

Chaplain:

The crucial and wide-ranging supportive role played by an Army Chaplain during centuries of conflict was made vividly clear by Reverend Ian Skinner at Kyrle Probus Club's meeting on Thursday 19 July. After serving for 25 years in the Army, including 10 years with the Hereford-based Special Air Service (SAS), Mr. Skinner attained the rank of Sergeant Major. His training as a Chaplain was followed by a further 20 years in active hot-spots around the globe, a total of 45 years with the British armed forces.

Postings took him to Northern Ireland, Iraq and the Falkland Islands, among many other places. Commando-trained, Mr. Skinner was with the Marines at the Battle of Goose Green.

Though a Chaplain is a non-combatant, his fearless duties over the years have seen many chaplains heavily involved with soldiers on dangerous operations, suffering fatalities, dealing with the wounded and willingly going into captivity alongside men taken as prisoners of war. "We are dealing with people who are fit and healthy but death is a constant factor, and I dealt with 56 funerals in a period of 10 years," Mr. Skinner said. "The aim is to give strength and comfort to those affected by bomb explosions and other atrocities and, if fatalities occur, meet parents and families, and to be aware that soldiers' wives also face enormous pressures, and helping those to come to terms with illness and death."

There are currently 110 Army Chaplains, including women, working on an inter-denominational basis. There are numerous after-care charities but Mr. Skinner felt there was a need for improved co-ordination, as some service personnel have 'fallen through the cracks'.

Kyrle Probus Club meets on the first and third Thursday every month at 10.30 am at Ross Conservative Club, when a variety of talks are given, either by members or invited outside speakers.

For more details visit the website www.kyrleprobusross.org.uk or contact Secretary Jeff Morris on 01989 563698