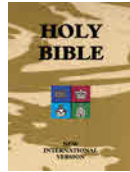




**No 95**

# News &



*'serving those who serve since 1779'*

**230th Year Edition**

# Prayer



**1779 - 2009**

Dear Christian Friends,

## **NMAFBS - 230th year of service**

NMAFBS's primary objective was written into its first minute book in November 1779:

*"For purchasing Bibles to be distributed among British soldiers and seamen of the Navy"*

Two hundred and thirty years later our mission remains broadly the same:

*"To supply Bibles and Christian resources to uniformed services, merchant seafarers and associated organizations".*

Although the first minute book no longer exists we have the Society's first reports from 1780 onwards courtesy of the British Library.

## **Our oldest Bible**

The recent acquisition of a 1792 Bible, given by our Society, links us to the time when NMAFBS was called simply, *The Bible Society*, a title later adopted by the British & Foreign Bible Society after it was founded in 1804. It is ironic that this Bible shown opposite was sold back 217 years later with a warning to 21st century ebay traders stamped inside the front cover!



The Bible was granted to Lieutenant Clark, 4th Dragoon Guards, inscribed inside with Ecclesiastes 12:1,

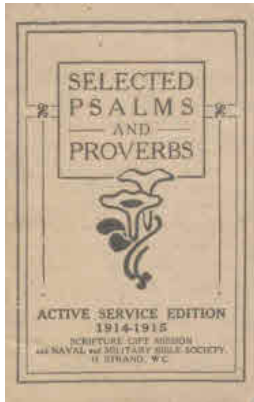
*"Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth."*

Coventry, Nov 3rd 1794



A year ago in News & Prayer No.89, I wrote about the Bounty Bible in the Pitcairn Island museum. I twice requested photos of it to no avail. It was possibly similar to Lieut Clark's.

We have also obtained another leather bound NMBS Bible printed in 1842 in French, in good condition. These old Bibles join the 1833 Bible from HMS Cordelia, presented by Colonel John Lewis, and our Boer War, WW1 and WW2 Bibles, New Testaments and Scripture portions:



### Seafarers' missions

In 1820 the Naval and Military Bible Society began its mission to merchant seamen. Today our Bibles still get sent far and wide. Mission to Seafarers' Chaplain Trevor Phillips is shown with a Filipino sailor holding a Seafarer's Bible in the port of Gladstone in Queensland. We have recently restocked with 3,000 Seafarers' Bibles - Port Chaplains please note.



### Combat the Stress (Australia)

Last February we published a booklet *Combat the Stress*, so far distributing over 7,000 copies. In August a further 3,000 were printed in Australia by Everyman's Welfare Service using Australian Defence Force images.

### A full life for the Cadet Corps

In the early 1990s we produced the booklets *Adventure into life* for the Sea Cadet Corps and *It's a great life* for the Army Cadet Force. We are just going to print with a booklet for all three cadet corps entitled, *A full life*. Its aim is to give cadets a basic understanding of Christian values, prayer and the need for a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. See the next newsletter for more information.

### Part of a Royal Marine's kit

Trainee Royal Marine bandsman, Sam Martin, was challenged by a corporal during a kit inspection as to why he kept his Royal Marine New Testament, issued by the Chaplain, in his kit locker rather than with personal possessions. Sam replied tactfully that corporals should know that New Testaments with Globe & Laurel badges on the front are indeed part of a Royal Marine's kit. Good work! Sam, but it never pays to be too clever in training!!

### IBS-STL - Biblica

Are we seeing the demise of large scale Christian publishing in the UK? Due mainly to the recession IBS-STL UK, part of Biblica, a global Christian resource publisher and distributor is to

be sold off. IBS-STL owns the 42 Wesley Owen Books and Music shops and Authentic Media, a book and music publisher. STL was started in 1962 as 'Send the Light' and expanded into the global evangelism and church planting mission Operation Mobilization (OM). STL later separated from OM and merged with IBS UK in 2007.

Over the past 4 years NMAFBS has purchased over 21,000 NIV Bibles for the armed forces and merchant sailors through what is now IBS-STL. CEV Bibles and New Testaments are printed by The British & Foreign Bible Society.

Christian retailers have to embrace the new reality of book-buying on the internet and digital downloading. But Christian bookshops have always provided a mission presence in the communities they serve and the likely closure of even some of Wesley Owen shops will be a serious blow. There is much to pray about here.

### **News from a returning Padre**

The following is edited from an email sent by Army Padre Mark Grant-Jones and is probably representative of the homecoming from Afghanistan of most of our service chaplains.

I have just returned home. After a lovely quiet weekend, I went straight into preparations for the remembrance service for the 24 fallen in the Battlegroup over the last six months as well as those injured. The day went well but quite emotional. It was good to have some of the injured visiting from hospital. Overall we had 200 with a

variety of injuries and 14 men with major injuries.

My main focus will be helping the soldiers to return to normality. A strong sense of public support and interest has helped our homecoming. In the past months we have been in a bubble removed from normal life and it is strange to return to salad and vegetables, Tesco and X-factor and so on. The letters and parcels sent over the past months provided a connection with the outside world which was really important given the bubble in which we were living. You can feel isolated and cut off from reality but a letter, magazine or packet of sweets from someone really grounds you.\*

I am very grateful for the prayer support received over the tour. Prayer was answered on two levels. There were very many close calls and what can only be miraculous interventions. The spiritual tempo was high and high church attendance experienced on operations is continuing at home.

*(\*Sandes and others often include our New Testaments and booklets in their parcels to troops in Afghanistan).*

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We celebrate again the Lord's birth and Derek joins me in wishing you a blessed Christmas and New Year.

In the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,



Richard Prendergast

**Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.** 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV)

**To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul; in you I trust, O my God. Do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me.** Psalm 25:1-2 (NIV)

## **Items for Praise and Prayer**

- **Praise** God for his provision of prayer and financial support for our Society over the past 230 years. Pray that we would continue to meet the needs of the armed forces, cadets and seafarers for Bibles and other Christian resources.
- **Pray** for protection for service personnel facing daily danger wherever they are deployed and for their families separated from them this Christmas; and for service Chaplains providing spiritual guidance at home and abroad and for the care for those who have returned home, injured in mind and body.
- **Pray** that the Lord will bring a satisfactory outcome to the conflict in 2010.
- **Pray** for the work of **SASRA** Scripture Readers on Army and RAF bases and **RSR** Chaplaincy Support Workers, also **The Mission to Military Garrisons** and **Sandes Centres, AFCU and NCF** through whom so many of our Bibles and other literature are distributed.
- **Pray** for the work of Chaplains in the three cadet corps and for satisfactory publication of the new cadet booklet, *A full life*.
- **Pray** for Christian publishers being affected by the recession and down turn in the buying of Christian literature, including IBS-STL UK and SGMLifewords.
- **Pray** for provision for the needs of all homeless ex-service personnel on the streets and for the Christian charities who care for them, providing food for the soul as well as food and shelter for the body.
- **Pray** for the quick release of crews held onboard merchant ships or ashore by Somalian pirates and for their waiting families, and for RN and RFA crews at sea on anti-piracy patrols.
- **Pray** for the work of Port Missionaries and Chaplains from the **Apostleship of the Sea, Mission to Seafarers, Sailors' Society** and **Seamen's Christian Friend Society** visiting ships and distributing Christmas parcels to crews away from home over the Christmas period.

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