
Birch Bark Express

The newsletter of Butler's Rangers

Editor: *Corporal Michael Trout, UE*

July 2004

Commander's notes

Lieutenant Dave Solek

MOURN FIRELOCKS! It is with sincere sorrow that I must inform you of the passing of Peg (Arrufat) Roff on 20 May 2004. She will be remembered as a sweet, kindhearted soul and the last original member of the recreated Butler's Rangers started in 1964. Some of you have asked if we should wear a black armband. Per research, the custom appears to be limited to British Officers in the late 18th century. I am recommending that we do a "Mourn Firelocks" with a moment of silent prayer after the Saturday evening "retreat" (final formation) at the Battle of Newtown on 28 August 2004, for Peg and all departed members of our extended Butler's Rangers' family. I expect to see many of you there to pay your final respects.

On a happier note, this year's Newtown event is a 225th anniversary and it coincides with the recreation of the Butler's Rangers Corps within the Brigade of the American Revolution on 27 August 1964. According to Peg, Capt. Frey's Company is the direct descendent of the original recreated unit started in 1964 (before it divided into companies). Present records indicate we are the oldest existing Crown reenactment group and other paperwork suggests we are older still! So happy 40th birthday to us and I believe a cake and some libations are called for on Saturday evening. Let me know your thoughts via phone at (203) 268-7049 or e-mail at soleranger@hotmail.com. Volunteers are always welcome!

Due to requirements for insurance coverage at non-BAR events, Capt. Butler's Company has joined under our incorporation: Susquehanna Valley Flintlocks / Butler's Rangers. Since we dress the same, participate together, and go to the same events, there will be no noticeable difference except a larger roster. To make the chain of command simple, Mike Trout was elected Corporal for Frey's Company and Ernie Coon was elected Corporal for Butler's Company. Mike will continue as Editor of our newsletter *Birch Bark Express* and Ernie will be the Webmaster for the combined Web site at www.butlersrangers.homestead.com. These two fellows, along with Don Paukett and Phil Malvagno (Adjutants of their companies) will get information from me as soon as I get it, and in turn will make sure you get it via phone call, newsletter or Web site.

I also welcome our two newest Rangerettes, Vivian Lea Stevens and Rebecca Fifield. Their mettle was tested at the Minisink 225th event in a tactical trek through a swamp! We didn't lose 'em (but then again we couldn't find a pool deep enough), so they've earned their Ranger merit badges. They established new standards for civilian interpretation. So boys, quit your whining when you gotta wear your regimental coats--they gotta wear stays! Wanna trade?

I'll see you at sundown!

Butler's Rangers annual meeting Greene, N.Y. 28 Feb. 2004

This year's meeting was held at the home of Don Paukett and family, who treated us to a fascinating and entertaining tour of their house and outlying buildings, which are extensively furnished and decorated with many items from the 18th century and earlier. Attending were Vivian Lea Stevens, Don Cox, Don Paukett and family, Mike Smacher, Dave Solek, Michael Trout, Mickey Wind, and Kristin Negrycz. A potluck luncheon fortified us for the meeting, which began at 1:55 P.M.

Our treasury holds \$1,441.19, calculated before adding this year's dues.

As with every year, insurance is a major concern. Walter Butler's Company has elected to join Frey's Company for insurance purposes, which covers both companies for BAR and BVMA events, and helps spread the cost. To solidify the legal requirements of our coverage, we've decided to use the official name "Susquehanna Valley Flintlocks – Butler's Rangers" for insurance purposes. This continues the name established by Butler's units way back in the 1960s. Also, all members must be fully aware of all BAR safety standards. This year's total cost to cover all members was \$375.

Dave Solek announced that small waistcoat-size "BUTLERS RANGERS" buttons would be available at 30 cents each. They're made from a special non-lead white metal/silver alloy. He'll also have Brown Bess-caliber musket balls at a good price. Dave is still looking for a source of casehardened hammers (known today as "frizzens"). We all agreed to seek a bolt of good quality green wool for our regimental coats. Also, we're still looking into a source of overalls, which could be a good supplement to our uniforms.

The BAR has a rather light schedule this year, and is working on publishing. They will soon have new editions of *Soldiers of the Brigade* and *Basic Clothing Guide for*

Women, as well as a new music manual. Online versions should be available. Our own Vivian Lea Stevens is the new BAR Public Information Officer, and Emma Reuter of the New Jersey Volunteers is the new Children's Program Coordinator. For the BVMA, there is a \$10 dues increase, along with some changes in insurance coverage. Their new officers include Commander John Osinski and as Deputy Commander, our own Jim Stevens. It appears that there will be no Schoharie event this year. This year the British Brigade is concentrating on improving safety, with an emphasis on safer encampments, including vehicle IDs.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the recreated Butler's Rangers. On 27 August 1964, Ed Arrufat, Bob Morris, and Meryl Stickler created the new Butler's Rangers—possibly the oldest Crown unit in the BAR. Our old Web site is still out there, seemingly immortal, but Ernie Coon is revising the Walter Butler's Company site. We hope Ernie's work will allow us to retire the old site soon. In West Virginia, it appears that Caldwell's Company has become inactive.

Dave called for a nomination to promote Michael Trout to corporal. Mike Smacher made the motion, seconded by Mickey Wind, and the vote was unanimous. Also, Walter Butler's Company reports Ernie Coon's promotion to corporal.

It's agreed we all need to continue to improve our training, including the Manual of Arms. Dave reminded us that everyone in Butler's Rangers probably knew the Manual of Arms well.

Upcoming events of note include the School of Instruction on 24-25 April (possibly including a trek); Minisink on 15-16 May; Stony Point on 17-18 July; "The Big One" at Quebec 31 July-1 August; Newtown 28-29 August (where Walter Butler's Company and lots of Canadian

Butler's are expected); and John Jay

After action reports

Homestead on 2-3 October.

Clothing Workshop Peebles Island, Waterford, N.Y 6 March 2004

This useful event was first held a couple of years ago. New Butler's Ranger Becky Fifield did much of the work to put on this program, assisted by Ingrid Schaaphok. About a dozen BAR members attended, picking up loads of information that they'll put to good use. Among the highlights was a "taping" session to get the right size and shape for women's stays. Samples of appropriate woman's clothing,

undergarments, and fabrics were on display, which was especially helpful to those of us just getting started. Becky and Ingrid answered questions patiently about what patterns were correct for our use, and helped at least one member drape her gown for the perfect fit.

-- Luann Trout

BAR School of the Soldier New Windsor, N.Y. 24-25 April 2004

Sekoh Ohre (hello friends):

I knew the BAR School would not be heavily attended but I had plans to make our Ranger participation interesting for us! First I'd like to thank our lovely and talented ladies, Becky Fifield and Katie Caddell, for putting on some excellent programs that I hope will inspire others into improving their reenacting skills. Maybe they can do the programs again at a future event for all who couldn't attend. The key phrase here is "raising the BAR bar."

The early morning scout and tactical exercise went off well. I was thanked by many of the participants who want to do this more often—**more, more, they want more!** We also got to do some "woodland tactics" and practice basic Ranger skills on Saturday in a nearby covert trail. Thanks is due to Mickey Wind for finding a way to get us out of class by dropping his musket butt on the floor and waking up the sleeping crowd (by the way what was that lecturer talking about anyway? Yawn!). When the riflemen found out later about our scouting

exercise, they wanted a part of the action too ("More!"). But they had to wait until Sunday morning.

We enjoyed a dinner at a local tavern, after I went crazy looking for members who were already there enjoying a cool one. Returning to the Cantonment and Annual BAR Board Meeting, fellow Board Officer Lt. Steve Otlowski and I had "tied one on" and got silly cracking jokes between us. Gosh, I wish I could remember what they were—that is, the motions I put forth for acceptance.

The weekend ended with Wayne Daniels's splendid talk on the Baylor's Dragoons Massacre. Following that was a slow rain with wet tentage and wool clothing packed away—we all smelled like soaked poodles driving home. Next years' BAR School will cover practical, hands-on skills. This will raise the woodcraft bar for us Rangers. And yes, I plan another woodland scout and tactical because I know you all want **more!**

-- Lt. Dave Solek

Battle of Minisink 225th Anniv. Montgomery, N.Y. 15-16 May 2004

On Friday, 14 May, I arrived at the Farmer's Museum in Montgomery, N.Y., ready for what would prove to be a most exciting and fun weekend as a new member of Frey's Company. Upon arrival, Dave Solek and Bob Stone helped me set up my tent, spraying for the deer ticks which we knew to be omnipresent, and removing poison ivy (of which there was a lot!). Within 15 minutes, my tent was up, bedding and clothing were installed, and we were off for dinner.

Saturday morning, I was awakened early by one of the junior officers of Ten Broeck's Company, as he roused all the Rangers from their slumber. Saturday was to be the public day of the event and I had several responsibilities that needed my attention. After a pancake and sausage breakfast (provided by the site), I prepared to greet and introduce two speakers who were scheduled for the morning. Marguerite Dunn, an herbalist lecturer and teacher, spoke on the 18th century use of herbs. Chuck Sperrill, Director of the Red Mill Museum, Clinton, N.J., spoke about the Raid on Minisink. After the lectures, lunch was served and the rangers prepared for the raid, even as rain clouds threatened in the distance.

Becky Fifield (another new member of the Company) and I talked with the public and answered questions about life with the 18th century armies, our clothing, and the men in the "funny green coats." The reenactment of the raid commenced and played out very well as we watched from the public viewing area. One spectator said, "This is the best Revolutionary War event I've ever seen." It was quite impressive to see the Colonial militia, celebrating what they believed to be a victory over the advanced scouts, ultimately turn tail and run, as the bulk of the Rangers with the native allies, topped the hill and began to descend upon them.

(For photos of the event, please see the Web site.) By this point, the rain was picking up and the tactical soon ended. Some of the soldiers marched into the public viewing area and were dismissed from there, giving them a chance to speak to the public and answer their questions.

After an early supper, some of the Rangers joined in watching our native allies, members of the Abenaki tribe, as they sang and danced around their fire. The Abenaki were kinfolk and traditional allies of the Mi'kmaq, Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, and Maliseet Indians, with whom they formed the historic Wabanaki Confederacy of New England and the Maritimes. It was interesting to see the Rangers smoking their pipes and listening intently to the fine drumming and singing, lit only by the blaze of the fire. It was indeed a "magic moment" as I pondered if I, as a white woman, would have ever seen such, and how I might have reacted to the wild dancing of the savages. Rumors were flying and several folks approached us and asked if we were to be the "hostages" during tomorrow morning's tactical. Becky and I knew not what Dave had gotten us into, but we assured them that we were **not** hostages, but right-thinking Loyalist refugees! Unsure of exactly what awaited us on the morn, we decided to call it a night fairly early.

The morning dawned cool, overcast, and slightly damp. The Rangers were to be led by Jim Stevens of Ten Broeck's Company, and the Continentals were to be led by Ken Miller of Heard's Brigade, who had been instrumental in organizing the weekend. After a quick breakfast, the troops formed up, performed a safety inspection, and the Rangers were informed that Becky and I were to portray Col. Butler's nieces who were being transported to safety. Some of the natives scoffed at the gown-wearing refugees, insisting that they would have donned

breeches or trousers to be “transported.” Becky and I vehemently denied that assumption, stating “This is what the women wore every day and this is what they would have worn to Canada.” Becky and I rucked up our apron, gown skirts, and outer petticoat, and were ready to hit the trail.

We entered the woods with the natives ranging well in advance of the main column and Becky and me towards the rear. Dave Solek, Michael Trout, and John Ward were given the dubious honour of safeguarding the refugees. We quickly heard gunfire as the natives engaged the advanced scouts of the Continental militia. We had already treaded through some muddy areas and Jim Stevens was now faced with a hard choice. He put the question to us: “Ladies, we can go further into the swamp, but your feet will get wet -- or you can turn yourselves over to the Continentals.” I quickly responded, “My freedom lies on the other side of the swamp and my feet are already wet. . . . let’s go!”

We proceeded to traverse the swamp, trying to find a way back out to the camp. At the deepest point, we were in water that was about 18” deep. (Upon later reflection, I believe our trek through the swamp looked like the Family Circus comic strip when young Billy goes around and around the neighborhood!) Towards the end, we were standing on high ground while the commander decided which way to go. I observed to some of our escorts that the Continentals probably hit the swamp and said, “They wouldn’t go in there -- they wouldn’t take the ladies in **there!**” (It just shows what little knowledge they have of the heart and determination of Loyalist refugees!) We finally exited the swamp, with our clothes wet up above our knees and the

biggest grins you’ve ever seen on our faces. We made a point of finding our native allies and showing them that we had, indeed, gowns and all, made it through the swamp and to safety! We were highly amused to meet up with some friends who had served as Continental advance scouts. They said they **had** hit the swamp, gone in up to about their ankles, and decided that “They wouldn’t go in there -- they wouldn’t take the ladies in **there!**” We all shared a good laugh over that one. (I don’t think anyone will underestimate our fortitude the next time we go out!)

We had such a wonderful time and learned so much about what it must have been like trying to make one’s way to safety in Canada. As I’ve continued to think about the experience, I cannot imagine trekking through a deep swamp or deep snow with all my worldly possessions tied on my back, a babe in my arms, and another one or two clutching at my petticoat. In the deepest water and mud, it was all I could do to keep my shoes on and myself upright.

My hearty thanks to Dave Solek for his confidence in us and his encouragement; for our gallant escorts who got us safely through in one piece (albeit a very WET piece); and to all the Rangers for providing Becky and me with a wonderful “magic moment.” This experience will serve as incredible fodder for the continuing development of our personas as Loyalist refugees. (Our one regret was that we had to wash the mud out of our clothes due to the accompanying stench of swamp water. Oh! How perfect we would have looked at future events, if we could have left the mud intact!) We hope this was only the first of many such treks the Rangers and refugees will undertake!

-- Vivian Lea Stevens

**Mabee Farm Rotterdam Junction, New York 22-23 May
2004**

Fine weather helped this small but enjoyable event, which seems to grow a little each year. There were also a few more sutlers than in previous years. The site includes the oldest existing farm buildings in Schenectady County, including an impressive Dutch barn. Saturday was intended as a “day of rebellion” or some such, as any Crown forces attending were to be only in “skulking” mode. The dozen or so BVMA Butler’s Rangers served as Tryon County Militia, although late in the day a small skirmish took place in which we served as generic Tory forces. We were assisted by one artillery piece, and despite our tiny numbers, we were gaining the upper hand before the gun suffered a touchhole malfunction and we were forced to withdraw.

In the evening the local Whig rebellionists held a number of trials, using original transcripts of actual 1779 trials as guidelines. The first trials were for several of their own soldiers accused of various misconducts. Their harsh punishment did not bode well for Butler’s Rangers Sergeant Newberry (played by Roger Garrison) and Lieutenant Hare (played by Michael Trout), who had been arrested

and charged with spying. Despite the Rangers’ protestations and some suspicious holes in witness testimony (as well as spirited pleas for mercy from Hare’s wife), no cross-examination was allowed and both were convicted and dragged away for hanging. It should be noted that the Whig soldiers guarding Newberry and Hare were remarkably inattentive; at one point Hare picked up a shovel without anyone noticing and could have easily dispatched both careless Whig sentries. This entertaining event was a great way to draw in the public, although it was held rather late in the evening.

Sunday we elected to “show our colours” and put on our Butler’s Rangers regimental coats. The day’s skirmish saw us outnumbered even worse than the day before (although we were joined by a few former Whigs who had seen the error of their ways), and without any artillery. With little room to maneuver, low on ammunition, suffering several musket malfunctions, and facing two Whig artillery pieces, we still managed to embarrass the unimpressive Whigs before withdrawing.

– *Cpl. Trout*

**Brigade Firelock Matches Birdsboro, Pennsylvania 5-6 June
2004**

Well, we got home without the aid of an ark -- no exaggeration. It’s a rare time when all the campers wind up being forced into a cabin to wait out the rain. When we (Kristin Negrycz and Mickey Wind) arrived at the beautiful Daniel Boone’s Homestead site we realized it was not going to be pleasant. The forecast called for rain . . . and rain it did, for the entire day and night on Saturday.

Despite the horrid conditions, the matches did take place, though with perhaps lesser attendance. In addition to us, Katie Caddell, Becky Fifield, and Dave Solek all showed up to represent the Rangers. “Butler’s Babes” did very well during the shoot, including Kristin hitting the target on her first ever live fire shot! Now Dave has to worry about more than

being hit by metal if we upset her.

Despite the rain, there was plenty of humor, with Dave turning bright red by the more suggestive jokes told by the ladies. Dave returned in kind for a while, but the ladies showed their wit could match any man. By then, Mickey was falling asleep on his feet and barely made it through the wonderful pig roast dinner.

The site was lucky enough to have a scout cabin available and we were allowed to stay there to keep out of the downpour that would not subside. The men went to one room and the ladies to the other. Despite staying with those of Congressional leanings, the night was fine (except for one lad with a heavy snore) and sleep came easily.

Sunday was still dark, but not as rainy.

The shoot was able to conclude with Norm Fuss of the 2nd New York beating Rich of the 3rd New York in the rapid-fire contest. Kristin was able to shoot a rifle borrowed from Jackie and hit her target and the target of her neighbor, which she thought was hers at first, on several of her shots. She is on her way to being a big shooter in the years to come.

We were a little saddened at the poor showing of Crown forces. Except for a couple of New Jersey Volunteers on Saturday, no others came out for the shoot. Few redcoats have shown for the first two BAR events of the season and this is a concern to me. I'm not sure of the reason, but maybe talking with the regulars may be needed to see what would get them to more BAR events.

-- *Pvt. Mickey J. Wind*

Johnson Hall Market Fair Johnstown, New York 12-13 June 2004

Fears of declining attendance by participants, sutlers, and public were unrealized, as the parking lot was filled to bursting, helped by perfect weather on both days. About a dozen BVMA Butler's Rangers attended. Last year's event (held in an incessant, soaking drizzle) included extensive off-site tacticals with the Canadian Yorkers. No such battles took place this year, but there was plenty to do just the same, with a good number of sutlers plying a variety of wares. The usual magicians, sword swallows, fire-eaters, slack rope walkers, and other entertainers kept the crowd happy. The large number of children in particular seemed to have a wonderful time, as the nicely-mowed site allowed for much running, rolling, skipping, and game-playing. Ranger Calvin Arnt performed admirably as a mule, pulling his own and other children around in a period-correct wagon and wheelbarrow.

On Saturday Lt. Jim Stevens conducted an extensive training session for those Rangers who wished to participate. Jim has developed his training regimen down to a science, covering saluting, safety, drill, maneuvers, formations, and priming and loading, and more. Not only should all of us take advantage of Jim's expertise whenever we can, but it's been pointed out that real soldiers in the 18th century spent most of their time in training, training, and more training. Even if you already know everything (doubtful!), repetition through training makes for better performance in the field. Jim reports that some of our potential adversaries were nervously taking notes, and some even suggested that we stop training so that we don't gain too much of an advantage. Just wait. . . .

-- *Cpl. Trout*

Upcoming events

17-18 July	Battle of Stony Point 225th anniv.	Stony Point, N.Y. (BAR)
24-25 July	Old Fort Johnson Colonial Days	Amsterdam, New York
31 July-1 August	Plains of Abraham	Quebec City, Que. (Northern Brigade)
13-15 August Maine	Battle of Penobscot 225th anniversary	Penobscot,
14-15 August	Fort Niagara (Clinton/Sullivan Raid)	Youngstown, N. Y.
26-30 August	Battle of Newtown 225th anniversary	Elmira, New York
11-12 September	Fort Ticonderoga	Ticonderoga, New York (BVMA)
18-20 September	Destruction of Ft. Engagement	Milford, N.Y. (BVMA)
26 September	Battle of Brandywine	Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania
2-3 October	John Jay Homestead Market Days	Katonah, N.Y. (BAR)
9-10 October	Carleton's Raid on Ft. George	Lake George, N.Y.
15-17 October	Burning of Kingston 227th anniv.	Kingston, N.Y. (BVMA)
20-21 November	Ft. Lee Historic Site	Ft. Lee, New Jersey (BAR)

From the archives

As fugitives filtered into Niagara the ranks of Butler's Rangers began to fill up. Many of the best recruits had come from settlements along the Susquehanna where all suspected persons were keenly persecuted and many like John Glassford had come "almost naked into Niagara." Although they had little knowledge of military drill or discipline they possessed the practical knowledge and endurance so essential to survival in the forest. Soon recruits were issued uniforms of the dark green worn during the Seven Years' War by Rogers' Rangers and at the present time by the Queen's Rangers. The equipment consisted of jackets, buckskin breeches, and low flat caps bearing plates monogrammed "G.R." encircled by "Butler's Rangers." From Niagara parties went out to perform various duties

according to their instructions. The silence and lightning rapidity with which they struck and vanished, to reappear where and when least expected, caused great fear to sweep through the settlements. Inhabitants on the frontier from Johnstown on the north, German Flatts on the West, and Unadilla on the south soon became an armed yeomanry. Men watched at home and took turns standing sentinel when labouring in the fields. They were continually harried by conflicting rumours, and often the first intimation that the foe was in their midst was the glare of a neighbouring house in flames. This fear, though it proved an asset to the Rangers, gave rise to tales of such extensive ferocity and atrocity as are impossible of belief. Probably the rebels' bitterest complaint, that white men

disguised themselves as Indians, was unwarranted because this ruse had been used by both sides throughout the French wars.

-- From *The Mark of Honour* ("The King's Men—Part I"), by Hazel C. Mathews, University of Toronto Press (1965), page 49.