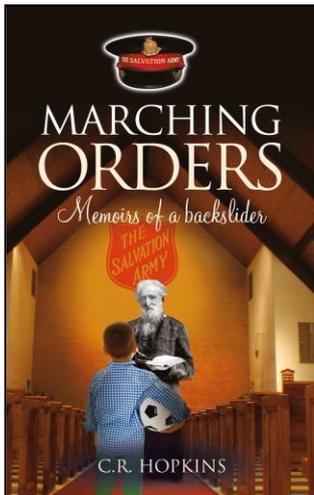


## MEREO NEW BOOK: PRESS RELEASE

A humorous and moving account of growing up in The Salvation Army in the 1950s & 60s – exploring themes of adolescence, faith, doctrine, mental illness and forbidden sexuality

PUBLICATION DATE: MONDAY 10<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2017



# MARCHING ORDERS

Memoirs of a backslider

by C.R. Hopkins

*'God likes to be praised and you mustn't praise any other gods.'*

*'Are there any other gods?'*

*'Take your elbows off the table.'*



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*My mother told me that we had received our 'Marching Orders'. These were in the form of a letter received from [Salvation Army] Divisional Headquarters instructing my parents as to when and where they would next be stationed ...*

Clive Hopkins's parents were Salvation Army Officers who lived strictly by the (now defunct) 1936 Regulations for Salvation Army Officers. This meant that Clive and his brother were brought up in a teetotal home and had to endure six hours of religious meetings every Sunday. Most kinds of pleasure (including girls) were off limits and – to Clive's dismay – even football was forbidden on the Sabbath.

*'We've made a decision and that's that' said my mother. 'Clive is not playin' football on a holy day. Remember the words of Exodus.'*

The family moved frequently – on the orders of The Salvation Army – and while this disrupted the boys' education and their friendships, Clive also remembers good times too: the brass band, sports days, cricket matches against the Methodists, family caravanning holidays, and their first TV set – as well as his own adolescent romances and attempts to impress the girls through the "Charles Atlas Art of Manliness Course". There were also visits to his socialist Uncle (who was not a member of The Salvation Army); seeing The Beatles perform in 1963 and rebellious moments involving alcohol, cigarettes, fare dodging and 'girlie mags'.

When finally at the age of 14 Clive was coerced into becoming a Salvation Army Soldier himself, it was a step too far, and like his older brother before him, Clive rebelled and became a 'backslider' – much to the distress of his father.

*'How do you think he feels with his own children backslidin'? It's humiliatin' for him. How can he save souls when his own children have gone to the Devil? 'I can't help that. I can't pretend to believe something I don't.' 'Why not?'*



*A Salvation Army marriage: the author's parents, Fred and Marjorie Hopkins, on their wedding day in 1939*

Clive Hopkins has now written this entertaining and moving memoir of a youth spent trying to balance his own enjoyment of boyhood and teenage years with the demands of his parents' religious calling.

In recounting his memoirs, Clive captures evocatively the lost world of the 1950s & 1960s – and reveals a family secret which may explain his father's ardent religious conviction and strict approach to family life.

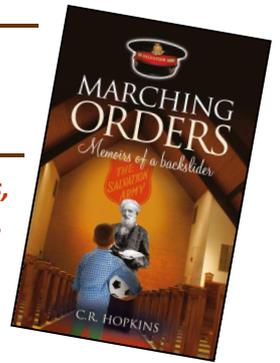
**This book will appeal to social historians, to those interested in Christian sects and to everybody who enjoys nostalgia for the 1950s and 1960s**

***Feature suggestions, local-interest angles, author details & more photos appear overleaf >>>***

**MEREO NEW BOOK: PRESS RELEASE continued**

**MARCHING ORDERS: Memoirs of a Backslider by C.R. Hopkins**

**PUBLICATION DATE: MONDAY 10<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2017**



*I took a deep breath and announced that I was not going to the meetings, that day or ever again. I did not believe in God. 'You'll be in in torment for ever, wailin' and gnashin' your teeth. See how you like that.' 'I'll take that risk,' I said, 'and be damned.' I never went to a Salvation Army meeting again, save for my parents' funerals.*



#### **About the author:**

**C.R. Hopkins** was born in **London** where he has lived for most of his adult life. C.R. Hopkins was educated at **Reigate Grammar School; University of Wales at Bangor** and **St John's College, Cambridge**. He is a mathematician and actuary. He worked for Shell for thirty-three years and lives in **Wimbledon** with his wife Yasmine. They have four grown up sons and two grandsons. Aside from family and writing, his interests include astronomy, golf, music, theatre, travel and a passion for Tottenham Hotspur.



**Marching Orders is C.R. Hopkins' first book.** He says, "In it I reflect on life growing up in the Salvation Army. I wanted to try and capture a lost world so that my children and grandchildren would know that my father was a remarkable man. In the book I quote from *Salvation Army Regulations 1936* – which are now strikingly out of date – but these were the rules that guided my parents and I mean no disrespect to the Salvation Army who do great work."

**Media opportunities:** Excellent material for short, seasonal extracts/serialisation. Photos and review copies available on request. The author is available for interviews.

*< 1949: the author (aged 2) with his brother, Alan (aged 8)*

**Feature suggestions:** The book taps into memories of the **1950s/60s** – a period currently enjoying renewed public interest thanks to popular TV series such as "*Father Brown*" and "*Call the Midwife*."

- The wonderful welfare work carried out by The Salvation Army
- What is it like for teenagers who are brought up in a strict Christian sect?
- Attitudes to homosexuality during the 50s & 60s: Would things have been different for Clive's father these days?
- Has the role of women in the Salvation Army changed since 'The Home League' of the 50s & 60s?
- Are class differences as important as they were in the 50s & 60s?
- Discovering a family secret: does it change how you feel about your parents?
- Having a "nervous breakdown." The stigma of mental illness – have we *really* made any progress?
- As we get older, do we become more sympathetic and forgiving towards our own parents?

*The author's father, Fred Hopkins, when he became a Salvation Army Officer >*



Ask your readers or listeners to compare their own memories with the author's recollections of:

- The Coronation • entertainers from 'The Light Programme' on the wireless • Teddy boys • American pop stars & fashions • Mods & Rockers • their first television set • the first gig they attended and • their first true love.

**Local UK interest:** The author was born in **London**, however the Hopkins family moved frequently during the 1950s & 60s – whenever they received new 'Marching Orders' from The Salvation Army. Consequently C.R.Hopkins' memoirs feature nostalgic descriptions of the 50s & 60s in: **Harpenden**, near St Albans, Herts • **Stotfold**, near Luton, Beds • **Watford**, Herts • **Wolverhampton**, West Midlands • **Newport**, South Wales • **Aldershot**, Hants • **Redhill**, Surrey • **Wimbledon**, London • and **Sittingbourne**, Kent (which was also the location of one of the convalescent homes where the author's father recovered from a nervous breakdown. The other convalescent home was in **Beckenham**, Kent.) These enthralling memoirs also mention **Tooting**, South London home to the author's grandparents • family holidays in **Bournemouth**, Dorset and **Canvey Island**, Essex • and summer work as a student in **Bradford**, Yorkshire and at Butlin's in **Margate**, Kent. Coincidentally, the author's parents also spent their last years in **Margate** • The author now lives in **Wimbledon**, London SW19.



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