

THE ROYAL PIONEER CORPS ASSOCIATION

"Daddy

what did the
Pioneers do
in the War?"



Abyssinia 1940-1941
British Somaliland 1941
Greece 1941, 1944-1945
Iraq 1945
Italy 1943-1945
Malaya 1941-1942
Malta 1940-1942
Middle East 1941-1944
South East Asia 1941-1942
North Africa 1940-1943
Norway 1940-1941
Sicily 1943
Syria 1941
Burma 1942-1945
NW Europe 1939-1940, 1944-1945
United Kingdom 1940-1945

NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2005



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VE/VJ 60TH ANNIVERSARY LUNCH

Wos & Sgts Mess, 23 Pnr Regt RLC, Bicester 21 May 2005

A Lunch to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of VE/VJ Days is to be held in the Warrant Officers and Sergeants Mess, 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC, Bicester on Saturday 21 May 2005. (1200 for 1230 hours).

The dress is lounge suit or jacket and tie. The lunch is for Association members with guests, wives and children too, if the latter are big enough. The cost is £10 per head, however, for those Association members who served in the Second World War there will be no charge for the member and his wife or carer.

Please apply on the booking form enclosed with this Newsletter; this must be received at HQ RPC Association by 4 May 2005.



39/93 CLUB WEEKEND

The Red Lion Hotel, Fareham

The 39/93 Club has arranged accommodation and breakfast for members at the Red Lion Hotel, Fareham, Hampshire at £23 per person per night from 4 to 6 March 2005. A dinner is to be held on Saturday 5 March 2005 at a cost of £15 per person, day visitors will be welcome to attend the dinner. If you wish to attend, please contact the Secretary, Les Rowley, telephone 0162 889 0913. The hotel will not accept telephone bookings.

FIFTY-NINTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PAST AND PRESENT OFFICERS' DINNER,

23 Pioneer Regiment RLC, St David's Barracks, Graven Hill, Bicester Friday 14 October 2005

Serving and ex-serving officers are invited to attend the 59th Past and Present Officers' Dinner at 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC, St David's Barracks, Graven Hill, Bicester, Oxon on Friday 14 October 2005. Dress: black tie, miniature medals and neck decorations. Timings 7 for 8 o'clock to allow time for a meeting. Members are asked to send their cheques for £20 to HQ RPC Association before Friday 30 September 2005 please state if accommodation is required. Members of 23 Regiment should book through their PMC.

NORTHAMPTON BRANCH

2005 Events still to be finalised

The 2005 Branch events have still to be finalised a Newsletter will be forwarded to Branch members. If you do not receive this and wish to be included in the distribution please contact Mr N Brown on (01604 403338).

WOs & SNCO's PIONEER REUNION CLUB

2005 Events

A Club Newsletter containing full details and booking instructions will be forwarded to members in due course.

- Fri 1 Apr 05** - a 'Wake' on the withdrawal of the Pioneer Flash
- Sat 11 Jun 05** - Generation Dinner
- Sat 15 Oct 05** - Ladies Dinner Night



PIONEER REUNION WEEKEND - 2005

The Pioneer Reunion Weekend is once again, thanks to the Commanding Officer 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC to be held at Bicester on 8/9 July 2005. A Booking Form is enclosed with this Newsletter, this must be returned to HQ RPC Association by no later than 23 June 2005.



It is pleasing to report that Operation SLAM, the refurbishment of St David's Barracks is currently on schedule and should be completed by the Reunion Weekend. It is hoped therefore, that all accommodation will be within St David's.

A programme of events is as follows:

8 July 2005

EVENT	TIME	LOCATION	DRESS
Bring a Boss	1600 hrs	Cpls' Club	Jacket/Tie
Invitation to Sgts' Mess	1900 hrs	Sgts' Mess	Jacket/Tie

9 July 2005

EVENT	TIME	LOCATION	DRESS
WOs & SNCOs Pnr Reunion Club AGM Note: members only	0900 hrs	Sgts' Mess	Jacket/Tie
Remembrance Parade	1030 hrs	Corps War Memorial	Uniform or Jacket/Tie
Photograph following parade	1030 hrs	Lawn outside Officers Mess	As above
RPCA Committee Meeting	1130 hrs	RHQ Conf Room	Optional
RPCA AGM	1230 hrs	JRC (NAAFI)	Optional
23 Pnr Regt "Open Day"	1400 hrs	Sports Pitch	Uniform /Casual
The Pioneer Night	1930 hrs	Garrison Theatre	Casual



Editorial

VE/VJ Day. We are approaching the 60th anniversary of the German Empire surrender to the overwhelming superiority of the advancing Allied Forces - a supreme effort of total co-ordination, willpower and the burning need to quell all forms of tyranny particularly after the revelations of the holocaust.

To celebrate VE/VJ Day the Association is to hold a dinner in the WOs & Sgts Mess, 23 Pioneer Regt RLC, Bicester on 21 May 2005. Full details are on page 2. Those who served during the Second World War and/or wife/carer are invited as guests of the Association (i.e. no charge).

Benevolence - As mentioned in the last Newsletter the work of Benevolence has passed to the RLC. It is pleasing to report that this transition has proceeded very smoothly. The Director RLC has given the following guarantee:

"The RLC will guarantee to provide the same, or where possible an increased level of support for your dependency for as long as there is one former RPC officer or soldier, or eligible, dependent, still alive who needs support and assistance. We are acutely conscious of the heritage of our predecessors and remain totally committed to assuming the continuing responsibility for the welfare of our comrades from the RPC."

This guarantee should lay to rest the fears of those who were concerned with the transfer of responsibilities.

Retirement - Maj Geoffrey Crook retired on 30 September 2004, we wish him a long and happy retirement and hope he enjoys his new life 'on the moors'. We would also like to record our appreciation for the hard work and commitment he has shown in his 13 years as Controller of the Association.

Congratulations - Congratulations must be made to three of our serving Warrant Officers' on their selection for commission. They are WO1 Tony Topping, WO1 Billy Dilkes and WO1 Taff Teague. We wish them well in their new appointments and hope they continue to support the Association as they have in the past.

Membership - It is pleasing to report that we recruited 80 new members during 2004. However, as can be seen from the obituaries column on page 19 we have sadly lost a large number including 9 known Normandy Veterans during the year. Again we have had a large number of Newsletters returned marked "Gone Away" - please inform us of change of address.

Email address - In the last Newsletter we asked members to forward their email address as this is an easy and speedy way to get in touch. If you have not already done so please forward your email address to: pioneers@rpca.fsnet.co.uk

Articles for the Newsletter. You will see from reading this Newsletter that we have received a number of articles from members, please keep them coming, your recollections, views, ideas and suggestions are always welcome. Thank you to those who have contributed.



Returns VE/VJ Day Dinner/Reunion Weekend - A separate booking form is included with this Newsletter. Please return to this form by the due date as late returns cannot be received.

Norman Brown

Front Cover
VE/VJ Commemoration Issue and showing the many places that Pioneers served during WW2.

THE ROYAL PIONEER CORPS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2005

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Registered Charity Number: 801733

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WOs' & SNCOs' PIONEER REUNION CLUB LADIES DINNER NIGHT

WOs & Sgts Mess, 23 Pnr Regt RLC, Saturday 16 October 2004

Including guests 84 members attended the Reunion Club's Ladies Dinner Night on Saturday 16th October 2004. The guest for the evening was Lt Col MJ Baker a former Commanding Officer of 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC. (see photographs on centre pages)

39/93 CLUB WEEKEND

at the Red Lion Hotel, Fareham 15/16 October 2004

The Club held a meeting at the start of the weekend on Friday 15 October 2004 where a minutes silence was observed in memory of Col GC Walker who died on 19 September 2004 and was the Life President of the Club. During Saturday some visited Portsmouth and other places whilst other shopped locally. On Saturday a Club Dinner was held together with members of the RM Association (Worcester Branch).

CHRISTMAS DRAW RESULTS

A total of £6,429 worth of tickets were sold !

A total of £6,429 worth of tickets were sold for the Christmas Draw this amount being a record amount since this Draw was implemented in 1987. £2,218 worth of tickets were sold by serving units and £4,211 by members.

This was a first rate effort and raised a net profit of £4,893. We must thank all who purchased tickets with special thanks to those who requested and sold additional tickets. A special mention must again be made to WO2 Wayne Townsend SSM 206 Sqn; this Sqn sold some £500 worth of tickets.



The Christmas and Derby Draws are one of the few remaining sources of income for the Association and are a great help in maintaining the Association's work.

Results are:

1st	£500	25784	D Gimes, London
2nd	£250	49046	J Stewart, Harrogate
3rd	£125	37732	C Mullaney, Leicester
4th	£75	19825	D Daly, Bournemouth
5th	£50	06151	A Corby, Paddington, Oxon

DERBY DRAW 2005

Counterfoils to be returned by 26 May 2005

Tickets for the Derby Draw are included with this Newsletter (unless you have indicated not to receive them). Counterfoils and monies should be returned here by 26 May. If you would like more tickets, please telephone or write for more.

You may use your code number (which is in brackets and precedes your name on the envelope in which you received the Newsletter) on the top stub of each book; this saves you the task of identifying each ticket stub.



GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE

Westminster Abbey, Thursday 11 November 2004

The Field of Remembrance was opened on Thursday 11 November 2004 by Her Majesty The Queen. Brig CB Telfer, Lt Cols JA Starling, PA Jones and A Barnes, Majs Elliott and Crook, Capt M East, WO1 W Dilkes, Messrs N Brown & J Smith were at our plot, no 134, which was fronted by Maj PJ Fleming. (see photograph on centre page)



CENOTAPH PARADE AND SERVICE

Sunday 14 November 2004

The following attended the Service at the Cenotaph, at Whitehall on Sunday 14 November 2004:

Mr A Hobbs, Mr I Dewsnap, Mr J Doble, Mr I Easingwood, Mr H Bishop, Mr W Pepperell, Mr T Whipps, Mr A Fawcett, Mr J Reid, Mr H Gunter, Mr DN Bryant, Mr N Brown, Capt M East and Capt PN Thomas who presented a wreath.



NORTHAMPTON BRANCH CHRISTMAS PARTY

The Plough Hotel, Northampton 12 December 2004

62 members attended the Branch Christmas Party which was held on Sunday 12 December 2004. It was pleasing to welcome 3 members who had travelled a long distance to attend, namely Mr J Kear (Bristol) Mr J McPhillips (Blackpool) and Mr B O'Donovan (Huntingdon).

58TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PAST AND PRESENT OFFICERS' DINNER

23 Pnr Regt RLC, Officers Mess, St David's Barracks, Bicester Friday 15 October 2004

In the presence of HRH The Duke of Gloucester, KG GCVO. Other guests were Gen Sir John Stibbon, Maj Gen MS White and Col ND Josling. The following also attended:

Col PJ O'Connell	Maj R Bennett
Brig AF Mutjch	Maj S Woodward
Brig HJ Hickman	Maj M Hing
Brig CB Telfer	Lt Col JRMcl Rayner
Col RF McDonald	Maj J Stringer
Col K Broom	N Brown Esq
Maj PJ Fleming	Capt J Brown
Wng Cdr VD King	Maj S Walmsley
Rev P Swinn	Maj AJ Rickard
Maj S Berry	Lt Col PA Vignaux
Lt Col JGO Lowe	Capt M East
Lt Col PA Jones	Maj MJ Potter
Lt Col M Bennett	Maj CD Spears
Maj G McLane	Lt Col DC Ingle
Capt J Shields	Capt RJM Johnstone
Capt PN Thomas	Lt Col JA Starling
Maj D Allenn	Maj P Stannett

(see photograph on rear cover)



ROYAL GARDEN PARTIES

You can only go once!

If you have never before attended a Royal Garden Party and wish to do so, you should apply in writing, by 31 January of each year, marking the envelope "Royal Garden Parties" in the bottom left hand corner. The application should include full military details, a contact address and telephone number, and do not forget to give details of anyone else that you would like to accompany you i.e. wives, husbands, children, companions, etc. The addresses to write to are as follows:

**PS 12 (A), Room 2/1, Block 7
Wellington Barracks,
Birdcage Walk, LONDON
SW1E 6HQ**

Unfortunately, anyone who has attended a Royal Garden Party, at any time previously, is unable to attend one again.



KILLING WITH KINDNESS

People arrested for begging have hard drugs in their system

Westminster and Camden Councils have come together to launch a hard-hitting campaign highlighting the problems that occur when money is given to beggars. The common misconception about beggars is that they are homeless but that is not always the case. A recent survey carried out by Camden Council found that out of 96 beggars only five were actually sleeping rough. It showed that the overwhelming majority of beggars have access to a bed and many could actually be described as professional beggars.

People are reduced to begging for a number of reasons but unfortunately for many it is the need for cash to fund a drug or drink problem that drives them to the streets.

Recent figures showed that 85 per cent of people arrested for begging by the Metropolitan Police have hard drugs such as crack cocaine or heroin in their system. Kit Malthouse, Deputy Leader of Westminster City Council, believes that a misplaced desire to help may actually prove to be counterproductive and deadly. "People need to know that the money they casually give to a beggar may buy the fix that kills them. In my view giving money to beggars is actually a very cruel thing to do" he said.

Of course, there are beggars on the streets who are also homeless. Both Councils do have a bed available for everyone on the streets and a full raft of services to help people with any problems or addictions they may have.

The problem the Councils face is that if the homeless are sustained in their lifestyle by the public they will not come in from the cold and receive the treatment that is available to them.

If people want to assist the homeless then the best way to do so is to give to a recognised charity. Of course it is always hard to walk on by but the hard reality is that by giving to those who beg you could be giving someone the means to buy the fix that kills them.

UNCLAIMED BENEFIT

2.5 billion went unclaimed in 2001/2002 alone!

The National Audit Office has reported that there are currently 23 benefits available to older people with linkages between 16 of them and many pensioners are not claiming benefit which is rightly theirs. A massive £2.5bn of benefit went unclaimed in 2001/2002 alone. The figure is presumed to be substantially higher now. Pension credit is currently claimed by only 60% of the entitled households and Council Tax benefit by even fewer. Help the Aged produce a free booklet "Can You Claim It", a guide to claiming Pension Credit, Council Tax Benefit and Social Fund payments.

The booklet can be obtained by downloading from their website at www.helptheaged.org.uk or by sending a 35p SAE to Information Resources Team (CYCI), Help the Aged, 207-221 Pentonville Road, London, N1 9UZ.

COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE DIRECT

New Legal Service



The Government have recently launched a new Legal Service that offers free, high-quality information and advice for everyone and help with civil legal cases for those who qualify for legal aid. This organisation will specialise in:

- Welfare and benefit problems
- Debt problems
- Educational problems

It can be accessed online at www.clsdirect.org.uk or on the advice line at 0845 345 4345.

THE COMPLETE MONEY PLAN for planning your retirement

This is a step-by-step guide for anyone planning retirement. Topics include: saving and investing, cutting tax, managing debt, making a will and obtaining financial advice. There are also sections on boosting income, help with Council Tax, being self-employed and raising money from one's home. Available from Age Concern Books, Units 5&6, Industrial Est, Brecon, Powys, LD3 8LA. Tel: 0870 4422120. Price £6.99 + £1.99 p&p. 262 pages.

THE ARMED FORCES MEMORIAL PROJECT located at the National Arboretum in Staffordshire



The Armed Forces Memorial is a new national memorial to the men and women of the UK Armed Forces who have been killed on duty or as a result of terrorism since the end of the Second World War. It will be located at the National Arboretum in Staffordshire. A committee under the patronage of HRH The Prince of Wales are working to raise £4 million. Visit www.forcesmemorial.org.uk for details.

FREE PASSPORTS for the over 75s

Britain's wartime generation are now entitled to receive free passports. In recognition of the sacrifices made by World War 2 veterans and civilians, every British Citizen born on or before 2 September 1929 will no longer have to pay for a UK passport.

Many veterans have already received free one-year passports to enable them to revisit battlefields in the 60th anniversary year of the D-Day landings.

The Home Secretary announced that this would be extended to cover everyone that played a part in the war effort, who will now receive free passports for life.



The Home Secretary said, "The years of the Second World War were amongst the darkest in our nation's history. We must never forget the sacrifices made and bravery shown by the entire wartime generation. They endured the horrors of the battlefield, terrible losses and unremitting hardship at home to secure our country's freedom and prosperity."

He added, "Now the wartime generation - some 4.5 million people - will receive free passports for life in recognition of they they gave us to secure our nation's liberty."



MEDALS

How can I claim medals from my time in service?



In many cases, you will have received the campaign medals awarded to you while you were still in the armed forces, because you must wear them for ceremonial duties and other functions. However, you may have left the armed forces before your medal was given to you. If so, you must claim the medal from the Medal Office. Also, most

Second World War servicemen and women were not given medals before they were demobilised at the end of the war, so they had to claim them after they had left the Services.

If you want to claim the medals of a serviceman or woman who has died...

If you are a relative of a serviceman or woman who has died, you can claim their medals. You may need to prove your relationship to the person before you can be given the medals.

Do I have to pay for the medals?

You do not need to pay for medals the first time they are provided. But if you are applying for replacement medals which have been lost, for example in a burglary or a fire, you will have to pay a fee for them. If you are claiming replacement medals, you will have to provide some proof that you lost the originals with, for example, a police or insurance report.

How do I claim a service medal?

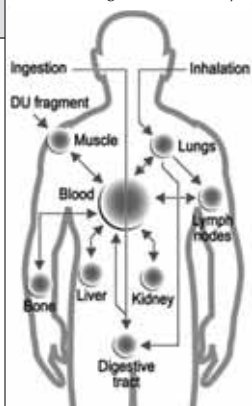
To claim or to find out if you are able to receive one, you must write to the Medal Office. You need to give as much of the following information as you can:

- Your service number
- Your Regiment or Corps
- Rank and date of discharge
- Your name and address now

If you are claiming a First World War medal for a member of your family, you should collect as much of this information as you can before contacting the medal office for the service they were in. Address of Army Medal Office:-

**Army Medal Office, Government Buildings,
Worcester Road, Droitwich Spa, Worcs. WR9 8AU**

How DU might enter the body



DEPLETED URANIUM testing programme about to begin

Launch of Main programme of voluntary DU retrospective testing for veterans of operations in the Persian Gulf (1990-91) and former Yugoslavia. The DUOB is pleased to announce that its main testing programme is now ready to begin. The Board is an independent committee of scientists and veterans' representatives set by the Government in 2001 to oversee the establishment of a voluntary retrospective testing programme for veterans concerned about possible exposure to DU.

The DUOB test is being administered by an independent contractor, through a network of NHS clinics in various regions of the UK. Samples will be analysed by one or both of two independent laboratories. The DUOB has planned enough capacity for up to 500 people to be tested per year with scope to increase capacity dependent on demand.

The test is now free of charge to individuals who served:

- In the Persian Gulf between 1 Aug 90 and 31 Jul 91
- In the former Republic of Yugoslavia on or after 5 Aug 94

Details and an application form can be obtained by writing to the DUOB secretariat at MOD Main Building (Floor 7 Zone H), Whitehall, London, SW1A 2HB or emailing info@duob.org.uk.



THE R.P.C. ASSOCIATION SHOP

(prices include postage and packing)



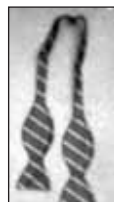
Wall Shields
85-93 badge £20



Bow Tie
adjustable £5.50



Wall Shields
Hand Painted £20



Bow Tie
silk £14



Ties
polyester £6



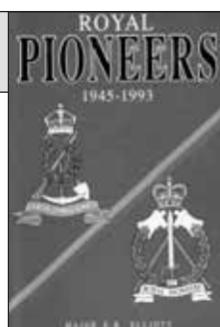
Blazer Badge
silk & wire £7



Blazer Buttons
gilt on brass, engraved,
6 small and 6 large £22



Seasons Greetings Cards
x10 £2.50



SPECIAL OFFER "Royal Pioneers 1945-1993" by Major Bill Elliott

The Post-War History of the Corps was written by our honorary treasurer, Major Bill Elliott, who generously donated his work and rights entirely for the Association's benefit. It was published by Images, Malvern in May 1993 and is on sale in the book shops at £24. Callers to 51 St George's Drive or the Northampton Branch may now buy this book at the reduced price of £10.

To order the book from here, please send a cheque for £14 which includes postage.

"A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps 1939-45" by Major E H Rhodes Wood

This book, long out of print, is now available on CD-Rom at a cost of £10 (plus £1 p&p) from HQ RPC Association.



Every year, the remains of some 20 Commonwealth servicemen who died in one of the two World Wars are found, a sombre reminder of the human costs of these conflicts. Sadly, it is only rarely that identification is possible, thus bringing an end to many years of uncertainty for the families concerned.

In Feb 2003, whilst evacuating the site of a housing development near Broekhuizen in the Netherlands, workmen discovered human remains together with regimental insignia and other artefacts. The case was handed to the authorities for investigation. With the Dutch Army Recovery Team, the British Embassy in The Hague and the Ministry of Defence all working together, the remains were identified as those of CSM Evan Tom Davies, of the 3rd Bn Monmouthshire Regiment, who died on 30 Nov 44 when his regiment attacked German units defending the village. Although the attack had been successful, the battalion lost half its strength.

300 people attended the funeral on 9 Jun 04 at the cemetery in nearby Venray, among them members of Evan's family, though his widow was herself too frail to attend. Evan was buried with full military honours and is reunited with his comrades, including his brother-in-law, Pte Leslie Bindon, who is also buried in this cemetery; a poignant reminder of just one family's loss in war.

Some of the documents used to assist the Ministry of Defence in such cases are stored in the Commission's archive, which includes original graves registration reports, details provided by next of kin and information relating to headstone and memorial inscriptions. As this is very much a working archive, the documents are used and handled every day and deterioration is inevitable.

Aware of our obligation to conserve this valuable trove, the Commission has embarked upon a project to scan the 3,500,000 documents over the next 5 years. Electronic images will make access to information easier and ensure that these valuable documents are preserved for posterity. After a comprehensive tendering process, the £1.6 million contract was awarded to The Stationery Office (TSO). By preserving such historic documents, the Commission's eye is on the future. This is certainly the case where education is concerned. Historically, a pro-active approach to education has not been a core activity of ours but it is now recognised that informing and engaging a new audience of young people is essential to perpetuate the Commission's work.

Last year's annual report touched briefly upon this issue, since when a great deal of progress has been made. After engaging consultants and specialists, the first element of the Commission's education programme, a CD ROM for Remembrance called One Boy, was produced and mailed to more than 5,000 of the UK's secondary schools.

Designed as a 10 minute Remembrance assembly presentation, with classroom extension activities aimed at secondary and upper primary school children, One Boy tells the story of Horace Iles who, at the age of 14, enlisted in the Leeds Pals and went to war. Horace and his sister Florrie wrote to each other often and on 9 Jul 16, she sent a letter to her young brother at the front begging him to tell the truth about his age and come home. But Horace never received the letter; he was already dead, killed in the first few minutes of the Battle of the Somme, on 1 July, at the age of just 16.

Horace's tragic story made an immediate impact with a huge number of students, helping them to a better understanding of the human cost of conflict - something which the Great Wars huge casualties fail to convey - and the importance of remembrance. In a perhaps surprising partnership, the Commission enlisted the help of the rock band Motorhead, who kindly supplied some music for the CD at no charge. One head teacher wrote to say how One Boy had captivated over 800 of his students, who sat attentively for the full ten minute presentation - in his words, "a rare event"!

One Boy is just the first element in a much broader education initiative. A new website was launched in Autumn 2004 as a micro-site of the Commission's main web address at www.cwgc.org. Titled Remember me - Echoes from the lost generations, this multi-unit resource draws on the Commission's work to deliver study programmes across the curriculum.

In addition to its own efforts, the Commission has entered into a number of partnerships with organisations that have similar goals in education. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence Veterans Agency, the Commission has joined the Imperial War Museum, The Royal British Legion, Department for Education and Skills and the main Service museums to promote the contribution that veterans have made to society.

This manifested itself in a number of schemes funded by the UK lottery, the most relevant to us being the Their Past, Your Future element of the programme. The scheme, which will run up to the end of 2005 and encompasses most of the major anniversaries that mark the end of the Second World War, aims to offer opportunities for school children to participate in commemorative events, alongside veterans, both in the UK and overseas. The first part of the programme focused on D-Day, which was called D-Day and Beyond which was very successful.

Our commitment to education is genuine and for the long term. The future will see the development of additional material and the forging of new partnerships. As the education programmes develop, the Commission will determine how best to resource and support this growing sector of our work. ■



Following its inauguration and move to small offices at 20 Grosvenor Place, the ABF was quick off the mark to meet its commitments. In the first year (8 months to 31 Mar 1945) the balance sheet showed £1.6m (£30m in today's money) and overheads were an economical £1,608-2s-10d. In the first full year £150k in grants were made to charities and Regiments/Corps - this would equate to about £4m today.

It was decided at that time "to regard the estimated Capital of the Fund as expendable over the period of the next 25 years and to regard the interest accruing from the invested Capital during these 25 years as the foundation of a Fund to be maintained in perpetuity for the benefit of the future generations of the Army".

As at 31 March 1954 the value of the Fund stood at £3,683,671 (about £50m in today's money). However, expenditure was exceeding income by the ratio of more than 2 to 1. Indeed the annual average deficit of expenditure over income for the 6 years 1953 to 1958 inclusive was £280,000 (£6.64m today). Putting it another way the loss of capital to meet such expenditure over the 6-year period was the equivalent of £20m today (close to the value of the present ABF accumulated unrestricted funds!). Something had to be done to put a break on this expenditure and a Committee chaired by Lieutenant General Sir Euan Miller was set up in 1958 to review the General Financial and Policies of the ABF. The report by the Committee was presented to the Control Board at their meeting on 15 January 1959 who, after "a prolonged and exhaustive discussion on the points raised in the Miller report", decided:

That the Fund was required till the end of the 20th century and during the period until then there would be no time when the Fund would be more particularly required than at any other.

That the Fund should adopt a policy of conserving its Capital and living on the income which would accrue therefrom annually together with any additional amounts which might become available from other resources.

To agree that the considerable reductions in grants, which will be inevitable, should be effected beginning in the year 1959/60 and that an annual expenditure of £150,000 (£3.75m today) be reached by 1962/63 as a rational basis for planning.

There then followed a period of retrenchment and reorganisation, which took another 3 years to complete. Looking back, had the Trustees not taken such draconian action, by 1971 the Fund would have expended all its capital and ceased to operate! However, in the late 1960s the Fund was able to expand its support to the Regiments and Corps by introducing the Individual Major Rehabilitation Grant (MRG) - now called the Individual Benevolent Grant (IBG). It also introduced children's bursaries, supplementary allowances for the elderly, holiday schemes and the Assisted House Purchase Scheme.

In addition the Fund continued its commitment on behalf of all the Regiments and Corps by giving regular grants to National Service Charities. The ABF was accepted as the central focus of benevolence in the Army. Such bipartite benevolence has continued with little change in policy ever since.

However, the benevolent "workload" of the three Services was proportionate to the number of survivors from operations as far back as the South African War. In 1963 the number of Army veterans was about 5 million whereas the equivalent figures for the Royal Navy was 1.5 million and the RAF 1 million. The salient fact emerged that although the Army's benevolent "workload" was more than 3 times that of the Royal Navy and 5 times that of the RAF, it was not able to distribute as much as the other two Service Benevolent Funds. In 1963 the average case grant in the Army was £6, whilst in the RAF it was £45. In 1963 75% of the work of the National Service Charities was for soldiers and their dependants - such a percentage has only dropped slightly since.



ARMY BENEVOLENCE STATISTICS

(As at 31 March 2003)

1. Number of cases handled by the ABF has dropped 40% in the past 5 years (1997/98 was the peak year for the Fund).
2. Number of cases handled by Regts & Corps has dropped by 20% in the past 6 years (1996/97 was the peak year).
3. Number of Individual Benevolent Grants (IBGs) from the ABF have decreased by 67% in the past 5 years. However, the number is still higher than 10 years ago.
4. Total expenditure of grants from the ABF has decreased by 25% in the past 5 years (£5.2m to £3.9m).
5. Total expenditure by Regts & Corps (individuals) has increased by 25% in the past 5 years (£4.8m to £6.1m).
6. Average amount per case of Regts & Corps has increased by 45% in 5 years (now £350).
7. Average amount per ABF case has increased by 35% in 5 years (now £675).
8. TRBL has doubled its Direct Charitable Expenditure in 5 years (Quadrupled in 10 years).
9. Over the past 30 years the ex-Service population has nearly halved (from 8.8m to 4.7m). This figure will halve again over the next 15 years (from 4.7m to 2.3m).
10. There are more former National Servicemen than former WW2 servicemen. However, currently the ratio of case is about 1 to 4 (NS to WW2).



Sixty years ago in 1945, the war in Europe ceased when Germany surrendered unconditionally to the Allies and six years of tyranny came to an end. Early in 1945, the real story of the Nazi occupation began to reveal the true horrors of war as Allied troops entered Bergen-Belsen and freed about 30,000 remaining victims. Dachau, another death camp, was freed by American GI's who were enraged by what they saw and shot remaining SS guards in sheer anger. The frustrations of war were finally realised when news confirmed the death of Eva Braun and Adolf Hitler, who shot himself in a Berlin bunker. It was all over in Europe but still a struggle for many British and Allied troops in the Far East.

The war in Germany is at an end. At 3pm on Tuesday 8 May 1945, Mr Churchill addressed the world from 10 Downing Street, followed by an official declaration to the House of Commons pronouncing an end to the hostilities in Europe. Crowds had gathered all day awaiting the historic news and the streets of the nation's capital fell silent as the Prime Minister's words echoed through the afternoon air. "Finally almost the whole world was combined against the evil-doers who are now prostrate before us.. but let us not forget that Japan, with all her treachery and greed, remains unsubdued and her detestable cruelties call for justice and retribution."

Churchill later appeared on the balcony of Buckingham Palace to a mass of people singing "Land of Hope and Glory". He added, "In all our long history we have never seen a greater day than this." King George VI gave an official

address at 9pm to Britain and the Empire declaring that the war in Europe was now over. This news had been expected the previous day but the statement had to be co-ordinated with Washington and Moscow for an agreed announcement. It was rumoured that Moscow had requested the delay due to formalities connected with Germany's surrender.

In Britain, people were ecstatic with excitement. They waved flags, blew whistles, sang and danced in the street. Throughout the nation, street parties and gaiety replaced the dark side of confinement, black-outs and a country under siege. The night air was alight with searchlight beams and a series of bonfires were lit around the capital to the sound of sirens. It was a day to rejoice and remember. It was almost over, as men started to return and civilian life struggled to get back to normal. At least it was the start.

The German surrender had been unconditional. An instrument of surrender was initially signed by five senior ranking German Officers in the presence of Field Marshal Montgomery at Luneburg Heath on 4 May 1945. During the early hours in Rheims on 7 May at School House which was General Eisenhower's Headquarters, General Alfred Jodl of the German High Command, signed the surrender of all forces on land, sea and air. In a radio message given by Count Schwerin von Krosigk to the German people, he announced that after an heroic fight. Germany had succumbed to the overwhelming odds of her enemies. "To continue the war would only mean senseless bloodshed and futile

disintegration. The Government, which has feeling for the future of its nation, was compelled on the collapse of all physical and material forces to demand of the enemy cessation of all hostilities." General Alfred Jodl added that the German army had achieved and suffered more than perhaps any other people in the world and hoped that the victor would treat them with generosity. The words gave little comfort to the millions killed at the hands of the Nazis, particularly those caught in the holocaust. Peace, however, came to pass but the memories live on, such is the high price paid for life and freedom. ■



"In all our long history we have never seen a greater day than this."

Winston Churchill





Maj Pat Fleming talks to HM The Queen at the Field of Remembrance



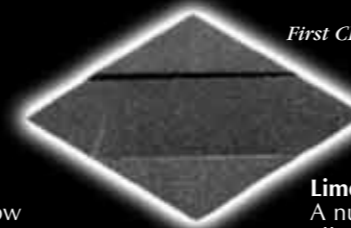
The Corps Plot at the Field of Remembrance

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IN LOVING MEMORY
JAMES PATRICK SCULLY GC
THINKING OF YOU ALWAYS
LOVE FROM
YOUR CHILDREN

The Pioneer Corps *during* World War II



First CDN Army

In September 1939, a large number of infantry and cavalry reservists were formed into Works Labour Companies.

On 17th October 1939, the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps (AMPC) was formed from these Labour Companies and a Labour Directorate was created to control labour matters within the British Expeditionary Force in France.

On 22nd November 1940, the cumbersome and greatly disliked title, Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps, was changed to Pioneer Corps at the request of the first Colonel Commandant, Field Marshall Lord Milne. Recruitment of UK Pioneers followed established lines. Pioneer officers were sent abroad to open Depots for recruitment in East and West Africa, Swaziland, Basutoland, Bechuanaland, Mauritius and India. After formation into companies, many of these men were despatched to the Pioneer Corps Depot at Quassasin, Egypt, which at one time held 23,000 Pioneers.

Pioneers performed a very wide variety of tasks in the UK and in every theatre of war. Companies established with Beach Groups took part in the assaults in North Africa, Sicily, Italy and North-West Europe. (Our February 2004 Newsletter described the work at Normandy on D Day). Strategic and tactical smoke screens were laid by Pioneers who supplied the smoke cover for the crossing of the Rhine.

At most operational ports and railheads, Pioneers were responsible for all non-technical labour. So skilled did they become, that they were often able to takeover technical tasks without supervision. One Mauritian company in Italy, together with its officers, was transferred to the Royal Engineers as a Docks Operating Company. Companies were trained to fight and took their places in the line as infantry in Tunisia.

Less spectacular, but nevertheless essential, were the Lines of Communication and Base tasks performed overseas and in the UK. Millions of tons of stores were handled for the Services at all stages of transit. Pioneers became

expert in loading and unloading railway wagons and motor transport.

The RAF relied on Pioneers for much of their labour and companies worked with Maintenance Units of the Desert Air Force from El Alamein to Italy. Similarly, but to a less extent, the Royal Navy called for the aid of Pioneers at operational ports. Both Services received their civilian labour overseas from Pioneer and Civil Labour Units (PCLUs). PCLUs recruited civilians as close to the fighting as possible, so relieving the strain on the Military Pioneer. PCLUs landed at Salerno and Anzio. These units were particularly successful in recruiting skilled artisans and clerks for RE, REME and Ordnance units, as well as a very large number of unskilled workers.

It was an enormous, worldwide commitment which may be fairly judged from the fact that in 1945 the Pioneer Corps included 12,000 officers and controlled the following number of men:

UK Pioneers	166,000
Indian, E and W African, Palestinian, Syrian, Mauritian, Basuto, Swazi, Bechuana, Maltese, Cypriot, Ceylonese, Seychellois, Rodrigue and Arab Pioneers	330,000
Civilian labour officered and staffed by the Pioneer Corps	1,074,000
POW labour officered and staffed by the Pioneer Corps	173,000
TOTAL =	1,743,000

CIVILIAN TASKS

Although the loan of Pioneers for civilian tasks was confined at all times to tasks of urgent national importance and the minimum number of men was supplied for carrying out each task in the shortest time, a daily average of 877 men employed was recorded during 1942 and this figure had risen to 1202 men daily employed during 1943.

Examples of these tasks are:

Assistance to GPO

Parties of troops were called upon annually (1941, 42 and 43) to assist the GPO with the clearance of Xmas postal traffic.

Central Electricity Board

The project was known as the war time reinforcement of the electricity grid system and the work consisted of excavating for pylon bases, erecting pylons and assisting overhead linesmen. The system was to cover a total

distance of 192 miles from Watford-Oxford-Gloucester to Ebbw Vale, pylons being spaced 200 yds apart.

London Midland & Scottish and Great Railway Companies

On 17 Sep 41 the first loans of Pioneer Corps personnel were made to Railway Companies. Men were supplied from 12 Trg Centre, Birmingham for unloading trucks of coal at Shrewsbury and Oswestry and from Western Command resources at Leamington and Worcester. Thereafter assistance to the Railway Companies became almost a constant demand and there were very few periods when numbers of Pioneers were not engaged on such tasks.

Satellite Petrol Tin Factories

Pioneers were loaned to assist with the construction of these plants at Bowling, Ardrossan, Worcester, Stourport and Gloucester. They had to construct and earth over six 4,000 ton petrol storage tanks at each site.

Ministry of Supply, Tamworth

Initially a working party of 24 men was supplied from 12 Trg Centre, this was increased to 52 men and then to 4 Sections. The task involved the emptying of trucks of shell and cartridge salvage material from Home Commands. Salvage handled during 1943 amounted to 31,900 tons (612 tons per week averaging 7 and a half tons per man per week or 3 and a quarter cwt per hour). In 1944 the Pioneers were replaced by Italian POW but this experiment failed with the probable infringement of the Geneva Convention and Pioneer returned. The Pioneers were finally replaced by 'Co-operator' Italian POW on 11 Jun 44.

London Midland & Scottish Railway Company and Ministry of War Transport

The task was the quadrupling of the LMS Railway main line from Gloucester to Cheltenham. 140 Pioneers of 251 (Alien) Company were loaned until they were replaced by recruited Irish civilian labour. In 1942 following an epidemic of sickness amongst engine drivers and firemen, 405 Pioneers from 6 & 12 Trg Centres and 54 from London District, Eastern and Southern Command were loaned to assist at various stations. The men were generally employed as railway firemen's relief parties, loading locomotive coal from stocks to trucks, but other jobs such as blowing tubes, clearing engine ash boxes, ash pits and loading heavy material for engine repair shops were also complied with.

Benson Aerodrome

Three sections were specially formed and ported to 273 Coy for the construction of a new length of road and the widening of an existing stretch between Henley and Oxford. The task was of great urgency and linked up with the lengthening of a runway (for the use of heavier types of aircraft) at Benson Aerodrome. >

Limestone Quarrying

A number of Pioneers were allocated temporarily from fire watching duties to limestone quarrying on 3 Oct 42. The quarries concerned were in the Derbyshire, S Wales and Gloucestershire area and by 4 Mar 43 a total of 528 men were so employed; these personnel were to be withdrawn when replaced by civilians. The numbers decreased gradually until 5 Nov 43 when the final party was withdrawn.

Wolfram Mining

When overseas supplies of Wolfram had been cut off (Wolfram being a vital raw material which is used for tipping tools, especially armour piercing ammunition for tank busters) it became necessary to mine greater quantities in the UK. Pioneers (all ex miners) were loaned from 1 (Spanish) Company to assist with this important task.

Milk Processing

Owing to an unexpected surplus of liquid milk supplies during Apr 43 large quantities were allocated to Dairy Companies for processing (into condensed form), Pioneers were authorised to assist with general labouring tasks, i.e. handling the milk required for processing.

Assistance to Docks

During the period Jul 43 to Mar 44 varying large numbers were loaned to assist in handling large quantities of traffic at Docks. The ports concerned and the maximum number of Pioneer Corps personnel made available were as follows:

Hull	500 men
Leith	230 men
S Wales ports	500 men
Glasgow	104 men
Liverpool & Manchester	300 men
Southampton	200 men

Pioneers were also loaned to port authorities during dock labour disputes but employed in place of civilian workers solely for purposes essential to the conduct of military operations or for performing services vital to the life of the community.

Labour Disputes Other Than Docks

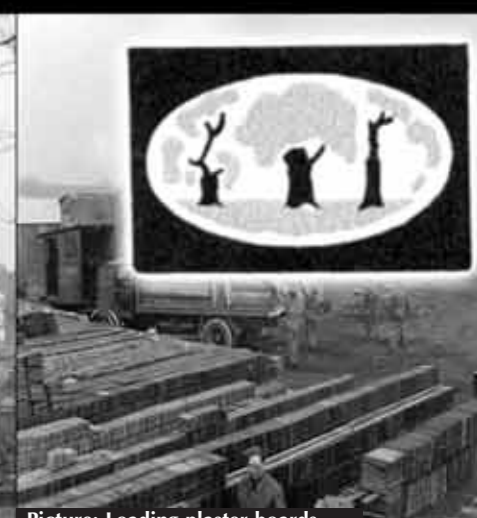
During the South Wales and Derbyshire coal strikes in 1944 Pioneers were loaned to GWR and LNE Rly Coys to handle emergency stocks of railway coal. Pioneers were supplied to Manchester Gas Works twice in 1944 and once in 1945 following a labour dispute. Coal Bagging. In January and again in November 1945 Pioneers were employed in the distribution of household coal in London District due to the shortage of labour. They were employed on coal bagging and delivery.

Dock Strikes

Also during the period of the dock strikes in Oct and Nov 45, the Pioneer Corps supplied personnel. ■



Picture: Bomb damage repairs



Picture: Loading plaster boards



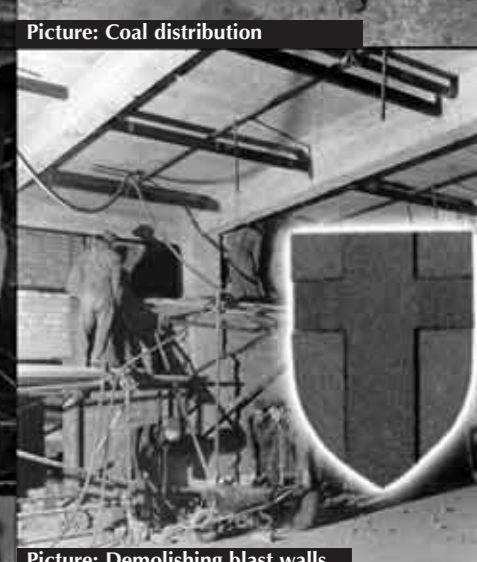
Picture: Loading plaster boards



Picture: Coal distribution



Picture: Cutting steel support girders



Picture: Demolishing blast walls



Picture: Bomb damage repairs



Picture: Bomb damage repairs

Second Army



Beach G.P.S



30 Corps



Netherlands District

Berlin District



L of C Troops

Airborne Troops

Anyone visiting Italy and standing a few miles south of Salerno would be gazing at one of the loveliest sights in the world as the waters of the Tyrrhenian Sea rolled softly against the sunburnt shore. However, if he had been standing on that shore on 9 Sep 43 he would have been gazing at over 400 ships of various sizes and classes and the beginning of my GULF OF HELL...

175 Coy Pioneer Corps had been bivouacking on the beach of Bizerte since our campaign in North Africa had ended in May 43. The sun shone all day and the temperature was 30-35C and we had to take care we did not get sunburnt as this was a chargeable offence if it caused you to miss a parade. We could go swimming in our 'stand-down' time as we were here as 'guests' of His Majesty's Government. Most of the day was spent on keep fit classes or marches and lectures of various kinds. As we were lucky to have some talent in the Coy we were able to arrange our own concerts as Cpls Sullivan and Tommy Jones were good singers and guitar players with a magical touch. However, it was not a holiday camp, as at the end of Jul 43 scenes and beach landings became the order of the day. We were issued with the insignia of Combined Operations and we then realised the other troops in training were Commandos and Royal Marines, and we began to get worried as up to now we had been support troops for the infantry units. At the end of Aug the beach was crowded with troops as we were all called on parade to hear our battle

orders and to be told we were to undertake a beach landing at Salerno in Italy on 9 Sep and was code named AVALANCHE. Security was 100% and with the 'Red Caps' in full view no-one was allowed to visit the nearby towns or villages. We wrote our final letters or made out our wills and handed them into our HQ Cpl Ron Goddard who incidentally lived in Leicester, and he would arrange for their safe keeping or dispatch.

On 5 Sep we were issued with our ammunition and 48-hour food pack and trenching tools. Transport took us to the harbour of Bizerte and we boarded our troop carrier and finally set off for Salerno. The sea was quite calm, but as we headed out into the 'Meddy' it commenced to be very rough and most of the troops were beginning to be seasick. Other convoys had sailed from Tripoli and Palermo all to rendezvous in the Bay of Salerno at the appointed time. As evening drew near we docked in Palermo in Sicily for the night, but as the port was full of LST-LCI and DUKW ships our troopship anchored off-shore and we used scrambling nets and rope ladders to clamber down into the smaller ships that would take us ashore. One of our officers had asked his batman to bring his bedroll ashore with him. Unfortunately this item found its way into the sea with the help of a few of his mates and was never recovered. No other officer requested our help, I wonder why? We stayed in a school and had a hot meal and a doze for a few hours. However, in no time we were

mustered and proceeded to clamber back aboard our ship and commenced our final journey to Salerno. Our flagship was USS ANCON where all future planning was made and it was then we heard from our OC, Maj Hubbard, that our amphibious landing point was to be Red Beach Uncle and much to our delight the Royal Marines and Commandos would land at a different beach near Majori. We were with 46th Div and would be landing with the 3rd wave of troops. At 1930 hrs 7 Sep 43, 8 hrs away from the first landings, we were told that the Italian Government had surrendered its Armed Forces.

We now knew that we would be facing German troops and not Italians. As if to verify this, the sky turned crimson and we were ordered to Battle stations as the Luftwaffe was attacking our convoy. Flares dropped from the planes were lighting up the sky. Navy guns, Oerlikons and even our Bren guns opened up firing desperately at the bombers. Bombs were dropping all around and as the ships were being machine-gunned we were ordered down below as the Royal Navy gunners took over the defence of the convoy. It was like being locked in a coffin. The raid lasted for an hour and as we waited intensely in the darkness we heard only one ship had been hit and sunk.

At 2300 hrs all was quiet except for the low throbbing of the engines of the assault ships as they cruised around searching for their starting positions. There were 30,000 British troops and >

28,000 Americans all awaiting the signal to go into action. Our thoughts were all for what was lying ahead and we were nervous and silent wondering if it would be a repeat of our invasion of North Africa at Algiers. Would we be met by bursts of machine gun fire or shells from the German batteries hidden in the hills? Would flares make us standing targets? Each man with his own thoughts crouched down doing the launches awaiting our next orders. Our Royal Navy coxswain had been given his orders to land us on Red Beach Uncle and the guns of the Royal Navy would provide covering fire. The Americans would be landing on their beaches quietly as they reckoned it would be safer.

We shook hands with each other and made the usual jokes, as we were no longer afraid, only tense. Our LCI's were lowered over the side of the ship and we scrambled down the nets. The Coxswain spoke to us to keep our heads down as he manoeuvred the craft to its new position and commenced circling around. As he spoke we realised he was an American and not our Royal Navy. Looking towards the beaches we could see the Germans had assembled their artillery, tanks and mortars in a semi-circle covering the coast and a concentration of heavy AA guns were stationed at Salerno and Battapaglia. We were told the beaches had been hastily mined and barbed wire obstacles had been erected while machine guns were aimed to cover the landing spots. The strip of coast for the invasion was 36 miles long from Maiora, west of Salerno where the British Commandos and Royal Marines would land to Paestrom and Agropoli, where the Americans would land.

The Germans commenced their bombardment on our ships and we immediately dispersed and scattered to a safer place. However, we heard a couple of the LCI's had been hit and sunk. The Royal Navy guns replied and their shells were soon whistling over our heads to land, we hoped, on the German batteries. Our small fleet of LCI's started to gather as it was now 0525 hrs and in another 3 hrs we would be ready to land. Our first wave of Hampshire Infantry and Pioneers had already landed and we could see the flares illuminating the beaches as the men were squirming through the barbed wire and around the mines.

Suddenly we heard a loud speaker voice shouting 'Come on in, and give yourselves up, you are fully covered'. We could see and hear the carnage that was taking place. However, it was soon our turn as the 3rd wave of troops to head towards the beach and we heard the shells of the enemy 88's opening up in the hills and the shells bursting on the landing area that we would soon be occupying. The second wave of troops had apparently landed and their RV was the railway line after passing through the vineyards. The rocket ships were firing over our heads, as our Sgt 'Jack' Edwards said "Follow the tracers and forget the plan". The casualties were mounting on the beach as we could see bodies and men crawling to reach a safe place or a medical unit.

In 10 minutes it would be our turn, when suddenly our crafts veered to the right and ran parallel to the beach and we wondered if the coxswain had received new orders. Soon, however, we turned towards shore and our ramp was let down and we rushed ashore. Making

contact we were informed we were on the wrong beach as the American coxswain would not land on Red Beach Uncle as it was being heavily shelled. He then turned his craft around and headed to the open sea, leaving the wounded behind on the shore, maybe his action did save our lives, who will know?

As we were 2 miles away from our nominated beach the OC decided that the best thing we could do was to clear the debris off the beach to enable the oncoming assault ships to lower their ramps. The beach was littered with boxes of ammunition, crates of medical supplies and various other logistics. The Pioneer Companies who had previously landed there had suffered badly so we were needed to move the wounded and the dead further up the beach until the medics could attend to them. We toiled for the next 4-5 hrs helping the REs to lay down matting on the beach to enable the wheeled vehicles a clear way on landing.

The conditions were appalling and many soldiers were hit by the German crossfire and shelling. We were glad when our OC received a message for us to move inland. We advanced about 400 yards inland and took cover in the ditches which fortunately were not mined. While we had been doing our bit on the beach one of our Lts, Lt Hope, had 'borrowed' a bicycle and had ridden along the coast road for a couple of miles. He reported to our OC that the way was clear and with caution we could proceed to our designated landing, Red Uncle. A roll call revealed we had been lucky as we had only had 5 killed and 13 slightly wounded. Our OC held a consultation >

Salerno

by G D Pringle

(a veteran who took part in the invasion of North Africa (1st Army),
In Italy (5th Army) and D Day in Normandy (2nd Army))

*"The most bitter
and hard fought
battle was the 5
days at Salerno..."*

THEIR NAME LIVETH
FOR EVERMORE

*"How we survived I
will never know,
hungry, tired and
dirty, but still full
of Pioneer spirit as
everyman knew it
was do or die"*





and it was decided we would proceed along the road in platoon order, forming two lines, one each side of the road.

The final words from CSM Maskell were "an alert soldier is a live soldier", and we scrambled out of the ditches and made our way towards Salerno. We eventually reached our RV to be met by the beach master, Brig Mike O'Daniel, who welcomed us with some "friendly" army words, which I added to my Army Vocabulary. We were ordered to dump our kit by a low wall and make our way to the beach and assist in clearing more debris and lighten the incoming craft of their loads and logistics. Some of the Company were arranging a dumping area in the vineyard and were able to hear how the invasion was progressing and it was not good news. The bridge head was holding, but many targets had not been reached and fierce fighting was taking place all around.

We spent the next day on the beach assisting other Pioneer Companies to carry out what was required by us to maintain the full flow of logistics from the invasion ships. I don't think the Germans were quite happy as they kept interrupting us with volleys of shots and shells. On 11 Sep more reinforcements landed and advanced up the beach to the front line which we were told was only 2 to 3 miles away, and the Germans were consolidating their forces for a big push against our forces. That night we were ordered down to the beach in parties of 2 sections (60 men) and only to work for 2 hours at a time. The reason for this was we were all tired and hungry and needed a rest and time to cook a meal from the contents of the compo boxes. We also heard that the Americans on a nearby beach were baking bread in an oven they had carried ashore.

Working on the beach at night was comparatively more peaceful than working during the day with only the methodical salvo of shells landing at intervals. The next night we thought would be similar, but CSM Maskell was quietly rousing us up and we were told to collect ammunition and to follow him. Apart from 5 Sections, who were beach parties, the rest of us crept forward using whatever cover we could find. We were then told the Fusiliers and Ox and Bucks were fighting desperately to hold their positions to prevent a breakthrough on the beach.

There was apparently a 5 mile gap between the British and American forces and we were

committed to a cordon defence as we tried to plug this gap. The Germans had great advantage as they held the high hills and it seemed that they were looking down our throats. As we reached our RV we were told that clerks-cooks-lorry drivers were also in position and we realised the situation must be desperate. We spent the day assisting the Infantry in preventing the Germans from crossing a canal or using the crossroads. Messages from our HQ gave us the impression that Op AVALANCHE had reached a stalemate. We could not advance due to the overwhelming German power of tanks and artillery and the Germans could not attack while we held our position on the bank of the canal and crossroads. The answer would lie in who got reinforcements first and I know that we prayed it would be us.

On 12 Sep Gen Mark Clark, Commander 5th Army, came ashore and established his HQ in a trailer in a wood near a tobacco factory. He had come with his staff to oversee the perilous situation and found the British troops were taking the brunt of the punishment. Panzer troops and units were determined not to allow our exhausted troops an opportunity to consolidate before they began their attack to drive us out of the beach head. Our reinforcements had managed to come ashore and the next couple of days comprised of attacks and counter attacks as land we gained was lost and casualties were mounting up by the hour. During a brief lull one night our Company was detailed to collect the wounded infantrymen and carry them to a deserted and shell-wrecked building near Pontecagnano for shelter and safety.

We were surprised when a few nuns appeared with their Mother Superior who told us to place the wounded in this room, as there were Germans soldiers in the other. The situation began to look more serious as the Americans began to withdraw on our right flank and they had abandoned Hill 424 due to overwhelming German attacks, as they moved down a defile and nearly divided out forces. We were then ordered to fill the gap, together with the remainder of our infantry and to ensure we closed the gap and "to yield not an inch".

We could see the Royal Navy vessels approaching the shore and soon they were blasting the German forces that were ahead of us. Buzz (rumours) began to spread that contingency measures were being made for a possible evacuation. (We heard later that if the German General Kessilring had massed his forces at this point he could have easily over-thrown us). In places, the beach head was now only 1 mile deep and we could see the hospital ship, the Newfoundland was blazing from stern to stern, no doubt the result of an attack by the Luftwaffe. Reinforcements were being rushed ashore to stop or assist any evacuation plans. What was to be our fate? To fight on until the infantry got away? Was our fate to be PoW or

death? God how I hated War!

The question we were all asking was "Where was the 8th Army?" They were supposed to advance up from the South of Italy about 150 miles and meet up with the 5th Army in a couple of days. We did not know it would be 10 days before the two armies met up due to the Germans employing successful delaying tactics.

So we had 10 days of sheer Hell. How we survived I will never know, hungry, tired and dirty, but still full of Pioneer spirit as every man knew it was do or die. Every remaining reserve including wounded soldiers who could fire a rifle were thrown into the front line and by nightfall the enemy had been held. All soldiers were exhausted after 6 days of uninterrupted struggle.

Casualties amongst most Pioneer Companies were high and 79 Company which had worked constantly on the beach had suffered greatly. Their OC, Maj Hossack, had recorded in his diary that his men had worked 15 hours a day and were almost at breaking point.

Finally on 18 Sep the 8th and 5th Armies were united and so they advanced on 2 fronts pushing the Germans back as British and American reinforcements landed together with ranks and artillery. The guns of the Royal Navy had a field day shelling the German Panzer divisions as they fled northwards to save capture. We all breathed a sigh of relief as the battle for Salerno was over, but it had been a costly battle.

	British & Commonwealth	American
Killed	53	1225
Wounded	1951	853
Missing	1561	589

We learnt later that a number of the missing returned to their units. So what do you think a glorious victory or a calculated risk?

■ Mr G D Pringle



Acts of Bravery

by members of the Pioneer Corps during World War II



PRIVATE JOE POLLAK - DCM London Gazette

Pte Joe Pollak was a multi-lingual Palestinian of Cypriot extraction. After escaping from a prisoner of war camp he made his way to Rome. Here he became a 'billeting officer' where he arranged accommodation in safe houses and food for other escapees. He was fluent in Italian and his physical appearance enabled him to pass himself off as one. A description of his work is contained in the book *Escape and Evasion - POW Breakouts in World War Two* by Ian Dear.

He was awarded the DCM in 1945 and his citation is as follows:

Name: Pollak, Joseph
Rank: Pte
Number: Pal 12872
Unit: 604 Coy
Theatre: PW Escape

Captured in GREECE on 29 Apr 41, Pte POLLAK escaped from CORINTH PW Camp about six weeks later. After spending two months in CORINTH he moved to ATHENS, where he was arrested by Germans on 14 Sep 41. For eight days he was imprisoned at AVEROFF, but with the help of two doctors he was transferred to the Public Hospital, from where he escaped. He returned to friends he had previously made at KALAMAKI, and remained with them until, in Dec 41, he took a party of 28 escapers to the island of ANTIPAROS. However all were captured on 14 Jan 42 and taken to SYROS. Transferred via RHODES to ITALY, he was ultimately imprisoned in Camp 78 (SULMONA).

He escaped again on 12 Sep 43 and owing to his knowledge of languages, including Italian and German, Pte POLLAK was employed by British officers in helping other PW in the district. During October he was sent with a message to Allied authorities but, failing to get through owing to German activity, returned to SULMONA and continued his former work there. In Dec he accompanied heads of SULMONA organisation to ROME, where he was employed as a runner.

On 5 Jan 44, Private POLLAK was arrested by Germans and taken via BUSSI to CIVITAQUANA. After many interrogations his captors recognised him as a PW and sent him to AQUILLA. On 3 Mar 44, he was entrained for GERMANY and, although his boots had been removed, he jumped from the moving train near AREZZO. Six days later he reached ROME where he recommenced his duties with the organisation. On 4 Jun 44, when the Allied entered ROME, he directed armed guards to vital points to prevent sabotage.



SGT A CANOVAS - MM London Gazette

This NCO volunteered for a mission to work with the French Resistance movement and was parachuted into Aude on 8th August 1944. He was of great assistance in organising local groups and leading operations against the enemy.

During the attack on Foix on the 19th August 1944, the Spanish marquis groups were held up by two German Machine Guns, situated on a bridge commanding the main entries into the town. A Major, Sergeant Canovas, and three Spanish Maquisards, armed with one Bren and Stens, forded the Ariege below Foix into the rear of the town where they engaged the German Garrison in fierce street fighting. Sergeant Canovas received a rifle bullet in the leg but continued to fight with exemplary courage. This attack forced the Germans to withdraw the machine guns from the bridge, thus permitting the main maquis forces to enter the town.

In subsequent operations on the 20th, 21st, and 22nd August, Sergeant Canovas continued to show great coolness and courage, and his devotion to duty was a source of inspiration to the French.



PTE R RAMOS - MM London Gazette

On the night 26/27th March 1945, Parachutist Ramos was a member of a party of mixed British parachutists and Italian partisans which attacked the Corps Commander's Villa in the headquarters of the German 51st Corps at Albinea, ten miles south of Reggio near Emilia.

During the very fierce fighting which ensued in the house, Ramos was always in the forefront, killing at least six German officers on the spiral staircase. In an attempt to ascend the staircase in the face of intense fire a British officer was seriously wounded. Ramos picked him up and carried him to the door, returning afterwards to the fight. When the party was ordered to withdraw and the villa had been set on fire, Ramos, with one other British parachutist carried this officer, who weighed thirteen stone, through heavy machine gun fire and an area live with angry Germans, six miles to a cottage. For the next two days they carried this wounded officer on a ladder through the plain to a safe house near Reggio, in spite of searching German troops who knew they were in the area.

Having ensured that this officer was safe and would be well looked after Ramos returned to his base in the mountains. It is considered that Ramos showed

remarkable courage both during and after the attack. His intelligence and initiative in a strange country thirty miles behind the enemy lines showed a devotion to duty worthy of the highest praise and resulted in preserving the life of a valuable British officer.



PTE M S KHOURI - MM London Gazette

This man was taken prisoner during the operations in Greece in the spring of 1941. Some time later he escaped from captivity and joined up with the local Greek guerrillas. During the time that the guerrilla bands were collecting to the rendezvous with Lt Col MYERS, Pte KHURI volunteered to join the demolition party detailed to destroy the GORGOPOTAMOS VIADUCT on the night 25/26 Nov 42. He showed great bravery and devotion to duty under fire.

BAR AWARDED London Gazette

In March 43, Brig MYERS reported that sabotage of the important ASOPOS Viaduct on the main railway line between SALONIKA and ATHENS, and approximately 12 miles South of LAMIA, presented a 'chancey' likelihood of success. This viaduct is an example of one of the triumphs of railway bridging engineering and is some 200 meters long. It spans a precipitous gorge whose bottom lies 320 ft below. The railway enters onto the viaduct at either end from a tunnel. Furthermore, the viaduct is on a slight curve, thus making repair extraordinarily difficult. The viaduct is of steel.

Brig MYERS was advised by GHQ, MEF that destruction of the viaduct was much to be desired, but the later it could take place the better.

Early in May, Brig MYERS reported that he considered destruction of the viaduct with the least loss of time was necessary as, not only was the guard being strengthened, but Italians had been replaced by Germans. Furthermore, workmen had started reinforcing the whole structure at its base with concrete. GHQ MEF replied that they agreed that early destruction was not only desirable, but would have important strategic results in the near future.

After a preliminary reconnaissance had been carried out by Lt STOTT, a party of eight, under command of Capt GORDON-CREED MC, which included Pte KHOURI, set out to attack the viaduct, from the village of MAVROLITHARION with 56 fathoms of rope and improvised ropes platted from parachute >



rigging lines. Owing to the weight of the stores being carried, they did not reach the beginning of the gorge until 22 May, and established a HQ at its head. Straight away STOTT led six men of the party down to the first waterfall where a dump was made, and then returned the same day to Gorge HQ. On 23 May, Capt GORDON-CREED and STOTT made a reconnaissance from the Northern cliff top, which enabled the whole party to reach the second waterfall with all their stores and explosives. On 24 May the whole party managed to reach a point midway between the second and third waterfall. Here they were stuck and further reconnaissance from the Northern cliff top was made on the 25th, with the result that STOTT and one other managed to reach the third waterfall on the 26th, but could get no further with the amount of rope then available. They

decided to give up the attempt until further rope and packs suitable for carrying on the head, so as to keep explosives etc, dry when walking through deep water, could be sent to them. It was feared also that it would be impossible to proceed further than the third waterfall without much more reconnaissance from both the North and South cliff tops. So far the party had not got within sight of the viaduct, although they had reached within two miles of it. They returned to MAVROLITHARION on 28 May and a few nights later the requisite stores were dropped to them from an aircraft.

On 12 Jun, the same party, less two of their number, but still including Pte KHOURI, set out once more for the gorge. Pte KHOURI played a major part in carrying explosives and their accessories, mostly on his head, through

water up to his neck and whilst climbing and descending precipitous cliffs.

Without his assistance, not only in carrying stores, but in helping others over difficult places, it is doubtful if the whole party would have reached the target in time or as quickly as they did. He was with the two Sapper officers the whole of the time whilst they were laying their charges, and he carried out their instructions to the letter. All this was done within a few yards of the German guard and post.

Pte KHOURI is strongly recommended for an award of a bar to the MM for his diligence, courage and willingness throughout the operation which resulted in the successful and complete demolition of this important viaduct. ■



Glenn Miller *by George Pringle, Bootle*

I had been serving in Europe since 8 Jun 44 and I had heard that troops were to be given a 48 hour leave pass. Thanks to the usual grapevine system I had also heard that the American troops had taken over some hotels in the Montmartro District of Paris and had arranged some entertainment for troops on leave. Armed with this information I badgered our CSM to make my pass out so I could spend my leave in Paris, I think he was glad to get rid of me as he did not object to my request. I made my way to Paris by hitch-hiking and eventually arrived at my destination and obtained a room at a hotel by presenting my pass.

I obtained a ticket for the next day to attend a Glen Miller concert on 16 Dec 44. I spent the rest of my day wandering

around the centre of Paris mesmerised by the sheer beauty of the buildings and how easy it was to obtain refreshments and meals. My ticket was for an early show at the theatre so after a quick snack at a roadside cafe I joined the throng of troops outside the theatre at 1130 hrs. The place was soon filled and we waited for the start of the show as I believe Glen Miller was an American favourite. Very soon the curtains opened and a member of the orchestra or maybe he was MC, stopped forward raising his arms to stop the clapping. He apologised as it was not the start of the show as there would be a delay due to unforeseen circumstances and asked us to be patient.

About 30 minutes later the same chap came forward and then told us the following news, "Maj Glen Miller had boarded a plane with two of his companions on a routine flight to Paris where his band was scheduled to play to the troops. He has not yet landed in France and we do not know where he could be. Meantime the band would begin the show while efforts were made to trace the whereabouts of the band leader."

There was murmurings amongst the American troops which soon subsided as music filled the air. At the interval we were told Maj Miller had not arrived at his destination, but no distress signal had been received and no wreckage of a plane had been sighted. In true entertainments tradition the band carried on with the show.

At the end of the performance the acting leader of the Band announced no further news had been received so we can only assume the worst had happened.

It was a cold and misty day over the English Channel and America had lost one of their most beloved and popular band leaders as Glen Miller rehearsed until every bar of every tune was perfect. The men of his band had no rivals for precision and blending of music. Maj Miller had volunteered for active service in 1941 following Pearl Harbour, however, he was persuaded that his music would be more valuable boosting the morale of the American troops so he played in the War Zones of the Pacific and Europe. ■

It was suggested by Mr Fred Downie that we hold a competition asking members to name individuals from an old photograph. We can, of course, recognise our patron, HRH The Duke of Gloucester but who are the others.

There will be a prize for the person who names the most people correctly, send the answers to HQ RPC Association and state where and when taken.



Competition

LOST TRAILS

The following are trying to re-establish contact with members. If no contact details are shown please contact through the Association

2 Scots brothers from Westmoors in 1961

Mr T Devlin is trying to trace 2 brothers who were stationed at Westmoors who later transferred to 2 Para and posted to Aden where 1 brother was wounded.
Contact telvin@tbaytel.net

Ed "Yank" Blundell

Is trying to contact Tommy Hulls, Stevie Bellis, Steve "H" Henderson, "Mac" McAllister, Ian "Diddy" Driver, "Tats" Faulkner, "Dinger" Bell and anyone else who remembers him.
Contact: www.brookwater.co.uk

Geof Dyson

Is trying to contact John "Whiskey" Haig and Dave Brown who served with 19 Bde Colchester (73/76) and 206 Coy (76/77).
Contact: did@supanet.com

Rob O'Hara

Is trying to contact Tony Walls who served with 28 Sig Regt 1981-84.
Contact: Rob.OHara@cwmsg.cwplc.com

Kevin Shipton, Jock Bohem and "Murf" (possibility Murphy)

All stationed in the Falklands shortly after the surrender and lived with the Smith family in Sparrowhawk House on Drury St (John and Ileen).

Any of their daughter says it would be great to hear how they are or even if they remember the Falklands.
Contact: anyamiggs@yahoo.co.uk



102 Coy RPC

Mr AG Jackson would like to contact anyone from this Company especially those shown in the photograph which was taken in 1947.



523 Coy RPC

Capt JS Coleman would like to contact anyone from this Company especially those shown in the photo taken outside Queniborough Camp, Syston, Leics. He is the one at the rear left.



806 Smoke Coy

Mr W Law would like to contact anyone from this Company especially those shown in the photograph. The photograph was taken in Hamburg in 1945.

OBITUARIES

It is with sadness and regret that we have to report the following deaths

Col GC Walker (Aged 76)	20 Sep 04	Birchington	Mr A Gorwood (Aged 83)	31 Oct 04	Wirral (Ex 115 Coy & Normandy Veteran - landed on D-Day)
Mr T Murphy (Aged 83)	25 Apr 04	Jarrow	Mr MJ Barry	22 Nov 04	Lincs (Normandy Veteran)
Mr JP Fitzgerald (Aged 57)	17 Jun 04	Dublin (Ex Cpl)	Mr WF Whitby (Aged 90)	14 Apr 04	New Zealand (Ex 175 Coy and Normandy Veteran)
Mr ANW Arnold (Aged 86)	2 Jun 04	London (Ex WO2 ORQMS) Joined Ass. 8 Nov 46	Mr T Swan	9 Dec 04	Glasgow
Mr JW Swain	2 Oct 04	Southampton (Ex 81 Coy AMPC & Normandy Veteran)	Mr J Pegler	7 Dec 04	Brighton
Mr RC Thomas	19 Oct 04	Banbury (Ex SSgt CQMS)	Mr T Dable (Aged 87)	31 Dec 04	Warwick (Ex Normandy Veteran)
Mr BM Gahagan	20 Oct 04	Burnley (Ex Cpl)	Mr LH Burgess (aged 83)	1 Jan 05	Southampton (Ex Normandy Veteran with 267 Coy, employed with Rhino Ferries)
Maj AE Robotham	15 May 04	Newcastle (Joined Ass. 1954)	Mr T Osborne (Aged 95)	27 Nov 04	Crowland, Lincs
Mr R Wrigley (Aged 47)	23 Nov 04	Huddersfield (Ex SSgt SQMS 518 Sqn)	Mr WE Morris (Aged 82)	11 Jan 05	Brecon
Mr T J Leigh	9 Nov 04	Royal Star & Garter Home (Ex Normandy Veteran)			
Mr JH McCormick	7 Nov 04	Barrow in Furness (Served 1940-46)			

OBITUARY - Colonel G C Walker MBE A wonderful Pioneer and a Life President of the 39/93 Club

All members who knew him will be very sorry to hear of the death on 19 September 2004 of Colonel G C (Gerry) Walker. He was a wonderful Pioneer and was the Life President of the 39/93 Club.

He will be missed for his old fashioned courtesy, his quaint mannerisms, amusing anecdotes, meticulous attention to detail and the interest and welfare of the men who had served under him. We extend our deepest sympathy to his widow Maggie.

Gerry joined the army in Feb 46 and was commissioned on 4 Feb 47. His 32 years commissioned service included serving in the Middle and Far East and 17 years in BAOR. His knowledge of the German language was coupled with his knowledge of German Labour Laws and Industrial Relations. His last appointment was Director of Labour at HQ BAOR where he was the Commander in Chief's representative with the BAOR Highest Level Works Council.

He retired on 31 Jul 79 to live in Devon but for the last six years resided in Kent.





THE ROYAL PIONEER CORPS ASSOCIATION

58th PAST AND PRESENT OFFICERS' DINNER - 15 OCTOBER 2004

