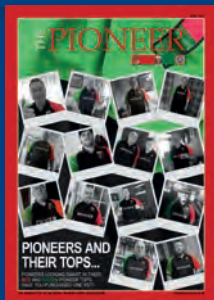


THE PIONEER



PIONEERS AND THEIR TOPS...

PIONEERS LOOKING SMART IN THEIR RED AND GREEN PIONEER TOPS. HAVE YOU PURCHASED ONE YET?



Front Cover

Pioneers sporting their new Pioneer tops.

Pictures: Supplied



Back Cover

Pioneers at Garden of Remembrance, Westminster.

Picture: Paul Brown

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The Royal Pioneer Corps Association

c/o Bicester Garrison
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EDITORIAL

IT IS now 14 years since I started work as Controller/Secretary of the RPC Association, how time flies when you are having fun! In that time I have moved office 4 times! Firstly from St George's Drive, London then to Building 35 in St David's Barracks, Bicester (the old Training Wing at the top of the square), then to Block 4 (in what was the TV room) and then to Building 13 (the bungalow behind the guardroom, which was the Headquarter building) and finally last September to St George's Barracks.

2016 was a good year for the Association with members meeting across the country and it is pleasing to report that the Northern Branch is expanding, if you would like details of this Branch please contact Mr John Hatfield.

The Northampton Branch hold quarterly meetings and organise some very good events through the hard work of the Branch Chairman Mr Bob Fox. The last event was a very successful Burns Night which was held in the Conservative Club, Northampton.

The Bicester Branch under the guidance of Major Billy Dilkes is about to hold its first large function - I hope this goes well.

The Nostalgia Group are holding their meet

at Scarborough this year, unfortunately once again it clashes with the Army v Navy Rugby match at Twickenham. I hope they all enjoy their visit to the sea-side. This year we managed to sell 153 tickets for the Army v Navy match, if all attending wear red and green we should be easily visible for those watching on television.

Unfortunately the membership active list is slightly down on last year as, once again, we had a large number of the October Newsletter returned "Gone Away". One was actually marked deceased in 2005! So, for the last 12 years, we have been sending 2 Newsletters each year to that address. Please inform us of your change of address and, if possible, the date you died!

This year will be the third year we will be holding the Reunion Weekend away from a military environment. We hope this will be the largest one to be held at Coventry, the outline programme is shown on page 10. It is intended to hold a raffle on the Friday evening, if you could donate a prize it will be appreciated. On the Saturday evening along with the first class entertainment a small auction will also be held, items for this would also be appreciated.

We have increased the items in the Corps

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PIONEER STREET
LONDON BOROUGH OF SOUTHWICK



STOP PRESS

■ New Veterans Gateway website can be found at:
www.veteransgateway.org.uk

STOP PRESS

■ Group "Out of Order" now booked for Sunday night Pnr Weekend – why not book a further night!

STOP PRESS

■ As we write this it is the day before the London Marathon and Pioneer Beaky (James Upfield) is running! We have just learn't that he has arrived at the start line before anyone else! We wish him well.



Shop, full details are shown on page 15. I notice Mick Micklethraite needs to buy a Pioneer tie as he is not wearing one (back page). Items may be purchased using Paypal, our account is: royalpioneer corps@gmail.com

New items include the new Pioneer Polo Shirt (as shown on the front cover), new Hoodie, new Rugby Top and new Association enamel badge.

Once again tickets for the RPC Association Derby Draw are included inside this Newsletter (unless you have indicated that you are unable to sell them), it would be appreciated if you would give this your fullest support.

If you can sell more tickets please do not hesitate to contact us. It is appreciated that some people no longer have cheque books, please note that payment can be made via paypal, our account is: royalpioneer corps@gmail.com

Or, for those who do not have a paypal account payment can be made by bank transfer, our account details are: Lloyds bank plc, sort code 30-90-77, account number 01206610

If you are buying tickets for yourself, instead of putting your full name and address on the counterfoils simply put the number which appears above your name on the envelope you

received the Newsletter.

Thank you to everyone who submitted a picture of themselves wearing one of the new Pioneer tops. As you have no doubt seen we have put some of the photographs that you have submitted onto the front page. We could not fit all of you on, but will publish more in later editions. For publishing purposes please supply a reasonable quality photograph.

Kineton Station will be holding a 75th Anniversary celebration during 20th to 23rd July 2017 and that there will be a Freedom Parade through Warwick on 20th July. Anybody who would like to attend is most welcome, please contact Major Rendall as DESWpnsDM-Ktn-21C@mod.uk

We hope you appreciate the varied articles contained in this edition, we are always looking for articles. Can you supply one? If so please send it to us (with photographs if possible), do not worry about grammar, we will edit it for you.

I am looking forward to seeing a lot of you at the Reunion Weekend, if you have not booked in yet please do so as soon as possible.

Norman Brown



Can you spot the mouse?

The winner of "Find the Cuneo Mouse" was Mr J E Raynor.

A prize will be on its way to him. It was on page 52 standing on the weapons magazine.

We only had a handful of correct answers this time, so I will make it easier for you in this issue.

Can you spot the Cuneo Mouse in this edition?

Terence Cuneo painted 'Sword Beach' which shows the activities of the pioneers who were among the first British troops to land on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day. Sword Beach was the codename of one of the five main landing beaches in Operation Neptune, the initial assault phase of Operation Overlord, the Allied invasion of Normandy on 6 June 1944.

Cuneo also painted himself into the painting and he can be seen with his bicycle and his easel on the beach.

Pioneers played an essential role on D-Day and suffered many casualties.

26 Pioneer Companies went ashore on 6th June 1944. By 1st

August 1944 there were over 35,500 pioneers in Normandy. D-Day + 79 there were 231 Coys and over 68,000 men.

In most of his paintings Cuneo hid a small mouse (sometimes lifelike, sometimes cartoon-like) which was his trademark and somewhere in this newsletter we have hid a Cuneo mouse and it's not the one on this page!

They can be difficult to detect, and many people enjoy scouring his paintings to find one.

Entries should be submitted (by letter, email or telephone) by 15th July 2017.

Correct entries will go into a hat and the first one pulled out will win a prize!

Good luck.

PLEASE SUPPORT THE DERBY DRAW
Tickets are enclosed with this newsletter



PAST EVENTS



■ ON 21st January 2017 Brigadier Charles B Telfer (formerly Royal Pioneer Corps) was charged with the murder of a defenceless Haggis. It is believed that the Haggis froze with fright at the sound of the pipes.

The murder was witness by 45 members of the Northampton Branch of the RPC Association who were attending a Burns Night at Northampton Conservative Club in Billing Road, Northampton.

It is also reported that the Brigadier's wife Mrs Sheila Telfer who was sitting next to her husband failed to intervene and watched as her husband repeatedly stabbed the Haggis with a knife he had previously hidden in his sock.

Following the repeated stabbing he then gorged out the intestines of the poor Haggis, he even rhymed Scottish poetry as he was doing the foul deed!

After being found guilty of the deed by all members present no punishment could be agreed, it is therefore left to you the reader of this article to submit suggested punishments which could be awarded at the Annual General Meeting of the Association which will be held at the Pioneer Reunion Weekend, Coventry from 30 Jun to 2 Jul 17. The most original punishment suggested will receive a prize!

The Burns Night proved a great success with a 3 course meal (including eating the poor Haggis), Rob Muir was the piper and his son played the side drum. James Upfield and Kelvin Smith did a splendid job raising £250 for the Branch funds through the raffle.

■ THE 39/93 Club met at Travelodge Hotel, Andover on 10th March 2017, members who arrived early decided to sample the beers at the Wetherspoon public house in Andover and all met up at the Chalkhill Blue public house (located opposite the hotel) for a chat before retiring back at the Hotel.

Saturday morning saw the AGM of the Club with the secretary, Mr Les Rowley, trying to take the minutes with everyone talking at once. After the short meeting members went their separate ways, some to visit Stonehenge (£16.50 admittance!!!) and others went shopping in Andover before meeting up again in the Wetherspools. We had intended to have a meal in the hotel but we had been warned because of difficulties in the kitchen they could only cook the meal one at a time! We therefore changed location to the Premier Inn opposite and 17 sat down for a meal with the "Working Pioneer" in the middle of the table.

Following the meal most went to the Andover British Legion Club for a further session of "Swapping War Stores".

If you would like to join the 39/93 Club on one of their reunions please contact Mr Les Rowley on 07955 237932.

■ ON the 28/29 October 2016, 20 years after the first one, 18 ex members of 144 gathered in Northampton for the second reunion, the reunion was for the original members, it included 16 of the original personnel who formed up in Bulford in 1979, which included all three platoon Sergeants

The weekend was a complete success, and we may only see each other once every 20 years but formed bonds which will last forever.

The Corps plot at Westminster

22 stood behind the Royal Pioneer Corps Association plot at Westminster Abbey on Thursday 10 November 2016 with two members, Mr Glen Lath and Mr Nat Chauhan, in front of the plot.



■ Mr Glen Lath and Mr Nat Chauhan meeting Prince Harry

Picture: Supplied

THE Royal Pioneer Corps Association plot at Westminster on Thursday 10th November 2016 had 22 standing behind. Mr Glen Lath and Mr Nat Chauhan were in front of the plot.

Both HRH Prince Harry and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh both stopped to speak to them.

It was nice, once again, to see two of Sgt Scully's daughters attend and stand with us. Tickets are required for this event and can be obtained through the RPC Association, why not join us this year.

Following the service most went to the The Lord Moon of The Mall in Whitehall for a chat, a curry and a catch up.

The Pioneer ladies and generation dinner night

The WOs' & SNCOs' Pioneer Reunion Club held a Ladies/Generation Dinner Night on Saturday 25 March 2017 at the WOs' & Sgts'Mess, Kineton Station.

THE WOs' & SNCOs' Pioneer Reunion Club held a Ladies/Generation Dinner Night on Saturday 25 March 2017 at the WOs' & Sgts'Mess, Kineton Station.

82 members (and guests) attended. WO1 (RSM) KN Orrell presided and speeches were made by Col D Clouston MBE (principal guest) and Mr Peter Thomas (Chairman of the Reunion Club). Our thanks go to WO2 D Frewein RLC (former Master Chef at 23 Regt) who organised the event and WO1 Rob Berton for supplying seating plan, name cards and the purchase of wines and gifts for the Ladies.

For those who could not attend the following is the foreword written by WO1 Orrell:

Sir, Ladies, Gentlemen and Fellow Club Members,

Welcome to the WOs' & Sgts' Pioneer Reunion Club Ladies/Generation Dinner night 2017. This is an excellent opportunity for us "The Pioneer" family to sit and break bread together in an environment befitting such an occasion which allows us to uphold our traditions.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our honoured guest Col D Clouston MBE and his wife Mrs K Clouston who are dining with us this evening.

I'm sure throughout the night you will make them feel at home in true Pioneer tradition.

As we move forward through these uncertain times, can I ask that we all reflect on what it means to be part of "The Pioneer" family and as a family how we ensure our future is embedded within our very own core strength?

The history books show that survival in any organisation means the ability to evolve with the times and remain current, if they do not they themselves become history.

It is fundamental that as a club and as an association this cohort takes on the responsibility to ensure "The Pioneer" family develops and improves. How we do this is very much open to discussion.

We are all busy people and sometimes life just gets in the way, however I'm certain that if we all dig deep we could all make "The Pioneer" family a healthier and more inclusive group to be part of. This is not a one man show; all of us sat here tonight have an obligation!

It is now time to enjoy each other's company, talk and laugh of our fond memories of each other and hopefully make some more. These events provide an

opportunity for us to acknowledge the support and patience of our families; for without them we probably wouldn't be where we are today. To the wives, husbands, partners and families; we thank you for the support you have given us (past, current and future) and I hope that you will enjoy the evening.

The dinner this evening has been organised by Capt Reggie Lane, WO1 Rob Berton, WO1 (RSM) Russ Clarke, Mr Norman Brown and their dedicated committee, complimented by WO2 Dan Fewins who has been working behind the scenes ensuring that his Mess and accommodation are ready for this evening. On behalf of us all, thank you for your hard work and dedication over the past few months to ensure we all have a pleasant and enjoyable evening, I'm sure it will be a great success.

I'm very proud and humbled to of been asked to be your Presiding Member for tonight, can I ask that you all enjoy the evening but be mindful that we are guests in someone else's home.

The following, again for those members who could not attend, is his speech:

I won't take too much of your time tonight as I'm fully aware of the bar timings!

Can I firstly say what an honor it is to have been asked to be your PM for tonight. I never thought I would ever get the opportunity to address my Pioneer family in such a formal way.

I've said how I feel about the future of the association and this prestigious club within my forward and I will not labour on the fact that we need to evolve to insure that we are more inclusive to all Pioneers regardless of what cap badge we wore.

Our common denominator is our colours and this is what we should be leaning into.

There are 16 Trades within the Corps, 17 if you include the lonely Railway man that is still kicking about.

Filling those Trades, there are 9203 soldiers of which there is a Delta within the Corp of 372 spread across all. And trying to ensure that the Corps is fulfilling all its commitments there are 24 Regiments and numerous specialised Sqns leading and managing those men and women.

Never in the history of the Corps has the Pioneer trade been so well represented but also been so vulnerable.

Please excuse rank;
Jordon RSM 7 Regt
Jowett RSM 11 EOD Regt

Burditt RSM 25 Regt
Wright RSM 27 Regt
Donaghue RSM 152 Regt
Orrell RSM 158 Regt Des 102 Bde SM
Clarke RSM 159 Regt
Samuel RSM 167 Regt
Moore RSM DST Leconfield
Avant RSM Headlycourt Des RSM Kineton
Alcorn RSM 2 ATR Pirbright Des 101 Bde SM
Ellis GSM Dekila Station
Beltcher-Marks GSM EPI Station
Barthram Des RSM Headly court

My point is that even though currently we are so well represented, all of the above names that I've read out are helping lead and manage those 9203 soldiers within the Corps and not the remaining 73 Regular Pioneers that are left.

This is and always has been a Unit/individuals responsibility.

I still have the emails dating back to 2014 exampling to all Pioneers from who was then the last RSM of 23 Pioneer Regt, what 3 choices there were for the remaining lucky few.

1. Leave and take Redundancy
2. Transfer in or out of the Corps
3. Stay in trade and etch your bets!

Some of those that selected the third choice are now feeling that they have been miss-managed and have been forgotten by the Corps, when this cannot be further from the truth.

Unfortunately over the past decade we have grown a culture of individuals believing that they should be promoted on their first shout and we are now suffering for that.

Col Clouston will speak on the future management of the Pioneer trade so I will not steal his thunder, but let me remind all serving Pioneers that before 2006 there were only 2 fixed RSM posts available for just under 700 Serving Pioneers which meant you had a 0.2% chance of ever becoming an RSM. Now the remaining 63 potential RSMs that are left have a 1.5% chance of fulfilling their potential.

There is also now a lot more opportunities to take E2 positions so the odds are even greater.

If you also take into consideration that only 1% of the British Army ever makes it to become an RSM, then we, as the remaining Pioneers are not in a bad place.

So regardless of what you think, feel or even heard, Pioneers within the Corps still have a Red & Green Future!

Thank you.



Marching with Dewsnap and also taking a photograph at the same time, is a lot harder than it looks...

Report: Paul Brown
Pictures: Paul Brown

FOR MANY years now I have photographed the Pioneers marching at the Cenotaph from many different vantage points along the route, from the press box, taking the salute from various members of the Royal family and even standing on a set of ladders amongst the huge crowds of people.

For 2016 I wanted to see if I could capture the Pioneers handing over the wreath and march at the same time!

This was easier said than done as in theory you are not allowed to take photographs whilst marching!

I practised taking photographs without looking through the viewfinder and setting up the camera, so I can basically point and

shoot. When practising this I initially ended up with most of my shots being of the sky!

I used the smallest lens available, a 40mm pancake lens which is quite discreet and proved to be a good choice.

Anyway with the old fart of a Pioneer by the name of Dewsnap breathing down my neck and kicking at my heels at every available opportunity I still managed to capture the shot I wanted, which you can see in the background of this page.

The photograph is an absolute corker and for the first time I am entering it and a few others into the Army Photographic Competition 2017, so touch wood you may see this photograph again.

The Association were granted an increased allocation of 85 tickets for the Cenotaph in 2016 and I know the old man had to turn members away as the allocation was quickly booked.

He was disappointed to find on the day that only 69 members attended, a few had informed him that they could not attend because of illness but most did not.

Once again the Association President, Brig CB Telfer, led the Pioneer contingent with Mr Pete Thomas acting as Contingent Marshall.

Once again we had good coverage from the BBC and it appeared as if most were in step, apart from that old fart by the name of Dewsnap!

We even had a police escort for the group photograph which I will put into this publication somewhere!

After the Parade most made their way to the Civil Service Club in Old Scotland Yard where stories were told and refreshment taken. Dewsnap as usual could not handle his drink and he later fell over and broke his wrist! ■

Pictures: Paul Brown



CENOTAPH PARADE

13th November 2016



ROYAL PIONEER CORPS ASSOCIATION
B12

remember



brance

FUTURE EVENTS



■ THE Soldiers of Oxfordshire museum is located in Park Str, Woodstock, OX20 1SN are to hold the following talks
Wed 17 May – Ian Beckett's "Dad's Armies, the Amateur Military Tradition 1558-1945"

Close attention is given to the development of forces such as the militia, yeomanry, volunteers, territorials and home guard and the continuity between these forces indicating the important part they played in local society.

Wed 14 Jun – Peter Doyle's "The Raising of Kitchener's Army" – The talk explains the amazing story of Kitchener's Army and its volunteer soldiers, the men of the 'First Hundred Thousand' and the many Pals' battalions that were later raised across Britain, in its industrial heartlands and leafy shires alike. Their journey to the Somme and the tragedy of July 1916 had a huge impact on the communities these men left behind.

Full details of the talks can be found at www.sof.org.uk

■ THE CENOTAPH Parade is to be held at Whitehall on Sunday 12 November 2017. Last year we had an increased allocation of 85 tickets, unfortunately only 69 turned up which was disappointing as some members were turned away.

This year we hope to have a similar allocation, although we will try to increase this number. At the time of going to press 82 members have already requested a ticket. Members are reminded that they must be on Horse Guards Parade by 1010 hrs. Northampton Branch of the Association will, once again, be running a min-bus to the event, if you wish to travel on this please inform RPC Association.

Following the Parade we will once again meet in the Civil Service Club, Old Scotland Yard, Whitehall for a chat and a beer.

■ THE 71st Past and Present Pioneer Officers' Dinner is to be held on Friday 20 October 2017 at the Bicester Garrison Officers' Mess, Ambrosden, Bicester.

Officers wishing to attend should contact the Association Secretary (royalpioneer corps@gmail.com).

■ THE former members of 8 Regiment are to hold their anniversary reunion weekend and dinner on Friday and Saturday 20-21st October 2017.

These Annual Re-Unions are open to any Ex Member of 8 Regiment, with their Partner or Guests, of any Cap Badges who served in the Regiment between:- October 1964 - July 2012. Venue: - Friday 20th October 17 - The Army Reserve Centre, Wigan. Saturday 21st October 17 - "The Village on the Green Club, Aspull, Wigan. For further information contact:- Jimmy Aspinall, by Email: jimmyasp@hotmail.com or David Southall by Email: Dcsouthall@aol.com

■ THE FIELD of Remembrance will be held at Westminster Abbey on Thursday 9 November 2017.

If anyone would like a cross or wreath placed on the RPC plot on their behalf they should contact the Association by 1 Aug 17. Tickets are now required for this event and these can be obtained from the Secretary RPC Association. As has become practise we will hold a London Lunch immediately after the Field of Remembrance, this year it will be held at the Lord Moon of the Mall which is just below Trafalgar Square in Whitehall.

The Royal Pioneer Reunion Weekend

The Pioneer Reunion is to be held at The Royal Court Hotel, Coventry on 30 June – 2 July 2017.



■ Mr Glen Lath and Micky. Am not quite sure what is going on!

Picture: Paul Brown

THE booking form for the reunion was sent out with the October 2016 Association Newsletter. If you have lost or misplaced this please either contact the RPC Association or send email to royalpioneer corps@gmail.com

The programme for the reunion is still to be finalised but will probably be as follows:
Friday afternoon – book in, Association shop will be open.

1930 hrs carvery lunch – raffle – live group (Dreamettes) and disco

Saturday 0900 hrs – Annual General Meeting (any points for the agenda should be sent to RPC Association by 1 June 2017)

0930 hrs – Mini bus(es) departs for Wellesbourne Market (return shuttle service will start at 1400 hrs)

1015 hrs – Annual General Meeting of the WO's & SNCO's Pioneer Reunion Club – members only

1200 hrs – Mini bus(es) departs for 159 Regt RLC for BBQ

2000 hrs Carvery Lunch – live Group (Black Country Boys) – auction

Sunday 1000 hrs – Church Service on Lawns (weather permitting)

Opportunity to visit Coventry

1400 hrs – Quiz, competitions and bingo

1930 hrs – Carvery Lunch – Group 'Out Of Order' and disco (Solent City Sounds)



■ The Invictus Choir at the Invictus Games (main) and Geoffrey and his wife Linda (top left)

Picture: Kohjiro Kinno

You can't sit there!

War veteran Geoffrey Dorritt, the only Geordie member of the Invictus Choir, has told how he nearly gave Prince Harry his marching orders.

GEOFFREY DORRITT, the only Geordie member of the Invictus Choir and a Pioneer veteran, who recently performed with the popular choir at the Sports Personality of the Year awards, made his royal gaffe at an event in the US.

It was at Orlando in Florida where the BBC choir, famously set up by Gareth Malone, were set to perform at the opening ceremony of the Invictus Games. Wracked with nerves, they were having a meeting beforehand when the Prince paid a surprise visit - only Geoffrey didn't have a clue it was him.

"We were sitting in a row and there was a space in the row in front," recalled the pensioner from Leam Lane in Gateshead. "Then a scruffy-looking guy appeared from over my shoulder, stopped in front of me and hopped into the seat. I thought 'who is this guy?' "I said 'excuse me, you can't sit there; we're filming for the BBC' and he turned around and it was Prince Harry.

"That's how I met him. He introduced himself - and I just gulped. He looked at me and I thought 'I better watch myself'! but we talked."

He has high praise for the down-to-earth

Prince and especially for choirmaster Gareth Malone himself who he said has been an inspiration, helping to turn around the lives of the choir members. All are ex-servicemen and women who have been wounded, left disabled or traumatised by their experiences and the story behind the 12-strong ensemble featured in a BBC series and won the seal of approval of Prince Harry who created the Paralympic-style Invictus Games.

The choir went on to hit the charts with *Flesh and Blood*, the song they performed at the opening of the Games.

Geoffrey is the only North East member of the choir and, at almost 73, the oldest.

He is proud to be a part of it and was delighted to be among the former soldiers given a voice at the Sports Personality of the Year awards. And there are more performances to look forward to next year, with the help of a new musical director.

While serving with the Royal Pioneer Corps in the Persian Gulf, Geoffrey further damaged slipped discs in his spine when he fell from a height. He had to be flown home to take up light duties and has since been plagued by post-traumatic stress disorder. It was his wife Linda who originally read about Malone's idea for the choir and

put his name forward, sending off a video of him singing. A talented tenor, he used to perform in clubs around the North East and pulled off an impressive Elvis Presley impersonation. He's never had any formal training. Growing up in a family of 13, he worked as a "barrow boy" on the quayside. "We were very, very poor," he said.

By the age of 21, he had three children. A fourth followed then he and his wife also went on to foster a total of 54 children.

Being part of the choir has enriched his life even more. And they've been a hit with the public. He adds a touch of Geordie humour to the group and it set him in good stead on that occasion with the Prince.

"I'm the eldest and cheekiest!" said Geoffrey, who loves the camaraderie of the choir members who show such spirit in the face of their difficulties and are a big support to each other.

He added: "Because we've been so successful, it's done us the world of good; getting us together and helping to take the bad memories away.

"It's given us something to concentrate on. Gareth Malone is amazing. What you see on TV is what you get.

He's nothing but inspirational to us."



■ Arthur Goddard (left), Richard Commins (Middle), Bob Barron (Top Right) and the highest military honour in France (Bottom Right) Picture: Paul Brown

Pioneers get highest honour

Well done to Pioneers Arthur Goddard, Richard Commins and Bob Barron. These WW2 Pioneers receive the Legion D'Honneur, which is Frances highest military decoration

ARTHUR GODDARD, who lived in Thornton Heath for 90 years but now lives in a care home in Bristol, received the French Legion of Honour on Monday, October 31st 2016. Arthur, 96, is a retired chartered surveyor, but was a sergeant in the Pioneer Corps which landed on the Mulberry Harbour at Normandy in support of the Allied invasion liberating France in 1944.

He enlisted into the East Surrey Regiment on 24 Jun 40 and transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 24 Dec 41 and served until 13 Jun 46.

The French Consul for Bristol, Josette Lebrat, formally presented Arthur with the medal at Abbots Leigh Manor Nursing Home, giving him the rank of Chevalier (Knight) in the Ordre National de la Légion d'honneur.

Remembering his time at the camp, Arthur said: "The first camp was situated near Bayeux. We expected 2,000 prisoners but 5,000 arrived. As the fighting went north we followed closely behind, always near a port so we could arrange transport of prisoners to England on the boats bringing in fresh troops and supplies. On one occasion, 9,000 prisoners of war arrived without warning, increasing our number to some 20,000."

Arthur commanded more than 30 German prisoners of war who became clerks in the camp.

He qualified as a chartered surveyor when he was released from his army duties, and founded Goddard and Jones estate agency, in South End, Croydon for more than 25 years.

He said: "I am grateful to everyone who has looked after me so well, allowing me to reach the age I am but I miss my visits to Selhurst Park watching the Palace.

He also expressed his gratitude at others he fought in the war with.

"There were many, many colleagues who deserved the award more than me but, alas, are no longer with us."

Arthur's son, Steve Goddard, said his dad was a member of Emmanuel Croydon Church, on Normanton Road, South Croydon, in his younger years and that he also played tennis at St Paul's Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club on Essenden Road.

Steve added his dad only stopped playing tennis seven years ago, aged 89. "It is thoroughly deserved. He plays it down as he was just doing his job but looking after 20,000 prisoners of war is no mean feat. We are very chuffed as a family and are joining him on Monday for the presentation.

He always says that he was one of the fortunate ones. He did not have to deal with soldiers that wanted to kill him. He dealt with soldiers that were disillusioned with the war. T

The Hungarians and Romanians were starved and were forced at gun point to fight. To him that was the saddest thing of the situation.

Seeing the suffering of all those who did not even want to fight."

Well done Arthur!

RICHARD COMMINS, has been awarded the highest French order for his sacrifices during the Second World War Richard was in the Royal Pioneer Corps during the liberation of France.

Richard was enlisted into the General Service Corps (for basic training on 18 Mar 43 (at the age of 18) and was transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 29 Mar 43 and served until 24 Jun 47.

The 93-year-old has been awarded the Legion d'honneur and received a letter from Sylvie Bermann, the ambassador of France to the United Kingdom, in which she told him 'we must never forget the heroes like you' and said 'we owe our freedom and security to your dedication because you

were ready to risk your life'. The Legion d'honneur has been awarded to British veterans by the French government to thank them for their role in ensuring the French people were freed from Nazi oppression.

Mr Commins said: "I am over the moon and I never expected it! It has been a pleasure to visit the town hall, I have always wanted to meet David Hanson and I haven't been here since I was very little. It has been a big shock [to receive this] and a huge honour. This is for the lads who never came back." Mr Commins' nephew Nigel Acott was "immensely proud" of his uncle and told the Leader on Friday that his uncle was one of the first to visit Auschwitz during the war. Mr Acott said: "He spent time there cleaning everything up which must have been very distressing.

My uncle lost a lot of friends during the Second World War so he doesn't like to talk about what happened and will often get upset. Sometimes he will talk about the D-Day landings and he told me once his boat was blown up but fortunately he survived. He has some amazing stories."

Mr Commins served in the army and saw action in many European countries during the Second World War and was awarded several military medals for his bravery and service by the British government.

David Hanson, MP for Delyn, and the deputy mayor of Flint Cllr Vicky Perfect held a special ceremony to congratulate the 93-year-old at Flint Town Hall on Friday afternoon. Mr Hanson has been working with the families of these brave men to ensure that they were all bestowed this great honour from the French Republic.

The MP for Delyn said: "It has been an honour to meet with all the recipients of the Legion d'honneur, the most prestigious honour awarded by the French government. Mr Commins is one of Flintshire's finest. "He served not only his country during the Second World War, but he fought against the evil forces of fascism in Europe.

He was one of the many men from Flintshire who fought selflessly to liberate the French people from the tyranny of oppression they were under. Holding a civic ceremony for Mr Commins is a small way for Flint to thank him for his service and sacrifice.

I know that the people of Flintshire will want to send Mr Commins their support and thanks. Mr Commins' past deeds secured our peace and freedom. Ensuring that we can live in a free and democratic society. For that we are truly grateful." When visiting Flint town hall, Mr Commins signed the visitor's book as a guest of honour next to the page which Jade Jones had signed.

When Mr Hanson told him who had signed the page he was delighted to hear about what Jade had achieved as a man who had lived in Flint all his life.

Mr Hanson said those who had gathered at the town hall to honour Mr Commins had done so on behalf of everyone in Flint and said "we are all very proud of you".

Congratulations Richard!

BOB BARRON, Barron insists he played only a "small" part in a big team effort to liberate France. But the French disagree, more than 70 years after the Normandy

Landings, the nation rewarded modest hero Bob with its highest military decoration - the Legion D'Honneur.

The 95-year-old, who enlisted into the Royal Artillery (Light Anti-Aircraft) on 12 Mar 42 and transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 3 Dec 42 and served until 27 Feb 46. Richard was presented with the medal in a special ceremony at Fulwood Barracks in Preston.

"I'm deeply moved by this award," said the retired hospital porter. "I'd like to thank the French President and the people of France for the medal they've given me."

Widower Bob, who lives in Ashton, Preston, admits he always knew the risks he and his comrades took were deeply appreciated by the French people.

But he dismisses the part he played as just "a small role in a very large team effort."

When war broke out in 1939 Bob's work meant that he was initially in a reserved occupation, but by early 1942 he was called up and conscripted into the Army. Although he did not know it at the time he was being trained for a role in what has become known as the 'D-Day' landings. Bob had been specially trained to assist the Royal Engineers in the construction of 'Bailey Bridges', Pontoon Bridges and other equipment designed to move breach obstructions that had been placed or created by the retreating German Army.

Like many of his fellow soldiers he was extremely seasick on the journey across the Channel. Bob was scheduled to be landed, with his Regiment on 'Gold Beach' near Arromanches in the early part of 'D-Day'. For most of that day he was anchored just off the coast in the still rough seas.

One of his clear memories of the day is being anchored next to the Battleship HMS Rodney which was firing its large guns in deafening salvos at German positions all day.

Two of those guns still greet visitors at the front of the Imperial War Museum in London.

Bob and his colleagues were glad to get on dry land again and were immediately moved by the scenes of the recent battle on the beach.

They had no time to dwell on this because they were quickly deployed on the tasks that they had been trained for.

One of Bob's first tasks was to assist the Royal Engineers in the construction of an emergency airfield between the towns of Tilley and Bayeux.

While assembling building materials locally for this task he was being mortar bombed by the Germans. Night time was particularly dangerous because the Germans could use their artillery without being attacked by the RAF. This required Bob and his comrades to dig in on a nightly basis to avoid death and injury.

Bob was also involved in the battle for Caen and clearly remembers witnessing the large Air Raid carried out by the RAF and US Air Force.

The advance through northern France towards Holland was very quick and his work to help re-building bridges and clear obstructions was in frequent demand to keep the momentum of the advance going. The main danger he and his colleagues faced was from mortar attack.

A good friend of Bob's from Southport

was killed in one of these attacks. Other serious dangers included 'booby traps' on installations they had to work on. Two of his corporals were killed in one such incident.

Another of Bob's memories is witnessing the intense relief and gratitude of the civilian population of northern France, Belgium and Holland as they liberated villages and towns from German occupation in their advance towards Germany.

Bob knows that he played a small role in a very large team effort.

He has always known since that the risks he and his comrades took were deeply appreciated by the French people. He has been deeply moved by his award and wishes to thank the President and people of France for the medal he has been given.

He knows that he was lucky to survive the conflict without injury and always remembers, everyday, his comrades and friends who were not so lucky.

He realises how fortunate he has been over the last 70 years to see Europe grow out of that terrible conflict in freedom and peace.

Congratulations Bob!

Légion d'honneur for British World War II veterans

The French government has been awarding the Légion d'honneur to D-Day veterans from many different countries for several years, as a way of honouring and thanking those who fought and risked their lives to secure France's liberation during the Second World War

On the 70th anniversary of D-Day in June 2014, the French President announced that the distinction would be awarded to all British veterans who fought for the liberation of France during the Second World War (veterans must have taken part in military operations in France between 1944 and 1945).

Since June 2014, more than 4,100 medals have been awarded.

How are applications processed?

Applications should be sent to the Ministry of Defence (DC Sec Commemorations, 6-C-01 Main Building, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2HB), which checks that applicants fulfil the relevant criteria. These are then passed on to the French authorities. Applications should not be sent directly to the French Embassy or to the French authorities in Paris.

The French authorities subsequently endorse the names forwarded by the MoD for appointment to the Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur, before an ad hoc decree is adopted.

Due to the vast number of applications received, a new administrative procedure was put in place in July 2015 in order to speed up the processing of applications. This new procedure has had the desired effect and applications are now being processed and confirmed at a much faster rate.

The French authorities attach great importance to ensuring each veteran receives their medal, and they are working hard, in coordination with the British authorities, to ensure that all of the veterans who have already sent their applications to the MoD receive their medal.



■ THANKS TO all members who supported the Christmas Draw.

This is one of the few areas in which we raise money to keep the Association running. The lucky winners are:

1st Prize £1,000	- D Luker Aberdare
2nd Prize £500	- P Williams Bristol
3rd Prize £200	- R Ainsley Bicester
4th Prize £100	- D McAllister Carnforth
5th Prize £50	- WO1 Donaghue Holywood

■ THE Commonwealth War Graves commission are trying to make contact with the family members of the following Labour Corps soldier.

Casualty ID: 75229924. Service Number: 301750. Name: Leonard ELDRIDGE

Date of Death: 5 Jan 20. Rank: Private. Cemetery: Monks Risboiough (St Dunstan Churchyard).

If related please contact UKNA Technical Team (enquiries@cwgc.org)

■ THE "Walter Mitty" Bill proposed by Dartford O Gareth Johnson has moved another step closer to becoming law.

The document, which aims to stop people wearing medals they have not earned with the intention to deceive, was due to be read in the House of Commons for a third time as we prepare this issue for press.

■ THE National Army Museum re-opened on 30th March following a three-year, £24 million facelift.

Changes to the site in Royal Hospital Road, London include extra learning spaces and a new café, shop and children's area.

The museum's main display has also been rearranged into themes rather than running in chronological order.

"We hope personnel see themselves reflected in our new displays," curator Rebecca Newell explained. "It's all about connecting civilians with their story and we have packed in as many voices, past and present, as we can."

■ IN THE October 2017 edition of the newsletter we made an error which was only noticed after the Newsletter was received from the printers.

The heading on page 42 – the story about Arthur Day BEM should read "This article was prepared and written by his daughter Suzanne". We apologise wholeheartedly to Suzanne for this error and the editor has been sent to Specsavers for an eye test.

■ WE HAVE now setup a small shop on our Pioneer Facebook Page.

This has proved to be very popular and has kept me quite busy!

The shop can be reached by typing the following internet link into your browser..

www.facebook.com/pg/RoyalPioneerCorps/shop

There are around 30 items that are available to purchase straight from the above link and there are many more items to add.

The new Pioneer tops have been a top seller and we even have Pioneer red and green socks for sale!

Barrack Closures

The Pioneer home for many years is now one of many to be closed by the Ministry of Defence.



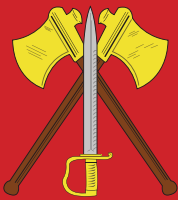
■ St David's Barracks, Bicester

Picture: Supplied

IT WAS announced by the MOD on 7 Nov 16 that the following army barracks would close. As can be seen this includes St David's Barracks, Bicester (the Pioneer 'home' for many years) – for those concerned about the Corps War Memorial which is currently located in St David's this is to move to the new RLC Museum at Worthy Down.

Buckley Barracks (Hullavington Airfield), Chippenham, 2016
 Chalgrove Airfield, Oxford, 2016
 Copthorne Barracks, Shrewsbury, 2016
 Somerset Barracks, Somerset, 2016
 Abercorn Barracks, County Down, 2018
 Craigiehall, Edinburgh, 2018
 Catterick Town Centre Parcel, Catterick, 2018
 Harden Barracks (Duchess Of Kent Psychiatric Hospital), Catterick, 2018
 Burgoyne Barracks, Folkestone, 2019
 Claro Barracks, Ripon, 2019
 Fitzwygram House (Royal Army Veterinary Corps Centre), Hampshire, 2019
 Commander And Staff Trainer (North), Catterick, 2020
 Cavalry Barracks, Hounslow, 2020
 Kneller Hall, Twickenham, 2020
 Parsons Barracks, Donnington, 2020
 Prince William of Gloucester Barracks, Grantham, 2020
 St George's Barracks, North Luffenham, 2021
 Venning Barracks, Donnington, 2020
 Middlewick Ranges, Colchester, 2020
 Chilwell Station, Nottingham, 2021
 Queen Elizabeth Barracks, North Yorkshire, 2021

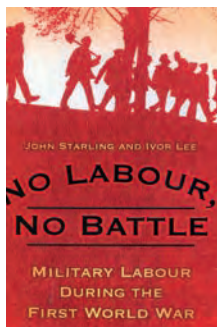
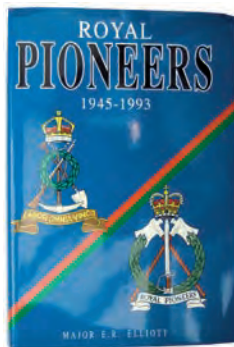
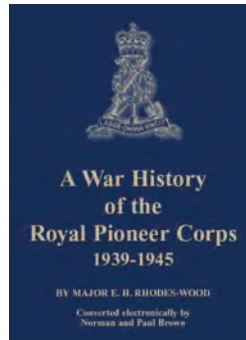
Sir John Moore Barracks, Winchester, 2021
 Towthorpe Lines, Towthorpe, 2021
 Thornhill Barracks, Aldershot, 2021
 Clive Barracks, Shropshire, 2022
 Fulwood Barracks, Preston, 2022
 Kinnegar Logistic Base, County Down, 2023
 Meadowforth Barracks (HQ 51 Highland Brigade), Stirling, 2022
 Redford Cavalry Barracks, Edinburgh, 2022
 Redford Infantry Barracks, Edinburgh, 2022
 Dale Barracks, Chester, 2023
 Aldershot Distribution Outlet, Aldershot, 2024
 Cawdor Barracks, Pembrokeshire, 2024
 Leighton House (AOSB Westbury), Westbury, 2024
 Southwick Park, Portsmouth, 2025
 Brecon Barracks, Wales, 2027
 Beachley Barracks, Wales, 2027
 Invicta Park Barracks, Maidstone, 2027
 MoD Woodbridge (Rock Barracks), Ipswich, 2027
 St David's Barracks, Bicester, 2028
 Vauxhall Barracks, Didcot, 2028
 Woolwich Station, London, 2028
 Buckley Barracks (Hullavington Barracks), Wiltshire, 2029
 Dalton Barracks including Abingdon Airfield, Abingdon, 2029
 Azimghur Barracks, Wiltshire, 2031
 Carver Barracks, Saffron Walden, 2031
 Dishforth Barracks (Airfield), North Yorkshire, 2031
 Imphal Barracks, York, 2031
 Robertson Barracks, Norfolk, 2031
 Fort George, Scotland, 2032
 Glencorse Barracks, Scotland, 2032



Association Shop



Please support the RPC Association and place an order today...



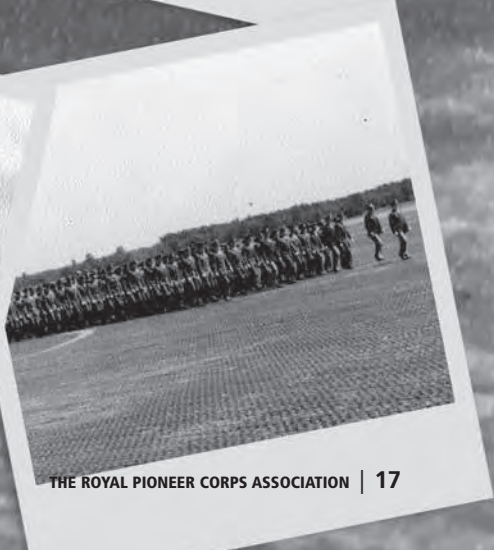
VISIT THE NEW PIONEER SHOP AT

www.facebook.com/pg/royalpioneercorps/shop
More items are being added all the time - there are new Pioneer red and green tops and even Pioneer red and green socks!



The Berlin Airlift

The following is an account of the Berlin Airlift (Operation Plainfare), featuring an article from the September 1949 edition of The Pioneer



THE VICTORIOUS Allies of World War 2 divided Germany into occupation zones: the American, French, and British zones in the west and a Soviet zone in the east.

Within the Soviet zone lay Berlin, formerly Hitler's capital, also divided into four sectors, each administered by one of the wartime allies. The only guaranteed means of access to isolated Berlin was by air. The Soviet Union had granted each of the three Western Allies a 20-mile-wide air corridor leading from their respective occupation zones to the city; but no such arrangement governed travel by road or rail—that depended upon the continuing cooperation of Soviet authorities.

Scarcely had the war ended when relations between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union began to deteriorate. Eastern Europe came under Soviet domination. As early as 1946, Britain's wartime Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, in a speech in Fulton, Missouri, warned: "From Stettin on the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent." Behind that curtain, Soviet control tightened; a sphere of influence became a ring of satellite states, as happened to Czechoslovakia in February 1948 when a Communist faction seized control of the government. Shortly afterward, the Soviet Union began exerting pressure on the overland routes leading into Berlin, imposing arbitrary restrictions on access, such as temporarily halting coal shipments and, on 24 June, establishing a blockade.

Lacking the ground forces to punch through the blockade, the Western Allies had no choice but to rely on airlift if their sectors in Berlin, with a combined populace of some two million, were to survive. Never before had any nation mounted so ambitious an aerial resupply operation. The Soviet leadership, conditioned by failure of the German airlift at Stalingrad during the war, could hardly have taken seriously the Allies' prospects for success. The task of supplying Berlin by air devolved upon the U.S. Air Forces in Europe, commanded by Lieutenant General Curtis E. LeMay, who had at his disposal 102 C-47s, each with a cargo capacity of 3 tons, and 2 of the larger C-54s that could carry 10 tons apiece. He called for reinforcements and entrusted the operation to Brigadier General Joseph Smith, who called it Operation Vittles because, "We're hauling grub." The first deliveries took place on 26 June 1948, when C-47s made 32 flights into Berlin with 80 tons of cargo, mainly powdered milk, flour, and medicine. As the days passed, General Smith increased the use of his C-47s and newly arriving C-54s by dispatching aircraft according to a block system that grouped them according to type, allowing radar controllers on the ground to deal more easily with strings of aircraft having the same flight characteristics. Within a month, American officials realized a massive airlift of indefinite duration afforded the only alternative to war or withdrawal.

The transports would have to deliver not only food for the populace but also coal to heat their homes during the winter, and

bulky bags of coal would cut deeply into the available space within the aircraft. The airlift would continue after the good flying weather of summer had ended and winter fog, clouds, rain, and ice commenced. Because so extensive an operation exceeded the capacity of the U.S. Air Forces in Europe, Operation Vittles became the responsibility of the Military Air Transport Service, created on 1 June 1948 by the merger of Air Force and Navy transport units and directed by the Air Force as the executive agent of the Secretary of Defense.

Chosen to command the Berlin Airlift was Major General William H. Tunner, a veteran of the aerial supply line across the Himalayas, from India to China, during World War 2. General Tunner arrived in Germany late in July 1948 and promptly set about speeding up the delivery of cargo, an effort that earned him the nickname "Willie the Whip." He established a truly impossible goal of a landing every minute, day or night if the ceiling at the destination was 400 feet or more. At times the aircrews participating in the operation came close to achieving this goal, touching down 3 minutes apart. The transport aircraft entered the air corridor at a prescribed time and altitude, followed the beams from radio ranges to keep on course, and obeyed instructions from ground radar controllers who regulated speed and interval within the aircraft stream. Each pilot in this endless procession had one chance to land. If the weather or some other reason prevented a landing, he would return to his home station and re-enter the cycle later.

On Easter Sunday, 17 April 1949, this system delivered 13,000 tons of cargo, including the equivalent of 600 railroad cars of coal. This so-called Easter Parade set a record for a day's tonnage during the operation. The Easter Parade required near perfect teamwork. Fuel and bulk cargo were first loaded onto ships in the United States, sent across the Atlantic, and unloaded in Germany. Once there, the fuel and cargo were shipped to one of our U.S. Air Force airfields: two were in the American Zone and two in the British Zone. Freight from the American Zone went to Templehof Airfield and cargo from the British Zone went to Gatow Airport. The transports themselves were flown by crews from the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Navy, and the Royal Air Force.

Initially, the Royal Air Force mounted its own airlift, called Plane Fare. British aircraft spent more than 210,000 hours in the air, the equivalent of 24 man years, and flew more than 30 million miles, which equates to flying to the moon and back 63 times. During the Airlift, British military and civilian aircraft lifted more than 540,000 tons. This included food, coal, liquid fuel, military equipment and other items, such as metal girders to rebuild the bridges in the city destroyed during the Second World War.

The airlift sustained the population of West Berlin, at that time estimated to be around two million. Their daily requirement for food alone was 900 tons of potatoes; 641 tons of flour; 106 tons of meat and fish, 105 tons of cereals and so on, amounting altogether to some 1,800 to 2,000 tons of food alone every day. Nearly 45 per cent of the food and supplies taken in to Berlin were flown in British aircraft. 39 British and Commonwealth personnel lost

their lives during the airlift

After mid-October 1948, however, a combined airlift task force headquarters melded the British and American efforts.

Soviet forces harassed but did not attack the cargo aircraft of the Anglo-American alliance, although fighter pilots and anti-aircraft gunners occasionally opened fire near the corridors, and searchlights that might temporarily blind a pilot sometimes played upon the aircraft by night. By the spring of 1949, it was obvious these tactics of harassment had failed to deter the American and British airmen involved in the airlift of supplies to Berlin. Consequently, the Soviet Union entered into negotiations which culminated in an agreement, signed on 5 May 1949, that resulted in the lifting of the blockade, but it did not settle the basic issue of freedom of access.

Despite the resumption of surface traffic into the city, the airlift continued until 30 September to mass a reserve of food, fuel, and other supplies in the event the Soviets re-imposed the blockade. Between 26 June 1948 and 30 September 1949, the airlift delivered more than 2.3 million tons of cargo, approximately 75 per cent of it in American aircraft. American aircrews made more than 189,000 flights, totalling nearly 600,000 flying hours and exceeding 92 million miles. To keep the aircraft going, military and civilian mechanics worked around the clock to support airlift operations. Maintenance technicians would perform periodic checks of aircraft components and systems after every 20 hours of flying time to ensure proper operation. After 200 hours, the aircraft received a major inspection, and after 1,000 hours, the transports were flown to depots in the United States for a major overhaul.

The operations sustained over the 15-month period were surprisingly safe despite crowded airways and bad winter weather; the accident rate of the airlift forces averaged less than half that of the entire Air Force. Nevertheless, breaking the blockade cost the lives of 30 American servicemen and one civilian in 12 crashes.

PIONEERS AND THE BERLIN AIRLIFT

The following appeared in the September 1949 edition of "The Royal Pioneer", being a short account of the 'Pioneer' contribution to the Berlin Airlift (Operation Plainfare) and of the visit of the CIGs to the RPC GLO Camp, Celle, BAOR by Maj Frank K Walker RPC

Brigadier HH Blanchard OBE, Director of Labour, War Office on his recent visit to the GLO Camp at Celle, where he saw the Airlift in full operation, expressed the opinion that many old Pioneers would be wondering how the Corps were faring on Peacetime Operations and suggested a short account of our efforts would be welcomed by the Editor and readers.

So I take up my pen at a time when it looks as if soon the "lift" will be a memory but a glorious one – so much has been accomplished on a very large scale by the Western Allies, and details of which you will, no doubt, all have read about.

But what of the not so glamorous part without which the operation could not succeed, the men who lifted the 'stuff' off the railway trucks or lorries and put it into the planes and unloaded it off again, over two million tons wants a lot of handling. It

was all done without a hitch by Pioneer controlled German Labour.

Let me give you the story of CELLE which became one of the largest main Anglo-American Airlift bases and which, with its brother-base at Fassberg, has proved such an outstanding symbol of United co-operation. The Airfield was under command of the RAF, the planes and the operation side American, the supplies and transport RASC, and the Labour, Pioneer under the organisation of Col Reid, Director of Labour BAOR and 13 Group RPC, who had the colossal job of controlling the labour at the principal Airfields in the Western zone.

Also let me take this opportunity of naming some of those Pioneers who done such sterling work on this operation: Majors Charles Cusack, John Crowhurst, Jack Dempsey, Hannaford Hill, Jim Beach, Joe Gold, John McCauley, Fred Booker, Geoff Odams, Bernard Cains, Bob Peat and many others, including Peter Lynn, Bill Haines, Mick Dunant and the staffs of Labour Directorate, George Wise, John Ryall, Ken Norman 'Nobby' Clarke, etc. HQ 13 Group RPC, 'Cash' Hunter and Ken Slater and of course, the RPC receiving end at Berlin under the able direction of DADL Berlin, let us not forget RPC WOs and NCOs, also engaged on various 'Plainfore' tasks.

But to continue the CELLE story and my own small contribution, it started on a very dull morning in October 1948 when as ordered overnight, I reported to Group HQ for onward transmission to a "secret destination" which turned out to be CELLE and told that a Pioneer job lay ahead, namely to erect tented accommodation and prepare a camp for three thousand GCLO (German Civil Labour Organisation who are volunteer organised units of approximately the same strength as an average Royal Pioneer Company), who would shortly be arriving from various locations as the Airlift labour force for CELLE.

The site was hardly the best, it had been the Airfield rubbish dump of many previous tenants including the Luftwaffe and our own RAF too.

On my arrival bulldozers were hard at work to try and clear it up, but the result was hardly ideal, nevertheless action was required forthwith, so my small party got to work. We had been warned that space was limited and tents should be in blocks of four to save space, and so we pressed ahead on a 70 hour week, but all was not plain sailing as the REs, were also trying to lay on water, a road or two, put in electricity, put up ablation huts, overhead lines, and so on, but out of chaos arose a sea of tents, six hundred of them (American pattern with stoves), and then as we overcame many difficulties, real progress was made, but alas, one major set-back occurred, a representation to the RAF Commander and to Lt Col Donovan, by German Medical Officers of Health who stated it would be suicide to put Germans into tents in winter, and did we know what a German winter was, etc.? But Col Donovan had an answer to that, he said, the British would live in tents too, if necessary. As I was the only Britisher on the spot I forthwith volunteered to move in and pitched an Officers' Tented Camp near the Main Camp. This was early November and not the best of weather; later I was joined by Maj Jack Gosh and

Geoff Odams. It was excellent as a morale booster and proved by example we too 'could take it'.

The others have now gone (not due to pneumonia, but in the best of health) and I, the old original, am still under canvas. I'll hate going back to civilisation, yes, really! Anyhow, by the middle of November units started arriving, they were a bit 'tent-shy' at first, but gradually they settled down, and by the time the operation commenced all were bedded in very nicely, but the Camp was not quite as I wished, improvements had to be made, the men, had to become tent-proud which eventually they did, but they needed a lot of 'pushing' and encouraging in a 'democratic' way. Col Donovan demanded the highest standard and I was determined it should be a GCLO Camp without equal, especially so as lots of 'brass hats' were very interested in this canvas experiment of using tents as winter quarters in BAOR, and the many distinguished visitors to Celle all wanted to look at the GCLO Camp which by Christmas was looking like the "Show Camp" the Group Commander and I had planned it should be.

At the end of the year, in spite of the non-stop-lift, we supplied three labour shifts a day, seven days a week, we looked back with pride at the recognition we had received by visits from General Sir Brian Robertson, Military Governor, General Sir Charles Keightley KBE CB DSO GOCinC BAOR, Air Marshall TM Williams AOC, BAFO and General Miller CB DSO MC our District Commander, in addition Col Reid and Lt Col Donovan who paid us frequent visits and helped us in many ways.

Looking back we were highly satisfied as morale was higher than ever expected, the tents were standing up to conditions very well, health was excellent (better than in the hutted Camp at Fassberg), there had been no fires (the Fire Inspector was pleased about that), and we had received excellent reports of the labour and, in addition, had been congratulated on the turn-out of the Camp by the Military Governor and other high ranking officers, a big step forward from the dark days of October.

Early in February I was warned that the CIGS Field Marshall Sir William Slim KCB CBE DSO MC would be visiting the Camp, so I briefed my staff and "blitzed" the Camp for days ahead ready for the great day. A final look round on the day and then to the appointed place to await him. I felt alone and rather nervous in spite of having available near by my faithful Camp Superintendent, in case the CIGS wished to speak to any of the Germans, I was prepared for anything. I didn't have to wait as right on the appointed time a large Daimler with a five star plate arrived, and a figure, whom I recognised immediately from press photos, stepped out and came straight across and shook me by the hand and said, "What have you to show me?" So I introduced myself and explained the Camp lay-out and particulars of strength, conditions, etc.

By this time Major General Sir Charles Keightley KCB CB DSO, Air Marshall Williams, General Turner, Chief of the Combined Airlift Task Forces, and other high ranking Allied officers had dismounted, and we set off and the Field Marshall asked me questions concerning the GCLO, as we

walked round. He looked in the tents, in our Welfare huts, Education Centre and our Camp Hospital where he talked to the Germans and told them that they were doing a good job, for their own people in Berlin, and that he could see they were being very well looked after. Before leaving he congratulated me on the excellent turn-out of the Camp; he spent considerable time looking round and he appeared extremely interested.

All the GCLO and of course I too, felt very honoured by the visit of the CIGS and his recognition of our months of effort to make our Camp the best GCLO Camp in BAOR. I don't know if it was the best, but it certainly had more publicity than any other. Later we had a visit to the work-site by the Rt Hon C Attleem MP, Prime Minister and Lord Henderson who were accompanied by General Sir Brian Robertson; other distinguished guests to the work-site included Air Marshal in Chief of the RAF, Lord Tedee and also USA Forces Commander, General Cannon. The camp later was further honoured by visits of the Colonel Commandant of REs, Lt Gen Sir Giffard Le Q Martel KCB KBE DSO MC, Maj Gen Tuck OBE Chief of Staff BAOR, Maj Gen Shapland MGA BAOR, Maj Gen Miller CB DSO MC 7th Armd Division Commander, Brigadier HH Blanchard OBE Director of Labour and also Brigadier JH Edey DSO OBE MC, before his retirement and many other high ranking officers of all Services including the Dominions, also Staff College Officers, and Cranwell Cadets have had our Camp on the itinerary, and I can assure all those who visited us that the Germans felt very proud of the interest taken in their welfare.

Time marches on and even the Russians relax, so soon it will all be over, and the carefully tended gardens, plants, flowers and trees will be unattended, perhaps it may even revert to its former role as the "Station Dump", but anyhow, let us remember that, while it lasted, we had a busy and interesting time for over ten months, and that the GCLO "Show Camp" was a place where the Red and Green of the Royal Pioneer Corps was proudly displayed and we hope, added to the Corps' already grand record in war and peace.

The Airlift goes into retirement but like all good Pioneers everywhere, we in BAOR are ready to take the field again in any emergency.

A POST WAR HISTORY OF THE ROYAL PIONEER CORPS IN EUROPE

(Ed note: the following is an extract from the above history which was written by LT col GC WALKER in 1974)

During the summer of 1948 the situation between the former Allies, then currently in occupation of the various zones of Germany, became increasingly tense. The Russian Zone of Germany, now known as East Germany of the German Democratic Republic, was gradually more and more isolated from the other Occupation Zones. The most difficult part as far as BAOR was concerned, was the maintenance of the four-power status of the city of Berlin. Geographically located some 150 Kms inside the Russian Zone of Germany, the three Western Sectors of the city of Berlin were in a position of complete isolation.

The later background, the building of the Berlin Wall and the demarcation boundary fence between the Western Zones and the Russian occupied zone of Germany are now matters of common historical knowledge. However it is important to recall the earliest problems which occurred when in the latter part of 1948 the Russians closed the land corridors between the Western Occupied Zones and Berlin.

Not only were there the basic difficulties of maintaining the French, American and British Forces in occupation of the Western Sectors of Berlin, but in addition, the civilian population of those Sectors also required our support as, particularly in respect of food and fuel, that part of Berlin could under no circumstances be self-supporting. The immediate problem consisted of moving supplies for the population and Forces from Eastern Germany into Berlin without the use of road and rail facilities, the sole remaining route to Berlin was by air and the immense problems of moving tonnages required to support these people gave many great cause for concern.

The result was the Luftbrücke, (Airbridge), as it was known to the Germans. The British and Americans referred to it as the Berlin Air Lift. A very large force of transport aircraft was assembled by the British and Americans. This consisted not only of military transport aircraft, but also civilian charter aircraft often stripped down

specially for the purpose of transporting stores rather than people.

The planes operated from many bases in both the British and American Occupation Zones. However, as can be seen from a map, three or four airfields in the British area were particularly suitable from a distance point of view to mount this operation. The airfields concerned in the British area were Wunsdorf Airfield, Fassberg Airfield and Celle Airfield. In addition a squadron of Sunderland Flyingboats operated from the River Elbe based at Hamburg-Finkenwerder. The Labour requirement was to provide loading parties for this large air transport force, 24 hours a day, 7 days per week.

It was then that the existence of the organised mobile labour forces became particularly important.

German Civilian Labour Groups (GCLG), drawn mainly from the Hamburg area, were rapidly moved to sites close to the three airfields being used and, often starting from a rough piece of ground, erected tented camps. They then improved their tented living facilities whilst off duty, and at the same time carried on with aircraft loading during their duty hours. In the case of Wunsdorf Airfield the camp formerly occupied by Displaced Persons at Beggenhagen was used and this operation was the first to commence. The second airfield in use was that at Celle which was

already operational and where heath land had to be cleared in order to erect a tented camp. The disused airfield at Fassberg was then rapidly re-activated and again a tented camp erected alongside the airfield.

The main commodity moved at this time, (mostly in US Globemasters) was coal. During the airlift a large amount of directly employed civilian labour was also used on aircraft loading and cleaning and this was organised by 9 PCLU which had its HQ at that time at Bergdorf close to Hannover.

However, the existence of a self-administered labour force, which could be called upon to supply working parties round the clock was of extreme importance. As the Airlift developed, the need to co-ordinate labour demands on each of the airfields became more and more apparent and either the senior GCLC Commander or a specially appointed Pioneer Officer was made responsible for this task. Naturally a similar situation existed at the receiving end in Berlin although the work here was made easier from an organisational point of view, by the more concentrated nature of the distribution points, whereas at the despatching end, a considerable amount of double handling of stores, all being received from different supply lines and sources, was necessary.

The Airlift finally ended in May 1949 when the Russians were persuaded to re-open land routes to Berlin. ■



Coronation Programme

I recently purchased the above programme from a Coronation Garden Party and thought that readers might find the introduction interesting.

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Norman Brown

RECENTLY purchased the programme below entitled 'Coronation Garden Party & Fete and thought that readers might find the Introduction interesting.

"In sending a message of Greeting on behalf of all members of our Old Comrades Association, to those attending this Garden Party, I pay a very hearty tribute to the Chairman of our Surrey Branch, Major EH Rhodes-Wood, and his very active Committee, for the energy, and enterprise which have gone into organising this function. It has meant an enormous amount of entirely voluntary hard work by everyone concerned, and is so strongly in keeping with the spirit of The Royal Pioneer Corps and its Old Comrades.

Our Association was founded in the autumn of 1946, one of its main Objects being to perpetuate friendships made in war and peace, and to ensure that the grand record of The Royal Pioneer Corps in the war of 1939-45 is maintained also in the days of peace, in addition to which to help its members in numerous ways to solve the problems of civilian life, and working closely with the Corps Benevolent Fund, whose offices we share in London.

Our Association now has some 6,000 members, Life and Annual Paid-up, with 24 Branches in this country and 3 overseas. This is a very small total compared with the numbers who have served in the Corps, though it is safe to say that over double that number have enrolled as members since its formation, but for various reasons many have not maintained their membership. This is a problem which many ex-Service Organisations have to face, but in spite of the fact, those members who keep it up year after year have made firm friendships amongst the Old Comrades which will last for a lifetime.

In asking you to support this Garden Party, I assure you that you will be furthering the cause of Old Comradeship amongst all ranks of the Corps, both past and present, and I cannot resist quoting some lines from Tennyson's "Ulysses" which always seem so appropriate to an Old Comrades Association.

"Though much is taken, much abides; and though

We are not now that strength which in old days

Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are.

One equal temper of heroic hearts
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield"

Major CK Briggs
General Secretary
Royal Pioneer Corps Association
51 St George's Drive,
London, SW1"

The current active membership of the Association is 2,875 – approximately half of what it was in 1953. We know that there are a lot of ex Pioneers out there who are

not members of the Association or we do not have a current address for them.

If you are in contact with ex Pioneers please ask them if they receive our Newsletters, if not please let me have their details.

You may tell them that membership is free and members receive two Newsletter each year, these are also free!

Royal Pioneer Corps Association
& Benevolent Fund
Surrey Branch
— CROYDON —

**Coronation
Garden Party
& Fete**

to be held at
**PARK HILL RECREATION GROUND
CROYDON**
on
SATURDAY, 27th JUNE, 1953
at 2.30 p.m.
Official Opening at 3.0 p.m.
by
Brigadier H. G. L. PRYNNE, C.B.E., M.C.
Accompanied by Mrs. Prynne.

◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆

Souvenir Programme

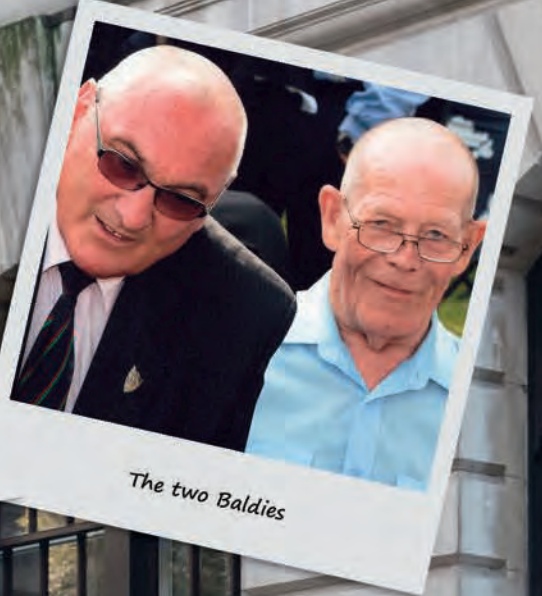
Price 6d. Lucky No. 0064



Looks like Bob Fox needs a Pioneer shirt!



144 Coy Reunion



The two Baldies



PIONEER



Horseguards Parade, Remembrance



SAS meets a Royal Pioneer!



How do you turn this on?



39-93 Club



At Garden of Remembrance



Glen Lath and Nat Chauhan



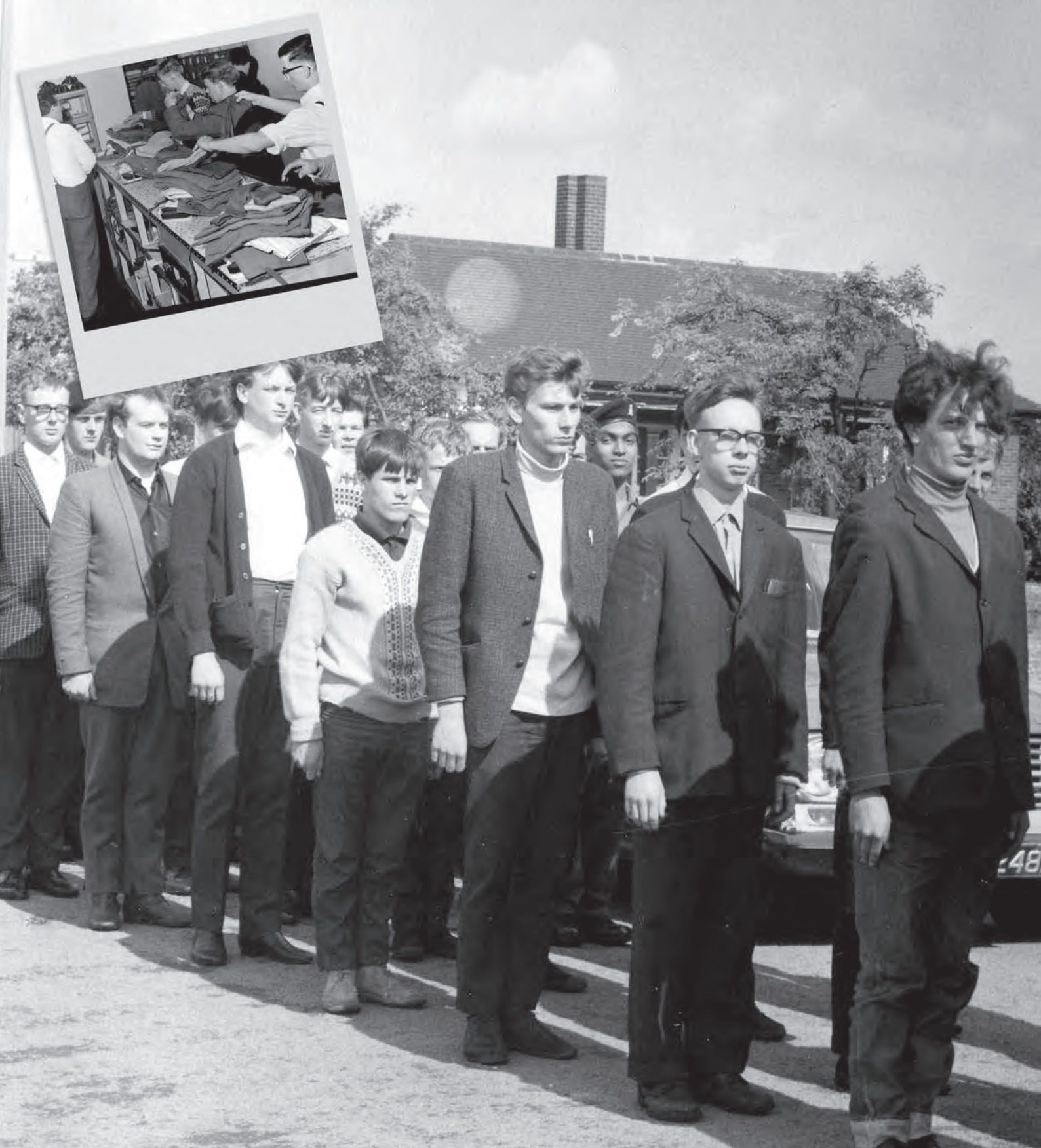
Paddy - looking his usual smart self!



Horseguards Parade, Remembrance



Horseguards Parade, Remembrance



Recruit Training

in the 60s

The following is an account of Recruit Training in the 1960s. The author who is a member who wishes to remain anonymous.



Report: Anonymous
Pictures: RPCA Archive

THE TRANSITION from civilian to soldier was dramatic both in its speed and its effect. The whirlwind of Day One left a patchwork of recollection, Of Blanco and Brasso; of Does and Don'ts; of disbelief and acceptance; of crude instruction on doing things the Army way – from lacing boots to making a bed; of tyrannical NCOs, all the time terrorising, menacing and bullying as they chivvied their new charges, shouting orders, cajoling them into a new routine – from the Army's point of view the idea was to give the recruits a short, sharp shock in order to accustom them quickly to the disciplinary needs of the military regime. From the recruits' point of view it was, for the most part, a numbing and dislocating experience.

Those who had been away to camp with the Boys Scouts or the Boys Brigade or who had served in any of the military cadet forces coped best with the first forty-eight hours of basic training; so too did those who had worked in the two intervening years since leaving school at sixteen; likewise, but at the other extreme, boys who had been sent to boarding schools had little difficulty in adapting to army life. The ones who suffered most were boys who had never been away from home or who had led fairly sheltered lives.

The first difficulty was the uniform - the rough woollen khaki shirts, the gaiters, webbing, the shapeless blue beret and hard unyielding boots. There was an Army saying; "If it fits, you must be deformed." Therefore very few recruits were happy with what was issued to them. To begin with, the trousers had to be pressed to give them a perfect crease. This task was usually performed with damp brown paper and an iron hired from one of the NCOs and returned at the end of training. Then shirts, pants and other personal items had to be folded to exact Army specifications. To make them look good, pouches would be stuffed with newspaper, and cardboard squares would fill out small packs to

uniform proportions. Next webbing had to be attended to. Most of it had been used before, and had to be scrubbed clean so that the blancoing process could begin all over again. Using Blanco and liberal amounts of water, the resultant paste would be brushed vigorously into the webbing, layer by layer, until a smooth surface built up. (Too much blanco and it would crack, too little and the result would be patchy). Brasses – badges, buttons and insignia – had to be scoured with wire brushes until they could take Brasso and a final polishing, but the strangest ritual was reserved for the evolution of "best boots" – those worn on parade.

When they were issued, all pairs of boots were standard issue, made of stout leather uppers and soles with tell-tale 'pimples' on the uppers. To make them fit for inspection and to get the mirror-like surface demanded by the Sergeants, the recruits had to go through the never-to-be-forgotten process of scalding off the pimples, usually with a heated spoon, until bare leather had been reached. When that had been achieved – the more daring set fire to their boots, burning off the surface with meths – the second stage was to use heated polish and a good deal of elbow grease until the surface gleamed. As such, they were things of beauty, but their unsullied sheen made them useless as pieces of military equipment; if worn on parade in the rain the surface would quickly crack up and disintegrate. In all the preparations for inspection there was a fair helping of the illogical, but the bullying of boots was the most absurd part of the procedure.

Each squad was put under the aegis of a Corporal or Lance Corporal whose task it was to instruct his recruits in army lore, to offer help and advice, and to keep order within the barracks. Any mistakes made by his squad – dirty kit, untidy lockers, scuffing on the floor – reflected on him and so he was the first link in the chain of command. Above him were the Sergeants, and at the apex the Regimental Sergeant Major, with a battery of degrading insults at his disposal. If the recruits were to survive these had to

be taken with an extra large pinch of salt.

One day, on RSM's muster parade, I was second man, front rank, first platoon. Having spent two years working as a joiner at a bench I was a bit round-shouldered. We were formed up. All of a sudden a voice rent the air, "Sergeant Daniels, second man, front rank looks like a vulture about to shit." I almost died on the spot, but afterwards it was very funny. I will remember it to my dying day.

It was the task of the drill sergeants to get the squads to move as one man on parade by instilling in them the basic facts of the Army's drill book until each man could carry out every order precisely on the word of command. To accomplish this they threatened, then coaxed, then bullied again, normally using a stream of insults which had been carefully nurtured over the years.

It became possible to smile at the sadistic humour of the bully-boy NCOs, even during the seemingly endless hours of purgatory on the parade ground, learning by numbers drills which could not be forgotten in a lifetime. "If you don't swing that arm, laddie, I'll tear it off, stick it up your arse and have you for a lollipop."

Basic training was all rush and bull. During the day we were rushed all over the place – shouted and bullied all the time. Evenings were spent bulling kit and there was very little free time.

Kit was inspected frequently, and I have seen men's kit tipped onto the floor and freshly blancoed webbing thrown through windows when not meeting the standards demanded by the inspecting NCOs.

After six weeks training we had a long weekend so I went home to Barnsley. I can remember going out in town and I went to my old barber for a haircut, the barber said, "Have you joined the Cadets, then?" Boy was I deflated.

My own pal had joined the RAF a day after me and we were both home together, strutting round the town in uniform when we saw an old postman we knew from work days. He took one look at the pair of us and shouted across the High Street, "Thank God there's a Navy!" ■



The following article appeared in the May 1984 edition of "The Royal Pioneer", it must bring back memories to most readers who were either posted to the Training Centre or visited on courses

Report: Norman Brown
Pictures: RPCA Archive

SIMPSON BARRACKS Barracks, the heart of the Royal Pioneers, loved, hated, dreaded. To one who had never served here but certainly belonged to the last category that of dread and foreboding the prospect was not a happy one. In fact it has all turned out as a pleasant surprise.

Mention the Training Centre and the gloom sets in, "Poor chap", "PVR" and the interviews one has giving in order to "change my posting, Sir".

Well, far from being the expected Hades it is almost a Shangri-la compared with many postings. It must mean many things to the host of people who have passed through its gates over the many years it has served as our home.

To the recruits it will probably leave an indelible mark on their lives. A period of intense activity in which a major metamorphosis takes place and from which their cocooned lives will never be the same again. Many over the years will look back and remember their training with nostalgia and pride and inevitably sigh that life has changed and the young men now couldn't hold a candle to those of bygone tougher

days. Some who have attended the Pioneer School may regard the Training Centre as a pleasant interlude in their hectic work filled year. One non-Pioneer Officer regarded it as a little bit of heaven where he learned with interest, "but serenity", the role of a Unit Civil Labour Officer!

Certainly, it is diverse and indisputably it will mean different things to different people. To some of us it will be remembered as that windswept place in which every time the back door is opened a gale as fresh as any from the North Sea sweeps into the house and purges by its ferocity the carefully retained heat. To some little girls on the patch it has been likened to a prison owing to the wire walls which keep the encroaching litter from nearby Wootton mercifully from us.

To one whose job is not wholly bound to the Training Centre and can see life from a more detached objective view the life of the recruits is every bit as demanding, perhaps in a more modified way to what it was. The passing out parades, for instance, have in every way maintained a standard which any Infantry Depot would have been proud to hold on its own hallowed square. The training is completed with verve and the recruits have a sense of purpose as well as

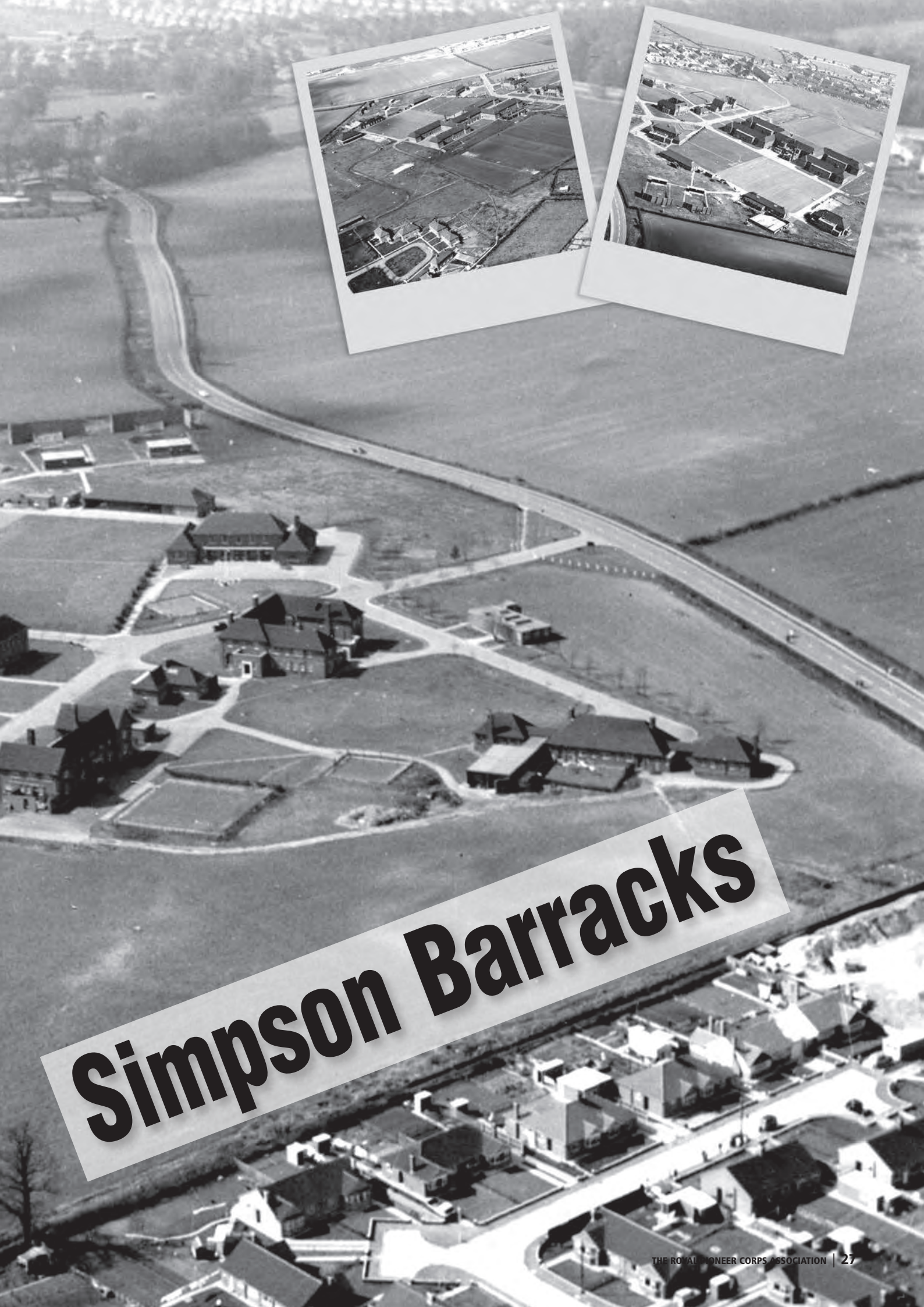
the usual urgency associated with their training.

One has one's laugh of course. The new boys who salute without a beret. The young man who saluted with KFS and mug in his right hand and no doubt a black eye next morning!

The pace of life here is a steady jog, inexorable but not repressive as Training Centres used to be; albeit there are the curses heard through bated breath on a winter's morn when frost lies thick and the inmates jog – some even run on these Friday mornings! Well a few!

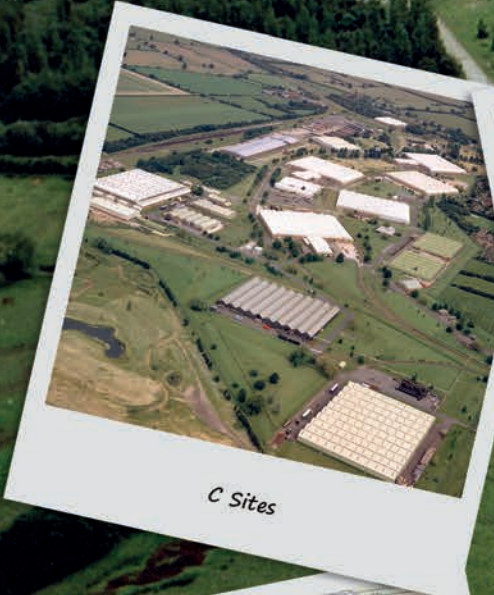
So to those who have been heard to draw breath through clenched teeth when the phrase "Training Centre, Northampton" was mentioned fear no more. Life here is busy, but where isn't it these days of vast unemployment? However, it holds less terrors than we are led to expect and has a great deal going for it, both the Centre and the town from which we are about to receive the Freedom.

In short, there are may worse places where one can be stationed, so to all those who sadly shake their heads when the Training Centre is mentioned – shake no more, come to Simpson Barracks and join the team After all LOA is being cut yet again so we hear. ■



Simpson Barracks

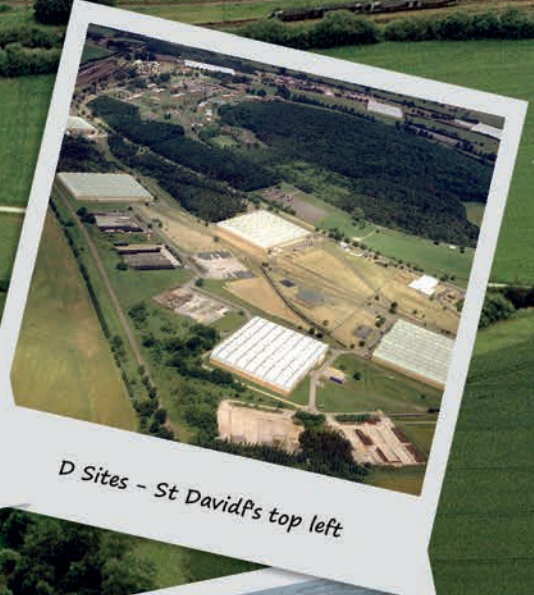
Bicester



C Sites



C Sites



D Sites - St David's top left



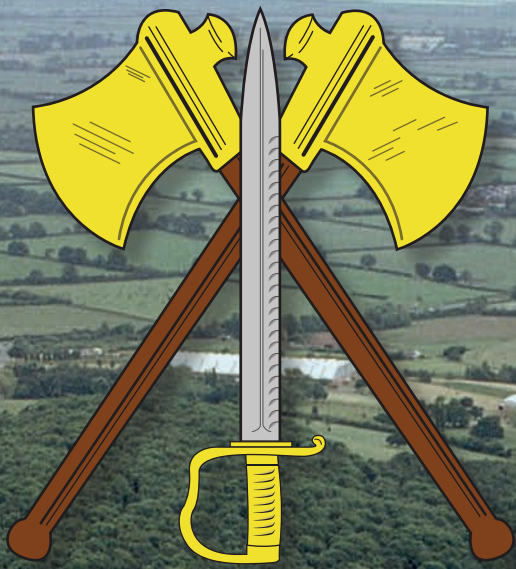
E Sites - St David's



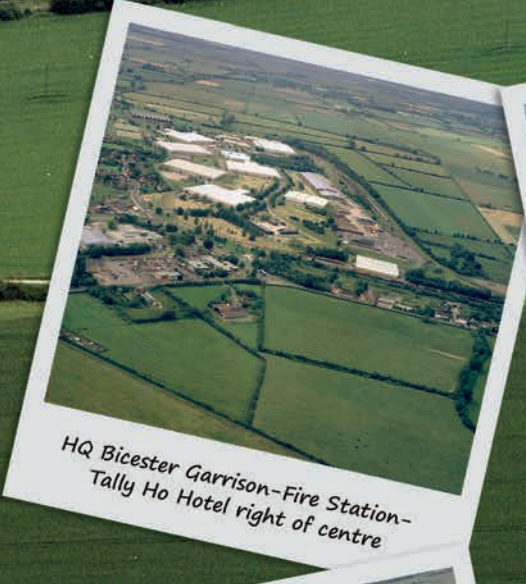
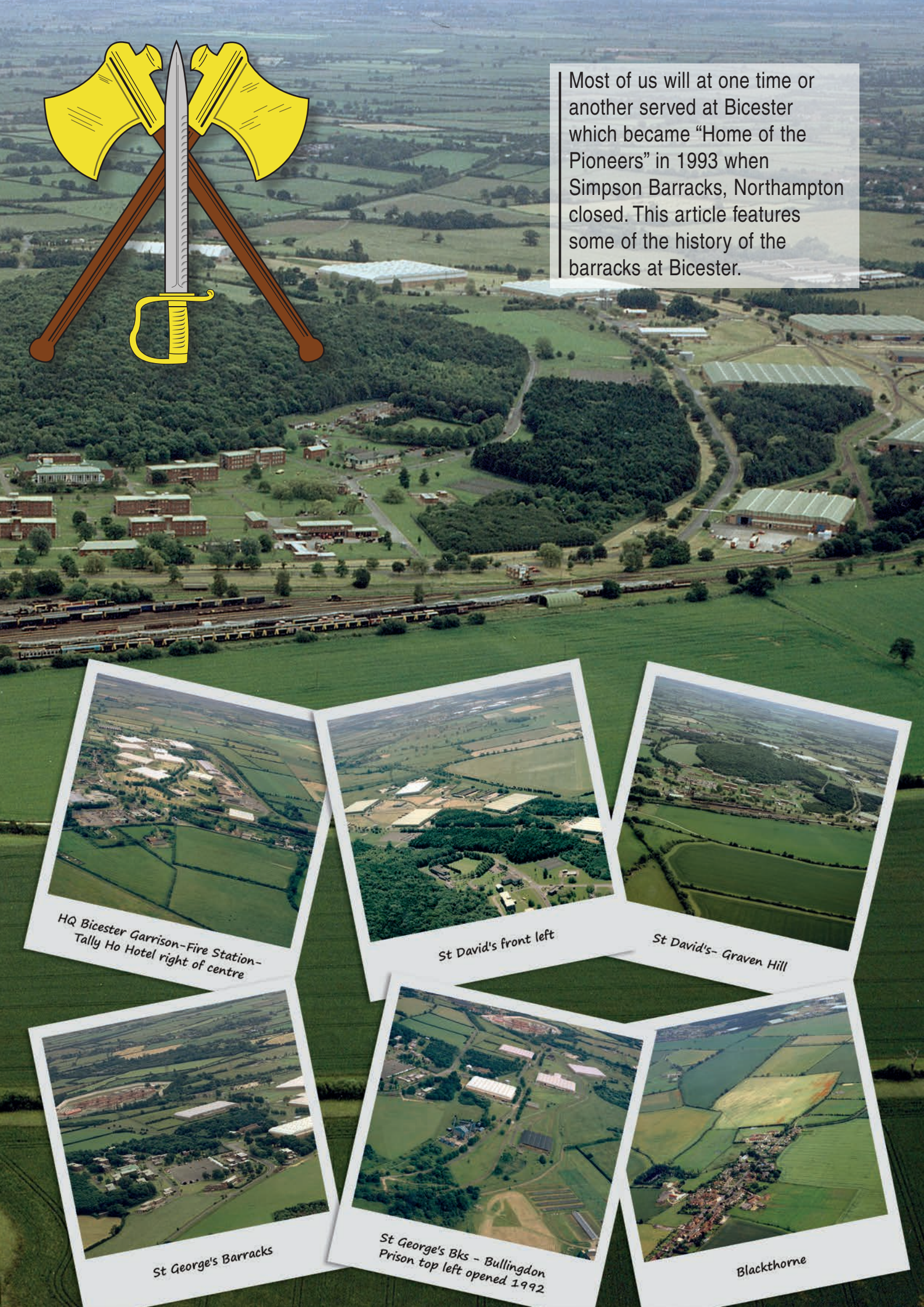
E Sites - St David's



E Sites left - St David's centre



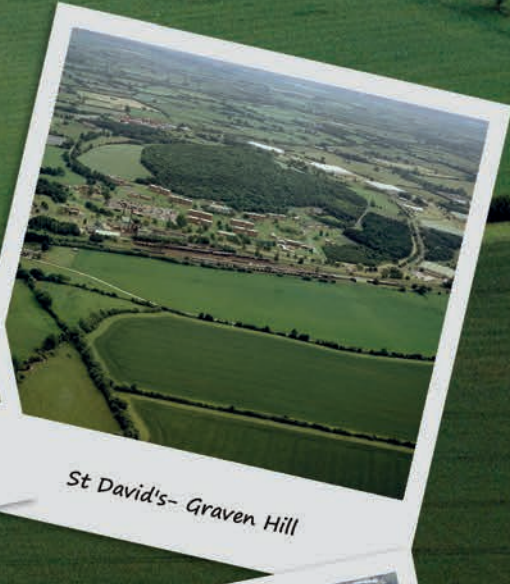
Most of us will at one time or another served at Bicester which became "Home of the Pioneers" in 1993 when Simpson Barracks, Northampton closed. This article features some of the history of the barracks at Bicester.



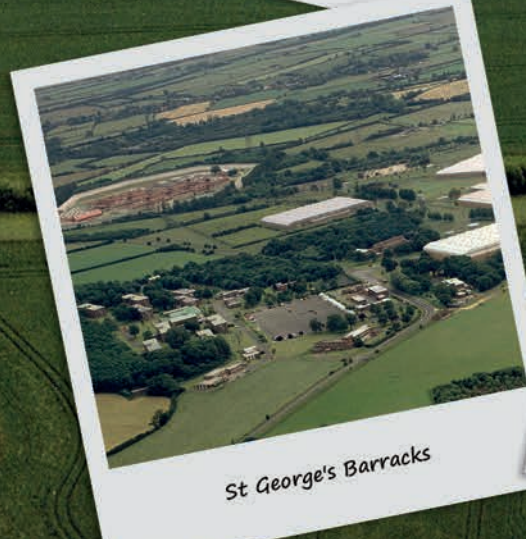
HQ Bicester Garrison - Fire Station - Tally Ho Hotel right of centre



St David's front left



St David's - Graven Hill



St George's Barracks



St George's Bks - Bullington Prison top left opened 1992



Blackthorne

MOST OF us will at one time or another served at Bicester which became "Home of the Pioneers" in 1993 when Simpson Barracks, Northampton closed. HQ 23 Group RPC moved to Bicester from Chester in December 1962. On 5 April 1993 its title was changed to 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC. The Regiment was disbanded on 26 September 2014.

521 Company RPC had a Detachment at Bicester in 1948 and the Company moved to Bicester in September 1951. The Company moved to Didcot in March 1959 but retained a Section at Bicester. It moved back to Bicester in March 1963 and stayed there until it was disbanded in March 1993.

518 Company RPC was reformed at Bicester on 1 Jun 70 (it had previously been disbanded in January 1968), on 5 April 1993 it became 518 Squadron 23 Pioneer Regiment. 206 Company and 522 Company also became Squadrons on 5 April 1993 and moved to Bicester from Long Marston and Kington respectively. On 5 April 1993 a new Squadron, 144 (Headquarter) Squadron, was also formed at Bicester.

The following tables show the units that served at Bicester during World War 2:

RPC Units in Bicester during WW2

39 Coy – Sep/Nov 41 – G/Hill Camp construction Arncott
74 Coy – May/ Jul 44 – Arncott
82 Coy – Apr/Jun 44 – Working with RAOC
89 Coy – May/Jul 44 – Working with RAOC
90 Coy – Nov 43/May 44 - Working at RAOC Depot
108 Coy – Mar 42/Jun 43 - Working for DCRE Ambrosden
151 Coy – May 44/Jul 44 – Working at COD Bicester
165 Coy - Feb 42/Jan 43 – Concreting roads at Arncott with RE
172 Coy – Mar 42/Jul 42 – Camp construction at Arncott
175 Coy – May 44/Jul 44 – Working at COD (12 and a half hour days)
179 Coy – Nov 41/Sep 42 – Working at 'X' Depot (initial name of COD)
182 Coy - Jun 43/Nov 43 – Camp construction (Coy 18 sections strong)
185 Coy – Oct 43/Jun 44 – Camp construction Arncott
186 Coy – Oct 43 / May 44 – Camp construction Piddington and Graven Hill
192 Coy – Jan 42/Sep 42 – Hutting and pipe-laying at Arncott
201 Coy – Sep 40/Feb 41 – Digging air raid trenches at Fritwell
Feb 41/Sep 41 – Defence works at Bicester aerodrome
205 Coy – Jul 41/Jun 42 – Railway construction at Arncott and Ambrosden and building POW camp
251 Coy – Jul 42/Jan 43 – Camp construction at Arncott
273 Coy – Jul 41 - Miscellaneous work in scattered detachments
306 Coy – May 42/Jun 43 – General construction work
322 Coy – May 44/ Dec 45 – Working at Graven Hill and Arncott
323 Coy – Jun 43/Jul 43 – Detachment only (work unknown)
330 Coy – Jun 43/Oct 43 – Road

construction at Arncott

353 Coy – Jun 43/Dec 45 – Road construction/Work in COD

396 Coy – Sep 44/Dec 45 – Work in COD
828 Coy – Aug 43/Sep 44 – Camp construction Arncott

831 Coy – Dec 43/Nov 43 – railway track and sidings construction

14 Group HQ – Nov 41/Apr 44 – Commanding all Pioneer units in Bicester area

107 Group HQ – Apr 44/Dec 45 – Commanding all Pioneer units in Bicester area

3 NCC Coy – Feb 42/Dec 45 – Camp construction and 50 miles of railway track

645 (Italian) PW Coy - Nov 44/Aug 45 – located Shed B35 – 319 men working at Arncott. HQ & 7 Sections - moved to Bicester (Located Shed B35 Arncott) Remaining 3 Sections return from Bridgewater (Now HQ & 10 Sections 319 men) working at Arncott.

Bicester has grown considerably in the last few years and continues to grow – it is the intention to make the Town a Garden City. The town boasts two railway stations with trains running to London. It now has a multi-screen cinema (within the "Pioneer Square"). Developments are taking place on all approaches to the Town – Bicester Village is to expand on the site of what was the adjacent Tesco supermarket, a new larger Tesco has been built on the road opposite. 1,900 houses are to be built on Graven Hill (the wood on the hill is to remain). What was the civil service club (Rodney House) was demolished and a new housing estate has been built. The Garrison Theatre was demolished three years ago and building on the approaches (including what was D Sites) has now started. A new housing estate has also been built at Ambrosden, opposite the three corners garage. This is shortly to be expanded on the fields opposite the Garrison Officers' Mess.

History: The area occupied by the Depot was once the site of Roman Settlements which included the old town of Alchester. The local military command of the Roman General, or Practor, comprised a Legion of soldiers and an army supply base. In recognition of this historical link, elements of the Practor's Standard was incorporated in the Central Ordnance Depot emblem.

Origin and development of the COD

Perhaps one man, more than any other, is linked with planning and development of Bicester. He was Maj Gen GW Palmer. Early in 1941, the then Director of Warlike Stores, Maj Gen LH Williams CB MC, (later knighted), gave instructions to Col Palmer (as he then was) to plan the new layout of a vast new COD.

The problems presented in building a new depot were manifold. In fact there were those who said they were in-surmountable. Favourable sites were hard to find in those days. Government departments were building shadow factories, the Air Ministry giant new airfields, and the Army wanted areas for battle training. The site for the new proposed depot was not allowed to be too near other Service establishments. It had to be near main arterial railways and roads for speedy transport of stores to and from

other depots, factories and ports. Water and electricity were other necessities. Also, with a view to recruitment of civilian labour, 'X' Depot, as Bicester was then called, had to be adjacent to at least one large town.

In February 1941, Col Parker, with a small staff, started the initial planning of the depot in offices at Steigler's Factory Beeston, near Chilwell. Col Palmer's 'baby' had to be a depot with a difference. Precedent was created when it was to receive, store, maintain, and issue stores of five Provision Groups, and five district sub depots were planned for MT spares, major assemblies and tyres. Small Arms, Signals and Wireless, Armaments and Engineering. Thus every type of warlike store, with the exception of ammunition and complete vehicles, were to be handled at Bicester.

Col Parker toured the country in search of a suitable site for the new depot. Eventually, he decided on his 'possibilities', Bicester was the one finally selected. Treasury sanction for the depot was obtained on 6 Jun 41, and within a few days a Railway Construction Company RE began work.

By the summer of 1941 the depot began to take shape and preparations were made to receive the first intake of military and ATS personnel. In this respect was unique, for unlike other Ordnance depots, it was decided for various reasons that military and ATS should staff the depot through the war years. Civilian labour was not recruited for technical duties with the five sub-depots until 1946.

In 1942, nearly 1,000 men, earmarked for Bicester, were under canvas at Wollaton Park, Nottingham. When they arrived at Bicester on 9 Oct 42 they found a very dreary and out-of-the-way camp awaiting them.

The development of the depot, particularly in the autumn and winter 1942 presents a dramatic picture of stores being received and issued to the fighting forces before buildings were completed, of soldiers working long hours under trying conditions, including temporary lighting and very little heating, but always managing to meet on time the ever-growing demands for equipment and spares.

The first of the five sub-depots to function was MT, which received its first stores on 7 Aug 42, and made its first issue a few days later.

By Jan 44, the other sub depots were in a position to receive and issue stores. Their functioning came only just in time, for almost immediately afterwards the COD was called upon to play a great part in the packing programme for the invasion of Europe. Great numbers of landing reserve packs were completed as well as "FAMTO" issues. Bicester was also one of the assembly points for LRs from other CODs and a special organisation was set up for this commitment.

Then came one of the greatest and most important jobs Bicester was called upon to tackle.

A method of waterproofing tanks had been evolved which enabled them to travel through several feet of water. Somewhere had to be found to store this weighty and cumbersome "wading" equipment. Bicester, together with West Hallam and the White City (two Chilwell Sub-Depots) were the chosen places. The storage area at

Bicester for "wading" equipment covered approximately 400,000 sq ft. This equipment was of paramount importance for the successful landings in Europe and received top priority at Bicester. All personnel working on this equipment were kept hard at work day and night, and rest days were cancelled.

During the period following D-Day the depot maintained a six-hour service for 'Red Hot' demands, and a 23-hour service on all other demands. Staff were working on a three shift basis plus overtime as required for those on the day shift. Apart from BLA commitments the depot supplied theatres, units and governments all over the world. The main issued to British units were through BODs in Italy and India.

The Bicester COD building project provided:

5 and a quarter million feet of modern heated store sheds with road and rail access
34 miles of roads

48 miles of Army railway track

21 miles of perimeter fences dispersed over an area of 12 and a half square miles, with the object of minimising the possible effect of enemy air attacks.

At its peak period during the latter part of WW2 some 20,000 troops and members of the Auxiliary Territorial Service were employed in the COD and supporting Garrison Units. In keeping with the war-time system of priorities, all living accommodation for troops and ATS personnel was of the temporary hutted variety and this was the situation until 1958 when two modern barracks was

constructed (St George's and St David's).

In the post-war period continuing until 1961 the principal task of the depot was to operate in support of the CODs at Chilwell and Donnington, and the Vehicle Organisation RAOC.

The 50s – Development and Consolidation

The start of the 1950s saw the first redesignation of COD Bicester to that of Base Ordnance Depot (BOD) in direct support of BAOR. There was a national recruiting drive for civilian staff coupled with a housing scheme funded jointly by the MOD and local authorities to provide 850 houses over a period of time for Bicester town in support of the BODs increase in establishment.

Not only was housing developed for civilians but also their military counterparts in respect of new barrack blocks and married quarters at Ambrosden following the formation of 17 and 18 Battalions. Bicester had the greatest concentration of RAOC National Servicemen in the Corps.

Bicester Garrison developed into a large organisation centred around Ambrosden which straddles a road junction midway between the two halves of the Garrison and was therefore seen to be an ideal site for the development of the married quarters. Approach the village from the west along the arrow straight Islip road and it looks as many other Oxford villages, peaceful and solid, the typical small farming community clustered around the village church. Approach from the other direction and the

scene is vastly different. Here the War Department estate, in the throes of construction brought expansion, bustle and newness to old ways, the pre-war village of 99 houses to be more than trebled in numbers.

The noise of tractors being drowned by the constant flow of Service vehicles.

The new War Department was to engulf the original village.

The soldiers accommodation centred around Arcott and Graven Hill was also under development with a battalion in each location to be housed in eight three storied blocks with 4 x eight men rooms on each floor plus twelve Corporals' rooms in each block – 864 men. There was also a requirement for new Sergeants Messes.

During 1956 the unit was redesignated a COD. The newly constructed St George's and St David's Barracks were handed over and occupied by 16 and 17 Battalions RAOC together with the new Sergeants' Messes. Closure of Suez Base imposed further additional responsibilities upon COD Bicester with the return of stores.

1957 saw the disbandment of 15 and 18 Battalions with them being amalgamated into 16 and 17 Battalions.

Development from 1961

In 1961 COD Bicester was selected to perform a key role in a major reorganisation of the United Kingdom Base Ordnance Installations, designed to re-shape these installations to meet the requirements of a small all-regular Army.

This reorganisation require Bicester to assume the responsibilities of the older COD Depots at Didcot (General Stores) and Braunston (Clothing) which were to be closed. Implementation of this plan involved COD Bicester in a gigantic reorganisation operation.

This included the handling of 150,000 tones of stores, a complete change in the Depot organisation and build-up of staff and facilities to meet the new commitment.

The major part of this large-scale undertaking was successfully completed by the end of 1964.

Associated with this reorganisation was a major building programme designed to complete the development of permanent facilities. A new provision, Control and Accounts Office block, a civilian canteen and a Military Medical Reception Centre, had already been completed.

Work on a new Headquarters Office block and an Officer's Mess was scheduled to start in late May 1965.

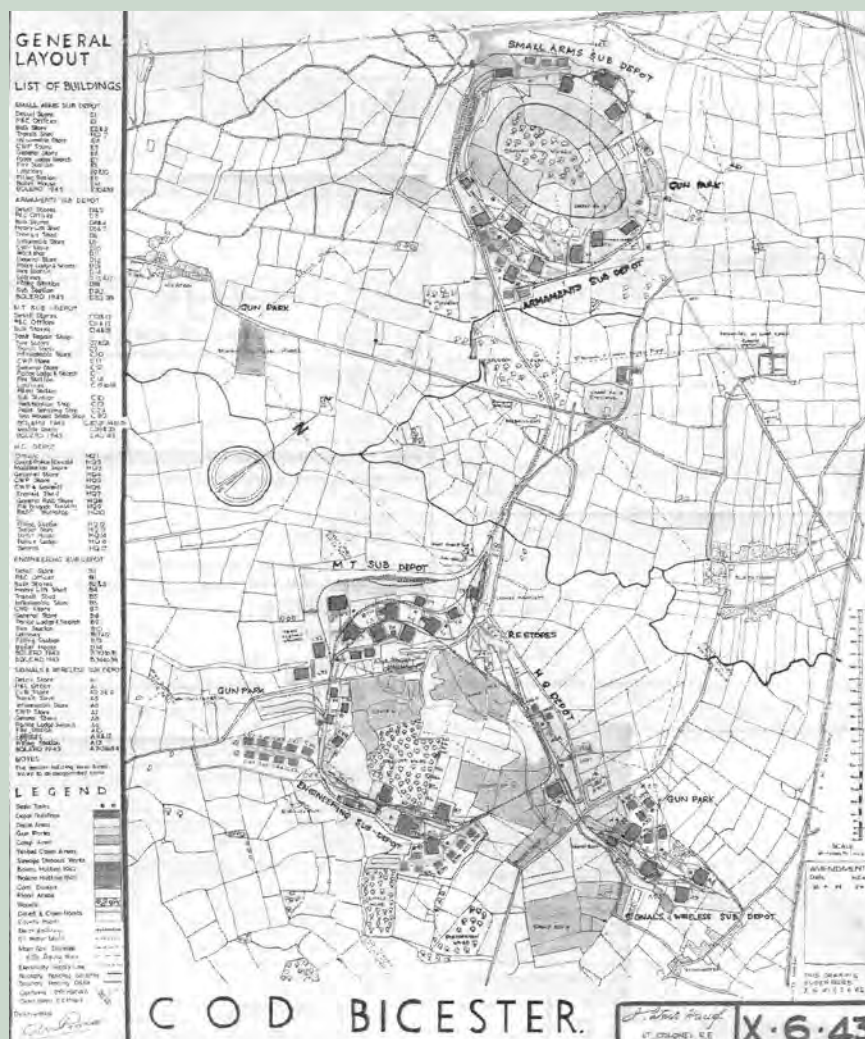
In order to provide long-term continuity of staff, the MOD, in conjunction with the Urban District Council, expanded the scope of an earlier pilot scheme to provide houses for depot civilian staff in Bicester town.

By May 1965 450 of these Army sponsored houses are occupied with a further 360 under construction.

The Personnel employed as at May 1965

Of the current strength of Bicester Garrison, the COD alone employees 650 RAOC, 150 WRAC, 100 RPC, 2,700 Civilian Staff

RPC personnel perform their normal support role in Stores Sub Depots and also provide personnel in support of overseas operations. ■



Bergen Belsen

Bergen-Belsen or Belsen, was a Nazi concentration camp in what is today Lower Saxony in northern Germany, southwest of the town of Bergen near Celle. Originally established as a prisoner of war camp, in 1943, parts of it became a concentration camp. The photograph below depicts Pioneers permitting former SS camp guards at the camp to rest. However, they are forced to do so in one of the empty mass graves they were made to dig for the thousands of unburied corpses of inmates.



INITIALY Belsen was an "exchange camp", where Jewish hostages were held with the intention of exchanging them for German prisoners of war held overseas. The camp was later expanded to accommodate Jews from other concentration camps.

After 1945 the name was applied to the displaced persons camp established nearby, but it is most commonly associated with the concentration camp. From 1941 to 1945, almost 20,000 Soviet prisoners of war and a further 50,000 inmates died there. Overcrowding, lack of food and poor sanitary conditions caused outbreaks of typhus, tuberculosis, typhoid fever, and dysentery, leading to the deaths of more than 35,000 people in the first few months of 1945, shortly before and after the liberation.

The camp was liberated on April 15, 1945, by the British 11th Armoured Division. The soldiers discovered approximately 60,000 prisoners inside, most of them half-starved and seriously ill, and another 13,000 corpses lying around the camp unburied. The horrors of the camp, documented on film and in pictures, made the name "Belsen" emblematic of Nazi crimes in general for public opinion in many countries in the immediate post-1945 period. Today, there is a memorial with an exhibition hall at the site.

The following is an extract from the book "A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps 1939-46" by Maj HR Rhodes-Wood:

The administration of Belsen camp was taken over by 35 Group (Lieutenant-Colonel A. M. Duncan, T.D.), who, by early June, was able to report that deaths had been reduced from 700 daily to 21 and that, "although burials are rather crude," covering for the bodies was being provided, proper registration being carried out and graves marked.

The following is an extract from the war diary of 35 Group PC:

25 Apr 45 Group arranged for the reception of 60 French and Sick personnel liberated from BELSEN Concentration Camp. Men were in a pitiable and emaciated condition, most of them showing marks of brutal treatment received. 3 men died through the course of the night. Men of Group HQ acted as stretcher bearers. The pathetic condition of these victims of German bestiality made an indelible impression on all ranks.

4 May 45 Moved to LUNEBURG
24 May 45 Moved to BELSEN Camp
25 Apr 45 Vatican Party of 4 Medical Officers, 8 Priests and 14 Nuns installed in BELSEN Camp
29 May 45 Commander BELSEN Camp hands over to Group Commander
Jun 45 Throughout June representatives from all countries visited the Camp – US correspondents, Russian Liaison Officers, Belgian Parliamentary delegation, French Parliamentary Mission, Yugoslav representatives, Danish Mission, War Crimes Commission and Old Vic Theatre Coy
5 Jun 45 Lowest figures of death yet recorded – 21 today
16 Jun 45 Camp placed 'out of bounds' to all not on duty

22 Jun 45 First ambulance train left for Sweden
28 Jul 45 Moved to WUNSTORF after a hectic time clearing and receiving delegations from all over the civilized world. Command of BELSEN Camp handed over to 4th Bn Wiltshire Regt

The following is a report written by Maj GT Hill:

Summary of Operation on Special duty at BELSEN

About the middle of May, Col De Pass, ordered me to go to BELSEN and arrange takeover from 102 Control, commanded by Col Bird and staffed by 2 Lt Cols and 12 Staff Officers. The original task was diminished to some extent in gravity and volume. The organisation employed by the Group was 2 Pioneer Corps officers drawn from local unit, 2 officers attached to 102 Control and left behind, and officers from Defence Unit.

The state when the Group took over was as follows:-

British Troops – Over 2000
General Hospital
RASC
Provost
Pioneer Corps
Composite Defence Company
Russian Hospital - 600-700 all told.

Treated on equal terms with British personnel

Hungarians - 3 regiments – under terms of truce signed by VIII Corps when the Battle was on – 2000 men

German Medical Services – Drivers, nurses & orderlies – 1000

Many small Organisations such as BRC, Vatican Mission etc, more difficult to provide for than regular units. No War Establishment or military standing for rations, clothing NAAFI etc.

DPs in camps and hospital – 35,000
Reductions have been effective by evacuations and deaths - highest 700 a day, but now reduced to 20-30 a day. Lowest 9 a day. The number of DPs is now 15,000 in camps and hospitals.

My policy is to reduce the need for Hungarians so that the truce can be concluded and then the residue of work might be done by POW or Civil Labour. I would say that the job approximates that of a Garrison Commander, with an additional control of complex and delicate diplomatic issues.

Since arrival an improved scale of rations has been effected. White bread for children.

Burials are still rather crude, covering for bodies now provided and there is proper registration. Graves are marked.

Amenities – Community Centres have been opened, school for children, cinema (1000 seated twice a day). Swimming baths (British only including nurses), canteen, and men's EFL, Officers Club for 250.

Group also looks after 8 Pioneer Companies

COPY
International Committee of Catholic Charity - Chaplains

To Commander, HQ Belsen Camp
The Vatican Mission desires to present medals struck in the image of the Sovereign Pontiff to the undermentioned British Officers in recognition of the great help and assistance given to our Mission in Belsen

Camp.
Miss G S Tyndall – Principle Matron 29th General Hospital
Col K Fletcher-Barrett – SMO, 29th General Hospital
Maj F T Hill – Commander HQ Belsen Camp
Signed M Hauret
Chief of Mission

The history of Bergen-Belsen

In 1933, Adolf Hitler came to power and along with his top Military Generals, started to increase the German Military to a force of over 500,000 troops. To allow them to train these troops, there was a need to establish training areas within Germany, large enough to enable two divisions to train at the same time.

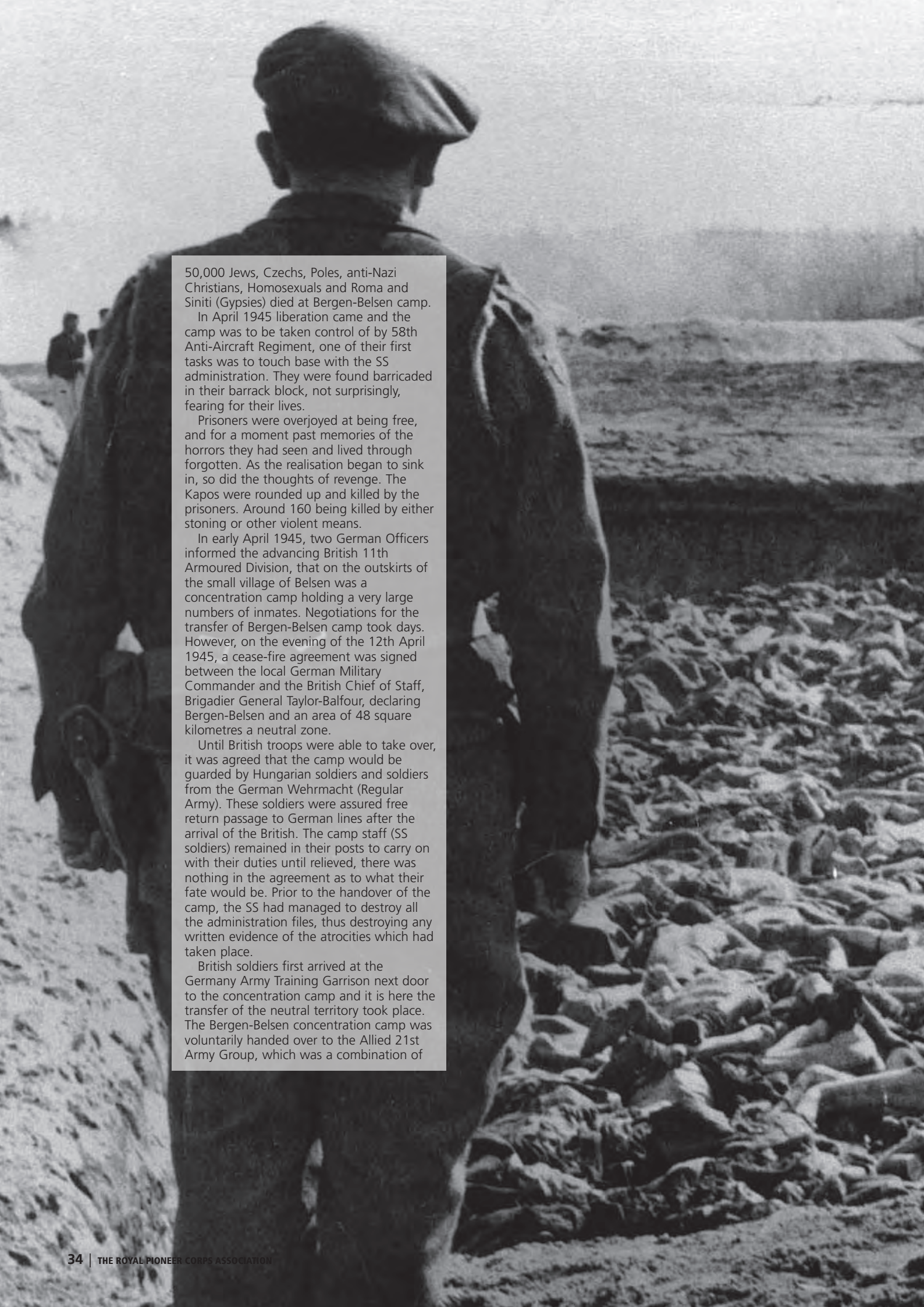
An area of 284 square kilometres on the Luneburger Heide, near the village of Bergen was chosen as the largest of these new training areas. More than 24 villages and small settlements had to be evacuated, meaning a total of 3,650 people being relocated. Work to build Bergen-Belsen training camp started in 1934 with construction workers housed in camps near Fallingbostal and Bergen, the latter known as the Bergen-Belsen Army Construction Camp. Once the build was completed in 1938/1939 these Construction Camps fell into disuse.

After the invasion of Poland at the end of 1939, the Germans started to use the disused construction camps to house prisoners of war. From June 1940, Bergen-Belsen construction workers camp, housed French and Belgium POWs. The camp was significantly expanded from June 1941, as Germany prepared to invade the Soviet Union. It was intended to hold up to 20,000 POWs and was one of three within the area.

By the end of March 1942, some 41,000 prisoners died within these three camps from starvation, exhaustion and disease, this number rising to 50,000 by the end of the war.

In April 1943 the SS Economic Administration took over part of Bergen-Belsen camp, thus becoming part of the concentration camp system.

In December 1944 a new camp commander was appointed, SS-Hauptsturmführer Josef Kramer who had previously been stationed at Auschwitz. Following his arrival, the SS took over the POW hospital and increased the size of the concentration camp. In July 1944 there were just 7,300 prisoners, in December the numbers had increased to 15,000 and by February 1945 it had risen to 22,000. As other concentration camps along the line of the advancing Red Army were evacuated, some 50,000 were moved to Bergen-Belsen. By the time the camp was liberated in April 1945, the numbers had soared to around 60,000. The camp, originally designed to hold about 10,000 inmates, was extremely overcrowded which led to the spread of numerous diseases (typhus, tuberculosis, typhoid fever and dysentery), and also severe malnutrition, resulting in a vast increase in the number of deaths. Also at this point, the special status of the exchange prisoners no longer applied, which meant that all those held within Bergen-Belsen were subject to starvation and epidemics. In total, an estimated



50,000 Jews, Czechs, Poles, anti-Nazi Christians, Homosexuals and Roma and Sinti (Gypsies) died at Bergen-Belsen camp.

In April 1945 liberation came and the camp was to be taken control of by 58th Anti-Aircraft Regiment, one of their first tasks was to touch base with the SS administration. They were found barricaded in their barrack block, not surprisingly, fearing for their lives.

Prisoners were overjoyed at being free, and for a moment past memories of the horrors they had seen and lived through forgotten. As the realisation began to sink in, so did the thoughts of revenge. The Kapos were rounded up and killed by the prisoners. Around 160 being killed by either stoning or other violent means.

In early April 1945, two German Officers informed the advancing British 11th Armoured Division, that on the outskirts of the small village of Belsen was a concentration camp holding a very large numbers of inmates. Negotiations for the transfer of Bergen-Belsen camp took days. However, on the evening of the 12th April 1945, a cease-fire agreement was signed between the local German Military Commander and the British Chief of Staff, Brigadier General Taylor-Balfour, declaring Bergen-Belsen and an area of 48 square kilometres a neutral zone.

Until British troops were able to take over, it was agreed that the camp would be guarded by Hungarian soldiers and soldiers from the German Wehrmacht (Regular Army). These soldiers were assured free return passage to German lines after the arrival of the British. The camp staff (SS soldiers) remained in their posts to carry on with their duties until relieved, there was nothing in the agreement as to what their fate would be. Prior to the handover of the camp, the SS had managed to destroy all the administration files, thus destroying any written evidence of the atrocities which had taken place.

British soldiers first arrived at the Germany Army Training Garrison next door to the concentration camp and it is here the transfer of the neutral territory took place. The Bergen-Belsen concentration camp was voluntarily handed over to the Allied 21st Army Group, which was a combination of

both British and Canadian forces on the afternoon of Sunday 15th April, authorised by SS Henrich Himmler. Himmler had been the man in charge of all the concentration camps. The camp was to be handed over a day earlier, but Bergen-Belsen was in the middle of a war zone and the fighting between Allied and German troops within the area caused a delay.

The scenes that greeted British troops were described by the BBC's Richard Dimbleby:

"Here over an acre of ground, lay dead and dying people. You could not see which was which. The living lay with their heads against the corpses and around them moved the ghostly procession of emaciated, aimless people, with nothing to do and with no hope of life, unable to move out of your way, unable to look at the terrible sights around them.

Babies had been born here, tiny wizened things that could not live. A mother, driven mad, screamed at the British sentry to give her milk for her child, and thrust the tiny mite into his arms, then ran off, crying terribly. He opened the bundle and found the baby had been dead for days. This day at Belsen was the most horrible of my life."

Due to the initial small numbers of British troops, the Hungarians were allowed to remain in charge and only Kramer was arrested. Emergency medical care, clothing and food were supplied by the British. The water supply had been sabotaged by the departing German soldiers, this had to be re-established. Revenge killings also took place in the satellite camp the SS had

created in part of the German Army Training camp. Prisoners from Mittelbau-Dora had been relocated there, being in a much better physical condition than the majority of the others, these men turned on those what had been the supervisors whilst at Mittelbau.

Brigadier Llewellyn Glyn-Hughes was the medical officer in charge of the relief operation. The terrible epidemics in camp had been one of the main reasons that the camp had been surrendered so easily. Over the days that followed, surviving prisoners were deloused and moved to the German Army Training Camp, which became known as the Displaced Persons (DP) camp.

Over the following weeks, almost 30,000 of the remaining survivors were moved there. The Allied troops forced the remaining SS prisoners to bury thousands of bodies that were in various stages of decomposition and had been left in heaps all over camp. These bodies were buried in mass graves about a kilometre from the camp in a remote area.

Bergen-Belsen concentration camp was then burned to the ground; this was due to the typhus epidemic and the louse infestation. The concentration camp was no more, and Bergen-Belsen DP camp was then what it became known as.

Although the camp had been liberated and medical services made available, a further 9,000 died in April, and by June a further 4,000 had died. Despite systems to overcome the weak inmates due to long term starvation, they were unable to handle the likes of skimmed milk. A rice and sugar

based mix which had achieved good results in the Bengal Famine of 1943 was used and recovery of personnel started.

The former German Army Training Camp became the largest Displaced Camp in the British zone of occupied Germany.

The camp played a key role and focal point for a displaced Jewish community. Eventually housing over 11,000 Jews, the British Military had to prevent any more DPs from entering.

The British also tried to rename the Camp Hohne, causing friction with the Jewish community, who refused to accept this and for political and symbolic reasons continued to call it Bergen-Belsen DP camp.

The camp had not totally been given over to the DPs, it was shared with units of the British Army, who were part of the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR).

Social lives started to flourish in the DP camp, with the survivors starting to rebuild their lives. Family life began again and soon marriages were taking place and schooling organised.

In March 1946, the British handed over the running of the camp to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). However, by 1950 when the DPs had departed, Hohne Camp was passed over to the British Army.

Major work was carried out throughout the camp. As each camp was completed, fresh British troops were moved into their new accommodation, Hohne Camp was being prepared for the next chapter in its history. ■

Christmas Greetings

1939

France

England

Algiers

Augusta

Catania

Messina

Taranto

Barletta

Normandy

Ouistrhem

Gacé

River Orne

Brussels

Albert Canal

Escaut Canal

Arnhem



112 COMPANY
PIONEER CORPS

Nijmegen

S'Hertegboch

Weert

Maastricht

Opgrimby

Venlo

Gennup

River Maas

Goch

Appledorn

River Rhine

Bremen

The Elbe

Saltau

Luneberg

Kiel

1945

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Norman Brown

RECENTLY purchased the Christmas card on the left - a 1945 Christmas Card from 112 Company Pioneer Corps. As can be seen this Company certainly moved a great deal during its six years in existence.

It was part of the BEF in 1940, went to N Africa, Malta, Sicily and Italy before returning to UK ready for D Day - it actually landed in Normandy on D Day.

The Officer Commanding was at one time in charge of the former French Battleship HMS Courbet - it is believed this is only occasion when an Army officer has been in charge of a Battleship.

It went through France, Belgium, Holland and was involved in the crossing of the Rhine before moving through Germany.

The following is a copy of the war diary of this unit together with a report on smoke operations following D Day.

17 Jan 40 Formed in ST GILES DES BOIS (part of 4 Group) from reservists as follows:-

160 Manchesters, 12 Lancashire Fusiliers, 4 South Lancs, 2 East Lancs & 1 King's Maj J Baxendale MC - OC

22 Jan 40 50 AMPC ORs TOS

6 Feb 40 25 AMPC ORs TOS

12 Feb 40 Joined 7 Group

25 Feb 40 Since formation the Coy has been employed on earth works and railway construction at 1 BSD

8 Mar 40 Moved by road to LA HAVERDAIS - railway construction near FAY Station

14 May 40 Joined 17 Group

16 May 40 Moved to RENNES - railway construction

20 May 40 Lt T W Pratt & 50 ORs - attached to 19 coy at PLOUART

26 May 40 Lt J McN Rankin & 30

ORs - sent to CHATEAUNEUF for guard duties at 22 BAD

No Diary for June and July 1940

17 Jun 40 Composite Coy formed:- 58 Coy Diary

30 men of 55 Coy

44 men of 58 Coy

30 men of 64 Coy

30 men of 112 Coy

Entrained for ST MALO. Train bombed and machine gunned with a few casualties - all kit was lost since the train caught fire.

Continued journey by road. Embarked about 1730 hours

3 Aug 40 Left No 2

Centre, GLASGOW for PRESTON (24 Group) - miscellaneous duties in scattered detachments

26 Feb 41 Land mine exploded on billet, which was destroyed. 13 killed & 3 men admitted to hospital a further 50/60 suffering from cuts, shock and superficial injuries

8 Mar 41 Moved to BIGGLESWADE (60 Group) - ammunition, clearing woodland, road construction and drainage

14 Apr 41 4 sections at SANDY - ASD

1 section at CHICKSANDS - ASD

1 section at PARKWOOD - ASD

1 section at SOUTHILL - ASD

3 sections at CROXTON - CSD

1 Sep 41 2 sections at TEMPFORD

- GPO. 2 sections at CHICKSAND Wood - ammunition

6 sections at SANDY - ammunition

8 Dec 41 No change in location - work much the same - 1st 'Q' section taken on

3 Jan 42 HQ & 7 sections - move to MARSTON MORETEYNE, Beds

2 sections - move to WOBURN SANDS

9 sections at MSD - 1 with RASC at CAXTON - 1 with GE BEDFORD

1 Feb 42 Under 31 Group

31 Mar 42 Part of 18 Group

May 42 50 men a day training remainder at 11 MSD

25 Jul 42 Ordered to mobilise

17 Sep 42 Under 71 Group

31 Dec 42 Coy now doing secret training - all have had embarkation leave

Jan 43 Engaged on a smoke exercise

21 Jan 43 Moved to POLLOK

Camp, GLASGOW - training

26 Feb 43 Moved to BRANDON, Suffolk - part of 31 Group

6 Mar 43 ½ coy moved to NEWMARKET

HQ & ½ coy moved to DIDDLINGTON

4 Apr 43 HQ moved to

BRANDON, Suffolk

Coy once again mobilised and men sent on embarkation leave

11 May 43 CSM Packer - tos vice Bullock (to WOSB)

2 sections under Lt A L Cleland to Scotland for training

Whole Coy now undertaking 'smoke' training

26 Jun 43 Embarked LIVERPOOL for CLYDE

30 Jun 43 Left CLYDE

10 Jul 43 Arrived ALGIERS but did not disembark

14 Jul 43 Sailed from ALGIERS

16 Jul 43 Arrived MALTA

18 Jul 43 Left MALTA

19 Jul 43 Disembarked AUGUSTA, Sicily - training (little work)

5 Aug 43 HQ & 4 sections - move to CATANIA to operate a smoke circuit

7 Aug 43 Remainder of Coy move to CATANIA

16 Aug 43 72 men training on captured enemy AA guns

4 sections on smoke duties

28 Aug 43 4 sections at MESSINA - smoke

2 sections at MILAZZO - smoke

11 Sep 43 HQ moved to MESSINA

23 Sep 43 Concentrated at

CATANIA

27 Sep 43 Landed at TARANTO, Italy - smoke duties. Take over 772 Italians and re-organise Italian smoke arrangements

8 Oct 43 2 sections to BARLETTA

under Lt E R Badman

10 Nov 43 Commenced training

1981 (Bech) Coy on Smoke. Still 750

Italians under command

7 Dec 43 BARLETTA detachment returned to TARANTO

13 Dec 43 Experimenting with generators as mobile sea screens

20 Dec 43 Handed over TARANTO

smoke to 1981 Coy

22 Dec 43 Embarked

4 Jan 44 Disembarked GOUROCK

5 Jan 44 Moved to LEWES

23 Jan 44 Moved to SEAFORD and ordered to mobilise

6 sections training - 4 sections working

6 Feb 44 4 sections hutting at CHICHESTER

22 Feb 44 1 section to SHOREHAM Coy work - hutting, roads and clearing beach defences

18 Mar 44 CHICHESTER & SHOREHAM detachments rejoin Coy

3 Apr 44 Moved to SOUTHEND ON SEA - smoke training with 50 Group

8 May 44 Moved to HORSHAM - training

20 May 44 Moved into Marshalling Area

3 Jun 44 Embarked

SOUTHAMPTON

6 Jun 44 Off French coast - recce party landed. Main landing held up owing to Rhino service being unsatisfactory

7 Jun 44 LSTs beached and dry landing made. Suffered 4 casualties immediately on landing. Commenced setting out smoke circuit

12 Jun 44 Smoke being used consistently on 'Queen' beach - little on 'Mike' and none on 'King'

15 Jun 44 HQ moved to

LANGRUNE

20 Jun 44 New smoke circuit laid out at OUISTREHAM - not for immediate use

31 Jun 44 'Queen' beach being shelled daily

25 Jun 44 Pte Burgess died from wounds caused by a delay action AA shell - First fatal casualty

30 Jun 44 AA screen set up on 'Queen' beach under OCs control from HMS 'COURBET.' OC has complete control over Army and RN personnel and boats. Congratulations from high Army and Navy authorities

22 Jul 44 OC discontinued control from HMS 'COURBET' and returned to HQ

26 Jul 44 'COURBET' received 3 direct hits in shelling. Navy requests smoke screen to start again

29 Jul 44 OC appointed to take over smoke commitment from all Army and Navy VPs on eastern flank

30 Jul 44 'COURBET' received further direct hit

9 Aug 44 Human

torpedo attack on 'COURBET'

14 Aug 44 Enemy shelling COURCELLES smoke points - 1 destroyed

17 Aug 44 'COURBET' hit by 2 more shells - 1 man of Coy taken off with shock

21 Aug 44 Smoke circuit except OUISTERHAM being dismantled

24 Aug 44 Ceased being under command of 80 AA Bde (I Corps) and came under 2nd Army Troops (VIII Corps) - 63 Group for administration

26 Aug 44 Moved to GACE

31 Aug 44 Joined 13 Group

2 Sep 44 Moved to ABANCOURT and commenced camp construction for 2nd Army Main HQ

6 Sep 44 Moved to LOOMBEEK, Belgium - camp construction under 56

Group

10 Sep 44 Moved to HOLEBECK, Belgium

20 Sep 44 HQ moved to LINDEN

OVERPELT - detachment to VIII Corps for operational smoke duties

28 Sep 44 Moved to NIJMEGEN, Holland - whole unit on operational smoke duties

30 Sep 44 10 ORs wounded by shelling

8 Oct 44 After a few days operating at NIJMEGEN under heavy shelling and air attack the Coy moved to MIERLOO for refit and rest – handing over to 810 Coy

10 Oct 44 Lt A Birks and detachment moved to MILL, Holland

12 Oct 44 Detachment of Coy formed part of the guard on occasion of the inspection of VIII Corps by HM The King.

14 Oct 44 Coy transport now consists of 19 x 3 ton trucks; 5 x 15 cwts; 1 Jeep and 12 Motorcycles

23 Oct 44 Lt S G O'Dell and detachment commence smoke operations with 51st (Highland) Division until 27th

31 Oct 44 Moved to WOENSEL, Holland

2 Nov 44 2 parties left for XII Corps and located at VUGHT

1 Dec 44 3 ½ sections on smoke duties with XII and XXX Corps – remainder training

6 Dec 44 XXX Corps now have 7 sections standing by for smoke duties

18 Dec 44 7 men wounded by splinters from flying bomb

19 Dec 44 Coy less detachment moved to EINDHOVEN – training

15 Jan 45 110 men commence work on roads
1 section standing by for smoke rest on detachment

29 Jan 45 2 officers & 77 ORs now on smoke operations with 43rd Division remainder training

30 Jan 45 Whole Coy together again

2 Feb 45 Move to NIJMEGEN

13 Feb 45 Coy relieved by 805 Coy on NIJMEGEN front – detachments operating.

22 Feb 45 Part of 41 Group

24 Feb 45 Heavy shelling of NIJMEGEN – 2 wounded

28 Feb 45 Detachment of 3 officers & 100 men move to GOCH for operations with 53 Division. Small party remains at ZELDERHEIDE

3 Mar 45 Standing by

17 Mar 45 HQ & 9 sections move to APPELDORN – 1 section at ZELDERHEIDE joins on 18th – working on anti-observation over Rhine in preparation for Rhine crossing

29 Mar 45 Moved to DINGEN, Germany – 1 section standing by for smoke rest on camp construction

3 Apr 45 50 men mopping up stragglers captured 50 prisoners

4 Apr 45 Further 116 German stragglers captured

5 Apr 45 Moved to HOLLICH, Germany – camp construction

9 Apr 45 Moved to IBBENSBUREN – 150 men on camp construction at Army Main HQ

15 Apr 45 Moved to BORSTEL – part of 101 Group

17 Apr 45 CSM Spencer – 'Mentioned'
Sgt S A Johnson – awarded French Croix de Guerre and 'Mentioned'

19 Apr 45 50 men on camp construction
12 trucks moving PC units
50 men escorting German PWs

25 Apr 45 Moved to FRIETINGEN,

Germany

3 May 45 Moved to LUNEBURG – detachments with VIII and XII Corps rejoined unit

9 May 45 Now on guard duty at No 2 Lager – 6000 prisoners

4 Jun 45 No 2 Lager closed – Coy training

15 Jun 45 Under 79 Group

20 Jun 45 Moved to KIEL – guard duty at food depots

25 Jul 45 5 sections of 119 Coy – tos
Coy has 12 sections – 1 section sent to COPENHAGEN

31 Dec 45 Still at KIEL – guarding food, petrol and coal

8 Mar 46 Maj F B Booker – tos OC vice Harrison (sos release)

30 Jun 46 Last Diary entry
Still at KIEL
W.O. Records state the Coy was disbanded on 30 Jun 46 but I do not think this is correct as the Diary entry of that date does not mention that disbandment mooted or is in progress.

Smoke Operations – 112 Company Pioneer Corps by Maj JCF Harrison, Officer Commanding

For the invasion of France this unit was instructed to land on the first tide, 4 recce parties of three to survey the land and prepare for the main body landing on the second tide. The recce parties landed according to plan but owing to unforeseen circumstances the main body landed on the morning of D + 1. Through this delay in landing the main body, the recce parties were forced to lay out a temporary circuit with the aid of RAF personnel and any other troops that could be mustered, and a screen was put up during the night of D day to cover Queen beaches.

From D - Day to 20 Aug 44 the whole Company was spread out along the beaches Nan, Mike and Queen, the whole area being covered by smoke circuits which were manned by night and day. During this period very little smoke was put up on Nan and Mike Beaches, but Queen Beach being subject to very heavy shell fire it was found necessary to prepare and man a day screen for anti-artillery purposes.

To make this screen a success the old battleship COURBET was used as a sea-borne smoke HQ and smoke emission point. It is considered worthy to record that 112 Coy PC claim to be the only Pioneer Company having a battleship on its strength. This ship was approximately 1½ miles from the shore near the entrance to the river Orne and was in contact with Smoke Control on the land circuits by wireless. To make a complete success of this screen the following craft, vehicles and stores were used. 4 DUKWs for supplying the craft with generators, food, water, etc. 4 boats manned by naval ratings and marines, but under command of OC 112 Coy to cover the bay to the COURBET, and between the COURBET and the shore a RHINO was used to cover the gap between ship and shore. For supply purposes 12 RASC lorries were attached and kept fully in use. For communications 6 wireless sets 38's and 18's were used, and at the beginning manned by Signal personnel until our own personnel could be trained. Whilst this anti-artillery screen was being manned,

the men and craft were under spasmodic shell fire from the batteries at Le Havre and human torpedo attacks from the sea, and of course by air attacks. The battleship COURBET was hit during this time by approximately 20 shells and 1 human torpedo the only casualties on board being 1 signaller killed and 1 Pioneer wounded.

In addition to the beach screen orders were issued by 80 AA Bde under whose command the Company were serving, to have a party of 1 Offr and 7 men standing by for smoke duties in the forward areas. On the 9 Jul 44 the first party was ordered to report to 43 Div to cover 'No mans land' at Verson for the 7th Somerset L.I. to attack.

On the 6 Aug 44 a further party of 2 Offrs and 24 ORs was ordered to report to 59 Div for laying a screen over the bridge Across the RIVER ORNE. To establish the Circuit it was necessary to cross the river and take advantage of high ground on the East Bank. In spite of enemy fire, the personnel and stores were, ferried over the bridge with jeeps, and the circuit established on the East Bank. Owing to enemy counter attacks and concentrated artillery fire on the bridge head, the tactical situation changed, and the detachment was ordered to withdraw. During the withdrawal 1 Offr and 3 ORs were killed, and 2 ORs wounded. Four jeeps were damaged but were subsequently recovered. The detachment stood by at the disposal of 59 Div until the 11 Aug 44.

On the 1 Sep 44 the Company having completed its duties on the beaches was attached to Second Army (Main) for camp construction duties and standing by for any smoke operations that may be required.

It is considered worthy to record that from 6 Jun 44 until 1 Sep 44 the whole Company was employed on the above operations, continuously under shelling and bombing attacks, working day and night shifts without it being possible to allow the men to have any time off at all. This I consider compares favourably with any infantry record.

On the 11 Sep 44 a detachment of 1 Offr and 30 ORs was ordered to report to 12 Corps, being allotted to 50 Div to cover the bridge across the Albert Canal at M.R. 043857, Sheet 3. The first night on operations the enemy made a counter attack and advanced to within 200 yards of the detachment who were given the approach road to the bridge to defend. The personnel took up positions but the attack was beaten off and the men returned to their former role of laying a smoke screen. A change-over was taking place, 50 Div being replaced in positions over the Canal, by 15 Scottish Div, and a smoke circuit was laid out to cover the bridges from observation or aimed fire during the period in which the change-over was being effected. No enemy activity was directed against the bridges, and the circuit was discontinued on the 13 Sep 44. The detachment remained under command of 12 Corps for further smoke operations.

On the 13 Sep 44 another detachment was ordered to report to 30 Corps and on arrival ordered to stand by. On the 25 Sep 44, 1 NCO and 10 men from this detachment was sent to 129 Bde, being ordered on the 26 Sep 44 to lay a screen across the River WAAL to act as a decoy.

The men were warned to expect a hot reception from the enemy on lighting the generators, but fortunately the reception was not so and the operation was completed successfully and without casualties.

On the 22 Sep 44 a smoke detachment was called forward to cover the day reinforcement of the bridgehead North of the NEDER RIJN. As the reinforcement took place during the nights 23/24, 24/25 the smoke detachment was not called upon to smoke. When it was decided to withdraw troops from the bridgehead this detachment was deployed in two parties. The first of these provided a smoke screen as part of a dummy assault crossing. The second party deployed on both flanks of the line of withdrawal to put a smoke screen over the river if the wind was in a Southerly direction. As it turned out the wind was North Westerly and the smoke screen was provided by smoke shells.

On the 18 Sep 44 another detachment of 2 Offrs and 46 ORs was ordered to report to 8 Corps and on arrival allotted to 3 Brit Div for smoke duties. On the 19 Sep 44 one party from this detachment crossed the SQUAT CANAL with the infantry in assault boats carrying a generator in each hand. After working their way forward under Intermittent MG fire an anti-shelling screen was established approximately 700 yards on the eastern flank of the assaulting infantry. This screen was manned for two days, the detachment occupying the forward positions of the infantry, and being under small arms fire from enemy positions. The control of smoke was vested in the CRE, 3 Brit Div. On the 20 Sep 44, aimed fire being no longer a hazard, the detachments set up an AA screen around each bridge. The screens were manned day and night under control of the bridge defence Coy, 185 Inf Bde. The screens were discontinued on the 25 Sep 44, one detachment returning to Coy HQ and one detachment remaining under command of 8 Corps for further operations.

On the 28 Sep 44 the Company, less 1 detachment with 12 Corps and 1 detachment with 8 Corps, ceased to be attached to Second Army Main, and were allotted to 30 Corps for screening the bridges across the RIVER WAAL at Nijmegen. An AA screen was established on both sides of the river, covering the whole bridge area. The screen was manned day and night, smoke being put up under orders from AA defences, during periods when the bridges were subject to air attacks. During the whole of this period, the area was under constant enemy shelling, and was also subject to bombing attacks. Casualties during the operation were 10 ORs wounded.

On the 1 Oct 44 the detachment with 8 Corps moved to MOOK on the River Maas, and was placed under command of the CRE 30 Corps, to cover a bridge being erected over the river. An AA screen was established on both banks of the river, covering the complete bridging area. Two anti-shelling screens were also established approximately ½ a mile down the river to screen the bridging site from enemy positions in the Reichswald Forest. The control of the smoke was vested in the Smoke Officer, and all of the screens were manned during the whole of the bridging

operations. Although the area was subject to shelling and bombing attacks, the detachment suffered no casualties. The screens were discontinued on the 9 Oct, and the detachment returned to 8 Corps Main for further smoke operations.

On the 20 Oct 44 the detachment under command of 12 Corps was placed at the disposal of the CRE, 51 (H) Div to screen bridging operations at St. Nichielsceste, and Halder. Acting in two parties the detachment stood by during bridging operations by 274 Bridge Coy RE. On the 25 Oct 44 a further bridging operation was carried out by CRE 51 (H) Div at Esch and the detachment provided an operational party standing by during the operations. This detachment returned to Coy HQ at Mierloo on 27 Oct 44.

The detachment with 8 Corps was released from operational duties and returned to Coy HQ. The Whole Company was now together located at Mierloo, undergoing a rest and re-fit.

On the 31 Oct 44 the Company moved to Eindhoven, and whilst standing by for operational duties under CW 2nd Army, carried out extensive re-fresher training.

On the 2 Nov 44, two detachments, each consisting of 1 Offr, 20 Smoke operators, plus signallers, transport and operational stores, were placed under command 12 Corps and proceeded to Oisterwijk. The detachments were under control of 51 (H) Div to screen an assault crossing of the Afterwaterings Canal. Owing to the tactical situation and wind conditions, only one small operational party was used, this party laying down a screen in the Canal on the right flank of the assault being made by 153 Bde. On this occasion the American Smoke Floats were used for the first time being placed in the water by the personnel under protective covering fire of a tank. After standing by at Vucht for 48 hours for any further operations, the two detachments returned to Company HQ on the 6 Nov 44.

On the 13 Nov 44 two detachments, each consisting of 1 offr, 11 Smoke operators, signallers, cooks DRs, plus transport and operational stores were placed under command of 12 Corps, and moved to Weert, to be in support of an assault crossing of the Nederweert Canal to be made by 51 (H) Div. A large smoke plan had been prepared by the Artillery and our smoke was required to fill in any gaps in the Canal to prevent enemy observations onto the assaulting troops. On the 14 Nov 44 a small operational party, equipped with Bren Carriers, took up position approx 400 yards to the left flank of 153 Bde. During the assault, the party moved to the Canal bank in the carriers to lay smoke floats to fill in the smoke screen over the Canal. During the operation three prisoners were captured by the operational party. The two detachments remained at Weert under command of 12 Corps for further operations.

On the 17 Nov 44, a detachment consisting of 1 Offr, 12 Smoke Operators, signallers, cooks and complete stores and transport, proceeded to Asten, under command of 15 Scottish Div (8 Corps). The detachment stood by to cover an assault crossing and bridging operations but owing to the tactical situation were not required to operate. The detachment remained under

orders until the 22 Nov 44 when they returned to Coy HQ.

On the 23 Nov 44 a detachment consisting of 1 Offr, 20 Smoke Operators, signallers, cooks etc, and complete stores and transport were placed under command 30 Corps, and proceeded to Opgrimby. On the 5 Dec the operational strength of this detachment was increased by 5 complete sections and 2 Offrs. The whole detachment under command 30 Corps laid out a smoke circuit along the axis of advance of 30 Corps. The screen was not operated owing to changes in the Army Tactical plan, and the detachment remained under command 30 Corps.

On the 30 Nov 44 the two detachments under 12 Corps, moved from Weert to Hedden, and were placed under command of 15 Scottish Div to cover an assault on Blerick on the River Mass. The detachments were allocated to each flank of the attack, and with the use of armoured cars were to go forward with the assault laying an anti-shelling screen. The weather conditions were very bad, and the whole attack was made by tracked vehicles, and considerable difficulty was experienced by the detachment using wheeled scout cars. The two detachments left command of 12 Corps on the 4 Dec 44 and returned to Coy HQ at Eindhoven.

On the 24 Jan 45, the detachment at Opgrimby left command of 30 Corps and came under operational command of 12 Corps. A smoke circuit was sent out from Heinsberg to Drennan, to protect the Corps axis of advance from enemy observation, and was operated on the 26 Jan 45. The detachment, continued to man this screen, until the 29 Jan 45. During the operations at Opgrimby casualties sustained were 7 ORs wounded.

On the 30 Jan 45 the whole detachment returned from 12 Corps to Company HQ and the whole Company were located together at Eindhoven.

On the 2 Feb 45 the Company left 2nd Army and came under command of 1st Canadian Army, operational control being by 3 Cndn Inf Div. The Company complete with stores moved to Nijmegen.

On the 4 Feb 45 orders were received for operation "Veritable", the Company to lay a smoke screen along the line of the bank of the Rhine, to protect the Div area from enemy observation. The operation commenced on the 9 Feb 45, when a detachment of 1 Offr and 36 O.Rs, using Buffaloes to cover the flooded areas, proceeded to the dyke on the River banks and laid out and operated a smoke screen far approximately 2,500 yards. By relieving the personnel on the dyke each day, the screen was manned daily and extended to 5,000 yards. On the 11 Feb 45, 803 Smoke Coy began taking over our original smoke points as this Company went forward behind the attack, extending the screen forward on the river banks in line with the attack. The screen was constantly pushed forward behind the line of attack until the 13 Feb 45. On the 13 Feb 45 the Company ceased to take any part in the smoke screen on the dykes, and remained at Nijmegen for operations under 30 Corps.

On the 11 Feb 45 a detachment, consisting at 1 Offr and 49 O.Rs, with complete stores and transport proceeded to the area of Gennep under command of 30

Corps, 1st Canadian Army. In face of heavy shelling and mortar fire, a smoke screen was put round the bridge area at Gennep, while a bridge was constructed over the River Niers. The smoke screen was put up on the following day to protect the bridge from enemy observation while troops and supplies were being taken across the river.

On the 14 Feb 45 the above detachment, moved from Gennep to Zolderheide, and were joined by a further operational party from Coy HQ, consisting of 2 Offrs and 70 ORs, complete with stores and transport. The whole party was under command of 30 Corps and stood by to lay an anti-shelling screen to cover the road from Gennep to Hekkens crossroad. In the meantime, a small operational party crossed the river Niers by buffalo and put up a smoke screen to cover the Hekkens crossroads which was being subjected to concentrated enemy artillery fire. The screen was maintained until nightfall, one casualty being sustained. The detachment stood by on this screen during the 15 and 16 Feb. On the 16 Feb 45, while serving the smoke circuit, a three tonner was wrecked by a mine, one casualty being sustained. The detachment was stood down on the 16 Feb 45 and returned to billets at Zelderheide.

On the 23 Feb 45 a small operational party with complete stores left Zelderheide and proceeded to the railway track on the western approach to Goch. A smoke circuit was laid out, approximately 2500 yds long, to be ready to put up an anti-shelling screen to protect three tank regiments which were moving into Goch. This screen was not operated but the party stood by all day to operate the screen if necessary. The party returned to detachment HQ at nightfall.

A further operational party went forward to Goch on the 28 Feb in support of 53 Div and stood by to screen the town of Weeze from enemy OPs to the SW. The tactical situation, did not permit the use of smoke and the party returned to Zelderheide on the 1 Mar 45

On 1 Mar 45 a detachment stood by at Zelderheide at immediate notice to go forward to screen the Weeze - Udem road. Smoke Officer made contact with the Brigades operating in the area, but was not called upon to lay out the screen.

On 2 Mar 45 the operational party went forward, and laid out a smoke circuit covering the Weeze - Udem road under control of 158 Bde. The circuit was manned all day from 0800 hrs but as the anticipated enemy shelling did not take place, the screen was not required to put up smoke. The party returned to detachment HQ at Zelderheide.

During the above period, the remainder of the Company not engaged on operational duties, were still located at Nijeegen and were employed in building up forward dumps of generators which were required for future operations.

On the 12 Mar 45 a detachment consisting of 1 Offr and 67 ORs complete with stores and transport, moved from Zelderheide to Wardt, and came under command of Smoke Control, 2nd Army. The British 2nd Army were now forming a large smoke screen along the banks of the River Rhine, to cover the build-up of forces for the assault crossing of the river at a later date. The detachment took over an existing screen from 846 Smoke Coy, and smoke

was put up during the day until last light. The screen was also operated on the 13 Mar 45. The screen was manned on the 14 Mar 45, but no smoke was ordered. During the operation one severe casualty occurred, subsequently proving fatal.

On the 14 Mar 45, the Company returned to the British 2nd Army, and came under operational control of 8 Corps.

On the 15 Mar 45, the detachment at Wardt moved to Appeldorn, and were joined there by the balance of the detachment from Zelderheide, consisting of 1 Offr and 60 ORs, plus stores and transport. A new smoke circuit was laid out from Calcar to Xanten, linking in with the full 21 Army Group river screen. This screen approximately 10,000 yards long was operated from first light on the 16 Mar 45. The screen was manned day and night as required and smoke put up on orders from smoke control, 2nd Army. An addition to the screen was made on the 18 Mar 45 when the Company took over part of a screen at Calcar from 846 Smoke Coy.

On the 17 Mar 45, Coy HQ and balance of personnel, moved from Nijmegen to Appeldorn and established new Company location. During the 18 Mar 45 a recce was made on the line of the River banks, and a new circuit laid out along this line. This new circuit was approximately 10,000 yards long, and from the 19 Mar 45 took the place of the original circuit from Calcar to Xanten. This screen was operated day and night under orders from 2nd Army Smoke Control, during the whole build up on the Western banks of the Rhine, and was maintained up to the assault taking place at 21.00 hrs on the 23 Mar 45. During the whole of these operations, the Company personnel engaged on the screens on the river banks were subjected to heavy mortar fire and intermittent small arms fire from the enemy, but no severe casualties were sustained. Maintenance of the screen was a big problem owing to the high rate of burning, and all available Company transport and personnel not engaged in smoking, were constantly employed in bringing up generators from the Army Roadhead.

At 2100 hours on the 23 Mar 45, when the assault took place, the whole Company were placed under operational command of 30 Corps.

On the 24 Mar 44 the river circuit was manned in case of requirements while the build-up of the crossing was taking place. Part of the circuit was smoked to give light cover to the ferry crossings. During the afternoon of the 24 Mar an effort was made to put a screen in front of Rees by using buffaloes to drop smoke floats in the river. On the 25 Mar 44 a smoke screen was put up in front of Rees, from land points and also from buffaloes operating in the river. This screen was maintained on the 26 Mar 45 and a further screen put up on the opposite side of the river. Bridges were now being built, and an anti-observation screen was established on both banks of the river to the East of the bridging area to prevent enemy observation or aimed fire. During these operations the personnel engaged in smoking were subjected to enemy mortar fire, and small arms fire, but no casualties were sustained. These operations finished on the 28 Mar 45.

On the 29 Mar 45 the Company was attached to 2nd Army main for duties in Camp construction duties, while remaining available for smoke operations.

During the period 29 Mar to 24 Apr 45, the Company was not engaged in any operational role, but was attached to 2nd Army main for Camp construction duties. The Company moved forward with 2nd Army main to Hollich – Ibbenburen and on to Borstel. On the 25 Apr the Company ceased camp duties with Army main and reverted to a fully operational role under CW. The Company location was moved to Soltau.

On the 22 Apr 45 a detachment consisting of 1 Offr and 51 ORs plus complete stores and transport moved to Huchting under command of 30 Corps in support of 3 Brit Div for the assault on Bremen. The detachment was deployed in 51 (H) Div area, and a smoke circuit was established approx 4,000 yards in length to screen the left flank of 3 Brit Div when they assaulted. The screen was manned on the 23 Apr 45, all day on the 24 Apr 45, also during the night and up to 1600 hours on the 25 Apr 45, by which time 3 Brit Div were firmly inside Bremen. The detachment returned to Coy HQ at Soltau on the 26 Apr 45, having suffered no casualties.

On the 22 Apr 45 a further detachment of 1 Offr & 50 ORs stores and transport was placed under command of 30 Corps, and moved to 52 Div to support that Div in the assault on Bremen operating on the Eastern bank of the river. Smoke circuits were established, and the detachment moved forward supporting 52 Div. The detachment remained at Bremen at the disposal of 30 Corps until 7 May 45, returning to Coy HQ on the 8 May 45.

On the 3 May 45 the Company location was moved to Luneburg.

On the 27 Apr 45 two small operational detachments with complete stores and transport were placed under command of 8 Corps, and were deployed to cover the flanks of an assault crossing of the River Elbe. Successful smoke screens were maintained during the crossing, though the personnel were subject to bombing. Two trucks were burnt out and one damaged, and three men were wounded. The detachment stood by during the operations until 3 May 45. The detachment returned to Coy HQ on the 4 May 45.

On the 30 Apr 45 a detachment consisting of 2 Offrs and 42 ORs with complete stores and transport were placed under command of 12 Corps at Winsen to screen bridging operations over the river Elbe. Smoke circuits were established on both sides of the river, and were manned during the entire operation, standing by until 4 May 45. No casualties were suffered, and the detachment returned to Coy HQ on the 5 May 45.

It is interesting to record that the Company began its smoke operations on D-Day, and was engaged in operational smoke duties when hostilities ceased, the operational detachments returning back to Coy HQ after the end of Hostilities.

The total casualties from enemy action during the campaign were:

	Offrs	O.Rs
Killed	1	5
Died of wounds	-	1
Wounded	1	39 ■



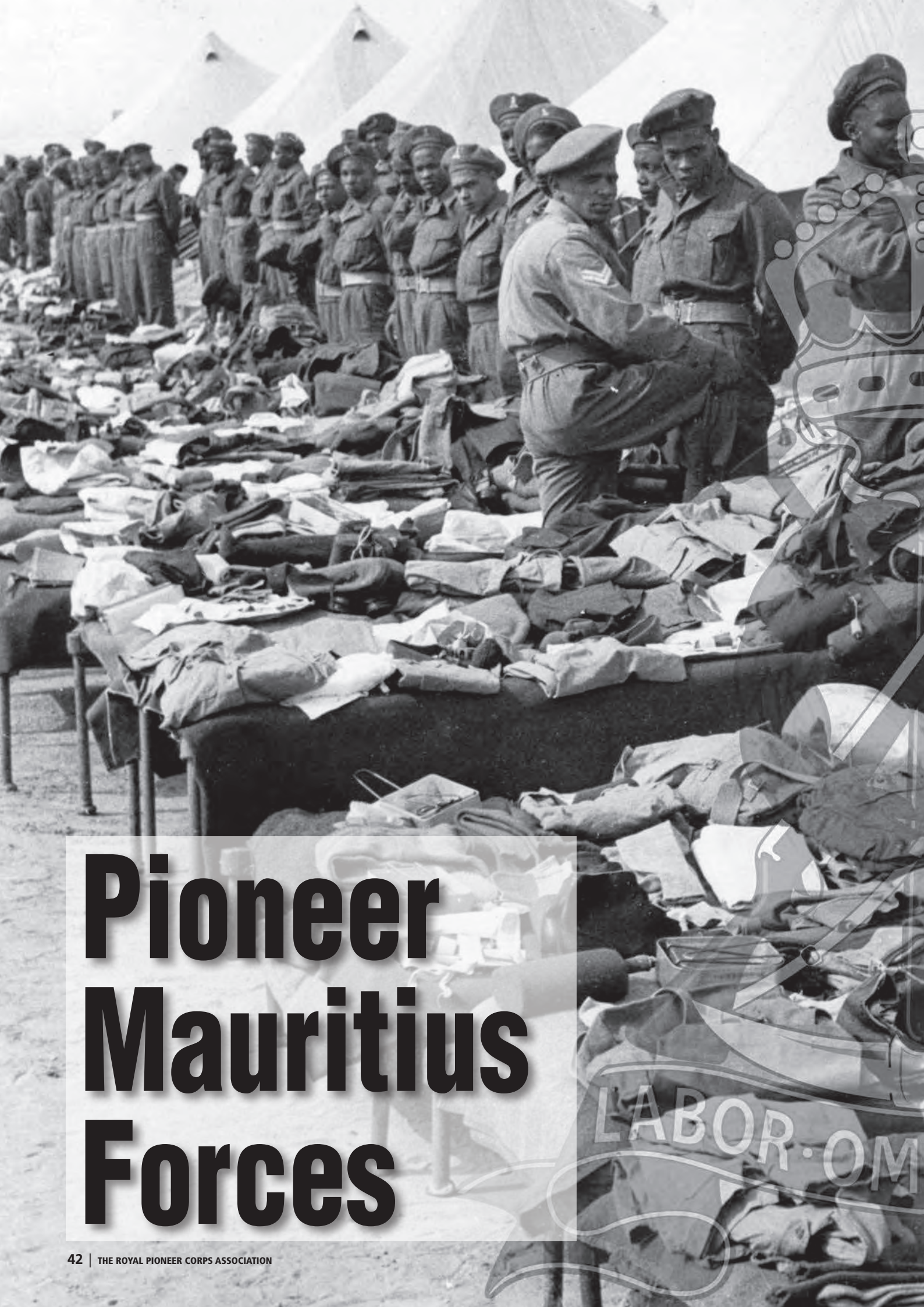
Check out the socks!

Allen Batchelor showing off his own customised red and green socks at the Cenotaph Parade. I have better ones for sale in the shop!

Picture: Paul Brown

THE PIONEER

THE ROYAL PIONEER CORPS ASSOCIATION | 41



Pioneer Mauritius Forces

LABOR-OM



INIA VINCIT

Towards the end of 1940 it was decided the Mauritians could be usefully employed as Pioneers. Recruiting proceeded very quickly and various Pioneer Companies were formed.

ALTHOUGH the Mauritius authorities approached the War office shortly after the outbreak of war with a view to providing such manpower as could be used beneficially, no large-scale recruiting commenced until late 1940. Prior to this however, a quite large number of Mauritians had volunteered for service with the RAF, RAOC, and certain other services, and many had already proceeded overseas for training.

Towards the end of 1940 it was decided the Mauritians could be usefully employed as Pioneers. Artizans, Stevedores and with Motor Transport Companies.

Accordingly, in November 1940 the military took over the Bell Village Housing Estate, near Port Louis, and officers of the local Territorial Force offered their services in connection with the training of recruits.

A Camp Staff was formed, consisting of Capt F Rountree (OC), Lt F Elliott, Lt D Sauzier (Adjnt) and Capt F C Lay MBE MC (QM) the latter being DO Royal Artillery who was loaned by 25th Coast Battery. Certain local gentlemen also volunteered for service with the Companies to be formed and an Officer and 6 British ORs were sent out from UK..

Recruiting proceeded very quickly and the following Companies were formed:-

1501 Mauritius Pioneer Coy

Lt G C Mayer
2Lt R Duclerc des Rauches
2Lt L G P Guimbeau
337 MORs

1502 Mauritius Pioneer Coy

Lt F de Brown
2Lt G J M Leclous
2Lt J M B Baissac
345 MORs

741 Mauritius Artizan Works Coy RE

Major Duncan Taylor
Capt G E Baker-Cresswell (ex UK)
2Lt J H Wiehe
CSM Greenhill, CQMS McNaughton, Sgt Gazlewood, Cpl Haigh, Cpl Carney, Cpl Butterworth. 250 MORs

The last-named Coy were trade-tested, 86 Carpenters, 34 Drivers, 6 Cooks, 32 Bricklayers, 12 Masons, 19 Electricians, 20 Fitters, 15 Painters, 23 Concreters, 3 Clerks. They proceeded overseas by HMT TALAMBA on 16 Jan 41.

Further recruiting proceeded immediately after these Companies embarked and a complete Motor Transport Coy RASC together with a further Pioneer Coy were raised as follows:-

1503 Mauritius Pioneer Coy

Lt M A Mayer
2Lt A E Sauzier
343 MORs

41st M/T Res Coy RASC

Capt E J Allan (ex UK)
Lt Rolls (from RSM ex UK)
Lt M J P Chasteau de Balyon

Some idea of the constitution of the MT Coy can be gained by the fact that it included 378 Drivers, 27 Fitters, Electricians,

Coachtrimmers, Turners and Carpenters. Both units embarked on HMT TALAMBA on 3rd April 41.

A draft of officers arrived from UK in the following June, also further British ORs. These included Majors Phillips and Cherry MC, Cpts Curtis and Colsell, Lts Phillips and Fountain, CSM Hollingsdale DCM MM, CSM Kent, CQMS Hall, CQMS Appleby, Sgts Woodhouse, Charman, Reed and Warrilow.

Major Phillips now assumed command of the Camp vice Capt Rountree and the following Coys were raised:-

1505 Mauritius Pioneer Coy

344 MORs

1506 Mauritius Pioneer Coy

348 MORs

Dock Operating Coy

202 MORs

All Officers mentioned above together with two local Officers - Lts Hein and Martin proceeded overseas with these Companies by HMT ISLAMI on 27 Sep 41. War Establishment for a permanent Training Centre being contemplated CSM Hollingdale of the British ORs posted for employment with these Coys was retained in Mauritius

En route to Mauritius, HMT ISLAMI called in at Rodrigues, a dependency of this Colony which has a population of only 9700, and embarked 350 volunteers for service with the Pioneers. These were formed into one Company. Physically they were a good sample, but the dental standard was very low. They were used to Mosquitoes but ignorant of the dangers of Malaria as this was non-existent at Rodrigues.

The result was a very high incidence of Malaria. The mental standard of these men was not high but they proved good workers under supervision. Much difficulty was experienced in finding the correct names of these soldiers as most of them knew only their 'nick-names.'

Meanwhile, recruiting was also continued locally and by the end of November 1941 two further Coys were ready for embarkation:-

1507 Mauritius Pioneer Coy

Capt R R Henry (ex UK)
2Lt M Cayeux
2Lt R Guimbeau
395 MORs

1508 Mauritius Pioneer Coy

Capt Curzon (ex UK)
2Lt L M Ulcoq
414 MORs

These embarked on HMT VARELA on 2nd Dec 41

Lt L Atkinson MM RNF ex Northumberland Fusiliers Training Depot (70 RNF) disembarked HMS CARTHAGE on 1st Dec 41 and the War Establishment for the Mauritius Pioneer Training Centre was approved on 11 Dec 41.

The following disembarkation from UK on 16 Dec 41:- Capt W E Allen, Lt F K Wright, 2Lts N F Soanes, E E Perry, L Y Millen, E P Scother also CSM Highfield, CQMS Metcalf, Sgts Angood, Wells, Caudwell and Robertson.

It was decided by War Office that no further Coys would be formed, but that reinforcements would be needed. Lt Wright returned to Durban as surplus to requirements Jan 42.

Recruiting again commenced and a draft of 475 MORs was raised during the next two months.

On 16th Feb 42 emergency commissions granted to 2Lts R de C Dumeé and N C Glenn. 6 Mar 42 Lt Atkinson re-granted Temp rank of Capt and appointed A/Major and Camp Commandant Mauritius Pioneer Training Centre.

The draft sailed on HMT ASCANIUS on 13 May 43.

Mauritius Pioneer Training Centre was now re-organised, the following being on permanent staff:-

Major Atkinson, Camp Comdt
2Lt Dumeé, Camp QM
2Lt Saeuier, Camp Adjnt
2Lt Scotcher, O/c Trg
CSM Hollingdale, Camp RSM
Sgt Robertson, Drill Instr
And 48 MORs of low medical Category

Sgt Angood proceeded to UK on compassionate grounds and was later granted a commission

Owing to a heavy RE Defence Works programme, personnel awaiting embarkation had been loaned to the RE for works. This proved so successful that some 50 tradesmen were held back from the last draft, and permission to raise a local Company sought. This was granted by ARMINDIA in Sept 42 and 370 men were recruited into the Pioneer Coy Mauritius Territorial Force.

In October 42 2Lt O M Adam was commissioned and 2Lt M E Barclay disembarked ex India together with Sgts McCarney, Cardwell, Cairns, Vincent, Dowler, Williams, Eves and Brabaeon. These had been demanded as drill instructors. All were of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers with the exception of Mr Barclay (Ghurkas).

The War Establishment of the local Coy was approved conditionally that Major Atkinson filled the vacancy of OC Coy in addition to that of OC MPTC, but vacancy 2IC (Capt) was filled by promotion of Lt Dumeé in December 42.

The work of this Coy included the clearance of dense undergrowth and construction of roads on Isle Aux Aigrettes and Isle de la Passe, also similar work at Points aux Fenilles and Points du Diable. This very arduous work was vigorously tackled as was later the man-handling and loading of guns into barges, and their later installation, the construction of concrete gun emplacements, of buildings and other essentials to hotted camp.

This Company, whilst being concerned for over 12 months with construction of buildings and other units, had no other accommodation apart from canvas for themselves, but no complaint was ever heard.

Early in 1943 Royal Signals commenced work on an ambitious programme that of linking up the whole of the military installations and units which had previously depended upon the civil telephone department. ARMINDIA was asked to approve the formation of a second Coy but

in the interim period Mauritius was placed under East Africa Command who, whilst approving the formation, laid down a W/E for the two Coys which in effect provided for only 40 additional personnel. Recruiting however had proceeded in anticipation of a duplication of the original W/E so that each of the two Coys were 300 strong instead of 200 as provided in the W/E.

Pioneer mobile detachments were attached to Sigs and erected poles and telephone wires from Mahebourg and coastal batteries, over the mountains to Vacos, and were responsible for the erection of a complete net-work of communications, carpenters making and erecting crosspieces and other tradesmen doing suitable other work, so that OC Sigs commented that these detachments were able to work for long periods without his supervision.

Also in early part of 1943 CSO visited Phoenix camp and discussed the question of enlistment of Mauritian for Sigs.

This was eventually decided upon and 200 Mauritian were placed in the Pioneer Camp Phoenix for their initial Infantry Training, which was undertaken by MPTC. NCOs were also loaned to Mauritius Coast Regt on formation for recruit training.

In June 1943, 1st Bn Mauritius Regt was unable to cope with intake of recruits for that Bn, and an arrangement was arrived at whereby recruits were first posted to Pioneer Camp for 6 weeks training until such time as they could be absorbed. On completion of recruiting to W/E it was decided to form a reserve '2nd Bn MR', and some 40 volunteers were transferred to form the nucleus of that Bn.

At about this time, Mid East called for a reinforcement of 35 MORs and these were immediately forthcoming, the men being discharged from their Home engagement and being re-enlisted in Pioneer Coys a few days prior to the date of embarkation.

East Africa also requested a number of Clerks, and 25 men were sent to this HQ by NSO. Only 14 of these were able to stand up to elementary training and these were embarked, the remainder being discharged as physically unfit with the exception of Pte Nadia, who was embarked on a later ship and unfortunately went down with this ship.

Also in July it was decided to form a Coast Security Section and these men were all volunteers from the Pioneers. Other personnel were later recruited to bring to full W/E. CSM Saydraouten was transferred to this Section - a procedure which did not please Maj-Gen Smallwood, who thought that Saydraouten would be more usefully employed with Infantry, Saydraouten declined to re-transfer.

A new War Establishment for Mauritius Recruiting and Training Centre was approved for the purpose of recruiting Clerks, Tailors, Shoemakers and other tradesmen for service in East Africa. HQ was a Bell Village, which had been vacated by Pioneer Trg Centre in July 42.

Towards the end of Nov 43 the accommodation at Phoenix was proving insufficient for the needs of both Pioneers and Signals, and it was decided that Pioneers should return to Bell Village, and also absorb the aforementioned unit.

The move took place immediately and on 1st Dec 43 the distribution of Pioneers was:- HQ Bell Village, No 1 Coy PGME - Bell

Village, No 2 Coy PMGR - Mahebourg, Defacements - Vacoas, Quartier Militaire, Point aux Feuilles, Point du Diable, Isles aux Aigrettes and Fort George. The detachment at Fort George was composed of a special camouflage squad which carried out a good deal of work for RE at various parts of the Island.

Lt E F Bishop (Kumaon Rifles) also arrived in early 1943 and was placed in command on No 2 Coy. He later however was appointed OC Trg to Pioneer Units and was both efficient and popular.

During December 1943, 17th (Ugandan) KAR disembarked at Port Louis, and were accommodated in Bell Village for several days pending embarkation of 1st Battalion, Mauritius Regt.

Shortly before 1st Bn MR embarked a new W/E was received which made a demand for 50 trained soldiers. 50 volunteers were immediately forthcoming from Pioneers, and after being interviewed by CO, all were accepted.

Also towards the end of 1943 this HQ was provided with a Lt (QM), ex RSM G J Christie being posted in to fill the vacancy.

A rather quiet period was experienced at the beginning of 1944 but the position regarding Officers was very acute, and in March Lt W Taylor and Lt I Richardson were posted to the Group from East Africa, both having served during the Madagascar Campaign.

It should here be mentioned that in order to regulate the command of various units in Mauritius, the Pioneer Training Centre, 2 Pioneers Coys of the Mauritius Regt, and the Mauritius Recruiting and Trg Centre were all abolished in Jan 44 and a new W/E approved for a Pioneer Group, Mauritius Regt. This provided for HQ and 1 Recruit Coy and 2 Works Coys. Lt Taylor was appointed OC of the Recruit Coy with the rank of A/Capt, the full list of officers on reorganisation being as follows:-

HQ

CO Maj L Atkinson MM
Adjt
QM Lt (QM) G J Christie

No 1 Coy

OC Capt P R de C Dumez
2i/c Capt O M Adam
Lt E P Scotcher

No 2 Coy

OC Capt W G Bishop (Ind Army)
2i/c Capt M E Barclay (Ind Army)
Lt I Richardson

Recruit Coy

OC Capt W Taylor
Capt H Avicé (on loan from HQ MR)

Mid East called for a reinforcement of 800 in March 1944 and recruiting proceeded immediately. Some 100 men from MTF Pioneer Coys immediately volunteered and were discharged from engagement and re-enlisted in the Pioneer Corps. The remainder of the recruits were enlisted within 3 weeks. It was impossible to spare an Officer for Draft Conducting and Lt Gough together with Sgts Winters and Sellars were posed from East Africa for that purpose. Also in the early days of 1944 some 100 volunteers for transfer to Pioneers from 1st Bn MR were also sent to

Mid East from Madagascar, the Bn being disbanded at that time and re-formed into Independent Guard Coys and an Artizan Works Coy.

The new War Establishment was approved w.e.f. 1 Jun 44 and the Group established with HQ, A, B & C Coys.

On 18th July 44 A/Capt Gough, 2 BORs and 796 MORs embarked on HMT SALVEEN for Mid East.

There was no further recruitment during 1944, but in October some 120 MORs were repatriated for leave and home service. Also disembarked from the same ship were 150 ORs ex 1st Bn MR who were to be discharged as "surplus to requirements". The discharges were carried out by this HQ on the same date.

A quiet period ensued, meanwhile the strength of the Group hovered round 700 - 800, all being fully employed on local works for RE, Sigs, Ord, whilst many Clerks, Drivers and miscellaneous tradesmen were attached to various units.

The beginning of 1945 was marked by the worst cyclone on record for over 50 years which resulted in the demolition of practically the whole of the temporary Military establishments and camps on the Island. These included the four Mauritius Coast Battery encampments, new buildings erected for the RASC detachment in Vacoas and for the Signals at Phoenix.

The greatest disaster, however, was the complete razing of Bell Village estate with the one exception of Group HQ building. Nothing but the bare walls remained of some 100 cottages built in brick and concrete, and even many of these walls had been blown down, whilst more than a further 100 stoutly built and composition houses which had withstood many near-cyclones for many years completely disappeared.

The loss of stores appeared likely to be colossal but by virtue of the splendid efforts of all ranks, the final write off was a mere £300, stores to the value of over £10,000 having been recovered some of these being collected from a distance up to a mile from the camp.

On surveying the devastated area, the local government decided to wash their hands of the camp (which was a pre-war housing estate), but the OC Troops decided that a certain amount of reconstruction could be undertaken, especially with a view of the desperate position regarding accommodation for the troops. Accordingly, a small party of RE set to work on salvage and reconstruction, the troops meanwhile being given permission to sleep at their own homes.

In March 45 Lt N C Glenn who had left Mauritius in May 42, returned to Mauritius with a draft of 321 MORs of low medical category. By the same ship was embarked a draft of 272 reinforcements.

Lt Glenn was appointed OIC Works, and buildings were repaired and made habitable at such a rate that within 6 months of the catastrophe it was possible to provide accommodation for between 400 and 500 men in the camp.

In April 1945 Lts A Clark, D Ball and H Lambert were disembarked and recruiting commenced immediately for two new Companies which had been demanded by Mid East. These were completed by the end of May and ready for embarkation.

Again more than half of these men were volunteers from Pioneer Coys MR.

Lt Darnell disembarked on 9 June 1945 and was TOS. A further small number of medical cases also disembarked for home service.

Shipping was not available until early August, but on the 10th of that month the two Companies embarked on HMT FRANCONIA. The draft was in charge of Capt Avice, whilst Capt Bishop, Lt Darrell, Lt Lambert, Lt Scotcher and Lt M Christie also proceeded by the same ship.

Also during the early part of August 45 there disembarked 1064 Docks Operating Coy with Maj Brown in command and Capt Ulcoq 2IC, the strength of the Coy was approximately 400. Disembarked from the same ship were 204 MORs of 741 Art Wks Coy under Lt Cateaux and a further 333 who had been repatriated for various reasons, the Group now had a strength of 1600.

Large scale releases were now ordered by East Africa Command, the first being the disbandment of 1064 Coy on 1st Oct 45. Authority was also given for the release of all men of low medical category, and with the first 11 Age and Service Groups being affected, releases commenced at a rate of approx 100 per week and continued at that rate until the end of the year.

Reorganisation was effected, 'A' Coy being converted into a Divisional Centre and 'B' Coy carrying all other personnel (less 'C' Works Coy) and acting as Depot. Strength of this Coy rose to well over 1400 at one period.

During the last two months of the year further drafts of 837, 160, 360 and 50 disembarked from Mid East.

Some very large amounts were paid to soldiers on release and a Branch of the Government Savings Bank was established in Bell Village.

The venture was so successful that almost a million rupees paid out to the end of the year, practically a half of this amount was invested in newly opened accounts, quite apart from the amount invested by those who already had deposit accounts in the bank. Average payments amounted to over £100 including plain clothes allowances.

During the year Major L Atkinson received the MBE whilst the Officer Commanding Troops - Col R E S Yeldham (Sherwood Foresters) was awarded the CBE for outstanding service.

One of the most creditable achievements during the past 4 years had been the fight against Malaria, especially in Bell Village which had enjoyed a terrible reputation, it having been said that no man ever escaped the dread disease who entered the Camp. From an average of 12% of the total strength in hospital from all causes in 1941/42 a steady decline had been effected and resulted in figures of 8% in 1943, 5% in 1944, and less than 3% for the whole of 1945.

During 1945 there was an epidemic of Infantile Paralysis followed by a cyclone but none of the personnel of this unit were affected. The shortage of food in the Island and the deterioration of conditions generally had the effect of inducing the majority of the men who had been struck off strength as Deserters to surrender themselves.

Pioneer Camp at Bell Village was also

used as a Transit Camp by various units of MR on disembarkation and those units were accommodated in some cases for several weeks pending the establishments of their own HQ. A Victory Parade was held on 16th Aug 45 and a detachment of Pioneers under Lt Glenn took part in this. 'VJ' Day celebrations were held on 6 Sep 45 and both 1064 Docks Operating Coy and an ex 741 Art Wks Coy men took part in this parade.

His Excellency the Governor, Sir Donald Mackenzie-Kennedy arrived back in the Colony on 3rd Jan 46. The Guard of Honour was composed of 100 men ex 741 Art Works Coy RE, who put up a splendid show. A further 100 men of this unit, also ex-overseas, formed the cordon from the quay-side.

The work of excavating and laying cables connected with RADAR from the top of Signal Mountain to Fort George was undertaken by this unit.

Towards the end of January 1946, proposals for the re-deployment of Ex-Service men were discussed, and the possibility of further service in the Mid East was mooted. In this connection Maj Atkinson proceeded to HQ East Africa Command by air on 23 Jan 46, Capt A Clark assuming temporary command of the Group.

A cyclone warning was received on 29 Jan 46 and the cyclone eventually passed near the West Coast of Mauritius during the night 31 Jan - 1 Feb 46. Several roofs were stripped off buildings, the cook-house demolished and considerable other damage was noted.

On 7 Feb 46 232 Mauritians and Rodriguais disembarked ex Mid East.

The former were sent home on leave and the latter accommodated in Fort George pending onwards movement to Rodrigues. Major Atkinson returned by air on 11 Feb 46, having made satisfactory proposals which had been approved by the Governors of both Mauritius and Seychelles, details to be settled by HQ MEF, HQ EAC, both Governors and OCT.

C in C Lt Gen Sir Keith Atkinson KCB, MC visited this HQ 12 Feb 46.

On 14 Feb 46, 161 Rodriguais left by SS HUNAN for Rodrigues. Lt Rochecouste, Lt Pontre and 2 Sgts accompanied the draft for the purpose of completing the release of these men on disembarkation at Rodrigues.

As a result of the visit of the C in C, it was decided that disbandment of 101 Ind Gd Coy MR, 102 Ind Gd Coy MR, 131 Art Wks Coy MR, and the Depot MR, should be effected, and this HQ would be responsible for release procedures.

First batch of 40 MORs from 101 Coy passed through the Dispersal Centre on 25th Feb 46 and the disbandment was completed by 20th Mar 46.

It was also decided that Age and Service Groups 30 to 36 all Mauritian personnel stationed in Mauritius should be released by end April 46. Some 640 men of this unit were affected and releases started at the rate of approx 30 each day wef 22nd Mar 46.

News was also received that a further 400 MORs were in Transit Camp in Mombasa, and these would be released immediately on disembarkation in Mauritius. Expected that these would arrive by HUNAN in early April.

Now confirmed that recruiting would

shortly commence in order to raise at least 10 new companies for Mid East. It is planned to return all personnel at present serving in Mid East as soon as possible.

New War Establishment to include HQ, Dispersal Centre, Depot Coy, Works Coy, and 2 Holding Coys, the unit meanwhile having been organised on these lines as a compulsory measure. An unofficial O2E(?) has also been set up as the number of casualties to be published have risen to an average of well over 100 daily during the past 4 months. This Depot housed in splendid new buildings erected by own personnel from salvaged material.

On 4 May 46 a further 416 MORs disembarked from HMT HUNAN. These were mostly ex Mid East but approx 50 were Mauritians who had been serving with units in East Africa. All were sent on Release Leave wef the date of disembarkation. The DCO (Draft Conducting Officer) in charge of this party was Capt Leclos. During the month a further 300 (approx) men were also released from units stationed in Mauritius, being in Age and Service Groups 37 to 46.

Recruiting commenced for a 3 years term of service with Pioneers in Mid East on 13th May 46 and by the end of the month attestations had reached 1222. This meant that the following Coys had been formed:-

1st (Mauritius) Pioneer Coy
Strength 360
2nd (Mauritius) Pioneer Coy
Strength 360
4th (Rodrigues) Pioneer Coy
Strength 360
NCOs Pool and surplus ORs
Strength 202

These figures include 380 volunteers from Rodrigues, HMT HUNAN making a special trip to collect these during the a/m period.

A further 5000 volunteers had been registered up to the end of the month, all having been selected from much greater numbers as likely to pass the approved medical standard. These will be called forward as quickly as accommodation can be found.

Up to the end of May 46 approx 5000 MORs had been released via the Dispersal Centre of this unit and well over Rs5,000,000 (five million) paid in release benefits, some Rs3,000,000 of this total has been paid into the Government Savings Bank Branch which was established as a branch of 'Welfare' in HQ Camp at Bell Village.

Of the 900 recruits accepted in Mauritius (excluding Rod) some 250 are ex-servicemen whose release leave had been completed.

Major Atkinson, having completed 4 years service overseas in Sep 45 was called forward for repatriation under 'Python'. He agreed to defer until the Dispersal Scheme had become efficient and again on his visit to East Africa in Jan 46 agreed to remain in Mauritius until the new recruiting scheme was successfully launched. On completion of the first 3 Companies, and sufficient volunteers being registered to ensure that the scheme would go ahead, Major Atkinson elected 'Python' at end May, and Major H P Rowbotham was nominated to proceed from East Africa to Mauritius to take over command of the Pioneer Group approx Mid June 46.

**A War Diary
2032 (Mauritian) Company
(was 1505 Coy until 4 Dec 43)**

4 Dec 43 Re-designated 2032 Coy
15 Dec 43 Located NOLA
Dec 43 Still at NOLA

1 Jan 44 Located NOLA – ammunition and petrol
Officers:-
Maj W Cotton – OC
Capt H Mayer – 2IC
Lts N Glenn, A D Lee, Dutton & Cayeux
14 Jan 44 Left NOLA and commenced portage for 56 Division (167 & 169 Bdes)
17 Jan 44 Lt Dutton and 26 ORs cross GARIGLIANO with the advance force of 8 RF. Remainder of Coy carrying ammunition down to the River bank. Heavy shelling
19 Jan 44 Crossed GARIGLIANO – portering from BHQ to front line. Heavy mortar and shell fire
22 Jan 44 Changed from 168 to 188 Bde
24 Jan 44 Heavy MG fire – casualties
25 Jan 44 Capt H Mayer – wounded
27 Jan 44 Last day of portage – returned to rest
30 Jan 44 Portering and stretcher bearing for 167 Bde
3 Feb 44 1 officer & 90 ORs with ADS at relay stations on the side of the mountains for stretcher bearing. Remainder portering ammunition
6 Feb 44 Withdrawn from line and starts work at DIS & MPFC
13 Mar 44 Returned to forward area to porter ammunition etc for 88 (US) Division, and stretcher bearing to Mount DAMIANO. Normal load 40 lbs for a 3 – 4 mile carry
24 Mar 44 Relieved and returned to rear area
28 Mar 44 Moved to 13 Corps for FMC work
6 Apr 44 Lt G T H Hope – tos
8 Apr 44 Lt A D Lee – sos as 2IC
2030 Coy
9 Apr 44 Capt R Guimbeau – tos
2IC
26 May 44 Location not stated but somewhere in CASSINO Area. Mention of a football game against 216 Coy who were then at VENAFRO, Part of 39 Group
29 May 44 Joined 46 Group
18 Jun 44 Moved to ACQUINO – working at FMC
26 Jun 44 Lt A P Grundy – sos
Italian coy. Lt E J Francis – tos
30 Jun 44 Moved to CIVITA CASTELLANO MAGLIANO – POL work
28 Jul 44 Moved. Part of 61 Group – POL work
2 Aug 44 Lt Dutton – sos Italian coy
15 Aug 44 Moved to CHIARAVALLE – POL under 61 Group
20 Aug 44 ½ coy under 2IC moved to SENIGALLIA – BSD work
1 section evacuating wounded by air at FALCONARA airfield
7 Sep 44 Lt E J Francis – sos 1977 (S) Coy
21 Sep 44 Lt R W Bransford – tos

23 Sep 44 Lt S M Keiller – tos
25 Sep 44 Moved to RIMINI – miscellaneous work under 64 Group
4 Nov 44 Maj W Cotton – sos
Italian coy
21 Nov 44 Maj J A Howell – tos OC
1 Jan 45 Still working at RIMINI
Railhead
3 Jan 45 Lt G T H Hope – sos
Italian coy
26 Jan 45 CSM E F Ellis – awarded MBE
30 Jan 45 Lt R W Bransford – sos
as 2IC 1941 Coy
8 Feb 45 Lt R I Walton – tos
13 Feb 45 Lt R I Walton – sos
22 Mar 45 Lt E H Bennett – tos
16 Apr 45 Moved to FORLI-
PREDAPPIO area
11 Jun 45 Maj W G Lee – tos OC
vice Howell (sos as 2IC 55 Group)
14 Jun 45 Moved to ANCONA for embarkation
15 Jun 45 Arrived TARANTO – for re-embarkation for Middle East
20 Jun 45 Arrived PORT SAID and proceeded to QUASSASSIN
4 Jul 45 Maj R Guimbeau – promoted OC
vice Lee (sos 1912 Coy)
2 Aug 45 Moved to ABU SULTAN for guard duties under 84 Group
2 Nov 45 Maj R Guimbeau – sos
30 Nov 45 Last Diary entry – still at SULTAN. Capt E Angood – A/OC

**Post War Casualties
ROYAL PIONEER CORPS
DEATHS IN SERVICE**

Allagapen Pte K 2048(M) Coy
K.I.A. Ambush - Egypt, 3 Dec 51

Antoine Pte L V 2048(M) Coy,
K.I.A. Ambush - Egypt, 3 Dec 51

Ayaroo Pte 2048(M) Coy K.I.A. Ambush -
Egypt, 3 Dec 51

Bhola Pte R 2048(M) Coy K.I.A. Ambush -
Egypt, 3 Dec 51

Fat Pte A F 2048(M) Coy K.I.A. Ambush -
Egypt, 3 Dec 51

Gungabissou LCpl 2048(M) Coy
K.I.A. Ambush - Egypt, 3 Dec 51

Marigadoo Pte R 2048(M) Coy
K.I.A. Ambush - Egypt, 3 Dec 51

Mathieu Sgt J E 2048(M) Coy
K.I.A. Ambush - Egypt, 3 Dec 51

**From the Library of Congress
"Egypt, on the threshold of Revolution
1945 - 1952**

A Major from the Royal Engineers, Deputy Commander of Royal Engineers in the Suez Area was travelling in an Army Car accompanied by one warrant Officer and a Private soldier, and followed by a three-ton Lorry driven by a British Corporal and carrying eight Mauritian Soldiers, (Pioneers) and was returning by the coast road from a visit on duty to Port Twefik.

As they turned the corner by the Eastern end of the refinery area, they ran into an ambush which concentrated heavy fire on both vehicles. Fire came from a building in the refinery and from a grove of palm trees on the other side of the road. Both vehicles

were forced into the ditch by the intense fire. The occupants of the car were thrown clear, but although unhurt, were weaponless and could not defend themselves. The driver of the lorry dismounted with his weapon and lying on the ground, returned the fire of the attackers. The only two men he actually saw firing at them were auxiliary policemen. After a few minutes a civilian car approached from the East and the Warrant Officer, commandeering it was able to escape with the Corporal the fetch help. They returned with a party of Bren-gun carriers, which on approaching the scene of the ambush came under heavy fire from both sides of the road. This party also observed Police Auxiliaries amongst the attackers. Under fire they were able to rescue the bodies of five Mauritian Soldiers from the lorry.

The following day early in the morning, a party of troops was sent again to the scene of the ambush and on making a thorough search of the area, found the bodies of the remaining three Mauritian soldiers and of the British soldier who had been in the car. The body of the British Major was delivered to the British hospital by an Egyptian Police officer.

It appears from the Post Mortem report that the eight Mauritian soldiers and the British soldier were killed by gunshot, but there is evidence also that their bodies were "mutilated" after death by being struck all over by a "blunt" instrument and by stabbing. It is clear from the evidence of the Post Mortem Report on this Officer, that he was brutally murdered, probably near the scene of the ambush. The Actual Post Mortem/ Autopsy report #61/. (FO.../96...) was performed by Lt Col R. V... (RAMC) Specialist in pathology. This report is far too brutal to be fully reported here.

The only serviceman who was taken prisoner by these Auxiliaries and lived to tell the tale of his harrowing experience was LAC Tony Rigden who after a long time in captivity ended up being thrown out of a taxi onto the streets of Paris, and from there made his own way home. He recounted his experience on the recent Television special on the Canal Zone by International Jazz Musician (and SCZ Veteran) Acker Bilk.

By December 1952 there were 4 Groups (84, 211, 244 and 321) containing 20 Mauritian Companies (and a number of East African Companies) in Egypt and the Canal Zone. Most of the Mauritians formed Guard Companies responsible for security of the various installations although there were a number of specialist units such as 2039 Coy - supporting the REME Workshops in Tel el Kebir, 2059 (Seychelles) Coy with the RE and 2037 (Rodrigues) Coy maintaining the road from Moscar to Port Said.

With the drawdown from Egypt all these units returned home during 1955 and early 1956 thus ending the service of the Mauritian Pioneers. An Association was established in Mauritius after the War and the Mauritian Group played an active role in the Pioneer Corps. Many members will recall a number of the Corps trophies for the Annual Skill at Arms were presented by the Mauritians such as the 'Le Chaland Trophy' (Young Soldiers Match). A number of the Trophies were returned to Mauritius for display when the Pioneer Trade was discontinued in 2014. ■

Civil labour was a big headache

One of the main jobs for the Corps following the end of WW2 was Civil Labour when large numbers were employed throughout the world. The following article appeared in "The Royal Pioneer" issue 20 in September 1949.



	TEL NUMBER	LOCATION	INTERP M.
48		DEL MENHURST MARSHALLS HARDACKS	
		AMHORN	
5	RAE TEC 3171	WESEBELUG	
6	MIL GOV 2222	BATHUIS	3
7	30 INFCONT	HANOVER	
8	BALMORAL 3140	HOTEL ZIP POST	
9	OFF CLUB 3165	HEIDENKAMP	
10	407 INCRE 3192	HANNOVER HARDACKS	
11	NAAFI 3192	"	
12	13 FIELDSS 3159	OLDENB. STR	
13	MIS BR MILGN 3102	BATHUIS	
14	OFF MESS 3157	MONTKESTR	
15	30 LEADU 3174	PRIVATWEG	
16	AKC 3151	OLDENB. STR	
17	407 T/CR	AHLHORN	1
18	WORLD SYMCA 3129	OLDENB. STR	
19	RD-R 3171	WESEBELUG KAMMELHOTEL 300 TOTTOR	
20	AW'S		
21	INBRA-CENTR 3171	WESEBELUG	3
22	411 F/MT Co 3180	DUSTERMORT	
23	T/PCAMP 3170	WESEBELUG	
24	101 INT CAMP 3104	ANDHEIDE	
25	75 STORES 548	OLDENBURG	
26	10VD TRNG 300	OLDENBURG	
27	16 VEH COY 455	OLDENBURG	
28	170 JB OFF 354	OLDENBURG	
29	INBRA REGS	ANKERWERKE	
30			
31			
32			
33	81 GRAVES CO 374	SAGE	1
34			
35			
36			
37			



**Report: Maj R Wallace-Bateman OBE MC
B Arch, FRIBA, D Phil
Picture: RPCA Archive**

MAKING BRICKS, without straw was child's play when compared with the daily problems which confronted the Civil Labour Officer in his work and who had neither precedent nor form, rule or regulation to guide him in his task.

Civil Labour started slowly and painfully found its feet by the use of unorthodox methods of trial and error, evolving regulations, where none existed, to fit the immediate problem.

Even in those later stages of the war, when experience had shown how best to organise and control the Civilian worker, whose only loyalty to the Allied Cause was, more often than not, built on the fact that he was paid handsomely and regularly, the task of the Civil Labour Officer was an extremely difficult one.

Not only had he to overcome the apathy amongst the local inhabitants, who after several years of German rule hardly dared to believe in their liberation, but had often to resist prejudice in the higher branches of the service.

The idea to organise and use civilian labour to augment and replace the few who could be spared from Military duties, was good and I doubt if we could have succeeded so well in Africa and in Europe without the help of the Civilian, but I often wonder whether those who perpetuated those 'bright ideas' that emanated in an every growing stream from 'Foyer Comique' in Algiers, had any conception of the worries of the Officer in the field, who was operating over an extensive territory with an entirely inadequate staff.

Nothing was too big and nothing too small for Civil Labour to handle!

Providing a single worker for a Mess was just as important as finding a thousand men to build a new Airstrip and had to be more carefully chosen.

Docks, Depots, Installations of all kinds, road works and camps all used civilian labour and it was not long before even the most prejudiced Unit realised that Ammunition, Stores, Rations and Equipment could be loaded or unloaded by civilian gangs working to the direction of a single soldier.

In the dockyards, civilian labour worked day and night, shift relieving shift, to keep the port open and because of this effort the target figure for each port was soon far exceeded.

Even the constant bombing of the ports hardly affected the amount of tonnage which was discharged and the slight delay while the raids were made was quickly made up.

Good and experienced cooks were provided for the messes and skilled washerwomen were found for the Laundries. Canteens and Cookhouses were often staffed by selected civilian labour which the Officer himself vetted. Arab women, in contradiction of the tenets of their faith, discarded the veil which masked their features from alien eyes, in order to

work faster at the task of filling petrol into cans. Even small boys were recruited at a low wage to collect salvage and village ancients sprayed the mosquito breeding grounds near the water courses.

Of the many kinds of headaches which the Civil Labour Officer had to solve it is perhaps better that I relate an instance.

It is not generally known that shortly after the African landings, several companies of Arab Pioneers were formed and placed under the command of French Reservist Officers. Only political prejudice prevented this force from operating in the later Invasion of Europe and it is a great pity that these Arabs were badly handled and never served out of Africa.

The little white town of Philippeville, perched precariously on the steep slope of the narrow valley, drowsed quietly in the white sunshine.

The only sound that disturbed the quiet of that Sunday afternoon in early 1943 was the sound of screaming winches and cranes in the tiny dockyard at the foot of the street, as they swung the cargo ashore from the great ship lying alongside the stone jetty. The little town slept!

Within the little office in the Rue Clemenceau, the Civil Labour Staff wrestled with the countless forms, returns and proformas in the midst of the paraphernalia of a Hairdressing Establishment which had been requisitioned for their use.

Above their heads, fearsome waving and drying machines in shining chromium twinkled and were reflected in the many mirrors that covered the walls. In the tiny cubicles, designed for fairer occupants, heavily booted soldiers bent over strength returns and payrolls in the sweltering heat.

All at once the quiet of the Sunday afternoon was shattered by the strident clamour of my telephone. Raising the receiver, I found that it was the Labour Directorate in Algiers speaking.

Within the next few minutes I learned that I was to form as many Units of Arab Pioneers as could be raised, collected, housed, clothed and fed within the next few days. Written instructions were to be sent to me but I had to start right away as the need was urgent.

Unlike the ragged hordes of Kabyle and Coast Berbers who worked under daily recruitment in semi-organised gangs at the docks and installations in the Sub-Area, these Pioneers were to wear uniform and be self-supporting and come under the direction of the Military Authorities who would decide the work location and move the unit to where they could be best employed.

As I rapidly considered the new problem, I decided that I must look for my recruits beyond the immediate vicinity of the Sub-area, from which by now we had gathered practically all the available labour.

For transport, my unit possessed one small Utility Car and in this I started early next morning to visit the little scattered villages amongst the hills and the Arab settlements in the open lands of the High Plateau.

In the barren and inhospitable wild

county of bare hills, where only narrow tracks overhanging the steep valleys, linked the cluster of Arab dwellings perched on the hill tops, it was often necessary to leave the car and proceed on foot along precipitous slopes to interview the Caid and many miles along winding hill roads before the required quota of recruits could be assured.

Returning to Philippeville, I managed to requisition sufficient transport and on the third day, several three ton lorries, led by my ubiquitous Arab Interpreter Ayadi Tahar, set off for the recruiting areas.

While the lorries were absent, I requisitioned the use of a derelict Hospital on the outskirts of the town, which after being completely disinfected and cleaned was transformed into the depot where medical inspections and clothing distribution would take place.

The new recruits would also get their first meals in the depot and possibly sleep the first night before proceeding to the Unit Billet Area.

This had been arranged in empty buildings at St George's, a small village, some ten miles away, where one of my subalterns had already taken charge.

In all these preparations I possessed no written authority to draw on Army sources for stores but by means of cajolery, persuasion and guile, I managed to get the necessary bedding, blankets, clothing and rations and to transport them to the depot.

In all of this, I must pay tribute to the splendid co-operation I received from the Quartermaster of No 42 Group who took much of the burden of my shoulders and to Lt Col Breitmeyer, the Group Commander, who so ably backed me in all my efforts.

Even knives, forks and spoons were issued, though, because Algiers considered these unnecessary, I was informed, I used them on my own responsibility and would have to pay for any losses of these articles. I cannot recollect that event, but this warning did not trouble me overmuch and I never had to settle with the Authorities as before long these articles became an issue.

In the depot, several old stoves had been installed to supply hot water to the showers we had erected in a temporary bath house. Disinfestation arrangements were made and a liberal supply of lice powder obtained. The medical arrangements I left in the capable hands of some of my friends from the Hospital who had volunteered to carry out the inspections.

I made a final check of the arrangements and issued final instructions and we were ready for the arrival of the intake. Towards evening on the fifth day, through a cloud of fine dust the first returning lorry made its appearance.

As the lorry slowed down and finally came to a standstill outside the depot, thirty of the dirtiest Arabs I have ever seen jumped down and in a moment pandemonium ensued.

The rags of lice-infested clothing which they wore, barely half-covered their scarred bodies, which were incredibly filthy and those of us who watched the arrival moved cautiously to the windward. ■

| We dig through the archives of the many thousands of Pioneer photographs, picking out the



Report: Paul Brown
Pictures: Old RPCA box file

SOME PROGRESS has been made in scanning some thousands of 35mm slides that I found when helping the old man to move, however there is a considerable amount of work still to be done, before the task is finished.

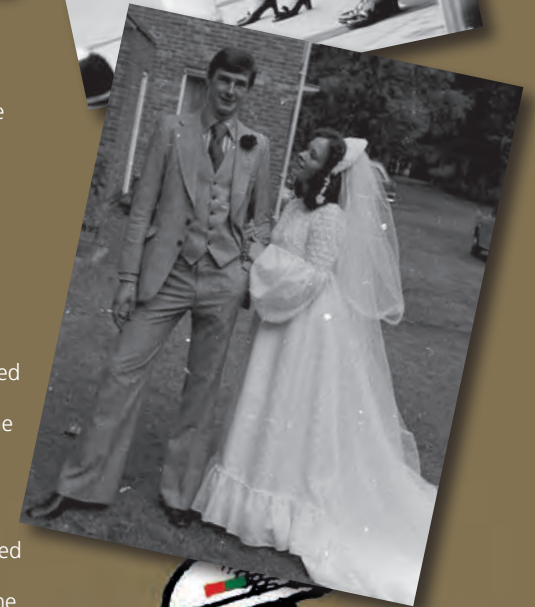
We found a few more slides from the Falklands which we have put onto the facebook group.

Many more slides are yet to be scanned in - what we will unearth who knows! Most of them so far seem to be from the time frame of the 1980s, featuring additional pass out parades, reunion weekends, 522 going to war etc, etc.

For this issue all the slides apart from one are from when HM The Queen visited Northampton. Some great photographs and the date we are sure is 1982 and she can be seen inspecting the Royal Pioneer Guard of Honour.

Amongst the thousands and thousands of slides featuring Pioneers we come across someone's Wedding photographs - does anyone recognise the couple in the photograph above?

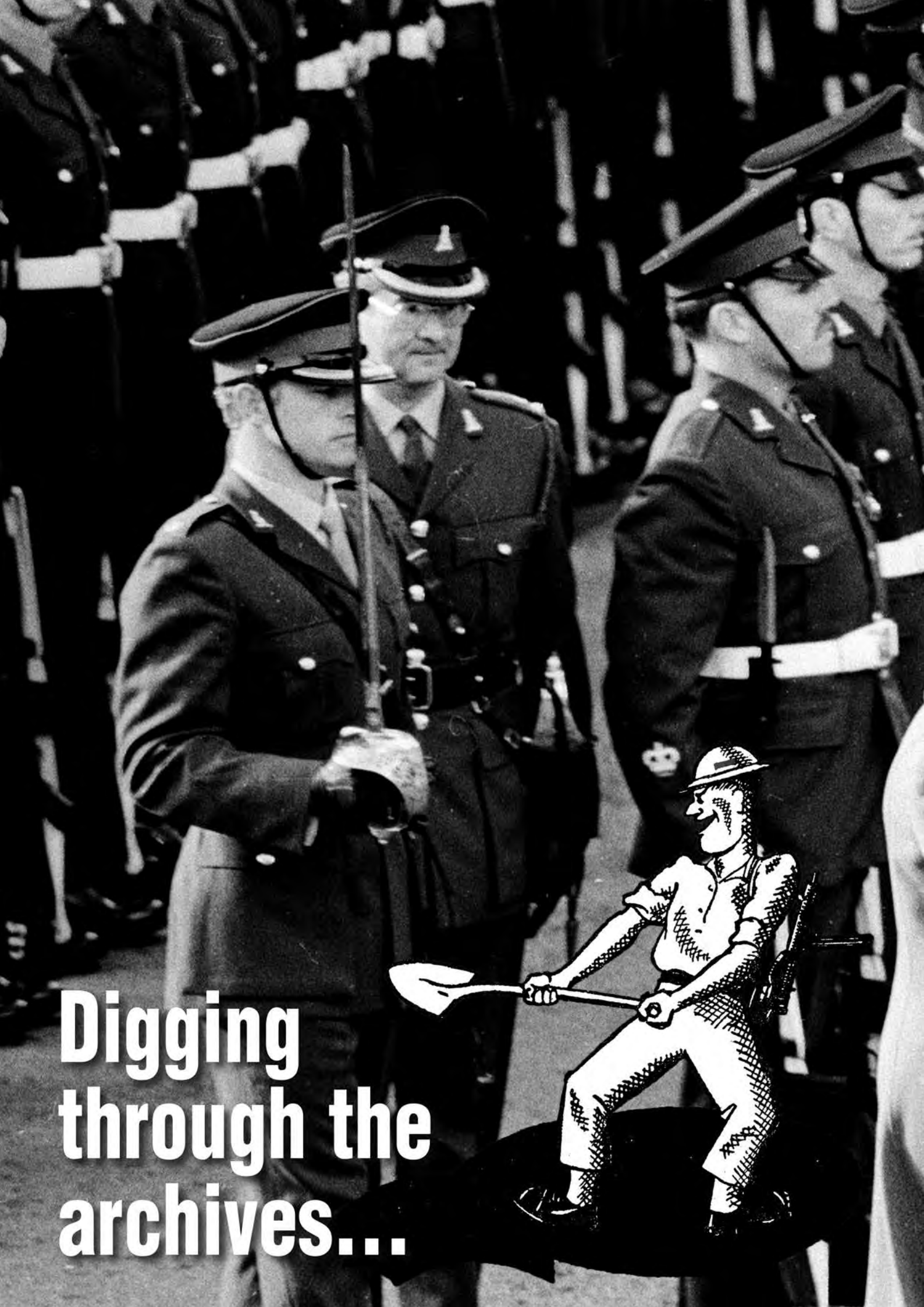
Also I unearthed a classic featuring Scouse Bradley in his dark room amongst thousands of negatives. Do you recognise anyone? ■



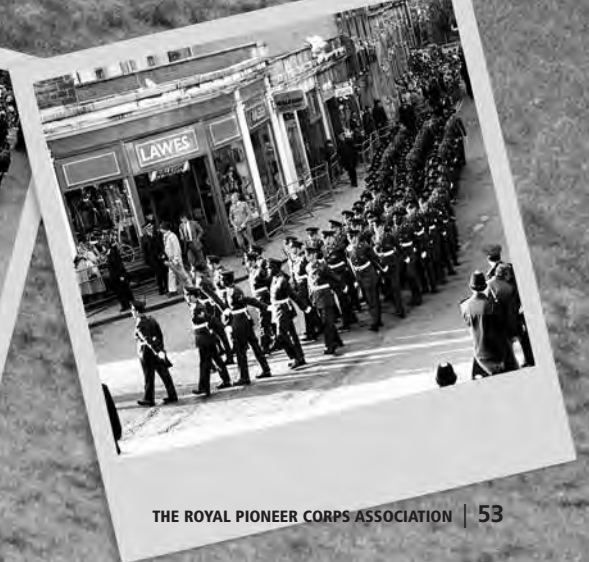
Digging through the archives...

very best ones that we think are of historical significance or are just very good photographs.





**Digging
through the
archives...**





**Digging
through the
archives...**



Press Cuttings for 1961-1970

The following have been taken from our archives. These cuttings are all from the years 1961-1970. It is the intention in future Newsletters to print details from other years.

Report: Norman Brown
RPCA Archive

THE following have been taken from our archives which detail Pioneer related events from various publications. These cuttings are all from the years 1961-1970.

The Times 19 Apr 61
GUARDS UNIT FOR S. CAMEROONS
FROM OUR MILITARY CORRESPONDENT

The 1st Battalion of the Grenadier Guards are under orders to move to the Southern Cameroons next month to replace The King's Own Border Regiment, who went to the Cameroons in September. The War Office described this yesterday as a routine move. The troops would move by sea and air.

There are more than 500 supporting troops with the Border Regiment. They are drawn from the Sappers, the Royal Signals, the Royal Army Medical Corps, the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, the Army Catering Corps, the Royal Pioneer Corps, and the RAF. All these ancillary troops will also be replaced, and the Grenadiers will move as a battalion group.

The King's Own Border Regiment have in effect been employed on behalf of the United Nations, to prevent any terrorist activities during Britain's trusteeship that might have affected the plebiscite held in February.

The Grenadiers will have to contend with the rainy season which starts about July. The annual rainfall can be as much as 400 ins. It looks as if they will have to stay at least until the autumn. The date when British trusteeship of the territory is to end has not yet been decided by the United Nations.

The Times 6 Jun 61
HOWARD SERVICES' EPEE CHAMPION
PROOF OF VERSATILITY BY OLYMPIC
FENCER

The Services' fencing championships at the Royal Tournament, Earls Court, began yesterday with the epee event, in which the Army retained the title through Lieutenant M J P Howard (Royal Pioneer Corps) A member of our Olympic epee team, Howard has never previously won the Services' title, although he has been their champion with both foil and sabre.

Since 1921, when officers and other ranks ceased to be segregated for Services' fencing, the epee has, with occasional interruptions by the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines, been largely a struggle for supremacy between the Army and the Royal Air Force. Now they stand level with 14 victories each.

It was a keen, good final, fought with traditional British restraint – rather an anti-

climax after Sunday's international foil tournament. For some time Williams, Howard, Marshall and Gelder shared the upper half of the pool, but after the penultimate round Howard led alone with five wins. The holder, Gelder, and Marshall were only one win behind him and when Howard faced Collum in his last bout, victory meant the title. Fencing with the caution born of experience, but with sufficient dash to keep his opponent guessing, Howard went ahead to win from two-all.

The Star Johannesburg 22 Mar 62
COLONEL JEFFS PRESENTS WAR
HISTORY TO PARAMOUNT CHIEF

Lt Col WA JEFFS MSM, the Star's gardening correspondent, has left Johannesburg for a brief visit to Swaziland.

At a ceremony held in Mbabane yesterday he presented, on behalf of Lt Gen Sir John Cowley, Master General of the Ordnance, the War Office, England and Colonel Commandant of the Royal Pioneer Corps, a specially bound and inscribed volume of the official war history of the corps to the Ngwenyama (Paramount Chief) Subhuza II. This was followed by an inspection of former members of the Royal and African Pioneer Corps.

Similar presentations are to be made shortly to the Paramount Chief of Basutoland, and the African Council, Bechuanaland in recognition of the contribution of troops made by the Protectorates in the Second World War.

The High Commissioner Territories provided many thousands of African Pioneers who served with distinction in the Middle East and European theatres and rendered invaluable service to the war effort.

The Times 26 Apr 62
CAPTAIN SENTENCED TO BE CASHIERED
FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT DIDCOT
APR 25

Captain William Coombes, aged 44, of the Royal Pioneer Corps, Didcot, was sentenced by a general court martial here today to be cashiered. The sentence is subject to confirmation. He pleaded Guilty to 26 charges of obtaining money from Army pay officers by false pretences.

It was stated that he was unable to get a posting near his home in Dover, where his wife had to live because she was in invalid needing sea air. Finding life in the officers' mess lonely, he took to visiting friends in London and formed an attachment for their daughter.

He spent each night in London, invented an address at Bix, near Henley-on-Thames, and claimed ration and travel allowances as if living there with his wife. He told the Court that next April he would have been

able to retire with a pension of £400 and a gratuity of £21,200

The Times 21 Dec 62
MAJOR SENTENCED IN GERMANY
PREVIOUS COMMUNIST POST
UNDISCLOSED
MUNCHEN-GLADBACK, WEST
GERMANY
DEC 20

Major Charles Marcus Cusack, aged 50, whose wife lives at Gillingham, Kent, was sentenced here today to the loss of two years' seniority and a severe reprimand for making a false entry in a security questionnaire.

At his court martial it was said that he had once been secretary of the Fulham (London) Branch of the Communist Party but had said in the questionnaire that he had never been a communist.

Cusack pleaded Guilty to the charge. The sentence is subject to confirmation.

Major Cusack, who has been serving in Germany with the Royal Pioneer Corps joined the Army 22 years ago. He has three children – boys aged 18 and 14 and a girl aged 12.

SECURITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Major JB Weston, prosecuting, said that Cusack had to complete a security questionnaire after being appointed second in command of 45 Group Royal Pioneer Corps last spring. When Cusack came to the question about previous membership of the Communist Party he answered that he had not been a member.

Major Weston said that in a statement to Colonel Frank Elliott, chief of the Rhine Army's special investigations branch, Cusack admitted joining the Communist Party when he was about 25.

This was in 1937, soon after he joined the Daily Worker League whose object was to promote sales of the Daily Worker and to bring readers together.

The statement said; "I cannot remember now why I joined except that I was a clerk and it was in a decade of hectic political happenings. Mussolini had been gassing Abyssinians and Hitler was on the march.

My motive in joining was that of a Christian who felt there was much wrong in the world."

Cusack said, according to the statement, that he could remember attending only two Communist Party meetings, at one of which he was made secretary of the branch in the latter part of 1939.

A few weeks after this meeting he ceased to have anything to do with the party or the Daily Worker League. He had answered the question on communism in the negative, "Because I was afraid to reveal this past which to me was dead and I wanted it to remain so".

Four officers called as witnesses said that Cusack had been mentioned in dispatches and had an excellent character.

The Times 3 Jan 64

AIRLIFT OF 1,000 BRITISH TROOPS CONTINUING TODAY

From our Defence Correspondent

A Royal Marine Commando is now standing by to join Army units in Cyprus if the situation there deteriorates. The 41 Commando, stationed at Plymouth, has been brought to immediate notice as spearhead unit of the UK Strategic Reserve.

Troop movements to Cyprus continued last night when 250 Army technicians left Lyneham, Wiltshire, in aircraft of RAF Transport Command.

They were followed by the advance party of the 1st Battalion, the Parachute Regiment. With them were 80 men of the Royal Pioneer Corps from Long Marston, near Stratford Upon Avon, and Kineton, near Warwick. They had been standing by to move since the weekend and several men had been recalled from Christmas leave.

POSITION OF BAOR

The advance party was due to arrive in Cyprus at 1 am today. They will be followed today by the main body of the Parachute Battalion, together with helicopters of the Army Air Corps and other military transport. Altogether more than 1,000 troops will be involved. The airlift will be made by Britannia, Hastings, Argosy and Beverley aircraft, bringing the total number of Transport Command sorties from Britain to Cyprus to 59 since Boxing Day.

The Ministry of Defence said last night that although 41 Royal Marine Commando had been placed next on the list for Cyprus it was thought that when today's airlift was complete there would be enough troops on the island to deal with the situation unless there was a sudden increase of tension or fresh out-breaks of violence.

They said that although troops might have to be withdrawn from the British Army of the Rhine in certain circumstances, it was by no means certain that they would go to Cyprus; there were other places where they might be urgently required. No orders had been given to place units in Germany at special notice to move.

600 MEN MOVED

The move of 600 men of 2 Regiment Royal Artillery, was completed on the night of Wednesday-Thursday and when the Parachute Battalion arrives in Cyprus there will be five battalion-sized units on the island. So far as the remainder of the Strategic Reserve is concerned, the only formation now left intact is 51 Gurkha Infantry Brigade, stationed on Salisbury Plain. One of its battalions, the 1/6 Gurkha Rifles, is due to move to the Far East soon.

Our Diplomatic Correspondent writes:

Until a late hour last night no decision had been made on further moves.

Paper Unknown

ROYAL PIONEERS KEEP BUSY IN CYPRUS

He muttered, half to himself. With the same disdain he picked up the 100 lb load, and, raising them to shoulder height, tossed them onto a trailer with the utmost ease.

This feat of strength was not intended as show, but it did serve to indicate the fitness

of a group of men who are working 10 hours a day, seven days a week to ensure that issues of fuel are sufficient to keep on the road the thousands of vehicles needed at the moment.

BALANCED TEAMS

These men belong to 251 Company, Royal Pioneer Corps which was disbanded in 1961 and reformed again at Bicester on the 27th December last year especially for their tour in Cyprus.

Altogether there are six sections each comprising 26 men engaged on the Island, and those employed at the Royal Army Service Corps Petrol Depot on the Dhekelia Garrison certainly provide a good example of how a perfectly balanced and capable team can realise maximum output.

This particular group is responsible for tagging, filling, loading and stacking. Their combined efforts achieve an average of 700 Jerricans an hour through the rotary filling machine (known as "the cow") meeting a target of something like 5,000 in a morning's work.

WELCOME POSTING

And as if this were not good enough, after lunch they are back at it again, collecting together the cans which will provide the next day's task for themselves and the Cypriot labourers who man the diesel pumps.

But for these hard-working Royal Pioneers far from being a flog, their presence abroad is an exciting experience for there is normally only one overseas command which gives Corporals and below within the RPC a chance of a posting away from home and that is Aden.

Stationed there at present is 518 Company which was, until recently, here in Cyprus where there is evidence of their industry and versatility. Indeed, the huts the present Company are occupying were built by their colleagues of 518.

A second reason that the Company is pleased to be in Cyprus at the present time is that they are offered a greater diversity of jobs. In fact since their arrival – besides the task already mentioned – they have erected tented camps and are responsible for their maintenance, dug salt from the Larnaca Salt Lake, driven vehicles for various Services, unloaded food and rations, helped repair water pumps, issued ammunition and weapons, removed furniture, provided guards and sentries and manned road blocks.

The 180 men on the Island have been drawn from three Depots: three of the sections being formed from 521 Coy RPC, Bicester, two from 206 Coy RPC, Long Marston, near Stratford-Upon-Avon, and the remaining one from 522 Coy RPC, Kineton, near Leamington Spa.

16 Mar 64

Newcastle Evening Chronicle

A County Durham soldier is at present hard at work helping to ensure that the vehicles of the British peace force troops in Cyprus will be kept on the roads.

He is Private Barrie Hughes, the son of Mr & Mrs SF Hughes, of Leazes View, Rowlands Gill.

Barrie normally serves with 522 Company of the Royal Pioneer Corps, but is at present based with 251 Company which was specially formed to assist in the Cyprus crisis

in December.

Barrie is working at a Royal Army Service Corps depot on the Sovereign Base Area of Dhekelia, a vast change from his former station near Leamington Spa.

During the emergency, Barrie and his colleagues have been working almost non-stop helping to keep the vehicles of the British forces operational.

It has been estimated that during a normal day's work the soldiers each hand between five and six tones of goods, usually jerricans

10 Apr 64

Whitley Seaside Chronicle

HE HAS A COLD JOB IN SUNNY CYPRUS

It may be sunny Cyprus but LCpl Raymond Graham, of Saghill needs the combat jacket he is wearing for he is entering one of the huge refrigeration chambers in the Royal Army Service Corps cold store there at Famagusta, where temperatures are "17 below".

Aged 22, he is among members of 251 Coy RPC which was reformed at the end of last year especially for the Cyprus emergency.

A former miner, he is the son of Mr & Mrs JJW Graham, of Dene Grove and has been in the Army since Aug 62. His trip to Cyprus was his first-ever journey by air.

Just how much the Pioneers' work is valued is summed up by the cold store superintendent, Warrant Officer Arthur Smith RASC – "I just don't know what we would have done without them over the past few weeks".

A morning's work could mean the moving of something like 50 tons of stores, which averaged out to roughly 1 cwt per man per minute over a four-hour period.

"This is certainly an achievement, particularly when it is noted that a great deal of time is involved on stacking frozen goods in the large refrigerated chambers where temperatures are constantly kept between 14 and 18 degrees below freezing", says an Army public relations officer.

Although many of the demands on 251 Coy have been for the usual "humdrum" (but equally important) chores few members have complained, realising that their call to Cyprus has afforded a rare opportunity to work abroad and has also presented them with a greater diversity of jobs that could be normally expected.

As one of their young officers so aptly put it "Give us a task, we'll do it."

4 Jul 64

The Lion (The British Army Cyprus Weekly) PIONEERS CHANGE AROUND

By the end of the first week or so in July there will be few familiar faces remaining in the ranks of the longest serving Emergency Reserve unit in Cyprus – 251 Coy RPC.

Already 87 of the original 186 men who were rushed to the Island following the Christmas intercommunal fighting have returned to England for a well-deserved spell of leave before rejoining their Units in the UK, and within a few days the remainder will follow – that is all except for a section of 25 men who have volunteered to stay on for a further tour of six to nine months.

Those leaving the Island will be replaced by batches being flown from England on

the 2nd and 7th July, and these will be administered from the new Company Headquarters in Slim Barracks and will be deployed in Dhekelia and at the Ordnance Depot at Four Mile Point.

Of the original officer complement only Lt Jim Heap will stay behind. Capt Bob Colville, the 2IC, and Lt Bill Ingram, platoon officer, have already departed, and the Officer Commanding, Maj Arthur Biggs, leaves later this month – he hopes in time to celebrate his 10th wedding anniversary!

Maj Biggs, who, after home leave, will go to Bielefeld, in Germany, to take command of the Pioneer Civil Labour Unit, is being relieved in Cyprus by Maj Martin Lee, from the Pioneer School, Northampton, and the new 2IC will be Capt John Hudson, from Bicester.

Particularly looking forward to his return to England will be Sgt Joe St Hill whose wife gave birth to her second daughter, Melanie Annette, at Neath on the 24th May.

The Company's new Sergeant Major, WO2 Maurice Grange, will certainly have cause to remember his spell on the Island for later this year he will be marrying SSgt Esme Hutchings, CQMS of 27 Independent Company WRAC, who he has met during his stay.

There will also be memories for Cpl Mick Purvey, of the Army Catering Corps attached to the Company, who will be able to boast to being the only member of the Unit to serve with and wear the Blue Beret of the United Nations Force.

Whatever the sentiment of the men returning to England those who have served with 251 Coy RPC will undoubtedly remember for some time to come their stay in Cyprus with its initial hard work and diversity of tasks.

These have varied from digging salt at Larnaca's Salt Lake to the most recent erection of tents for the Leave Centre at Troodos and assistance to No 1 Hygiene Wing with mosquito control.

The Times 2 Jul 64 PISTOL CHAMPION FOR THIRD YEAR CLOSE STRUGGLE AT BISLEY

Captain J M Gough, the former British Olympic pistol shot, who is stationed in Germany with the Royal Pioneer Corps is likely to win the Revolver Cup, which is the Army pistol championship for the third successive year. Yesterday at Bisley he scored 432 out of a possible 480 to beat the same runner-up as last year, Lt Col CAG Walker, RA by 27 points. The result is subject to confirmation.

22 Aug 64 The Lion (The British Army Cyprus Weekly) PIONEER CO-OPERATION IN RADFAN

To mark the close co-operation between 'A' detachment 908 PCLU RPC and the Federal National Guard at Fort Thumier, 908 PCLU has presented to the Fort an embossed Corps shield.

During the current Radfan operations in the Federation of South Arabia, the PCLU detachment has been responsible for raising up to 600 Arab workers a day employed on road construction and in improving farming and irrigation in the area and camel drivers for re-supply caravans.

In this task they have received invaluable assistance from Fort Thumier, who provided Federal National Guard escorts and interpreters and helped in the actual recruiting of the labour force.

The Times 22 Dec 64 REPRIEVED CHILD MURDERER ESCAPES "BABES IN THE WOOD" CASE

Frederick Alfred Smith, aged 38, who in 1947 was sentenced to death for the murder of a girl aged seven, in the "Babes in the Wood" case, and was later reprieved escaped yesterday from Wormwood Scrubs prison, London. He was in a working party in the grounds.

At 1.20 pm he climbed over wall with the help of two Dutch hoes and a piece of bent

pipe.

The murder for which Smith, who was then 21, was convicted took place in Manor Woods, Guildford, Surrey. He pleaded Guilty at his trial. A charge of murdering the girl's brother, aged nine, was ordered to remain on the file.

Smith was receiving psychiatric treatment at Wormwood Scrubs.

A Surrey police spokesman said last night: "We are keeping a close watch in the area around Pitch Place, Worplesdon, where Smith used to live".

Police in London and the Home counties were told to search gypsy encampments because he is of gypsy origin.

The murder became known as the "Babes in the Wood" case because the two children were found lying in under-growth after an immense police search. The boy had been shot and his sister died later in hospital from shock and a fractured skull.

From 1944 to 1945 Smith had served in the Pioneer Corps and was discharged on mental grounds.

The Times 12 Nov 66 HEROISM HONOURED AFTER 23 YEARS From our Correspondent Derby Nov 11

The heroism of Private John Tancred of the Royal Pioneer Corps, under fire at Monte Cassino, Italy, during the last war is to be recognized 23 years later at an Army ceremony next week.

A silver statuette has been made showing Private Tancred carrying a wounded officer. In the battle of Monte Cassino in 1943 he carried an officer over the hills to an advanced dressing station.

The officer survived but Private Tancred died from exhaustion. Because he died from natural causes and not in the face of the enemy he could not be recommended for the Victoria Cross. The statuette, provided by all officers of the corps' reserves, is to be presented to the central officers' mess of the Corps at Northampton. ■

707 Pioneer Company

707 Pioneer Road Construction Company
leave their calling card in Europe.

WHEN 707 Pioneer Road Construction Company had finished their work they left their calling card with the sign you can see on the right.

707 Company utilised German prisoners of war to clear mines at the border and to clear the roads to aid construction work.

Pioneers kept the German prisoners in the farmhouse

when they were not utilised.

Farmers whom were previously evacuated, returned back to their farms in Spring 1945 and discovered the three stones at the front of a farm.

The stones were restored in 1989 and placed at Millsbeek / Gennep.

Amazing to think that the stones are still there after 72 years and have probably outlived the Pioneers that laid them.



THE ARMED forces charity sector largely grew out of the needs created by the World Wars at the beginning and middle of the last century and has grown to around 2,000 registered charities in England and Wales.

There were 196,500 personnel in the UK armed forces as of July 2014; total armed forces personnel figures have fallen by 15.5% since April 2011, which is in line with planned reductions of 33,000 Service personnel by 2020, or 19% of the Services from the 2010 baseline.

The ex-Service community is estimated to be around 6.1 to 6.2 million people in the UK, including 2.8 million ex-service personnel and 3.1 million dependants.

The MOD has primary responsibility for the health, wellbeing and welfare of Service personnel and their immediate families.

It also provides support for their transition to civilian life. After that, provision of the ex-Service community hands over to mainstream public services such as the NHS, charities and private providers (such as employers and private housing providers).

The government has put in place a large body of legislation over the last decade to try to ensure better outcomes of transitioning to civilian life, and has recently put over £65 million of LIBOR (the London interbank offered rate fines) funding into the armed forces welfare charity sector to increase support.

The specialised needs of ex-Service personnel, cuts to services and the gaps in the quality of provision from the NHS, plus the long history of armed forces charity assistance blunt the boundaries between public and charitable provision and these boundaries are liable to become even more indistinct in future.

Owing to the ageing profile of the ex-Service population, the community is more likely than the UK general population to experience various long-term physical health conditions and there has been an increase in these conditions since 2005.

Mental health is a particular concern for the ex-Service community with the MOD reporting that between 2007/08 and 2013/14 mental health disorders increased among all serving personnel by 74%.

Certain groups including Early Service Leavers (those who leave before having completed four years in Service), reservists and those who have seen active combat tend to be more vulnerable to certain mental health issues.

While the majority of ex-Service personnel experience very few difficulties with transitioning to civilian life after the armed forces, a significant minority require specialist care.

The increased number of personnel leaving the Service as a result of the reductions, plus the increase in the numbers of Service and ex-Service personnel with additional needs caused by active combat in Iraq and Afghanistan are likely to put added pressure onto charitable provision and a stretched NHS.

SOME TIME ago I come across an excellent article from Jonathan Fagan, a Solicitor who was also a Managing Director of his own company. His company donates to charity, however his policy was not to donate to any charity where the CEO earns more than £75,000 a year (this was in 2015).

His thinking was that £75,000 is a reasonable wage to pay a decent manager or director involved in a non-profitable charity.

This got me thinking, exactly how much do some CEOs earn who work for non-profitable and charitable ventures and how much are charities actually losing by other organisations who have the same policy as the MD/Solicitor above?

When I looked into the salaries at the time, I could not believe the results and I forgot about all this, until today, when I read an article in my local newspaper - the Northampton Chronicle and Echo (29th October 2016), entitled "Northampton veteran celebrating 50 years of being a poppy seller has helped to raise £81,000 for the Royal British Legion".

Firstly I would like to point out that Fred has done an outstanding job over the last 50 years, his endeavours should not go unnoticed. The Royal British Legion is one of many charities that has a very special place in my heart.

But, did you know that the CEO of the Royal British Legion collects a salary between £150,000-£160,000? Should someone working for a non-profit organisation earn more than the person responsible for running the country?

The combined ministerial and parliamentary salary of the prime minister is £143,462, at April 2016.

So going back to Fred Barrick, of Duston, Northampton... in 50 years he has helped to raise a staggering £81,000 for the Royal British Legion. An amazing achievement.

However, this would only pay the Chief Execs salary of the Royal British Legion, for just over 6 months. Surely, this is not right and it is not only the Royal British Legion that has high salaries. Let's look at some other charities (figures from 2015)...

Action for Children £140k-£150k
Age UK £180k-£190k
Alzheimer's Society £130k-£140k
Barnardo's £150k-£160k
British Heart Foundation £173,300
British Red Cross Society £180k-£190k
Cancer Research UK £210k-£220k
Catch22 £120k-£130k
Charities Aid Foundation £150k-£160k
Consumers' Association £300k-£310k
Leonard Cheshire Disability £160k-£170k
Marie Stopes International £260k-£270k
Macmillan Cancer Support £160k-£170k
Marie Curie Cancer Care £160k-£170k
National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux £140k-£150k
National Autistic Society £130k-£140k
National Schizophrenia Fellowship £120k-£130k
NSPCC £160k-£170k
People's Dispensary For Sick Animals

£150k-£160k

Royal British Legion £150k-£160k

Royal Horticultural Society £150k-£160k

Royal Mencap Society £170k-£180k

Royal National Institute of Blind People

£130k-£140k

Royal National Lifeboat Institution

£130k-£140k

Salvation Army £140k-£150k

Save the Children £162,220

Save the Children International £261,309

Scope £130k-£140k

Sense, The National Deaf blind and

Rubella Association £150k-£160k

Shaw Trust £180k-£190k

St John Ambulance £130k-£140k

Turning Point £165,000

To attract someone good to the role of CEO you do not need to pay a salary at the kind of level shown above. Perhaps charities should be made to print a statement on all of their literature stating that any donations made will pay for staff salaries and for which also states the CEO's salary.

Going back to the beginning of this article... if the Solicitor/Managing Director of a company that gives a good percentage of his profits to charity and only gives them to charities whereby the CEO earns less than a certain amount, how many other companies are doing the same? And how much money are these charities actually losing by having a CEO being paid more than the person responsible for running the country?

Jonathan Fagan, looked into the finances of the Parkinson's Disease Society. Parkinson's is a horrible illness that has no cure at present. It had income of just over £22.5 million in 2014. The charity spends just under £13 million on employee costs and £6.5 million on generating funds. This means that a whopping 75% of donations made to Parkinson's UK are eaten up in costs. That surely is not right? Another question that has to be asked, is why do a lot of the above charities have their headquarters based in or around London? Relocating them would surely keep administrative expenses down.

91% of charities have no paid staff at all. However out of 161,000 charities and a £39 billion income, 533 charities received £19 billion of this!

The Chairman of the Charity Commission, William Shawcross, said that "disproportionate salaries could bring charities into disrepute" and he may have a point. Amazing charities with great causes are potentially losing money because some organisations and individuals are not donating to them. They are not donating to them because they have a policy of not donating to a charity if the Chief Executive is earning a salary that is considered excessive. How much money are they potentially losing because of this? On the other hand, because of the policies of these certain organisations and individuals some amazing charities are potentially receiving more financial support.

Will it stop me buying a poppy, of course not, however I understand that it could pose a bit of a moral dilemma.

Paul Brown

Found by chance in a remote graveyard

FIRST OF all I would like to thank you for featuring the article which appeared in the October 2013 edition of The Pioneer (page 61 – Bellmullet) which I discovered as part of an internet search about my grandfather, John Halliwell Warham.

It shows the pictures of war graves, including my grandfather's, in Bellmullet, Southern Ireland, found by chance in a remote graveyard by one of your readers, whom I would also like to thank. I appreciate the information you have collated in the article about the circumstances leading up to his death and details extracted from the 15 Coy war diary. The details portray a horrid picture of the circumstances and conditions that the crew and military personnel suffered on the fateful night the ship SS Mohamed Ali El-Kebir sank in 1940.

The work you do in keeping alive the history of the regiment means a lot to the families of those who have served and, far too often, lost their lives. I have served in the Royal Navy so can appreciate the weather conditions, the sounds, smells and sights of being on a warship in peacetime but can't imagine what this would be like this with the added elements of a wartime situation, especially for young, recently enlisted men simply embarked for the voyage and unfamiliar with the ship's layout or being at sea. The photograph of my grandfather's gravestone demonstrates the great work that the CWGC does in maintaining the headstones of fallen service personnel throughout the world. The gravestone mentions 'Daddy of Jeanne' who is my mother and who was less than 2 years old when her father died so never knew him or had the opportunity to visit his grave whilst growing up in Walton, Liverpool. My mum has been able to visit her father's grave several times in later life and we visited it together about the time your article was published. It was an emotional time for both my mother and I as we stood together by his graveside some 70 years after he lost his life. Having served in the Armed Forces myself I am proud of my grandfather's Service and we have been able to obtain the medals that his Service had entitled him to. These are further reminders of the sacrifices made by him, like so many servicemen and women over the years.

Thank you, again, for publishing the article and I wish you all the best for the future. **Steven Mack**

(Ed note: thanks to John Killeen for sending in the original article and photographs)

Fathers recollection

THANKS ONCE again for your speedy reply. This helps to put flesh on the bones of some of my late father's recollections.

He did say he did guard duty or patrolling around the White City where the Free French were. He said that some of these troops would get over the wire and go out. On more than one occasion helped on their way back over by a smack on the backside as a deterrent. He also said he was once stood next to General De Gaulle, whether it was guard duty or the General was visiting a site they were at I don't know.

His memories of clearing bomb damage and recovering bodies was quite graphic

too. He came home one night and a land mine had blown half of their street away. Luckily my mother and brothers were in the underground, safe.

It is interesting to see the football matches mentioned as he damaged his cartilage in one. He always joked that he got chased out of France unscathed and then got injured on home service. I always thought that this was the main reason for discharge as he walked badly for years due to that knee.

I can't stress enough how much you have helped us, Thanks again,
David Frost and family

Paperwork matches

THANK YOU for the prompt and very helpful response. The information you supplied matches the paperwork I have, and the letter to my mother I have is dated 1 May 44 and signed Maj F Brooker who is in the 323 Coy diary as OC at that time.

I've tracked the locations in Western Europe on a map and these corresponded to the verbal information from my late mother, although they landed in Normandy 2 months after D day, not the 6 days I recall her saying.

The final location at Bienenbuttel is close to Luneburg where she said he finished up.

She also said he was at Bergen Belsen at some point, that's en route but not mentioned. My father never said anything.

I will certainly contact the Army Personnel Centre for his service record, thank you for that contact.

I will order a copy of the book you recommend, and send a donation to the RPC.

Thank you again for help, if I may I'll contact you again when I've obtained the service record if I need any further information. Best regards,

Chris

Clearing up after the atom bomb

I DO appreciate how busy you are kept with requests from us Pioneers, I am asking for some information but I am not sure that you will have what I am looking for. In 1967/68 Operation Brumby went to Maralinga in Australia to clear up the mess made when the atom bombs were detonated.

In Maj Elliott's book "Royal Pioneers" on pages 236/240 this Operation is mentioned. Some years ago I wrote to Lt Col PDN Baird asking for any photos he could let me have that were taken during the operation. He replied that all of his photos had been mislaid by the publishers of the book.

I am wondering if you have any filed away amongst your vast collection. If not, could a request be put in the Newsletter.

My interest is that in 1958 as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers I spent time working in Maralinga under the strictest security I have ever known. No cameras or recording

equipment was allowed into the forward area. We were not allowed to discuss what we were working on even to our room mates. We could use our cameras in the accommodation area only.

Seeing the photograph of the crater on page 240 aroused my curiosity. I remember the amount of concrete and steel that was put as the dropping zone. The work force was divided into three working parties, each working 8 hours a day for two whole days to make it possible to do the mix in one almighty effort. Everything weighed into the mixers to guarantee the correct mix and the whole area being floated off by hand to the boffins satisfaction.

I am more interested in pictures of the site than of the personnel.

Thanking you in advance, I await any reply with eager anticipation. Yours sincerely,

RD Stetterfield

Photo opportunity



■ Former site of Quebec Barracks, later named Simpson Barracks

Picture: Ian Crawford

VISITING some friends who recently moved near Wootton, Northampton and had to stop for this photo opportunity at the site of Wootton Barracks.

Ian Crawford

Ed Note: The Barracks closed on 1 April 1993 and the site is now used for a housing estate, including the old workhouse. There are any road names reflecting its military origin are amongst the housing estate.

THE PIONEER

■ **TODAY AT** work has gone to plan and all jobs got done by the two teams I work with great bunch of guys... hey but wait when I got home the icing on the cake the pioneer mag turned up from the UK. I would like to thank Norman for sending it, it brings a smile to my face when I read such good articles.

Andy Barratt

■ **WITH MORE** thanks than words can ever express. Norman Brown...due to your help I have received my Dad's War Medal... he was a German Jew, interned on Isle of Man, then became 229 Pioneer Corps. He sadly passed in 1980 (57). I am so proud & more than grateful to you for your help.

Mandy Hughes

■ **THANKS FOR** amazing service to us all (including the widows and families too) – don't know how you manage this mammoth task between just you and your son.

Jenny Tubridy

■ **PLEASE FIND** enclosed a cheque in appreciated for some very excellent work done by Lt Col John Starling.

Kindest regards
David Millington

■ **MANY THANKS** thinks to you and Paul for the production of the best Regimental Magazine I have every seen – quite brilliant and keeps everyone in touch.

Gary Cooper

■ **IN THE** last issue of The Pioneer I noticed a piece written by Steve Stainton about the palletisation of 552 Coy at CAD Kington in 1972. In the earlier 70s that was the section I was in, I left to go to Ireland in 1971 Sergeant Ray Fielder my Section sergeant not sure about the Corporals, one of the names that stick out was Private J Oakley. I remember him well, he was posted to 3 Div HQ & Sig Regiment at Bulford, I followed there some months later and was demobbed.

Kevin Bentley



Write in or email us...

The Royal Pioneer Corps Association

c/o BGSU
St George's Barracks
ARNCOTT
Bicester OX25 1PP



or email us at:
royalpioneer corps@gmail.com

8mm film of Aden

I HAVE been reading the excellent history of 518 Coy, compiled by WO2 Shield.

It reminds me that in 1964 I shot a brief 8mm film at Fallaize Camp, Little Aden, with assistance from Chris Etherington. I gave the film to Charles Cussack in 1969 when he was at the museum in Northampton.

I know you are very busy but I would be grateful if I could impose on you to see

whether you still have it. If so, perhaps I could impose further by asking if you could have it transposed to disc, I would of course pay the costs involved.

Otherwise, I hope you are keeping fit, as we try to. I keep in touch with Garry Cooper in Scotland and remind him in the winter to put plenty of lard in his tea. Kind regards.

Colin Dave

Email newsletter

MANY THANKS for your RPCA email newsletter.

Being a Luddite (and probably not the only one) who avoids social media like a plague it was most welcome - very well done.

Saw you together with the other Pioneers marching passed the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday, it looked to me as though a certain Brigadier should have visited his barber beforehand!

Garry Cooper

They all survived the great war

PLEASE FIND enclosed a small donation to the Association in gratitude for some very comprehensive and interesting information regarding my great grandfather as provided by Lt Col John Starling.

My grandfather went to war in 1915 and probably met up with three of his soldier sons there, they all survived!

Also enclosed is a photograph of my great grandfather with his son (my grandfather) circa 1917, which might be of interest to you.

Father – David Samuel Brown (1867-1938) Pte 289784 700 Company LC – France 1915-1919

Son – David Samuel Brown (1889-1974) Gunner 35555 116 HB RGA – France 1914-1919

Steven M. Brown



Corps memories

WE LAST corresponded nearly two years ago just in time for me to correspond with my former Drill Sgt John Hickman who rose to be at the head of the Corps.

My contact with John before he passed away and his wife subsequently also enabled me to get in touch with fellow officer in Cyprus, namely Dennis Higginbotham. You were the key to start this off. So thank you. In reading the Corps Magazine I have come to the conclusion you are a remarkable man and the old Corps members would be at a loss without you.

In the last but one Magazine I was thrilled to read about one of my old Unit (518 Coy) that I served with in Cyprus. In the write up it recounts the time when the Unit built and set up a Tented Camp for the Parachute Regt and one officer and two Sgts and about 60 men were assigned to this task. I was the un-named Officer and the Sgts were Oxley & Wordsworth. It even records that the CO Major Waterhouse with a car full of men went to watch the Paras drop from the Troodos Mountains over Morphou Bay that morning the Camp was vacated. I also drove my own car with 4 men in tandem with the CO. It was dawn to see it take place.

The significance of this Tented camp being built took place for me on the day that a fellow Army Education Major in the No. 2 Mess in Epsikopi was throwing a Party following the arrival of his wife at their new allocated Army hiring. Weeks in advance he told me he was lining up a girl for the evening and I had to be there. I obtained permission and went to the party for part of the evening as the Camp was not far away.

Later that evening I had met and re-met at the party the girl lined up for me and so finally took her with me to check that all was quiet at the camp before going to a romantic Restaurant for a meal. That was early 1960. In September 1961 I married her in Cyprus and we are still married 55 years later. My wife remembers vividly that evening as I drove to check on the "Para" Camp and was met by Sgt Oxley on the Perimeter after driving down a very rough

track. Reading the article brought it all back to me. Indeed at the Restaurant where we ate that evening was a Pianist playing local hits of the day. When I returned on holiday to Cyprus in 1992 and stayed at a Hotel in Limmasol who was the resident Pianist but this same man 30 years later. So a brief sentence in the Magazine which I thoroughly enjoy was a real jewel and reminder of very important days past.

As a National Service Private at Wrexham in 1958 I had three Drill :- Sgts Hickman, Wells & Burnett. The latter two served with me as Commissioned Officers in Cyprus and although I was much closer to George Wells, Mike Burnett was my best man.

I lost touch with him when I left the Army at Northampton. It was said he became a Prison Officer in Scotland.

I was never able to trace him and he will be early 80s by now. Do you have any news of him with an address?

As you can imagine my 3 years in Cyprus were on the whole wonderful times. I served with some very nice colleagues of all ranks.

When my wife was 50 (we were married before she was 21 and she had to obtain permission from the OC Sovereign Area to marry) I traced the Education officer, now retired and his wife and they came to my wife's surprise 50th Birthday party in Norfolk. After all those years she did not recognize them!

Sorry this is all rather personal memories but I do value the times I spent in the Corps. I regret not having kept up with more than just one colleague (George Wells now deceased 4 or more years ago). Other colleagues whom I knew well such as John Royle and Dai Davies, Barry Webster, Hugh Myers etc may not be around now.

So may I say a personal thank you for what you do for the past members. For me it is much appreciated.

Another reason for writing is that next week I am going on a Organized trip to the Royal Hospital Chelsea.

Do you know if there are any former Pioneers in residence. If so and it is possible I would like to meet them. Best regards,
Stuart Steven

Excellent visit

I JUST want to report on an excellent visit today where finally I had the pleasure of meeting IP Hull who did not respond to my advance Text.

But did respond when my phone was used to call from the local pub. We had a fantastic day and I met Mick in their club before the tour when he came back promptly.

I found he joined RPC at Gresford one month after me but it seems our paths never crossed.

Before he arrived I was able to talk to many of his colleagues. It could not have

been a better day, enthralling but it was cold.

So thank you for the details that made my meeting possible.

A friend had recently moved to Haddenham and I have stayed there recently. When I have another visit I will see if I can escape to meet up if you are free. I owe you a lunch!

I think there may be a photo of me with Mick Hull on someone's else's camera but I enclose one of me taken at the entrance gate which will follow. Very Best Wishes,
Stuart Stevens



Dadland is a manhunt

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

AS DAD slowly leaves us, I try to haul him back – from the bottom of cardboard boxes and forgotten trunks; from letters buried in desks; from books I previously had not known about... It's not just Dad I want to stick together again. This is an exorcism. And a ghost hunt. Rebuild him. Rebuild me.

Keggie Carew grew up in the gravitational field of an unorthodox father who lived on his wits and dazzling charm.

As his memory begins to fail, she embarks on a quest to unravel his story, and soon finds herself in a far more consuming place than she had bargained for.

Tom Carew was a maverick, a left-handed stutterer, a law unto himself. As a member of an elite SOE unit he was parachuted behind enemy lines to raise guerrilla resistance in France, then Burma, in the Second World War. But his wartime exploits are only the start of it...

Dadland is a manhunt. Keggie takes us on a spellbinding journey, in peace and war, into surprising and shady corners of history, her rickety English childhood, the poignant breakdown of her family, the corridors of dementia and beyond.

As Keggie pieces Tom - and herself - back together again, she celebrates the technicolour life of an impossible, irresistible, unstoppable man.

A beautiful, poignant, irrepressible

memoir about love, loss, uncovered history and the layers of memory that make up a life.

'...it's full of tenderness, and her writing is nimble and handles emotion well... "I've been in thrall to Dad too many years," she writes. "It's been hard to grow out of the need to impress. Be more fearless.

Be wilder. Be braver. Be different. Think differently. Surprise! I knew Dad was out of the ordinary and I wanted to be too."

With the publication of this original, moving book, she has succeeded.' – The Guardian.

DADLAND
AUTHOR: KEGGIE CAREW
(ISBN 978-1-784-70315-8)

Searching for Lord Haw-Haw

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

SEARCHING FOR Lord Haw-Haw is an authoritative account of the political lives of William Joyce. He became notorious as a fascist, an anti-Semite and then as a Second World War traitor when, assuming the persona of Lord Haw-Haw, he acted as a radio propagandist for the Nazis.

It is an endlessly compelling story of simmering hope,

intense frustration, renewed anticipation and ultimately catastrophic failure.

This fully-referenced work is the first attempt to place Joyce at the centre of the turbulent, traumatic and influential events through which he lived through World War 2.

It challenges existing biographies which have reflected not only Joyce's frequent calculated deceptions but also the suspect claims advanced by his family, friends and apologists.

By employing his rampant,

increasingly influential narcissism it also offers a pioneering analysis of Joyce's personality and exposes its dangerous, destructive consequences.

"What a saga my life would make!" Joyce wrote from prison just before his execution. Few would disagree with him.

SEARCHING FOR LORD HAW-HAW
(THE POLITICAL LIVES OF WILLIAM JOYCE)
AUTHOR:
COLIN HOLMES
(ISBN 978-1-138-88886-9)





Road and house builders go to France

Mr S Addy (son of former Director of the Corps, Brig Addy) sent in the following newspaper clipping from 5th February 1940

Report: Mr S Addy

FROM DOUGLAS WILLIAMS, Daily Telegraph Special Correspondence with the British Expeditionary Force in France, Sunday. Engineering and labour in modern warfare are almost as important as fighting and that the Army is fully conscious of this fact is proved by the large number of Royal Engineers construction and labour companies that are coming over there to swell the strength of the BEF.

The latter are known as "Amps" – an abbreviation for Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps.

The projects and works that await them are reminiscent of the Labours of Hercules. There are roads to be built or improved, hutted camps to be erected, railway sidings to be made or extended, dumps and storehouses to be set up, defence lines to be dug, and scores of other tasks requiring not only hard work but great technical skill.

It is impossible to give too much credit to

these volunteers, many of them over 40, who have cheerfully joined the Army to take on this important work, in many ways for less pleasant and lacking in glamour than that associated with a fighting unit.

READY TO FIGHT

And yet, in the hour of emergency, these labour troops will be just as ready to take their place in the firing line – to drop their shovels and picks and take up rifle and grenade – just as their predecessors did in the last war when reinforcements were so urgently needed in the dark days of the March offensive in 1918.

The RE construction companies are recruited from many of the largest peacetime firms of building contractors, from county council staffs and from officials of the Ministry of Transport.

Among the famous firms which have supplied many volunteers are Mowlems, Laings, Costains, Wimpeys and Nuthalls, names which have long been familiar on new buildings all over England.

They are an unusually fine lot of fellows –

each a technician in his own line, be it carpentry, plumbing, fitting, welding or any other of a dozen trades and all imbued with the traditional pride of craft of the British workmen.

DAY AND NIGHT SHIFTS

They are strong and sturdy, and well equipped to stand up against the hard work they will be called on to carry out in the next few months.

In some urgent projects work will go on day and night in eight hour shifts.

These new sappers in France are in huts waiting to start jobs that have already been blue-rinted for them. Some of the officers were, only a few weeks ago, executives in construction companies at home earning £3,000 or £4,000 a year.

The "Amps" are also a fine body of men, although their work is somewhat different from the rest, as their ranks are recruited from less skilled trades. Most of them are men over 41, many of whom served in the last war in the infantry or artillery. ■

The Last Post

Since the last newsletter it is with great sadness to report the following deaths

BARTLETT NORMAN F. 17 JUL 16 (22695207) EX PTE (AGED 82).

Served 1952 – 1954 in 196 Coy

KEARNS JOHN J. 24 OCT 16 (21021042) EX CPL (AGED 95)

Served 1943-1975 originally in 2204 Coy East African Pioneer Corps. More than 200 people attended his funeral on 8 Nov 15 at Markeaton Crematorium, Derby his coffin was draped in a Pioneer Flag and it is pleasing to report that many Pioneers attended the service together with serving members of the Reserve from Nottingham together with other ex service personnel from the local Royal British Legion.

A friend has in her possession his Army records which say that John enlisted on 5 August 1943 into the Royal Pioneer Corps in Belfast and served for the whole of his career as a Private. In his discharge book his Commanding Officer describes him as an "extremely pleasant likeable man who has seen long service in the Army. Whilst not being interested in promotion during his long career, he has, nevertheless, always proved himself to be completely reliable and trustworthy in all aspects of military life". He was married to the late Eileen for 40 years, she died 18 months before John.



MCGRAND JOHN F 17 MAR 15 (13114038) EX PTE (AGED 93)

Served 5 Mar 42 to 26 Apr 49

THOMAS CHRISTOPHER JOHN 15 JUL 16 (24326345) EX CPL (AGED 61)

MITCHELL ROY 28 DEC 16 (24383625) EX PTE

JOHNSTON IAN ANDREW 17 OCT 16 (24327722) EX PTE (AGED 64).

Served 6 Aug 74 to 5 Aug 83. Jimmy Boyle posted the following message on Facebook: I paid a tribute today at the funeral of former ROYAL PIONEER Corps Soldier Iain Andrew Johnson from Falkirk.. Iain was in the Corps from 1974 until 1981... I knew Iain from 206 Coy.

In the Seventies... I was not aware he lived in the Falkirk area... Iain was a very popular and well known Soldier who was very friendly with everyone... he had a heart of

gold...His Pioneer brown beret was placed on top of his coffin on entrance to the tune of "O flower of Scotland " very emotionalIain had a great mate in Smokey Graham (brother of Herol Bomber) who sadly passed away recently...

I remember in N-Ireland Crossmaglen when Iain was covert dug in for 2 weeks... R.I.P Soldier your duty is done God bless

NEWWEY ROY 14 JUL 16 (22561655) EX PTE (AGED 82)

Served 14 Jun 51 – 5 May 56. His wife wrote: My husband Roy passed away on 14 Jul 16, he would have been 83 on 13 Nov 16 and we celebrated his life with memories, laughs and sadness.

Just a couple of things we would like to thank you for; publishing his story in The Pioneer of his time in the army – it made his day, he and we were so proud. Roy always said how good you were especially when he ordered things from you.

When The Pioneer was due it was either it's late or my book is due soon. He spent such a lot of time reading everything in it. Roy was very young at heart and certainly didn't look his age. Sorry about going on but we all miss him so much. So thank you Norman for everything. Beryl Newwey

DACKERS GARY 20 DEC 16 (25053460) EX PTE.

Taff Teague left the following message on Facebook:

"You was always a good laugh to be around. Never a dull moment with you. Took the piss out of anybody and anything. Remember.. Neither of us wanted to go to heaven as it would be full of boring c--- and no pubs. So my friend. I will see you somewhere on the other side causing havoc somewhere. See you at the re-org.

VOICE DAVID WINDSOR 19 JAN 17 (23027265) EX PTE (AGED 80)

Served 6 May 54 – 27 May 56

HARDY CHRISTOPHER GRAHAM 31 JAN 17 (AGED 50)

Former OC 518 Coy RPC

GIBSON WILF 14 NOV 16 EX PTE

A regular attender at 39/93 Functions and Pioneer Reunions.

HAGAN DAVID CHARLES 15 JUN 16 (24274119) EX PTE (AGED 62)

Served 1974 – 1986

EVANS RICHARD MORGAN 17 FEB 17 (14631186) EX PTE (AGED 92)

Served 17 Jun 43 – 6 Oct 47 mainly in Salvage Units (these were controlled by Pioneer Corps).



Roy Newwey



Epineri Tokalau

TOKALAU EPINERI 3 JAN 17 EX PTE (AGED 38)

GALLOWAY KEVIN 4 MAR 17 (24367385) EX CPL (AGED 65)

Spencer Norman wrote on Facebook, "RIP Gunny Kevin Galloway, a true 1pl, 518 Coy legend. Gunny was a unique Section Commander in Gulf War 1, if the boss sent him for a wheel barrow he came back with a JCB, if he was sent for tent he came back with a marquee with no questions asked. RIP Red & Green."

PRICE DAVID MICHAEL 16 FEB 17 (24006153) EX CPL (AGED 70)

Served 1964 – 1978

ANSON COLIN (FORMERLY CLAUS OCTAVIE ASCHER) 13 JUN 16 (13118503 FORMERLY 13085191) EX SGT (AGED 94)

Enlisted into the Pioneer Corps on 15 Nov 40 and transferred to Sussex Regt (given a 3rd service number of 5466355) cover for the Royal Marine Commandos where he took part in the invasions of Sicily, mainland Italy and the Greek Islands.

(Ed note: His exploits are recorded in the book "German Schoolboy, British Commando – Churchill's Secret Soldier" by Helen Fry ISBN 978-0-7524-4996-8)

MCCAMBRIDGE ARTHUR 16 JAN 17 (23118183) EX PTE (AGED 80)

Served 1962 - 1974



And finally...

The Pioneer name and colours are literally everywhere, Sgt Dewsnap, Cpl Burke (left), Geordie Taylor (left) and Pete Thomas (second from left).

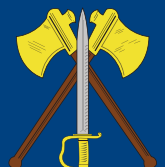
Report: Paul Brown
Pictures: Supplied

WE HAVE seen an influx of red and green and named Pioneer posts and pictures on facebook and the like. Here are a small selection.



Coming up in the next newsletter ...

- News
- Forthcoming events
- Past events
- Your Letters
- Your stories
- Blast from the Past
- Digging through the Archives
- Photo Gallery
- Book Reviews
- Press Cuttings
- And much more!



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SGT DEWSNAP was addressing a squad of 25 and said: "I have a nice easy job for the laziest man here. Put up your hand if you are the laziest." 24 men raised their hands, and the sergeant asked the other man "why didn't you raise your hand?" The man replied: "Too much trouble raising the hand, Sarge."

SGT DEWSNAP was serving overseas far from home and was annoyed and upset when future wife number 2 wrote to break off their engagement and ask for her photograph back. He went out and collected from his friends all the unwanted photographs of women that he could find, bundled them all together, and sent them back with a note saying, "I regret that I cannot remember which one you are. Please keep your photo and return the others."

SGT DEWSNAP, during camouflage training was disguised as a tree trunk and had made a sudden move that was spotted by a visiting general. "You simpleton!" the officer barked.

"Don't you know that by jumping and yelling the way you did, you could have endangered the lives of the entire company?" "Yes sir," he answered apologetically. "But, if I may say so, I did stand still when a flock of pigeons used me for target practice. And I never moved a muscle when a large dog peed on my lower branches. But when two squirrels ran up my pants leg and I heard the bigger say, 'Let's eat one now and save the other until winter' - that did it!"

SGT DEWSNAP, meets with an army Major who is visiting sick soldiers. The major says to Sgt Dewsnap, "What's your problem, Soldier?" "Chronic syphilis, Sir!" "What treatment are you getting?" "Five minutes with the wire brush each day, Sir!" "What's your ambition?" "To get back to the front lines, Sir!" "Good man!" says the Major. He goes to the next bed. "What's your problem, Soldier?" "Chronic gum disease, Sir!" "What treatment are you getting?" "Five minutes with the wire brush each day, Sir!" "What's your ambition?" "To get back to the front lines, Sir!" "Good man!" says the Major. He goes to the next bed. "What's your problem, Soldier?" "Chronic piles, Sir!" "What treatment are you getting?" "Five minutes with the wire brush each day, Sir!" "What's your ambition?" "To get to the front of the line and get the wire brush before the other two - Sir!"

SGT DEWSNAP was brought up before the unit CO for some offence. "You can take your choice, Sergeant - one month's restriction or twenty day's pay," said the officer. "All right, sir," said Sgt Dewsnap, "I'll take the money."

SGT DEWSNAP came home from a secret two year mission only to find his third wife with a new born baby. Furious, he was determined to track down the father to extract revenge. "Was it my friend Micky", he demanded. "No!" his weeping wife replied. "Was it my friend Jim then?" he asked. "NO !!!" she said even more upset. "Well which one of my no good friends did this then?" he asked. "Don't you think I have any friends of my own?" she snapped.

SGT DEWSNAP was on a military training exercise, the British divisional command radio operators were getting very bored one quiet night, when breaking the silence a voice asked over the air, "Are there any friendly bears listening?" After a moment, another voice replied, "Yes, I'm a friendly bear," and then another voice, "I'm a friendly bear too!" At this point, the Officer at Headquarters grabbed his microphone and let loose a blistering tirade at the operators for fooling around on an radio link. When he had finished, there was silence for about ten seconds. Then a small voice said, "You're not a very friendly bear, are you?"

SGT DEWSNAP had just chewed out one of his cadets, and as he was walking away, he turned to the cadet and said, "I guess when I die you'll come and dance on my grave." The cadet replied, "Not me, Sarge... no sir! I promised myself that when I got out of the Army I'd never stand in another line!"

SGT DEWSNAP who was habitually drunk, publicly announced to all the men in his company and surrounding companies that he was swearing off drinking and that all the other soldiers should give up this foul habit also. The other soldiers would tease him to fall off the wagon by giving him whiskey and get him drunk. Every morning he would be back preaching about the sins of alcohol. One day his tent mate told him he ought to give up preaching about the evils of the jug as he always ends up drunk. With a twinkle in his blood shot eyes he said " what, and give up all that free whiskey?"



THE PIONEER

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