

THE PIONEER



THE PIONEER WEEKEND

PIONEERS LOOKING SMART AT THE IMPROVISED CHURCH SERVICE, DURING THE PIONEER CORPS ASSOCIATION REUNION



Front Cover

Pioneers at the Church Service, Reunion Weekend

Picture: Tracy Brown



Back Cover

Pioneers at the Church Service, Reunion Weekend

Picture: Paul Brown

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EDITORIAL

PLEASE, please let me know if you move address, once again we had 35 newsletters returned following the April distribution. Although most have now informed us of their new address a number are now in our "Lost" member folder.

This year, I believe, has been another successful one for the Association. Two new Branches, the Northern Branch (under the Chairmanship of Mr John Hatfield) and the Bicester Branch (under the Chairmanship of Major Billy Dilkes), are now up and running and are holding regular functions/meetings. The Northampton Branch, under the Chairmanship of Mr Bob Fox, continues to thrive and hold quarterly meetings as well as organising functions throughout the year. The 39/93 Club still meet as does the Nostalgia Group. We have record numbers applying for tickets for the Cenotaph Parade, this year should be our largest group ever! If you cannot attend please watch for us on the television. I have already contacted the BBC to give them details of our Corps including a brief history.

The Pioneer Reunion Weekend was again a great success however we must reach out for the younger ex Pioneers to attend. A booking

form for this year is enclosed with this Newsletter and details are shown on page 17. You are reminded that payment for the weekend can be made in instalments, payment can also be made via paypal, our account is: royalpioneer corps@gmail.com

A full weekend of entertainment is guaranteed with groups already booked for Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. Once again we intend to run coach(es) to the National Memorial and hold a short church service in the Logistic Grove. It is also hoped to have a finger buffet at the British Legion Club at Alrewas.

Let us make the 2018 Pioneer Reunion the largest yet, please pass the word among your friends and comrades.

Again it is my sad duty to print details of members who we have lost, this edition contains details of some well known personalities i.e. Cloggy Compton. He was a larger than life character and was my first Sergeant Major – he left a lasting impression. Another was ex WO1 Frank Lyle MBE, he was a regular attender at the Reunion Weekend and was in fact due to attend this year. However, the week before the Reunion he had a fall and broke his leg, unfortunately he passed away a

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You're clever and you're wiffy
You make other Toms seem plain
Trust me to have an ex-RSM
Who's flipping half insane</p> |
|--|--|



STOP PRESS

■ Congratulations to Kev Jessop and Peter Bevan on their recent marriages.

STOP PRESS

■ Congratulations to WO1s Wright and Alcorn and WO2 Archer on selection for commission.

STOP PRESS

■ WO1 Donaghue now Head of Trade for serving Pioneers

■ Book now for 2the 2 018 Pioneer Reunion.



week later.

Last year an event was held at Sherringham organised by Mr Peter Wegg, this was another success and a similar event is to be held in 2018, details are shown on page 17 I hope you can attend.

Once again I am asking for articles for the Newsletter, have you a story to tell? If so, please submit it (with accompanying photographs if possible). You must have some exploits/exercises/tours you were involved in, all articles help to preserve the history of the Corps.

You will notice that this issue is a 72 page bumper edition as we had so much to pass on to you, the reader. I hope you enjoy reading the contents especially those articles on the Corps history which, I think, we must preserve.

You will also note on pages 86 and 87 photographs of individuals, it would be appreciated if you could identify these personnel. These photographs were obtained from a box of negatives held by the Association. To date over 3,500 of these negatives have been scanned in, it is noted that a great majority were taken at Kineton (probably by Scouse Bradley!). In the next few issues of the Newsletter we will be publishing more photos

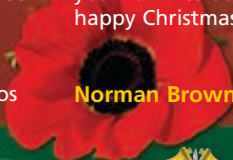
from these negatives.

Once again tickets for the Christmas Draw are enclosed with this Newsletter (unless you have indicated that you are unable to sell them), please give this draw your full support, this is one of the few sources of income that we have. You can purchase these tickets using paypal if you wish - our account details are shown above.

We still have a few signed prints left of The Fighting Pioneer painting, these are £20 each (this includes postage) if you have not purchased a copy I suggest that you do so now before they are all sold. Items from the Corps Shop can be purchased at any time, details and prices can be found at: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/RoyalPioneerCorps/shop/>

If you are in contact with other ex Pioneers please ask if they receive this Newsletter, if not please pass their details on to me, you can inform them that the Newsletter is free!

Finally on behalf of the Chairman and all members of the Council may we wish you and your families our sincere good wishes for a happy Christmas and a successful New Year.



Norman Brown



Can you spot the mouse?

The winner of "Find the Cuneo Mouse" was Elaine Oram.

A prize will be on its way to her shortly. It was on page 1, third photo along, in the mirror.

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.





■ FINDING THE best military charity to suit your needs is set to be far easier for ex-soldiers thanks to the launch of a new service.

Veterans' Gateway can be accessed by calling 0808 8021212, logging-on to www.veteransgateway.org.uk or texting 8121.

Its announcement comes after research revealed more than 40 per cent of veterans said they would not know which organisation to turn to, while 54 per cent said they found the sheer number of providers confusing.

With more than 2,000 registered Armed Forces charities now in existence the result is not surprising. It is hoped the 24-hour online chat, phone and text message service will offer greater clarity.

Staffed by trained veterans, the £2 million initiative – which has been financed by a grant from its Covenant Fund – is being delivered by a Royal British Legion-led group of organisations including Poppy Scotland, Combat Stress, SSAFA, the MOD and Connect Assist.

It will direct ex-Servicemen and women to a full list of services from housing and recovery to mental health, finance and employment.

■ THE FIRST ever memorial to African and Caribbean Servicemen and women has been unveiled at a ceremony in Brixton.

More than two million troops from these regions served during the two world wars.

(Ed note: many in the Labour Corps, Pioneer Corps and Royal Pioneer Corps) and the monument recognises the sacrifices they made in the conflicts.

The initiative was supported by £80,000 from the Department of Communities and Local Government.

■ THE SCHOOL of Law at Queen Mary, University of London, successfully established a legal advice centre in 2006 which is open to the general public.

Through the "Law for Forces Project", they offer free legal advice to those currently serving in the armed forces, those who have served and their families in areas of law such as:

- Landlord and tenant disputes
- Freehold and leasehold disputes
- Employment issues
- Consumer transactions
- Private contracts

They also advise on the following matters as part of other projects that they run at the centre:

- Intellectual property
- Discrimination
- Family law
- Hate crime
- Revenge porn
- Immigration & Asylum
- Criminal law (offences and Procedure)

Also company law for start-ups, businesses with a turnover of less than £100,000 and social enterprises with a turnover of less than £1 million if non-profit and a turnover of less than £250,000 if profit making.

The Legal Advice Centre is dedicated to offering both a welcoming and confidential environment when seeking free legal advice.

If a client has a legal issue which they cannot advise on, they can signpost the client to an organisation that will be able to assist them.

Dining out after 22 years service

WO2 Mark Lucas was dined out of the Army after 22 years service on Fri 21 July 2017 at Ashchurch Station, Station WOs' & Sgts' Mess



■ WO2 Mark Lucas

Picture: Supplied

MARK'S final tour was as Squadron Sergeant Major of 721 EOD Sqn, 11 EOD Regt RLC. It was a fantastic night hosted by the EOD community with serving Pioneers in attendance, these included WO1 (RSM) Paddy Donaghue, WO2 (SSM) John Patrickson, SSgt Taff Hildreth and now veteran Jason Steen.

Mark presented the mess with one of The fighting Pioneer prints.

A point to note: RSM Paddy Donaghue was taken home early by his wife Jayne being in no fit state to carry on drinking – nice to hear he has not changed!

Mark moves on to pastures new with a career as a Welfare Officer with the Defence Medical Services for Hertfordshire.



■ Allan Sutcliffe and David Levitt from SSAFA

Picture: Supplied

Thank you to everyone

The RPC Nostalgia Group have raised £1,600 for SSAFA Redcar & Cleveland North East Branch by the 72 members who attended at the Premier Hotel in Skegness

ALLAN SUTCLIFFE, along with Kevin Young, Michael Radbourne and John Hatfield with the help of their wife's Liz, Anne-Marie and Julie worked all weekend (28/29th Apr 17) to get all the money raised by holding a fancy dress night on the Friday and auction and tombola on the Saturday night with help of all the members of the group who donated prizes.

And for that we would like to thank our members for all their help. Kelsii Sutcliffe (Allan's granddaughter) sang for the group and did the music with the help of Kevin.

Special thanks need to go to David Levitt from SSAFA who helped out with poster's and other things to sell on the night i.e. pen's, shirt's, wrist bands and mugs. Bill, Jane and Steve at the Premier Hotel, you made us all proud by your hard work and looking after us all, so from the group a big "Thank you".

Also Allan had another surprise for the group. Sandra Allen who is the sister of the group's founder Trevor Leach, who passed away 12 years ago, and who asked Allan to keep the group going visited and stayed the weekend with us.

Allan and Kevin on behalf of the group

would like to thank Lynn and Steve from the Coastal View for everything they have done for us, with equipment when needed to make the weekend the success it has been. And to Russell and Sarah from the Cleveland Bay who ran the Clarry Hotel in Redcar where we all met them for the first time at one of our reunions and have been not only been friend's but are in the Groups family and who turned up once again this weekend to support us.

Next year our chosen charity will be the Royal Pioneers Corps Association. So we are looking forward to seeing you all next year and remember to bring a prize, no matter how big or small it all helps. (Ed note: I thought I would add the history of SSAFA):

When Major (later Colonel Sir) James Gildea set up the Soldiers' and Sailors, Families Association (SSFA) in 1885, the intention was to help the families of servicemen serving in the Sudan campaign. Did you know that, at the time, the state did not legally recognise the majority of marriages to servicemen? This meant many women received little or no financial assistance during their husband's active service. Major Gildea set up a fund to

provide a small allowance to dependants of soldiers and sailors. He defined it as "the ready help of friends to friends" with the motto 'dis dat qui cito dat' – twice gives he who gives quickly. By the end of its first year, SSFA had helped 231 women and 466 children with monetary grants and clothing. Committees were established in Kent, Devonport, Portsmouth, Chatham, Liverpool, Suffolk, Wakefield and Guernsey.

When servicemen were deployed to the Boer War (1899-1902), SSFA stepped in again, initially helping wives find employment. However, as the war progressed and fundraising started to increase (raising a staggering £1.3 million), SSFA was able to offer financial aid along with food and clothing to those in need.

During the Boer War years, SSFA gave monetary assistance to 200,000 families with the help of 12,000 volunteers. SSFA's casework approach during this time was influenced by the mainly female volunteer base and is the framework from which they still deliver core services today.

SSAFA is continuing to evolve and adapt with the changing military landscape. Last year they helped 67,616 people through their charitable services.



■ **THE PARTNERS** of veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder are themselves at significant risk of mental health problems, according to research by Combat Stress.

In the first study of its kind, nearly half of 100 wives and girlfriends questioned, reported having alcohol issues, while more than a third had depression or anxiety and 17 per cent displayed symptoms of PTSD.

Another survey revealed that partners can also face challenges such as isolation.

As a result, the charity has launched a two-year pilot programme, funded by The Royal British Legion, to support individuals who are affected.

"This will give partners a good insight into how and why veterans are affected by PTSD, and how they can manage the impact that it has on the family," commented Dr Dominic Murphy, lead author of the research papers.

■ **THANK YOU** to members for purchasing Draw Tickets, the Association made a profit of £850, this helps the Association to carry out its work. Results are:

1st £1000 - Wings of Eagles - 20383
Mr J Barker, Manchester
2nd £500 - Cliffs of Moher - 14051
A Owen, Bethnal Green
3rd £200 - Cracksman - 00668
K Pacey, Wrexham
4th £100 - Eminent - 45404 AR Palmer, Derby
5th Benbati - 39664
Mr G Cooke, Andover

■ **WHETHER YOU** want the challenge of an open water swim, 10k run or 50-mile cycle ride, SSAFA can help you find the event that's right for you.

Perhaps you'd like to try white water rafting, tandem sky-diving, or even walking?

Or one of SSAFA's own events: Soldier 30:30 and the unique Ride to the Somme. To find out more call: 020 7463 9310 or email: communityfundraiser@ssafa.org.uk

■ **PRINCE HARRY** has said mental health strategies for armed forces personnel are crucial to create a "more confident, focused and, ultimately, more combat-ready military".

In a speech at the Ministry of Defence the 33-year-old prince, who spent 10 years in the army, said that as the number of active-duty personnel had been reduced there was a premium on "every individual being fighting fit and deployable".

Announcing a joint initiative between the MoD and the Royal Foundation, created by the Prince and the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge to tackle mental health issues, Harry said mental health strategies needed to be at the forefront of armed forces personnel training.

"Quite simply, these men and women are prized assets which need to be continually invested in. We surely have to think of them as high-performance athletes, carrying all their kit, equipment and a rifle," he said. "Crucially, fighting fitness is not just about physical fitness. It is just as much about mental fitness too."

■ **THE Ox & Bucks Veterans Support Groups (including the Heyford & Bicester Veterans Group) can be contacted on 07594558761, Representatives from H4H, Combat Stress Veterans UK and TRBL are always in attendance.**

Pioneer receives the highest honour

WW2 Pioneer veteran Peter Howard Wayne receives France's highest honour, the Légion d'Honneur



■ Peter receiving his award

Picture: Supplied

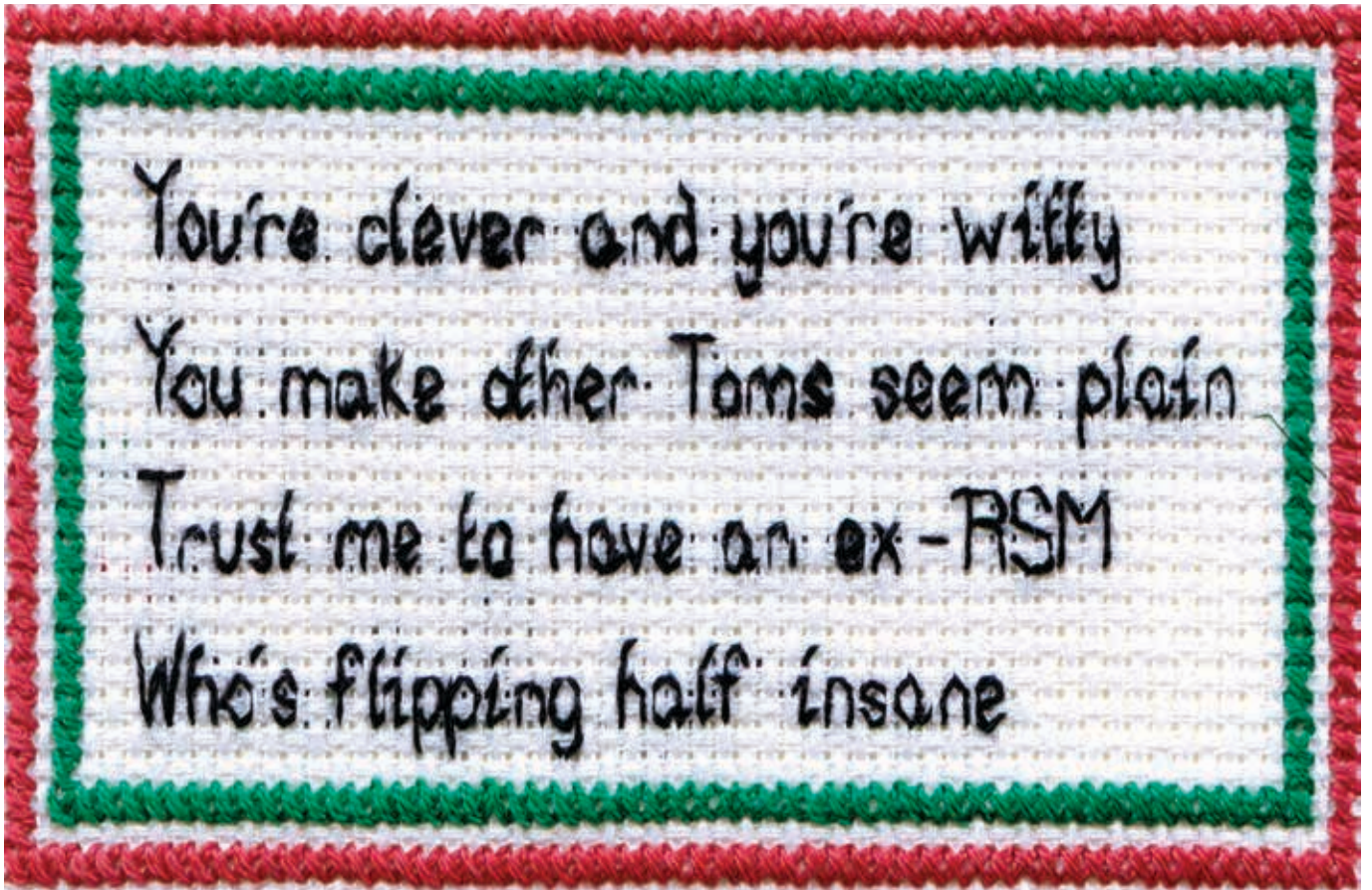
PETER Howard Wayne initially enlisted under the name of Hans Dieter Wolff and given the service number 13805468. A service number prefixed "1380" indicated that they were an "Alien" and if captured would easily be recognised as one. Ten thousand Aliens enlisted into the Pioneer Corps (until 1942 this was the only Corps they could enlist into). They were then given the option to change their service number and if they wished also their name, Peter did this and was given the new service number of 13116554.

He enlisted at Liverpool on 14 Feb 41 and served in the Pioneer Corps until 17 Oct 46.

On 22 Aug 17 the military attaché at the

French Embassy came to his home in Kensington with his Deputy and in a short ceremony presented him with the insignia of the Legion d'honneur. In his tribute the attaché mentioned the contribution made by Peter in interrogating prisoners of war, and after the liberation of Dieppe in September 1944 assisting the Royal Engineers in clearing the Harbour as a member of the Pioneer Corps.

The French government has been awarding the Legion 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.



■ The embroidery says it all

Picture: Supplied

Favourite Sgt Major

In June 2017 Maj (Retd) Jimmy Atkins celebrated his 90th birthday, congratulations Jimmy! The following is an extract from the book "England's Last Hope" by Gerry 'Cloggy' Compton

THERE was a character in the Corps called Captain Jim Atkins, normally known as Tommy Atkins. In 1956 he had transferred, as a WO2, into the Pioneers from the Parachute Regiment. He had been a PJI (Parachute Jump Instructor) but broke both of his ankles in a bad jump. He soon became one of the two RSMs in the Corps, later receiving a quartermaster's commission in 1961, and was always playing jokes on his colleagues.

After quite a few years as RSM, he knew our family well. Whenever he saw Beryl (Ed note: Cloggie's wife) and myself out shopping in Bicester, he would shout across the street:

"Can I carry your bag for you, Sergeant Major? Or would you sooner she walked?"

Beryl would say: "I'll brain that Jimmy Atkins one of these days."

As an ex-RSM and having a Quartermaster Commission, he had the privilege of using the Sergeants' Mess as well as the Officers' Mess.

Just before it was time to leave the army, I decided that it would be a good idea to

have my haemorrhoids fixed. I went to see the MO and he arranged for me to go to RAF Halton Hospital, just outside Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire.

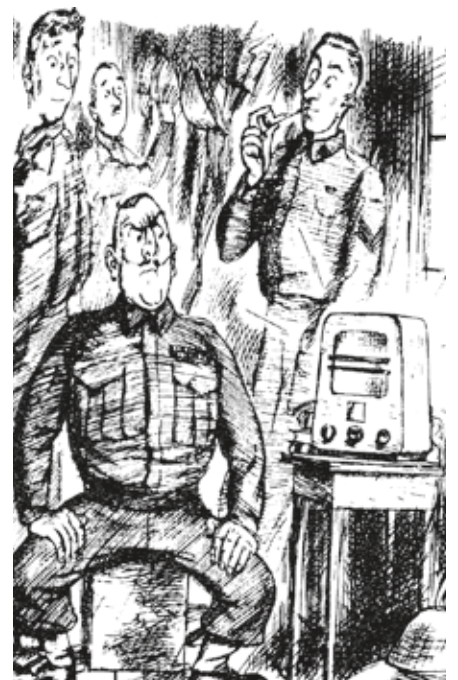
I duly had the operation and, after a brief period of recovery, it came time for me to have the plugs removed and to go for a warm salt bath.

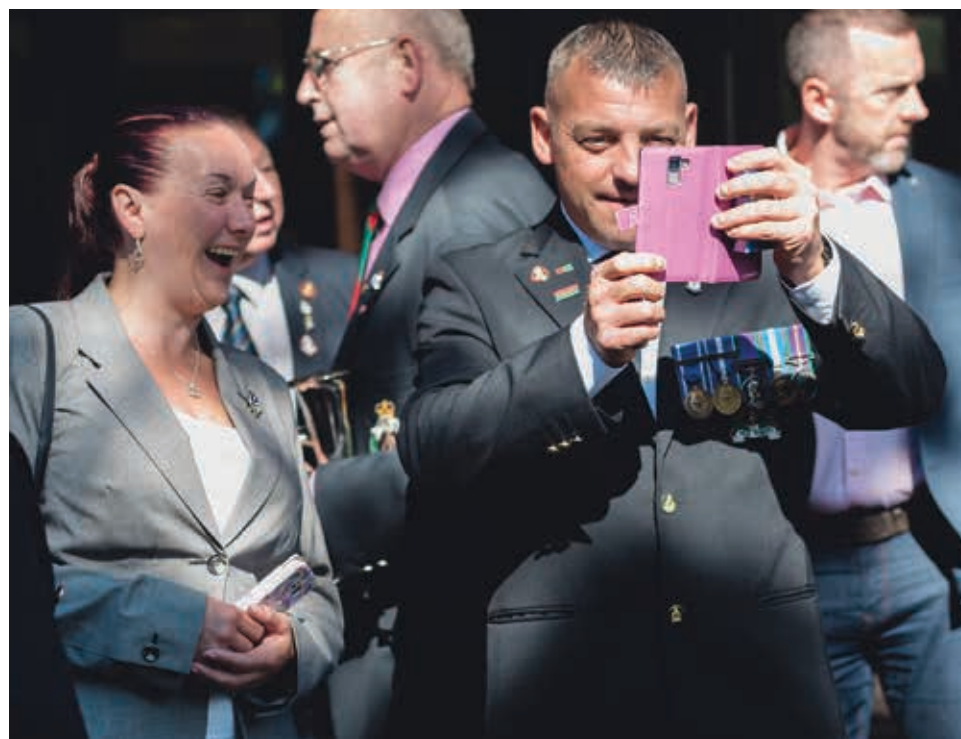
I was walking down the ward, a little bow legged and trying to keep the cheeks of my backside apart, when I heard an announcement over the hospital music and public address system.

The announcer said that he was, "... playing a request for Sergeant Major Cloggy Compton of Ward 3, that old favourite, 'Ring of Fire'. With the best wishes of the Quartermaster and his staff for their favourite Sergeant Major".

Of course, everybody in the ward roared out laughing.

I found out later that Jimmy Atkins had been the instigator of this episode and that he had bribed quite a few of the orderlies and the Flight Sergeant who ran the request programme to play the tune at the appropriate time.





What a weekend!

The third Pioneer Corps Association Reunion to be held at The Royal Coventry Hotel was held on 30 June to 2 July 2017

THE third Pioneer Reunion to be held at The Royal Coventry Hotel was held on 30 June to 2 July 2017. However, some eleven members decided to stay an extra night and booked in on the Thursday, although there was no entertainment that night we were entertained by "Pedro" (Andy Conyers), he has assured me that he is to take singing lessons before next year's reunion (15/18 June 2018).

As most guests arrived on the Friday the Association shop was doing great business especially with the new Polo Shirts (these can still be ordered through the Association at £27.50 – this includes postage). Thanks go to Pete and Chris Thomas for running the shop.

On Friday night the entertainment was, once again by popular demand, the Dreamettes. This is the third time they have played for us and everyone was asking me to book them again next year. During the evening a raffle was held with all prizes being donated by members, this raised the magnificent sum of £360, - again thanks to Pete and Christ Thomas for their help. Everyone enjoyed the first of the three carvery's over the weekend.

Saturday saw the first mini-bus depart for Wellesbourne market which gave the ladies a chance to spend their partner's money! The Association AGM was held at 1000 hrs where both the President and Chairman both mentioned that they would be stepping down from these positions. The minutes of the meeting are shown on page 52.

Saturday afternoon saw a shuttle service to 159 Regt RLC for a BBQ organised by WO1s Rob Bierton and Ross Clarke. Those

who did not go to the BBQ went to a variety of locations, some to the National Arboretum, some to the motor museum and some to Coventry City centre – the few remaining had a quiet afternoon in the hotel.

Saturday evening we were entertained by the Black Country Boys. During the evening an auction was held which raised the magnificent sum of £1,470, again all items had been donated. Pete Thomas excelled himself as the auctioneer and special thanks must go to Mr Gillespie for his wonderful Pioneer gypsy caravan which raised the sum of £370 thanks to Roger Kirby! Thanks also to Mrs Lathwood for donating two Pioneer teddies which raised nearly £100 each.

On Sunday morning after a hearty breakfast a church service was held on the lawns on the hotel, luckily it was a beautiful sunny morning. Mr Ian Dewsnap once again marched the contingent down to the stone circle at the bottom of the lawn. (He has now decided to hand over as Parade Marshall as by this time next year he will be 70!). The service was held by the Association adopted Padre, Capt Kev Jessop, who volunteered to carry out the role ably assisted by Maj Billy Dilkes who did the bible reading.

After the service a group photo was taken on the lawn with Mr Kirby's caravan in the foreground, copies of this photograph can still be obtained from the Association.

Sunday afternoon was again a quiet spell with members again dispersing to various locations, many heading to the Wetherspoon's pub in Coventry where Pedro once again practiced his singing much to the dismay of everyone else!

Sunday evening saw us have the final carvery meal with entertainment from the group "Out of Order" and the disco "Solent City Sounds". It was great fun trying to guess the singer as the disco had a large screen showing old clips.

Once again the weekend was a great success, this can be seen from the letters which are shown on page 65 and the photographs on the opposite page and below. It is hoped next year's Reunion will be the largest let at Coventry, a brief outline of the programme is as follows:

Fri: reception, Association Shop open, carvery meal in the evening with once again The Dreamettes and also a raffle.

Sat: coach(es) to the National Memorial Arboretum, church service in the Logistic Grove, coach to Alrewas British Legion Club for a finger buffet, then return to Coventry for a Gala Dinner (with wine) together with the Group Vintage Group Plus - there are 11 members in the Group with 3 girl singers, and once again an auction.

Sun: Association AGM, followed by WOs & SNCOs Reunion Club AGM, during the afternoon a "Photo Flash" where it is hoped over 3,000 photographs will be shown, it is also intended to hold a quiz and bingo. The evening entertainment is the Group Out of Order, there will also be another carvery meal.

The booking form is enclosed with this Newsletter, if you wish to receive the members discount please return it by 1 May 2018. Members are reminded that they can pay by instalments.

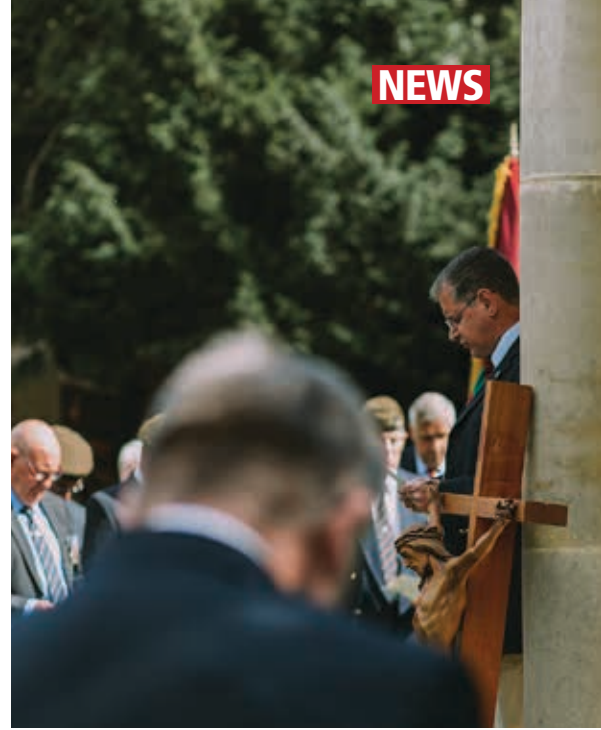
Payment can be made by cheque made payable to "RPC Association" or made via paypal, our account is: royalpioneer corps@gmail.com













■ MICHAEL MULVEY decided to run the London 10k with the intention of breaking the time of 73.34, this he did by completing the run in a time of 72.25 so beat the current world record by 1 minute and 9 seconds.

The Guinness Book of Records have acknowledged this. He ran to raise funds for BLESMA and the RPC Association.

Well done Michael!



■ KEVIN YOUNG had a message left for him from the girl's School at Wootton to take a look at the plinths for the plaques at the old entrance to Simpson Barracks.

So he went up to have a look on way home. "I think they need a bit TLC."

Tom Appleyard is currently doing enquiries if the contractors who cut the grass have took the plinth to their yard and to look into getting the necessary work done to restore it all to its former glory.



■ IT IS quite amazing what some people try and sell. Take for example the above badge.

A very poor reproduction of the Veterans badge, combined with the newer Pioneer badge, that is also very poor and is not even right. Why would someone want to wear a fake veterans badge?

Also we have reported 3 companies producing poppy badges to the RBL for which they are taking action, as they do not have permission.

A company that does have permission from RBL and donates to the RBL is www.militaryremembrancepins.com

Another Pioneer gets the highest honour!

WW2 Pioneer veteran Walter Kraus receives France's highest honour, the Légion d'Honneur



■ Walter Kraus - congratulations!

Picture: Supplied

VIENNA BORN Walter Kraus says he is 'touched' to receive the Légion d'Honneur, but adds that he still thinks of his fallen comrades,

Now a great-grandfather, Walter was born in Vienna in 1919, but escaped following the Anschluss (Nazi occupation).

He was first interned in Belgium before arriving in England in August 1939 where, as an "enemy alien," he volunteered to join the British Army on his 20th birthday.

Alongside other German, Austrian and Czech refugees, Corporal Kraus served in the Pioneer Corps (74th Company) in the Battle of France, from February to June 1940, before being evacuated from Brest during Operation Ariel.

Four years later, he took part in the

Normandy landings and the liberation of France, landing at Arromanches shortly after D-Day, serving in France, Belgium and Germany.

He served with the British Military government at Aachen from 1945 to 1946, before marrying Charlotte Arendar in 1949, who sadly passed away in 2015. They had three children, 12 grandchildren and six great-children.

(Ed note: 13800767 Walter Kraus enlisted on 2 Jan 40 and served in 74 (Alien) Company until his discharge on 1 May 46. During his service he served with the BEF before being evacuated on 17 Jun 40, he was also stationed in London on demolitions and debris clearance and at one time stationed at Graven Hill, Bicester working on camp construction).



■ The UK Invictus Basketball Team

Picture: Supplied

I am the Winspear

Well done to Pioneer Craig Winspear who has won a Bronze Medal at the Invictus Games in Toronto, when the UK Wheelchair basketball team beat Denmark by 25 to 14.

THE INVICTUS GAMES is an international adaptive multi-sport event, created by Prince Harry, in which wounded, injured or sick armed services personnel and their associated veterans take part in sports including wheelchair basketball, sitting volleyball, and indoor rowing.

Named after Invictus, Latin for “unconquered” or “undefeated”, the event was inspired by the Warrior Games, a similar event held in the United States. The first Invictus Games took place in March 2014 at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in London, United Kingdom.

The 2014 opening ceremony was attended by Prince Harry, then-Prime Minister David Cameron, Prince Charles, Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, Prince William, and Frederik, Crown Prince of Denmark. The event also included a recorded message from then-First Lady of the United States Michelle Obama.

The second games opened on 8 May 2016 at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex at Walt Disney World, near

Orlando, Florida, United States. The opening ceremony was attended by Prince Harry, First Lady of the United States Michelle Obama, former U.S. President George W. Bush and many other dignitaries. U.S. President Barack Obama and Queen Elizabeth II helped make a promotional video for the 2016 event.

The 2017 games were held in September in Toronto, Canada.

The fourth Invictus Games are to be held in Sydney, Australia from 20 – 27 October 2018, these Games will bring together over 500 competitors taking part from 17 nations.

They will compete in 10 different adaptive sports with events being held across Greater Sydney, including Sydney Olympic Park and on and around Sydney Harbour.

This will be the Games in which the community embraces those that serve, and have served, and the family and friends that support them; it will inspire the many who on a daily basis battle to turn adversity into opportunity.





FUTURE EVENTS

2017 - 2018

CHINESE LABOUR CORPS – 7 NOV 2017

■ A screening of "The Forgotten Faces of the Great War. The Chinese Labour Corps" is to be held at the Macmillan Room, Portcullis House, Bridge Street, London, SW1A 2LW on Tuesday 7 Nov 17 from 1900 – 2030 hrs. Admission is free.

At the outbreak of WW1, China was still a neutral country. However, near on a century of foreign incursion and occupation would make the government explore ways in which it could join the Western Allies in order to regain control of Shandong Province from Imperial Germany. Offers were made and rejected and it was not until casualties within the first week of the Battle of Somme had reached such staggering numbers that the Allies were forced to reconsider their position.

Finally, on 19th April 1917, after a three-month journey over land and sea, a thousand Chinese men arrived in Le Havre, France, weary and bewildered. This was the first batch of the Chinese Labour Corps (CLC), recruited by the British to provide logistical help at the Front. They would be followed by several tens of thousands, mainly from Shandong, thus forming one of the largest Labour Corps involved in World War I.

At the end of the war, many stayed on to clear the land and restore it to agricultural fields. They dug up the dead and buried them in the cemeteries that dot the rural landscapes of France and Belgium. Yet their contribution to the Allied cause is little mentioned and has never been officially acknowledged.

FIELD OF REMEMBRANCE – 9 NOV 2017

■ The Field of Remembrance will be held on 9 Nov 17 at Westminster Abbey.

Tickets are now required for this event and can be obtained from the RPC Association. Members attending are reminded that they should be at the Corps plot by 1030 hrs.

LONDON LUNCH – 9 NOV 2017

■ Following the Field of Remembrance it is once again intended to hold a London Lunch in The Lord Moon of the Mall, 16/18 Whitehall.

CENOTAPH PARADE – 12 NOV 2017

■ The RPC Association has been allocated 85 tickets for the Cenotaph Parade and all have been allocated, we hope however to have a further allocation.

It appears therefore that this year we will have a record attendance, for those unable to attend please look out for us on the television.

BICESTER BRANCH CHRISTMAS PARTY – 15 DEC 2017

■ The Bicester Branch of the Association is to hold a Christmas Function in the WOs' & Sgts' Mess, St George's Barracks, Arncott,

Bicester on Fri 15 Dec 17.

The event is being organised by Al Batchelor and is for Branch members and their families. A disco has been arranged as has food, a raffle will be held and there will be LOADS of banter and cheap beer. Dress - smart casual. Transport will be available from the market square and the cost will not exceed £10 per head. Further details can be obtained from Al Batchelor on 07792 907886.

NORTHAMPTON BRANCH BURNS NIGHT – 27 JAN 2018

■ The Northampton Branch of the Association is to hold a Burns Night in the Conservative Club, Billing Road, Northampton on Sat 27 Jan 18. Further details can be obtained from the Branch Chairman, Mr Bob Fox, on 07484 322603

39/93 CLUB MEETING – 9/11 MARCH 2018

■ The next meeting of the 39/93 Club will be held over the weekend of 9/11 Mar 18 at Aldershot, this will include a dinner on the Saturday night. Sixteen couples have already indicated their intention to attend. Further details can be obtained from Mr Ian Dewsnap on 07999 947958

LADIES DINNER NIGHT – 24 MARCH 2018

■ The WOs' & SNCOs' Pioneer Reunion Club is to hold a Ladies Dinner in the Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess, St George's Barracks, Bicester on Sat 24 Mar 18. A return has already been distributed to Club Members, if not received please contact the Club Secretary, Mr N Brown on 07868 757642.

ARMY v NAVY RUGBY MATCH – 5 MAY 2018

■ The WOs & SNCOs Reunion Club are, once again, organising tickets (and a coach from Bicester) for this event. It is again agreed that all members of the Association can apply for tickets. However we must have your request as soon as possible as last year Twickenham was sold out by early November.

NOSTALGIA GROUP MEETING – 11/13 MAY 2018

■ The Nostalgia Group are to hold a meet in Skegness on the weekend of 11/13 May 2018. Further details can be obtained from Allan Sutcliffe on 01287 654850.

SHERRINGHAM JOLLY – 1 – 3 JUNE 2018

■ Following the success of the 2016 Sherringham Jolly, Mr Peter Wegg is organising another for 2018. The itinerary for the weekend is as follows:

Fri 1 Jun – arrive at the Breck Farm campsite (you can book in advance on 01263 588236 – the postcode is NR25 6QL) from 1400 hrs onwards. Report to reception on arrival and

you will be pointed to "Camp Chunk". Personnel not camping and who intend to come to the evening BBQ please use JMX Taxis (01263 820000) who have a special price for Pioneers – the magic word is "Pioneers"

Sat 2 Jun – Meet at the town memorial at 1055 hrs for laying of wreaths. Blazers, ties and medals etc please. The remainder of the day is for you to enjoy the delights of Sherringham.

Sat evening – Jolly buffet at the Tyneside Club from 1900 hrs, casual wear for the evening. It is intended to hold a raffle in aid of the RPC Association (£230 was raised in 2016)

Sun 3 Jun – for those camping pack up and maybe enjoy a good breakfast in town before heading home.

PIONEER REUNION WEEKEND – 15/18 JUNE 2018

■ The Reunion Weekend is, once again, to be held at The Royal Court Hotel, Coventry from 15/18 June 2018, a booking form is enclosed with this Newsletter. The draft programme for the weekend is as follows:

Fri 15 Jun arrive from 1400 hrs (Association shop will be open)

1930 hrs Carvery Meal with entertainment from "The Dreamettes" – back by popular demand together with a Disco. A raffle will be held in the evening – raffle prizes are always welcome.

Sat 16 Jun Breakfast 0930 hrs Coach(es) depart for National Memorial

1100 hrs Church Service in The Logistic Grove

1330 hrs Coach departs for Alrewas British Legion Club for finger buffet and drinks

1630 hrs Coach returns to Coventry

1930 hrs Gala Dinner (wine supplied) with entertainment from "New Vintage Plus" – a group of 11 with 3 female singers, together with a disco. During the evening an auction will be held.

Sun 17 Jun Breakfast
1030 hrs Annual General Meeting RPC Association

Immediately after AGM – the AGM of the WOs & SNCOs' Pioneer Reunion Club will be held (members of the Club only)

1300 hrs A quiz, bingo and a series of Association photos will be shown

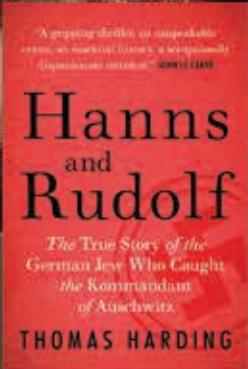
1930 hrs Carvery Dinner with entertainment from the group "Out of Order" together with a disco.

Mon 18 Jun Breakfast and depart with, I hope, happy memories!



Pioneer Nazi Hunter

How a Pioneer feared Nazi hunter scoured Europe for Hitler's henchmen with an SS officers corpse strapped to the roof of his car and whose story has echoes of the film Inglorious Basterds



HE HAD been forced from his homeland by the Nazis, and Jewish refugee Hanns Alexander was desperate for revenge. A pivotal Nazi hunter, Alexander was the man who brought Rudolf Höss, one of Hitler's highest ranking officers, to the noose in 1947.

It all started when the Jewish refugee fled to London in 1936, when his father, living in England already, heard dark rumblings of what was taking place in his native Germany.

Three years later, Britain declared war on Hitler's Third Reich and 22-year old Alexander signed up to the army and set his sights on bagging Nazi top brass.

He served alongside his twin brother, Paul, in the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps - a unit made up of refugees who wanted to take the fight to the Nazis.

Alexander's military career took him to Normandy for the D-Day landings in 1944, before going on to liberate the Bergen Belsen concentration camp the following year. After distinguishing himself in the war, he was desperate to devote his time to hunting down the architects of the Holocaust.

In 1945, Alexander became a natural fit for a crack team of 12 men tasked with scouring Europe for Nazi war criminals - and bringing them to justice.

Before the unit had even been formed, Alexander had reportedly asked to help the Army in their hunt for Nazis, even taking on investigations in his own time.

Rumour had it that the fearless hunter once even drove across Europe with the corpse of an SS officer strapped to the roof of his car. Motivated by his own persecution, Alexander rounded up the guards and administrators at the newly-liberated Bergen Belsen camp.

His interrogations yielded crucial information which laid bare the role of chief Nazi Rudolf Höss in orchestrating the Holocaust.

Now Alexander had a new mission: hunt down the sick Colonel who relished in the extermination of Germany's Jewish population.

Höss was the longest serving Kommandant in Auschwitz's dark history, responsible for introducing the deadly Zyklon B gas to the camp's execution chambers.

It was Höss's sick drive for murderous efficiency which allowed SS guards at Auschwitz to kill 2,000 people an hour.

He was a monster, and he had to be found.

Desperate for information, Alexander began to track Höss down after the fall of Auschwitz in 1945.

Auschwitz was not a single camp: it was a network of over 45 installations built in occupied Poland.

The first Polish political prisoners were sent there in 1940, with the first exterminations taking place a year later.

An estimated 1.3 million people were sent to the camps between 1940 and 1945.

Around 1.1 million of those were killed.

The murders, by gas, starvation and medical experiments, were presided over by 7,000 SS officers.

Around 12 per cent of Auschwitz staff were convicted of war crimes.

Höss, the cowardly Nazi, had fled with his family, and British intelligence managed to place the exiled monster in the Flensburg area of the Danish border.

An intercepted letter from Höss's wife, Hedwig, offered proof that she knew where her husband was hiding.

So in 1946 Hedwig was hauled in for questioning, and Alexander was the one to crack her.

He brought in her eldest son, Klaus, and threatened to deport him if he didn't get his information.

Sure enough, Hedwig caved - telling Alexander everything he needed to arrest Rudolf Höss on March 11, 1946.

Rudolf Höss was handed over to investigators after Hanns Alexander's unit captured him.

The Nazi chief was stripped naked and beaten into submission, before being tried at Nuremberg and then in Poland, where he was found guilty of the murder of over three million people, many from the deadly insecticide Zyklon B

He was hanged at Auschwitz on April 16, while Captain Hanns Alexander returned to London to live out his days in peace.

The prosecutor who interrogated him at Nuremberg said he appeared chillingly "normal".

Lawyer Whitney Harris said he seemed more like a "grocery clerk" than a mass murderer.

And even camp inmates said he always appeared calm and collected as he ended the lives of millions.

The monstrous natural killer was found guilty despite his calm demeanour, and hanged for war crimes.

The story has echoes in the film *Inglorious Basterds*, the 2009 Tarantino flick which follows a group of Jewish Nazi-hunters on their bloody quest for vengeance.

But unlike the brash Nazi hunters in the film, Alexander never once spoke about his instrumental role in bringing Rudolf Höss to justice.

It was only after his death aged 89 in 2006 when the war-hero's descendants uncovered the truth.

His story was pieced together by his nephew Thomas Harding, who spent years delving into historical records in search of evidence about Alexander's involvement in the war.

Eventually, Harding was able to uncover his uncle's legacy, writing a best selling book about him called *Hanns and Rudolf: The German Jew and the Hunt for the Kommandant of Auschwitz* (ISBN: 978-0099559054).

It has been announced that Hanns and Rudolf had been optioned by The Ink Factory Films and that the company is in talks with Sir Ronald Harwood to adapt the book into a film.

The following are some of the comments on this story which have appeared on the internet:

"Mr Alexander you are a true hero. Hoss committed crimes that were so bad that even hanging was too good a death for this piece of human garbage." Styx Birmingham

"I remember a documentary where a

Jewish survivor said that what upset him about the Holocaust was that it taught the Jews to hate. I can see why. This hate will never stop immediately but can dissipate over time, more like a tea kettle cools down on the stove. I can only hope, however, that things like the Holocaust are not repeated again causing more hate to go around."

typeOneegative Mumbai

"Justice is served!" Cocinero Baghdad
"Thank you Mr Alexander on behalf of those of us left with morality and a fear of what the future may hold in this shallow, materialistic, hate filled world. The woman I called 'nanna' survived a concentration camp and my great uncle who was in the British engineering corps had the job of bulldozing corpses into mass graves in an attempt to stave off disease upon liberating a camp in Poland. Today religious extremism and blanket bigotry threaten our world again and western society has become a weak, shallow wasteland of narcissists and idiots. Thank you again, Mr Alexander xxx." Penelope Australia

"Those who forget the past, are condemned to repeat it. never forget the horrors taught to us by the Nazi's." Bukk, USA

"So he was only 27 or 28 years old when he took on such a crucial role in hunting down these criminals...what a true hero." Mia, Sydney

"I hope they make a movie about this remarkable story and man." Bless him. Missyrocks

"There are those who stare horror and injustice in the face and do something about it. Fewer and fewer now days.. Thank you, Mr Alexander!." Valory, Washington DC

"I hope Rudolf Höss is burning in hell for his crimes against humanity." Irishrose, London

"Everyone should study the events of the Holocaust, so as to put their own "problems" into perspective." Paul, Leeds

"Thanks very much Capt Alexander, for tracking down this awful person," Longtom, Brighton

"Wow. So much we don't know that has gone on to track down these murderers!" TGreat, Gushikawa, Japan

"Hanns Alexander a true hero." Fret, Portsmouth

"At least that one didn't get away. What terrible sights must have haunted Captain Alexander, who caught him, though. Nothing could drive that out of your head. Hoss was captured two months before I was born, and thanks to those who fought against people like him, I have had the happy life that most of the people in the camps did not. I am eternally grateful." SW66 Bristol

"Mans' inhumanity to man, knows no bounds. Justice done, and seen to be done." Norman Miles, Gloucester

"What a marvellous story, we must never forget." Philip Barcelona

"Everyone should study the events of the Holocaust, so as to put their own "problems" into perspective." Paul, Leeds. ■

TELEGRAM

Public. This limited to Office of Origin and Service Instruction. Words

47

447 4.45 PETERSBOROUGH 14

GOODMAN 36 MERCERS RD LDR N 19

ARRIVED IN ENGLAND 29 NOV HOME 30 - R05

30 10 30 29

For free repetition of doubtful words telephone "TELEGRAMS ENQUIRY" or call, with this form, at office of delivery. Other enquiries should be accompanied by this form and, if possible, the envelope.



PIONEER CIVIL LABOUR OFFICE



CABLE AND WIRELESS LIMITED

P 727 "Via Imperial"

The first line of this telegram shows—Number, office of origin. (Note: "Oversea" is used to denote that the office of origin has been suppressed.)

OFFICE OF ISSUE
PETERSBOROUGH

71 16 200

MR AND MRS H.J.GOODMAN
36 MERCERS RD
LONDON N 19

ALL WELL AND SAFE
WRITING
MY ADDRESS IS - A.N.P.C. BASE DEPOT M.E.F.

GOODMAN



Letters Home

I would like to thank Mrs Judy Godley (daughter), Mr Roger Goodman (son) and Mrs Gillian Smith (daughter) for giving the Association permission to publish their father's letters home during World War 2. These make fantastic reading, Part 3 in particular, with reference to Civil Labour which was administered by the Pioneer Corps.



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PART 1 – Letters from Pioneer Corps Depot, MEF

7 Sep 43

Dear Mum and Dad, Sorry I was unable to keep my promise to write immediately on arrival. Unfortunately I fell a victim of a common complaint to beginners out here known locally as "Gypsy tummy". Anyway I have now recovered and am beginning to get acclimatized to the heat and flies. I seem to have been bitten by everything that flies except the possible exception of an aircraft. It seems to be very peculiar to be in a country where there is no blackout but even that one can get used to. I attended a remarkable Service last Sunday. The lesson and prayer were repeated in 5 languages besides English. 4 African and one Indian. The most remarkable part was the King at the end when we all sang together 6 languages at once. We are now eagerly awaiting our postings. As you can imagine we want to get cracking. To end with I might add that we came over in a convoy that made history. What the history was will have to wait till later. Cherio. Rob.

24 Sep 43

Dear Mum and Dad, Just a few lines to let you know I am still here in Egypt although I am not expecting to remain here much longer. I hope that in the next week or so I shall be nearly halfway home. However that remains to be seen. I have been out of the country for eight or nine days and consequently did not get your cable until I returned the day before yesterday. By the way will you please remember that my number is 264350 and not 2081207. It was only by chance that I got the cable. I was terribly sorry to hear from Peggy about the passing of Mum Hughes it must have come as an awful shock to everyone being so sudden.

I have had some very interesting experiences during my trip of 1500 miles through Palestine & Syria. I managed to visit quite a number of interesting places like Kantara, Gaza, Haifa, Tyr and Beirut. I have been through the "Wilderness", and believe me it is true to its name, and seen Mount Carmel. The land of milk and honey hardly lives up to its name but I can quite imagine that after wandering 40 years through the Sinai desert it would appear pretty good. Lebanon was disappointing because I couldn't find the cedars. However it certainly abounds in fruit. Bananas, grapes, pomegranates, lemons, apples, melons, dates, mangos and olives are everywhere. There are some peculiarities of cultivation worth noting. Tomatoes & grapes trail along the ground like marrows in England. However they don't appear to suffer for it because tomatoes as big as breakfast cups are quite usual. I came to

the conclusion that Syria was a very nice country. I spent a couple of days with my ex OC Major Guthrie up in the mountains on the road to Damascus. Unfortunately I was unable to get that far. From that above description you will probably think this was a pleasure trip but actually it wasn't. The hardship of the journey will I am afraid have to remain untold for obvious reasons. Anyway I did do a job of work.

Cherio for now. Keep the letters coming. God bless you both. Love, Rob.

7 Oct 43 (arrived 15 Oct)

Dear Mum & Dad, Many thanks for your long awaited letter which arrived today 9 days after you dispatched it. There seems to be some hold up in mail in both directions. So far I have only had two letters from Peggy and this one from you. Neither Peggy nor you seem to have received any letters whatsoever from me. However I suppose it will sort itself out in time.

You will see from the above address that I am still rotting at Base. I don't expect to be here much longer and I am far from settled down as I am packed ready for instant notice. I know where I am bound for within a little. It is impossible to give locations in letters because of the possibility of these getting in the hands of the enemy. However I think it is safe to say that it is not far from where Peggy and I were in 1938. I am sorry I cannot give details of the voyage either. I believe I mentioned that we made history and in due time I expect it will appear in your newspapers. Perhaps Peggy can glean a little more news about it from the Syrian letter. Ask her.

I suppose no letter home is complete without a few grumbles so here goes. We were badly misinformed back home and none of our hopes have come true. None of us are, or ever likely to be used in our special capacities. Promotion is out of the question entirely. Major Guthrie has gone. Mr Gilham who stayed with you, and about four others are the only ones left here with me. He is Assistant Messing Officer and like all of us is itching to get something more active. He, poor chap is not even posted. I have the consolation of knowing I am going sometime. All the majors are posted away in their original rank. They kicked up a hell of a dust about it all to no effect. It must be most disappointing for them. Gerry Gilham asked to be remembered to you both and wants to know how the grass is getting on.

By the way did you ever get the photograph from Northampton. I hope so.

In Peggy's last letter which arrived 10 or 11 days ago, I was very sorry to learn of the sudden passing of Mum Hughes. I have sent an airgraph to Bert & Kitty which I hope they have received, I have also sent Mr Klaiber an airgraph.

The pay out here is very good but goes no further. A large tin of Kiwi costs 2/- and soap 1/- a tablet. You can also buy a nice pair of inferior stockings for 21/-. Some places charge 4/- pint for beer. I hope you don't think that because of all the above remarks I am thoroughly despondent. Not me. Take it as it comes and always happy. What has to be, has to be, so why worry. We have been discussing the points system of demobbing. My prospects seem fairly rosy except for the poor devils who have been out here for 5, 6, 7 or 8 years. Well

cherio keep writing some will get through. Love to all. God bless you both. Rob.

12 Oct 43 (arrived 27 Oct)

Dear Mum and Dad, Your No 3 letter arrived this afternoon a matter of eight days after leaving you. I am calling this No 4 because I have sent 1 airgraph and this is the third air letter. I am glad if you are able to glean anything from my letters but please do not write back suggesting to me what I mean. I will do my best to keep you posted as to my whereabouts as often as possible bearing in mind the interests of security. I know you will understand that these letters are always likely to be shot down and the enemy may possibly glean something of interest from them.

As you can see from the above I am still at PC D and consequently comparatively near Bobby. About 180 miles via Cairo. I will drop him a line and maybe we can fix something up. Unfortunately I am in rather an awkward position. I am completely packed up and may move at a few hours notice. I am therefore unable to get a weekend pass to Alex. In the ordinary course of events it would be quite easy to jump a lorry and be there in six or seven hours free of cost. Hitch-hiking is the usual and easiest way of getting about here. Trains are practically useless. On two occasions when travelling I have stood still for no apparent reason for eight hours.

Now I suppose I had better get this army number business cleared up. Really, of course there is nothing to it except that as in the ranks I have a number, only my commissioned number is 264350.

Gerry Gilham also had a letter from home today and his wife makes some very charming remarks about dad. Look out mum or else you will be losing him. Please also ask Mrs Gilham next time you pass on any information not to repeat same back to us out here. Tell her all you can by all means but please don't embarrass us out here.

Tell Mrs Gilham that Gerry is expecting to go south of my posting. He mentions something about it in his letter No13.

I have started a collection of photographs of things I have seen and places I have been to. Unfortunately I never thought of it whilst I was in Syria so I am afraid that part will have to be a blank. However the others should make an interesting set for after the war. I shall send them home from time to time numbered in sequence as I saw them. I am also sending a photograph or two of Gerry, Dennis Dutton & myself. Known locally as the three musketeers. We are all married and all have one kiddie each. You would be surprised to hear the amount of baby talk that goes on between us. I must add though that we do not knit.

The three of us are at the moment all sitting round the same table writing like mad. I have just read out the previous few lines to them which caused much amusement. Apparently I made one mistake. From the retort received I assume that Dennis can knit. Further alteration "Does knit".

I am tempted to ask where Bert left his cards, however perhaps I had better not. There are many places where he could have left them out here. Still "silence is golden" and I think we had better leave it at that.

I hear from Peggy that Judy has at last

reached the elusive two stone. I haven't had myself weighed since I have been out here but I should imagine from the pints of perspiration per day exuded by me I shall be on my way down to meet her. I also understand that she is making progress with her Sunday School and Dancing classes. I can just imagine the awkward questions she asks. In the letter I received today from Peggy I also understand that she is telling everybody that I am bringing her home a bicycle. This is rather amusing as I shall have to lose a lot of my kit here when I go because of weight restrictions. This unfortunately includes my bed. However I expect I shall pick another one up on the way.

Well, dad, I don't know how long this letter will take to reach you but my guess is that it will probably be near your birthday. So here's to a very happy birthday and God speed for the coming year which should be eventful to say the least of it. I think we can now definitely see the beginning of the end although the way may be long but I doubt it.

Well the bottom of the page is looming in sight so I must begin to close. Give my love and kind regards to all and sundry at home. An occasional letter from various sources would be appreciated. You must understand that I cannot promise to answer direct as I am limited to one A M letter card per week. You people are unrestricted.

Goodnight to you both

God bless and keep you safe. All my love, Rob

22 Oct 43 (arrived 1 Nov 43)

Dear Mum and Dad, The arrow you shot into the sky on the 1.9.43 landed safely at P C D on the 15.10.43. 6 weeks for surface mail is a record.

There are a couple of photographs on the way to keep with the one you already have of the company. One is of myself and the other is of Gerry Gillam and I together. They are only cheap seaside type but will probably serve the purpose for the time being. They have been dispatched by surface mail on 18.10.43 so will probably be six weeks getting there.

Thank you both so much for the flowers you sent Peggy. She did appreciate them very much also for your good wishes for both of us.

Your letter of 10.10.43 also arrived yesterday 19.10.43. Although it was posted the same day as Peggy's it arrived a day later. Glad to hear that Bert and Kit got my airgraph. I can't understand what has happened to the one I sent to A J K which apparently hasn't arrived. Miss Bunce should have received one by the time you get this.

Sorry to hear about Mrs Baker. Peggy had already told me about Mrs Locock.

I had no idea that W G was connected with a Catholic Convalescent Home. He seems to have started a bit late. Still better late than never I suppose.

I had been a bit worried about the raids in London. We heard all about them of course on the radio, but nobody had mentioned them from home. It is nice to know that they didn't do much damage.

It is nice to see Mum's familiar handwriting for the first time on your last letter. Is she still shy about writing, even to her own son? Anyway it is good to see it.

Well now a little news from here. As you see I am still at P C D still packed and waiting. I have written to Bobby asking him if he can possibly meet me in Cairo. So far I have not had a reply.

Tomorrow Gerald, Dennis and I hope to have a day off and are going to Cairo to see what we can find to send home. We hope to find a few suitable Christmas presents for the folks at home. I have no doubt that we shall not entirely restrict our day to shopping although that is our main object. However I shall be able to tell you more about the results of our visit in my next letter. Nothing very exciting has happened since my last letter. The weather is now much cooler. We can even survive one blanket on top at night and it is quite cold first thing in the morning. The heat in the afternoon though still calls for as little movement as possible. Well cheerio for now. God bless you both. All my love, Rob

27 Oct 43

Dear Mum and Dad, I received your second surface mail letter two or three days ago. This I believe is the fastest ever. Having taken only 4 and a half weeks. I did not reply to it immediately expecting to get your usual weekly letter yesterday. However the Gods have not been so kind to me recently and neither yours nor Peggy's has yet arrived.

I believe I have already told you that I have written to Bobby but as yet have not received any answer. I should like to meet him if possible. It must be nearly five years since last I saw him.

I have dropped a few lines to Miss Bunce which I hope she has now received. I hope by now that Miss Gammon has recovered from her childish complaint which I believe can be very serious for grown ups to have. Please convey my fraternal greetings to the brethren when next you see them. No doubt if I was in or reasonably near Cairo I might have an opportunity of going to a Lodge out here. Unfortunately such is not my lot. Lieut Bro. Steer, whom you may remember is also out here.

Bro. Boynett who had some headaches owing to his Scottish Lodge number, arrived out here about four weeks ago. He didn't stay here long and is now away on a course of Hindustani. Sorry to hear that Teddy Keyes is not coming up to scratch. I have no doubt that a little fatherly advice from the 'old pot and pan' will make him see his erring ways.

Yes Gerald Gillam and I are still together. With the exception of about five or six evenings, we have played bridge together every night since we left Blighty.

As a matter of fact there are two photographs on their way home to you. One of Gerry and myself and one of me alone. They should reach you in 3 or 4 weeks.

We very rarely go out as it is so frightfully expensive, so we stay at home and make our own enjoyment. I am very lucky to have two companions, Gerry and Dennis, whose ambitions like mine are to get this war finished and return home to our families. As dad will know, war acts on men in most peculiar ways. It would be impossible to believe some things if you didn't actually see them.

You will notice I have missed out my trip to Cairo. That will follow in the next letter

in a few days.

Cheerio. God bless you, Rob

29 Oct 43

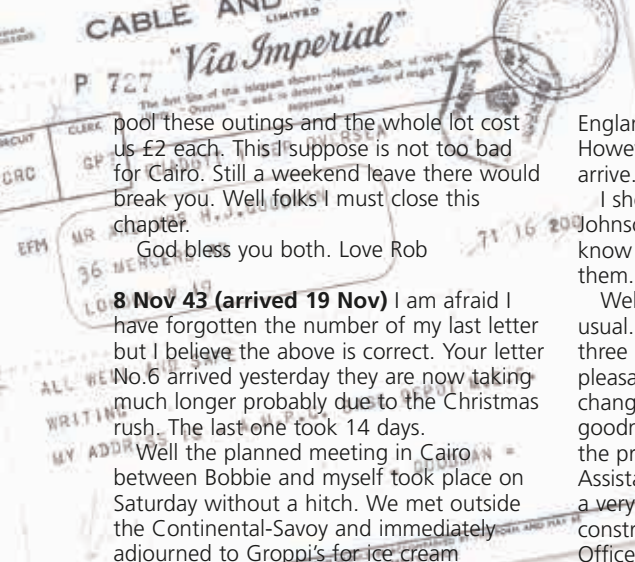
Dear Mum and Dad, No 5 letter arrived today. Not so quickly this time having taken eleven days. I will try and assist you with your book as far as possible.

The stories on history making were very interesting. The two I liked best were "Journey in half the time" and "First troop convoy through Mediterranean". The second one seems hardly possible non-stop and unmolested.

Regarding further reading matter from home I should like copies of the local papers. Hornsey Journal & Islington Gazette. Also such things as "Lilliput" "Men Only", "Readers Digest" & "English Digest" and one other "London Opinion". An odd copy of these now and again would be very acceptable. The Sunday paper is not much good I am afraid. Perhaps you will contact Peggy so that you don't duplicate magazines.

I hope you have now got in touch with 219 about the photograph and had a favourable reply. - I have now had a reply from Bobby Vokes. He has moved very much nearer to me. He is now about 60 miles away very near Cairo. Unfortunately I only had his letter yesterday. When I went to Cairo last week I passed right past his barracks. However I have written him today making a definite date for a day in Cairo together next Saturday 7.11.43. Subject of course to either of us not being posted. At any rate we have contacted each other by post and I hope keep it up.

Our day in Cairo last week was not as successful as it might have been. Firstly Gerry Gillam had toothache which wasn't a good start. Secondly when halfway there it poured with rain and there were no windows in the bus. On arrival Dennis went off to find some friends stationed there and Gerry and I, after ice creams at Groppey's, started our hunt round the shops. Gerry wanted cosmetics for his wife. At last he found the brand he wanted. 1 box of powder, 1 box of rouge 1 lipstick cost 19/-. Then I saw some Soir de Paris like I bought Peggy for years before we were married. On asking how much it was I was told that the tiny 3/6 one in England cost 18/- out here. Needless to say I didn't buy it. Gerry and I spent nearly four hours going round those shops and never bought a thing. Stockings were as much as £3 a pair. Toys were just as bad. So altogether our shopping part of the visit was disappointing. However as regards food we did ourselves rather well. Having met Dennis for lunch at "Le petit coin de Paris" we lunched on spinach & scrambled egg. Veal stew French beans & salad & fresh fruit. Figs and bananas. Dennis went off again at 6 o'clock we met him at Shepheards with his friend, another Officer, and had a few drinks. His friend then took charge and we adjourned to the "St James Hotel" for dinner. Here we had tomato soup, fish, Turkey, braised celery, sweet potatoes. More fresh fruit and coffee. He then took us to a cabaret called "Bardia". Here we sat and drank and watched a very inferior floor show. (Nothing naughty). The good floor shows don't start until late and our bus went at 10 o'clock. So thus ended a rather disappointing day although the food was good. We always



pool these outings and the whole lot cost us £2 each. This I suppose is not too bad for Cairo. Still a weekend leave there would break you. Well folks I must close this chapter.

God bless you both. Love Rob

8 Nov 43 (arrived 19 Nov) I am afraid I have forgotten the number of my last letter but I believe the above is correct. Your letter No.6 arrived yesterday they are now taking much longer probably due to the Christmas rush. The last one took 14 days.

Well the planned meeting in Cairo between Bobbie and myself took place on Saturday without a hitch. We met outside the Continental-Savoy and immediately adjourned to Groppi's for ice cream sundaes. Bob is looking extremely fit and well and is hoping to take a General List Commission in the near future. He knows Cairo backwards, this made a great deal of difference and saved a lot of time getting from place to place.

Before lunch we went to the Desert Purchasing Organization where I bought several things for home. There is a 2 lbs box of Turkish Delight on its way to you. It should arrive in time for Christmas. Perhaps you will let me know when you get it.

After this we went to the St James Hotel for lunch. Egg omelette, chicken, spinach, beans and sweet potatoes, fresh fruit figs and dates. We did a little more personal shopping and went to a place called "Music for all". Here you sit down in easy chairs, settees etc and talk or read as you wish free of charge. On the stage a quartet plays light classical music. Tea and cakes are brought round which you purchase as required. During this session Bob and I got down to a big chat about everything imaginable. He brought an album of photographs he is collecting. Snaps from home and various scenes from actions he has been in. A very interesting assortment.

In the evening we went to the "Metro" picture house and saw "Random Harvest" and finished up with supper at "Le petit coin de Paris". It was the best day I have had since I have been out here time simply flew. Bobbie has found, like I am finding, that you must keep your mind occupied out there. He, like myself, is not leading a very active life at the moment and one tends to think too much about home. I think you will appreciate what I mean. For instance if an Arab kiddie runs up to me, as they often do, its not an Arab I see but Judy more often than not. It is essential to keep occupied. Gerry, Dennis and myself get over it by reading at odd times in the day and playing bridge immediately after dinner each evening until 11 o'clock and so to bed. Then being thoroughly tired out, we hope, go straight to sleep. However that doesn't always work.

Well must close now. Cheerio for now. Love Rob

11 Nov 43 (arrived 19 Nov)

Dear Mum and Dad, A glorious surprise yesterday. Two letters from home one from each of you. I don't intend to write to you separately but I will send another later in the week to reimburse you for your two.

Well it was good to hear so much news from home. I am glad to see that my letters are gradually finding their way to various people. So far I have had no letters from

England except yours, Peggy's and A J K. However I hope soon they will begin to arrive.

I should like to have the addresses of Dick Johnson and Howard Morris. You never know I might be lucky enough to run into them. Especially Dick.

Well life goes on here much the same as usual. Last Sunday I commenced a series of three inoculations against typhus. Not very pleasant but a necessity. I have now changed my job at the Depot. Thank goodness. No more "square bashing" for the present. I have now been made Assistant Hygiene Officer for the Depot. It is a very interesting job as it covers construction besides hygiene. The other Officer concentrates on hygiene and I on construction. We have quite well fitted up carpenter and paint shops. The staff consists mainly of Italians. Six carpenters two joiners a cabinet maker two pressure lamp repairers and two sign writers compose the workshop staff. Then we have a number of squads working outside on latrines, cookhouses and various other buildings. Two lorries are also available. These last are very overworked and my means of transport is usually Shank's Pony or possibly a bike. Believe me cycling across the desert is no fun when you run into the loose sand.

Well the end of this one has arrived.

Cheerio for now

God bless you, Rob

12 Nov 43

Dear Mum and Dad, Here comes second instalment as promised. As it was only early yesterday morning before breakfast that I wrote the last one news is not excessive. However I am keeping my promise of writing to someone each day and as replies are not exactly snowing me under I am utilizing this free day to write to you. I suppose that some of the folk who are receiving letters from me are still recovering from the shock. When they regain sufficient strength maybe I shall get a few replies.

I hope to go to Ismailia on Sunday for a few hours. Whilst I am there I will buy some snaps for you for the book. There are no shops here and I can't run into town just when I like, it being 17 miles away. By the way don't put in the postcard snaps of myself, & Gerry & myself. They are only cheap ones done in the street, produced in 5 minutes. They are not fast and will fade in about twelve months. There is a photograph of Bob & myself on the way which is OK and will not fade. Unfortunately I am unable to obtain snaps of Palestine & Syria.

Now a few replies to your letters. Making history should now be apparent, I hope. Many thanks for all you have done in connection with Barnet. I understand that Peggy has not heard another thing about the light. Regarding the branch in Egypt. I made it quite clear in my letter that I for one was not going to be the manager.

Regarding Christmas presents there is nothing I require out here so I shall be glad if you will give it to Peggy to put in the Bank. I expect we shall be glad of it in the near future with the arrival of the new baby.

Well I think that covers most things. Rumours are busy again and I may be off very soon. However no confirmation is at hand at the moment. I shall not be sorry to

move on from here. Life here is not nearly active enough. Maybe when I do move I shall get more than I want.

One of the most useful items I brought out here was the shaving mirror that stood in your office unused for years. Now everybody who gets an opportunity uses it.

God bless you both. Love Rob

21 Nov 32 (arrived 2 Dec)

Hello folks, Your letter No.8 arrived yesterday whilst I was in Cairo meeting Bobbie for the second time. This may be a little disjointed as I am a bit under the weather. This morning I had my third and last inoculation against typhus. Two Officers just in front of me went straight out, clean as a whistle. Personally I didn't feel as bad as that but it was pretty potent. I will try and straighten out your query about times. Anyway here it is. Cairo time is two hrs ahead of Greenwich. Algiers time one hour. As I am due south of Cairo I am two hours. We don't listen to the same wireless programmes. We hear BBC General Overseas and BBC Pacific services also three news bulletins from Cairo. Here is a correction I am NE of Cairo not South. On the railway to Ismailia.

Regarding mail, sorry to say you cannot help me. We are rationed to one letter-card a week solely to reduce weight of mail home, not for lack of paper. Also we use different forms and different rates.

Glad to hear Harry Taylor is making a good do of his job. I am sorry we didn't make the change earlier. One of the things about which the "young un" was right for a change. In passing I will add that I wrote to Taylor some time ago. As soon as I have an answer I will write again. That I think answers your letter.

My idea of writing one letter per day, which I have kept up since landing, is now beginning to bear fruit. This week I have had letters from Miss Wood, Uncle Will & Auntie Emmie, Mrs Johanson's son who is in Tripolitania and the "Messenger". You can't imagine the keen joy or disappointment each afternoon at 4.45 hrs when the post is distributed.

Well I suppose you are anxious to hear about what is happening out here. The hygiene job is still going strong. Dennis, Gerry and myself are still managing to hang together. All of us posted, all awaiting movement orders. We still play bridge every evening. Incidentally a few packs of cards included in a parcel will be appreciated.

Yesterday I met Bob again and we had a very good time together. Whilst in Cairo I managed to get some of the snaps you wanted but I still haven't got all I want so I will hang on to them for a bit. I have been looking for something typically Egyptian to send home to you. Yesterday I found what I wanted. Within the next day or two a necklace for Peggy & one for Mum will be dispatched by the Desert Purchasing Organization. Average time for parcels is 6 weeks but Christmas will probably delay it. The necklace is made of wire entirely by hand. The work is known as filigree work. You will notice that each portion is marked. This is not bad workmanship but actually the Egyptian Government stamp to prove that it is genuine. I suppose it is the equivalent to our own Hall Mark.

Bob took me through the native bazaar. Very much overrated. Still I have seen it.

We spent the day much the same as usual. Eating, talking, listening to music and finished up at the pictures.

The last item I have space for is King Farouk met with his accident within a mile of this Depot. None of our lorries were involved.

Must close now. God bless you both, Rob

25 Nov 43

Dear Mum and Dad, No.9 letter arrived yesterday. I don't think there is anything to answer in your letter nor for that matter is there any news from here. Since I last wrote on Sunday life has taken its usual course without any unusual incidents.

On Monday evening the three of us went down to the Officers club for dinner. After this we adjourned to the card room and played bridge as usual.

Time is still hanging heavily on our hands. Having these temporary jobs is alright but you don't put your back into it like you do a permanent job. However there appears to be a possibility that some of us will be leaving about the middle of next week. I hope I am included this time.

I don't think I have mentioned what Unit I am posted to so here it is. 1944 (Basuto) Coy AAPC BNAF That was the last known address but it is probably different now. Anyway don't use that address. I will confirm any change from present one as soon as possible.

Today is the last official day for posting for Christmas and as the post is collected at 8 o'clock in the morning I have missed it. However knowing that sometimes letters posted after the last official date make the grade I expect this one will probably do so.

This letter is rather a mess because I am trying to listen to the Cairo news about the result of the Berlin raids. I suppose these raids will to some extent come back on you at home. I trust they will not be too heavy.

The news all round seems pretty good and there is still a possibility of you losing your bet. Nobody hopes more than me that you do.

Well cheerio for now. God bless you both, Love Rob

28 Nov 43

Dear Mum and Dad I am starting small because I think that this letter might be long. However if it finishes before I get to the end of the paper blame it on to the small writing. First of all I must apologise for my last messy affair. I admit that at the time I didn't feel a bit like writing but refused to give up the idea of one letter per day to someone.

Well mother your letter arrived yesterday and very interesting reading it was. I don't know what has happened to Peggy's this week. I hope it will come this afternoon. It is now nine days since I heard from her.

I am still here at the depot. It now appears possible that I shall be on the move on Wednesday next. However having been disappointed on so many occasions I am not pinning too much faith in it until I actually move.

I read part of your letter to Gerry Gillam and I am afraid the pickled onions made his mouth water. He wants you to do him a jar for the victory parade.

Honestly I don't know what I should do here without Gerry & Dennis Dutton. We all seem to fit in so easily together and

whatever one says goes and we do it.

Yesterday being Judy's birthday my thoughts were naturally miles away from here. I suppose if I am frank about it I was actually a little bit homesick.

Anyway I took the afternoon off and the three of us went and watched some sports held in the Depot. There was also a native football match which was very interesting. Later there was to be some native dancing round a fire which was prepared. However tea-time arrived and off we trotted to the Mess. Not so much for the liquid refreshment but mainly because it is mail time. Naturally I am not lucky every day but today I was. There was your letter and one from the Paymaster with a chit for £11.9.0 allowances back to 31 August.

I am afraid your letter didn't improve my mood because there was home on every page. Just because of what I have put in the preceding sentence please don't alter the tone of your letters. Well with £11.9.0 in the bank I didn't see why we shouldn't celebrate Judy's birthday out here. So I said I would take the other two down to the Officers Club to dinner. So we dashed away after tea, changed into Service dress and walked to the Club some two miles away. Having ordered our drinks we all three lifted them together and very solemnly drank a toast to Judy. So began a quiet but very enjoyable evening. I don't know whether I should describe the dinner but I suppose you are so used to hearing about what I have eaten that one meal more or less will not matter. Lentil soup. Salmon & rice. Chicken sweet potatoes cauliflower & pumpkin. Cream caramel. Savoury & coffee. Cost 5/-. I suppose this is a good deal better than you can get in London these days. However I think I could do without this and put up with London any time you like.

After dinner we met three of the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Sisters whom we came over on the boat with. Unfortunately they were all escorted so after a brief conversation of five minutes we passed on, selected a table beside the dance floor and sat, watched and made rude remarks about the dancers.

I don't know whether I have mentioned the procedure of acquiring a partner if you so desire. The usual practice here is to go to the Matron of the Military Hospital and say "Madam I desire to take Sister Blank out to dinner. I promise to escort her back to the Hospital by midnight etc." We did it once when we first came out here. However the expense is more than it's worth as far as I am concerned. If you go to a dance without a partner it is not usual to pinch someone else's. The reason being that he has paid for her and if one danced with her others would. Twelve women between a couple of hundred men is not much and I am afraid he wouldn't get his moneys worth. (I am afraid I have put that rather crudely).

Well that brings me to the conclusion of another letter. It may be my last from Egypt or it may not. Time will tell. I now have a complete set of photographs for you of places I have ACTUALLY been to. As soon as I have written on the backs I will send them home. Dates on the backs should be checked with Peggy's as I am not quite sure in some cases.

God bless you, Love Rob

PART 2 – Letters from 1944 (Basuto)

Company AAPC, CMF

At sea - 3 Dec 43 (arrived 21 Dec 43)

Hello Mum and Dad, As you see from the address I am on my way at last. Quassasin is now behind me. What a relief. I am not giving any details of the voyage in this as I am going to try and keep a list of the interesting incidents and put them in an air-mail letter.

My new address is as yet unknown although we have a fairly good idea where we are going. Don Futter's address will be appreciated.

Thanks for all the addresses enclosed in your last letter. I am afraid the only one I am likely to contact now is Dick Johnson.

I am sending home a specimen menu of the voyage. I expect it will take a long time getting to you as I don't think it worth while sending it airmail. However any future photographs will be sent air-mail. I have certainly learnt my lesson there. Bobbie and I met on the 6th November for the first time. He must have been lucky with the post to get the photograph home so soon.

Just before I left I was extremely lucky to receive letters from you and Peggy in seven days. In fact they arrived the day after your previous week's letters. One from Miss Bunce came the following day having taken only 6 days.

I appreciate your 9 o'clock sentiment. You at home will also be especially remembered at 10 o'clock Central European Time. I say especially remembered because you at home are never far from my thoughts.

By the time you get this you will know that we have had a good deal of excitement and speculation out here about the outcome of certain talks. Many were the rumours. Not all were right but many were. Several of our fellows had the pleasure of seeing certain well known people. I was not one of the lucky ones.

However we are all cheered by the news. The conferences show great aggressiveness which is what we want. I still think there is a good chance of you losing your bet.

There isn't anything I can add to this letter except to tell you that my next letter will be very long. I have already filled 9 pages and we have hardly started. I think I shall call it "Saga of four Pioneer Officers". The actual letter I have written is to Gerry, but I am copying all of it except certain passages that will only be understood by Gerry. (Just as well perhaps).

Well cheerio for now. God bless you both. Love Rob

At sea 1 Dec 43

This is the start of what will be the longest letter you have so far received. I am going to start by introducing my three fellow Officers in this adventure.

Lt Dutton – we have been together since leaving England. One of the best pals a fellow could wish to have. Sincere in all he does. A very good bridge player who has taught us practically all we know about the game. A grand sense of humour.

Lt Chadwick – leader of our draft. Red to the core – so red that all bulls within a hundred miles quiver at the mention of his name. A communist by politics.

Lt Coleman – Quiet and inoffensive most of the time. I was at OCTU with him but as yet really know very little about him.

There is no need to write about the fourth member. You know him too well. Such are the four totally different types thrown together by War.

I know you will want as complete an account as possible of our journey so I will try and give you a running commentary as far as I am able.

We knew more or less officially on Monday that Denis Dutton and myself were leaving PCD. We were instructed to take only 60 lbs of kit each. This was a great blow because our kit weighed nearly two cwt. each. It meant that we should have to leave all our camp kit, including bed behind. This naturally rather distressed us and we decided to take a chance. We packed everything we decided was essential in our valises and everything else in suit cases which, if need be were to be left behind at the port. We argued that if we left them at the Depot we should probably not see them again anyway.

We had only one regret on leaving PCD that was that Gerry Gillam was not coming with us. It was with heavy hearts that we walked over to our tent in the South African Wing for the last time. We had just shaken hands with one of our best friends for what was probably the last time for some months. It has been a great pleasure to meet him in war-time. I trust that we shall be able to continue that war-time friendship in peace-time.

We duly presented ourselves at the Department tent where we found all our kit had already been loaded on the truck. Inside the tent were two corporals who were coming with us. There were several good natured cracks about 60 lbs of kit between us and the CBM on duty. At 0030 hrs on Wednesday morning we embarked and left PCD we hope, for several months to come.

Our journey as might be expected was a chapter of accidents. On arrival at the station we found that we should have caught a train at 2230 hrs instead of 0130 hrs as stated on our movement order. This was a good start. The RTO who was suffering from the effects of a night out, told us to board a train that was standing there. This we did only to find that each compartment contained four Officers and kit. You can imagine the amount of room left for us. However Coleman opened the door of one compartment to find it only contained one Officer. Asking if there was any room, he was told there was not and who the hell was he anyway. Coleman, rather tactlessly perhaps, said it was none of his business who he was. This incident didn't exactly strengthen our precarious hold on the train, especially when it was found out that the occupant was a Divisional Commander and OC train.

Chadwick, not knowing that Coleman had already tried this compartment, opened the door and in his Lancashire dialect asked "Any room in here chum?" The answer received was "No I am the Divisional Commander." To which Chadwick replied "In that case I had better get out", and did.

By this time Denis had worked his way along the corridor and arrived outside the holy of holies. Naturally, on opening the door he was greeted in no uncertain manner. The poor old boy called for his Adjutant and asked who we were. The Adjutant said he thought we were

something to do with ENSA.!!! The RTO was sent for and every time he explained something the DC only asked. Why? However we remained on the train with all our kit.

You can imagine that the atmosphere was not exactly friendly. Denis and I decided to spend the night looking after the kit in the corridor. The other two managed to squeeze into a compartment. Actually I think we were better off. We sorted out the valises and by skilful manipulation we made ourselves comfortable for the rest of the night. So we reached port.

On arrival we were informed that our ship was on the other side of the bay fifteen miles away. After a wait of a couple of hours we again continued our journey on a lorry with all our kit. We arrived at the quay at 0930 hrs.

Chadwick had a word with the Embarkation Staff Officer about embarking. Now we thought comes the great test. Does our luggage go with us or in the drink? It was rather frightening when we saw all our kit stacked in front of the gangway. Denis looked over his glasses. So did I. Neither of us thought it could possibly come off. However it did and weren't we proud of ourselves. The ESO took us up the gangway to our cabin each of us taking as much kit as possible with us.

We were shown into a very nice cabin, perhaps a shade smaller than the last one. The four of us had it to ourselves. It has little cupboard room but boasts two lavatory basins which are very useful.

Down to the quay we went again and endeavoured to carry up our valises. Chadwick nearly succeeding in throwing himself and the valise in the sea when he caught the top of his valise on the underside of the door, passing through. I followed him up and managed to pass through safely but half way up stairs I had to have a rest. I put my valise down on the stair handrail which promptly broke under the weight. However slowly but surely we got it all up to our cabin, which by the way is on "B" deck. The bottom bunks are sufficiently high to allow the valises and suit cases to go underneath. So we are fairly well off for room.

The above operation successfully concluded with only superficial damage we sat down and had a much needed rest. After this we sorted out the bunks. Denis and I have the two top ones the others are underneath.

A wash and a shave soon brightened us up and we went on a tour of inspection. The lounge, though small is well appointed, sufficient easy chairs are available for all Officers on board. The ship is "dry" as expected but plenty of lemonade and lime juice are available. The dining room is not as big as on the M of B but there is plenty of room for all Officers at one sitting. The staff are more numerous. We have two waiters between four of us and as soon as one plate is empty it is whipped away only to be replaced by a full one. As far as we can see at the moment the cabin steward is quite good. We even got our shoes cleaned without asking. There is a small but useful library as well, of course, as a canteen. That is about all I know about the ship that I can put on paper.

We all went to our first meal, lunch, expectantly. We were not disappointed. A

large plate of soup. Stewed steak, beetroot and English potatoes. Semolina puddings and wine sauce. Bread and butter ad lib.

After lunch we all went to bed except Chadwick to make up for our previous night's disturbed sleep. Chadwick as draft leader attended a conference. When he came back we found that Denis had been made Security Officer for the voyage. Just what he does is a bit of a mystery at the moment. If he does anything at all he has certainly been very security minded about it. At any rate I for one haven't missed him yet.

Tea is provided at 1630 hrs. This consists of one or two cups of tea and a cake or biscuit.

The next incident of note was at dinner. When we got to the fish course, which by the way was far from small, Denis had the audacity to take one and a half pieces. I wonder where he puts it all. The meat course was pork cutlets. They were delicious. When it came to Chadwick to take his portion, the next one on the dish was tremendous. Without exaggeration it must have weighed nearly a pound. However he took it and manfully tucked in but it beat him in the end.

Having consumed a cigarette with our coffee we adjourned to the lounge where we played solo for the rest of the evening. All around us were fours playing bridge and I must admit that Denis and I often cast envious glances in their direction. What a pity our two companions don't play. However they say variety is the spice of life.

Thus ended our first day.

Thursday [2 December 1943]

When I awoke this morning I found we had started our voyage. Breakfast is at 0800 hrs. At 0645 hrs Chadwick got up and a little later Coleman followed suit. Denis and I looked at each other, smiled, and said nothing. If this happens every morning I don't think we shall complain. By the time they finish getting ready it just leaves sufficient time for Denis and I to present ourselves at the appointed hour. Chadwick apparently put on a pair of shorts and went to the bathroom for a bath. Unfortunately he chose the wrong one. He went to the one reserved for Deck Officers only. On coming out after his bath he was rewarded with a hostile stare and a few unkind remarks by an Officer waiting to use it. When he came back to the cabin he told us that he had done 10 minutes PT on deck much to the amazement of other people. He seemed quite upset about it. Need I add that the occupants of the two upper bunks looked at each other over their glasses and smiled.

The next major incident was at breakfast when Chadwick and Coleman consumed the following. Grapefruit, porridge, liver & bacon, corned beef, bread and butter & marmalade. Between you and I, I believe the only reason Denis didn't have corned beef was because he didn't know he could have both (NOTE this remark has since been confirmed by Denis).

Boat drill this morning took two hours from 0930 hrs to 1130 hrs. During that time four poor Pioneer Officers wandered about trying to find their station, unsuccessfully. Denis and Chadwick went off leaving Coleman and myself at the top of the main staircase. Eventually I enquired

of the ship's Staff Captain. He told us to stay where we were as we were unattached to a Unit and he would fix us up after the drill. Coleman and I stood there for one and a half hours during the drill and after but nobody came so we faded.

During this time Denis and Chadwick had found a boat with our station number on it. There was no one else there with them. The usual inspecting procession came past. Whether they saw Denis or not will never be known. Anyway they didn't pass any remark. We therefore presume that in the event of trouble, Denis and Chadwick will lower their own boat and set off for England.

After boat drill we went into the lounge and had a much needed drink and a cigarette. We chose books at the library to pass unoccupied time. When that will be for me I don't know. It is now nearly teatime on Friday and during all this time I have been writing solidly to Peggy and you each an air letter card. To Gerry a similar letter to this only slightly longer. I also have four other letters to write. So I think I am a bit of an optimist to get a book.

Well to continue this saga.

The canteen opened at 1200 hrs and quite naturally Denis and myself were in the first three. We bought Colgate tooth-paste for 1/- against 3/8 in Egypt. Some air mail paper, a tin of sweets and some Anzora hair cream 1/6 against 4/6 in Egypt.

I am afraid that both Denis and myself excelled ourselves at lunch. Not content with soup, stewed steak and boiled potatoes, we followed this with cold pork and a large portion of ice cold potato salad.

During this time we were tying at anchor where we spent our last night at sea on the way out. Late in the afternoon we resumed our journey and before another day dawns we shall pass very near to Gerry Gillam.

No further incidents of note occurred. We finished off the day playing solo until we went to bed.

Friday 3 December 1943

Strange as it may seem both Denis and myself were up before 0700 hrs dashing along the corridor for a bath. They were, unfortunately, not very successful. Cold sea-water baths without sea-soap and small basins of luke warm fresh water. However they were better than nothing.

Coleman, having come out from England with Geraldo's band, appears to fancy himself as a crooner. We were treated to several songs in the cabin this morning. Unfortunately he tried to croon "Love will find a way" from "Maid of the Mountains". This was the last straw. However after having failed to reach the last note he went out leaving Denis and I in sole charge.

Breakfast went well as usual we all did ourselves well. We are beginning to wonder if the band will play us ashore to "Roll out the barrel".

At Boat drill we were at last allotted our tasks. At first I had a shock. I was instructed to take over command of No 2 boat station. On arrival I found ten men. Asking them what sort of a boat we had, I was informed that it wasn't a boat at all it was a raft. Good old Goodie lucky as usual. However at a later date my mind was eased when I was officially told we have a small boat. It certainly must be small or damn well camouflaged, I haven't seen it yet.

Denis is more fortunate than me. He is at the next station so you see the "heavenly twins" are not far apart. He has a boat which holds 40 and only 26 men besides himself to go into it. Still I suppose this will be counterbalanced by the extra weight he has put on recently (sorry Denis).

Boat drill was shorter than usual but still took 1.25 hrs. Having two RSMs in Denis's boat who possessed binoculars which they loaned us, we spent a very pleasant time scanning the harbour for WRENS (sorry Peggy).

Out of fairness to Denis I think I should place on record the fact that he did report to the Orderly room today whilst in the vicinity. However our very secure Security Officer was seen five minutes later securely seated in the lounge reading a book. Oh to be a Security Officer!

Today I am the Blackout Officer. My job is also about as difficult as Denis's. Though it did take me half an hour. I also have the bogey of Orderly Officer hanging over my head.

This afternoon our Convoy left harbour. At last we are really on our way. We have the usual attachment of escorting destroyers and the ever present RAF hovering overhead.

After tea I had a chat with a fellow Officer who had spent a long time in Searchlights. You can imagine that we found plenty to talk about. He also plays bridge. I hope we will be able to fix up a four so that Denis and I can give them a run for their money.

As expected it was announced on Orders tonight that until further notice we shall sleep fully clothed. Thank goodness there are only four in the cabin this time. We had seven last time and woke up like boiled lobsters.

The labours of the day being ended we finished up with solo as usual.

Saturday 4 December 1943

This morning we all awoke feeling hot and clammy. Four in a tiny room with portholes closed, door fixed open only nine inches and to crown it all the fan had stopped. I suppose the door business needs a little explaining. All doors on ships these days are secured by hooks so that they are fixed open nine inches. The reason is simply to ensure that they are not jammed shut in the event of trouble.

Today Coleman is Orderly Officer. He treated us to some crooning first thing but after breakfast when he received his orders it wasn't crooning he resorted to. He has to visit the hold and baggage rooms between 0130 hrs and 0330 hrs.

This afternoon after tea Denis and myself made up a four at bridge with a Major and the ex-Searchlight wallah. This was a welcome change from solo. We continued the session after dinner.

We are among very distinguished company on board but details of this will have to wait several weeks. I hope I shall be able to tell you a lot about my fellow passengers at a much later date.

Sunday 5 December 1943

It is now 1050 hrs on Sunday and for the first time I am actually up to date with my letters. So far today we only had one interesting incident. That was a short time ago one of our escorting destroyers started

getting busy and rushing about. It has dropped one depth charge so far. The RAF have been circling the spot and are apparently satisfied because we are now all back in position carrying on as if nothing had happened. It was probably only practice anyway.

After lunch today I decided to take a chance and undressed and went to bed. It was a lovely sensation, pyjamas and sheets instead of sleeping on top of the bed in shirt, battledress trousers and socks.

Monday 6 December 1943

The daily accounts are getting shorter because I don't wish to bore you with repetition. Once the daily routine has been put down it more or less repeats itself each day.

At midnight last night we put our watches back an hour. We are now one hour ahead of you. At eleven o'clock last night (Cairo time) all of you at home were remembered according to ancient custom. Did your ears burn? Although I know you were writing to me at this hour, I must admit that mine did not.

This morning when we awoke we found it was decidedly cooler. The sea has also got a swell on it and white horses are numerous. It has upset some of the fellows on board as I found out to my cost.

On boat drill this morning I put down my raincoat and water bottle near to the rail. Some poor fellow on the deck above was unable to hold it and the wind blew it back all over my raincoat. Need I add that Denis laughed his head off. Still I may have my own back yet. Denis was not noted for being a good sailor on the way out and I noticed pork cutlets on the menu for lunch. Well, well, we shall see.

After lunch today there was a conference and we were warned that we may be in for a sticky party. A cheerful thought. It is expected that we shall see land tomorrow and we may make a call.

After tea Denis and I settled down to a bridge session with the Major and Lieutenant. This was continued after dinner until bedtime.

Chadwick is the first really sincere Communist I have met. He has obviously made a long study of the subject and at times puts up very convincing arguments. I can't say that I agree with him but at least he endeavours to back his statements with facts.

When we went to bed last night Denis and I decided to get him talking. He talked alright until just after midnight when prolonged knocking on the cabin wall made us realize that if we didn't want to sleep somebody else did.

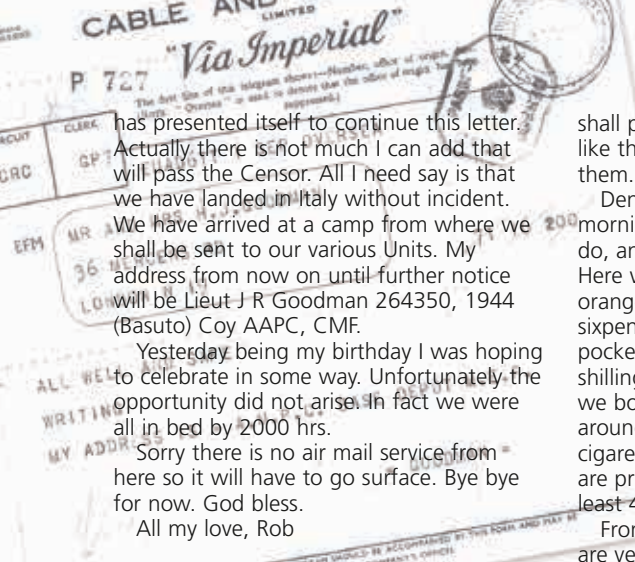
At about 0200 hrs the ships hooter started to blow. Up we got and quickly gathered our things together. False alarm it was only fog.

Tuesday 7 December 1943

This morning soon after breakfast we sighted land for a few minutes through the mist. It was soon obliterated. At 1200 hrs we again sighted land above the clouds. It appears to be a mountain of some kind. I have a good idea what it is.

Friday 10 December 1943

During the last two days, as is obvious by the gap, things have happened and no time



has presented itself to continue this letter. Actually there is not much I can add that will pass the Censor. All I need say is that we have landed in Italy without incident. We have arrived at a camp from where we shall be sent to our various Units. My address from now on until further notice will be Lieut J R Goodman 264350, 1944 (Basuto) Coy AACP, CMF.

Yesterday being my birthday I was hoping to celebrate in some way. Unfortunately the opportunity did not arise. In fact we were all in bed by 2000 hrs.

Sorry there is no air mail service from here so it will have to go surface. Bye bye for now. God bless.

All my love, Rob

11 Dec 43, arrived 21 Dec 43

My dear Mum and Dad, This is the first opportunity I have had to settle down and write a few lines to you since I landed in Italy.

I managed to insert the fact that I had landed in my last air graph after I had sealed it down so I am afraid it was a bit of a mess.

The full account of the voyage was sent off yesterday. When you get it, it should keep you quiet for a few minutes. It contains eight double sided pages. Unfortunately there is no ordinary air-mail service from here so I have had to send it by surface mail. Hence you will not receive it for about six weeks.

There is also no telegram service at the moment because of Christmas so I hope you will not be worrying too much about my silence. Gerry promised to let you know I had left Quassassin and I expect he has done so.

You will notice that I have started renumbering. After all this is really a new chapter.

Naturally we find great differences here after Egypt some for the better some for worse. However it is a mighty good feeling to be back in Europe. To be actually inside the so called European fortress.

We landed at a very famous port which had obviously had some attention from both sides. Once free of the town there are surprisingly few marks of war. One might almost imagine that one was back in the English countryside.

I am at present seated on my bed looking out on a sea of mud in an oak forest. From time to time a cock crows and more frequently we hear the "gobble" "gobble" of turkeys which some intelligent fellow has collected and is fattening up for Christmas.

Naturally after Egypt we all felt the cold pretty badly. Four blankets and a sleeping bag soon put this right. Though they did seem heavy after one blanket. However there are no mosquitoes few flies and no smells.

It is most unlikely that I shall be able to keep a regular mail going because I shall probably be moving about a bit. I shall do my best and don't worry if they seem a long time coming. I expect the letters I get from home will also come in batches from time to time as they find me. Actually, I am not at the address mentioned above. I haven't reached there yet but by the time you get this I should be settled down in my Company. There, of course, I have to start making friends all over again. Denis is still with me but as soon as we leave here we

shall part. I shall miss him no end. War is like that you make friends and soon lose them.

Denis and I went for a walk yesterday morning, there being nothing else for us to do, and found a sort of open air market. Here we found Italians with baskets of oranges, almond nuts and figs. We gave sixpence and a box of matches for a pocketful of nuts. Oranges cost eight for a shilling or tangerines ten for a shilling. Figs we bought at sixpence a bag containing around .75 lbs. A packet of 10 "V" cigarettes which are issued to us free and are practically unsmokeable will secure at least 4 oranges sometimes 5.

From what I have seen so far the Italians are very poor but also appear to be very friendly. However one has to be cautious and not take everything at its face value.

Well when you get this I suppose Christmas will be past and forgotten and probably the New Year as well. The next event of note at home will be about the middle of February. It is a peculiar feeling being all this way from home at this time, wondering what is happening and how things are going along. I do hope that Peggy has as easy a time as possible. I know you will let me know as soon as possible.

I am sorry to say that for the moment I cannot think of anything else to say. Naturally I am unable to talk as freely here as I did in Egypt.

Well having said my all I will close
Cheerio for now,

God bless, Love, Rob.

PS Please let as many people as possible know my new address.

Christmas Eve 1943

My dear Mum and Dad, It is now a very long time since I wrote to you. The reason is that I have been doing a tremendous amount of travelling looking for my Company. Since I came to Italy and before joining my Company I had visited all the following places. Taranto, Bari, Barletta, Foggia, Termoli, Bizerta, Naples and Capua. Obviously I cannot tell you where I ended up but of course it is none of the places mentioned.

This morning I had the marvellous experience of receiving my first letters since leaving Egypt. One from Peggy dated 29 November, one from you dated 28 November and also your cablegram for my birthday. These were three of the best Christmas presents I could have had.

At last I feel I am doing something towards the war effort. We are doing a really front line job here somewhere in the Italian mountains. It is extremely strenuous work and as you know from the papers we have plenty of rain and mud. When we come back from a job we are sometimes too tired to eat a meal and just flop down on our beds and sleep. To add to our joys we are under canvas. Still I am getting quite used to it. These Basuto boys are doing a really grand job of work.

You can see from the above that opportunities for writing are not frequent and even when they are written I don't know when they will get posted. Still all you want to know is that I am fit, well and quite happy.

I am looking forward to receiving the newspapers and the copy of your lecture. Glad to hear that you have been able to get

my wireless repaired. It is a lovely set. How I wish we had it here. Still it wouldn't be much good because there is no electricity anyway.

You will be interested to know that during one of my long journeys I got stranded in a village with a RQMS and a 15 cwt truck. We decided to explore the possibilities of putting up at an Italian hotel for the night. With the aid of my limited Italian a bit of French, German and English, I managed to make them understand what we wanted. We were shown to a room containing two single beds which we said would do. We brought in some tinned steak pudding and tinned potatoes which they heated for us. They supplied a large bottle of "Vino" (Italian wine) and we had a much needed meal. I suppose I ought to explain that the water out here is not fit to drink without being processed. Well we had a very comfortable night's sleep and in asking for the bill we were told it was 120 lire or 6/- the lot including wine for the two of us.

All the Italians appear to be very friendly but naturally we don't take chances. I have seen some terrible sights out here as the result of bombing. Our boys certainly hit the target when they want to. I forgot to mention that I have also been to Salerno. How we ever landed there is a miracle. The damage in London is nothing compared to Foggia, Salerno and numerous other places I cannot mention. Naples is not too bad apart from the harbour & station these of course are practically non-existent. The precision of our bombing has to be seen to be believed.

Well I must close. We have a Turkey for tomorrow and maybe a bottle of whisky apiece so we shan't do too badly if we have time to enjoy them, which I doubt.

Cherio. God bless. Love Rob

27 Dec 43

My dear Mum and Dad, I wonder if you wrote to me as usual at 9 o'clock last night as it was Boxing Night. I myself am only able to write at odd moments now. At that hour last night I was picking myself along a mountain track with the aid of a stick. Mountaineering by day is pretty arduous but by night it is pretty uncanny. To add to my troubles last night one of my boys was taken ill and two of us had to carry him nearly two miles to the nearest village. Such is life here at the moment but what a pleasure it is to be doing a real job of work that will help to bring this campaign to a successful conclusion. I know to you at home it must seem a pretty slow job out here but nobody can realise the difficulties we are up against without actually seeing them. However we are very confident that this show is practically over. Reverses we shall no doubt have but only one thing can happen in the end and I don't think it will be long.

To say that we enjoyed Christmas would I am afraid be stretching a point. Far better to tell the truth and say that we had a rotten Christmas but mark you we think it will be the last one.

Christmas Eve I spent climbing mountains until nearly midnight, came back, soaked, cold and miserable. Miserable because I had lost one of my boys somewhere up there. Fortunately he returned next day.

Christmas Day I worked all morning and two hours in the afternoon and Boxing Day

I was again climbing for 9 hrs in the twilight and dark. Although it is an arduous job we get quite a thrill out of doing our job, knowing full well we are doing a really constructive job for a change. I shall have some stories to tell when I get home.

I believe I told you I had three letters on Christmas Eve. Christmas Day I had six more. My labours are beginning to bear fruit. I had one from Peggy, one each from you two, Alan, Bobbie and a fellow Officer in Syria Basil Terry. Now of course comes the question of finding time to write to you all. However during yesterday's exploits I slightly injured my ankle and the Major has taken my place on tonight's excursion and I am on my own in Camp. As the opportunity has occurred I am doing my best to make full use of it.

Thank you both for your very acceptable birthday presents. Although I am in no need of it at the moment it will certainly be very useful for my own "Post War Reconstruction".

Now I will answer the only query in your two letters. About the photograph. The river is the Sweetwater Canal. The so-called grave yard is really a grass verge running down to the canal with a few date palms.

At the time of writing this I have just finished my tinned dinner. We are unable to get anything except tinned stuff. Our Mess consists of a dilapidated room in a bombed out house. The cracks in the walls would certainly make any District Surveyor squirm. Our stove consists of a 4 gallon petrol can with a flue pipe attached to the nozzle and a small opening at or near the bottom where we stoke it with any wood we can find. Illumination is provided by three candles stuck on a 14 lbs jam tin. When it rains it pours in through the ceiling, there being no roof. The only protection being a dilapidated lorry cover thrown over the top of the ceiling which so far is intact.

Well I think it is time I closed this letter. I still have four more to write to catch up on my correspondence. I am afraid my letter a day will fall short whilst I am here.

Goodnight, God bless. Love Rob

6 Jan 44

My dear Mum and Dad, I am afraid I have been treating you very roughly because time has been so little in which to write you all. I am doing my best to write nine this afternoon in reply to those that I have had. My how I appreciate these letters up here.

Well folks I will get the worst part of the letter over first and put your minds at ease. I celebrated New Years Day by being taken to hospital on a stretcher. After being conveyed back from the front to various field ambulances I am now in No1 General Hospital. Still don't worry I am not seriously ill nor am I wounded. I am supposed to be suffering from exhaustion Funny isn't it? Anyway sufficient to say I got up this afternoon for a couple of hours and am feeling fine. We have had to do one or two sticky jobs recently but I am pleased to say I heard on the wireless today that the attack has gone in. So far successfully.

It is a grand feeling even in hospital to know that I have personally played a small part in that attack. Our boys have behaved marvellously under extremely trying circumstances. The weather not being the least of them. At least nobody will be able to say the PC is not a front line Corps.

Well that is as much as I dare tell you without breaching security.

Now before I do anything else let me settle this "sweet potato" question once and for all. They are not the same as ours and anybody daring to offer me one after the war may expect to get it straight in the eye, plate as well. I don't know what they look like in their raw state but cooked they are light yellow and have a sweet taste.

I knew Gerry had written you but did not see what he had written. I don't suppose I shall meet him until after the war. He was going to Malta. Denis is down south in Naples so we are now all split up. Curiously enough two days after I left Denis I happened to be passing through Naples and had lunch at the Officers Hotel. The first person I saw sitting eating his lunch was Denis. Unfortunately the meeting was brief as I had a jeep waiting to take me on to my destination.

So far today I have written Peggy, Uncle Will and Auntie Emmie and Harry Taylor. Somehow or other I still have to write Miss Bunce, The Fellowship, my Northampton landlady and the rest of the folk at 69 [The Ridleys].

It was rather funny I received a lot of greetings on New Year's Day, including yours, half an hour later I was lying on a stretcher on my way to hospital.

Well I must say the food here is a change. Chicken for lunch today. It is nice to get something that doesn't come out of a tin which is all we can get up there. Of course the variety is somewhat different from what you got in the last war. We get steak & kidney pudding, meat & vegetables, potatoes, peas, bacon, egg, cheese etc still it is all tinned. I guess we can put up with that for a few more months.

We are all pleased to see that Monty is taking over on your side. The right man in the right job. When he gets going the sparks will begin to fly in no uncertain manner. The sooner the better for all concerned.

The last I heard from Bob he was at OCTU. I sent him my Manual of Military Law for which he was very thankful. - I had a very nice airgraph from Dora Hammond and in replying I forgot to mention that the case they gave me for my 21st has done yeoman service through 4½ years of war. Will you please tell them for me. Now I must close I believe this is No.4 anyway my last letter was 27.12.43.

Goodbye for now. God bless. Love Rob

10 Jan 44 (arrived 20 Jan)

My dear Mum and Dad, Once again while the opportunity occurs I am writing you a few lines. I am still in hospital but I am expecting to leave tomorrow all being well.

They have done everything possible with my chest, listened to it, thumped it and felt it all over and can find nothing wrong. I went for a long walk on Saturday to see how things went. I stood up to the test satisfactorily, having no trouble whatsoever. So now I think they will discharge me and I can get back to my mountaineering.

Yesterday was the first opportunity I have had to attend church for some time. I went morning and evening and attended communion after the morning service. Both services were well attended and singing the old hymns once again reminded me of home.

Well the war seems to be progressing favourably on all fronts. Sorry it appears such a long drawn out affair on our front but one day I shall be able to tell you why more fully than I can on paper. Still no doubt you have by now seen photographs in the Press and have seen something of what we are up against. However we appear to be getting moving again now.

I suppose by the time you get this you will be getting ready for the great event at home. I hope everything goes off alright. I am more worried about it than I was before. I suppose it is because I am so far away this time. It is comforting to know Peggy has all of you round her to take whatever action is necessary. However I shall be glad when it is all over and I know Peggy will be. Judy is no doubt very excited but I am wondering how she will react to Peggy going into a Nursing home and leaving her at home. I suppose she will get over it somehow.

As I am in hospital without any mail I am afraid news is scarce. Once I get back to my Unit I hope to write you some more interesting stuff. These few days respite have given me an opportunity to get all my mail up to date but I hate the inactivity but it won't be long now. Well I must close.

God bless you both. All my love, Rob

12 Jan 44 (arrived 19 Jan 44)

My dear Mum and Dad, I arrived back at my Unit safely yesterday. Having hitch-hiked 50 miles in less than 3½ hours and including 5 separate lifts and making 2 calls on the way.

The Company has had some interesting experiences whilst I have been away and one of our Basuto corporals has been recommended for a decoration. We all hope he gets it because it will be the first in our Company although another Company already is expecting 3 DCMs. From the above you can see that we really have a fine crowd of fellows. It isn't easy for natives to get recognition.

I was expecting to resume my mountaineering tonight but the OC has given me a day to settle down. I expect I shall be out tomorrow night.

Today I received two letters from you Nos. 14 & 15. One via Egypt the other direct. This is the first letter I have received direct from England it took 16 days.

Several letters came here during my 9 days in hospital and unfortunately they have been redirected. When I shall eventually get these I don't know. I rather suspect there was one from Peggy as my last from her was dated 9.12.43. However in due course they will come back.

I am pleased to hear about your cigarette club. It is a grand idea and extremely useful. For most people they are extremely hard to get. I fortunately am one of the lucky ones and for that reason would like to drop out of the scheme. I hope this won't disappoint you. I merely want the others to have more. You see these Basutos don't buy very many and the 8 Europeans in the Company have more than we can smoke. 10 Players cost us 4/5d. I hope you will understand.

I hope you had a good holiday at Christmas the rest you both needed has no doubt done you both a world of good. I had my rest after Christmas as you know.

Glad to hear the Christmas cards arrived O.K. I sent out about 2 dozen altogether so

I suppose they all arrived.

It is with deep regret that I hear of the death of Ralph King. He was a charming fellow and will be greatly missed of the Estate.

As yet I haven't had word from the brethren. I wrote to Wor Bro Boynett some time ago. Please give them all my fraternal greetings when you next see them.

Thanks for Don's address. I will drop him a line probably tonight. Now once again I must close.

Goodnight. God bless, Love Rob

24 Jan 44

My dear Mum and Dad, At last I have a little while in which to settle down and answer the letters I have received from both of you. I'm afraid my last letter to Peggy was very disjointed owing to the amount of attention Jerry would persist in giving us. In fact as I wrote the closing remarks he had the audacity to hit the billet I was writing in and cover us all in white dust. Still don't worry I have now moved from there to another spot.

My present location could be desirable. The house such as it is, is surrounded by unpicked orange & lemon groves. Sounds very tempting doesn't it? Unfortunately there are several notices up such as this. "Oranges are sweet so is life." "These oranges are free. So are 'S' mines." "Sappers say, 'These oranges cost too much". In other words Jerry has very kindly mined the lot before retiring to strategic positions.

I should like to tell you lots of incidents but I am afraid I cannot. Still what I believe matters most to you at home is that I am fit, well and very happy doing an essential job of work. We find the Units very easy to get on with and they all speak highly of our Basutos especially 1944 which is making a name for itself. It makes us much keener to do a good job when our work is appreciated and some of our work in the past has been pretty sticky. However we have all come through without any serious casualties.

Our OC is sick and now the Captain has taken over temporary command. I have been appointed Mess President. This job, an extra one on top of ordinary duties, consists in looking after the welfare of the rest of the Officers. In our present position this is not very arduous. Our diet consists mainly of bully beef and biscuits and tea sugar & milk powder already mixed added to boiling water. There are, of course, sundry other little items but those mentioned are our staple diet.

We are right out of touch with the home news and it was only a few minutes ago that a corporal bringing some stuff forward to us told us about the 90 bomber raid on GB. I trust that you are all safe. I don't suppose I shall receive any more mail from you for several days as we are rather inaccessible at the moment but the situation here is slowly improving. I shall write myself as often as possible but don't worry if they are infrequent for a time.

From your letter I see you have sent some more magazines. Thank you for them in advance. Actually I haven't received any newspapers etc at all at the moment. However some at least will arrive some time.

I shall be unable to number this letter

because I have had to leave all my correspondence behind with most of my kit. My total possessions at the moment are two blankets a small kit, a spare vest, pants & pair of socks and the clothes I stand up in. At the last moment I rammed in a writing pad and your last letters.

Glad to hear that you liked the Turkish delight. Of course I don't mind you sharing it out as you did. Naturally anything that I get or my fellow Officers get is always shared out. Without the spirit of good fellowship we should often be on our beams end.

I had a very interesting letter from Bert and Kitty. I will reply as soon as possible but that might not be very soon.

Well folks I must now close down on this one. Keep smiling and look after yourselves. You can bet your life I shall do the same as far as I am able under present circumstances.

God bless & keep you both safe. Remember me to all at home. Love Rob.

4 Feb 44

Dear Mum and Dad, Here I am again with a few lines. Nothing very much I can write about at present owing to the nature of our work but will do my best to fill up the paper.

First of all I am fit, well, happy and very busy. We have played a very active part in several successful local "affairs", and have again been congratulated for our share in things.

I have shifted my location five times in the last ten days and consequently very few letters have filtered through to me I have had several "local" letters but only one from England from Miss Bunce. Tell her I will answer it as soon as possible. I have had a letter from Bob and one from Don Futter. So far I have had no news from Gerry Gillam. Denis Dutton is now in the same Group as me but so far I have been unable to make personal contact with him.

Regarding our work I can tell you nothing. It is exciting and strenuous. We are hoping to go back for a short rest soon. What we mainly need is a good bath and clean up.

Like all good soldiers we are having some interesting hunting for fleas. We have some amusing incidents when somebody decides he has got his hand on one inside his sock. He holds the flea we pull down his sock and hunt with the aid of candles. Sometimes we are successful other times the flea wins. So far I have been very lucky. No bites at all and only caught two in my blankets. I am told that fleas are part of a soldiers equipment so at any rate we have no kit deficiencies. Today for the first time for quite a long period it has been raining. The wind has also done its worst. However we have been very lucky to have so much fine weather and cannot grumble.

So far none of your parcels of newspapers have arrived. We could do with something to read up here. Those of us who are in during the evening turn in soon after seven. It is the best place when there is nothing to read. Also we are glad of a long nights sleep occasionally.

Well I suppose when you get this the new arrival will either be there or practically there. I am very anxious to know what "it" is. Boy or girl. Goodnight. God bless, Love Rob.

8 Feb 44

Dear Mum and Dad, Your telegram reached me the night before last but opportunity of replying has only just occurred. Well the son and heir has arrived and I am overjoyed about it. I was hoping it was going to be a boy this time and I haven't been disappointed. Quite frankly I am relieved that it is all over. [Peggy's mother, Elizabeth Ridley died on Sunday 16 January. Roger was born on Wednesday, 26 January]

With the telegram came letters from you and Peggy. Yours contained the greetings from all and sundry also the more serious news about Mrs Ridley's grave illness. I am deeply sorry for all of them especially Mr Ridley. Also I can imagine the extra work and responsibility thrust on Peggy at an extremely awkward time. I am prepared for the worst but trust that I shall have more encouraging news in your next letter.

We have just been relieved for a spell and tonight for the first time for six weeks, except when in hospital, I shall be able to go to bed in pyjamas and have no shells dropping round me. Believe me I shall miss their whine and crump tonight. But it's a good miss.

After getting settled in here this morning I spent the afternoon contacting a Bath Unit to arrange for the bathing and de-lousing of the Company. De-lousing sounds pretty bad but actually it isn't as bad as it sounds. You can't expect to sleep in barns and other odd places without picking up a certain amount of livestock. To the best of my knowledge my total bag was three fleas. The system for de-lousing is extremely good. You take all your kit and blankets to the Bath Unit. While you are bathing your clothes and blankets are cooked and you come away a clean man once again. In the last few days I have had letters from Bobby and Don Futter. Bob should, by now have obtained his Commission in the General Service Corps. He is hoping for a posting to CMF or even further West. Don seems to be getting used to life but from his letter I believe he is well down south. He is operating Radio Location and quite enjoys it. Knowing something of the subject myself I can appreciate that but after a time the sameness of the job begins to pall unless you work all sorts of types like I did. I am still wondering what has happened to Gerry Gillam as yet I have not had a single word from him. Information from your end would be appreciated.

No newspapers or magazines from you have yet been received. Likewise cigarettes. Still sooner or later they will turn up I hope. Peggy has had some Income Tax deducted from my pay. Could you see Collins about it for me?

Must close now. Off to bed and into pyjamas. Goodnight. God bless, Love Rob

15 Feb 44 (arrived 3 Mar)

My dear Mum and Dad, Two days ago I received three letters, one each from Peggy and your two selves. Unfortunately they all contained the sad news of Mrs Ridley's death. It fell to my lot on that evening to write two of the most difficult letters I have ever written. One to Peggy and one to Mr Ridley. On such occasions I know what I feel but putting it into words is, I am afraid, beyond me. Thanks to your previous warning the news was not such a shock as

it might have been.

I shall always remember Mrs Ridley as my second mother. During the twelve or thirteen years I have known her intimately she has always looked after me, when visiting her house, like her own son. Many happy evenings have I spent in her company. To dwell on the matter further will benefit no one so I will leave the subject there.

I am afraid that my so called gifts of description are not functioning these days. I am sure you will appreciate that it is entirely impossible for me to write about my doings these days. Our movements and work are so closely bound up in the actual fighting at the present time that I fear I might say something I shouldn't if I started describing things. So for the moment I remain silent on current affairs. I should like to keep a day by day record but unfortunately that it also frowned upon. Quite rightly too, when you think about it. I might give away quite a lot to the enemy if it fell into the wrong hands. Therefore I shall have to rely on my memory which is as it always was far from retentive.

Thanks for the address of Jack Norris and Frank Goodman also the good wishes from Mr Morris and Mr Saint.

Now once again I feel obliged to turn to the business side of things. From information received from Peggy I have had another £5 stopped for Income Tax for my December account. That is £11.12.6 in two months. I have asked her to let Collins have the pay slips to deal with. As you are aware I have up until October been paying HJG Ltd a sum each month as arranged. I assume that the necessary monthly instalments were paid by HJG Ltd to the Inland Revenue. Or am I paying them again through the Army? Of one thing I am quite certain, I am not taxable on my Army income. No doubt Collins can clear it up. I shall feel a lot happier when I hear what it is all about. I hope this doesn't sound like a telling off. It isn't meant to be, but £11.12.6 stopped from two months' pay is no joke. Well that's enough of that.

I hope that by the time you receive this the necklace has arrived. I should have thought that they should have come together. However we can only hope for the best. These things do get lost in transit and maybe you are one of the unlucky ones. At the time of writing no cigarettes or newspapers have reached me from you.

Well I suppose by now the son and heir is using his lungs quite lustily. As yet I have no other news except that contained in the telegram. I anxiously ask for post each day but so far I have been disappointed. However soon I shall know all about his weight, colour and number of wrinkles. I expect Judy is very excited about her brother. No doubt she is telling everybody all about him in her busy little way.

To finish off with, here is a little news from here. A few days ago I drove into quite a large town on business. One Unit stationed there for a rest was Denis's Company. I eagerly asked his whereabouts and found that he was away on detachment in a village I passed through on my way back. I called there only to find he had moved the previous day. It is extraordinary how we keep missing each other by hours. A few days prior to this whilst we were still in action, he drove over

to my Unit only to find me away on a "job". One of these days we will time it better.

From the wireless you will already know that the weather here is far from settled. We are still having considerable quantities of snow, sleet, hail, rain and wind. Spring has at last arrived only to wake up and find next morning a couple of inches of snow. Such is the climate of "Sunny Italy".

Last note. Awards to date are three mentioned in despatches. I believe we have more to come.

Goodnight and God bless. Love Rob

19 Feb 44 (arrived 6 Mar)

Dear Mum and Dad, Your letter No.20 arrived safely a few days ago together with four others from Peggy, Bill, Miss Bunce and Miss Gammon. When I had pieced together the information contained in all of them I had quite a comprehensive report on the arrival of Roger. By the way I hope you like the name. We had decided on that long ago if it was a boy.

Well I suppose by now you have both seen quite a lot of Peggy and Roger. You can imagine how envious I am of you both. I was pleased to see from your letter that you tried to get Peggy to stay in the Nursing Home for another week. I wonder if you were successful. I do hope so. It certainly would be a great help for Peggy.

I am interested to know how Peggy is going to arrange things at 69 [Yerbury Road where she had been staying with her parents, now her widowed father and her sister Eileen]. I can't for the life of me see how she can carry on, on her own with two kiddies to look after. Still I am afraid it is one of those things that I shall have to leave for her to sort out. There isn't much I can do about it. Probably I shall hear more about things in future letters.

Since last writing to you I am afraid very little has happened worth mentioning. We are still experiencing the most unsettled weather imaginable. Snow and rain followed by a day or two of sunshine and then more snow and rain. Today has been fine but bitterly cold with a keen wind. I have been standing about outdoors all day and came in frozen stiff. I hope we shall soon get more warm weather to thaw us out a bit.

I have been thinking about starting an ordinary letter containing various incidents and subjects that might be interesting to you at home. It won't be in any particular order like the one you have already received about the voyage. There are several incidents I think I could safely write about without breaking censorship regulations. The only trouble is I haven't the time on my hands now that I used to have. Still one of these days I will make a start.

Still no newspapers or cigarettes have arrived but I haven't given up hope. Still no news from Gerry I think I had better write again but strongly suspect that he has now moved from PCD. Denis is still reasonably near but as yet I haven't seen him.

Now I must close. Goodnight, God bless. Love Rob

23 Feb 44 (arrived 4 Mar)

My dear Mum and Dad, Many thanks for your letter No.21 dated 6 Feb which arrived today. You may be surprised to hear that I have every letter sent to me since leaving

England except one. That one was from Peggy and was lost on top of a mountain the night I had to half carry one of my boys back. I often re-read them and a very interesting collection they are from about 30 different correspondents.

I am pleased to see that Dad has now seen Roger and I gather is satisfied with his grandson. Thank you for providing Peggy and Roger with a car to fetch them home. I am sure Peggy will appreciate it and of course I do very much.

Sorry to hear that the car is giving up the ghost. Still I don't think we can complain. I don't know whether you realise it but it celebrated its fifth birthday on the 1st February. I don't suppose it now gets its monthly overhaul that I insisted on in peacetime. I expect you will find it difficult to replace in these times.

Regret to say that the time is not ripe to disclose the distinguished company as they have not been in action yet and are only a couple of miles from here. I started a sea-letter a day or two ago but I am afraid I am not satisfied with it so I shall have to start again. The subject was a typical Sunday.

Sorry to hear about Harry Oakes accident. I will certainly drop him an Airgraph.

I should have thought that Mum's necklace was on the same boat as Peggy's. Anyway don't give up hope. I haven't given up hope of the newspapers and magazines but so far I haven't received any of them.

Tomorrow I have to go and interview a Colonel. They require Officers for PLCO's (Pioneer Labour Control Officers). My name has apparently been put forward. I don't know whether I want the job or not. Only advantage is a possible 2/6 a day Staff Pay. Disadvantage is that I shall be on my own. No mess, no company. Only Italian labour to supply to whoever wants it. Anyway I might not be suitable anyway as my Italian consists of about 12 words. Let you know more about it after the interview.

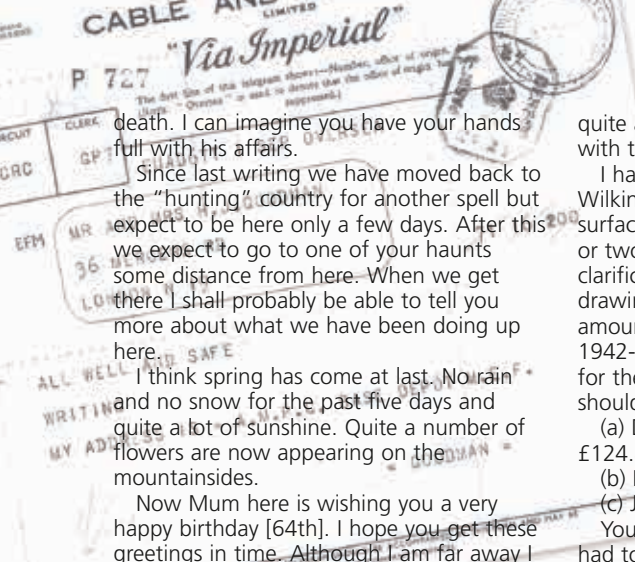
Today the weather has been perfectly foul. Heavy rain and snow. As usual I was lucky enough to be out in it all day. Came back soaked. However I was lucky to have a fire to come back to. How glad I am, I am not in the PBI. Cheerio, God bless. Love Rob

11 Mar 44 (arrived 20 Mar 44)

My dear Mum and Dad, The post gets worse and worse every day. I haven't received a letter posted after 14th Feb in England. Your letter No.22 posted on 13th Feb arrived yesterday having taken 26 days. I have received no letters since the bombing of London started again and naturally I am anxious to know what happened. I have just received two parcels of newspapers and two Readers Digests. The dates for these were 3rd and 10th of December. At the same time I got two airgraphs from AJK dated 15th November and 13th December. To complete this batch I had a letter from Bob dated 29th November telling me he would be unable to meet me in Cairo on the following Saturday. I think you will agree that I have a grouse against the postal authorities. Especially when they tell you we are getting them in forward areas in 7 days.

You told me in a previous letter about Harry Oakes' accident. I sent him an airgraph on 24 February. I hope he got it all right. The address was a bit vague.

Sorry to hear about Uncle John's sudden



death. I can imagine you have your hands full with his affairs.

Since last writing we have moved back to the "hunting" country for another spell but expect to be here only a few days. After this we expect to go to one of your haunts some distance from here. When we get there I shall probably be able to tell you more about what we have been doing up here.

I think spring has come at last. No rain and no snow for the past five days and quite a lot of sunshine. Quite a number of flowers are now appearing on the mountainsides.

Now Mum here is wishing you a very happy birthday [64th]. I hope you get these greetings in time. Although I am far away I don't forget these occasions or the celebrations we used to have when they came. God grant the time is not far distant when we shall once more be able to celebrate at Frascari's and see Bobby Howes or Leslie Henson again.

Now I must close. God bless. Love Rob

16 Mar 44 (arrived 25 Mar)

My dear Mum and Dad, I suppose it can be said that I am now virtually in a back area and I shall soon be going back further. On the other hand when you look at the map my present location does not appear to be very far away from the line showing our forward positions.

For the first time for some time I have an afternoon to call my own and I am getting down to replying to some of the dozen letters I have received during the past week. Including today I have 4 from you in two days. This brings your letters up to No.25 complete. Your last letter only took ten days which is a great improvement. I have also received a further packet of newspapers dated 16 November containing Mr Boynett's address.

Thank you for the information about Gerry. He has never been in Italy and I believe he may now be on his way to Syria. Will you please find out what Company he is with I can then tell whether he is in the CMF or not.

You seem to have misunderstood my remarks about Income Tax. My pay is of course subject to IT but my income is under the limit. All allowances are free from IT so my income was 11/- a day from 25 Feb 43 until 24 Aug 43 and 13/- a day from 25 Aug 43 onwards. This gives me a maximum of £204.5.0d a year which I believe for a married man with one child is free of Income Tax.

I am sorry these letters are giving no news of my doings out here but at the moment my lips are sealed. Soon I shall be able to tell you more. All I will say at the moment is that we have been right in the thick of it and count ourselves lucky to have come through with remarkably few casualties. We haven't had a single man killed which is a miracle. We often laugh at some of our escapes now but they weren't very funny at the time. I am lucky not to be in a similar position to Edwin Lloyd. I bet that shakes you. Still one of these days I will tell you all about it. Obviously the time is hardly ripe at the moment. Well cheerio. God bless. Love Rob

30 Mar 44

My dear Mum and Dad, I am afraid that

quite a lot of this letter will be taken up with the eternal problem of Income Tax.

I have received the form from Messrs Wilkinson Chater, signed and returned it by surface mail on the 26.3.44. There are one or two points which in my opinion need clarification. The main one being my drawings from HJG Ltd as stated. The amount in the books for the year 1 April 1942-1943 is £225.6.0d. I feel that item for the purpose of payment of Income Tax should be split into three as follows.

(a) Drawn by Mrs M E Goodman £124.8.0.

(b) Paid into Kitty a/c £10.10.0.

(c) J.R.G.'s H.J.G. Ltd a/c £90.8.0.

You may remember a similar arrangement had to be made last year for the same reason, in this case, however the Kitty a/c is a new one. I suggest that we have a similar arrangement as before. I pay Miss Bunce the Income Tax on Peggy's drawings and 27, 28, 32 The Fairway and 67 Carleton Rd and Miss Bunce paying the whole to Inland Revenue making up as necessary.

I find it most difficult to express myself adequately on paper but a personal chat on the matter is impossible. I am sure you will agree that it is only fair for me to meet my commitments on actual money received and each a/c should pay its respective amount as required. Perhaps you will let me have your views on the matter and at the same time ask Collins to ascertain the respective amounts to be paid by each account.

Well I hope you can understand what it is all about. Now for a little news. The day before yesterday two of us had a day out in Naples. We had a very enjoyable time. Having paid a visit to the Field Cashier to draw money we proceeded along the Via Roma, Oxford Street of Naples and proceeded to blow quite a lot of it. I bought a length of material for Peggy, two frocks a slip and a pair of knickers for Judy. On the table in front of me are two wooden boxes containing the aforesaid articles and I hope they will be on the way home tomorrow. I expect they will take at least two months to arrive.

In the afternoon I went to the San Carlo Opera House and saw La Boheme. I came back to camp with very little money left but very happy. Well cheerio for now. God bless. Love Rob

25 Mar 44

My dear Mum and Dad, First of all I must say how glad I am to receive the large parcel of mags and also another lot of newspapers. We have been terribly short of reading material recently and they are helping to fill in quite a lot of dull moments.

Secondly the censorship regulations have been relaxed a little bit and I am now able to tell you that I have been connected with the Casino front. More than that for the moment I cannot say.

The day before yesterday I received my first letter from Gerry Gillam. Unfortunately he did not get my letter, which, as you know was a replica of the voyage letter you received. Would you be good enough to have a copy sent to him by air mail. His address is as follows. Lt G.T Gillam 1921 (Basuto) Coy AAPC, PCD - MEF.

Before coming south I met Denis Dutton by accident. We had a chat for about half an hour but did not manage to do all the talking we should have liked in this small

space of time. We are hoping to arrange a short leave together some time and pay a visit to Capri.

A few days ago I managed a visit to Pompei. There is nothing much I can tell you about that because I know you have already seen it for yourself.

Yesterday I had my first letter from Bobby since he has been commissioned. He is now in North Africa near Tunis and is with a Graves Registration Unit. Not my idea of a pleasant pastime but he is quite happy in his new sphere.

I suppose I should be very proud of being one of a few thousand people witnessing the forces of nature the like of which haven't been seen for over 70 years.

[Mount Vesuvius] It is a very wonderful and terrifying sight. I only wish I was witnessing it at a greater distance. However the danger now appears to be over and the old devil is beginning to quieten down. I can assure you that none of us are sorry. Well I must close now. God bless. Love Rob

4 Apr 44

My dear Mum and Dad, I think it is about time I wrote a letter without mentioning Income Tax so I will endeavour to keep away from that subject on this occasion although I still have some more to say about it.

On the 31st March I received three letters from you Nos. 26 and 27 and one on Income Tax. It is my intention to reply to No.26 in this letter and give you what news there is from here.

You mention about eats in your letter. This reminds me that a fortnight ago I used my greatcoat for the first time since I was in the Atlantic and believe me I had a job to do the buttons up. I shall have to find some strenuous form of exercise to get my weight down. I don't know what Peggy will say when she hears. Quite frankly I haven't plucked up courage enough to tell her yet. I wasn't exactly thin when I left England. I am just wondering what will happen when I put my Service Dress on.

Gerry Gillam is I believe in Kassassin not Cairo. A Rotten place it is too. I shall not forget it in a hurry.

Well at last I have heard something about my interview with Colonel Lydd. On paper I have been posted to Civil Labour with effect from 20th March. In actual fact I am still with my Company awaiting further instructions regarding movement. So it appears that my days with the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps are numbered.

On the whole I can't say I am sorry but like all changes one makes in the Army one leaves behind friends and has to make new.

Now it looks like coming off I will tell you that I volunteered to go into Civil Labour. Not a thing one usually does except under certain circumstances

There was a very good reason why I did. Later perhaps I will tell you all about it. Sufficient to say at the moment is that at the time I was not altogether happy in the Company and I thought a change would do me good. When I get settled down I will tell you all about it. For the moment just continue to write to the same address. Cheerio. God bless, Rob.

7 Apr 44

My dear Mum and Dad, There is very little news from here so first of all I will

answer your letter of 19th March No.27.

I am very sorry to hear that Nos. 9 & 11 Drayton Park have been added to the wreckage of London. However it is something to be thankful for that no one was killed or injured. It is also good to see that HJ Goodman Ltd are earning such a name for themselves in speed of action. I expect Harry Taylor is now finding his hands full with all the IBC work.

So glad to hear that Roger is making such wonderful progress. Are you sure it was his first smile and not wind?

I have told you more or less the outcome of my interview. I do stand to gain a little in the new job, a matter of 2/6d a day staff pay provided I am suitable for the job and provided I like it. Since volunteering for the change my Company has moved to an entirely different kind of work admirably suitable for my qualifications. However the posting has gone through and I shall have to go, but I have had a word with the Adjutant and if I want to get back to this Group I can on application. The only thing for me to do now is try my new job when the opportunity occurs and then decide what to do. One thing I hope to accomplish by the move is to save a journey back to South Africa with the Company. I prefer to continue to get nearer home.

Well the invasion hasn't started yet but I hope it won't be long. Still much better to await the right time and be sure than hurry up the job and make a mistake. Some of us who have been in the front line realize only too well what the invasion will be up against.

Yesterday I had an interesting experience. I was clearing up some of the millions of tons of ash deposited by Vesuvius round here when I was invited to have a cup of tea with an American born Italian Countess. Naturally, during the conversation we kept clear of any military subjects but I did have quite an interesting time. It is a beautiful house and beautiful grounds but everything has been ruined for this year by the eruption, no peaches, no lemons, no oranges and no grapes.

Before I left I received a permanent invitation to call whenever I liked and as a parting gift I was presented with a duck egg. Such duck eggs are not seen in England 3 ins long and 1½ ins across. It was some duck that laid that one.

A few days ago I heard from Arthur Pemberton. Today I had an airgraph from Harry Oakes.

Cheerio. God bless, Love Rob

PART 3 – Letters from DADL (Civil (“H” Civil Labour Unit, 57 Area CMF (later unit title re-designated as 2907 Civil Labour Unit)

19 Apr 44 (arrived 25 Apr 44)

My dear Mum and Dad, It is now twelve days since I last wrote to you, I am sorry about that but time has just flown owing to a good deal of moving about. Now I am settled down in what appears to be a very comfortable job and I can get down to answering some of my correspondence.

Since last writing I have received three letters from you 26 March 2nd and 9th April. As I expect you are more interested in news than anything else I will answer them in a later letter.

A week ago today I received instructions

to move the following day. In a way it was somewhat unexpected but I was glad to get it and make the long awaited change. I am sure I shall be a lot happier in my new job. On leaving my Company I moved into a hotel for three days in a town where you have been yourselves. It was the first time I had slept on a bed with springs, sheets and a mattress since leaving England. I was so comfortable the first night that I couldn't sleep, however that was remedied the next two nights. I attended a short course of instruction on my new duties and in the off duty time we made the most of our opportunities at an Officers Club and pictures etc.

Last Sunday I arrived at my new Office in a country town not far away from my old Company. Our staff consists of another Lieutenant, whom I already knew previously, myself a sergeant and a corporal. Between us we control the destinies of nearly 6,000 Italians. We have quite extensive powers and sometimes have to make use of them. Our job consists of supplying Italian labour to whatever Unit requires it. To all intents and purposes a Labour Exchange. If the labour doesn't come to us for work we go and get it. The day before yesterday I interviewed two Mayors. I gave them 48 hrs to produce the 200 men I wanted and if they didn't I should take the necessary action. The necessary action would be sacking the Mayor which strangely enough we can do with a little backing AMGOT.

We have a lovely suite of offices. Two large offices with marble floors. Two bedrooms one for the sergeant & one for the corporal and a bathroom etc.

Jimmy Ivoll and myself live 300 or 400 yds away in a beautiful Mess with 4 Dental Offices and the town MO. Believe me we do ourselves well. What a change from the front line.

More news in my next letter. Cheerio for now. All my love, Rob

25 Apr 44 (arrived 3 May)

My dear Mum and Dad, First of all I must apologize for being an extremely poor correspondent in the last week or two. It has partly been due to moving about and partly through sheer laziness on my part. However I hope I shall have the opportunity to rectify my lassitude during the near future.

The mail must have been held up somewhere for quite a time because I had no letters from you between 31 March and 17 April. Between the last date mentioned and today I have received four, your last one only taking eight days. By the way you slipped up in your numbering I had two number 28s. Still I think I can forgive you for that.

A letter from Miss Bunce containing the allowance details also arrived today. I had been a bit worried about these allowances but now it appears to be all cleared up.

A simple explanation of these allowances is that the cost of living in various countries is different. In Egypt I used to get 5/3 a day extra in Italy I get 4/6 a day. These allowances for Dec & Jan had not come through nor had some other items for Nov in Egypt. However they are all through now so I shall not have to worry about these.

I have kept all the letters that have been sent to me and regarding Harry Taylor's letters I can only trace one airgraph sent on

25 Nov. which reached me on 3 Jan and I replied to it on the 6th Jan. No other letters have reached me from him. I have been extremely lucky with post recently. 14 letters in a week. They are keeping me quite busy answering them. Gerry is now in Italy and I am hoping to arrange for Denis, Gerry and myself to have a short leave together. It is a bit much to expect but one never knows. Peculiar things do happen out here. A couple of days ago I met a Sergeant whom I thought I recognized. After a few minutes conversation I found out that he used to be Chief Warden in Mercers Road and lived at number 55.

Several weeks ago I was reading some of the local papers you sent me. I was sitting in a little white house actually overlooking Jerry lines. It was at that time my headquarters. In walked one Officer who, seeing the papers asked where I came from. He came from Camden Road. I don't know whether I have told you this one before or not but here goes. When I came back from the front I was sitting in a Mess when I walked an RASC Capt whom I recognized as Douglas Pegg. He used to work for D & N and prior to that I was in the scouts with him. I met him again a few days ago in Naples. He was wearing a "mention" which he got in France. The Officer I am working with here, Jimmy Ivoll was at OCTU at the same time as I was so we are old pals. It helps quite a lot to meet people like that.

Now regarding the job. It is going on very well. There is plenty to do and there are no rifle inspections etc. etc. Our office is run on business lines and we take whatever action we think necessary. X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X
Well I must close. God bless. Love Rob

1 May 44

My dear Mum and Dad, Yesterday for the first time since I have been in Italy I actually received a letter from you before you had written the next one, it having taken only six days to come. It is rather curious that also by the same post came a record breaker of all time from Maud Taylor. She sent a letter by surface mail on the 18th April so that one only took twelve days by sea. All of this was in complete contrast to the previous day when I received one from Mrs Kennett (Miss Gammon) which she posted on the 24th Dec airmail and it has just arrived. It is therefore quite possible that Harry Taylor's letters will turn up.

Yesterday I sent off a box of one dozen lemons for you, whether or not they will be any good when they arrive remains to be seen. Anyway they only cost 3/6 including postage so I thought the experiment was worth a trial. I also sent a box for Peggy.

I am afraid that my job here is not exciting like my previous one and does not give me a lot of scope to write letters on. However you will be pleased to know that I do like it and everything is going on all right.

I do not think I shall be breaking any censorship regulations if I tell you that during Christmas I was engaged on taking food, water and ammunition up to the forward Infantry. We had to take it by hand because even mules couldn't get there owing to the difficult country. It all had to be done by night because we were under observation all the way. The journey there was usually between four and five miles up extremely rocky paths sometimes six inches

deep in water. How the boys stuck it I don't know because I had a job to keep on my feet carrying nothing and yet each boy was carrying 30 or 40 lbs and sometimes 60 lbs on his back.

I should like to tell you a lot more about my experiences up there but I think that it is wiser to say nothing more at the moment. I am glad I had a certain amount of front-line experience but quite frankly I am in no hurry to renew my acquaintance with it. I do certainly take off my hat to the Infantry stuck up there for days in little trenches regardless of weather. Our life was not exactly pleasant but theirs must have been absolute hell.

Life here in this country town is a luxury after what I have been used to and I do appreciate it. The other members of the Mess usually find something to grumble about such as the soup is cold or there is too much salt in the potatoes. They don't realize what it is like up forward living off tinned stuff all the time. I had tinned steak & kidney pudding for 14 consecutive days. I doubt if I shall be able to face it again for years.

Well that is enough of that for one letter. I am getting a lot of entertainment here in the evening. Last week starting from Monday I was out six consecutive nights as follows. Pictures, Ensa show, Dance, Party, Pictures and Party. It was quite a hectic week and of course not the usual routine of things. Still I must say that life is very pleasant here. The weather is now pleasantly warm and the countryside is very green. If only these Italians would learn a little more about sanitation even the towns would be bearable. We have now put out huge bins in the street here and are gradually teaching them to put their rubbish in them instead of chucking it in the road to rot and smell and breed disease. Now I must close. God bless, Love, Rob.

9 May 44

My dear Mum and Dad, Many thanks for your letter No.32 received yesterday. First of all thank you for the two addresses of Ted Veal and Gerry Gillam. I will drop Ted a line as soon as I can. Gerry and I are now regular correspondents. We each write a newsletter once a week. Gerry was at Toranto last time he wrote and was expecting to go to Sorrento. Lucky beggar it is a wonderful place, I went there this afternoon for a drive with Denis Dutton. More about that later. So glad you were able to fix Mum, Peggy and the children up at Minehead. I am sure Judy will enjoy herself with her pail and spade. About the new job there is little I can say I am still enjoying it very much and we have now got our figures up to 6400. We are trying to reach 7000 by the end of the month. Every "Itie" we can get in releases one of our own boys. If by any chance you should get this letter by the 17th please convey my fraternal greetings to the brethren. I will keep the date open and at 9 o'clock I shall be standing at the bar of the local Officers Club with a glass of vermouth in my hand. I am not near Arthur Pemberton now but before Christmas we must have been a matter of hundreds of yards apart. I don't think I shall be breaking any censorship regulations if I say that before Christmas I was at the foot of Monte Casino. It is better known in England as Monastery Hill. Please

don't mix it up with the one in the news at the moment. The one referred to is the one taken at the beginning of Dec. There being no other means of getting food and ammunition over the top of it we carried it all up by hand. The journey there was about four and a half miles most of the way under observation so we had to go by night. Having dropped our load we walked or should I say climbed home. This so called hill is 3200 ft high and it was on the top of this, that I was taken ill. Up to that time I think my trip down the mountain on that occasion was my most alarming experience. I quite frankly never thought I would make it. Since then I have had others worse than that but somehow or other I have managed to get through. Sitting in a comparatively quiet little town now I often wonder how we stuck it up there and yet we were quite well off compared with the PBI. Well that is enough of that for the time being. Today to my amazement when I came back from a long motorcycle trip, I found Denis Dutton waiting for me. He came up to the Mess for lunch and afterwards he took me for a really wonderful trip in his lorry. From the sight-seeing point of view the best part of the trip was from Torri-Annunziata through Castellammare to Sorrento on the coast route. Did you do this trip when you were over here? The scenery really was magnificent. We had grand views of the Bay of Naples, Vesuvius and in the distance we could just see Capri. We had a delightful tea at the YWCA at Sorrento overlooking the Bay. After tea we tried to find out if Gerry had arrived in the area but were unable to glean any information. He brought me back here and then started on his long trip back to a town less than ten miles from the front where he is stationed at the moment. He had arranged to come down tomorrow and spend the night here but it was impossible and so being in the vicinity he came down to let me know today. He is going to try and get down again later on and I hope to know where Gerry is by then so that we can go and see him. Well must close. Cheerio, Love Rob.

15 May 44

My dear Mum and Dad, No.34 arrived about an hour ago and now I will do my best to reply to it in between answering all sorts of Italian requests as they come in. Therefore this letter may possibly be somewhat disjointed.

Jimmy Ivoll having tried to break his neck on our motorcycle due to the bad roads has taken it into Naples this morning on a lorry and is bringing back a new one. So here I am sitting in the office on a bright sunny morning writing this. I was very interested to hear about Roger's dedication. I expect I shall hear more about it in my next letter from Peggy. I am afraid that any combined meeting of Denis, Gerry and myself is out for the moment. Gerry's plans have been somewhat upset and his proposed move to Sorrento is off for the time being and he is remaining in the vicinity of Taranto. This is too far away for me to get over and see him still we are keeping in contact by letter. As I told you in my last letter Denis and I tried to locate him at Sorrento when we were visiting the place last week. By the way my spelling of those places was entirely wrong but perhaps you were able to work them out. At any rate I hope so. I am afraid

I shall still have to remain silent about certain adventures because the position in that particular area is still very much the same now as it was then, however with the new offensive now well underway perhaps I shall not have to remain silent much longer. By the way I have had no more papers for some weeks now. Are you still sending them or have you stopped? Hornsey Journal & Islington Gazette would be appreciated.

Life here goes on very much the same as usual. It is now getting really hot and in addition to khaki drill we have now had to take the precaution of sleeping under our mosquito nets once more. So far mosquitoes have not been very troublesome but we have caught a few. The main reason for the nets is to keep off the flies which are becoming numerous. Directly I get to the office each morning I pick up a swatter and kill 100 before doing anything else. Having done this I always feel that I have done my share in the fly campaign. Tomorrow I am going with the MO to Naples to the San Carlo to see the opera Il Traviata. If it is worth mentioning I will tell you something about it in my next letter. Cheerio for now. God bless. Love Rob

27 May 44

My dear Mum and Dad, I am afraid that all my good intentions of writing one letter a day to somebody have gone by the board. Apart from the one I sent to Peggy yesterday it is now eight days since I have written to anybody. The reason is that I have now left my friends at Nola and am now running my own branch office in a new district. I am lucky to have with me a very efficient sergeant who knows the district fairly well. All the same the task of obtaining labour here is very arduous and when I get back to my billet in the evening I feel too tired to settle down and write letters. I am perhaps putting more time in at the office and touring the district on a motor-cycle than is really necessary. However in the three weeks that this office has been open, including myself, three officers have tried to get it going. I have no intention of failing and following in my predecessors' footsteps and I am putting all I have got into the job. If I do fail I can assure you that it won't be the lack of trying. I have here a larger staff than we had at my previous office and at the moment they all seem very capable. I have as one of my civilian clerks a Lawyer who is just the right type of man to put these howling mobs in order. I also have his younger brother who can speak a fair amount of English and also understands it provided I speak slowly enough. My other employee is a woman typist. Apart from these three there is the sergeant who speaks Italian fluently and a corporal from my last office. On top of our ordinary work I am preparing a register of all unemployed civilians in this town and the surrounding villages. This is a tremendous task and will probably take several weeks. However I think it will be worth the work entailed. When I have it completed I shall know all the details about the civilians employed and unemployed, which unit they are working for, if they have been sacked I shall know why and if necessary black-list them if they are no good. I was lucky enough to requisition a very fine steel filing system of eight steel files, with the aid of these I shall

be able to register 50,000. I think that should be enough to go on with. At the moment I am employing 4500 but I hope I shall soon be able to improve on that.

Yesterday I received the airgraph photo of Judy and Roger. I was very excited when it came and I have in on my office desk. I think it is beautiful and so do everyone else who come into the office.

Now I must close. God bless. Love Rob

6 Jun 44 (D Day)

My dear Mum and Dad, On looking at my diary I find that it is now some ten days since last I wrote to you. This is a rotten bad show I admit but I must say in my defence that I really have been busy since I took over this office and the only letters I have written have been to Peggy. Even now I can't promise that this one will be at all interesting as I am endeavouring to concentrate on writing this at 10.30 in the evening after having slept for the past three hours immediately after dinner. Again I will admit that my sleep was not due to tiredness brought on by overwork, no in this instance it was due to over indulgence in the famous Italian Vino. I suppose one might say that from time immemorial it has been the soldiers' privilege to celebrate great occasions more boisterously than civilians. Today is a great occasion and even amateur soldiers like myself have made it an excuse to celebrate. Once again our comrades have set foot on French soil. All of us over here who have done amphibious landings against the Hun know something of what they are going through. The last sentence will probably startle you once more, yes strange as it may seem even the poor old Pioneers have done it including your son. I can assure you that when it happened nobody was more frightened than I was. Still we made it all right and we stayed there. Now we are all anxiously awaiting news as to how this biggest of all landings is going. Please God it is successful because if it is we all see the beginning of the sunrise and the final defeat of our enemies. Outside our flat in the street below are more deliriously happy and some incapable tommies than I have ever seen before. Well good luck to them they have done their bit and are back for a rest and they are enjoying themselves as only soldiers know how.

If you find this letter a little unintelligible put it down to the fact that I feel a bit like the soldiers below. Goodnight. God bless you and keep you safe. Love Rob

16 Jun 44

My dear Mum and Dad As usual these days I have to apologise for what may follow in this letter. Recently I have received two or three letters from you including one from Mum. I have left them all at the office and this evening I am unable to refer to them so I shall have to try and remember what was in them that needed an answer.

First of all I must say how glad I was to see from your last letter that you did get to Minehead. All the events happening so suddenly I rather expected that you would find it impossible to travel. However you managed it and I am sure you all enjoyed what I hope was a well-earned rest. Whether or not it was a rest I shall have to learn from your next letter because at the time of writing the invasion had not taken

place.

One thing about the invasion that bucked a lot of us up immensely was the fact that there was a word of praise for the Pioneers. I think it was put as "Was it not for the unsung heroes, the Pioneers, unloading furiously on the beaches, the landings would not have been a success." Some of us appreciate just what was entailed by "furiously unloading on the beaches." I think it can be said that every Unit in the British Army has at some time or other been dependant on the Pioneers. I think probably my most uncomfortable time was when I spent three days in action with the Commandos. Yes even the "Crazy gang" is dependant on us and weren't we glad when we finished. All this of course happened months ago but the memory still lingers on. Sometimes when I sit back here in my comfortable flat I begin to wonder if it really happened to me.

From Peggy I gather that she went away armed with two films so I am hoping that before many weeks are passed I shall have a few photographs of you on holiday.

One last important thing. Here is hoping you celebrate a very happy wedding anniversary on the 18th. I hope I am not too late. Now God bless & keep you safe. All my love, Rob

26 Jun 44

Dear Mum and Dad, During the past five weeks I have been working pretty hard and in return for it I must admit that I have earned one or two laurels for myself. However laurels are not everything and as I have also knocked myself up a bit I have decided that I am going to try and take it more easily for a bit and rest on the laurels already earned. Last week I got myself into such a state that I had to leave off at 4 o'clock and go home to bed and I didn't arrive at the office until midday the following day. I must say I felt a good deal better for the short rest. Next Thursday I am going on leave for a few days until Sunday. I am spending at least part of it with Gerry Gillam at Torre del Grecco. I hope to do a bit of swimming and sunbathing and generally take things quietly.

I was extremely surprised to receive a parcel of 500 cigarettes from you. They were originally addressed to PCD so they have done quite a lot of travelling about. Anyway they have arrived and were very acceptable. The following day another 200 arrived from the Fellowship. I think I must now have all those that were originally despatched to me.

From your letter I see you want to know if we are wearing our service chevrons. The answer is NO and unless we are ordered to do so we shall not. The general opinion, and I share it, is that we have no intention of going about like so many Christmas trees. For instance in two months time I can put up five stripes on my uniform but take the case of a regular soldier who has done 14 or 21 years service, I mean, after all, we are human and not blinking zebras. Anyway stripes and medals are not what we are interested in. Home, wives and families are what we want and the powers that be know what they can do with their medals and I hope they hurt them.

By the way I have no further experiences to relate of my past activities you now know something about them all and I shall not

enlarge on any of them until I return. I have told you sufficient to let you know that for a period of three months my life was anything but pleasant.

Well cheerio. God bless, Rob.

9 Jul 44 (arrived 18 Jul 44)

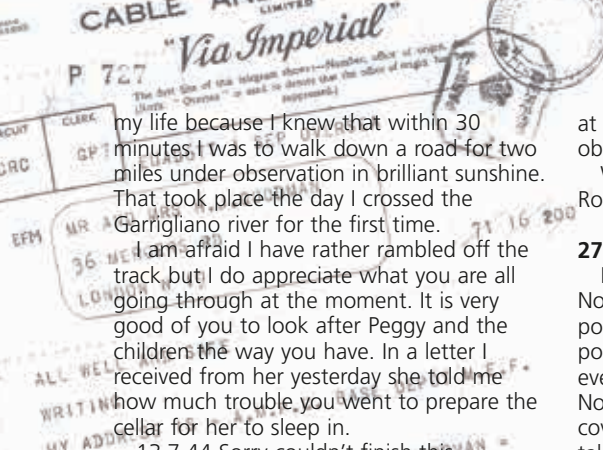
My dear Mum and Dad, Many thanks for your letter No.41 received this morning. I am afraid that all my good intentions about letter writing have gone by the board. During the past six weeks I have only written to you and Peggy and the remaining mail I have received which is quite a lot has just remained unanswered and will stop like that for some time to come. I am still up to my eyes in work but I must say that I have made a lot of progress since I came here. One of my main jobs since I have been here has been to supply 1500 Italians for one Unit alone. That job was successfully completed on time and today it has been inspected by my Brigadier. At the time of writing this I do not know the result but I feel satisfied that he will be pleased with it. I don't suppose I shall get any flowers showered on me for it but it is nice to know that my Colonel and Major think that the job is sufficiently well organised to include it in the Brigadier's programme.

I am still enjoying this job very much but at the end of the day I am usually too tired to concentrate on letter writing. During a day I do 30 or 40 miles on a motorcycle on roads that you have never seen in England, clouds of dust and potholes every few yards. The brilliant sun and glare of the white roads is very tiring and more often than not I come home and go straight to bed for a couple of hours before I can face anything to eat. Well I suppose I am painting a pretty black picture of things. Now on the other hand I have a delightful flat which I share with my sergeant & corporal. Four very large rooms a kitchen and a tiled bathroom also a lovely terrace, all of which I deeply appreciate after the Garigliano a pig-sty (if I was lucky) 2 blankets, knife fork spoon and a tooth brush. Quite frankly I am living under luxurious conditions now and am thoroughly contented with my lot. Cheerio God bless. Love Rob

P.S. Give my love to Peggy & the children.

12 Jul 44 (arrived 24 Jul 44)

Dear Mum and Dad, Many thanks for No.42 which arrived a couple of days ago. Until I received it I am afraid I did not realize the seriousness of these "doodle bugs". It is quite obvious from your letter and others received from home received by my sergeant and corporal that they are things to be reckoned with. I remember last January being under similar circumstances. Owing to the lack of billets in a particular village I was sleeping in a church, less than 50 yds away was a battery of our heavies doing their stuff. Unfortunately for us Jerry had a pretty good idea where they were and every time we let him have it back came the reply. We were all more or less "sitting ducks" and it is one of the experiences that will long live in my memory. It was whilst I was writing a letter to Peggy that he got a direct hit but luckily all I got was plaster off the ceiling. Although on that occasion I tried to write a cheery letter I was never more frightened in



my life because I knew that within 30 minutes I was to walk down a road for two miles under observation in brilliant sunshine. That took place the day I crossed the Garrigliano river for the first time.

I am afraid I have rather rambled off the track but I do appreciate what you are all going through at the moment. It is very good of you to look after Peggy and the children the way you have. In a letter I received from her yesterday she told me how much trouble you went to prepare the cellar for her to sleep in.

13.7.44 Sorry couldn't finish this yesterday. We are still very busy.

14.7.44 Well somehow or other I must finish it this time. At the moment we have a private war on in this town against disease. Things looked pretty black until yesterday morning but now it seems we have more or less got it under control. The precautions we take probably seem unnecessary to you. All our crockery and glass has to be washed in disinfectant, all our fresh fruit is allowed to soak in it as well, we also put disinfectant in our washing water.

Two parcels of mags arrived yesterday no name and address of senders. God bless. All the best Rob

22 Jul 44 (arrived 31 Jul)

My dear Mum and Dad, Once again I am in the midst of one of my periodic rests in hospital. This time the cause is a poisoned knee I received as a result of a graze going septic. It was rather more serious than my poisoned toe I had in England and I have had to have a slight operation. At the moment I have a cut beside my knee cap about an inch and a quarter long by a quarter of an inch wide and about half an inch deep. Until this afternoon it has been plugged but now they have taken it out and I have seen the hole for the first time. I must admit I got a bit of a shock when I first saw it, but now I am getting used to it.

I had several days of agony before they operated on me but as soon as it was over I had instant relief. The operation took place last Wednesday and the poison is still draining out with the aid of hot fermentations. The operation was quite an experience for me because I had never been on the "slab" in my life before. I can't say I looked forward to it with much relish but it was not nearly as bad as I expected. They use a new method of putting you to sleep these days. They inject a fluid in the vein on your arm and you are away in less than five seconds and later you wake up without ill effects of any kind comfortably tucked up in bed. The food here is very good. Among other things included in my diet is a tot of whiskey at 6 o'clock every evening. I have had several visitors including my OC Maj Davy and also my friend Jimmy Ivoll who has gone out to Afragola to take over my job until I get back, which I am afraid will not be for 14 days or more. My sergeant also came and saw me.

I was due for a move forward to Leghorn probably last Wednesday but of course that is now all off. I am not very sorry about it although I expect it would have meant an extra pip. However believe me promotion is not everything over here. I have been as near the front as that before but I am not anxious to repeat it.

We are wondering here what will be the outcome of the internal trouble in Germany,

at the time of writing it is still rather obscure as to what is happening.

Well cheerio for now. All the best. Love Rob

27 Jul 44 (arrived 1 Aug)

My dear Mum and Dad, Many thanks for No.44 which arrived this morning. My other post consisted of an Income Tax assessment posted to me last February which has eventually caught me up via Egypt and North Africa. I have already sent it with a covering letter to Mr Collins. It will probably take a month to arrive. I had one other letter from Arthur Pemberton who is now in an RE Artisan Works Company. I should imagine this will suit him a lot better than Artillery.

It was nice to get some news of Peggy and the children I haven't heard from them for some time now but I suppose that isn't surprising as I expect Peggy finds quite a lot to do with two of them.

I am sorry to hear that the flying bombs are being such a trouble to you. Why don't you both go down to St Albans? It is all very well to stick it out but there is no point in putting your head in the fire unnecessarily. It is a pity it is doing such havoc to our property but I am afraid we shall just have to grin and bear it and put it right after the war.

It is with deep regret that I hear of the passing of poor old Jimmy Hawker. I suppose he must have been the oldest member of the firm. I feel that we shall be a very different firm when we get going after the war. Many things have undergone changes and I feel that the war has done me a lot of good in many ways. It has certainly broadened my outlook on life and has also taught me to be much more self reliant. This last job of mine has in my mind been a complete success and has forced me to go out after what I have wanted and get it.

Yes I knew about Bob Vokes we write once a fortnight to each other ever since we met in Cairo. I am afraid I have let him down for the past eight weeks owing to pressure of business but I hope to put it right either today or tomorrow. Denis is well forward but until I came into hospital I saw Gerry once a week. We are about 15 miles apart but Gerry has to come into my town to collect rations and sometimes stays to lunch with me.

Finally the knee is progressing well. I hope to be up in less than a week if all goes well.

Look after yourselves. God bless. Love Rob

3 Aug 44 (arrived 11 Aug)

My dear Mum and Dad, You will be pleased to hear that when the surgeon came round this morning he decided that I was fit for discharge. My knee is not yet quite healed but it is only a matter of dressings for a few days to finish it off. I shall be leaving here on Saturday and I hope to return to my old district. When you are discharged from hospital over here various people have to be informed and it takes 48 hrs to get out.

I think I can safely say that my education in respect of the various sides of war has now been completed. My last lesson, three weeks in a surgical ward of a Base Hospital, has not been exactly pleasant. I have seen

some of the most remarkable feats of surgery and also some of the most piteous sights you can imagine, none of which will I attempt to describe. I have no doubt that with your experience at "Lord Robert's" you will know something of what I have seen.

Saturday 5.8.44 Well I am afraid it didn't get finished on Thursday but now I am once again sitting in my old office I think I can manage to complete it. My word it is great to be back once again.

I had another letter from you today but as I have left it back at the flat I will not attempt to answer it here. I am afraid I owe you an apology. Soon after I arrived in hospital the first batch of newspapers arrived and I can assure you they helped to pass the time I spent in bed. Thank you very much.

I am indeed pleased to be out of hospital. I am not yet properly fit and I shall have to have a couple of hours rest each afternoon for a week or so. I feel I shall get quite well quicker here than in hospital. Each day there were five or six leaving our ward in the morning for operations and returning in the evening. I shall get a lot more peace and quiet here. Jimmy Ivoll is staying here for a few more days so I shall not have a lot of work to do.

This time last year I was home for the last time before coming abroad. Such a lot has happened since then that I can't say that the time has dragged, time passes so quickly. Five years ago next Wednesday I walked out of the office for the last time that also hardly seems possible. How the years fly by. Now for the moment I must close. Cheerio. God bless. Love Rob

10 Aug 44 (arrived 18 Aug) Unit title re-designated as 2907 Civil Labour Unit

My dear Mum and Dad, I should not find it difficult to fill the paper on this occasion as I have two of your letters to answer. I don't know why but my pen doesn't seem to flow as easily as it used to do and now I nearly always find that it takes me over an hour to fill even one of these letter cards.

Before I start on answering your letters let me point out a slight difference in the designation of my Unit as above. I have not changed my Unit or my location it has merely been renamed. Apart from your two letters I have also received a second parcel of newspapers and magazines for the latter part of June. Thank you very much for them.

I hope you are right about the writing on the wall. The Hitler bomb scare did not make much impression generally on the company I found myself in at the time. That Hitler is in a tight corner is generally admitted but was the attempt on his life genuine? The general feeling here is no. It was argued his way. He originally came into power by the Reichstag fire. He obtained more power after the bomb in the Munich beer cellar. Now immediately after this one he calls for total mobilization and presumably he gets it at the same time killing off a few of his wavering Generals. Whether or not he has done any good remains to be seen. Certainly he is having a black time and a blacker one is to follow. I don't think that Jerry will get away with it this time for two very good reasons. Last war the soldier took all the knocks while the civilian didn't really know what war was. You will only be too ready to agree

that that is not the case this time. Secondly the soldier this war is more politically minded and I am convinced that when he comes home he is going to have a good deal to say and see that it is carried out. There is only one country who is likely to try the soft pedal but even they may change their mind after the next few weeks. What a lot I could tell you but may be its best forgotten. Cheerio. God bless. Rob

15 Aug 44 (arrived 23 Aug 44)

My dear Mum and Dad, Many thanks for No.47 received yesterday. So glad to hear that you are beginning to get straight once more after your recent upset. Although deaths and upsets are expected these days, it was nice to receive a letter wherein there were none of these occurrences. It is good to hear that Peggy is settling down comfortably in St Albans [with Martha's sister Emmie and husband Will]. I hear from her more often now and she tells me how much she and the children appreciate your visits. I can imagine how quiet St Albans must be after the noise and bustle of London.

You will be pleased to hear that I am now feeling very much better and the Major has promised me a short holiday in the Isle of Ischia. I have no idea when it will be and if it is not in the near future I think the war will be over and it will be too late.

The news of your proposed holiday came as a surprise, that was one of the pieces of news you forgot to tell me. I suppose you will have nearly finished your holiday by the time this arrives so all I can say is I hope you enjoyed it. At any rate I rather think a fortnight away from London will do nobody any harm these days.

I was lucky enough to catch a glimpse of the "PM" yesterday and I must say he looked very fit and well. Since my return from hospital I have been taking things very quietly and have managed to catch up on all my mail some replies were over three months overdue.

Jimmy Ivoll and myself were together at Nola and it is quite like old times having him here, now that I am so much better I expect he will soon be returning to HQ. Cheerio once again. God bless. Love Rob

26 Aug 44 (arrived 5 Sep)

My dear Mum and Dad, Your letter No.48 written in Devon arrived a few days ago. I have failed to answer it sooner because quite a lot of changes have taken place out here and given me quite a lot of work. I myself am still at the same office but Jimmy Ivoll has gone and so has my sergeant who has been with me for the past fifteen weeks. It has therefore been necessary for me to train a new sergeant who, unfortunately, is unable to ride a bike. This necessitates me visiting every unit personally with the sergeant riding pillion and I have had to devise a new method of unit inspection so that we can carry out all the work allotted to us. Things are now sorting themselves out and I think we have pretty well everything under control once more.

It was announced in the newspapers a few days ago that the famous 4th Indian Division was fighting in Italy. You may remember that it was this Division that captured Von Arnim in North Africa and finally brought to a conclusion that campaign. This Div was my distinguished

company referred to in my voyage letter last December.

Your holiday didn't start very well with the Gaumont getting a smack. However I hope when you did eventually get to your destination you had a restful and enjoyable time.

A recent letter from Peggy telling me all about the fair on August Bank Holiday at St Albans made me very envious, but I am looking forward to seeing the Christmas presents taken from the tree at home this year. Wishful thinking? No I don't think so. Cheerio, God bless, Love Rob

11 Sep 44 (arrived 18 Sep)

Dear Mum and Dad, Owing to a variety of trivial reasons I am afraid my mail has suffered to some degree and recently I have not written to you as often as I should have liked to have done. However I know you will appreciate the fact that I do write as often as I can and that my thoughts are always with you. Since I last wrote I have received two from you Nos. 50 & 51, both of which were written at Illfracombe where it seems you were enjoying your holiday to the full.

Since my last letter I have had a three day holiday myself at the Officers Rest Camp on the Isle of Ischia, about fifteen miles up the coast from Capri. It was a very rushed affair like most things in the Army these days. I was informed by DR at 8 o'clock at night to be ready to leave the following morning at 9 o'clock. I packed a case and next morning I was rushed into Naples and into the boat after various preliminaries without any opportunity of calling at the cashier to get any money, luckily I have been carrying a few pounds about with me recently and I had sufficient to carry me through. It was rather peculiar that I should stay at a Swiss hotel probably six years to the day after I stayed in a similar hotel under rather different circumstances. I had a comparatively quiet time but on one afternoon accompanied by two RE Officers and three American Nurses I went sailing and swimming and got very sunburnt, now I am paying for it because my forehead is peeling all over the place.

Short as my holiday was it was very pleasant and put a final touch to my convalescence after my accident. I am now feeling fit and fine and ready to get really cracking once more.

Now before I find myself at the bottom of the page I had better answer your query about the sergeant and the girl. Well Jimmy Ivoll tells me that it all fell through, I believe mainly because the sergeant wanted to wait a year and the parents wanted to get on with the job as is the usual custom among Italians. Antonietta has nothing to do with the above. She is one of three sisters to whose house I go and have a glass of wine occasionally. Naturally I showed them my family and she offered to make a frock for Judy. Apart from the cost of the material it has cost me nothing as she refuses to be paid for the work she has done. I shall be sending it home as soon as I can get into town to post it off. Now once again cheerio. God bless, Love Rob

20 Sep 44 (arrived 26 Sep)

My dear Mum and Dad, Many thanks for No.52 which arrived a few days ago. Sometimes it seems as though I have been

away 152 weeks and at other times it doesn't seem nearly so long. I suppose it depends on one's mood. Today I am not in a very jovial frame of mind because I am tied to the office due to the inclement weather. Today we have had our first really wet day since last April and believe me when it rains here there is no mistaking the fact. It has its consolations though. I suppose I am stationed in one of the dirtiest villages in Italy where everybody throws everything they don't want in the street. We have street cleaners here who are supposed to sweep the streets every day but even so I imagine that we have as many flies here as anywhere in Africa. Today the streets have had a real good wash and are beginning to look reasonably clean but tomorrow they will be as bad as ever. I don't think I have ever met a more uneducated people than these Neapolitans. If you tell them that flies carry disease they laugh at you and they can't understand why I insist on all our food at the flat being covered over. Even on the table at meal times we have all the food except the plate we are actually eating from covered over. At nights we sleep under nets not because there are many mosquitoes but to keep the flies off. There are a few mosquitoes here but I haven't seen any of the malarious type which are easily distinguishable from their brethren.

I had a letter from Bob the other day and I was pleased to see that he had got his compassionate posting home. He is now in Cairo awaiting a berth to come home. He has promised to look you up as soon as possible. I am very pleased he is coming home, he has had three years out here and a hell of a lot worse time than I have had. I am sure it will be a great help to Pat to know he is coming home. Pat and Bob have not had much of a married life and now with luck they will be able to plan a future together.

The news continues to get better each day and I hope the end of the European phase is not far off.

Goodbye, God bless. Love Rob

1 Oct 44 (arrived 8 Oct)

Dear Mum and Dad, Another momentous month has passed and today we begin what might easily be the victory month. Perhaps this is somewhat wishful thinking but at any rate it cheers me up no end to think that it may be.

My mail is again getting well behind owing to pressure of work but as we commenced this new month today I am endeavouring to turn over a new leaf and devote the whole of this evening to letter writing. Your last letter created a record, it took four days and I am now writing this one two hours before you start your next one. As a matter of fact it is ten days since I last wrote to you so I have two to answer.

At the time of writing No.53 you had just been listening to the account of the airborne landing in Holland. Well it was a magnificent do but unfortunately didn't quite come off; if it had we might easily have been well on the way to Berlin. As it is I suppose some poor General will get called over the coals because of the casualties. I feel extremely sorry for these people who have to make these tremendous decisions.

I was sorry to hear about Peggy's doubtful welcome to London. I hope that the doodle-bug spell was only a flash in the

pan. I haven't read any further accounts of them and I haven't a wireless. I think that auntie was extremely kind to allow Peggy and the children to stay there during the unpleasant session in London and quite agree that she should not have to put up with the extra responsibility any longer.

Turning to your letter number 54 the main question in everybody's mind at the moment is demobbing. We only have brief details out here at the moment but as I see it at the moment I am well up the list under schedule A "Age & Service". Counting 6 years of life for every year served I am as at 3rd September 59 $\frac{3}{4}$. As far as I know I have more points than anyone else in my Unit which is encouraging. Under Schedule B, Priority of job, I am also high up. However there is a lot to be said for A and I am not making up my mind which I shall go for until I know more about it.

Thanks for the information about the insurance policy. I think it is a very good idea. It is always a good idea to make provision for the future. One never knows what might happen these days.

Well I see the end is in view so now I must close. Goodnight. God bless. Love Rob

15 Oct 44 (arrived 24 Oct)

My dear Mum and Dad, To keep apologizing for taking so long to write is rather silly so I am just going to say that we really are extremely busy and leave it at that.

This job of mine is really very interesting and given me quite a lot of confidence in myself which I am ready to admit I did lack before the war. Like you at home we get one problem after another in quick succession and it necessitates me making decisions which would normally be made by majors at least. Of course I make mistakes, who doesn't, but on the whole I am quite successful, as usual there is little praise for success but plenty of raspberries for mistakes, however we keep plodding along doing our best.

It was only a day or so ago that the tables re "Age and Service" were published out here and now I know what you meant in your letter about my priority number being 21. For your information I am not in a position to do anything about schedule "B" occupational priority for release. The way it reads out here is that the Ministry of Labour will prepare lists of men they want released and forward them to the War Office. As I see you are one of the selected firms for "War Damage" maybe you can do something about that side but I can assure you I personally can take no action whatsoever.

Now before I get to the end of the page here is wishing Dad a very happy birthday. I am quite sure that before your next one comes round we shall all be re-united at home. Things are a bit slow in France at present but one assumes that it is only the calm before the storm which should finish the European side of things.

Now once again I must close I will try not to be so long writing next time but I cannot promise. Cheerio. God bless. Love Rob

22 Oct 44 (arrived 30 Oct)

Dear Mum and Dad, Many thanks for No.57 which arrived yesterday. There is such a lot to answer in it that I should not have to spend much time thinking about what to

write.

I have previously described the meaning of DADL but here it is once again. Deputy Assistant Director of Labour, he is a Major and the job carries an extra 10/- a day Staff pay, nice work if you can get it.

Yes I still see Gerry Gillam about once a week, as a matter of fact he had lunch with me at my flat last Friday. I usually see him on Fridays and sometimes on Tuesdays when he comes to a nearby village to collect NAFFI rations. A few weeks ago he was travelling about quite a bit looking for a new location for his camp. He went quite a long way north and among other places he visited Cassino and Rome. One of these days I hope I shall have an opportunity of going up and seeing them.

Of course I am proud of my son, from what I hear from Peggy he takes after his father in as much as he is shy when it comes to ladies. I am sorry I made such an awful mistake about his rompers still better luck next time.

I was quite surprised to hear about Tony Klaiber but I don't altogether agree with what you say on the matter. I think the spirit of adventure is the right attitude and I am quite sure you are only too ready to admit that the older you get the more snags one sees and the more cautious you become which I am not sure is altogether a good thing.

So far no Readers Digests have arrived. Some time ago I had a parcel of John Bulls from an unknown donor.

I have recently met several RAMC Officers a few at any rate are on the square and I have suggested we might hold an evening once a week at my flat just to brush up a bit. Whether or not it will materialize remains to be seen. At any rate I am assured of an occasional run through by one Major. Now cheerio and God bless. Love Rob

7 Nov 44 (arrived 11 Nov – 4 days)

My dear Mum and Dad, What a mail you sent me this week, on Sunday Mum's letter arrived and yesterday Dad's two typewritten ones. Even so with all this material to draw from I really don't know what I am going to write about.

Today I have been given some added responsibility in as much that I now have two offices to run instead of one, later I expect to add a third giving me in all about 12,000 Italians to look after. At the moment I still only have a motorcycle but hope to get a 15 cwt truck in the near future. I suppose the first thing that springs into your mind is "what about promotion", well I am afraid that is unlikely because we are allowed two Captains on our establishment and we already have two so there are no vacancies. However although I should like to get a bit further I am not unduly worried. I have a pleasant little job which keeps me fully occupied and when you are away from home that is the main thing.

I was pleased to see from your letter that Bob Vokes had at last arrived home. I hope he finds time to come and see you he has many interesting things to talk about that can't be put in letters.

I must say I had to laugh at your description of the wedding and I should say that however unusual they intended it to be, it didn't go, shall we say, according to plan.

Will you please ask Peggy to have Judy's photograph taken in the frock I sent home. Antonietta is rather anxious to have one and after all I can hardly say no seeing that she made it for nothing.

You remember the monthly a/c you used to send me from the Paymaster? I haven't had any since February 44. Can you let me have some later ones? From time to time I claim various allowances and I have no idea whether or not they are being paid into my account. I am a bit of a chip off the old block when it comes to claiming all I can. Well the way I look at it is anything to come glad of it. It will all be useful after this show is over.

Now once again I must close. Keep your chins up, it won't be long now. Love Rob

20 Nov 44

Dear Mum and Dad, I am sorry I have been such a long time writing but Peggy may have received her letter before you and will have told you all about it.

I have been pretty ill for the last nine days and it was not until today that I have managed to concentrate enough energy to write letters. This morning I polished one off to Peggy and this is the second one.

I have had a bout of jaundice which is fairly common out here but for all that it is not very pleasant. All I need now is a pig-tail and I would make a fine Chinaman.

I must say I have been extremely lucky in as much as I have numerous friends at the local General Hospital and the trouble was diagnosed in its early stages and I have been able to diet early enough to warn off a more serious attack. I am not in hospital but stayed in my own flat. The MO comes in daily and sees me and my food is sent up from the hospital. With this complaint one doesn't feel very much like eating and it is difficult to tempt me with chicken which is sent up nearly every day, two mouthfuls is sufficient. However my appetite is now returning and this morning I managed a boiled egg and some bread and butter for breakfast and some boiled fish at midday. No cure is known for the complaint except rest in bed and a non-fatty diet. I believe I shall be up and about in a few more days although it has been known to last 6 weeks.

As usual my illness came at an unfortunate time just as I was taking over two other offices in addition to my own. I now administer just 10,000 Italians and it is very disappointing not to be able to show that I can do it. I hope another system will not be devised before I have a chance to prove that I am capable of the job.

Had my first letter from Denis Dutton for a long time today he has now got his Captaincy and is working under similar conditions to last Christmas poor chap. However he seems very happy.

Letters from you, Peggy, Allan and statement just this minute arrived. Statement is understood and is correct except for Income Tax which I give up and leave to your end. (Chip off the old block!)

God bless, Love Rob

23 Nov 44

Dear Mum and Dad, I believe this letter once again brings me up to date. The weeks and months simply fly these days it hardly seems possible that almost 12 months ago I left Egypt with the famous

4th Indian Div to start my war experiences in earnest. Since that time I have served with every branch of the British Army with the one exception of Paratroops. I have made many friends some of whom I hope I shall be able to keep contact with after the war.

After a very long silence Denis Dutton has written to me. He has got his third and is now 2IC a company. He is well forward and experiencing similar conditions to what we had last Christmas and January. However under all the vicissitudes of his life he seems to be very happy. He claims to be the first Englishman to enter Mussolini's birthplace and brought a memento away with him.

Gerry Gillam is still not very far away from here and we see each other occasionally. Recently of course being in bed I have been unable to meet him. However we will soon have this rectified as the MO has just left and given me permission to get up this afternoon and go out tomorrow. I have got to take it easy for a bit after twelve days in bed and the MO is recommending me for seven days leave. If it comes off I shall endeavour to hitch-hike up to Rome. It seems a pity not to see it before I leave Italy and it looks as though my job here may be a static one.

Turning to home I am glad you have been able to fix up Christmas. I am sure you all need a rest from your hectic life in London. I am looking forward to the time when I shall be able to join you in your festivities. However I must admit with all the extra work I prefer Christmas at home, there is nothing like the old Christmases. Now God bless. Love Rob

13 Dec 44 (arrived 19 Dec 44)

My dear Mum and Dad, To apologize is a farce so I will get straight on with the letter. Since my last letter some moons ago I have received 3 from Dad and one from Mum. All have been extremely welcome and helped to buck me up when I was down in the dumps. Life here is much the same as usual but am beginning to feel the strain of a lot of hard work recently and find that I have to amuse myself with something other than letter writing in the evening, usually a couple of games of table-tennis a couple of gramophone records and straight to bed. I am spending about 12 or 13 hours each day checking these Ities whom you cannot trust further than you can see them. I hope after Christmas I shall have the office completely reorganised. The addition of the two new areas has made a lot of work because the troubles left behind to be cleared up by me are considerable.

Thanks for the explanation of the Christmas card. I wondered what the hell it was myself. One of our own Officers designed it and as soon as I go into the City to HQ I will ask him if he agrees with you. I imagine he will be glad to know what it is all about himself. Still nobody will deny that our Unit is original. I doubt if any other Unit can produce anything like it. I hope not anyway for everybody's sake.

Peggy's description of Judy's party was marvellous. I almost thought I was actually there. I wish I could have enjoyed the excitement you all must have felt. Now cheerio, God bless, Rob

3 Jan 45 (arrived 12 Jan)

My dear Mum and Dad, At a Unit New

Year's Party on Monday evening the Colonel said "Do your job well but don't let it get you down, and when you have finished your job enjoy yourself". I am afraid that recently I have let it get me down and in consequence I have not been enjoying myself and my job has been suffering. I have come to the conclusion that I must let up a bit and not try to do too much at the time and pay a bit more time to letter writing which I haven't done for weeks. I hope therefore that in future you will be rewarded with a few more letters. I think it must be about six weeks since I wrote to anyone except Peggy and yourselves.

Today I was rewarded by the postman, the photograph of the family arrived and wasn't I pleased to get it. I think it is grand and it is at the moment safely in position on the sideboard in my Mess where I shall be able to see it every time I sit down for a meal and each evening I spend in the Mess. I consider it is better there because I spend only one or at the most two hours in my office each day, the rest of the time I am touring the countryside in my old broken down 15 cwt Ford known locally as "Tired Tessie". I am sure one day it will be so tired that it won't even move.

I also have to thank you for your very appropriate Christmas Airgraph. We out here think that you must have had a very sympathetic censor to pass it. How the devil you got away with it I don't know and most certainly hope your forecast is not correct.

Have you seen anything of Bob Vokes? Gerry Gillam has now moved up to Rome so once again we are all spread out. Now God bless. Love Rob

15 Jan 45 (arrived 23 Jan)

My dear Mum and Dad, Your letter arrived today and as you see I took the gentle reminder to heart and am replying right away. I don't quite understand why you had no word of me for three weeks because although I know I haven't been a regular writer recently only on one occasion was it that there was an interval of 15 days. I am unfortunately in the position of having to rely on other Units to post my letters and I can only assume that all have not reached the post office. I admit that I haven't written to you personally but in my letters to Peggy I have explained the position.

Your last letter has worried me a bit as I was unaware that the bombing had got worse recently. I do hope you have managed to get Peggy and the children fixed up somewhere and although it is difficult don't you think you ought to do something about it yourselves?

Life here is much the same as usual except it is, if anything, a little more difficult. The past week has been a chapter of accidents as far as I am concerned. Firstly one of my sergeants was taken to hospital with jaundice, secondly my truck was taken to workshops and pronounced beyond repair and I am awaiting a replacement which will probably take weeks and thirdly one of my corporals is in hospital due to an Itie punching him in the eye whilst riding a motorcycle and knocking him off. I hope he will be alright but his eye is apparently bleeding behind the eyeball which isn't too cheerful. You can see that we are a happy family and even in these Base areas have our troubles.

Cheerio. God bless Love Rob

23 Jan 45 (arrived 2 Feb)

My dear Mum and Dad, Many thanks for your letter received today. It is a great relief to know that Peggy and the children are away from London but I would be even happier if you two would follow their example during Hitler's last fling. I had my first letter from Peggy two days ago since before Christmas. I think it is the longest she has ever kept me waiting and I hope she will be able to write more often now she is out of London.

I had a lucky break on Monday when the Major rang me up and asked me if I would like 7 days leave in Rome. Naturally I accepted and on Saturday I am off up there by road to spend 7 days. I believe it is very expensive up there and I have armed myself accordingly and drawn a month's pay. Together with the money I already had I have now got £30 which I think should last me seven days even if I paint the place red every day.

As I am going up by road I hope to go via Cassino just to see what it looks like now. It doesn't seem possible that twelve months ago we were bashing away at that confounded place. I imagine the scene now is rather different.

Sorry I didn't say how nice the frame for the photo was. I thought it was excellent and congratulate you and Bill on securing such a delightful frame. Everybody who comes into my Mess remarks on it.

Now cheerio All the best, Love Rob

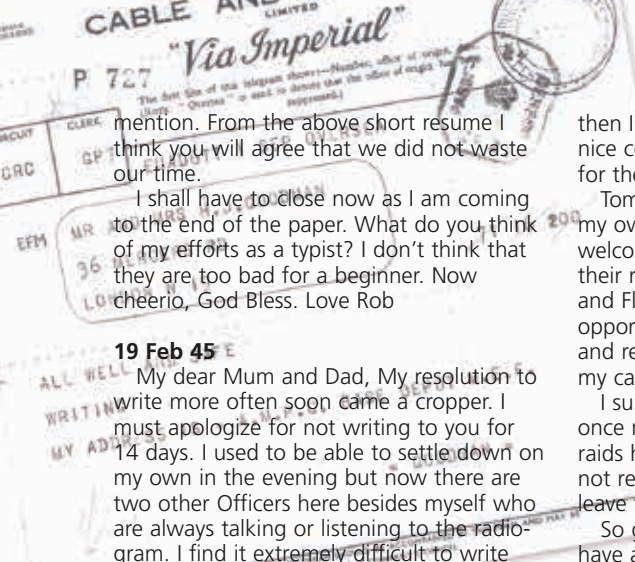
4 Feb 45 (arrived 22 Feb)

Dear Mum and Dad, Here we are once again back at the grindstone after a very interesting time up in Rome. We had delightful weather the whole time we were there. It is an experience I would not have missed for anything. We lived at a first class hotel. I had a bedroom complete with bathroom which I shared with an MO who came up with us. It is rather peculiar that he was my old MO when I was in searchlights.

To try and tell you all we did in detail on this short piece of paper is quite impossible. We went with the intention of having a good time and seeing all there was to be seen and I think I can say that we accomplished both our objects at the cost of a considerable amount of money. 20 Pounds slipped through my fingers with the greatest of ease. Still who cares it isn't often one has the opportunity of visiting the Eternal City.

All day long we were sightseeing. All we needed was a camera and some chewing gum and we should have been typical American tourists. During the seven nights that we were there we dined at six different Hotels, some of them you may know they were the Eden, Ambassadors, Victoria, Continental, Del Orso, and Plaza. Drinks cost from 3 to 5 shillings each at these places so it wasn't surprising that we got through the amount of money that we did.

One of the highlights of our visit was an audience with the Pope who speaks remarkably good English. The places we walked our feet off to see included St Peter's, The Forum, The Catacombs, Titus's Arch, Palazza Venezia (here I stood on Mussolini's famous balcony), The Arch of Constantine, Keats and Shelly's tombs, and a host of other places too numerous to



mention. From the above short resume I think you will agree that we did not waste our time.

I shall have to close now as I am coming to the end of the paper. What do you think of my efforts as a typist? I don't think that they are too bad for a beginner. Now cheerio, God Bless. Love Rob

19 Feb 45

My dear Mum and Dad, My resolution to write more often soon came a cropper. I must apologize for not writing to you for 14 days. I used to be able to settle down on my own in the evening but now there are two other Officers here besides myself who are always talking or listening to the radio-gram. I find it extremely difficult to write letters. However this evening is a golden opportunity. One has gone to Rome on leave and the other met an old friend and has gone into the big city with him on what is known as a "blindo". I assume the translation is unnecessary and I have already got his aspirins ready for the morning.

From your last two letters it is plain to see that the good old family lawyer has been doing his stuff. I am extremely sorry to hear about John's troubles but must admit I don't think it ever was a very happy match.

Peggy is rather worried, so it appears from her letter, about her continual stay at St Albans. I know she is disappointed about not being able to find accommodation elsewhere but in these times I am sure it must be extremely difficult to find anything. Anyway the news is once again bright and hopeful and perhaps the necessity of evacuation will not last much longer.

Tomorrow I am going to attend the wedding of an MO friend of mine Capt Geoffrey Hope Parkinson and Sister Betty Robinson. Geof has been extremely kind to me having nursed me through my last illness, jaundice, and also given my NCOs a good deal of assistance. Owing to the number of contacts I get in my particular work I have been able to get a vehicle for him to take on his fortnight's honeymoon which he is spending in Rome. Today I managed to get a very nice cigarette box for a wedding present with a bronze mould of St Peters in the lid.

Thank you both for your regular letters. Mum's last one arrived today. Once again Cheerio & God bless. Love Rob

27 Feb 45

My dear Mum and Dad, Many thanks for your letter No.75 received yesterday. I wish I could find as much to write about as you can. With the one exception of Christmas week you have written as regularly as clockwork and always seem to find sufficient to talk about to fill an airletter with ease. I suppose I can quite truthfully (6.3.45) say that you always did have the knack of explaining things in detail. I always remember the times you threw back my specifications at me because I didn't write enough. You can see from the date inserted in brackets that many days have passed since I commenced this letter. I am at the moment living in an Italian house some distance away from my own flat trying my best to clear up some labour troubles.

At the moment I am having to put up with Italian cooking and quite frankly I am not exactly happy here but I hope to get this affair cleared up in about ten days and

then I shall be able to get back to my own nice comfortable flat which I have occupied for the past nine months.

Tomorrow evening I hope to go back to my own village to attend a party to welcome home Capt and Mrs Parkinson on their return from their honeymoon in Rome and Florence. I shall also take the opportunity to spend the night in my flat and return here early the next morning in my car.

I suppose Peggy and the children are now once more settled in at 36. I see that air raids have started again. I hope they will not reach sufficient strength to make them leave town again.

So glad to see from your letter that you have at last seen Bobby and his wife. I can well imagine how eagerly you listened to his escapades. It hardly seems possible but it is over 15 months since I last saw him in Cairo. What a lot we have all gone through since then. I have just heard that my first Civil Labour Corporal who was posted on promotion to sergeant has been mentioned in despatches for stretcher bearing at Cassino last year. My Company were also doing the same thing when we were up there and I believe some of our boys have also been rewarded.

Cheerio. God bless. Love Rob

16 Mar 45

My dear Mum, It may well be that by the time you receive this you will have reached another milestone on the road of life. If by any chance this letter does arrive before the 23rd here is wishing you all the best and continued good health and happiness.

It is more probable that this will arrive after your birthday so in case it does you will know that even if it arrives late you are not forgotten. As I sit and pen these few birthday greetings my mind runs back to happier times gone by when Peggy and Dad and you and I together with Uncle Charles and Auntie Nellie celebrated these anniversaries in a manner never to be forgotten. For the moment all those good times are behind us and we have sterner jobs to do. Next year, please God, we shall once again be going to Frascati's or the like and on to a show.

One piece of news which may possibly gladden your birthday is that according to recent orders issued out here I am not eligible for service in the Far East owing to my age and length of service. I must admit that when the orders were published I myself together with many others breathed a sigh of relief. Of course there is always the possibility of the orders being revised to my disadvantage but somehow I think that together with my other qualifications I shall not be very long in the Army after the demobilization commences.

The news these days gives us hope that the time is not long distant when Jerry chucks in the towel and I am sure we all agree that the sooner he does the better for all of us.

Please give my love to dad and all my family. I am sure that Dad will not mind me writing to you personally on this occasion. Now God bless All my love, Rob

28 Mar 45 (arrived 3 Apr)

My dear Mum and Dad, I am afraid there has been another long break since I wrote to Mum. I hope Peggy has explained the

reason for it. In case she hasn't, briefly, I have been checking up on a Unit that has overpaid its civilians nearly 2,000,000 liras or £2500. I have had a very worrying time because at one time it looked as if they were trying to make me responsible for it. However I am pleased to say that I have been vindicated and am now sleeping quite well again although I had three weeks in which I hardly slept at all. Well it is all over now and the best thing is to try and forget it.

How is the Mercers Road Nursing Home going on? I hope by now that it has many empty beds and all the patients have recovered.

By the time you get this I suppose the wedding will be all over and Eileen will be a happily married woman. No doubt you will write and tell me all about it and later when available will send some photographs of the occasion.

I feel sure I haven't mentioned it before but the promised photograph of the family group arrived about a fortnight ago.

On Sunday quite a lot of us had our photographs taken and they are quite good. As soon as prints are available I will send some copies home.

Well I must do some more work now so I will close. Cheerio, God bless, Love Rob

12 Apr 45

My dear Mum and Dad, Tonight I am going to try and do something I haven't been able to do for some months now. I intend to spend a whole evening sitting here writing letters. Somehow for a long time now letter writing has become very difficult for me. I never seem to be able to concentrate on it for more than a few minutes and then give it up. It is such a long time since I have written to anybody other than Peggy and yourselves that I almost haven't got the nerve to start again. I must say in my defence that I have had a lot of worry during the past few months and due to that I have had an attack of nerves which makes me very restless and unable to sit still for more than a few minutes at the time.

I suppose the whole truth of the matter is that I like most others have had just about enough of war with its artificial surroundings and just long to get home again. I did notice in one English newspaper that it was stated that the first 20 age groups would be demobbed within a month of the German phase finishing. That looks very hopeful because with them out of the way I am the next on the list.

From your letter received today I was pleased to see that Eileen's wedding went off according to plan and that Judy behaved herself for a change.

If I don't write tonight please thank Glad for magazines received today and also Miss Gammon for her letter. Now goodnight, God bless, Love Rob

23 May 45

My dear Mum and Dad, I am afraid I have been a very naughty boy in not writing to you for so long. I do hope that Peggy has been keeping you informed about things from the few letters that she herself receives. Honestly life is so hum drum out here that it really is difficult to know what to write about and also because of war weariness I must admit that it needs a

terrible effort to get me to put pen to paper.

As far as we are concerned in our particular job the cessation of hostilities has not made the slightest difference. There is just as much work to do now as there was before. If anything our job has increased owing to the amount of "bumph" and returns for this that and the other.

Well I must say that they haven't taken much time in getting organized for the demobilization and it seems reasonable to assume that I shall be out somewhere in the region of December or possibly before. I really don't think it worthwhile for you to apply under group "B". I myself would much prefer to come out under A and know that I had definitely finished with this chapter of my life. As I look back on all my experiences I must say that I have been taught a lot and I feel that I have benefited by being away from home in as much as I have had to stand on my own feet without turning to anyone else for help. I feel confident that I am now equipped to take my place once again in our business, alive to other people's points of view and ready to combat where necessary.

Cheerio, All my love Rob

27 May 45

My dear Mother, It was indeed a very cheering sight to see your dear little handwriting once again this morning laying on my office desk. I am afraid I have been a rather erring son these last few months and haven't written nearly as much as I ought to have done.

I really have had no excuse. I haven't been ill, at any rate in body, but the old war has been dragging on now for so long that one tends to get browned off and it becomes too much trouble to do anything except get miserable and go to bed and sleep.

Dear, dear, I must stop that, you will be thinking I am half dead which is far from the case.

Well there seems to be every possibility that we shall all be together again for Christmas. I expect you will want to go away for a rest cure by then after all you have gone through during the war and especially during the last few months. I myself, on the other hand am looking forward to a real children's Christmas. I have of course spent two Christmases with Judy but she was really too young then to understand what it was all about.

The most startling news I have received was of course about Mr Ridley's proposed marriage. Well I don't know what you think about it but I think it is probably a good idea for him to settle down again now that all his children are married.

Gerry Gillam paid me a surprise visit yesterday on his way south. He is expecting to stay here for a few days and I expect we shall hit the high spots at least one night while he is here.

We are getting in a little swimming and sun bathing on Sunday afternoon but during the rest of the week we are still working at full capacity although I expect in a month or two our work will tend to slacken down.

Give my love to Dad and tell him not to work too hard. It is a pity I shall not be able to use the same methods of making people work at home as I do out here. Still we will

see what we can do when I get there. Now Goodnight God bless. Love Rob

30 May 45

Dear Mum and Dad, Many thanks for your letter received yesterday. I was surprised to learn that it was over a month since I wrote to you. I am very sorry about it but as I have already explained in my last letter the reason there is not much point in going all through it again.

I am afraid it will be some months before the phone rings and you find me speaking at the other end. However it is quite possible that your phone will ring soon and a Mr Kelly will be able to give you some news of me. He came into the office yesterday and told me he was going home in the next few days and as he lives at Harrow I asked him to give you a ring.

I have already given you my opinion about release but in case that letter didn't arrive I will tell you again. I have decided to take my chance with the rest of the boys. I feel I stand a good chance of being home for Christmas, free to do as I wish. If I transfer to "B" I may be released from the Army before my time only to find that I am directed to work somewhere other than my home town and this may possibly go on for years. Frankly for the sake of possibly coming home a month or two earlier I don't think it is worth it.

Peace celebrations out here were not the hectic affair they were at home. Naturally it had to be different. If an Army went mad it might be quite difficult to control so each Unit held its own celebration in quarters and it was quite a success. There were no incidents and I suppose I saw at the most two or three drunks. As far as the Italians were concerned here the war had been over for 18 months and so they didn't go mad either which was just as well.

Gerry Gillam called in on Saturday on his way south. He promised to ring me on Monday and fix up an evening out together but so far he hasn't done so. I expect he had to go sooner than he anticipated.

Glad to hear that Peggy has started things moving at Barnet [Rob and Peggy's home]. I am anxiously waiting to hear further news of the progress.

I expect you are now busy getting ready for the next wedding in the family. That was a bit of a shaker wasn't it? Well cheerio for now. God bless. Love Rob

16 Jun 45

My dear Mum and Dad, I regret this is going to be a little late for the occasion but at any rate you will know I have not forgotten your wedding anniversary. Here's wishing you both the best of luck and the hope that you will spend many more in peaceful surroundings. No doubt the strain of the past six years has left its mark. It is to be hoped that you will now be able to take things more easily and recuperate from your years of toil.

We are all more than a little worried out here about conditions in England, especially rationing. Our fears are not lightened by the boys returning here after a month's leave in the old country. A number have volunteered to stay on an extra year rather than go back. Well I hope things aren't quite as bad as they are made out to be. A little information from you on the subject would be appreciated. Don't worry I am not

volunteering for another year.

I hope you all had a pleasant holiday and that the weather cleared up a little after you both wrote to me. Italy has got something to be said for it from a sunshine point of view in the summer. We haven't had any rain now for three or four weeks and the temperature remains constant at about 80. I have managed to get the OC to arrange a bathing parade at 5pm every day and it is quite nice to dive into the Med after a hot and sticky day in the office. Sunday afternoons several of us spend on the rocks sunbathing and swimming. This is the only exercise I am getting now that I am an office wallah and in consequence my waistline is assuming alarming proportions.

Well I must close now. God bless. Love Rob

27 Jun 45

Dear Mum and Dad, Many thanks for your letter dated 20.6.45. Glad to hear that you had an enjoyable holiday in spite of the weather. Today we have had two minutes rain, the first for several weeks, and it just went up in steam as soon as it touched the ground. We are now getting it quite hot and no clothes and one sheet is as much as I can stand at nights now. Of course we have our mosquito nets over us which tends to hold the heat. We are at the moment in the midst of an epidemic of sand-fly fever. Not a serious complaint but unpleasant for four or five days. So far I have escaped it but I expect sooner or later I shall have my share. It is one of those complaints for which nothing can be done, you just go to bed and have your headache and pains for four or five days and a temperature of about 102 and that's the finish of it. It is believed that the insect responsible lives in bombed out buildings etc and believe me it has plenty of opportunities to breed here.

I am sorry my letters are uninteresting these days but really when one does the same old job for 14 months one doesn't have many things to talk about.

I am expecting 7 days leave on the 15th July but I am not intending to go far away this time. I have booked accommodation on the Isle of Ischia where I stayed last year. It is very expensive but makes a break to get away from this town for a few days.

Next Sunday 3 or us are hoping for a day at Capri. I haven't been there before although I see the island every day of my life. It should be interesting if we can get away from the Americans who always like a lot of noise and bustle. Until fairly recently it has been for Americans only and now we British are being allowed to go there. Well cheerio God bless Love Rob

8 Jul 45

Dear Mum and Dad, I suppose that by now Peggy will have told you the news about my third pip. It has come exactly 11 months after the time it was first recommended but still better late than never. The story of my previous misfortunes have been hinted at previously but perhaps a few more remarks will bear repetition. My first opportunity was when I was given the job of organizing the civilian labour at Leghorn. I had received all my instructions and was ready packed to move off when unfortunately I skidded on my motorcycle and grazed my knee. This subsequently went septic and I had to go to hospital and

have an operation. Whilst I was in there the new Unit moved forward and awaited the final assault on the port and moved in on D Day, another officer taking my place.

A long period of waiting for another vacancy was terminated about four months ago but again misfortune stepped in. This time a Unit under my supervision got into debt to the tune of some £2000 and I being the Civil Labour Control Officer of the area at that time had to carry the can and again another officer was posted into the vacancy. The irony of it was that I had only had control of this Unit for a fortnight and the money involved was spread over four months. The previous officer responsible having been posted, I was made the lucky man. I had a few sleepless nights over that business I can tell you.

Then at last on Tuesday morning the Colonel came bringing with him his successor. His words of introduction to me were. "This is Goodman. He is a Captain but doesn't know it yet". Whereupon I was congratulated and told to put it up. So far nothing has come through in writing but I am assured by those that are supposed to know that everything is all right this time. At any rate to all outward appearances I have been a Captain since last Tuesday, but I shall feel better when I see it in writing.

Now cheerio, God bless. Love Rob X X X

28 Jul 45

Dear Mum and Dad, Things are happening so fast out here at the moment that letter writing is just about beyond me.

The increased leave policy now in operation is making us so busy that we don't know whether we are on our heads or our heels.

Now to "crown" everything the OC is going home on a month's leave to England and I have been informed by him that I am taking over during his absence with the rank of Major. I bet that has shaken you. This is not official yet so please don't publish it abroad. Anyway I shall not actually wear the crown as I have to take it down again on his return and officers are given the option of wearing it or otherwise. It looks bad to put it up and take it down again so with very few exceptions officers don't put them up. Still what matter I get the pay just the same. It will probably last for 6 weeks.

I had arranged to go on 10 days leave to tour the North of Italy but owing to this latest development I have had to forgo my leave but get an extra 10/- a day for six weeks which is not to be sneered at is it?

Well you will have heard from Peggy that it is now fairly certain that I shall be home for Christmas and also she will have received a copy of stuff I have ordered from SA for the Christmas festivities.

I was terribly sorry to hear from Mum about the sudden death of Teddy Keyes. Please convey my condolence. Cheerio Rob

P.S. Address my letters as usual CAPT. NOT MAJOR

7 Aug 45

Dear Mum and Dad, Up to my eyes in work looking after my little flock of 52,000 Italians but thoroughly enjoying it.

Major Watson has not yet gone but hasn't done any work since last Saturday. The reason for his late departure appears to be due to the great "assistance" we are

getting out here from the railway employees at home. He was due to go last Sunday.

It was put back until Thursday. If we get much more of this I can see my release for Christmas disappearing into thin air. However let us hope our new Government will get things moving a bit more smoothly.

Major Watson lives in Scotland but is expecting to spend some portion of his leave in London and has promised to phone you or if possible to come and see you.

Well your last letter didn't say anything about the new Government. I expected it to be full of it. Personally it came as no surprise as I imagine that at least 80% of the forces voted Labour. I myself have a perfectly open mind at the moment about it. Conservatives have had a good long run and done a lot of talking but haven't accomplished much. Perhaps we shall now see some action. Anyway however we feel about it there is not much doubt that we shall have to put up with it for the next five years good or bad.

Well it is lunch time and I am hungry as a horse so I must stop. Cheerio God bless Love Rob

6 Sep 45

My dear Mum & Dad, Once again I have been a very long time in writing to you and really even now I don't know what I am going to talk about.

I think we are all a little bit unsettled out here "sweating out time". It is with the greatest difficulty that I can sit down and concentrate on letter writing for more than five minutes.

I have promised to write to Major Watson and let him know how we are getting on but I haven't done so. If he rings up and I still haven't written just tell him everything is all right but some changes have had to be made due to the loss of British Personnel.

Well it is something to look forward to when I look at the date of this letter and see that in 3 months time at the latest I shall be in civvy clothes again and about 10 weeks at the most in sunny, smelly, thieving Italy. If we could only have an hour's rain we might be cooler and get rid of some of the smells and flies. The drought here is quite serious. For four days we had no water at all in our part of Naples.

Last Sunday I climbed Vesuvius. There was probably a railway there when you saw it but of course that was destroyed during the eruption, and I walked up.

(Never again).

Cheerio God bless, Love Rob

29 Sep 45

My dear Mum and Dad, At the moment we are having rather a sticky time out here one way and another. Major Watson has been taken ill whilst home on leave and is still in hospital. Most of the staff here are old campaigners and are coming home to England on one months leave like Sgt Skinner. This has resulted in my Unit having a paper strength of 18 and actual bodies present in the Unit being 8. Between us we look after over 48,000 Italian civilian employees. Apart from supplying these bodies to British Units we also dabble in Social Insurance and Supplementary Rations for the dear little Ities.

They are now rewarding us for our care

and attention by rioting and making things generally unpleasant. So far we have only had two doors bashed in. The Italian Prime Minister came down from Rome to visit Naples. So to show their appreciation they turned his car upside down. Nice people aren't they? Well there is no need to harp on our difficulties but perhaps the foregoing is sufficient to make you realize that perhaps there is good reason for our comparatively large force out here. I shudder to think what will happen when we leave. I am enclosing a couple of interesting cuttings from the newspapers.

Under separate cover I sent a key to my box which is on the way home. The Customs may need it opened for checking.

It seems fairly possible that I shall be flying home in 3 or 4 weeks time depending on the number of planes available and of course the weather.

Do you know the CMF interpretation of BLA? Here it is "Blimey Leave Again?" CMF of course stands for "Countless Men Forgotten". Cheerio God bless Rob

NAPLES CROWD CAUSES PREMIER TO SLIP OUT THROUGH SIDE DOOR

Police reinforcements moved into Naples on Saturday, the Italian Government announced, to cope with a situation which caused a disturbance during a visit by the Prime Minister, Sig Parri, on Friday.

A crowd of several thousand port workers gathered at the Labour Federation headquarters as Sig Parri conferred with Labour representatives, forced their way into the building, and wrecked some furniture.

The police helped the Prime Minister to slip out unharmed through a side-door, but a car carrying his secretary and the Prefect of Naples was turned over and showered with bottles.

Five thousand demonstrators then marched through the streets shouting "Labour and bread". They were dispersed by the carabinieri.

The disturbance followed complaints over the curtailment of labour and the employment of German prisoners. In Rome later the Prime Minister said that Italian civilians had been laid off at the port not because of the Germans, but because of reduction in work.

United States authorities, in a statement quoted by Milan Radio, said that extensive use had hitherto been made of Italian civilian labour, but that, with the end of the war, a certain curtailment of work had become inevitable.

While United States authorities would do everything to help Italian industry back on its feet, and undertake to evacuate all Germans as soon as this could conveniently be done, German prisoners of war would have to be used for work under direct Allied control, the statement added. Reuter and UP.

8 Oct 45

Dear Mum & Dad, Many thanks to you both for your letters which were stacked with information and very interesting.

For the past week or so a nasty cloud has been blowing up and yesterday the storm started. It reads like this

"Vital Officers in age/service Groups 20-24 may have to be deferred owing to the acute shortage in CMF. This order is

likely to affect all branches of the Army".

I am hoping and praying that I shall not be affected but seriously I think I shall. However there is no use meeting trouble half way nor is there any alternative we must just wait and see what happens.

At any rate I am going for my medical examination tomorrow and today my name has gone forward on a nominal role for release in A/S group 21. All I hope is that it isn't chucked out.

Sgt Skinner sends his kind regards to you all and hopes you are well. He doesn't know yet but I have put in for his promotion to CSM which looks like going through all right. He really is a grand fellow and always a tremendous help to me here.

Many thanks for the menu which he brought back for me. Cheerio Keep smiling Love Rob

11 Oct 45

My dear Mum and Dad, Yesterday I am afraid I had some rather bad news. The official text is something like this. "All Officers in the CMF between age service groups 21-25 will be retained for a period of not less than 4 months. My age service group now reads 21 DOV in other words "Deferred Operationally Vital".

I doubt very much if you can imagine just how I feel about it. I had banked so much on being with Peggy and the children for Christmas and now my whole ambition is dashed in millions of pieces at my feet.

I won't say that I am bitter about the whole thing but certainly disappointed doesn't adequately express my feelings. I just feel as though the bottom has been knocked out of everything.

There is just one speck of light in this black outlook. There is a slight hope that I shall get a month's leave in England either before or during Christmas. Please don't bank on it. I am not. But it is something to hang on to until the chance fades away.

A great friend of mine Major Harry Cutbush is flying home to England on leave tomorrow. He has promised to call and see you about one or two things on my behalf. If you can do anything in the matter or how you set about it I don't know. BUT I do know my old man!!!

Cheerio God bless Love Rob

P.S. Please post some Christmas decorations out if available

23 Oct 45

My dear Mum and Dad, Many thanks for both your letters containing all the latest news and also your sympathies for my prolonged stay in Italy.

What the latest news on release is, is hard to say. According to the wireless Officers release in 21 Group is spread over from 12 November until 10 February but the last order received here is definite deferment of four months which is at the earliest 11 March and latest 3 April. That order did say that it would be constantly under review as maybe another order will be published bringing it in line with the news on the wireless. We shall just have to wait and see.

Well dad before I go rambling on here's wishing you a very happy birthday. I shall be thinking of you enjoying your dinner and theatre party. I hope next time I shall be able to join you. Please give my love to Auntie Nellie and Uncle Charles.

I had quite a nice letter from Major Watson two days ago. He said he had quite a long and interesting chat to you on the telephone. His absence from the Unit for such a long time has had its compensations AND its troubles. The main compensation is that on the 4th November I shall have completed 3 months as a Major which gives me the rank of War Substantive Captain. This will give me a gratuity as Captain instead of Lieutenant and leave pay on demobbing as Major about £5 extra. I am afraid I am going to feel a draught when I get back to civvy street. My present pay out here at the moment is 28/6 day + allowances. Cigarettes cost 8d for 20 Players, rationed of course and a bottle of Whiskey 8/6 or a bottle of gin 6/6. Pictures and ENSA Shows are free.

That sounds all very nice and cheap. On the other hand if you go to the Opera as I do it costs me 12/6 each time for a seat. If you go out for an evening with the boys you are lucky if you get through under £2/10/- or £3/-/-.

It is all a very artificial sort of life some like it some don't personally I am all for family and fireside (incidentally I still have to see a fireplace in Italy other than for cooking), and a nice piece of garden to scratch around in.

I don't seem to have left myself much space for this last item so I shall have to add an appendix as they say in the Army.

The position is this. Lt Jimmy Ivoll the first Officer I met in Civil Labour and now quite an old friend of mine wants to spend part of his leave on demobbing with his wife and two year old adopted daughter in London. He is a Scot and comes from Glasgow. He is a good deal older than me, 41, and has been rather unfortunate in the army. He has recently returned from hospital after having a kidney removed and was unlucky in my opinion in not being discharged or at least returned to home establishment. He is Group 22 and I am afraid this deferment has hit very hard indeed. He is by no means a rich man and the job he goes back to after the war is nothing to write home about. He has been a good pal to me and I want to help him if I can.

What I am going to ask you is, would you be prepared to put them up for two to four weeks? I realise I am asking a lot but if it is humanly possible it will make me very happy. His wife has never seen London and it would bring them a lot of happiness. Naturally I don't expect you to do it for nothing. I am told Hotel accommodation in London is extremely difficult and expensive and Jimmy is a very homely and jovial chap whom I am sure you would like very much. Perhaps you will think it over and let me know. Cheerio God bless Love Rob

28 Oct 45

My dear Mum and Dad, Yesterday afternoon I had to make a great decision. Actually there was only one answer to arrive at but some thought was necessary before saying OK go ahead I'll take the risk. It all came about like this, a signal came down from higher authority to the effect that Services should submit names of Officers in A/S Group 21 whom they were prepared to release immediately. It went on to say that even if these names were put forward for release in their own particular Service it

might be necessary to redirect such Officers to other Services on regimental duties where deficiencies of Officers were causing some concern.

Since Major Watson's departure I have made a pretty good name for myself in the handling of the labour of Naples for which I am entirely responsible at the moment. During my work I come into contact with quite a number of people that count with the result that my Chief, Col. Pope-Smith (Red taps) phoned me yesterday afternoon and said "Look here Benny my boy (By the way I have always been called Benny in the Army) I am prepared to put your name forward for release if you want me to but you realize that you may be transferred elsewhere and I shall not be able to get you back."

Well you know my answer. As I say there was really no other answer but frankly it is not a case of "Everything to win and nothing to lose". Here are the facts in favour and most important I stand a good chance of being home for Christmas which means so much to me and of course to be reunited with you all about three months sooner than I could reasonably expect. Against this is if I don't get released I immediately lose 12/- a day pay (Pay as a Major) and if I am transferred elsewhere before 4 November every possibility of dropping to the rank of Lieutenant and finishing my army career as a stooge saying Yes Sir Yes Sir after controlling all labour in Naples. I think you will agree my decision was not easy. Well cheerio Here's hoping for the best All my love. Rob

6 Nov 45

Dear Mum and Dad, I was hoping to have had some news about my release before this so that I could have given you the latest information on the subject, however, no news has come to hand so I am writing without actual news.

You know of course that 21 group Officers has been spread over 3 months. A certain signal was received by me and I immediately made application for early release giving length of service and civilian occupation to justify my application.

I know that it has passed all stages up to GHQ and I am now awaiting the decision of GOC It therefore follows that I may be released any time between now and 10 February depending on GHQ. At all events the prospects are

The above was written yesterday. Since then things have happened to improve the situation.

Another Officer is reporting here on Friday 9 November to take over from me. I shall have to spend one week here with him to explain the running of the Unit and I am told verbally at the moment that I am being put forward as available for release on 16 November. If all goes well I should be in England in 4 or 5 weeks from now depending on the weather.

All the above is verbal information but I have every reason to believe that this is how it will work. Well I am keeping my fingers crossed. Cheerio God bless Love Rob

11 Nov 45

Dear Mum and Dad, Thank you for your two letters. First of all let me tell you the news from here and fill the remaining space by replying to your letter.

A new Captain has arrived to take my place here and I am being made available for release from 16 November, next Friday. How long I shall be coming home after that depends on a good many things and it can be any time from 48 hrs after that date to about one month. At any rate it's nice to see that my replacement has arrived. We have a holiday here on Monday so I shall be busy on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday handing over the Unit.

You will also be pleased to hear that my promotion to Major has come through back dated to the 4th August, the day I took over from Major Watson. I may have to give up the appointment of Senior Labour Control Officer before I leave and hand it over to the new Captain. This is unlikely

though so I am expecting to retain my rank and be discharged as a Major. It will be rather nice to leave the Army with "Field Rank". I always hoped I might get my majority but the chances were slight. As it was it was merely a case of being at the right place at the right time.

I have just had quite a nice compliment paid me which perhaps bears repetition. – Recently the British Army took over responsibility for a large part of Naples Port. Naturally I was called in to supply all the civilian labour required.

A big job like this is always reported through the usual channels to GHQ. Unfortunately somebody higher up forgot to pass on the information and it was only by accident that the Brig. was told. The

usual angry enquiries were made as to why he wasn't told etc. However he asked who was in charge of the job and was told that I was. His reply was "That's all right then there is no need to worry about it".

Well I haven't left myself much room to answer your letter. May I just say how much I appreciate your reply in respect of Jimmy Ivor. I am so happy to have been able to help him.

I have asked him to write to you direct so you will be hearing either from him or his wife.

Am doing my best to get him a compassionate posting to England. I think it might come off. He is due for release by 1 March 46. Cheerio God bless All my love Rob. ■

A reminder of what the RLC (and the Army) have lost...

The following article by Major Cameron Macnish was published in the 1998 RL Review and also the February 1999 Association Newsletter. It emphasizes what the Army have lost:

**Report: Maj Cameron Macnish
RPCA Archive**

THIS is a profile of an often derided but little understood trade within the Corps: the Pioneer. I had commanded a troop of Pioneers in Bosnia who were attached to 8 Fuel Squadron; they stalwartly defended the ammunition and defence stores site in atrocious weather. But my ignorance of the Pioneer trade was great.

A Pioneer is probably the most versatile soldier within the RLC; this needs a deal of training. Recruits now have 14 weeks at Catterick on the Combat Infantryman course and three weeks on basic pioneer skills at Deepcut where essential tool and construction skills are taught with the fundamentals of field defences and basic materiel handling equipment (MHE) techniques.

For upgrading he qualifies in MHE, dog handling, Army war graves and Assault Pioneer amongst others.

The latter course deals with handling explosives, mine clearance and power tools. The Army War Graves course is about extracting, identifying and preparing human remains for repatriation; an unpleasant task but one for which the Regiment has sole Army responsibility. Some Pioneers progress to a three month course in brick working, concreting, carpentry and joinery.

With such versatile skills every Pioneer troop expands the capabilities of a force during operations.

After initial training at Pirbright, Pioneer training will change; within a year Pioneer

soldiers will not complete the Combat Infantryman's Course at Catterick.

The future is likely to be a 25 week Assault Pioneer and Logistic Skills package at Deepcut, Minley and Bicester giving MHE, tentage, basic construction, artisan skills and C + E licence acquisition (previously known as HGV 1), and defence skills to prepare for security, patrolling and protection duties.

It is hoped this will enhance the appeal of the Pioneer trade among young soldiers; it dovetails with Career Employment Qualification requirements from Trade 2000.

The CO organised a Pioneer Capability Presentation Day to show our capabilities to most of the RLC regiments, both CSSGs, HQ 3 (UK) Division, QMG, Land and MoD. Those who attended saw a polished demonstration of what pioneers can do and our versatility.

We organised defence, theatre reception, portable water handling, chemical decontamination casualties, materiel handling, construction work, artisan and Army War Graves stands.

Deployed to Sarajevo in 1996 as the initial IFOR HQ, the CO of ARRC Support Battalion gave our versatility an eloquent confirmation.

With scarce resources 170 Pioneer Squadron cleared the building to make it habitable, and erected and operated a defensive perimeter with their infantry skills. With insufficient RE resources the Pioneers began clearing mines; without their presence the HQ's establishment would have been impaired. The versatility of the

RLC Pioneer provides a cost effective option whose emphasis can be varied as the operation develops.

Our 518 Squadron, in an infantry role, was in Banja Luka. They robustly and effectively patrolled their TAOR, and have used their artisan and Assault Pioneer skills to refurbish a school and children's hospital. The independent Pioneer Troop of 522 Squadron with 2 (UK) Regiment in Split has been replaced with a troop from 187 Squadron.

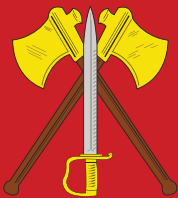
Not all tasks allow demonstration of our versatility, known to the troop in Donnington unpacking NBC suits to repack them for the non-NATO size pallets that the new shed takes.

Many things do not change, including the RLC Pioneer's enthusiasm for the task, which was estimated at over twelve months; it will take us less than five. Similarly, the staff officer forgetful of the password is temporarily out of the Exercise when a Pioneer is tasked to defend an HQ.

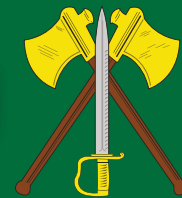
The modern Pioneer is likely to be young, fit, as keen as any other RLC soldier and with an impressive esprit de corps.

I count myself extremely fortunate to be serving as a Pioneer within the Royal Logistic Corps. ■

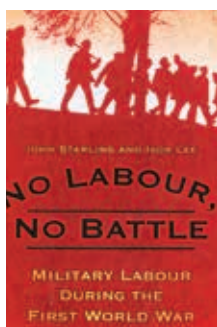
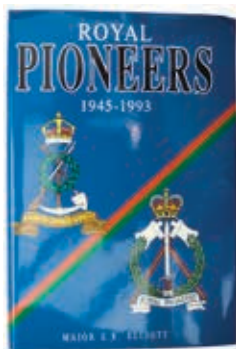
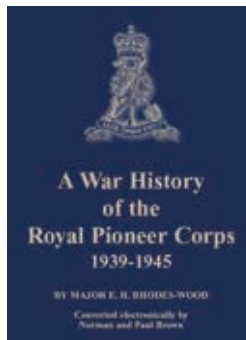




Association Shop



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 Work of the Pioneers

I recently purchased this pamphlet and thought members would like the article on the Pioneer Corps - Hard, useful work and no glory – that is the lot of the Pioneer Corps, yet they are vital to the Army

Report: Norman Brown
Pictures: War, Summer 1942

THE PURPOSE of this talk is to give your men a more detailed idea of the work of the Pioneer Corps, work which includes operating smoke screens, fire fighting, and salvage, as well as the main function of providing a body of men trained to cope with any kind of job that comes up.

In the 1914-18 war each division in the field had a Pioneer Battalion. They were fighting troops, but specialists in trench digging and road construction. Harking back a little further; in Victorian days when, for a short time, some Pioneer units were organised, they carried guns on parade and wore beards. There wasn't much for them to do then, but the more technical and all-embracing warfare becomes the more work there is for them. Handling goods at docks, depots, and railheads; helping to build aerodromes, branch railways and sidings, camps and defence works. Clearing and keeping open roads in winter, clearing tracts of country for cultivation, opening irrigation systems, harvesting and lifting sugar beet crops. Hard work and with no dividends of glory, but increasingly vital in warfare.

How They are Organised

The background of the Pioneer Corps in this war is as follows: in 1939 the War Office asked for 15,000 men aged 35-50. Most of the men who came forward had seen service in the last war. But by 1941 the numbers had risen to six figures, most of them young men of medical category unsuitable for fighting troops perhaps because of bad eyes or bad feet.

Recruits receive four weeks' elementary military training before being drafted to a field unit. Originally the Corps had one rifle between four men, but they are now much better equipped to defend themselves as many of them had had to in France, Norway and the Far East* (*Units in tropical countries are staffed by British Officers and NCOs, the men usually being enlisted locally. They include Jews and Arabs from Palesting, Cypriots, Sudanese, East and West Africans, Mauritians, natives of Bechuanaland, Basutoland, Griqualand and Swaziland, and Chinese).

The largest Pioneer Corps formation is a group, commanded by a Lt Col. A group may consist of any number of companies each commanded by a Major. A company normally has 10 sections each of 26 men, but companies may be of more than this number of sections.

What Their Life is Like

What is life like for the ordinary man in the Pioneers? Here are some notes by a private in the Pioneer Corps who is stationed at a large camp in Yorkshire. (Before Hitler killed the Austrian press he was the London correspondent of a Viennese paper. There are many foreigners in the Corps. Many of them have been in German concentration camps, and know better than we do how much is at stake in this war). This private soldier writes as follows:

"The largest number of men is claimed each day by the Royal Engineers where their jobs are varied, but rarely thrilling. Digging and draining or re-stacking barbed wire can be very trying when the weather is foul, and a Yorkshire moor can still live up to Emily Bronte standards. Jobs that provide work for a certain and steady number of men for a definite period are the most popular, for then each man has a chance to find work for which he is most sound, such as painting, levelling, the lay-out of a new store, etc.

Work at the Ordnance Depot is quite different. Here you have to subdue your individual talents and just make for speed and efficiency. If you are able to squeeze two extra bundles of battle-dresses or overalls into a lorry in half the time that the party working next to you, you may expect some praise. It's neither a very soldierlike job – for usually a civilian takes charge – nor does it require special skill, but there are compensations. The storekeeper may be a lady and impressed by your small talk."

The Kind of Job they Do

"The kind of job they find us is draining a site for a camp, that is always flooded after a heavy rainfall. This is how it's done: first one has to measure with accuracy the slope and difference in height at the four corners. Next the nearest brook must be found to serve as an outlet, then we are ready to dig. With small picks and shovels about two dozen trenches are dug across the field. The depth varies from one to three feet. Drainpipes are placed in each trench, and kept in position with the aid of small stones and bits of earth.

Finally, after having covered up the small drains one or two largest trenches are dug towards the end of the field, cutting across and serving as collectors.

Every so often a job out of the ordinary comes along. One Sunday morning last November the station-master of a Yorkshire village noticed something wrong with a goods train which had been shunted on to a siding late the night before. He found that some thousands of cans of petrol, carelessly stacked, had suffered so badly on the journey that they were now nearly all

leaking.

The nearest military camp was 15 miles away, and it was a Sunday morning, but 123 minutes later 30 Pioneers were on their way in a lorry across the moors.

Under the supervision of an RE officer the entire train load was shifted on to lorries. Leaking canisters had to be separated from sound ones, the records had to be kept, and the maximum time allowed for loading one lorry holding 240 cans was seven and a half minutes.

The lorries were driven across the moor and the 14,000 cans of petrol were stacked in camouflaged positions in a graveyard. We worked all day and into the night, but we had saved a lot of petrol."

Ready for Anything

The main function of the Pioneer Corps is to be ready for anything that comes along.

A number of Pioneer Companies and Groups were drafted into London during the winter of 1940-41 when bombing was at its height, to assist the LCC in clearing up debris and to work with the RE's in the maintenance of communications. Much heroic rescue work was done and many urgent engineering jobs.

For instance, on one occasion a large bomb fell on some pipes short-circuiting a loop in a river. The loop had previously been more or less filled up. In order to get the water through, about 1,000 Pioneers were rushed up at dawn, and by nightfall had dug out and cleared the old river bed, allowing the water to flow, thereby saving a very serious situation which would probably have arisen that night from lack of water.

They have done the same kind of work in the other blitzed areas. Another example of special task work was when sickness caused a serious shortage of engine drivers, which would have caused serious dislocation in rail transport. More than 400 Pioneers were rushed to engine sheds all over the country at 12 hours' notice, relieving the skilled personnel on maintenance in the sheds to handle the actual trains and engines. These Pioneers remained in the sheds for some two or three weeks.

Work on the Land

Pioneers do a lot of emergency agricultural work. On one occasion two companies were rushed to lift crops of sugar beet before the frosts came, thus saving the crop from ruin. They have been drafted to factories to assist in handling crops which would otherwise have been ruined by lack of labour.

Smoke Screen Operators

The Pioneer Corps supply all the personnel who operate the protective

smoke screens in this country. Smoke screens have mostly in the past been used by ships and for cover for troops. The smoke screens in this country are used to cover areas or special objects requiring protection from air attack in much the same way as the Germans covered Brest.

Originally the smoke was put up by small generators which were filled with a heavy oil, one man looking after many so-called "pots". Now the smoke is made mechanically and the colour and weight can to an extent be controlled. The machines are mobile, and they can be quickly moved, according to the wind.

While the neighbourhood can still be located, the smoke screen prevents the identification of the individual targets and thus previous accurate bombing. It does this with considerable success.

Down in the Forest

Many Pioneers have now been trained for special tasks such as dock and camp construction, work in connection with petrol, even to the operation and maintenance of machines making petrol containers, and railway construction, including plate-laying.

On one occasion electric power was urgently required to be taken across country for many miles. Pioneers were put on the

job and they laid the foundations for the pylons and erected the steelwork, with the result that power was made available quickly where it was urgently required for factories.

Pioneers work with the Colonial forestry companies in this country. The expert foresters do practically all the felling, the Pioneers do the limbing and lopping. The cuttings are more into charcoal by civilians, while the trucks are taken to the saw mills on tractors driven by Pioneers.

They Earn Their Keep

The Salvage Wing, under the Director of Salvage, is also part of the Pioneer Corps.

There are more than 150 salvage centres in this country, the large central depots being fed by small Salvage Transit Centres, usually staffed by one LCpl and one private of the Pioneer Corps and located in a suitable shed.

Their job is to sort out the paper, scrap metal, boxes, waste oil, petrol tins, sacking, rope, rags, rubber and other salvage sent in by units. Paper is the biggest item (and incidentally the most urgently needed) and sorting it isn't child's play.

For instance, kraft paper is a special high quality brown paper. It looks exactly like ordinary brown paper but as it is worth more than twice as much money it is worth

picking out.

Usually the Pioneers have to work fast to keep pace with deliveries, and they greatly appreciate it if units take the small amount of extra trouble involved in having plenty of containers and getting in the habit of putting the right thing in the right container. It isn't much fun to cut your hand on old razor blades when you are sorting quickly through a sack supposed to hold waste paper.

This is one, if not the only portion of the Army, which pays for itself. Between March 1940 and January 1942 the Directorate of Salvage collected and sold, or re-issued material to the value of more than £1,500,000.

This comprised a weight of 117,300 tons of metal and 21,273,416 articles.

Material sold to industry is at contract rates, but for re-issue to the Army has been estimated at about one-third normal prices. The gross figure is therefore much higher.

That is a pretty complete review of the work of the Pioneer Corps.

They do urgently necessary but usually unspectacular jobs, which, in the nature of things, don't get much appreciation. Don't forget that they deserve quite a lot.

They are equally important to the Army as stokers are to the battleship or the minesweeping personnel is to the Fleet. ■

WAR

Libya, Summer, 1942

ISSUED FORTNIGHTLY BY THE
**ARMY BUREAU OF
CURRENT AFFAIRS**



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June 27th, 1942

No. 21

GOOD MANNERS

By a Subaltern

NEARLY all my conversations with men who served in the last war have evoked from them some remark like "I missed most of all the grand comradeship"—referring to their feelings on returning to civilian life.

Since joining the Army I have thought of this many times. It seems to me that those old soldiers were mourning a period in their lives when men behaved with friendly courtesy to one another. There were, and are, exceptions, but this memory of comradeship, of the good manners which existed between man and man, is very prevalent.

Good manners make our existence bearable. Two hundred years ago it was almost impossible to walk down the Strand without being "jostled for the wall" by a tough who tried to force you into the gutter—a ridiculous pastime which often led to swordplay and death. There are people to-day who "jostle for the wall"—but they are few.

Look around your circle of friends and acquaintances and I think you will realise that it is in the company of those who are good mannered, who do not hurt anybody's feelings by word or action, that you take most pleasure.

It is a fact that courageous people are seldom lacking in courtesy. Sir Philip Sidney gave his last drop of water to a dying trooper. Sir Walter Raleigh was a great gentleman. Old historians spoke of "perfect gentle knights."

What is courage but the impulse of the spirit to do the right thing? Army training is merely the teaching of the right thing to do. When one obeys the order of a superior officer one is showing good manners.

Much of Army discipline and ritual is good manners, one realises on reflection. A salute to an officer is not an act of inferior to superior so much as a simple courtesy. An officer who does not return a salute is guilty of a breach of good manners.

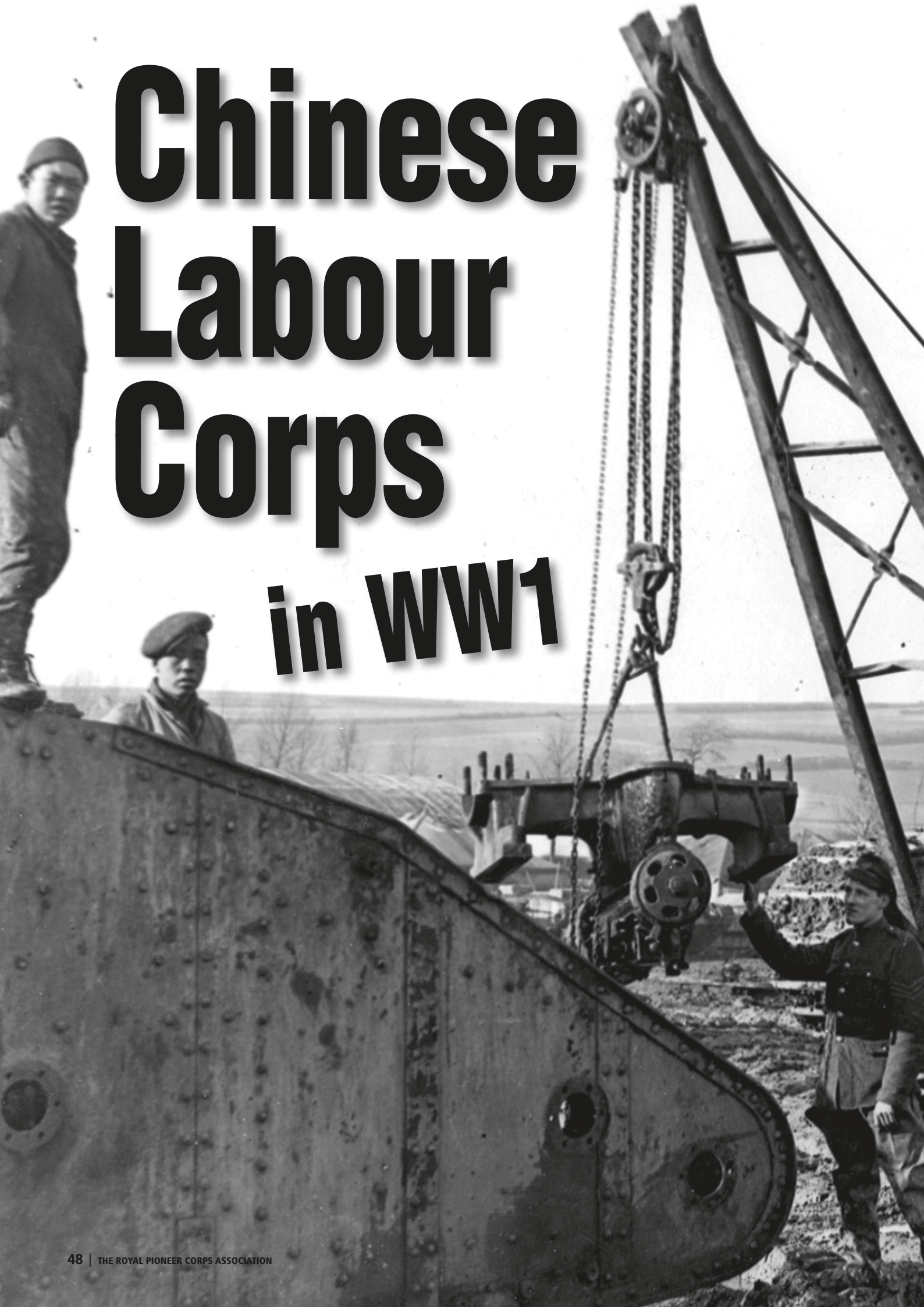
All of us conform, in some degree, to the courtesy code of civilian life. We say "Good-morning" to the family at breakfast; we open the door when a lady leaves the room. All these things make peace-time life pleasanter and smoother.

A similar responsibility to the community devolves upon us in the Army—and the military equivalents of these little acts of courtesy produce the same amiable results. There is nothing unsoldierly or unmasculine about good manners. Remember—the perfect gentle knight knew how to lay about the enemy, and he very effectively slew the dragon.

iv

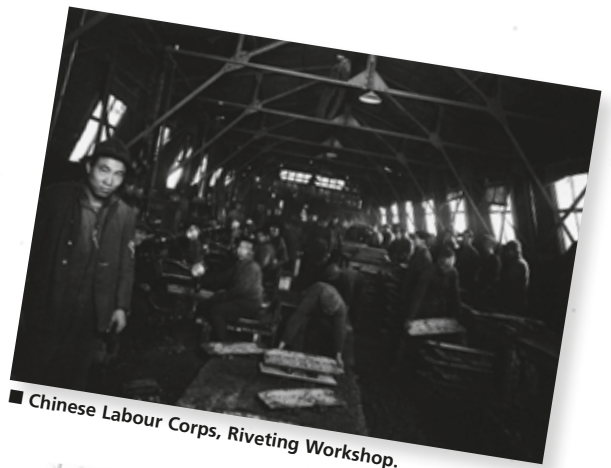
Chinese Labour Corps

in WW1





■ Members of the CLC providing a valet service to a Mark V at Erin



■ Chinese Labour Corps, Riveting Workshop.



■ A Medium A Whippet tank undergoing deep cleaning by the CLC. There were only 200 Whippets manufactured.



■ A trench digging machine (circa 1956) which would have saved a lot of labour.

I would like to thank Mr John Ham for allowing us to publish an article he wrote for the Tankette Magazine (magazine of the Tank Corps) in 2013



■ CLC graves at Shorncliffe Military Cemetery near Folkestone. There are a small number of other CLC graves in Britain.



THE part played by civilians in the British war effort of both world wars has been increasingly recognised in recent years. Less well known are the activities of foreign civilians in this context, many of whom came from parts of the Empire and British territories. Although non-combatant, much of their service was overseas with closer proximity to war zones, and their associated hazards, than in Britain. Rear areas could be shelled or bombed, and transport on merchant shipping was subject to torpedo attack from enemy submarines.

Background

Quite early in the war it became apparent that there was a shortage of manpower in construction and maintaining the infrastructure needed to support warfare. Roads and rail networks needed construction and repair; farm production needed to be increased to feed the Nation and its armed forces; transport needed manning; coal mines and factories needed to increase output; and docks and ports had to increase efficiency to deal with the greater demand for shipping of raw materials and military transportation. With this problem in mind Britain formed the Army Service Corps Labour Companies to unload ships and operate docks in France, and to work on railways. Many of these workers were conscientious objectors to the war or men who were unfit for front-line service. Army infantry divisions formed Pioneer Battalions from skilled and semi-skilled tradesmen whose primary role was labouring work. In January 1917 the Labour Corps was established, absorbing the ASC Labour Companies, and extending the work tasks performed. The Labour Corps was manned by officers and NCOs, unfit for the front line or wounded in service, and operated much closer to the fighting, sometimes even taking part as makeshift infantry.

The need for foreign labour to supplement British workers was soon recognised. Egyptian, Jewish, Greek and Serb civilians were employed in labour units in the Gallipoli campaign in 1915. The Dominions also contributed troops and labour, coming from countries such as New Zealand, South Africa, Canada, India, the West Indies and Malta. Britain and other European nations, including France and Russia also looked further east to China to fulfill their increased manpower requirements. Recruitment of Chinese workers started in October 1916 for British employees, six months after for employees of the French government.

At the outset, one of the main reasons for recruitment of foreign labour was the need to increase turnaround of shipping at many ports. The wartime movement of cargoes and men meant that certain ports were in high demand, so that existing experienced dockers and warehousing were insufficient to meet needs. The bottlenecks caused by these shortages resulted in some ships taking longer to discharge their cargoes than in peacetime, and so causing further difficulties by making that stagnant shipping unavailable for use. China was considered by the British government as a

large source of additional labour to speed up this process. British trades union objections to the use of foreign nationals resulted in these workers being deployed to work in French ports, so releasing the British dockers there for employment elsewhere.

Chinese Labour Corps Recruitment

Britain and other Western nations held leased territory concessions in China over which they had considerable influence. One of these areas was the port of Wei-hai-Wei in Shantung province in northern China. The British government considered that these northern Chinese would be better suited to European climates than the southern Chinese in Hong Kong. At this time China was a neutral country so recruitment was under civilian contract, although the workers were to be subjected to the rigours of army life and discipline.

Recruitment did not seem to be a problem, due the poor economy of China, and was effected through local agencies and missionaries. Pay for a labourer was 1 franc per day for a labourer with higher rates for those with skills, the highest pay grade being for interpreters. These were sourced from students, scholars and ex-missionaries. A separate portion of pay was to be paid directly home to China to worker's families. Additional sums were payable on satisfactory recruitment, and on departure from China. Duration of contracts was for three years. Workers were expected to work 10 hours per day, 7 days a week, with no holidays other than Chinese festivals. No pay was given during sickness, but food and medical attention was provided. Although labourers were not expected to work in battlefield areas, hazard to life and limb were recognised with a payment scale for injury and death. The risk was real. 543 French employed Chinese were killed when their transport was torpedoed in the Mediterranean; and a number of British employees were killed or injured when Calais was bombed in August 1917. French contracts were more generous and workers tended to be employed away from the front line in factories and mines.

A barracks was constructed to house the recruits at Wei-hai-Wei, and on completion of a satisfactory medical examination, recruits were enrolled and given a non-removable identity bracelet bearing their enrolment number. The first contingent of British employed workers left China in January 1917. A few months later a second recruitment centre was set up in the nearby larger port of Tsingtao. Wei-Hai-Wei was not on the rail network and difficult to reach for many Chinese. Tsingtao allowed easier access, was open to a larger area of potential recruitment, and enabled larger vessels with increased transport capability to dock. Steamers took one of several routes: around the Cape of Good Hope; through the Suez Canal and into the Mediterranean; or eastwards to North America and transcontinental transport, then across the Atlantic. By the time of the Armistice nearly 100,000 men under British contract had been transported to France.

The Chinese Labour Corps in France

Some of the labour intensive tasks the CLC were put to work in included:

Railways. Repair; maintenance and new construction including the light railways; working on the train ferry service from Newhaven to France; and more skilled workers in locomotive maintenance and repair.

Dockyards. Loading and unloading vessels.

Roads. Repair and maintenance.

Trench Digging.

Forestry work, cutting trees to provide timber for construction.

Tank and Vehicle Repairs. Skilled men or those perceived to have an aptitude were trained in work at the Tankodrome and repair shops.

Aerodrome Construction. Plans were made in 1918 to bomb Germany, but the Armistice ended the war before this could be put into action.

Tank Factory construction at Neuvy Pailloux

Service duties. Cooking, cleaning etc.

Generally, the CLC workers were hard working and industrious, and left to their own devices often developed tools and working methods to speed up the task in hand.

Relations between the British officers and the CLC recruits mostly seemed to be good. Sources of discontent were food and accommodation, poor communication and misunderstanding of language and customs. Although employed as civilians, the Chinese workers were subject to martial law, and serious offences were tried by courts martial. Most punishments took the form of forfeiture of wages, although there were military style hard labour punishments, and a number of executions by firing squad for serious crimes. A small contingent of Chinese labourers took part in the Etaples mutiny, to be met with swift and bloody retribution.

Although, not generally employed in front line activity there are several accounts of bravery, and even the Chinese taking up arms when positions near the front were overrun, particularly after China declared war on Germany in August 1917. A few Chinese were awarded military decorations for conspicuous acts of bravery.

Repatriation

As the war progressed, and particularly after America's entry to the war, there was increased shipping demand for transatlantic traffic. The long sea voyages to the Far East for Chinese labour was no longer a priority, and recruitment ceased in March 1918. Repatriation of British employed Chinese back to Tsingtao started in November 1918 and was largely complete by May 1920. Some Chinese were employed after hostilities ceased in helping clear up the battlefields of unexploded munitions, filling shell craters, and recovering and burying bodies.

In 1920 a contingent of 191 Chinese were sent to north Russia with the Slavo-British Legion in support of anti-Communist groups.

Some 2000 labourers did not return to China. Most are buried in various cemeteries in France and Belgium, with a small number of graves in Britain; and some sea burials for those who died on board ship. Some deaths were due to enemy action, but the most were from natural causes including the Spanish flu of 1918.

Unsurprisingly, deaths also resulted from the hazardous post-war work of disposing of munitions.

The CLC and the Tank Corps

From March 1916 the Heavy Section Machine Gun Corps, (as the Tanks Corps was known then), expanded rapidly. By the end of the year a decision was made to set up workshops and stores for the tanks at Erin in Northern France, a couple of miles from Heavy Branch Headquarters at Bermicourt. The workshops were expected to prepare the newly arrived tanks from Britain for battle, as well as their repair and maintenance. The Central Workshops covered a large area of some 10 hectares. Apart from accommodation for officers and men, and sheds to house the tanks, there was a separate compound for the Chinese. The workshops themselves were located in 11 ex-RFC hangars. Each of these was constructed of canvas over a light steel frame covering 400 square metres. The arrival of the 51st Company of the Chinese Labour Corps in August helped to alleviate the manpower shortfalls caused by increasing workloads. A month later, the 69th Company CLC joined them, followed by the 90th Company CLC. Each company was some 500 strong including about twenty British officers and NCOs. The Chinese were overseen by the interpreters and gangers of various grades of seniority. Of these men under half were employed at the Central Workshops, the remainder worked elsewhere in the Tank Corps area.

At first, the Chinese were allotted manual labouring tasks, but as demand for more manpower in technical jobs increased, Chinese with tradesmen's skills or those with aptitude were trained to perform more specialised duties in the workshops.

As part of the preparation for the Battle of Cambrai in November 1917, a large number of fascines were required, to be mounted on the Mark IVs to aid crossing of the wide German trenches. To accomplish this, 400 fascine bundles were constructed by the 51st Company. 220 truckloads containing 21,500 fascines were received at the Central Workshops. These had to be cut to length, and then chained up into bundles containing 60-100 fascines. To do this, two tanks were employed to squeeze together fascine bundles using enclosing loops of chain, each tank driving in opposite directions. Completed they weighed nearly two tons, requiring twenty labourers to move each bundle in difficult muddy conditions. The fascine bundles were then loaded onto trucks to be transported to the tanks at the Tankodrome tank park. Also needed for the battle were 110 wooden sledges, up to three to be towed behind supply tanks, carrying fuel, ammunition and other battlefield necessities. Some 70 tons of timber were used in their construction by the Chinese.

Apart from this labouring work, other members of the Labour Companies allotted to the Tank Corps were semi-skilled tradesmen working as carpenters, blacksmiths strikers, moulders, and sometimes as gearsmen in tank crews. Training of the Chinese in technical skills was done by the simple method of training a few of the more able individuals, then using these workers to train others. With the enhanced pay that went with it, trained

labourers achieved a certain status. Salvage repair work, and rough fitting of manufactured items were deemed to be particularly suitable work, but others progressed to more complicated tasks. Squads of workers were formed to work specific tasks such as detracking, derollering, dismantling and assembling sprocket wheels and pinions. At the peak, by the end of 1918, the technical teams had been formed into three sections totalling over 400 individuals. The track plate riveting shop was run entirely by Chinese using four riveting machines, and later six machines when the workshops moved to Teneur. The trackplates were provided from salvaged tracks, which first needed stripping of their rivets, a task done by Chinese track breaking squads. More skilled individuals were employed in engine repair, bedding in connecting rod bearings and radiator repair. Despite increasing work output, the squads still manage to finish their day on time for the end of day parade at 3.30pm. Some Chinese became quite competent tank drivers and crew.

An evaluation of the Chinese workers showed them to be as effective as European labour. At Teneur part of the Chinese labour force was kept separate from other work groups in their own hangar. A comparison with mixed race working in other hangars, despite language differences, concluded that work output was even more satisfactory under these conditions.

Much of the work in the early months that the Chinese labour companies did was on repair of Mark IV tanks. In June 1918, the workshops were given the job of converting Male and Female Mark V tanks into hermaphrodites. (WW1 tanks were either termed Female, armed only with machine guns, or Male carrying cannons. Hermaphrodites carried both, usually cannon on one side of the tank and MGs on the other). This was replaced by repair of the more complicated Mark Vs themselves. Learning about the workings of the new machine was slow going, and criticism was made that the Chinese were unable to finally finish jobs that required small fitting work. This is perhaps not surprising since the Chinese workers had largely been trained in repetitive tasks, but had not had the benefit of comprehensive skills training as might an engineering apprentice.

The Camouflage Section at the Workshops also employed Chinese workers. The section was responsible for the painting of tanks and the construction of camouflage nets. This involved painting sheets of canvas, which was then cut into strips and tied to a net following a template pattern.

Elsewhere in the Tank Corps area, ahead of the move of the Central Workshops to Teneur, Labour Corps Chinese were employed extensively in its construction of buildings, laying concrete foundations, and building the rail links and sleeper roads.

Tank Factory at Neuvy Pailoux

In 1918 a new tank factory was planned to be built at Neuvy Pailoux, France, to produce the new Mark VIII tank. This tank, called the International, was to be a collaborative venture between the USA, Britain and France with the parts and engines to be manufactured in America and the parts shipped to France for assembly.

The Chinese Labour Corps were to provide the factory workforce. Construction of this factory began in the second half of 1918 but was discontinued when the Armistice was signed in November with the factory partially completed.

Chinese Labour Corps Mysteries

Following the end of the war, there seems to be little record of the fate of the Tank Corps Chinese labour companies. One might imagine that some might have been employed in the dismantling of redundant tanks at the end of hostilities, but this is speculation.

The work of the Chinese Labour companies on mainland Britain is also an area where there is a paucity of information. Given the trades unions objections to foreign workers on British soil it is not likely that large numbers saw employment here. There are a number of CLC graves in Britain in places as diverse as Liverpool, Plymouth, Colchester and Folkestone. Some of these may have been deaths in transit near to ports of embarkation. In "China on the Western Front" there is a photo of a party of Chinese workers with shovels resting near a steam traction engine with a handwritten note on the image recording it as taken at Folkestone in August 1918. It is not known if these men had been put to work whilst awaiting transit connections, or following recovery from illness and treatment at the Shornccliffe Military Hospital near Folkestone.

Additional Notes

Trachoma was a common eye infection in the East, and an important part of the medical examination of recruits before departure from China. Successful examination carried sufficient weight for workers to be paid a bonus on passing it.

Fascines are bundles of wood from tree branches and saplings and carried by the early tanks to be dropped into trenches and shell craters to allow these obstacles to be crossed over. Fascine Carrying Tanks operated in groups of three. The lead tank would drop its fascine in the first trench whilst the others gave covering fire. After crossing over, the second tank would drop its fascine in the second trench, whilst the others would provide cover. The third tank, after crossing over, would drop its fascine into the third line of trenches. The chains binding the heavy fascine bundles were under considerable tension, and one account records that a man was killed by the chain snapping back after he cut it.

Track repair was an important part of maintenance of WW1 tanks. On these early vehicles typically track life might be only 30 km before they broke. Needing regular servicing, the tracks had to be dismantled and the trackplates replaced using new rivets.

This servicing also had to be extended to the track rollers on which the tracks ran. Impacted mud between the track rollers and running gear impaired efficiency and also accelerated wear and tear so that regular tank washing was an important part of this.

Driving these primitive WW1 tanks was a complicated exercise and involved most of the tank crew working as a team on steering and controlling the tank: a driver; tank commander; a brakesman and a

gearsman for each track.

Light Railways in WW1. These narrow track gauge railways were used to transport men and supplies from the conventional rail networks in the rear closer to the Front Lines. The narrow trackways were much easier to construct and replace than the full gauge track.

My thanks to David Fletcher and Library Staff at the Tank Museum for their assistance and permission to use the photographs.

Thanks also to Ivor Lee for his comments on the CLC in Britain, and his No Labor, No Battle co-author, John Starling, for supplying extracts from CLC war diaries, and other documents.

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The Chinese Labour Corps in France

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John Ham. (Adapted from Tankette magazine 2013)

CLC FOOTNOTES

Mesopotamia. Some 6000 Chinese labourers were recruited from Shanghai and Singapore for work in Mesopotamia for the British Expeditionary Force following the Gallipoli landings. Many of these worked in the dockyards engaged in construction of lighters and pontoon ferries used in transferring men and supplies from ship to shore. There are 227 CLC graves in Basra, now in modern Iraq.

Russian Labourers. Large numbers of Chinese were also recruited by the Russians. Many suffered great hardships from employers and the Russian winters, but this is outside the scope of this article. ■

AGM Minutes

The 69th Annual General Meeting of the Royal Pioneer Corps Association held at The Royal Court Hotel, Coventry on 1st July 2017

President: Brig CB Telfer
Chairman: Colonel A Barnes
Secretary: Mr N Brown
Members Present: 49

THE Chairman opened the meeting at 0900 hrs by welcoming all present and hoped everyone has a good weekend.

After receiving apologies from Col RF McDonald, Col D Clouston MBE, Mr S Coe, Mr P Davis, In Pensioner Micky Hull, Mr L Rowley, Mr F Lyle, Mr D Bryant and Mr D Luker

The Chairman requested 1 minutes silence in memory of those members who had sadly died during the last year after their names had been read by the Secretary. They were:

Ex Cpl Dennis Whittaker – served 78-84, Ex Pte Peter Johnson – served as a National Serviceman 58-60, Ex Pte Jack Clough – WW2 veteran who served from 40-46, Ex Cpl Michael Moore – who served from 63-69, Ex SSGt Allan Hopper – who served in the 50's then re-enlisted and served from 64-79, Ex Pte Norman Bartlett – served 50-52, Ex Cpl John Kearns – another WW2 vet who served 43 – 75, Ex Cpl John Thomas – joined in 1973, Ex Cpl Roy Mitchell – joined in 1979, Ex Pte Andrew Johnson – served 74-83, Ex Pte Roy Newey – served 51-56, Ex Pte Garry Dackers – joined in 1994,

Ex Pte David Voice – served as a National Serviceman 54-56 Ex Maj Graham Hardy – former OC 518 Coy, Ex Pte Wilf Gibson – joined in 1965, Ex Pte Charles Hagan – served 74-86, Ex Pte Morgan Evans –

another WW2 vet who served from 43-57, Ex Pte Epinerie Tokalau – at the early age of 38, Ex Cpl Keniv Galloway – served in Gulf War one with 518 Coy, Ex Cpl Michael Prince – served 64-78, Ex Sgt Colin Anson (formerly Claus Ascher) – another WW2 vet who served from Nov 40 in the Pioneer Corps and then transferred to the Royal Marine Commando, Ex Pte Arthur McCambridge – served 62-74, Ex Pte George Bowey – served 59-65, Ex LCpl Richard Sweetland served 70-92, Ex LCpl David Weller served 56-58, Ex Sgt William Sears – another WW2 vet who enlisted in Aug 40, died at the age of 100, Ex WO2 Cloggy Compton – he enlisted in 1942 as a boy soldier and served until Oct 69 – former Malayan Scout, a member of the SAS, a member of the Yorks and Lancs Regt. He finished his service as CSM 521 Coy – he was in fact my first Company Sergeant Major, Ex Cpl Peter John Hpeinstall – served 1981 – 1997, Ex Cpl Dave Pearsall – served 1961-1983 ex Corps of Drums who died on Wednesday and Ex Cpl Tony Reynolds who served in the 60's and 70's.

ITEM 1. MINUTES OF 68th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1. The minutes of the 68th Annual General Meeting were unanimously agreed. There were no points arising.

ITEM 2. ELECTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

2. In accordance with the Constitution one third of the Council must stand for

re-election every year. The following members all were willing to serve for another term and were unanimously elected:

Col D Clouston MBE, Maj B Dilkes and Mr N Brown BEM

ITEM 3. ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT'S REPORT

3. Brig CB Telfer gave the following report:

In the coming months there would be a change of Chairman, he proposed a vote of thanks for the out-going Chairman, Col A Barnes, who had been Chairman through many difficult changes. All attending heartedly agreed.

He would shortly be attending Kensington Palace with the Vice Patron to have a meeting with the Association Patron, HRH The Duke of Gloucester, when he would be standing down as President of the Association.

He went on to apologise that after the meeting he would have to leave but wished all attending an enjoyable weekend.

ITEM 4. COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

4. Col Barnes gave the following report: Welcome to the 69th Annual General Meeting of the RPC Association, and to the third AGM to be held here at The Royal Court Hotel, Coventry.

Since last year's AGM the Association – in various guises has had another busy year. The WOs' & SNCOS' Pnr Reunion Club have continued to be active, with a battlefield

tour to Arnhem, where they learned much about the ill-fated attempt to shorten the Second World War through the infamous Operation MARKET garden. The Past and Present Officers' had another very successful dinner in the Bicester Garrison Officers' Mess last October – once again ably organised by Maj Billy Dilkes, with 58 officers attending. The Association had 68 march at the Cenotaph Parade at Whitehall and even managed to get a good mention from the BBC – which many of you may have heard.

The WOs' & SNCOs' also had a successful Ladies Dinner night at Kineton where 78 sat down to an excellent dinner presided over by WO1 Oz Orrell and the Club's Chairman, Mr Pete Thomas. As in previous years, the Club organised a trip to the Army v Navy game at Twickenham, this event was opened up to all members of the Association and I am pleased to report that 153 members attended the Game. The 39/93 Club met at Andover for a successful weekend, as did the Nostalgia Group at Scarborough.

The Northampton Branch had a very successful Burns Night at the Conservative Club where the Association President, Brig Telfer, managed to kill the haggis! In two weeks' time the Northampton Branch is also having a canal trip, unfortunately this is already fully booked. If anyone is keen to be involved in future Northampton Branch events full details can be obtained from the Branch Chairman, Mr Bob Fox.

The Association Northern Branch is now fully established and meets quarterly in Barnsley. If you would like to join the Branch please speak to the Association Secretary and he will give details of the Branch Chairman, Mr John Hatfield. The fledgling Bicester Branch is about to hold its first major function organised by the Branch Chairman, Maj Billy Dilkes, and Secretary, Capt Kev Jessop. I am sure you will all join me in wishing these two new branches all success for the future.

I hope you all enjoyed the entertainment and meal last night. The entertainment continues tonight with the Black Country Boys, and we will also, once again, be holding an auction – please spend wisely, but bid high! This afternoon we are holding a BBQ at 159 Regt RLC which has been organised by WO1s Rob Berton and Ross Clarke – I hope you all enjoy that. The entertainment continues tomorrow night with a group "Out of Order" and a disco "Solent City Sounds". Unfortunately, due to work commitments. I have to leave after the meeting, but I hope you all have a great weekend.

I must also report that this will be my last AGM as Chairman of the Association. Brig Telfer has already informed you he is retiring as President and I am honoured that the Council have elected me to replace him. I am pleased to say that the Council have already elected my replacement as Chairman and that is Col David Clouston, the last Commanding Officer of 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC. Unfortunately Colonel David cannot attend this year because of family commitments But I have absolute confidence that he will continue the good work of the Association on your behalf.

Finally, for your diaries, we have already booked this hotel for next year – the dates are 15/18 June 2018. I hope to see you all

here once again then.

ITEM 5. GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

5. Mr N Brown gave the following report: Unfortunately our active membership list is slightly down again as we are still having between 40 and 50 Newsletters returned marked "Gone Away" or "Not known at this address", please let us know if you are moving. It is not cheap to post these Newsletters – the total cost is nearly £3,400! Since we met here last year 39 persons have joined the Association – some who were National Servicemen and some who were RLC Pioneers.

Last year we had 68 march at the Cenotaph Parade in Whitehall, unfortunately we were allocated 85 tickets and I had to turn away members who wanted to march. A few did say that they could not attend because of illness and one who found out on the day that he could not get a train to London to arrive by the form-up time of 1010 hrs. This year I have applied for 95 tickets but will not know until the 3rd July how many we will be allocated. I already have 93 applications for tickets. I always have spare tickets for the Field of Remembrance which is always the Thursday preceding the Cenotaph Parade. Following the short service at Westminster Abbey we normally have a lunch in a nearby pub.

As the Chairman reported we had 153 members attend the Army v Navy Rugby match at Twickenham, this was sold out by mid-November last year. This year I will be asking for returns by 1 Oct – this may appear very early but it is the only way we will be able to guarantee tickets.

The Chairman mentioned the Barnsley Branch is now running, if anyone wants to join this Branch please let me know and I will give them details. The Bicester Branch is to hold its first meeting on Sunday 16 Jul at the Ex-Servicemen's Club, Bicester.

The Chairman has already mentioned next year's reunion will again be here at the Royal Court Hotel on 15/18 Jun. It is intended next year to once again visit the National Arboretum and also to have a meal at the Working Men's club next the Arboretum.

Last night we held a very successful raffle thanks to Pete and Christine Thomas and managed to raise £360, tonight we will, once again, be holding a small auction where Pete has, once again, volunteered to be the auctioneer, please bid well. All monies raised help to cover the cost of the weekend. (After minute note: £1470 was raised. Special thanks go to Mr RF Gillespie for his wonderful hand-made Pioneer gypsy caravan which raised £370, sold to Mr R Kirby! and also Mrs Lathwood for her two wonderful Pioneer teddies which raised nearly £100 each).

Tomorrow we intend to hold a short church service on the lawns outside, weather permitting, if not inside the Blenheim suite. I hope those that are leaving tomorrow will attend before they leave. Following the service it is intended to have a Group photograph.

The Association has held for many years a box containing thousands of negatives. I have managed to scan about 2,000 of these in the last few months and estimate that is about half! Most are from 522 Coy

at Kineton in the years 1979 – 1986. Unfortunately, many individuals are not known, we hope to publish these soon, if you do recognise anyone please let us know, this will help us keep our data base up to date.

I must mention that Mr P Wegg is holding another Sherringham Pioneer jolly in June 2018, leaflets are available with full details of this event. The 39/93 Club is hold a get together in Aldershot on 9/10 March 2018, if you wish further details please contact Mr I Dewsnap who is here today.

Over the years many Pioneers served at Kineton, on 21/22 July the camp is holding its 75th Anniversary, this includes a march through Warwick on the 22nd. If you would like to march with them please let me know.

Finally, once again, I would like to thank my son Paul for his hard work for the Association, not only his work in preparing the Newsletter but his work on social media. I hope you all enjoy some of his work during the meal tonight!

My thanks also go to Lt Col John Starling for his work on the historical side of the Association and the many hours he spent in building up the data base of ex Pioneers. Thanks also to Major Billy Dilkes for the work he does for the Association and for all the free coffees that I have in his office.

ITEM 6. ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEXT REUNION/ AGM

6. The date of the next Reunion/Annual General Meeting will be 15-18 June 2018.

ITEM 7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

7. Mr R Fox asked that Mr M Mulvey and Mr J Upfield be recognised for the 10 km run and London Marathon which they had run for charity, both having disabilities.

8. Mr P Morley asked why the RPC Corps of Drums were not present at the weekend, he was advised that they had now disbanded.

9. Mr Pete Thomas asked for a vote of thanks to Maj Adie Mycroft for his help in organising the Army v Navy match. He also reminded members of the Reunion Club that the Club's AGM would follow the Association AGM.

10. Mr A Goode reminded those present that the Nostalgia Group meet in April each year.

11. Lt Col J Starling suggested that the Chairman gave details from the Council Meeting which had been held on the previous night. The Chairman replied that the main point from the meeting was the requirement to look for the younger element to widen the group membership and that this would be a focus for the Council during the next year.

ITEM 8. CLOSING REMARKS FROM THE PRESIDENT

12. The President closed the meeting by asking for ideas from members to improve the Association and wished all present to have a wonderful weekend.

13. There being no further business the meeting closed at 0930 hours.

**N BROWN
Secretary**

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



Report: Paul Brown
Pictures: RPCA Archives and Clarkie!

A FEW stunning photographs depicted in this issue. Above we have some happy faces departing RAF Brize Norton, where have they come back from? Do you recognise anyone or where they have come back from?

The photograph on the right is a series of photos depicting what looks like adventure training - a very young Eddie Butler can be found here!

The great photograph on the facing page I found amongst the archives - it depicts Pioneer Norman Donal relaxing with a cigarette on the beach near Gamil, during the Suez Crisis, 1956.

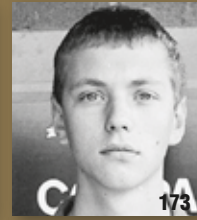
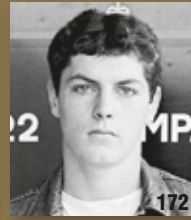
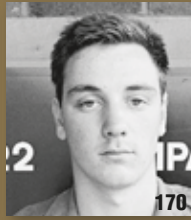
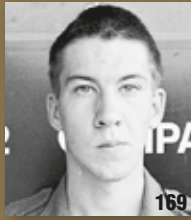
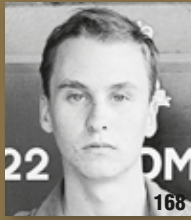
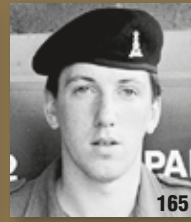
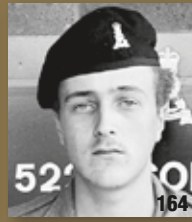
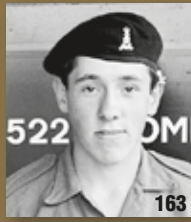
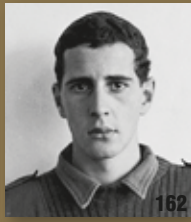
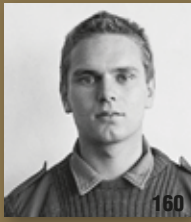
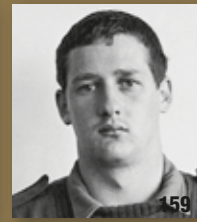
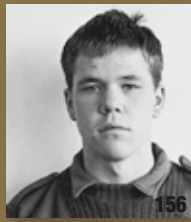
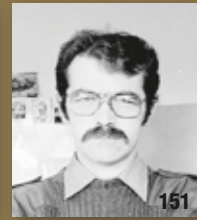
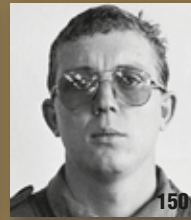
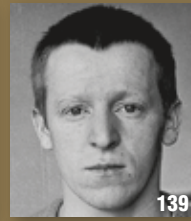
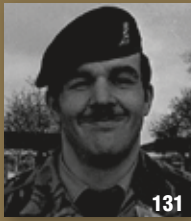
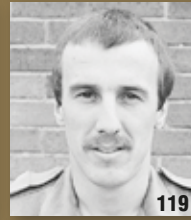
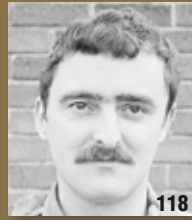
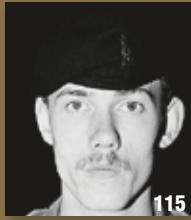
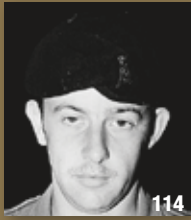
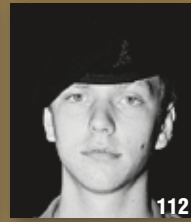
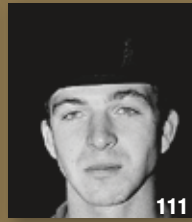
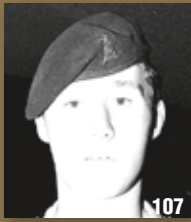
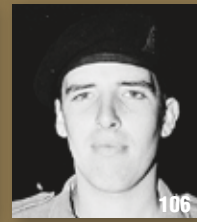
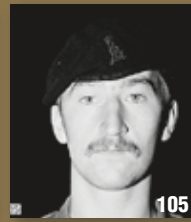
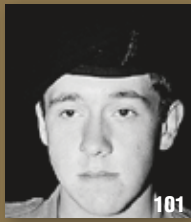
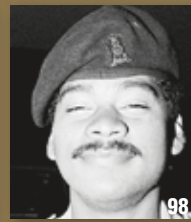
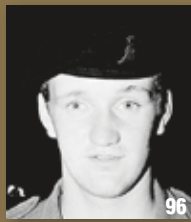
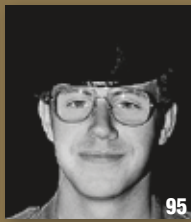
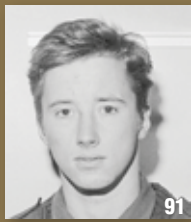
When scanning in Scouses negatives we have come across hundreds of headshot photographs, turn over onto the next page and see if there is anyone you recognise!

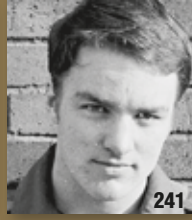
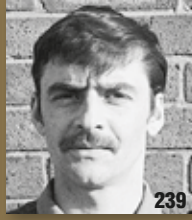
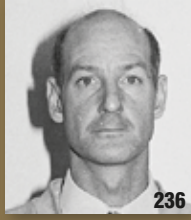
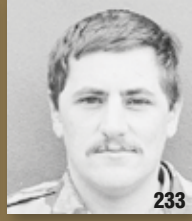
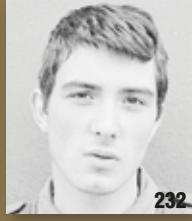
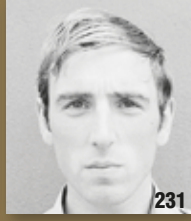
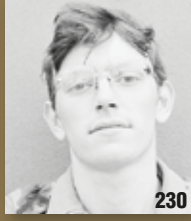
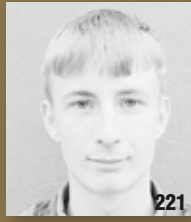
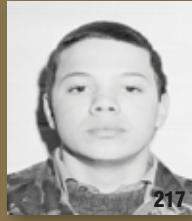
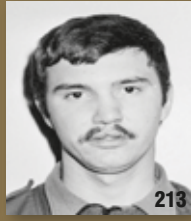
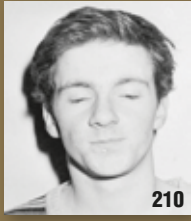
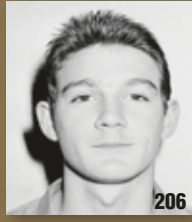
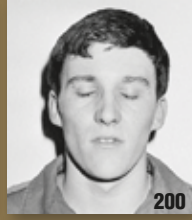
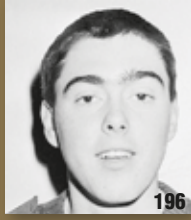
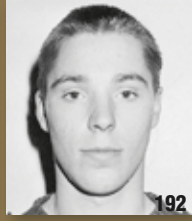
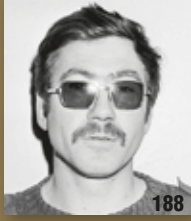
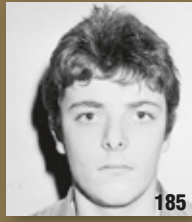
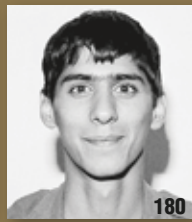
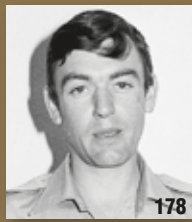
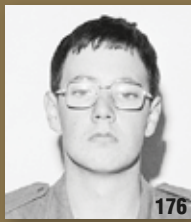
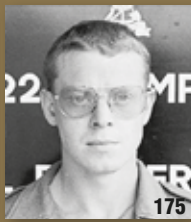
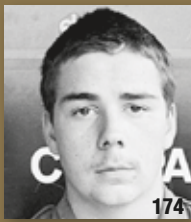
Finally last but certainly not least, I was loaned an awesome photograph that Clarkie has picked up... a hugely historical Pioneer photograph took on 26th July 1943, entitled 'Busy as a beehive' - Sicilian beach-head established - Sicily. The scene is all bustle as British Pioneer Troops prepare Sicilian Beach-head for heavy and light traffic. Men waist deep in the water pass supplies ashore from a lighter as men in foreground prepare roads for tanks and other vehicles of war. ■



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











Press Cuttings for 1971-1980

The following have been taken from our archives. These cuttings are all from the years 1971-1980. 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 1971-1980.

Bicester Advertiser 1 Aug 74 IT'S CERTAINLY NO CYPRUS HONEYMOON FOR DAVID

A Bicester soldier has had to postpone his wedding planned for August 10 because of the Cyprus emergency.

Pte David Jenkins, 18, a member of 518 Coy Royal Pioneer Corps, Bicester Garrison was recalled from his Midlothian home last week where he was on leave making arrangements for his wedding.

He was among 72 men from his unit who left Bicester last Wednesday for South Cerney RAF Station, Glos, where they were flown to the Military base at Akrotiri in Cyprus.

The Bicester soldiers joined another 22 from the same unit who flew to Cyprus the week before when the emergency first developed.

Nineteen men, the only remaining members of 518 Coy RPC are on stand-by and are expected to be flown out to Cyprus later this week.

The sudden recall of the men who were on special leave having just returned from service in Gibraltar, created some family and home problems. Cpl Dick Ledgeway had packed his bags for a holiday camp when he was recalled. He is seeking the help of the army for the return of his holiday deposit.

The unit commander, Major Chris Etherington said he did not know how long the men would be in Cyprus.

For the 518 Coy it will be a case of returning to old grounds as the company was in Cyprus from 1956 to 1962 during the previous troubles.

At that time Maj Etherington was a junior subaltern and two others who will again be with him are Staff Sgt Norman Beattie and Staff Sgt Derek Isgar who is the quartermaster-sergeant. They were both Corporals in 1962.

The Times 27 Aug 74 BRITISH SOLDIER IN ULSTER DIES AFTER SHOOTING

From a Staff Reporter Belfast

A soldier in the Royal Pioneer Corps died on his way to hospital yesterday after he had been shot while sitting in the back of an Army Land-Rover in Craigavon, Co Armagh.

Private Phillip Drake, aged 28, single, who came from Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, was hit by at least one

of 15 high-velocity shots fired near a roundabout as his patrol returned to its base at Lurgan.

The shooting occurred shortly after 8 am at the edge of the predominantly Roman Catholic housing estate at Drumbeg. Although Private Drake's companions fired back they do not appear to have hit anyone. The Land-Rover was driven to Craigavon Hospital but Private Drake, who was attached to the headquarters of 3 Brigade, which covers much of southern Ulster, died within half an hour.

Last March a Royal Ulster Constabulary policeman was killed in similar circumstances a few hundred yards away. On that occasion his own police vehicle was negotiating a round-about when it was ambushed. A man has since been charged with his murder.

Bicester Advertiser 26 Sep 74 THE RED CARPET TREATMENT FOR RETURNING PIONEERS

There was a red carpet welcome at RAF Brize Norton on Sunday for men of 518 Coy Royal Pioneer Corps stationed at Bicester who returned from special duties in Cyprus.

The men were flown out to Cyprus at short notice in July during the height of the emergency. They were welcomed on their return at Brize Norton by Col PE Marot, Commander of 23 Group RPC which has its headquarters at the Bicester Depot.

During their stay in Cyprus their many tasks included un-loading ships and running a refugee camp, but their biggest operation was the removal of furniture valued at £250,000 from some 400 abandoned army hiring's in the Famagusta area.

Dead Town

"We went into Famagusta and worked 12 hours a day for 15 days and we cleared 359 quarters of furniture which meant a saving of over £250,000", said company commander, Major Chris Etherington on Monday.

"Famagusta was a dead town but we got a clearance every day to go through the Turkish lines," he said.

Major Etherington said his men not only salvaged the furniture which was put into storage, but they managed to clear stocks from NAAFI warehouses at Lanarka and Famagusta. They saved several tons of food and other stock as well as rescuing 60 pigs which were penned ready for slaughtering.

Souvenirs brought back by the men included a Greek national flag used by the troops for entering Greek and Turkish lines.

Pte David Jenkins from Midlothian, whose wedding was postponed when he was recalled from leave to go to Cyprus, is to get married within the next two weeks and Sergeant Dick Ledgeway who had to cancel a Butlin's holiday is to treat himself to a late

holiday on the back pay he received following his promotion while in Cyprus.

Major Etherington said of the 116 men of his Company who had gone to Cyprus, 88 of them had now returned. A special pay parade was held on Monday and they were immediately given three weeks special leave.

Soldier Magazine Nov 74 CYPRUS – UNDER THE ARMY UMBRELLA

Famagusta, the main tourist resort of Cyprus, with its concrete cliffs of hotels for packaged sun-seekers and miles of sandy beaches is now a ghost town populated only by a few hungry dogs and stray cats.

The town's 43,000 inhabitants fled westwards before the tidal wave of Turkish tanks that swept out of the Kyrenia enclave as early negotiations between the warring Cypriot factions broke down.

Among the deserted shops, homes and hotels were 400 British Army married quarters whose occupants were withdrawn to the safety of the Sovereign Base Area at Dhekelia. Belongings had to be left where they were and that meant "operation moving house" to salvage the families' furniture.

The task fell to the Bicester-based 518 Company, Royal Pioneers Corps, which worked in five teams of seven men under the command of Major Chris Etherington, emptying houses and flats at a rate of 24 a day.

The Pioneers had to contend not only with the tension of the front-line situation and the oppressive silence of the deserted town but with temperatures which often soared above 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Even so, the teams worked 13-hour days.

To reach work each day, the Pioneers had to pass through a Turkish checkpoint where passes were closely examined by guards with fixed bayonets whose only words were a curt "good morning" as the daily six-vehicle convoy passed their unsmiling faces.

From then on the Pioneers saw no-one until they passed the Edelweiss restaurant in the centre of Famagusta where the Swedish United Nations detachment maintained a precarious foothold against all comers. Now the company is back in Bicester – a bustling metropolis compared to the sullen hush of Famagusta.

The tragic wake of this as any war was the human tide of refugees fleeing before the armed might of the combatants. Forces families living outside the sovereign base areas in the south-east and south-west of Cyprus were flown back to the safety of the United Kingdom (see SOLDIER, October 1974).

Less fortunate were the Cypriots themselves, many of whom sought protection under the Union Flag in the sovereign base areas. An eyewitness

reported just after the Turkish advance on Famagusta "Throughout the night the refugees poured into the SBA in lorries, cars and farm tractors, the line of vehicles stretching at one time to Famagusta itself six miles away. Those with cars have plastered them with mud in the forlorn hope that the makeshift camouflage will protect them from air attack. As I walked through the area this morning I saw old women sitting on the ground rocking backwards and forwards crying and wailing – a pitiful sight – they have lost everything and have nowhere to go. These people have given up and their only immediate hope is with the British Army from Dhekelia base who are giving them cooking and toilet facilities and – above all – protection".

The refugees were directed to Athna Forrest where at least a little protection from the sun could be found. Within hours the numbers swelled to an estimated 10,000 and the Army rushed in food and supplies. The camp was set up under the command of Lieutenant Colonel JF Bowman, of the Army Legal Services, who with a very small staff saw to the refugees' immediate needs.

The Times 2 Jan 75 SOLDIER DIES ON MOTORWAY

Private John Bogan, of the Royal Pioneer Corps, stationed at Bicester, Oxfordshire, was found dead on the M1 at Hendon yesterday. He had been struck by a vehicle which failed to stop.

VISOR (Northern Ireland) 23 Jan 75 ROYAL PIONEER CORPS

At present 206 Pioneers of all ranks are serving in Northern Ireland. They can be found in such varied occupations as patrolling the streets in Claudy, to loading stores in the Ordnance Depot at Kinnegar.

Within HQ NI and the three Brigades they are totally committed to guard duties and VIP escorts with Pioneer dog handlers deployed throughout the Province to guard key installations and support specialist search teams.

On occasions the Pioneers are used as escorts by bomb disposal (EOD), SDS and MAOT and are also called upon to mount vehicle checkpoints anywhere within the formation area. These are key posts which require a high degree of vigilance, concentration and operational know how.

Every Pioneer in Northern Ireland works long hours but it is made worth while because they know that the positions they hold are of vital importance to the formations they support. The majority of Pioneers in Northern Ireland are young men of about 25 years of age. By the time they have completed their Defence and Employment training course at Bicester and various courses over here they quickly become proficient in all aspects of infantry and IS training drills.

More recent arrivals have been the reinforcements to the HQ NI security platoon from 518 Company in Bicester. They have settled down well and go about the monotonous search duties with the Pioneer's normal cheerful attitude. Judging by all the building that is going on around the entrance to the HQ, their lot should soon be a happier one as they expect to have palatial new offices and search areas completed within the near future.

The Engineers at Antrim also have a small detachment on loan from Bicester and it is hoped that in the best Pioneer tradition their task will be finished well ahead of schedule.

Over the past year they have had four very welcome working visits from elements of 522 and 518 Pioneer Companies. SSgt MgGeough came over with 16 men to clear the obsolete security defences from the Long Kesh perimeter and completed the task so quickly that they were able to help erect a considerable amount of new wire fence.

Their hard work and cheerful attitude earned them the praise of the Engineers. Cpl Duncan Cameron and a half section of Pioneers from 518 Company were kept busy at the dismantling of the Gosford Castle defence installation. Again morale was very high and the job was finished days ahead of schedule.

All things being considered, morale and esprit de corps is high although as everyone knows the social life over here is very restricted. All Defence and Employment personnel have represented the Corps well in many sports. In mid 1974 3 Bde Pioneers won the Five-a-Side Football Tournament held by the Brigade HQ without losing a match; they also have a very strong hockey side. In Lisburn, at HQ Ni, the sporting highlight of the past year was most definitely the Pioneers winning the UK Minor Units Boxing. The WRVS Football team has at times been made up completely of Pioneers and they have been playing extremely well. 39 Bde Defence and Employment platoon played a large part in the Brigade Athletics Competition and helped the Signal Squadron to win the competition. The Corps was also well represented in the shot putting with Sgt Peters and Cpl Scogings at the peak of their form. Sgt Peters has already made his name in the Tug-of-War team which has several Pioneers participating. All in all quite a rewarding year.

All other pioneers in the province work a 2-year tour and their jobs must surely be the most monotonous and thankless of all operational tasks, nevertheless they try to live up to their Corps motto "Labor Omnia Vincit" and at all times keep a cheery smile for all their admirers.

Worcester Evening News 18 Nov 77 A SPARSE LIFE FOR THE TROOPS

There's nothing like coming home to a nice hot bath.

But the troops providing Worcester's only round-the-clock fire cover have to go to the city's public baths for theirs.

There are no baths at the disused Norton Barracks where the 15 men from the Royal Pioneer Corps are stationed.

Night crew leader Sergeant Andy Anderson said: "All the facilities are here – it's just that they are either not warmed up or in working order."

For the two six-man crews on call there is little to do cooped up in their duty room complete with terminally flaking plaster, wooden floorboards, and one paraffin heater.

They play cards, watch a small portable television which belongs to one of the soldiers to amuse themselves talking to their mascot – a jet black puppy called Beaujolais.

The night shift men are on duty for 15 hours and the day shift are there the rest of the time.

When they arrived each man was issued with a pair of Wellington boots. The trouble was they were all size nines and only fitted one man in the day crew.

Two nights ago a man arrived at the barrack gates to give them a box full of home-made sponge cakes and the local WRVS have sent enough magazines and war books to last for months.

PATROLLING

For some of the soldiers fire-fighting in Worcester is almost like a week at the seaside.

"I've seen bigger fires than we are ever likely to get here," said Corporal Alan Williams, who has just returned from three-and-a-half years active service in Northern Ireland patrolling the rough country. "This is a holiday."

While the firemen complain about their take-home pay of £46 a week all 18-year-old Private Tony Fairhurst gets is £23 plus board and lodgings.

Evesham Journal 10 Aug 78 PIONEERS ADOPT ALIGATOR AS MASCOT

Soldiers at 206 Company Royal Pioneer Corps at Engineering Resources, Long Marston, have adopted a new mascot – a two-foot alligator from Dudley Zoo.

The alligator, Caesar, is too young to be let out on parade, so members of the company plan to visit the zoo and erect a plaque at his pool.

It was after watching a television programme on the threat to wild life that one of the soldiers suggested they should adopt an animal from the zoo.

"The men wanted a gorilla which they could have on parade," said Major P Baird, the unit's public relations officer, "but that would have cost £1,500 sponsorship."

"We were offered squirrels or hamsters but we finally decided on an alligator. It is the first to be born at the zoo."

On Sunday two teams of ten men from the corps took part in the Chichester Marches over 40 kilometres. Money from the entry fees went to charity.

Five men from the corps are now planning a sponsored bicycle ride from Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire, to Long Marston in the first weekend in October. When they arrived at the camp ten men will then march from Long Marston to London. The proceeds from both sponsored events are expected to go towards the £98,000 North Gloucestershire cobalt appeal for a 3-D scanner.

On September 28 the four Pioneer companies in Britain will be taking part in an open day at Bicester when the new Colonel in Chief, the Duke of Gloucester will be in attendance

The Times 18 Feb 80 MPs TO CALL FOR INQUIRY ON SOLDIER'S DEATH

Mr Michael Morris, Conservative MP for Northampton South, and Mr Alfred Morris, Labour MP for Manchester Wythenshawe, are to ask the Government to inquire into the death from a drugs overdose of Private James Darkin, aged 19, a drummer.

He was found dead at the Royal Pioneer Corps Training Centre, Northampton, after

complaining to his parents and officers that he was being bullied by other soldiers.

Mr Morris said: "I am deeply concerned, because of the report that he had complained about bullying to an officer two weeks before his death and that he was some-how in possession of a drug that was only available on prescription."

The Times 26 Jun 80 'VIRGIN SOLDIER' WAS CRUELLY BULLIED, CORONER SAYS

Private James Darkin, aged 18, was so cruelly bullied by other Army recruits that he killed himself, a coroner said yesterday.

Service life was a "living hell" for Private Darkin, Mr Michael Collcutt, the Northamptonshire coroner, told an inquest in Northampton.

During the 18 months that Private Darkin was one of 55 recruits of the Pioneer Corps Simpson Barracks, Wootton, Northamptonshire, Army bullies tormented him by shaving off his pubic hair, giving him "regimental" baths, constantly making remarks about him being a homosexual, dropping him in a pond and covering his kit in boot polish.

Private Darkin hated the name calling, and particularly when he was called "the virgin soldier", a retired regimental sergeant-major told the inquest.

The coroner criticized the non-commissioned officers and officers at the barracks for in-sufficient supervision of the recruits.

"That was allowed to happen because those NCOs and officers responsible for Darkin, having become aware of part of what was happening, did not realize sufficiently the seriousness of the bullying or the effect it was having on Darkin himself", he said.

Mr Collcutt recorded a verdict that Private Darkin, of Bulford Avenue, Woodhouse Park, Manchester, took his own life. The cause of death was bronchial pneumonia after a drug overdose.

The Times 27 Jun 80 ARMY TO LAUNCH INQUIRY INTO 'BULLIED' SOLDIER

The Army is to hold a new investigation into the death of Private James Darkin, a young soldier driven to suicide by what a coroner described as relentless bullying.

The Ministry of Defence said yesterday that the inquiry would be carried out by the special investigation branch of the Military Police.

"Previous investigations by the SIB were made jointly with the civil police, to whom all information was made available", the

ministry said.

Private Darkin, aged 18, whom the coroner described as "a complete misfit" in the Army, was a member of the Royal Pioneer Corps. He died in February of bronchial pneumonia after an overdose of pain-killers.

The Times 9 Jul 80 SERVICE UNITS WIN AWARDS By Henry Stanhope Defence Correspondent

The Royal Navy's guided missile destroyer, HMS Fife, which carried out relief operations on the island of Dominica after it was devastated by hurricane David last year, was awarded a Wilkinson Sword of Peace in London yesterday.

The sailors, diverted to the area after exercises in the Caribbean, helped to repair local hospitals, restored water supplies and carried medical aid to isolated villages when Fife's Wessex helicopter was the only means of rapid transport on the island.

The citation for the award, one of three which were presented to service units by Wilkinson Sword Ltd in the annual ceremony at Cytlers' Hall, paid tribute to the dedication of the whole crew, and particularly to the aircrew and flight engineers who kept the Wessex in service.

The two other presentation swords, which are given for outstanding work in community relations, were won by 23 Group Royal Pioneer Corps for the Army, and by RAF Stornoway in the Isle of Lewis.

The Times 30 Oct 80 ARMY DEATH INQUIRY ATTACKED

An Army inquiry into a young soldier's suicide after alleged barrack room bullying, was condemned by his parents yesterday as a whitewash, and as outrageous by Mr Alfred Morris, Labour MP for Manchester, Wythenshawe.

James Darkin, aged 18, took a drug overdose in February. He had served at the Royal Pioneer Corps Barracks, Northampton. Mr Barney Hayhoe, Under Secretary for the Army, said yesterday that two lance corporals and a private had been disciplined. The lance corporals had been reduced to privates and the third man fined £70.

In a letter to Mr Morris, Mr Hayhoe said that no action would be taken against any officers. Measures had been taken to increase the level of care and supervision of young recruits, and while training had to remain tough and realistic, there was no place for personal ill-treatment.

"I am glad to give my personal assurance that I and my Army Board colleagues will

continue in our firm resolve to do all we can to prevent incidents of brutality, ill-treatment and bullying of any kind," Mr Morris said: "I find this a very disquieting, and in some respects, outrageous reply." He wanted to know why those disciplined were still apparently at the camp, and why it took a death to provoke action.

"James Darkin's parents have already told me of their anger at the findings of the inquiry James's parents see the report as a blatant whitewash and are not prepared to let the scandal rest there."

At the inquest, Mr Michael Collcutt, the Northamptonshire coroner, described Mr Darkin's Army life as a "living hell".

Hansard 30 Oct 80 PRIVATE JAMES DARKIN

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the inquiries into the death of Private James Darkin, a constituent of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, have now been completed; and what alterations he proposes to Army training methods to avoid any similar occurrence.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the investigation into the death of Private Darkin.

Mr. Hayhoe In the light of the evidence given at the coroner's inquest, I instructed the Special Investigation Branch of the Royal Military Police to resume its inquiries into the unfortunate death of Private Darkin. The report of the investigation has now been brought to the attention of the Director of Army Legal Services. In the light of his advice, and with my knowledge, disciplinary action has been initiated against three individuals, two lance-corporals and a private soldier, in respect of their actions whilst serving with the late Private Darkin at Simpson Barracks, Northampton. No grounds were found for taking similar action against any other individual.

In addition, a number of administrative measures have been put in hand at the Royal Pioneer Corps training centre to strengthen the care and supervision exercised over recruits undergoing training. I have written separately to my hon. Friend and the right hon. Member giving more details of the steps taken.

I should like to repeat that brutality, ill-treatment or bullying in any form will not be tolerated in the British Army and I am satisfied that the incidents connected with Private Darkin have now been fully investigated and the appropriate action taken. ■

Pioneer Long Lost Trails...

| One from 521 Coy from 1970-1972 and 522 Coy and one with 37 years unbroken service!

DR ELSON - I served between 1970 and 1980. I was in 521 Coy from 1970-72 before moving to Aldershot and then to 522 Coy

(at COD Chilwell). I wish to know if there are any personnel from these two Companies still around. My number is: 07768911255.

IHAVE seen and posted on FB years of service. It made me wonder if I am the longest continuous service at 37 years unbroken service. I served from Aug

1969 - Jun 2006.
Ivor Whittaker

THE PIONEER



A tribute to two important people

IF IT was not for my wonderful wife Lorna (Cleopatra photo), I would most certainly not have a Facebook page and would certainly not be who I am today. Also, like my many Veteran colleagues and friends, we would not have achieved so much without our wives support. Well done to our good Ladies.

I have attached photos that depict an overall look at my career, starting with my basic training platoon, "Burma".

Where are you guys now ? After serving with 206 Coy, RAVC ADU N I and 522 Coy I was posted back to RPC TC in 1976 and that is where I met the next person I wish to publicly pay tribute to. He is in the 9th photo having a discussion with me and the Officers Mess chef ACC. It is of course the then, Captain John Allen. This is the very first time I have had the opportunity to thank him. I have been befriended by John, as we became aware of each other on Facebook, thanks to Lorna.

During my time working in the Officers' Mess between 1976 & 1978, I was taken I believe to the Cairngorm mountains on adventure training with many others by John, to learn to ski.

Due to large numbers in the lessons, I said to John, who is an excellent skier. "Sir, can I follow you around?" "Yes", was his answer and he taught me to ski, (monkey see monkey do!). That was the beginning of what I achieved, as can be seen in the photo, which depicts my awards concerning skiing at RPC

Defence Coy HQ 1 BR Corps. Plus would you believe, John took over as OC as I was posted back to RPC TC in 1984.

My trip to the Cairngorm's was shortened by a week due to a sad event and I had to return to run the Officers' Mess. This action really upset me and I considered leaving the Army having being offered a manager's job and was contemplating emigration to Canada. John, being the excellent officer that he was, took me to one side and pointed out options that he could arrange for me.

One of these was an immediate posting to the D & E Platoon at 3 Inf Bde Portadown Northern Ireland and of course, I accepted, to which Lorna was not happy.

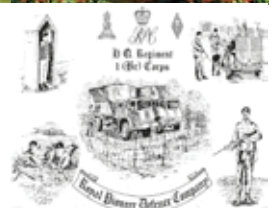
Without John's good advice and encouragement to keep me in the Corps, I would not have become or achieved what I did. Ending my career as RSM of 23 Group RPC. Thank you very much Mr John F J Allen MBE.

I was also proud to be asked to pose for the painting commissioned by the Central Sergeants Mess.

And last but not least, a very big thank you to all those who assisted and made my career fantastic.

With your help the RPC continued to be one of the best until the end. God Bless. Thank you all for taking the time to read this "Tribute to All" who I served with.

Roger Kirby



Prestatyn and Nescliffe

I AM 90 years old, I was called up in 1944, this was 8 months before the war finished. My number was 14900090. I did my training and I was sent to Prestatyn in North Wales to join the Pioneer Corps. After this I moved a number of times and did some time at Nescliffe Ammunition Depot.

A Till

Adopted family

I WOULD like to say a big thank you to everyone that attended the REUNION it was great to see so many yet again, not forgetting the guests as well.

It was nice to see that many more of my adopted family was enjoying themselves. I am so looking forward to NEXT YEAR, S all being well. So in the meantime all of my PIONEER FAMILY (ADOPTED) that is keep well and safe in whatever and wherever you are until the next time, R&G forever.

Archie Goode

Cracking weekend

WE ARE home, been shopping and the car is unpacked, Janice Cowton and i would like to say thank you to all our old friends and the new ones we have made for making it another cracking Pioneer weekend see you all next year.

Darren Burton

I will be there!

I WILL be there next year!

Dougie Durrant

Eternally grateful to Pioneer soldier



■ Pioneers helping at The Globe, Kenilworth. 1940.

Picture: Leamington Courier

I AM hoping you may be able to provide me with some information relating to the deployment of a Pioneer unit in Kenilworth or Coventry in 1940.

I am now 91, however, when I was 14 I was buried in the wreckage of the Globe Inn in Kenilworth, destroyed by a German landmine. It was due to the action of a soldier who dug through the rubble of the collapsed building that I survived. I never knew who that soldier was and did not meet with him after the event. I was told he was a member of the Pioneer Corps some of whom were billeted in the Abbey Hotel, Kenilworth. Only recently I thought to access the internet and was surprised to find so much information about the Pioneer Corps. I may never know the name of that soldier or where his war service took him, but I remain eternally grateful. I joined the RAF in 1944 aged 18 and served three and a half years.

The night the Globe was destroyed was 21st November, one week after Coventry's worst air raid on 14th November in which 600 folk were killed. It is possible a unit of the Pioneer Corps were deployed at the time to assist in the clean-up operations, but that is just a guess on my part.

Roy Stanley

Ed note: 28 people died that night, you were indeed very lucky.

If anyone has any information on this action please let us know. I have identified 4 Companies employed in Coventry they were 22, 100, 103 and 811 (Smoke) Companies.

In the action on 14th November one WO2, one SSgt, 1 LCpl and 4 Ptes received the following citation:

I am directed by the Area Commander to state that he has read with gratification the report of O.C. 811(S) Company Pioneer Corps, regarding the meritorious behaviour of the men of his Company and of the Warrant Officer, Non-commissioned Officers and men named above in particular, during and enemy attack on Coventry on the night of 14/15th November, 1940.

The Area Commander desires that his congratulations on their behaviour should be conveyed to all ranks through the medium of the Unit's Part II Orders.

Today, nothing remains of The Globe, except in the memories of a few and in Abbey End, where there is a small stone plinth bearing a bronze plate recording details of the fateful event. Further reading can be found at: www.khas.co.uk/from-the-archives-last-night-at-the-globe/

REME Interloper

HAD THE privilege of attending the Royal Pioneer Corps reunion this weekend with my dad and mum, had a fantastic evening last night and met some really nice people.

Many thanks to all for allowing a REME interloper into your do.

Kind regards,

Brian Popkin

Operation Muskateer



■ Pioneer Brian Freeth, National Standard Bearer for Suez Canal Association Picture: Brian Freeth

I HAVE just celebrated my 80th birthday on 11 May 2017 with a big party at home with family and friends on the day. Last year after 27 years as a Standard Bearer I was given the honour of promotion to the position of National Standard Bearer for the Suez Canal Zoners Association.

I was on parade at Weymouth in June for the annual Veterans weekend and in September at Basingstoke for the Suez Canal Zoners reunion weekend.

I was on active service in the Suez Canal zone with 524 Company RPC

based in Port Said in November 1956 on Operation Musketeer. In the UK I was based at No 1 ESD, Long Marston, working on the railway system.

I am enclosing a recent photo taken at the 2016 Armed Forces parade in Birmingham. I am wearing the sand coloured beret.

Brian Freeth

Ed Note: Looks like you are wearing the wrong Pioneer cap badge, I will send you one through the post. You may also recognise Norman on page 55?

THE PIONEER

■ **NORMAN**, I am sorry not to have been in contact before now to thank you for sending my Xmas Draw winnings so promptly. But things, health ways, have not been too good. I miss the Corps Weekends but look forward to reading "The Pioneer", I was sorry to read about Wilf. You and your son do a wonderful job on it. Best wishes to you all.

Derek Luker

■ **THANK YOU** so much for the RPCA Magazine, great reading, hope you are keeping well.

Christine Powell

■ **IT WAS** nice to see Mr Derek Luker from Aberdare winning first prize in Christmas Draw. Keep up the good work.

Phil Marks

■ **A MASSIVE** thank you to Norman Brown and Paul Brown for an awesome Magazine. Great read and awesome photos of my Red & Green Brothers & Sisters

James Upfield

■ **NICE TO** see photo of St David's Barracks from long ago (before the new blocks were put up) in the last issue of The Pioneer. Brings back fond memories. Went round that BFT route in my mind. I failed again. Lol.

Adrian Hughes

■ **WHAT A** good end to a great weekend and a big thank you to Norman Brown for being the best – see you all in November

Glen Lath

■ **THANK YOU** Norman Brown for a fantastic reunion weekend, this was my first one and I had a great laugh, it's always so nice catching up with old friends again but more importantly meeting new friends too. I'm already looking forward to next year's reunion.

Mac McAllister

■ **THANKS FOR** a great weekend Norman, I don't think we stopped laughing from the moment we arrived to the moment we left.

Jenn & Steve

Bone



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



Medals reunited

JUST THOUGHT I would take this opportunity to say what a great read the Pioneer magazine was this time and always is. Interesting to see the history of the Corps and the great work we have all done over the years around the world.

With that I would say even though the Pioneer Corps is no longer, it doesn't stop there.

As some of you know, some time back I setup the FB group Medals Lost & Found which has almost 1100 members and is slowly becoming one of the biggest resources and organizations for reuniting lost & found service medals.

The group is run by ex Pioneers, myself & Paddy (John McPhillips) who is moderator and who I will be promoting to

administrator of the group and Nick Tuner ex Royal Corps of Signals, great work gentleman. So as you can see the Royal Pioneers live on RED on GREEN forever. Maybe you would like to give the group a mention in the next news letter Norman Brown.

Let us keep it in the family, so if there are any Pioneers who would like to help us or think you could add some value to the group, just drop me a line.

After all it's not what you know but who you know and Pioneers always come up with the goods.

Great magazine Norman.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/medalslostfound/>
Stevie Belgrove



Queen and Country

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

WAS recommended this book by Mrs Jenny Tubridy the widow of ex SSgt Paddy Tubridy as there was a photo of our In-Pensioner Micky Hull on the front cover – the photograph was taken at the Field of Remembrance in November 2012 and also shows Sgt Chris Strange.

As consort to Queen Elizabeth II for almost 70 years, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh has been a steadfast pillar of support to Britain's longest-reigning monarch. The couple travelled the world, meeting and greeting heads of state and members of other royal families, acting as ambassadors for Britain while raising their own family and undertaking a range of official duties.

Like families of all backgrounds, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh have

enjoyed many happy times and endured moments of sadness. But through it all has shone a golden thread of togetherness, resulting in a wealth of glorious memories and moments to treasure.

In this special publication, as the couple look ahead to their 70th wedding anniversary, we pay tribute to the life and unstinting work of Prince Philip, looking back at his courtship of the teenage Princess Elizabeth, their fairy-tale post-war wedding and his role as her consort for seven decades.

There are hundreds of photographs to enjoy of the Duke cementing his place at the head of the Royal Family becoming a proud parent, grandfather and great-grandfather while sharing ready smiles and flashes of humour with people from all walks of life.

The following are some of the quips and quotes from the book:

1967 – When asked if he would like to visit the Soviet Union, he replied, "I would like to go to Russia very much, although the bastards murdered half my family."

1969 – The Duke said to Tom Jones after his Royal Variety Performance, "What do you gargle with, pebbles?" He later added, "It is very difficult at all to see how it is possible to become immensely valuable by singing what I think are the most hideous songs."

2001 – to Elton John: "Oh it's you that owns that ghastly car is it? We often see it when driving to Windsor Castle."

"If it doesn't fart or eat hay then she isn't interested...." Speaking about his daughter, Princess Anne, and her love of horses.

PRINCE PHILIP – A LIFETIME DEVOTED TO QUEEN AND COUNTRY
AUTHOR: PAULINE HAWKINS
ISBN 978-1-911276-23-4



■ Prince Philip at the Garden of Remembrance, Westminster

Picture: RPCA Archives

The Nazi Titanic

**Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied**

THE LITTLE known story of the most intriguing ship ever to sail. Built in 1927, the German ocean liner SS Cap Arcona was the greatest ship since the RMS Titanic, and one of the most celebrated luxury liners in the world. When the Nazis seized control in Germany, she was stripped down for use as a floating barracks and troop transport. Later, during the war, Hitler's minister, Joseph Goebbels, cast her as the "star" in his epic propaganda film about the sinking of the legendary Titanic.

Following the film's enormous failure, the German Navy used the Cap Arcona to transport German soldiers and civilians across the Baltic, away from the Red Army's advance. In the Third Reich's final days, the

ill-fated ship was packed with thousands of concentration camp prisoners. Without adequate water, food, or sanitary facilities, the prisoners suffered as they waited for the end of the war. Just days before Germany surrendered, the Cap Arcona was mistakenly bombed by the British Royal Air Force, and nearly all of the prisoners were killed in the last major tragedy of the Holocaust and one of history's worst maritime disasters.

Although the British government sealed many documents pertaining to the ship's sinking, Robert P Watson has unearthed forgotten records, conducted many interviews, and used over 100 sources, including diaries and oral histories, to expose the story. As a result, The Nazi Titanic is a riveting and astonishing account of an enigmatic ship that played a devastating role in World War 2 and the

Holocaust.

Ed note: On pages 250/251 Bob Kutner is mentioned as an Intelligence Officer. This man was originally known as Norbert Kutner (service number 13117739) date of birth 13 Jan 34.

He enlisted at Nottingham and joined 63 Primary Training Centre for basic training and then joined the Pioneer Corps on 16 Dec 43, he transferred to the Intelligence Corps on 17 Nov 44.

He was part of the British ground units liberating the beach at Lubeck Bay. He arrived to see hundreds of bodies washed up on shore, a sight so dramatic that he and his comrades referred to it as the "Nazi Beach of Blood".

**THE NAZI TITANIC
AUTHOR: ROBERT P WATSON
ISBN: 978-0-306-82489-0**

The London Cage

**Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied**

IN 1940, behind locked doors on one of London's most exclusive streets, the British Secret Service discreetly established a clandestine prison. It was called the London Cage, one of nine 'cages' around the country, and the one to which the prisoners with the most to reveal were sent.

Here, German prisoners of war, including top-ranking Nazis, were subjected to 'special intelligence treatment' designed to break their will and make them spill their secrets. The stakes could hardly be higher: the very outcome of the Second World War might hinge on obtaining information that

the detainees were determined to withhold.

As the war drew to a close, the investigators turned to the grim task of uncovering the truth about German war crimes – including the camp guards who shot fifty of the 'Great Escape' Allied airmen.

The cage was transformed into a crucial centre for gathering evidence against those who had perpetrated atrocities.

Until now, what happened at the London Cage has remained a secret closely guarded by the Home Office. This riveting book reveals the full details of operations there as well as the subsequent efforts to hide them.

Helen Fry's extraordinary original research paints rich

portraits of the interrogators and their prisoners, and gives disturbing, compelling accounts of daily life revolving around systemic Soviet-style mistreatment.

Helen also provides sensational evidence to counter official denials concerning the use of 'truth drugs' and 'enhanced interrogation' techniques.

Bringing dark secrets to light, this ground breaking book at last provides an objective and complete history of the London Cage.

(Ed note: many members of the Pioneer Corps are mentioned in this book)

**THE LONDON CAGE
AUTHOR: HELEN FRY
ISBN: 978-0-300-22193-0**



The Last Post

Since the last newsletter it is with great sadness to report the following deaths

BOWEY HENRY WILLIAM GEORGE (24376070) EX PTE (AGED 76) 2 APR 17
Served 1959 – 1965

SWEETLAND RICHARD (24156899) EX LCPL (AGED 67) 21 MAY 17 – SERVED 1970 – JAN 92)

Derrick Shaw wrote: My brother Taff Shaw and myself attended Richard (SWEETY) Sweetlands final walk on this earth, Sweety was a 22 year Royal Pioneer and I have to say it was our pleasure to stand in the presence of this man, farewell Sweety it was an honour knowing you and I salute you right up to the Pioneer club in the sky, my thoughts are with your family at this time . Red over Green my friend

WELLER DAVID (23301801) EX LCPL (AGED 79) 6 JAN 17 – SERVED APR 56-APR 58
Was driving instructor at Wrexham)

SEARS WILLIAM (1537054) EX CPL (AGED 100) 30 APR 17 – ENLISTED IN AUGUST 1940
His life story was published in the last edition of The Pioneer.

HEPPINSTALL PETER JOHN (24539763) EX CPL (AGED 53) 22 JUN 17 – SERVED 1981 – 1997

The following appeared on Facebook:
I am pleased to say that there was an excellent turnout to support the family at the funeral of Peter Heppinstall. Eleven standards travelled from far and wide to attend. Our thanks go to the RBL Riders & including Chris Elvis Oram for making his way up from Dudley for the escort from the church in Pontefract to the cemetery in South Kirkby. As usual the veterans responded to the call - well done guys you know who you are. Finally on behalf of the veteran family can I thank Kim, Michael and the family for the hospitality shown afterwards - Kim said that Peter has left a big hole in her life, hopefully we can help to fill a small part of that hole. God Bless Peter John Heppinstall - R I P Sir - Duty Done.

PEARSALL DAVE M (23821363) EX LCPL (AGED 73) 28 JUN 17 – SERVED 1961-1983

Served 6 Aug 74 to 5 Aug 83.
Was a member of the Corps of Drums.



Dave Pearsall (base drummer)

CLAPTON COLIN EDWARD (24332620) EX CPL (AGED 61) 24 JUL 17
Served 13 Sep 73-13 Jun 89

BALL KENNETH C (24409552) EX SGT 24 JUL 17
Served from Mar 82 with 68 Coy/168 Regt

O'DRISCOLL PATRICK (PAT) (23706420) EX PTE (AGED 76) 28 JUL 17
Served 1959-1962



Pat O'Driscoll

RODD JOHN (24628255) EX PTE (AGED 59) 9 SEP 18

Served in 34 Coy RPC was discharged on 25 Mar 89.

LYLE FRANCIS JOSEPH JOHN (FRANK) (23864474) EX WO1 3 JUL 17 – SERVED 1961-1984.

Mr Lyle joined the Corps in Northampton in April 1961. After leaving the Training Centre was posted to 206 Company, where he served until June 1964. His next stop was sunny Cyprus for a nine month emergency tour.

On return from Cyprus, ten weeks later found him in the Radfan running a detachment of 908 PCLU during this tour the Saracen he was in whilst doing the pay rounds was blown up by a mine – the off side wheel was blown 100 yards away! On return to UK he was posted to 522 Company. After 12 months he was on the move again, this time to BAOR for duty with 13 PCL Gp and HQ 5 PCLU. In 1970 he was off roving again, this time to HQ Brunei Garrison. On return to UK he served two years with the CMRO Documentation Team at Exeter from 1971-1973.

He then returned to HQ 13 PCL Gp as Chief Clerk before a short tour to HQ BAOR in 1976. This was followed by a posting to HQ 23 Group at Bicester until being promoted to WO1 and posting to HQ BAOR. In March 1983 he was awarded the MBE in the New Year's Honours List.

Ex Sgt Frank Berry writes: It is with regret that on 28 July 2017, I learnt of the death of a very good friend and comrade, Frank Lyle.

I first met Frank at 206 Coy at Long Marston and it was he who encouraged me to become a clerk. Along with Dave Shepherd, we all played football for the



Ted Foster receiving his LS&GC

Frank Lyle

Coy. Whilst serving in Aden with 518 Coy, Frank served with 908 PCLU and was mainly in the Radfan on civil labour duties where we were in contact again.

We again met up at Bicester whilst he was on the Docs team at Exeter.

The next time we came into contact was in BAOR firstly on exercises and then whilst at HQ 13 Gp, he used to come and stay weekends with my family at Hannover and my children used to call him Uncle.

When we had a BAOR Corps shoot at Bracht, I had an accident on the range (rabbit holes) (Geordie Turnbull submitted sketches that were published in the Corps Magazine) and jammed the butt of the rifle in my ribs.

Frank was detailed to take me to RAF Bruggen to be checked over.

On arrival there, on getting out of the vehicle, Frank cut his hand when closing the door and was treated before me!

He went back with his arm in a sling with me driving. After I left the Army and whilst visiting my son and his family in Wulpke Germany Frank was at HQ 2 Div at Lubbecke, so we used to meet up and have a meal and reminisce over old times and other comrades.

After leaving the Army, Frank remained in Germany for a while but then decided to move back to Dublin, and we remained in touch, meeting at reunions at Bicester and Coventry. He will be sadly missed by his family and all who knew him.

FOSTER ALBERT EDWARD (RED) (22807547) EX WO2 (CSM) 21 JUL 17 (AGED 83)

WO2 Ted Foster retired from the Army in 1974 as CSM of 521 Coy RPC at Bicester and joined the MOD Police mainly working in E Sites, Bicester. However, during his long service he held a variety jobs within the Corps. In March 1953 he was promoted Cpl whilst serving with 71 Coy and was promoted Sgt with 251 Coy RPC. In 1961 he was serving with 10 PCLU in South Cameroon and in 1965 he was promoted SSgt and was employed as a clerk with 906 PCLU. He was then posted as Chief Clerk 1 Detachment 906 PCLU in Tripoli before being posted to 2 Detachment in Benghazi when Tripoli closed. In Dec 1968 he was posted to 438 MCLG before being posted on promotion to WO2 to Training Wing HQ 23 Group RPC at Bicester in March 1969. He left HQ 23 Group in September 1971 for a short walk down the hill to 521 Coy RPC. He was awarded his LS&GC from Col IA Crompton, Deputy Commander Bicester Garrison on 28 Oct 70 (*Ed note: in those days 18 years exemplary service was required to qualify for this medal*).

COMPTON GERRY K (CLOGGY) (4758962) EX WO2 (CSM) 11 JUN 17 (AGED 90)

Served from 15 Feb 42 (as a boy soldier) and in following 29 years and 283 days saw service in India, Burma, Sudan, Egypt, Eritrea, Palestine, Malaya, Austria, Germany, Brunei and Sarawak as well as the UK. At the age of 14 he enlisted into the Yorks & Lancs Regiment – at the time he was only 4ft 11in tall and weighed between 4 and a half and 5 stones.

He became a flute and piccolo player in the Yorks & Lancs Band. In 1946 at the age of 19 he was promoted Sergeant – he lost them a few weeks later for fighting with some Americans! Out of the four Americans he had managed to hit before he was knocked out by a bottle to the back of his head one had a broken jaw, another had his nose spread across his face, the third needed several stitches in and around his ear and the fourth had just been knocked out cold!

After a spell at regimental duties he volunteered to return as a bandsman before being discharged from the army in April 1955 and joined the prison service and worked in Wakefield and Bradford prisons. After being suspended for 3 days (therefore losing 3 days wages) for using undue violence against a prisoner (This prisoner had attacked a visiting magistrate and two prison officers), he became disillusioned with the prison service and applied to join the Canadian Army. He passed all the tests and medicals but when his wife Beryl had her medical they found that she was pregnant with her third child and the Canadian army at that time would only accept a family that had two dependants.

He was then recalled to the colours for the Suez crisis – he could have been exempted because of his job but as he was sick of prison life he reported for duty to Dover Castle. After the Suez debacle he asked to sign on and finish his pension service. He was offered a job as a Staff Sergeant in the Military Provost Staff Corps at Shepton Mallett. This was the army prison, but declined this post as he had had enough of this in civvy prisons.

He was then offered a position training

recruits at Horsley Hall which he accepted. After two years training recruits he was attached to No 6 Port Operating Squadron in Cairn Ryan, Scotland. In the final 4 months of this unit's existence before disbandment they were deep sea dumping excess ordnance in the Irish Sea.

On 18th April 1959 he was posted to HQ 5 PCLU, Hannover, this PCLU consisted of a Headquarters and six detachments located about 20 to 30 Kilometres apart.

In 1962 he was posted back to UK with a posting to 206 Coy RPC at Long Marston initially as Chief Clerk and then, at his request, as a Section Sergeant. He was then posted for a 1 year unaccompanied tour to Brunei in 1964.

A posting to Malaysia in 1965 followed, this time accompanied.

After 18 months he was posted to 521 Coy RPC at Bicester as Company Sergeant Major. The Company at that time had a strength of 450 personnel spread from Bournemouth on the South coast to Catterick in Yorkshire where the Railway Detachment were based. This section moved all over the place, repairing the railway tracks and sidings that were used by the military. The Company also had 30 to 50 man detachments that were rotated every three months at Sharjah and Bahrain and similar groups of 52 men that were sent for training to HQ 23 Group Training Wing on ten week Infantry Training Refresher Courses. The latter groups, after their training, were deployed as relief for the Defence Employment Platoon that were spread all over in such places as Malaysia, Germany and Aden. They were known as the "Ever Ready Brigade".

He was finally discharged in October 1969.

The following is an extract from his book "England's Last Hope":

On 29th October 1969 I paraded the Company of about 300 men. As each Sergeant reported strength and relevant



Cloggy Compton

details, I handed over to the new Sergeant Major. He formed the troops into a hollow square formation and then reported to the OC, Major John Hickman, who had been on the edge of the square with the officers of the Company whom he told to fall in. The OC then gave a speech to the assembled throng and handed me my formal Discharge Book, AB108. He gave me the order: "CSM Compton, Dismiss!"

In response to the order, I saluted the assembled company, did an about turn and marched off the drill square. As I was doing so, another order rang out: "Three cheers for Mr Compton!"

I continued marching with my pace stick under my arm, head up, determined that I would not lose control and show any weakness such as shedding a tear; it was unthinkable. I was a tough bastard, none tougher, a Company Sergeant Major, a Malayan Scout, a member of the SAS, a Yorkshireman, a soldier of the King and Queen and an ex Boy Soldier. I wasn't going to succumb to any sentimentality. But as I got to the edge of the square, heading for the Company office, with the cheers ringing in my ears, the tears welled in my eyes and started to roll down my cheeks.

IN THE APRIL 2017 ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER WE PUBLISHED THE DEATH OF MAJ (500362) CG HARDY, LT COL ROD OTHERN WRITES:

Major Chris Hardy (Royal Pioneers, British Army) later a Commander in the Philippine Auxiliary Coast Guard.

I recently learnt of the untimely death of Christopher Hardy on the 31st of January this year from cancer and was deeply saddened by the News. He was only 60 years old. He lived in the Philippines with his beloved Jos and family and was buried with full military honours by the Philippine Coastal and River Guards AGROUPATION in which he held the rank of Commander (Lt Colonel equivalent).

Chris was a man of many parts and led a varied and often adventurous life. We both served in the same infantry regiment, the Queens Lancashire Regiment but at different times. One of his roles was as COP Platoon Commander in Northern Ireland before he transferred into the Royal Pioneers and was posted into 518 Coy RPC, a field force unit which I was commanding. He very quickly made his mark as a first class young officer, who was respected by his soldiers and in return he looked after their interests and welfare. He had a great sense of humour and was a thoroughly likeable human being. On my posting to DAPL, Tony Powell (RIP) became OC of 518 Coy and Chris became his 2IC. They became great friends, having a love of motor cycles in common. Later Chris became the first Pioneer officer to become an instructor at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, where he acquitted himself very ably and to the credit of the Corps. He returned to the fold to command 518 Coy RPC, which he did in his normal professional manner; in 1989 he commanded the Honour Guard for Princess Diana's visit to Northampton as part of their Jubilee Year celebrations.

Chris then went on to become a staff officer with 48 Ghurkha Rifles in Hong Kong. At this point he decided to leave the British Army but stayed in Hong Kong operating Jardine Securicor Ghurkha

Services, which provided ex Ghurkha soldiers to be employed as bodyguards to rich Chinese and also bank guards. At its height he employed 1,200 ex Ghurkhas who did a very professional job. He told me that life 'got a bit hairy' as the Chinese Tongs did not appreciate the professional abilities of his organization. Chris moved on and came to the Philippines, got married to Jos and set up business there. Amongst other things he got involved with the Philippine Coastal and River Guards AGROUPATION, instructing them in leadership skills. He made many friends there. He had many hobbies, was a keen shot, was an excellent dog handler and enjoyed rebuilding motor cycles. He fought a brave but losing battle against liver cancer and has left us all too soon. He will be sadly missed by his UK family and those in the Philippines. I have included several photos which depict his military life and am posting them with these reminiscences on Facebook on which he was an active contributor.



Maj Chris Hardy



Maj Chris Hardy's Funeral



Maj Chris Hardy's Honour Guard

**NOTHING BEHIND
BY MAJ (RETD) DAVID RAINEY**

Having noted in your last edition the passing of 24274119 Pte Hagen RPC, I felt compelled to say something of a man I held in high regard, particularly as his 12 years of service in The RPC were spent as a private soldier and his contribution might otherwise remain unrecognised.

David Hagan was a person of slight build, a quiet and almost nervous demeanour and who suffered from a minor speech impediment which sometimes caused him to stammer. We were contemporaries serving in 518 Coy RPC at Bicester and it was through him that I discovered that unflinching loyalty, which I was to later identify as the hallmark of a Royal Pioneer.

His fortitude, hard work and patience, were an inspiration to me. None more so when one day we had to pop down to the Ordnance Depot in a ropey old ¾ ton LR. For some inexplicable reason he was riding in the back and there came a time, in Police parlance, when I had occasion to perform a three point turn. As a matter of routine I asked Pte Hagen if there was anything behind to which he responded, 'nnnnnnnnoooooothhng'.

As I reversed and the vehicle tipped into the vertical plane, plunging into the steep sided ditch below, I realised that he had, in fact, answered the question correctly. There was nothing behind. However, this fact did not alleviate my concern that I had succeeded in hastening David Hagen's demise in a non-operational environment. Looking over my left shoulder and

downward I saw him standing on the tailboard looking up at me. Now transformed into the pilot of a vehicle aiming skywards, I was amazed to discover that David, shrouded in his ¾ ton tent, was still alive. In answer to my enquiry about whether he was OK, he responded with a plucky and verbally unimpeded, 'Yes I suppose so'.

Shortly afterwards we went on our separate career paths. With the introduction of mandatory retirement at the twelve year point capable soldiers left the Corps, but I am certain David remained a loyal and trusted Pioneer until the end of his service. How do I know this?

Having assisted with the vehicle's covert recovery and appearing entirely nonchalant during the return of the slightly more battered LR, he said nothing of my driving skills and remained silent on the subject throughout my career.

This demonstrated his generosity of spirit and certainly was above and beyond the call of duty?

As an aside, his brother was also in the Army and some two years after the 'death plunge', I visited the medical centre in Wilton. The RAMC duty orderly's face looked familiar and I asked his name. 'Private Hhhhhhhhhhaaaaaa' (at that point I interjected with 'Hagen'). 'Hooooowwwwww doooooo you know mmmmy name', he asked. 'I know your brother', I responded!

If David's brother is still alive I can assure him that I was proud and privileged to serve alongside such a good man and that I was greatly saddened to learn of his death. ■

IN THE APRIL EDITION OF THE NEWSLETTER WE PUBLISHED THE SAD DEATH OF EX CPL KEVIN GALLOWAY, THE FOLLOWING ARE PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN AT HIS FUNERAL





And finally...

A hardy Pioneer Falklands Veteran, some famous sayings and an IRA hand grenade recently unearthed!

**Report: Norman Brown
Pictures: Supplied**

A PIONEER Falklands War veteran risked his life by taking to the A34 on his 8mph mobility scooter to get to a disability allowance assessment. Former soldier Geoffrey Berry, 60, was seen trundling alongside 70mph traffic as he made his way from his home in Bicester to East Oxford for his Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessment.

"If you do not go to these assessments then your disability allowance can be stopped and I need that help to get by.

"I stayed on the hard shoulder the whole time because I didn't want to get in the way of other road users.

"Even though it was one of the hottest days of the year I didn't wear a hat because I was worried it was going to blow off and onto a car windscreen."

When Mr Berry, who reached the rank of corporal in the Army, was stopped on the hard shoulder of the A34 southbound by police.

He said: "The officers were very nice and

concerned about my safety.

"I explained what happened and then one of the officers telephoned the call centre and asked for a home visit for me.

"I have now had a text through confirming that I will be receiving one and that a date and time is currently being organised." ■

Some famous sayings...

The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.

Albert Einstein

Speak when you are angry and you will make the best speech you will ever regret.

Ambrose Bierce

The first half of our lives is ruined by our parents, and the second half by our children.

Clarence Darrow

Start off every day with a smile and get it over with.

WC Fields

Never keep up with the Joneses. Drag them down to your level, it's cheaper.

Quentin Crisp

You can't say civilisation don't advance ... for in every war they kill you a new way.

Will Rogers

If you wake up and you're not in pain, you know you're dead.

Russian proverb

When I asked my accountant if anything could get me out of this mess I am in now, he thought for a long time and said, "Yes, death would help."

Robert Morley

They usually have two tellers in my local bank, except when it's very busy, when they have one.

Rita Rudner

The definition of a Consultant: someone who borrows your watch, tells you the time and then charges you for the privilege.

A letter in the times

The word "Politics" is derived from the word "Poly", meaning "Many", and the word "Ticks", meaning "Blood Sucking Parasites".

Larry Hardman ■



Master Chef Dewsnap when he served in the Army Catering Corps



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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THE PIONEER



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