

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ROYAL PIONEER CORPS ASSOCIATION

royalpioneercorps.co.uk

FIONEER







Front Cover Commando Comic, thank you to D C Thompson and Bill McLoughlin Picture: © D C Thompson



Back Cover Commando Comic, thank you to D C Thompson and Bill McLoughlin Picture: © D C Thompson

Registered Charity Number 1024036 Patron HRH The Duke of Gloucester KG GCVO President Colonel A Barnes TD JP Chairman Brigadier D Clouston MBE **Controller / Editorial** Norman Brown BEM Esq **Design / Editorial** Paul Brown 🕿 telephone 07868 757642 🖂 email

- royalpioneercorps@gmail.com → website
- www.royalpioneercorps.co.uk facebook group www.facebook.com/groups/ chunkies/
- facebook page www.facebook.com/ royalpioneercorps
- youtube page www.youtube.com/user/ royalpioneercorps

The Royal Pioneer Corps Association

c/o Bicester Garrison Support Unit St George's Barracks Arncott Bicester OX25 1PP

EDITORIAL

ELCOME to the largest Pioneer Association newsletter ever produced. It was agreed at the June Association Council Meeting that the number of colour Newsletters would be reduced to one per year (in October/ November) and the April issue would be a black and white update only. Producing one newsletter a year will save the Association in printing and postage costs. I was going to start this column with the

I was going to start this column with the immortal words from Gerald Kane "Good morning bros and lasses on this fine day from Margate hope u all have a good day". These are the words he prints every day (unless the weather is, of course, bad) on the Association Facebook page. If you wish to keep up to date with events and other peoples news please log on to: https://www.facebook.com/groups/ chunkies/

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our Chairman, David Clouston, on his promotion to Brigadier effective from 1 October 2018, I am sure that all members will agree that this is a well-deserved promotion. With this newsletter is a booking form for

next year's Pioneer Reunion Weekend which

CONTENTS

2 Editorial Latest news from the Editor

8

- 4 News and Tommy the Silent Soldier Well done to Paul Davis
- 5 Carrying the Standard `Ike Easingwood carries the Royal Standard
- 6 News News and Roy Palmer becoming a Chelsea Pensioner
- 7 Reviewing the Army's Beard Ban Get a shave!
 - Past Events and Pioneers Doing Outstanding Work Amazing amount raised
 - The Scully Model made by Bob Gillespie One of the auction lots at the Pioneer Reunion
- 10 Opening of The Silibaravi Centre A brave soldier remembered
- 14 Reunion Club Ladies Dinner Night A night to remember
- 16 Pioneer Reunion Weekend 2018 Another successful weekend at Coventry
- 28 In Pensioner Roy Palmer Including his service details
- 32 72nd Past and Presen Officers Dinner Another good evening

PIONEER

once again is to be held at The Royal Court Hotel, Coventry from 14 to 17 June 2019. It is again to be the same format as this year's, i.e. Carvery meals on the Friday and Sunday evenings and a gala dinner on the Saturday. There is live entertainment on all three evenings (Fantastic Groups have already been booked), On Saturday following the Association's Annual General Meeting there will be a coach trip to the National Memorial Arboretum and a buffet lunch in the Royal British Legion Club at Alrewas. Full details of the weekend are shown on page 35. I have now visited the Arboretum over 20 times and on every visit I see something different, a few examples of different plots are shown on page 72. We appreciate for some finding funds for the weekend in one lump sum is difficult, we therefore accept payment for the weekend in instalments.

Once again with this issue you will find Christmas Draw tickets, please do your best to either buy them or sell them to others. If you can sell more please do not hesitate to ask for more. This is one of the few ways the Association can raise money to keep the Association going.

The family of Brigadier Tony Ridings recently

- **34** Future Events 2018/2019 Hope you can attend some of them
- 35 The Pioneers The Commando comic reproduced
- 54 Service details of Capt E Rhodes Did he fire the first shot of WW2?
- 62 Pioneer Long Lost Trails Can you help
- 63 We got our man A true story from Northern Ireland
- 64 Pioneer Graves in Ireland Maintained by CWGC
- 66 14 (Independent) PCLU Isolated in Berlin
- 68 HRH The Duke of Gloucester Makes his first visit to HQ 23 Group RPC
- 70 The award of George Medal To Sgt Waghorne
 71 Behind the Front
 - Behind the Front

72

73

74

75

76

PIONEE

WEEKEND

- The National Arboretum Suggestions to view
- Centenary of end of WW1 A poem by Paul Kennedy
- Pioneers with T-Force 1945 Target Force
- The Pioneer Painting Last chance to purchase
- Autobiography of Fred Blake An interesting story

STOP PRESS

Poppy pins with Corps badge currently on order and will be available shortly.

- Northampton Branch holding a Burns Night on 26 Jan 2019. See you there!
- STOP PRESSSTOP PRESSolding a
019. SeeThanks to 1 Regt RLC for kindly
renovating RPC War MemorialFinally, jus
give the Cl
 - Finally, just a reminder to please give the Christmas Draw your full support. Thank you.

donated ten photograph albums which I am currently scanning in for our digital photograph library. Thankfully a lot of these photographs are named and three albums might be of interest to those who either served or trained at the RPC Training Centre, Northampton from March 1970 to September 1972. If you would like copies of these photographs please send a cheque to the value of £10 made payable to RPC Association or make payment via paypal, our account is: royalpioneercorps@gmail.com

Throughout the year Pioneers have gathered from places as far away as Liverpool, Skegness, Bicester, Aldershot, Barnsley and of course the main event, the Pioneer Reunion at Coventry. It is pleasing to see the bond of red and green surviving. A few of these events are mentioned on pages 8 - 30.

165 members attended the Army v Navy Rugby at Twickenham in May and an even larger number will be attending this year, unfortunately by the time this Newsletter is produced the cut-off date will be passed, this match seems to be a sell-out earlier each year last year is sold out by mid-November.

As reported in the April Newsletter, 97 members marched in the Pioneer contingent at the Cenotaph Parade in Whitehall and had a good report on the BBC with three of our members being interviewed. This year we may have over 100 marching so please look out for us on your televisions if you are not marching.

We try our best to make The Pioneer as interesting as possible and this issue contains a large range of subjects. However, we are always looking for more stories and anecdotes, have you a story to tell. If so, please send it in to us (don't worry about grammar or spelling we will edit), photographs with the article would also be appreciated.

Talking about photographs our digital photograph library is still increasing and now numbers about 20,000. We are still trying to enlarge this before photographs are lost, if you have some could you either scan them in and send them electronically or send the photographs to us, we will return them within 7 days.

Finally may I wish you all a very happy Christmas and hope you have a wonderful New Year. I hope to see as many as possible in 2019

Norman Brown







80 Photo Gallery Photos from the last year's events

- 84 Digging through the archives Paul digs through the archives
- 88 The National Army Museum The re-vamped museum well worth a visit
- 90 AGM Minutes of Annual General Meeting
- 91 War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps Get yours now!
- 91 Press Cuttings 1991-2000 Interesting articles from these years
- 95 Derby Draw Congratulations to winners of Derby Draw 2018
- 96 Letters to the Editor Send yours in!
- 101 Book Reviews 2 books to check out
- **102 The Last Post** May they rest in peace
- **103 The Association Shop** If you get a move on, you will get them for Christmas
- **104 And finally...** A little humour
- **106 And finally 2...** Coming up and The Royal Pioneers







NEWS

■ EXTERMINATION WORK is being carried out at a British Army barracks after rats were discovered in one of its buildings. The rodents were found at St David's Barracks in Bicester last month, the home of 1 Regiment Royal Logistic Corps (and the former home for many years of the Pioneers).

The regiment has been based there since moving over from Germany in 2015 and 2016. The process to remove the rats from the barracks is expected to last for another week. A spokesperson for the Ministry of Defence said: "Rats were reported in the Junior Ranks Bar at the headquarters of 1 Regt RLC on 21 August.

"Immediate action was taken and contractors are currently working to eradicate them from the building. The extermination process is expected to last three weeks, during this time meals are being provided at another nearby site as a safety precaution."

■ A REVISED Skansa schedule will enable an earlier build of the museum at Worthy Down, It is now due to start in May 2019 with a handover target to the RLC in August/September 2020.

A formal review for a further £30M for Project Wellesley is due to be submitted to the Treasury later this year.

■ THE BRITISH Forces Germany Legacy Project is producing a high quality glossy coffee table book, 'British Forces in Germany – The Lived Experience.'

It will record the 75 years that British Forces have been stationed in Germany, and if you have stories and high quality photographs of famous people and events that clearly show British/German activities, please contact the Legacy and Projects Officer, HQ BFG, Catterick Kaserne, Detmolder Str 440, 33605 Bielefeld, or bfg-hq-legacyprojectogmailbox@mod.uk

■ A HARTLEPOOL teenager whose dad lost both legs while serving in Afghanistan is to spend a week using a wheelchair to raise money for a leading forces charity. Sixteen-year-old Shauna-Leigh Winspear

Sixteen-year-old Shauna-Leigh Winspear will experience first-hand the daily difficulties faced by disabled war veterans in aid of Help for Heroes, and help to raise greater awareness.

She has been inspired by her dad Craig Winspear, who lost both legs in an explosion while serving his country in December 2011.

In 2016 he won a silver medal as part of the UK basketball side, which reached the final of the Invictus Games in Florida, and he even met Prince Harry. Shauna-Leigh added: "Since then I have seen the difficulties he's been through and I've met so many people with their own struggles who just get on with it day by day, and it is so inspirational. "We all know our veterans can struggle with PTSD and other mental issues as well as physical disabilities, yet we don't take into consideration the challenge of adapting to life in a wheelchair and I would love to raise awareness of that."

She will spend Christmas in the wheelchair while staying with Craig, who now lives in Bedford.

Shauna-Leigh has set up an online sponsorship page and will post daily video updates on YouTube.

Donate by going to the following link: https://tinyurl.com/ybsylpv6

Tommy the Silent Soldier

Pioneer Paul Davis of EDF Energy welcomes the installation of the Silent Silhouette and the company's Doxford premises in Sunderland



Pioneer Paul Davis of EDF Energy

SUNDERLAND customer services centre has become one of the first companies in the region to mark its support for an initiative that commemorates the centenary of the end of World War One.

As part of a Royal British Legion campaign in remembrance of those who fought and died in the First World War, EDF Energy has installed one of the near life-size Tommy silhouettes at the entrance to its Doxford call centre.

As well as marking its support for the national remembrance campaign, the poignant reminder also reinforces the fund raising and support work undertaken all year round by EDF Energy employees.

Bringing the Tommy silhouette to Doxford was the idea of Paul Davis, who served in the Falklands, Northern Ireland and the first Gulf conflict as part of a 15 year career in the armed forces before he joined EDF Energy where he is now telephony operations manager.

As part of his role, Paul, from Durham, also helps to co-ordinate a forces support network across all the company's sites and along with other former military colleagues organises a number of special fund raising activities for various ex-services charities in the North East.

Paul said: "The silent soldier is a unique

Picture: Paul Davis

way to mark the centenary of the First World War and we are proud to demonstrate our support for the Royal British Legion's campaign in this way.

"As well as commemorating those in the armed forces who came home 'silently' from the war and those who tragically never made it back, we hope that it will also help to educate younger generations and represents our respect for all ex-armed forces personnel.

"The North East has always been a strong recruitment area for the military services and we have a number of ex-armed forces personnel working in Doxford. For many, the silent coming home theme of the Tommy silhouette remains very pertinent today, with former soldiers often needing help and guidance in making the transition back to civilian life.

"To meet this need, the support group we have set up provides support and mentoring to those who have come from a career in the armed forces, helping them to overcome any particular problems they may have and enabling them to integrate successfully among colleagues and within the business generally."

The installation of the Silent Silhouette will form part of a range of activities being organised by the company to mark Armistice Day later this year.



Pioneer Ivan Easingwood carrying the Royal Standard

Picture: Henry Henshaw

Carrying the standard

Pioneer Ivan Easingwood carries the Royal Standard. He was also born on the 470th anniversary of The Battle of Bosworth and The Death of King Richard III.

N June Pioneer Ivan Easingwood attended the Leicester Branch meeting at the Richard III centre for the first time, as a member of the Richard III Society, and towards the end of the

Society, and towards the end of the meeting Mrs Sally Henshaw, Branch Secretary, asked for a volunteer to join her in carrying the standard at the forthcoming Choral Evensong Service at Leicester Cathedral to commemorate The Battle of Bosworth and The Death of King Richard III, on Saturday 18th August, he decided to volunteer himself as he felt it would be a very great Honour to carry the Royal Standard and the fact that he was born on the 470th anniversary of The Battle of Bosworth and The Death of King Richard III.

Ivan attended the service wearing his military blazer as he was an Army veteran having served 3 years in 521 company Royal Pioneer Corps, The procession set of from St Martin's House, led by the Verger, Mr John Dilkes, Standard Bearers Sally and myself, followed by Dr Phil Stone, Chairman of the Richard III Society, Mr Martin Traynor, Chairman of the King Richard III Visitor Centre, Councillor Manjula Sood MBE, High Bailiff of Leicester, Mrs Diana Thompson, High Sheriff of Leicestershire, Mr Michael Kapour OBE, Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire, Crucifer and Acolytes, The Reverend Canon Dr Johannes Arens, Canon Preceptor The Very Reverend David Monteith, Dean of Leicester, The Right Reverend Guli Francis-Dehqnai, Bishop of Loughborough, and The Choir of St Wulfram's Grantham. The Procession then proceeded to the King Richard III Visitors Centre for prayers and the scattering of white rose petals over the original grave of King Richard.

The procession then walked over to the statue of King Richard, where the Dean gave a prayer before the procession moved into the Cathedral for the Choral Evensong Service.

While Ivan was carrying The Royal Standard ok King Richard III, his thoughts where of his very good friend and fellow historian, Mr Stuart Bailey, Chairman of The Leicester Civic Society who sadly passed away in June of this year.

Ivan felt a great sense of pride and honour standing in the high alter surrounded by my many friends in the congregation and clergy, as he is a volunteer Welcomer and Session Leader at the Cathedral, After the homily the Dean, Dr Phil Stone Chairman of the Richard III Society, Sally and Ivan as Standard bearers moved into The Ambulatory and stood by the tomb of King Richard III.

The Dean said, "On this day 533 years since Richard, monarch of this realm, yielded his crown his kingdom and his life at Bosworth Field. We are gathered now to remember that day, to command again to God's keeping both Richard and all who gave up their lives, and to commit ourselves to live peaceably, bound by all due loyalties."

Dr Phil Stone. Chairman of The Richard III Society, then laid a wreath of White Roses at the tomb After the service while refreshments were being served in the Great South Aisle, he took up position in the Ambulatory by the tomb of King Richard III, while members of the congregation paid their respects.

Then fellow members of the Richard III Society, Sally Henshaw, husband Henry, Julie Williams, Dr Maggie Clamp and Marian Moulton, and Ivan went for a well-earned meal together.

Ivan sends thanks to Henry Henshaw for taking the photographs of the possession, this was very much appreciated.

NEWS

■ WHILST THE vast majority of the 2.6 million former service personnel go on to lead healthy and productive lives, some veterans still face significant challenges in transitioning to civilian life.

Just 39% of employers would consider employing a veteran without industry specific experience, a common obstacle for those who have dedicated their professional life to military service. Potentially harmful misconceptions about what characterises an armed forces veteran furthermore underpin potential barriers to post-service employment. One in five people aged 18-34 say they most associated the word with retirement, despite an estimated 900,000 veterans being of working age. 54% of the general public also believe that all service leavers have a physical, emotional or mental health problem. However, whilst these assumptions are misplaced, some veterans do experience difficulties surrounding mental health, with 34% reporting feeling overwhelmed by negative thoughts, and a quarter suffering from suicidal ideation.

In response the Government launched Veteran's Gateway (VG) in June last year. This seeks to provide ex-service personnel with a single point of contact for support around healthcare, housing, employability, finances, personal relationships and more.

There is a huge network of organisations supporting the Armed Forces community, so finding the right one for your needs can be tricky. The VG makes it quick and easy by being your first point of contact for whatever support you need, whether you are based in the UK or abroad. Many of the staff working for VG are veterans themselves so they understand the issues that people face after leaving the Armed Forces. They work with people on a oneto-one basis, connecting them with the right support as soon as possible.

VG is made up of a consortium of organisations and Armed Forces charities, including The Royal British Legion, SSAFA – the Armed Forces Charity, Poppyscotland, Combat Stress and Connect Assist. Links with additional partners and organisations – means the VG can get you to the right organisation who can help.. This is the first time a group of this kind has come together formally to deliver a service to help the Armed Forces community.

For more information look up the Veteran's Gateway on the internet.

■ A MURAL at the Civic Centre, Immingham painted by a group of Veterans still Serving with PTSD and other mental and physical issues to commemorate a hundred years since the end of World War 1.

One of the painters was Lee Piggott ex Pioneer.



Adicated their litary service. hisconceptions es an armed post-service people aged an estimated f working age. How to become a Chelsea Pensioner. You may recognise the Pioneer on the left in the photograph below!

Becoming a



Chelsea Pensioner

Chelsea Pensioners, some of you may recognise the chap on the left!

Picture: Supplied

he story of the Royal Hospital Chelsea began over 300 years ago in the reign of King Charles II. Aware that the Army was supporting a growing number of soldiers who were no longer fit for active service, or who were desolate on the streets of London, the King committed to the creation of a welcoming and safe home for veterans who had fought for their country

and who were "broken by age or war". This ethos and tradition continues and the Royal Hospital Chelsea today supports up to 310 older Army veterans who are in need and who meet the eligibility criteria.

To be eligible to apply to become a Chelsea Pensioner, a candidate must be: - Over 65 yrs old and in receipt of a state

e over os yis old and in receipt of a state
 pension
 - Either a former soldier or non-

- Either a former soldier or noncommissioned officer of the British Army (Former officers of the British Army are eligible to apply if they have served in the ranks for at least 12 years before obtaining a commission; or have been awarded a disablement pension while serving in the ranks)

- Free of any financial obligation to support a spouse or family (We do not accept applications from individuals who are

currently married or have children under the age of 18 yrs old)

- Able to live independently in our Long Ward accommodation

Each application received by the Royal Hospital is assessed and factors taken into consideration include:

- Length and type of Army service - Attitude towards role as a Chelsea Pensioner

- Ability to live in a close knit communal environment

- Current type of accommodation and social situation

- Able to carry out duties as a Chelsea Pensioner

- Current financial status (Chelsea Pensioners are expected to make a weekly contribution towards the accommodation and services at the Royal Hospital providing this does not place them in financial difficulty)

To request an application pack, or for any queries, please contact the Chelsea Pensioner Admissions Officer:

Telephone: 0207 881 5204 E-mail:

admissions@chelsea-pensioners.org.uk



■ WO2 Paul Casey (left) showing his beard at the disbandment parade of 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC

Picture: Paul Brown

Reviewing beard ban

The Army is reviewing the ban on beards amid fears the rule is putting off a younger generation of potential recruits.

HE Army is reviewing the ban on beards amid fears the rule is putting off a younger generation of potential recruits. Whilst some facial hair is allowed on the grounds of religion or for medical reasons, the army has routinely not permitted the wearing of beards, except for certain ceremonial or traditional posts.

Captain Dave Somerville RE, wrote in the Soldier magazine warning that young fashion-conscious men might be put off joining. He said, "We are an organisation that needs to recruit and putting up artificial barriers because of an inability to change isn't what we are about, while attending a recent recruiting event I couldn't help but notice that a large percentage of the potential soldiers were sporting facial hair. It made me wonder how many of them were put off joining up because they can't have a beard.

Capt Somerville complained that in his 38 years of service he did not understand why the regulations still applied. He suggested the argument that the seal between a respirator and a soldiers skin could be

compromised by hair growth, no longer stood up as the Army became increasingly diversified.

"I have heard the respirator excuse trotted out many times, but frankly that really doesn't make sense, rightly we allow certain individuals to have beards for religious reasons and they are as likely to require the use of that piece of kit as any of us. The most annoying reason though is tradition, just like the one where we wore red tunics and advanced slowly towards the enemy," he said.

In response Lt Col Rachel Emmerson, in the Employment Branch of Army Manning, accepted beards would be seen more often as more members of religious minorities joined the armed forces.

'As the Service becomes more diverse and we update policy to support represented faiths, we expect the sight of serving officers and soldiers with beards to become more familiar. We must also ensure the army attracts as many potential applicants as possible, while maintaining the right appearance policies to protect the culture and ethos from which we derive our operational effectiveness.As such we routinely review such regulations including those relating to facial hair," she said Beards have become more popular with

young people in recent years.

A YouGov survey last year showed support for facial hair had increased by nearly 14 per cent over the five years to 2016. Among 18 to 39 year-olds just over 60 per cent said they had some form of facial hair.

The Association historian, Lt Col (Retd) J Starling, gives the following explanation on the wearing of beards:

"Infantry Pioneer Sgts grow a beard. Simple reason is they carry an axe into battle and not a firearm, in the old days of biting the cartridge, grains of powder would fall on to your chin and could be ignited by the flash of the flint, the normal soldier would have to shave off 3 fingers worth of beard to allow the grains to drop off. As the Pioneer Sgt carried an axe he did not need to shave.

The RPC have no official need to wear a Beard it was something they adopted on amalgamation into the RLC.

PAST EVENTS

■ THE 2018 Sherringham Pioneer Jolly kicked off at Breck Farm Weybourne with a BBQ and of course a drink or two, we had around 20 camping/caravanning and a few in local B&B's.

Saturday began with a service at the Town memorial with all very well turned out followed by free time. In the evening it was a convey of taxis to The Tyneside Club Sherringham for an evening of entertainment and a Buffet, a raffle and auction was also held and over £300 was raised for the RPC Association. I personally was blown away by the number of Pioneers and their wives/ partners who attended and were also keen for a 2020 Jolly to take place.

So thank you all very much for coming and making my weekend so memorable. Red and Green forever. Peter Wegg.



Pioneers doing outstanding work

The Nostalgia Group has raised a staggering £2165 for the Association - a significant amount by any stretch of the imagination. Thank you.



■ Norman Brown receiving a fantastic £2165 for the RPC from Kevin Young

Picture: Kevin Young

HIS This year's Nostalgia Group Reunion was attended by 80 members and held at the County Hotel, Skegness. Our chosen charity this year was the RPC Association.

Allan Sutcliffe, the moderators and wives did a brilliant job in organising the entertainment, the auction and also the tombola. A special thank you also goes to everyone who donated prizes to raise money.

On the first night we had our usual fancy dress but also with entertainment in the form of a singer. He started off well singing Pretty Woman, then to everyone's surprise Dave Fender burst into the hall dressed as a Panto/Drag Queen.

The group started clapping and burst into fits of laughter while the singer started getting very nervous as to what was going to happen next.

Our second night gave Kev "Digger" Young his chance to get the group and wives laughing when doing his one man show on the auction. This year they raised a fantastic £2,165 for the RPC Association, well done to everyone who made this happen. It was a great reunion with fantastic fun and passion for what we do every year. We saw old faces and new faces. Looking forward to seeing you all next year. Kind Regards Dave Fender

(Ed note: the following is a copy of a letter sent by the Chairman of the

Association to the Nostalgia Group): Dear Alan and Kevin,

Norman Brown has just informed me of the outstanding work you both have been doing recently with the RPC Nostalgia Group.

I was, as you know, the last Commanding Officer of 23 Pioneer Regiment and it is always good to hear stories of the Pioneers out there doing outstanding work.

I'm told that your group met at Skegness and has historically raised money for SSAFA but this year you decided to raise funds for the Royal Pioneer Corps Association. As its Chairman – Thank You.

£2165 is a significant amount to raise by any stretch of the imagination. That you only had 80 attenders to make up that amount is even more impressive.

I'm told the auction items soon ran out but such was the appetite that people were still willing to offer donations.

Simply put that is both amazing and humbling.

Norman runs the association on my behalf on a daily basis. He is very good at it too and I'm delighted that he let me know of your achievements.

Sergeant Trevor Leach, the founder, will be looking down and smiling I'm sure.

On behalf of the Association – Thank You for your work rate and effort.

Simply superb! Hopefully we will get a chance to meet up at some point and I can say thank you in person. David Clouston



Sculy Nodel

Thank you to Bob Gillespie for producing this lovely Scully model to be raffled at The Reunion Weekend

The High Commissioner of Fiji visited and renamed the Community Centre in Ambrosden, The Silibaravi Centre, to remember a fallen Pioneer soldier, 'Sili'.

NEW painting commissioned by Brian Meadows of Wigan was unveiled by the High Commissioner. The Fijian community rallied and were supported by others, such as the Nepalese in traditional dress. The Fijians broke into song – which was very emotional.

The following is the speech made by Lt Col Lyndon Robinson, the Commanding Bicester Garrison:

"Your Excellency, Sir, Ladies and Gentlemen welcome to Bicester Garrison's Welfare Centre soon to be formally recognised as the Silibaravi Centre. Pte Ratu Manasa Silibaravi joined the British Army in 2002. He had served in Iraq in 2003 and Afghanistan in both 2006 and 2009.

At 32 years of age he was killed in action on Friday 4th May 2012 alongside Cpl Andrew Steven Roberts.

They were both of Bicester based 23 Pioneer Regiment The Royal Logistic Corps and attached to the 1st Battalion The Royal Welsh Battle Group, serving as part of combined force Burma.

They were killed in an indirect fire attack on Forward Operating Base Quellette, in the northern part of the Nahr-E-Saraj District of Afghanistan.

Their role was to detect improvised

explosive devices in high risk areas as part of an advanced search team. In doing this they not only ensured freedom of movement but undoubtedly saved the lives of both Afghans and International personnel.

Some years ago an act of remembrance took place on behalf of Cpl Roberts in his home town of Middlesbrough. Indeed our gymnasium carries his name.

Although it is perhaps inevitable we are not here today to rekindle the sadness of <u>Pte Silibaravi's passing</u>.

We are here simply to honour him and in our reflections, give thanks to all our Army's Fijian Soldiers and indeed their comrades

from many countries.

When I arrived as the Commanding Officer of Bicester Garrison some 2 years ago I became aware that when those from 23 Pioneer Regiment, who had been killed or injured, were spoken of it was done with great reverence.

Indeed I formed a view that Sili, as he was known, was loved and that love lived in the hearts of men.

Sili was a Fijian, he was a Pioneer, he was a rugby player, he was a Christian, he was a soldier of the Queen but he was by any measure loved.

A love so strong that it needed a home, a home outside of the hearts of men that could capture, express and house the memory of a wonderful human being.

This will be that home and when age renders the building old and obsolete the

artwork commissioned in his honour can simply settle in another dwelling and carry with it the sentiments of today.

Proud though I would have been, it was not me that instructed today's events.

It was you and your Commanders who did so through the Garrison's Command Group.

On 25th December 2017 when I attended our Fijian community's act of Christmas worship here in this building I explained how we would be venerating Pte Silibaravi.

As I left the service it dawned on me that I had given a pledge with no real idea as to how to deliver it.

But love is a powerful thing and our friend Brig (Retd) Chris Murray and his colleagues in Agility proffered funding. Our personnel and their families rallied and laboured to the idea, our Quartermaster Maj Billy Dilkes and our Adjutant Capt Kevin Jessop organised.

NEWS

This building is not perfect but the sentiment behind it is.

With me or without me, this was going

to happen and when you came on board Your Excellency with an untrammelled enthusiasm the picture was complete.

What a privilege it is to honour a private soldier and before I invite Cpl Rokodrava to say a prayer of dedication in keeping with Sili's Christian faith I leave you with the comment of a then newly arrived young soldier called Pte Ranatora as he joined 23 Pioneer Regiment, he asked himself:

"What would the best person look like?" A few months later he concluded that it was Pte Ratu Manasa Silbaravi. Moce Mada Mataquile Sili"

THE SILIBARRAVI CENTRE

12th October 2018







NEWS

A Ladies Dinner night was held in the WOs' & Sgts' Mess, St George's Barracks, Bicester on Saturday 11 August 2018 where 69 members sat down for an excellent meal.

HIS dinner had originally been planned for March 2018 but had to be cancelled due to lack of accommodation at that time. It had been agreed that during

the evening the Club would dine-out WO2 Paul Casey who leaves the Army in November 2018 after 22 years. He was presented with a cushion from the Club which had been embroidered with his service details. The Club wish him and his wife Sarah a happy time in 'civvie' street. A cushion was also presented to Mr Pete Thomas who at the Club's AGM in June stood down as Chairman of the Club which he had been for 4 years.

Details of Paul's service are as follows: Paul enlisted in 1996 and joined Pirbright

to start Phase 1 Training on 17 Mar 96 (incidentally the same intake as WO2 John Patrickson). Catterick followed for the start of Phase 2 Training doing the Infantry Course and then to Deepcut for a Pioneer Skills Training Course.

On completion of his training he was

posted to 522 Squadron and served with this unit from October 1996 – September 1998.

This was followed by a posting to HQ Northern Ireland (Lisburn) where he served until November 2000, during this tour he started on the promotion ladder by being promoted Lance Corporal in September 1999. Also during this tour he met Sarah (at the Down Royal night club in Lisburn) who he later married on 29 August 2003.

His next tour was to the British Army Training Unit Suffield (BATUS) in Alberta, Canada. On being selected for promotion to Corporal he was posted back to 522 Squadron in November 2002, during this posting he was deployed to Kuwait as part of Op TELIC with 187 Squadron in February 2003.

His next posting was to 67 Squadron 6 Supply Regiment in Germany from May 2005 until May 2008.

He then returned to Bicester this time with 187 Squadron and was then selected for promotion in June 2008 to Sergeant and posted in October 2008 to 25 Regiment Deepcut.

His next posting from October 2010 to October 2011 was with Military Stabilisation Support Group (MSSG) and Op HERRICK 14.

Another return to Bicester followed this time with 518 Squadron where he stayed until August 2015, however this included being again deployed to BATUS for 6 months in April 12. He was selected for promotion to Staff Sergeant in April 2012 and on his return to Bicester was the Outreach SNCO to deal with redundancies and help to close 23 Pio9neer Regiment. He was selected for promotion to

He was selected for promotion to Warrant Officer Class 2 and posted once again to 25 Regiment, Deepcut in August 2015.

In August 2017 he was posted to 20 Squadron Regents Park Barracks RLC as a Troop Commander, this being his final posting.

His last official day in the Army is 13 November 2018.







NEWS





The Royal Pioneer Corps Association Reunion Weekend was, once again, held at the Royal Court Hotel, Coventry from 14th to 18th June 2018.

Report: Norman Brown Pictures: Paul Brown / Tracy Brown (unless stated)

HERE was nothing planned for the Thursday evening but it appears that more and more members are now attending early. This year most, following an evening meal sat in the gardens and just exchanged war stories and jokes (mostly clean!).

Early Friday saw more and more arriving and once booked in at reception they had the chance to spend some of their money at the Corps Shop which was open in the foyer of the hotel from 1300 to 1700 hrs and a large number of items were sold especially the new type polo shirts which are proving very popular. (These are still available at a cost of £25 - this includes postage), Snacks were also available in the foyer however, most made their way to the Lounge Bar. This year there were few problems at reception except where the Association Secretary had mis-spelt a few names (no-one is perfect!).

The Britannia Bar opened at 1900 hrs and a 3 course carvery meal was held with the entertainment once again following a great demand was the group "Dreamettes" – this was the fourth year we have booked them and once again they went down well. We also had the disco "Moonlight" which provided background music and a good choice of music throughout the night.

During the evening a raffle was held, all prizes being donated by those attending. It is pleasing to report that £520 was raised. After breakfast on the Saturday it was

After breakfast on the Saturday it was decided to bring forward the Annual General Meeting of the Association forward a day and this was held prior to the coaches departing for the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas. A copy of the minutes of the AGM are shown on page 91.

For members of the WOs' & SNCOs' Pioneer Reunion Club their Annual General Meeting was also held and WO1 (RSM) A Barthram was elected Chairman of the Club. He is currently RSM at Headley Court and is also "Head of Trade" for those Pioneers still serving. (Ed note: it is pleasing to report that he was selected for commission on 18 Oct 18, congratulations from all members of the Club).

It was hoped to also have a mini-bus to take members to Wellesbourne market but unfortunately the driver was taken ill, however Bob Fox stepped into the breach and took those who wanted to go in his car, thanks Bob, you saved the day! He also refused petrol money - a great gesture.

At the National Memorial a short church service was held in the Logistic Grove after Association members marched into the Grove being led by Ginge Hurdman carrying the standard.

The service was once again officiated by the adopted "Corps Padre", Capt Kev Jessop the Garrison Adjutant of Bicester Garrison. A group photograph was then held on the steps of the National Memorial and then members had a few hours to visit the Arboretum or have a tea or coffee in the restaurant. It was nice to see the refurbished reception area at the National Memorial - a great improvement, it is well designed and very comfortable.

The coach then departed to the British Legion Club at Alrewas where a marvellous buffet was supplied by the Club and members had the chance to reminisce about past adventures or play some of the games in the Club. Our thanks go to the stewardess of the Club, Jayne, who certainly made us all welcome.

A return to the hotel followed when everyone prepared themselves for the evening's entertainment. Following a Gala Dinner the entertainment was provided by a 9 strong group "New Vintage Plus" together with the Disco "Moonlight". During the evening an auction was held and the compare was Taff Wall who "bullied" people into bidding and the grand sum of £1,054 was raised. Many of the goods being auctioned were constructed by Bob Gillespie, thanks Bob your efforts are very much appreciated.

After breakfast on the Sunday morning, members had free time to visit Coventry which most did, a great number ending in the Wetherspoon pub (The Flying Standard) for lunch and, of course, a few beers. The Flying Standard is named after one of the cars made by the Rootes Group as it was known. The Royal Court Hotel was once the home of the owner of this group.

Sunday evening following another carvery meal the entertainment was supplied by the group "Out of Order". Those stalwarts still there had another good night, however not much dancing took place, most were too tired after the arduous activities over the weekend

Following breakfast on the Monday most made their way home except for about 5 who decided that they wished to stay a little longer. Two actually stayed for a full week, this is at a discounted rate and makes a fairly cheap holiday!

All comments on the weekend have been good with no complaints. Next year the Weekend is to be held on 14th to 18th June and a booking form is attached with this Newsletter. The entertainment for next year has already been booked as has the coach to the National Memorial. We have already signed the contract for the hotel with the promise that the charges at the bar will be the same as this year.

I hope to see you there, even if you just want to stay one night please make the effort. It is appreciated that some may find raising the money required in one lump sum may be difficult - we do accept payment in instalments. For those that have never attended the Reunion at Coventry (both old Pioneers and newer RLC Pioneers) we guarantee that you will quickly make friends and have a very enjoyable weekend.









































































On 3 September 2018 Mr Roy Palmer became the second Pioneer In Pensioner at the Royal Hospital Chelsea, we have not had two Pioneer In-Pensioners since 2007!

oy joined the Army (Northamptonshire Regiment) on 24 September 1956 and was trained at what was then Quebec Barracks (later changed to Simpson Barracks, Northampton in 1961).

On completion of training he was immediately promoted LCpl and stayed at Quebec Barracks on the training staff. He was then posted to Watchet, Somerset on advance party making ready for the return of the Regiment fro0m Hong Kong. Whilst at Witchet he was promoted Cpl and then when the Regiment was posted to Aden in 1958 he was promoted Local Sgt with A Platoon at Dhala in Aden. He returned to UK for 3 months and was then returned to Aden.

On completion of the tour the Regiment returned to Watchet before being posted to Osnabruck in Germany, during this time however, he was demoted and decided to leave the Forces in October 1961.

5 years later he joined the TA Northamptonshire Regiment and 2 years later decided to rejoin the Regulars and enlisted into the Royal Pioneer Corps on 27 February 1967. He elected to become a clerk in 521 Company, Bicester and was promoted LCpl. In 1969 he was posted to Bahrain as a Cpl on a 9 month

CORPS

unaccompanied tour.

On his return to Bicester he was quickly promoted Sgt and posted to HQ 2 PCLU, Bielefeld. After two and a half years he was promoted SSgt and returned to Bicester as Chief Clerk 521 Company. On completion of this tour he was promoted to WO2 and crossed the road to HQ 23 Group RPC as ORQMS.

He was posted back to Bielefeld as ORQMS HQ 13 Group RPC in March 1979. He served here until 1983 when the PLSUs were formed and joined 9 PLSU in Minden on the Long Service List. He was then offered another Long Service List appointment with the SSO in Krefeld where he served until December 1985. He returned to Simpson Barracks for discharge in April 1986 and immediately joined the RPC TA as a Sgt, later being promoted first to SSgt and then WO2, he retired from the TA in 1989.

The following article appeared in the Louth Leader on Saturday 25 Aug 18:

The popular Town Crier of Mablethorpe, Trusthorpe and Sutton on Sea will not be shouting 'Oyez Oyez' much longer as he is heading off to become a Chelsea Pensioner in September. Roy Palmer (79) began his role as the Town Crier around six years ago - but the decorated roll initially started off

guite differently. He told the Leader: "It started off as more of an entertainment novelty at first. "The first town clerk at the council said it would be good to get a Town Crier for the Mablethorpe Illuminations events and asked if I would do it - and it all spiralled off from there." Roy has covered many of the town's events as Town Crier over the years and added that he has loved every second of it. He admitted: "It's been the best job in the world!" And Roy will certainly be missed. Mayor of the town, Councillor Stephen Palmer said Roy has massively enhanced the reputation of the Town Council by association and has put the area on the map and helped with publicity on a local, national, and even an international scale. Coun Tony Mee, who was the Mayor last year, added that Roy had been an 'absolute asset to Mablethorpe', and that the Chelsea Pensioners will benefit from his entrance. Due to a change of lifestyle, Roy has decided to retire and will soon be wearing the iconic scarlet Chelsea uniform and living with the ex-military pensioners at the beginning of September. The big question on everyone's minds now is, will Roy be replaced? Even though the Town Crier role is voluntary, Mablethorpe and Sutton on Sea Town Council still need to discuss the

IN SUBSTITUTE ET LEVANEN EMERITORUM SENIO BELLOQUE FRACTORUM CONDIDIT CAROLUS SECUNDUS



REGINA

matter first. But the council wished to thank Roy for his dedication and support over many years.

The following article appeared in the September 1981 edition of "The Royal Pioneer"

Blisters and Beer by WO2 SR Palmer 0900 hrs 19 June 1981. After long hours of organisation and preparations the day has arrived and standing outside the Town Hall in Bielefeld Captain Mike Rose Mrs Muriel Palmer (my wife) and myself (WO2 Roy Palmer hereafter known in this article as I) surrounded by an assortment of onlookers, well-wishers and, I suspect, some people who wondered whether we would be able to complete the walk in the time, also some members of the RPC Defence Company parading in swimming trunks "IN SWIMMING TRUNKS"? You may well be surprised; however this was to highlight the fact that they had held a sponsored swim to raise money for the walk. (At the time of going to press the amount collected from the swim is approximately £110). After receiving words of encouragement and good wishes from Brigadier P C Bowser, Brig AQ 1 (BR) Corps, and Frau Schwerdt the Lady Mayoress of Bielefeld, the tape is cut and the walk is on, 300 miles to go.

Murmurs from the crowd are heard, "They are going too fast, they will never keep it up", Escorted by German Civil Police and a loudspeaker van from the local

AUXIT JACOBUS SECUNDUS PERFECERE GULIELMUS

ATUTA

newspaper, the two walkers plus accompanying car and caravan driven by Muriel are finally proceeding through Bielefeld on the first stage of the journey.

Imagine, two walkers car and caravan decorated with flags and posters proceeding at five miles an hour down the centre of the main street, with a rush hour traffic virtually at a standstill, horns sounding and all traffic stopped at red and green lights for us. "Members of the Royal Pioneer Corps" to proceed merrily on our way. After leaving the hustle and bustle of Bielefeld we suddenly realise, the burlesque is over and the graft is beginning The pace is good and we proceed to Herford where the Westfalen Blatt newspaper has arranged for us to meet the Mayor., After a short stop we decide that the next stop is to be our overnight resting place at Tengern nr Lohne which is another three hours away, however, along the road we are met by a well-wisher who gives us a pint each, this is swilled down with little or no ceremony.

The pace is maintained at approximately 5 miles an hour and we duly arrive at Tengern at 1410 hrs. After congratulating ourselves and bathing our feet, we then proceed to the nearest pub which is another 10 seconds walk away, ask permission to stay the night and sample a few of his wares (all liquid). The landlord realises what we are doing and gives us the benefit of his shower and toilet facilities.

MARIA

REX

ET

ET

PIONEER ROY PALMER 3rd September 2018

OYAL PIONEER

The next morning at 0900 hrs we are on the move again and this is the stretch that I had worried about throughout the planning stage, the stretch that Muriel has to negotiate with the car and caravan. It is a range of hills called Wiehengebirge and the corners are pretty hairy even for an experienced tower, which Muriel certainly isn't, however the traffic is pretty light and I needn't have worried (the car and caravan are okay, although the driver is a bit frayed around the edges). Having passed this range of hills, we are now walking in countryside that is very pleasant and quiet, no traffic , few people, country/farm roads and plenty of wild life (we even spotted a woodpecker in flight and that is unusual, to say the least).

We stop at the half way stage and discover that I now have large blisters, but Captain (Doctor) Rose in his usual methodical way soon disposes of them by sticking pins in them and squeezing (oh! the pain)but no mercy is shown, he then covers them with a sticky stuff which he says is antiseptic, but I know it is paint, his idea is that my socks will stick to it and stop the chafing, he is right, but he neglected to say how the sock is supposed to come off. I found out three hours later. Another uneventful three hours have passed and we have reached the Gasthaus Mainz in Strohen. By this time I am thinking about the socks and well I might, "Sit in the chair and take your boots off", I am commanded, "Hold onto the chair", when I picked myself off the floor and saw a sock in the Doctor's hand, words of unutterable syllables were used, then I wished that I had been more polite, there was still another to come off, 'Oh the bliss" (it was like being hit round the head with a hammer, we were visited by Herr Radeck the Civilian Personnel Officer of 13 Group and his family, who believe it or not took us for a couple of beers, however, the landlord offered us a drink for the road which we gladly accepted, to cut a long story short at 2330 hrs he was still offering us one for the road.



WO2 Palmer in and our of uniform - Bielefeld 1980

Which we were gladly accepting. It was at this stage that we found out that he also had a daughter who was deaf and blind. Nothing was too good for us. The following morning just before we left, the landlord invited the three of us to breakfast, during which he and a local lad arranged for the local press to be informed of our progress, interviews and photos were taken on the steps of the pub.

At last we are on our way, with a handful of Jaegameisters (for the uninitiated, alcohol for upset stomachs), Everything is going well until we come to a sign saying Solingen 9 kms, after walking for another hour and passing 5 or 6 signs saying Solingen 9 kms, we decided that the signs may be wrong. At this point in the distance we could see two figures walking towards us, it was two members of the RCT who were also doing a sponsored walk, albeit in the other direction.

We shook hands and wished each other well. Still maintaining our speed and waving at the cars that greeted us as they passed, we were not surprised when a car pipped and slowed down, however, we were surprised when we realised that it was Sqt Pitman who had travelled out to see how we were going. It now rained (was it because of our visitor?) and for the first time we are both soaked to the skin, even so spirits are high and the pace good,. We duly arrived at the overnight stop, another pub! After a strip wash and leaving Muriel to do the washing and cooking, we decide to have a quickie, however, Korn is flying, the local fire brigade have just won a band concert and Anglo/German relationships forbid us from refusing. Knowing that the next day's route is tricky, we decide to do a recce, whether it was the korn or not we don't know, but we got lost and that, was on the way back! The following day is uneventful; with the weather cool and the pace constant we arrive at Brinkum, seven kms from Bremen, the Gasthaus chosen is superb. While we are doctoring our feet the press from Bremen arrive, take photos and



Mablethorpe Town Crier



Conker Championships

interview us, this article made the front page of the Bremen paper.

People seem to be taking more notice of us, (is it because we are staggering more?) with 88 miles behind us that could well be the case.

The following morning being very polite and waking up our host to thank him, we proceed to Bremen, on the way we are met by the press again who tell us that they have fixed it for us to stop in the market place in Bremen to have photos taken and also to make a collection, they give us maps, one for the walkers and one for the driver, I ask you, "Is that a wise thing to do", two different route maps! Certainly not, especially if the driver happens to be called Muriel Palmer. The walkers arrive at the spot notified, but, also no driver, after walking around the market place for nearly an hour looking, we decide to press on, just as we are leaving, we hear a cry for help and sure enough it is Muriel.

When asked what is wrong, the reply comes, "Nothing really", "Well where is the car?" we ask. Just up the street, a one way street, facing the wrong way, blocking a traffic light, half way on the pavement and the caravan across another junction" came the reply, the next question is, "Who is looking after it?" "A policeman I think!" That was a slight fabrication of the truth and all is well that ends well. We managed to sort it out with no loss of money. Oh, by the way, we never did find the press or manage to make a collection. Approximately 15 miles further on we decide to stop for the night, but Muriel thinks not, could it be because we had stopped at the Top Secret night club. Oh well, we were feeling tired anyway.

Nothing more to be said about the overnight stop and the arrival the next day on the outskirts of Bremerhaven was uneventful, except that we could not find anywhere to stay, this meant we had to drive 20 kms to find a campsite. Here we rested for two nights and then returned to the outskirts of Bremerhaven to commence



Capt Rose and WO2 Palmer on sponsored walk from Bielefeld to Northampton 20 Jun - 4 Jul 81



Farewell cake

our final days 10 kms walk before joining the boat.

Arriving at the dockside we were warmly welcomed by Prins Ferries Publicity Manager (Mr Currion) who had arranged for us to be shown over the ship, including the bridge by the Captain. It was nice to see Major Read and Major Rayner who had taken the trouble to come and see us off. Thanks a lot. Once under way a decent meal was quickly devoured, (we wonder if Muriel's stew will ever taste the same again). We then went down to the cabins for a night's sleeps to prepare us for the second half in England.

ENGLAND. Now we know there is only one week's walking left., Here we are met by Major Elliott who gives us a quick brief on which side of the road to walk and how to use a telephone in English. Starting our first day at 1000 hrs our first stop is an English pub at East Bergholt, great interest is shown in what we are doing and a small donation is made plus free beer, (Oh, Joy) that is the landlady's name. Our first overnight stay was a lovely village called Stoke-on-Hay a distance of 24 miles from Harwich here we were introduced to the grandson of Douglas Fairbanks Jnr but alas, although Senior was in the village for a wedding we didn't see him, otherwise he would have been tackled for a donation. The following morning we were once again on the country roads, that 25 miles seemed to be never ending, plus we were a little worried my knee was beginning to swell, however, arriving at Clare, the second nights stop, the only suitable place to rest was the grounds of a working Priory where permission is granted by the Friar to stay, when asked if it was possible to have a shower, the Friar said "Yes, but we are a bit Spartan you know". We appreciated that he was right! The showers were freezing.

The next day was one of the warmest throughout the journey and we were pleased when we stopped at the Railway Inn for the night, here we had to mount guard, this was to enable us to have a strip wash in the Ladies loo of all places, Capt Rose thinks he did a good job, he kept them all out.

Having slept well, we started out and realised that today was not going to be a normal day, as indeed events proved. We only covered 13 miles in five hours, more trouble with the knee.

Perhaps an early night will help, it did. Off to an early start, the pace is back to normal and the weather is really warm. Today we hope to reach Bedford where we should have another rest day.

Having studied the map and found a campsite we are delighted, but also the sign says "No tourers or Gypsies" and we must look like the latter. Then comes the pioneer training, or should I say grovelling. Having spoken to the owner we are cleared to stay and at no charge, plus a donation to the cause. Can't be bad!

We suddenly find that the caravan is getting crowded. Capt Rose, grass widower not longer, his wife June and daughter Allison have at last managed to join us. Not to be outdone my son Kenneth decides that our days are better than his and he joins us from Boarding School.

We are now only 25 miles from Northampton and two days to go, therefore a rest day is called for. A leisurely day is spent in the sun eating fish and chips with the odd beer thrown in.

The knee had nearly recovered and knowing that there is now only two days to go, who cares. Bedford is well behind us and we have stopped for the last night at Brafield-on-the-Green where the Press will come to meet us, after the interview, the reporter departs, but returns about 30 minutes later, with Brigadier Ridings, who, hearing that we were in the vicinity, kindly decided to visit us, whether it was for our company, or whether it was because he knew that we would have some German beer, we shall never know.

But we do thank him for the visit and the



Roy Palmer and HRH The Duke of Gloucester



Conker Championships



■ WO2 Palmer with Herr Rabeck MBE



Capt Rose and WO2 Palmer on sponsored walk from Bielefeld to Northampton

very generous donation. We have only approximately eight miles to go, that is far enough for the last day, and we must be at the Training Centre at 1655 hrs, not one moment before and not a moment later, why? Those are orders. We set out at 1500 hrs and by 1610 hrs are at the Queen Eleanor pub, now it is a waiting game.

At last the time arrives and away we go approximately 300 miles behind us, the Training Centre in sight, recruits lining the route, Corps of Drums playing, spectators clapping and there in front of us General Sir George Cooper, Brigadier Ridings and all familiar faces, also unfamiliar ones, none the less welcome. Having walked the approximately 300 miles it was nice to see you all.

During the reception, we were able to present pewter plaques of Bielefeld to both the Officers' and Sergeants' Messes, these were gifts from the Town of Bielefeld presented by Frau Schwerdt, the Lady Mayoress at the start of the walk.

In addition we handed over a framed print of the Rathaus, Bielefeld which had been presented to the General Secretary of the RPC Association from the newly formed 1 (BR) Corps Branch.

Capt Rose and WO2 (ORQMS) Roy Palmer thanked all units and individuals who responded to their appeal. At the time of going to press, we would wish you to know that the total stands at approx DM 11,500 (£2,500).

We thank you all. With a special thanks to 149 IP Mr F O'Reilly Royal Hospital Chelsea, our first English donor and Mr (Sgt) Reg Rimmer GC the last English donor.

The distribution will be as follows: Talking Newspaper for the Blind £1000

Year of the Disabled Germany £1000

Youth Services Germany £300

RPC Benevolent Fund £200 ■



Roy on horseback as Mayor

The 72nd Past and Present Pioneer Officers' Dinner was held in the Bicester Garrison Officers' Mess, Ambrosden on Friday 19th October 2018

HERE was no guest of honour this year, it had been decided that newly promoted Brigadier D Clouston (Chairman of the RPC Association) would give an update on serving Pioneers and the latest news from the Association.

He mentioned that sitting down that night were two nonagenarians (in their 90's) and two octogenarians (in their 80's) as well as young members particularly two of the three newly commissioned Warrant Officers (WO1 A Barthram and WO1 A Burdittt – WO1 Orrell was unable to attend). Capt K Jessop acted as PMC in lieu of Maj B Dilkes whose wife had booked him a holiday.

The President of the Association, Col A Barnes, read out the Loyal Greetings from HM The Queen and the Association Patron, The Duke of Gloucester.

Mr N Brown, Secretary of the Association, read out the apologies for the evening and

these were: Gen Geoff Field, Col Gary Cooper, Maj Peter Nicholson, Maj Mat Young, Lt Col John Allen, Col Simon Hirst, Maj Mike Tickner (on exercise), Maj Adie Mycroft, Maj Colin Spears, Lt Col Andy Parry and Capt Reg Lane.

Maj John Coast who emailed the following: Just to let you know, I am unable to attend this year's dinner, I am waiting for a small operation on my hand that will then be in a cast for some weeks, at the moment I am unable to drive and do many things. I do hope the dinner goes well and please pass on my best to all attending. Hopefully I will be able to make all events next year.

Maj (Retd) Geoff Hill who emailed the following: Pioneer Brigadiers seem to enjoy considerable longevity and I hope that this will rub off on their minions (Hill in particular). Meanwhile, please pass on my best wishes to all the survivors in the hope that we will be able to meet up at some point in the future. Maj Joe Sievier writes: I send my apologies that, with deep regret, I will not be able to attend the 2018 Past and Present Officers Dinner on 19th October. I have recently had a hip replacement operation and am hobbling around on crutches and am not able to drive. The joys of getting old, thank God I have retained my youthful looks, still have a good flock of hair and my own teeth!! (I would add that, if I was American, and a Lawyer, I would not be eligible to be considered for an Appointment as a Supreme Court Judge!!) Please give my regards and best wishes to one and all and I trust you have a most enjoyable evening.

Maj Taff Teague and Maj Billy Dilkes both of their wives had booked holidays which clashed with the dinner. Although Billy was not here, a lot of the organisation of the Dinner was done by him before he went away, even down to making sure the Pioneer flag was flying!

32 | THE ROYAL PIONEER CORPS ASSOCIATION

NEWS



OFFICERS DINNER NIGHT 19th October 2018

THE ROYAL PIONEER CORPS ASSOCIATION | 33











FUTURE EVENTS

2018 - 2019

FIELD OF REMEMBRANCE - 8TH NOVEMBER 2018 AND CENOTAPH PARADE - 11TH NOVEMBER 2018

By the time this Newsletter is published arrangements will have been made for both of these events. It is anticipated that we will have record attendances at both events. If you cannot attend please look out for us on your television.

NORTHAMPTON BRANCH BURNS NIGHT - 26TH JANUARY 2019

The Northampton Branch is, once again, to hold a Burns Night, in the Conservative Club, Billing Road, Northampton on 26 Jan 19. The cost will be at a subsidised rate of £10 per head. Cheques (made payable to RPCA Northampton Branch) should be sent to RPC Association or payment can be made via paypal, our account is: royalpioneercorps@gmail.com

The Branch will also be having a meet in the Wig & Pen, Northampton on 1 Feb 19 to watch the 6 Nations Rugby.

On 13 July 2019 they will be have a canal boat trip followed by a meal, if you wish to attend please send an email to Branch Chairman, Bob Fox by email to rgfoxbem@ gmail.com

Other events are still being organised, if you wish to receive details please ask Chairman to be included on email distribution list.

93 CLUB

Paul

^pictures:

The Club is to hold a "meet" at Newport, South Wales. This gathering is being organised by Norman (Taff) Wall and there will be a full weekend of activities.

An outline of the weekend is as follows: Friday book into Travel Lodge (tel no 01633 815600 – persons attending are to make their own bookings). Saturday afternoon men at Whiteheads Rugby Club (dress blazers), ladies shopping in either Newport or Cardiff. Saturday evening at Tredegar Public House for a meal (and a fow heart). If you are for a meal (and a few beers!). If you are interested in attending please send an email to: royalpioneercorps@gmail.com and further details will be forwarded to you.

ARMY vs NAVY, TWICKENHAM -- 4TH MAY

2019 The WOs' & SNCOs' Pioneer Reunion Club is once again organising a visit to Twickenham to watch the Army once again beat the Navy!

This, as in previous years, was open to all Association members to apply for tickets, unfortunately the cut-off date for applying was 1 Oct 18 – the tickets appear to sell-out earlier each year and this year were sold out by mid-Oct. If you wish to attend next year please let me know and I will send you an application form

PIONEER REUNION WEEKEND - 14TH - 17TH

A booking form for the Weekend is enclosed with this Newsletter, if you wish to attend please submit by 1 May 2019. The format will be similar to this year and is as follows:

Fri 14 Jun – arrive after 1400 hrs (Association shop will be open from 1400-1800 hrs) Carvery Meal at 1930 hrs

Entertainment by the John Burrows Band

Sat 15 Jun – AGM of the RPC Association will be at 0900 hrs – any points for the agenda should be forwarded to the Secretary by 1 Jun 19

Coach(es) depart for the National Memorial Arboretum at 1000 hrs- a church service will be held in the Logistic Grove, followed by a Group photograph on the steps of the National Memorial.

There will then be time for members to explore the Arboretum until the coach departs at 1330 hrs for the British Legion Club at Alrewas where a finger buffet will be provided. The coach will return to the hotel at 1730 hrs.

A gala dinner will be held at 2000 hrs

Entertainment by the band New Vintage Plus

Sun 16 Jun - During the day members are free either to visit the delights of Coventry or stayin the hotel to view some of the photographs currently stored in the Association digital photo library. (We currently hold approx 20,000 photographs)

Carvery Meal at 1930 hrs

Entertainment by the band Vintage Stuff (different band from the Sat!)

As in previous years members can book in for extra days for a reduced rate – details are shown on the booking form. All members are

shown on the booking form. All members are reminded that they are eligible to use the swimming pool and gymnasium at the hotel. It is appreciated that some members may find it difficult to pay for the weekend in one payment, we are willing to accept payment by instalments as long as payment is received by 110-100 by 1 May 19

AUF WIEDERSEHEN BAOR – 11TH-18TH JUNE

This ambitious project is being organised by Neil Howard and involves a steam train travelling from Manchester to Berlin via Harwich, Arnhem, Wesel, Bergen and Helmstedt. It does not attempt to be a traditional battlefield tour, nor a railway enthusiasts' excursion.

The trip seeks to create a Military Staff Ride

which you can take a loved one on, and with better Gin! The train will convey 300 BAOR/BFG veterans (who get a 25% discount, as do friends and family travelling with them) and up to 150 general public (who do not).

It will be crowd-funded by its own passengers and financial sponsorship from the Luftwaffe. We do not think BAOR would have the lowbudget funeral preferred by HM Treasury. The narrative is to celebrate the special

relationship between the Army and the host nation, and if we can, to add value to the legacy of that relationship, including a financial legacy to RBL District of Germany and Berlin Branch

The narrative places most weight on the engineering and logistics achievement of reconstructing post-war Germany and the incredible contributi90n by RLC Founding Corps and the Engineers in that work and the Berlin Air Lift. The train enjoys the support of the British-German Association, BFG HQ Bielefeld, the Luftwaffe, the Bundeswehr, and our Military Patron is Maj-Gen David Burden. more details please fo to: www. For coldwarexpress.co.uk

NORTHERN IRELAND VETERANS ASSOCIATION – Op BANNER 50TH ANNIVERSARY PARADE – 17 AUGUST 2019

August 2019 will mark the 50th Anniversary of the start of Op Banner. To commemorate this, the NIVA will be organising a Service and Parade open to all military, police and other crown forces' veterans to attend at Wallace Park, Lisburn, Northern Ireland on Saturday 17 August 2019.

This invitation is also extended to veterans' families, in particular to those who lost serving members during the conflict. Permission to hold this event has been granted by Lisburn Council and the Police Service of Northern Ireland so all are welcome to attend. Further details will be circulated nearer the date on the NIVA website: www. nivets.org.uk

To help pay for this event, a badge has been designed and is available for purchase through msangster4@blueyonder.co.uk or mark.campbell59@ntlworld.com the cost is £3 plus 90p post and packaging.

They have both Paypal and bank transfer set up and details can be had on request. All monies raised witll be used to cover the costs of setting up this event and any balance left over will be donated to military charities. The badge is the approximate size of the new pound coin.





Thank you to D C Thompson and in particular Bill McLoughlin for allowing us to reproduce this comic












40 | THE ROYAL PIONEER CORPS ASSOCIATION





42 | THE ROYAL PIONEER CORPS ASSOCIATION



LIONEL WAS HORRIFIED. HASTY HAD BEEN A STICKLER FOR MILITARY DISCIPLINE.



PROGRESS WAS SLOW ON ROADS AS FRIGHTENED PEOPLE FLED FROM THEIR HOMES.



STURA STORES

A BIGGER AND MORE MENACING HINDRANCE CAME FROM THE AIR.



THE DIVE-BOMBING BY STUKAS WAS FOLLOWED BY A STRAFING BY Me109s — AND HASTY CAME TO A DECISION.

196





NEXT DAY THEY RAN OUT OF PETROL AND FACED MORE BAD NEWS THEIR SPARE FUEL CANS.







ONCE IN COVER IT BECAME OBVIOUS THAT, HASTY'S LIFE-SAVING EFFORT HAD BEEN WASTED:



KEEP COINC MARE FOR HOSE WOODS

HASTY DRAGGED THE CASUALTY INTO COVER AND ORDERED ON THE REST OF THE DETAIL

FIVE ROUNDS RAPID-FIRE FROM A LEE-ENFIELD LASHED INTO THE APPROACHING GERMAN PATROL.



HASTY GAVE SAMMY A QUICK NOD AND BETWEEN THEM THEY GRABBED THE PROTESTING LIONEL.





THEIR RESCUE CRAFT WAS THE PEUCAN, CREWEL BY A RETIRED REAR-ADMIRAL AINSLEY-PHIPPS AND HIS MANSERVANT.



THE PELICAN WAS MOVING OFF WHEN A LONG-RANGE SHELL EXPLODED ALONGSIDE.



THE PELICAN WAS RUN ON TO A SANDBANK AND HASTY AND HIS DETAIL WERE AMONG THOSE WHO STAYED AND HELPED WITH































WINSTON AIN'T HERE MY LITTLE GINGER TOM'S BEEN LEFT

IN THAT MESS

NOT SO MUCH OF THE OLD, YOU CHEEKY THING



NO, LAD, NOT MUCH USE AGAINST COAL GAS AND THEY'D STO US SMELLING IT.









- Almer The Manager of the second s



YOU NEEDN'T DIG SUCH DEEP BUNKERS FOR US, SPORT. VERY WELL, SIR — EXCUSE ME . . .



THE AUSTRALIAN OFFICER WATCHED IN SURPRISE AS HASTY'S WORK DETAIL TOOK COVER IN THE FOXHOLES. HEYI WHAT'S GOING ON? JUST A LITTLE BIT OF





TOBRUK CAME UNDER HEAVY BOMBING AND SHELLING BY DAY AND NIGHT, THE PIONEERS MAKING USE OF THE LULLS TO CARRY OUT REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE IN THE DOCK AREA





WHILE THE LIBERATION WAS UNDER WAY, HASTY'S SQUAD TIDIED UP OLD ARMY CAMPS IN UNCOLNSHIRE AND NOT A WEEK PASSED BUT HE PUT IN A REQUEST FOR A POSITING TO THE FRONT.

IN SEPTEMBER MOST OF THE GARRISON WAS RELIEVED, THE PIONEER SQUAD BEING AMONG

THOSE LIFTED OFF BY THE FLOTILLA OF SUPPLY SHIPS KNOWN AS THE INSHORE SQUADRON.

1100 SIX MONTHS

IN ACTION AND I

HAVEN'T SEEN A

ITEN O





ú

THEIR SHARE IN THE BATTLE FOR ITALY WAS

18-

111

CONFINED TO THE DOCKS OF NAPLES.

WHILE ALAMEIN WAS FOUGHT, THE GERMAN AFRIKA KORPS DEFEATED AND ITALY INVADED, THEY STAYED IN EGYPT,

- And

HELPING CONSTRUCT AIRSTRIPS.

THIS 'DOZER'S EVEN

BETTER THAN MY OLD STEAMROLLER,

SARGE.

THE AIRFIELD HAD BEEN CAPTURED DURING THE FAILED AIRBORNE OPERATION TO TAKE THE ARNHEM BRIDGE. THE WAR HAD SWEPT ON PAST - BUT NOT BEYOND THE RANGE OF A

THE ARTILLERY BATTERY COMMANDER CAME OVER FOR A TALK.

THE GUNS LIMBERED UP AND MOVED OUT





30955 Captain Edward Rhodes

The following notes were purchased by our historian (Lt Col J Starling) and were made by Capt Edward Rhodes. They were part of the estate of Maj 'Freddie' Forrester. The main articles concerning his time in the Royal Artillery have been excluded. It is not thought the diary was ever published. Capt Edward Rhodes was commissioned into the Pioneer Corps on 25 Oct 43, and served in civil labour throughout his time in the Corps.

Report: Norman Brown RPCA Archive

HE cottage in which I lived alone was a white faced jewel clinging precariously to a rocky ledge overlooking the tiny harbour and clustered houses of a small fishing village.

When I returned to England in 1936 with a score of unwritten stories filling my thoughts and begging to be written down my one ambition was to find pleasant and peaceful surroundings in which to work, and in this lovely corner of Cornwall I had found both. But there was a fly in the ointment. For six years I had been living 'out in the blue' knowing little of what was going on in the rest of the world. I soon discovered that plenty was going on and became convinced that another war with Germany was inevitable.

I was 42 years old, in excellent physical condition, and there would be no excuse for me to avoid bearing my share in what lay ahead even if I wanted to do so, which I did not. I ended up in the First War as a Captain in the Royal Field Artillery and had been a 'Gunner' at heart ever since. In 1937 it seemed so near that I tried to get back into harness in order to have training and so bring myself up to date again and not waste the time of regular soldiers when the shooting did start. It was easier said than done.

Hore Belisha was scrapping the older men in favour of youth. I was too old it appeared to get commissioned rank in the Territorial Army, indeed too old to even get into the ranks of the Territorials as a private soldier except in anti-aircraft or coast defence.

After turning things over in my mind I decided that the Ack-Ack units would never go overseas (How wrong I was!) whereas if I enlisted in the Coast Defence Artillery I might, when the trouble did come, manage to transfer to a field battery.

That year (1937) I enlisted as a gunner and was posted to a 6-INCH Heavy Battery and in due course became Battery Commander's Assistant and a Lance Bombardier – the best rank in the Army, that first stripe.

I will not pretend that I cared much for Coast Defence work for it struck me as an insipid business after field guns, and the preliminary work before firing the first round, with its adding a few yards to the range for this and deducting a few yards for that, and putting a few minutes deflection for one thing and taking them off again for another always struck me as the height of puerility and theoretical gunnery gone mad. However, it was better than nothing.

My new friends at the yacht club were greatly amused at my serious concerns about the future. Of course there would be another war, they assured me, and went to great lengths to prove how impossible such an event was. When in the summer of 1939 we were embodied and called out to service they were slightly shaken, but when a week later Chamberlain returned from Munich all smiles, waving his silly bit of paper and crying "Peace in our time" their assurance returned and they laughed heartily as I returned to the village and donned civilian clothes again. The year that followed is history.

On the night of August 25th 1939, or on the early hours of the morning rather, I was wakened from a heavy sleep by loud pounding on my door which boasted neither bell nor knocker.

"Who the devil's that?" I asked, putting my head out of the window.

"Tis Police Constable Penwarden, sir. Ne you 142073 Lance Bombardier Edward Rhodes?"

"You know damn well who I am, Pen." I answered a trifle testily. "You had to buy beer for me a couple of hours ago when I beat you at darts."

"I got a message from the coastguard for ee, sir," called up the constable. "You'm got to report to yore Drill 'All at once, it says."

And so for the second time in twelve months I was embodied for active service, and for the second occasion in a lifetime I went to war, a war which by the time it had ended had added up the years I spent fighting for England to ten out of a total of fifty.

No, perhaps 'fighting' is hardly the right word, for in the six years that followed I never fired a round in anger or saw an enemy except those who were already prisoners. Yet in spite of that they were good years, the years in England, Africa and Italy from 1939 to 1945 and I am glad to have lived them, glad and a little proud.

Two or three days later the Battery moved from its Drill Hall Headquarters to its war station at the Fort.

The Fort is situated at the end of a long arm of land which encircled the western end of a broad bay. It was an isolated spot for the land formed part of a large private estate and the only road on it was one built by the War Department which led to the massive iron gates which shut the Fort off from the outer world. A tiny fishing village, three or four miles away could be reached by the road and a foot track along the cliff edge, but apart from that there was no habitation near.

The narrow promontory ended in a cliff face falling sheer to the sea and it was into this rocky cliff that the fort had been built in the middle of the 19th Century, and with the passage of the years its buildings had toned down in colouring until they merged imperceptibly into the trees and rocks against which they crouched. There were, in fact, two separate buildings inside those fearsome gates. To the left, the landward side that is, was the Main Guardroom just inside the gates with, at the far end the Officer's Mess, and above that again the Battery Commander's Post from which the guns were controlled, and the signal tower. To the right of the gate a flight of stairs descended to a well in the centre of which was the cookhouse, storerooms and latrines, and facing these were the men's sleeping quarters and messes in two tiers, and above the second tier the bars, open gun deck with its two six-inch guns facing seaward and a drop of 80 feet from the edge of the gun deck to the sea below. There was not sufficient level ground on which to parade the whole battery, everything was stairs, stairs up to the Battery Office, stairs up to the Command Post, stairs down to the cookhouse and latrines, stairs up to the casemates in which were the sleeping quarters, stairs up again

to the guns.

In the warm sunshine of the August day on which we took up our war station it seemed a pleasant enough spot, but in the months that followed and throughout the wretched winter on 1939-1940 we came to find it a dreary prison, a prison without an exercise yard. As Examination Battery the guns were manned 24 hours a day and the unit split up into three watches, one on duty, one standing by in reserve and one resting. We were considerably under strength and during my year numerous changes in the watches were made in an attempt to improve conditions and make life bearable for the men, but none was really successful and by comparison with the army in general the men's lot was not to be envied. On paper the system of duty watch sounds fairly reasonable but what it really meant was this. On Monday, 'A' Watch, for example did one trick on the guns from 9.30 am until 5 pm and then became the 'Resting Watch' but was confined to barracks. On Tuesday they took over the guns from 2 am until 9 am, became the 'Reserve Watch' and did training from 10 am until 1 pm, then went on the guns again from 5 pm until 2 am on Wednesday morning and were 'Reserve Watch' again from 9.30 am when they had a full 24 hours free of duty. On Thursday morning they mounted the guns at 9.30 am and did the same cycle again. As will be seen, there was only one undisturbed night in every three. The fitting in of a full day's leave was the bugbear but the reason for this was that, although we were only 3 miles as the crow flies from the port we guarded it involved a journey of 17 miles overland from our isolated position with no transport for a considerable part of the way, and since most of the men lived in or near the port a short leave was of no use to them with a 34 mile return journey to cover. Later, a 4 hour 'village leave' was given on the day the watch came off at 5 pm which provided a little extra freedom. Had there been any level ground inside the Fort where the men could walk about or play games the prison atmosphere would not have been so acute.

To me it was an enormous relief when I left the Fort in August 1940 after a year's incarceration, but I have often thought with the very real sympathy of those men of the unit who were ordained to spend the six years of the war within its grim walls.

The First Round

The Battery, a territorial coast defence unit, had been embodied a week before the outbreak of war on 3rd September, 1939. Forty-eight hours after embodiment we left our drill hall in the West Country town and had gone to our war station, a two six-inch gun battery on the coast of Cornwall. We overlooked and were on the western point of a broad bay. From our position the land line swept backwards to the port, which was also a Naval station, then eastwards in a semi-circular sweep to Thole Point (Falmouth/Plymouth?) at the bay's other extremity. Between the two headlands a breakwater, on which were other guns, stood sentinel and afforded calm water for anchorage. At Thole Point and elsewhere on the rocky coast were sister batteries, mostly of guns of larger calibre. Our function was Examination

battery, covering and protecting the Examination Vessel which day and night throughout the long war years lay a mile or two out to sea. The Examination Vessel (or XV as she was commonly called) had a rather festive appearance since she flew a string of coloured bunting during daylight hours which, in fact, was a signal message intimating that all incoming shipping must report to her before entering port. On the approach of a ship making for harbour 'XV' signalled the Royal Marine watchers in the Battery Commander's Post and the order "Alarm, Take post" was broadcast throughout the Fort on loud-speakers, following which our guns covered the stranger until 'XV' had examined her papers and given her master permission to proceed to anchorage. The Gun Crews then received the order "Stand Down" upon which they carried on with training or other duties of the day, or at night returned to the wooden shelters on the gun deck situated to the rear of each gun, all except one man of each gun who remained on watch.

In order not to be caught napping by an enemy attempting to block or damage the port before the declaration of hostilities, 'XV' took up her station towards the end of August. We, as her protecting battery, at the same time started operating on a war time basis.

They were delighted, warm, sunny days about this time. Although at war stations little training was being done and except for the Main Gate guard, cooks, and others with an immediate job of work to do, most of the men spent long, lazy hours lying on the gun deck or fort wall sun bathing. A year before we had gone through a similar embodiment, all keyed up with enthusiasm and excitement, only to be disbanded at the end of the week sick at heart at Chamberlain's capitulation to Hitler, and we were not going to get that 'het up' a second time.

It was on the 2nd of September that we got our first 'Alarm.' A small, coaster had rounded the headland, ignoring 'XV's' signal to heave to and was attempting to gatecrash the harbour. As we brought the guns to bear on her we discussed the intruder amongst ourselves. It was just the sort of clever little trick Hitler would get up to, we decided, send a small, harmless looking vessel in loaded with high explosives, and hope that she might be able to damage and perhaps block one of the entrances to the harbour. We were following her every movement, the guns nuzzling around easily on their oiled bearings as they followed the ship's steady approach. In the silence we could hear bits of the conversation in the Battery Commander's Post, the voices coming over the loud speaker circuit which had not been closed.

"We'll let her have the first one across the bows as a warning," we heard. Then the order over the loud speaker, "Stand by to fire number one gun."

"Number One gun on target, sir."

"Load Number One gun."

"Number One gun loaded, sir."

By the Lord Harry this is what we had waited for so long. It was for this that during the past three years we had given up our evenings to training and spent our annual two week's holiday at camp. No dummy shell this time but the real thing. The one up the spout isn't meant to hit you, fellow, but the next one will send you to the bottom of the sea in a matter of seconds. The air tingled with excitement and tension. Oh, but life was good at the moment!

"Fire Number One gun."

"Number one gun fired, sir."

The long-nosed beauty coughed and slid back to her normal position, a trickle of smoke still coming from her open mouth. A few yards in front of the oncoming ship the sea erupted in and column of water spouted into the air. On board the 'raider' men sprang to life. They danced, they waved their arms, they took their shirts off and waved them too, still jigging up and down like marionettes on a string. The surrender was absolute and unconditional. We may not have fired the first shot of the Second World War, although we always claimed we did, but we certainly weren't far from it.

"Stand down the gun detachment. Clean out No 1 gun."

Number One's crew set to work with a will, laughing and talking amongst themselves.

"The first shot of the war, by Gawd, and we fired it, our gun and our battery: and the war had not been declared yet: Good old X Battery. Won't the other blokes in the brigade be swearing mad?"

I heard the rest of the storey in the dingy bar of a dockside pub that evening. As I pushed open the swing door and ordered a drink I could hear a rich Irish voice in the background.

Ah mow, be aisy will ye. How in the balzes could we be after knowing about phwat was going on? Five days ut from Dun Laodhaire we were, loaded wid barrels av stout, and us not fitted wid woireless. Four av us on board, not counting the lad who was on deck wid me as we rounded the point. My sister Mary Ellen's boy he is, out av Sligo. "Uncle Paddy Doyle," says he, "that's a grand ship wid all the flags flying, so it is." "T'will be a regatta," says I. "They do be after holding them things this time av year." "Phwat will yon man be waving them little flags at us for." Asks the lad. "T'is to kape off the sailing course," says I, but divil a yacht or sailing craft could we see any place. "The man's waving at us," says John Edward. "Wave back at him, says I. "Tis friendly people thay are hereabouts," and wid that John Edward gives them a wave wid his hat and not to be outdone I joins the lad a waves, too. Holy priest: T'was like we had given the signal for a war to start for off goes that divil's whelp of a gun at the fort and there was a shell screaming towards us like a sowl in torment and only missing us by a matter of inches. The engineer and the two hands came rushing up on deck wid the blood drained out av the faces av them. "Glory be to God," says I, "Them sodgers has gone mad. Wave your hands," saty I, "Wave your handkerchiefs, wave your bloody shirts. The Dev himself shall hear av this if we ever set foot in Eire again," and wid that we strips to the waist and surrenders the ship. Ah, well; it was a good battle whilst it

lasted

The Days Work (BOUGIE – Algeria) (307 Coy were there Nov 42 – Mar 43)

Wearily I drop into the chair by the open window in the apartment which we use as an Officers' Mess and take the whiskey which my batman has poured out as soon as he heard the door open on my entry.

Now that the pressure of the first few weeks following our arrival has eased off I have been able to give attention to our creature comforts. The warehouse is excellent for work purposes but most unsuitable as living accommodation. There are no sanitary arrangements, no water laid on, and worst of all we have been living herded together, officers and men, which is unfair to my staff for at the day's end they must be able to relax and enjoy themselves in their own way, something they cannot do with their officers continually on top of them. A visit to the Town Major produced two flats in Rue Lamoriciere, both within a hundred yards of the warehouse. My Sergeant Major and three Sergeants occupy one as their Mess and living quarters; I and my subaltern the other. Actually they are only living quarters for we all feed out with 307 Company who have moved in and are our neighbours. In other ways, too, life has improved for Area Headquarters has placed a car permanently at my disposal and Melson Allen, the OC of 307 Company, has furnished a driver and batman.

The Officer's Mess consists of two bedrooms, a dining room, kitchen and toilet. Sad to say there is no bathroom but one can do wonders with a basin of warm water set on the bedroom floor and it is a luxury. After the way we have been pigging it during the last few weeks. The place is fully furnished and my bedroom contains a massive bed on which I can lie with equal comfort lengthways or widthways. The previous occupants, we understand, simply walked out and left everything when the Allied invasion took place, furniture, clothing, personal trinkets - everything. Where they went no one seems to know but probably they sought sanctuary in the interior. But I am intrigued, considerably intrigued, for when, having got the key from the Town Mayor who had requisitioned the place, I first entered the apartment to inspect the place for suitability, there draped negligently over a chair back in what is now my bedroom were a pair of vivid blue knickers. They are now folded away in a chest of drawers with other items of female clothing yet I still wonder if Madame's departure was so hurried as not to allow her sufficient time to dress fully or whether in the excitement of the hour she simply overlooked this one piece of attire. Anyway, they are preserved for her return. She may still be worrying as to where and when she mislaid them.

The windows of the apartment look across the waters of the bay to a ridge of mountains some miles away to the northwards. One massive peak, snow covered at its peak the last day or two, dominates the scene and fills my few occasions of relaxation with never ending pleasure for the constantly changing cloud formations about it make it a scene of great beauty.

But now in the darkness as I slowly sip my whiskey and revel in the enjoyment of unaccustomed rest the mountain is no longer visible, only a deeper darkness across the Mediterranean waters indicates the land mass on the far side. To light a lamp means closing the window shutters to observe blackout orders and within a few minutes the room becomes hot and stuffy and the atmosphere intolerable. What I need most at the moment is just to sit quietly and let the tautened machinery of my nerves ease down slowly before I change to go across to 307 Company's Mess for dinner.

From early morning the pressure of work has slowly built up until by afternoon and early evening it has become a flood against which I must constantly fight if I am to keep control of events which threaten to swamp me. In fact my day commenced in the very early hours of the morning when the Duty Sergeant from my office wakened me to say there was an urgent telephone call from Allied Force Headquarters. Hurriedly I threw on some clothing and dashed along the road to the warehouse. With difficulty I listened to a tinny voice coming along the hundred miles of wire from Algiers, "The ADLs compliments and it was essential that he be informed at once if my subaltern was on ration strength before leaving England." I cursed the man roundly, although knowing that in passing the message the clerk or whatever he was doing no more than carrying out orders, and asked what the devil he meant by getting me out of bed at that hour for a damn fool thing like that, then slammed the receiver down before he had the opportunity to reply. There was no sense in blaming the man but I am not at my best when awakened at 2 am. Only our people in AFHQ could think of a blasted silly question like that to ask. What particularly maddens me is that Bostock was here two days ago and knows perfectly well that my subaltern is on detachment about 70 miles away and cannot be contacted by telephone. I am so irritable that I cannot fall asleep again and do no more than doze on and off until 5 am when I get up and have a shave, wash and dress. Already the Arabs our lcoal labour are gathering in the street below and by 6 am my Sergeants are forming them up into gangs under their re-armletted chefs d'equippe to march them off to the installations where they are to work. Everything is chaotic and pandemonium for the natives are incapable of doing anything in an orderly, controlled manner. When at last the street is cleared of all but a handful who have complaints or special requests to make I turn in to my office to see what has accumulated on my desk. Now that the fighting has died down in the forward areas the chair-borne wallahs are coming into their own and we are submerged under a snow storm of paper work. AFHQ wants returns on this, that and the other, so do L of C Headquarters, so do Area Headquarters, so do Group Headquarters, and all to be rendered in duplicate, triplicate or quadruplicate.

It complicates life. So does the telephone which I have recently installed. To begin with I was on the military exchange and everything was plain sailing. You simply lifted the receiver, a voice said 'Switchboard,' you asked for the person you wanted and (if the line was not engaged) were through in a matter of seconds. Now I have been transferred to the civilian exchange – and use the telephone as little as possible for life is too short. You lift the receiver, turn the handle, and wait. After a time a metallic female voice shrieks, "J'ecoute" and you ask for your number, "Six cent quatrte vingt dis sept, s'll vous plait" and wait. In the distance is heard what appears to be a startled parrotry in full cry, each inmate trying to vie with the other. You decide it is the operators calling to their young, or whatever it is that telephone girls do whilst they are kept waiting. A turbine engine starts up - and still one waits. The turbine pulses away and you lapse into a state of coma. The receiver is pressing too hard against your ear and arm holding it is becoming numb. You wriggle in your seat, uncross the left leg from over the right and cross the right over your left, and change the receiver from one hand to the other. The turbine still throbs and you still wait. Suddenly the operator call a shrill "'Ello and you say patiently, "J'attende six cent quartet vingt dix sept, mam'selle." A machine explodes and deafens you. After a second or two you realise it was the operator answering you, but by that time you have entirely missed what she was saying. None of them seems to have human voices, certainly not female voices. Maybe they are sexless. Discretion being the better part of valour you reply, "Oui, mam'selle. Six cent quatrte vingt dix sept, si" vous plait" - and wait. Very faintly through the din of the turbine comes a voice,

"Switchboard." With a sigh of relief you say, "Extension 46." The voice replies "Switchboard." The turbine roars into a thunder and you yell, "Extension 46." The voice whispers back "Switchboard" and the operator cuts in with a shriek "Finis?" Hastily you plead "Non: Ne coupe pas, s'il vous plait" and then shout louder than ever, "Extension 46" and a whisper comes back "Line engaged, will you wait, sir?" Without warning the line goes completely dead and you replace the receiver. Oh. Hell: Let it wait until tomorrow. The war will last another day.

There are a score of jobs calling for my personnel attention throughout the area but a stream of callers commences and it is impossible to get away. The morning wears on and I seem to have interviewed everyone except the Portuguese Ambassador. British, French, American, American, French, British, there is no end to them. All the little troubles that arise from my job recruiting Arabs and supplying 3,000 workmen daily, settling disputes that arise, soothing down one man, pepping up another and handling out a scolding to a third. In addition to the 3,000 casual labour I control I am forming uniformed Arab units and have to see the French officers who will (nominally) command them and the British officers who in fact do all the work. Camp sites have to be arranged and a dozen questions about equipment settled. My God: Captain Bishop has come all the way from Algiers with his stores and forgot 300 pup tents the natives are to sleep in Forgot a small item like 300 tents! I telephone Algiers, they say they haven't got any tents. I get through to DADOS - he hasn't got any either. No sooner do I put the receiver down than the accursed bell rings again. My brain, already working at top speed, has to suddenly adjust itself to deal with an entirely different problem. I scribble a few hieroglyphics on my blotting pad and start chasing those confounded tents again. Someone comes to the door of my office a native has cut his finger or dropped something on his toes and what should be done about it? I suggest he cuts the dammed things off but that doesn't seem

warehouse floor, drip, drip, drip. Eventually I get back to where I was originally, in the middle of an interview with M Guidicelli who sits bewildered on the other side of the table. More problems. Settle them, shelve them, or in desperation ignore them. Another phone call. More scribbling on my already overcrowded blotting pad. "Bon joir, m'sieur. Enchante." Another caller gone, but always there is yet another waiting outside. Telephone again, strap on my revolver and jump into my car. A blessed relief whilst I relax in the car on the 15 or 20 mile drive to look at someone's water supply. I find DADH (Deputy Assistant Director of Hygiene) testing the water critically. He wants to purify it before the Arabs drink it. I protest vehemently. They have never drunk pure water and it'll make them ill. Give 'em something nice ripe scum on the top and they'll lap it up like nectar and thrive on it. Chlorinate this well and they'll all be in hospital in a week. We argue the point and reach no agreement. Back to my office. Some charming slowvoiced Americans are waiting for me - not to mention a score of other people. I see the Americans first, it soothes my frayed nerves to listen to their long-drawn vowels. This question of feeding these 5,000 'genuwine, bedu-wine A-rabs.' I love the way they separate the two syllables of the word 'A-rabs.' Can they leave it to me? Will I do this or that? Do I think something else a good idea. I say, "Don't bother yourselves with it. I'll see to it and let you know how things are going," and they depart. Another phone call. Another interview. Yet another phone call and I sit, half dead, with the telephone glued to my ear, assuring the operator at minute intervals that I have not finished. "Ne coupe pas, s'il vous plait, Mam'selle." My eye drops on a blot on my crowded blotting pad. Strewth; I should have done that this morning. And so on it goes, hour by hour. Somehow, heaven alone knows how, I still manage to keep all the threads in fingers. Bostock suddenly arrives from AFHQ and wants me to give him the whole day tomorrow. Holy smoke: I haven't had a whole day to give to anyone or any single thing since landing – but he is my chief, so why argue. Prendergast phones (Lt Col G R Prendergast CO 26 Group). He drones on and on, and it all means nothing. I say "Yes, sir" and "No, sir" until he rings off. Reports. Reports. They all have to be rendered by some rigid hour. I have no clerk to make my returns. I am not allowed a clerk on my establishment but they still want their returns slap on the dot. Thank goodness I have brought my own portable typewriter, it has proved invaluable. I order the Duty Sergeant to pull down the shutters of my warehouse-office. I take the telephone off the receiver and settle down to working out statistics. Many of the figures I don't know, nobody knows so I guess the answer. If HQ can guess a better figure let them fire ahead and do so. I type out reports and write up my war diary, lean back in my chair, light a cigarette and breathe a deep sigh of relief. Seven o'clock and the first peaceful moment I have known in thirteen hours. That's another day

to satisfy. Phone the civil hospital. They

argue about who is going to pay the bill,

patiently outside my door blood dripping

and all the time the injured Arab stands

from his injured member onto the

done, I hope. I can hear the operator screaming into the hanging telephone receiver as I wearily lock up my security box and get ready to leave. The Sergeant switches out all the lights before raising the roller door. "If anyone below the rank of brigadier telephones, sergeant, tell them I died this morning." He grins. "Very good, sir. Good night, sir." "Night Sergeant." It is almost as bright as day outside and only half moon as yet, and I stand for a moment and breathe in the quiet of it all before returning to my small apartment.

My whiskey glass is empty as sitting by the open window I review all the incidents of the day. Another day ended. Another job of work done for England, home and beauty. Not very spectacular perhaps, but we can't all get up into the front line, someone has to keep things going along the Lines of Communication, and thank God I'm still fit enough to do that.

I get up on my feet to wash and change before going along to 307 Coy Mess for dinner and become aware of the voice of one of the most garrulous women I have ever heard and who lives in the flat adjoining mine. I now understand why the French favour the habit of garrotting. She starts at daybreak and continues without ceasing until long after I have turned in for the night. Also, she has the annoying habit of beginning each sentence with a piercing, "Alors!" The walls being paper thin I can hear every word of her stringent conversation. There is a husband in the background but I have not yet heard his voice. So far as I can judge he has not yet had a chance to get a word in edgeways since they returned here two weeks ago from some place in the interior where they went for safety at the time of the occupation. One day I feel sure that one of her sentences will end with a nasty gurgling sound – and then there will be peace and quiet. I shall say to myself, Good man," and the next morning will call in on him and say, "Alors," and give him one of my cigars and shake him by the hand and grin. He will grin back and there will be harmony between at least two men of the Allied Nations.

Charlie

Charlie was, perhaps seven or eight years old. You can never be quite sure with native children, as they themselves have no knowledge of their age. He was not, of course, baptised in the name of Charlie; in fact he was never baptised at all. One of my Sergeants gave him the name and it stuck. It at least had the merit of being more pronounceable than his real name was.

No one guite knows how the boy was first adopted by the unit, it seemed as if he had always been part of the scenery surrounding the warehouse which was used as our centre for recruiting Arab labour, a small child with liquid brown eyes, usually standing on one foot as he leaned against the doorway with one thumb in his mouth, and occasionally hitching up a dirty piece of cloth draped over one shoulder which was all the clothing he possessed. Children were a positive pest in those early days of the campaign, always hanging about the place shouting, squabbling, fighting, filling the air of Rue Lamoriciere with their din until one of my Sergeants would dash angrily out with a stick and drive them off upon which

there were shrieks of fear and the scatter of bare feet running away and then, with luck, a minutes silence. There was barely time to get one's ears attuned to the peace and quietness before they drifted back and the whole business started all over again. But Charlie never did act like the others. When the shuttered door of the warehouse was thrown open at daybreak there he was, standing quietly by looking in at us with big, sad eyes, silent. Whilst other children played or fought he remained stationary at the door-post watching, just watching. Right up till dusk when he must hurry away to keep curfew regulations he was there, patience personified. He did not speak, not even beg, but his eyes never left out faces. He grew on us to the extent that we scarcely liked to eat our emergency rations in front of him because of the unspoken accusation and reproach in those pleading eyes

I think it was Sergeant Wilton who first gave him a broom and told him to sweep the place out. It probably was because Wilton was the sort who would rather pass work on to others than do it himself. In those days I had none of my staff below the rank of Sergeant and before they had to carry out menial duties from which senior NCOs would normally be exempt. Be that as it may, from that time on Charlie was on the establishment. A couple of years later I listened in boredom to a long and waffling monologue during dinner in a mess when Brigadier Carter was expounding at great lengths on infiltration, which he claimed to have implemented during the First World War. Infiltration; Charlie knew more about that at the age of eight than Carter ever learned of the subject in Staff College, if he ever attended one which I doubt

My Sergeant Major asked permission for the boy to be employed by himself and the Sergeants at their own expense as a mess boy and general handyman, permission which I gave subject to his being washed and from then on Charlie was a fixture. Wise in his generation he kept well out of my sight and left my private office severely alone, but I could not be ignorant of his presence in such cramped guarters and often as I passed in and out saw him engaged in his chores from which he would look up gravely at my approach to spring to a salute when he recognised me. A very smart salute, too, which obviously he had been taught by my staff. Not only did he never intrude on me but he was assiduous in ensuring no other Arab did. It was no uncommon thing that we were very busy and the warehouse crowded with natives for one of them to attempt to short-circuit my staff and sneak into my office to take up his troubles with me direct, but after Charlie's advent none succeeded. Only once did he abuse his trust, a day when all my staff were away on other duties and I alone was on the premises. I was busy on paper work of some sort and dimly aware of the shuffling feet at my door but paid no attention until Charlie spoke.

"Commandant, a woman," he said, and disapproved.

I looked up and saw a young Arab woman standing erect before my table. She was covered from head to ankles in the enveloping white gown they wear, her face covered as modesty demands. Without waiting for me to speak she broke into a torrent of pleading, begging for clothing to cover her nakedness, clothing to warm her frozen body, anything, anything, so long as it was clothing. Since all that was exposed of her body was her eyes and hands I remarked dryly that it appeared to me she was fairly well covered and had little to complain about. The words poured from her again as she grasped tightly in her hands the robe which surrounded her.

"Commandant, I swear it is as I have told you," she protested. "I swear that I am naked. See!"

With a dramatic sweep she flings her two arms apart, holding an edge of the robe in each outstretched hand. She was right, by George! Naked as a new born colt. Hurriedly I called Charlie and had her bundled outside. Whether she was one of his family or had bribed him to admit her to my office I never did learn. Thank heaven she kept her face veil on and so observed all the decencies.

Charlie's appearance was changing by degree. The dirty, torn scrap of material which had been his only covering disappeared first and was replaced by a cut down army shirt. A pair of khaki trousers followed, also after much shortening. A forage cap was added to his equipment, and finally a pair of boots which my Sergeants managed to buy, somehow. He was not allowed to take these clothes home needless to say for they would have disappeared into the thin air overnight. When off duty he returned to his original tattered garment but immediately on his arrival was ordered to wash and change, which he did with great ceremony by the open doorway to the wide-eyed amazement of the crowd of native children who gathered to watch. He was the envy of every child for miles around as he stood fully uniformed and apparently unconcerned at the entrance to the warehouse, pretending to be sublimely unaware of the presence of the hordes of whispering youngsters who squatted on the other side of the road as with an unwarranted air of authority Charlie ordered grown men to move along and not block the doorway, or called to one of them to enter and report to the duty Sergeant for registration.

But the boots were a sore trial to one whose feet had never known restraint and captivity. The first day they were given to him he wore them without complaint but after that he only stepped into them when he was standing idly at the door, removing them at once the moment he had to go to any place, even if only a few yards away. Once having been shown the way of it he polished them several times a day with immense energy and gusto and exhibited them with pride to all who came near, but after that first experiment he never wore them other than to stand still in.

Charlie and my staff carried on long and involved conversations, although how they did so I could never quite fathom since my Sergeants knew no Kibile dialect and he knew nothing except that, and it was through him that we learned of the coming Feast of Aid-el Kibir, the 'Mutton Feast.'On that day, the 70th day of Ramadan, everything was given up to eating and singing and no man worked from the rising of the sun until the rising of the sun the day that followed. Yet it appeared on further questioning that although no man might work and all men would sing it did not follow that all men would eat: that it seemed was the prerogative of the rich and since Charlie's family were wretchedly poor the feasting would not be for them. That was something my staff would not tolerate and clubbing together they collected between them six hundred francs and bought a sheep in the native market place; a miserable looking, bony specimen it is true, but still – a sheep.

Throughout the day they kept the poor beast hidden away and then, as Charlie was about to leave and return home in the evening, they made a presentation of it to him. Never in his wildest imaginings had Charlie ever thought he would possess such wealth. Perhaps when he was a grown man, if fortunes came his way, he might one day have a tenth or even a guarter share in a sheep, although this seemed to be unduly ambitions and not to be pondered on outside the realm of day dreams, but a whole sheep, and on the eve of the Feast of Aid-el-Kbir too! He did not thank them, but in this he was not guilty of ingratitude. At the outset he had not rightly understood what these white soldiers were telling him. He looked from one to another of them trying his best to interpret their wishes and learn what it was they wanted him to do with animal whose halter they had placed in his hand, anxious to please yet uncomprehending. He took a lot of convincing - and then there were no words he could use to express the immensity of his gratitude, his awe at such unbelievable generosity. Still looking from face to face for assurance he started dragging the bleating animal along the street whilst at the doorway my men stood laughing and rubbing their stomachs to convey the wish that he would have an enjoyable feast. They were still at the open door, smoking, chatting, enjoying the cool of the night when a few hours later a small party of Arabs loomed up out of the darkness.

"'Ello. 'Ello. What's all this about?" I heard my Sergeant Major asking. "These wogs I'll end up in prison if they ain't careful, being out after dark like this. They know there's a curfew in force. Well, blimey, it's young Charlie. What do you want, Charlie boy?"

Very solemnly Charlie presented to the sergeant major an old tin pan from which, when he removed the dirty cloth which covered it, there came a cloud of steam and an evil, pungent stench. Laboriously he explained that those with him were the men of his family, his father, the father of his father, the brothers of his father and the other sons of his father.

"And this 'ere 'orrible looking 'ogwash, Charlie? What might this be intended for?" my sergeant major asked.

Once again the long, involved explanations were made. From the entrails and most succulent part of the sheep, Charlie explained, the womenfolk had prepared this delectable dish which, before a mouthful of the feast was touched by his family, must first be partaken by the giver. This was the custom and to fail to adhere to it would bring much disgrace upon them.

"Ee! Ah doan't think Ah could stomach that stuff," said the Sergeant Bartlett. "If you was to ask me Ah would say they hadn't cleaned the beast first before cooking it." "I am no a-arsking of you, Sergeant Bartlett, I'm a-telling of you," answered the sergeant major sternly. "You will get you spoon and eat some of this much and pretend to like it. What is more I will do likewise and so will you other sergeants." My Sergeant Major was not only a disciplinarian but a very wise man with considerable knowledge and understanding of the working of the native mind.

With much ceremony and every indication of enjoyment, despite the nausea that threatened to overcome them, my staff sampled the foul smelling dish whilst the natives stood around their mouths watering in anticipation of the moment when their turn to share the feast arrived. Mercifully, my NCOs were not expected to do more than sampling gestures and custom and honour being satisfied the Arabs set out on their return journey to their village.

"Sergeant Bartlett," said my sergeant major, "You had better see these 'ere men get back safely and ain't pinched on the way 'ome. If anybody stops you and wants to know why they is out after dark tell 'em these natives 'as been doing a job for the Major. Oh, an' just one other thing, sergeant. Don't 'ang about on the way to finish off the basin of soup."

My Sergeant Major's humour tends to be a little heavy at times.

A Gift of Tongues

A new development of the war was being planned and the ADL at Allied Force Headquarters had warned me to hold myself in readiness to move at short notice to take part in it. Your establishment, as he told me, will be two Subalterns, one Sergeant Major, six Sergeants and a batman-driver-clerk. Only the 'Foyer Civique' could have thought up that batman-driver-clerk combination and long experience has taught me that if a man could drive the betting is that he would be a lousy batman and a quite incompetent clerk, and that in any event, whatever his capabilities, no one man could satisfactorily carry out all those duties in a day restricted to twenty-four hours. However, that was a minor point. For the greater part of a year I had done my own clerical work, I or one of the others could drive the jeep, and it was to be hoped the man would not be too useless as a batman. What was important was the six Sergeants. In the specialised work we were to carry out they were the backbone of my team, and fortunately the ADFL had been able to assure me that they had been hand-picked and were top quality. They were to report to me in the course of a few days and I awaited their arrival with interest. With a light heart I set about winding up the job I was on and preparing for the bigger one that lay ahead.

My Sergeants reported for duty and I had all six paraded before me in my office for interview. Quickly I glanced down the nominal roll and posting order which one of them had silently handed me – Serjeants Bodnaras, Ardines (recruited in Algiers 16 May 43 real name 13809823 Hoyos Abilio RUIZ alias Julio ARDINES), Swatkiwski, Dahler, Orchudesch and Badanelli, I read. Not much of a clue here as the where our secret destination was to be. Could be any place in Europe.

"Good morning, Sergeants," I said. "I understand we are all to go on a little picnic together so we might as well get to know one another straight away. You have been travelling together for the last two days so will have teamed up by this. I am your Commanding Officer for this new show and I've little doubt you will soon learn my peculiarities, what I like and don't like in my NCOs and what I expect from you. To start off with I'd like to know which of you is which, and I'll just take down some particulars got my own records. Which of you is Sergeant Bodnaras?"

One man stepped forward and gave me an untidy salute, which coming from a senior NCO annoyed me. "Sergeant Bodnaras, sir," he said. There was something strange about them all which puzzled me. When I had addressed them their eyes had the attentive but nonunderstanding look one sometimes notices when talking in a subdued voice to those very hard of hearing. But my immediate attention was in Sergeant Bodnaras. His unsoldierly salute had irritated me I knew that I was frowning at him.

"How long have you been in the army, Sergeant?" I asked. "Sir?"

IF?

"I asked you how long you had been in the army, Sergeant," I repeated sternly. "Oh, yes, sir."

"What is wrong with you man? Don't you understand plain English?"

"H'English! Yes, I spik. Goof." He smiled engagingly.

My God, I thought. The man hasn't understood one word I've said. I wonder if any of them have? I let my eyes travel along the line from one end to the other.

"Has any one of you the foggiest notion what I've been saying in the last few minutes?" I asked.

They looked at me uncomprehendingly, silent.

"Do any of you speak French?" I asked in that language. Two of them indicated that they did and I heaved a sigh of relief. Now we can get somewhere, I thought thankfully. Sergeant Badanelli, an Italian seemed to understand my French better than the other and I used him as an interpreter. But it was tough going. Invariably it took three of them to get an answer out of the fourth but in the end I got my records straightened out. Here is a copy of it:-

- Serjt Bodnaras Rumanian Speaks Rumanian & Czech
- Serjt Ardines Spanish Speaks Spanish & French
- Serjt Swatkowski Polish
- Speaks Polish & German Serit Dahler German
- Speaks German & Polish
- Serjt Orchudesch Czech
- Speaks Czech, German & Italian Serft Badanelli Italian
- Speaks Italian & French

Their length of service in the British Army varied from three to six weeks. All had been released from concentration camps on the Franco-Spanish border and spent two or three years in confinement there and in other centres in Europe. None could speak English and the only thing they had in common was an intense hatred of Germany and Italy.

I sent them away whilst I puzzled things out. Ardines and Badanelli I could converse with direct, although occasionally I had to use Badanelli to get some of my French across to the Spaniard. To speak to Bodnaras I needed Badanelli who translated my French into Italian to Orchudesch who, in turn, translated the words into Czech which Bodnaras knew slightly. To speak to Swatkowski I needed Badanelli, Orchudesch and Dahler. To speak to Dahler I needed Badanelli and Orchudesch, and to speak to Orchudesch I needed Badanelli. Sergeant Badanelli was obviously my key man, with Sergeant Orchudesch as the second string.

To put it mildly I was intrigued. Like most soldiers in Africa it has seemed to me that Italy was the next obvious move, but clearly there was a deeper scheme afoot. Had we been going to Italy I would not have needed this League of Nations for I knew well that back in my old Training Centre in the west of England we had trained two companies of British-Italians who spoke both languages fluently. These companies would by now have a score of good NCOs with three years British Army training who could be flown or shipped out to Africa at short notice. If this team of mine was any indication we were to try a thrust somewhere further east, in the Balkans probably, a daring and ambitious project. To get in one the ground floor in a show like this was a terrific stroke of luck and I was buoyed up with excitement, and more than a little proud to have been AFHQ's choice.

When orders finally came to report to Algiers with my new team I could not get there quickly enough. Of my two subalterns one, Langer, (240968 Hans Peter LANGER, commissioned 20 Aug 42, joined Civ Labour from 337 (A) Coy Sep 43, tos OC 2917 CLU in Jan 46) was a first class man and something of a linguist which was an additional asset. I entered the ADL's office all agog to learn where our destination was to be. The ADL was something of a playboy and fond of his little joke so I knew he was only leg-pulling when he told me we were bound for the Salerno landings and the invasion of Italy.

"That was what 1'd expected, sir, before you sent those sergeants to me," I laughed back at him. "But after they arrived I realised that I had guessed wrong."

"But that is where you are going, "But that is where you are going, Rhodes," he assured me seriously. "We want you to nip into Naples the moment we've winkled the German out of the place and start operations immediately."

I was dumbfounded. It couldn't be, it just couldn't be.

"Do you really mean that?" I asked. He nodded.

"But those Sergeants, sir," I protested. "You told me they were all handpicked. They would be completely useless as a liaison between Italian civilians and British units. There isn't one of them speaks English and only two of them speak Italian."

"They'll shake down alright," he assured me breezily. "Don't take things so seriously, old boy. You'll make a jolly good job of it, I know you will."

Even after a year's experience of the "Foyer Comique" I could hardly believe my own ears. There was a big job of work to be done and we had to get cracking the moment we could enter Naples. Shake down! My God, there wasn't time to shake down. No time for training these NCOs with only an average of a month's service in the army. No time to teach them English. The utter stupidity of it appalled me. The Italian campaign had not come upon us suddenly, there must have been weeks of warning at AFHQ, and all the time the NCOs who should have been earmarked for the job were there at home in England, wasted, utterly wasted. I raged, knowing the uselessness of it even as I did so.

"I never knew such a man for creating difficulties," the ADL told me airily. "Forget your blasted Sergeants and snap into it. We've got complete confidence in you at AFHQ, old chap, or you can be sure we'd never give you a job of this size. It's going to be the biggest thing we've tackled yet, Now about transport – "

It was no use arguing. That was the brush off. We did the job, of course. Four men doing the work of ten; working from daybreak until long after dark, seven days a week, knowing things weren't being done as well as they should have been but impotent to do more in the circumstances; enviously watching our American opposite numbers with staff many times as large, most of them Italian-Americans who were as much at home in Naples as they were in New York. And all the time those Sergeants sat around on their backsides, useless, eating rations, doing nothing. Only one of them, Orchudesch, even attempted to earn his pay, and he was the only one who remained with me to the end. The others were eventually, after some weeks, 'returned empty' to Algiers – and without their stripes. It wasn't their fault; they should never have been selected for the job in the first place. They were not responsible for the work that was left undone and the hundreds of pounds of British taxpayers money that was wasted on them. It seems that a certain amount of lunacy of this nature must tackle place in war-time. But I shall never, never understand why.

Private Rosenzweig

Before leaving Algiers for the Italian campaign I had a second interview with the ADL at Allied Force Headquarters, this time about my batman-driver-clerk.

"The chap seems willing enough," I admitted, "Except that he thinks 'batting' is below his dignity, he drove a laundry van or something of that sort before the war, and he is damn nearly illiterate which cramps his style as a clerk. I suppose you know he still makes a cross in his pay-book because he can't write his name? I'm not worried about a batman, we officers will have to look after ourselves, but I am about someone to do the paper work. Because of that useless bunch of NCOs you've foisted on to me my Sergeant Major is going to have to do three Sergeants work for a living which means that I can't have him sitting around in an office.

The ADL was all magnanimity, flowing over with big-hearted generosity.

"My dear old boy, go along to the Alien Company and pick any man you want. I'll let the OC know you're coming. You'd better get out there right away as you haven't got much time to spare before you get on the road. I'm sorry about those Sergeants but there's no time to do anything about them now. Good bye, old boy, and good luck."

The OC of the Alien Company produced half a dozen men he thought would suit

me, but either they were not anxious to get back into Europe or they were minus one or two qualifications necessary and my optimism was beginning to ooze when Private Rosenzweig was sent in for interview. He was short in stature, aged about 40, and almost bald. I put the proposition to him.

"Because of security reasons I cannot tell you where we are going, except that it is somewhere in Europe. And I don't want any man with me who does not volunteer for the job. What languages do you speak?"

"I spik the Sherman most fluent. I spik mit the h'excellence der French. The Italian I spik ferry goot. A liddle of the Slovak, I spik, und like as you listen the h'English I spik shust like der h'Englishmans."

"What were you before the war; in business, I mean?"

"Sair, perfore Hitler I haf mine own pisness in Hambour. Der h'egsport trade am I in. Comes Hitler – no longer I der pisness haf." He shrugged his shoulders, "I am a Jew."

"How do you feel about going back into Europe?" I asked.

"Sair, pack into Shermany to go I am afraid. In Hamburg I haf der sister, der h'onckle undt der h'aunts. Eef I am a prisoner taken der Gestapo take undt kill my family."

"Then you will not volunteer to go with me, perhaps to Germany?"

"Sair, can I in anutter name go I to Shermany will go wit' you. Den I am no longer for my family afraid. For mineself still I am afraid, put I will go. Sair, I am not a prave mans." He shrugged his shoulders apologetically.

I liked the little man. It wasn't only that he had the qualifications I needed, but he had guts. He had every reason to be afraid. Hadn't he already spent two years in a concentration camp? That gave him enough reason in itself, more reason for fear than most of us has and we were afraid, too, sometimes but not honest enough to admit it. I told him that if he liked to come with me I would be glad to have him, and he marched out of the room with half an hour in which to pack his kit, his thin shoulders swaggering in a most un-soldierlike manner, and at least half an inch added to his stature.

Private Rosenzweig became my 'Admirable Crichron.' There was nothing he would not tackle if asked; more important, he did most jobs that were waiting to be done without being asked. His one ambition was to render good and faithful service and few men have fulfilled an ambition so completely. No day was too long, no job too menial, and his work was done in no spirit of subservience but in that of quiet dignity. In the appalling transit camp a few miles out of Oran where we stayed a few days prior to embarkation he was a godsend to me and my subalterns. When, to begin with, the sandy waste was a burning fly-pestered hell it was Private Rosenzweig who made life bearable with little attentions and kindness which were certainly not in his line of duty as a clerk to the unit, and when a couple of days later the rains came and the camp became a swamp of red ooze it was again Private Rosenzweig who rescued pieces of our kit as they floated away in the stream which flowed through our tent and returned them cleaned in so far as they ever could be made clean again, with a cheery, "Sair, h'eqscuse, plis."

The day before we embarked I took him into Oran with me to visit the British NAAFI there. This would be our last opportunity, perhaps for months, to buy those small luxuries which are so greatly valued on active service. I carried a list of things my officers and men wanted, chocolate, toilet articles, writing paper and a host of other items. I proffered to my assistant in payment notes in British Military currency which was all we had. But the NAAFI wasn't taking British money. American currency, yes, with pleasure, but if we could not pay in dollars then we could not have the goods.

Once again the good Rosenzweig came to the rescue, producing from the inner recess of his battledress blouse the dollars that were so badly needed. Quite irregular, of course.

Orders had been to convert all the money we had into military currency, yet since the welfare of my officers and men was at stake I was strangely blind to my clerks apparent oversight.

On the landing beaches of Salerno, where stores were piled mountain high in hopeless confusion over a few hundred acres of shore, it was the now invaluable Private Rosenzweig who traced and stood solitary guard over my unit equipment.

The early days in Naples were hard going. We desperately needed Italian civilian labour for British military installations, and it was

my job to supply it, but the Americans had taken over the civil labour office and its large, efficient staff and were, not unnaturally, diverting all manpower to meet US Army requirements. Private Rosenzweig found a solution to that.

Surreptitiously, in the dark mornings of those late autumn days, he attached himself to the end of the long queue outside the American Labour Office and by promises, wheedling, cajolery and bribery siphoned off enough of their supply to meet our most urgent needs.

Week by week he was perfecting his English and although the accent was still atrocious his command of the language advanced by leaps and bounds.

He was, of course, too good a man to remain long a private soldier and when the opportunity came to get rid of the useless, 'hand-picked' Sergeants who had been wished on me in Algeria Private Rosenzweig became Sergeant Rosenzweig, one of the hardest working and certainly the proudest Sergeant in the British Army.

Slowly the campaign in Italy moved northwards with the move into Germany becoming a possibility Rosenzweig decided it was high time he changed his name and removed all traces of his former identity. The machinery existed in the army overseas for this to be done and one day he presented himself before his OC.

"Sair," he said. "I wish to make application to change my name of Rosenzweig and to take an English name."

"Have you decided on the name you wish

to assume, Sergeant?"

"Yes, sir. I vill Louis Ross-Sweigen pecome."

'But, good God, man, that isn't an English name. You might as well remain Rosenzweig.'

'Sair. I haf gonsidered this way. If I am galled Ross-Sweigen and you vish to sent me as an English Sergeant amongst Pritish troops den I am Sergeant Ross. On ze udder handt, if you sendt me amongst Shermans I pecome Sergeant Sweigen. Zat is goot resons, yes?"

Our paths separated, as is the way of the army, and I last saw him in Florence carrying proudly a Sergeant Major's crown on his sleeve.

By 1946, when he was demobilised and reverted again to the status of a stateless person, with many regrets that his British Army service did not entitle him to acquire British nationality, he had to the best of my knowledge performed no acts of heroism or won any decorations for bravery, which is not surprising for his lot was not cast in the thick of the fight, but I do know that for four years he voluntarily gave to England very loyal and cheerful service.

In Vienna today is an alert little business man. Very bald and with an excellent command of the English language he walks with a queer shoulder swinging strut that belies any suggestion of military service. Amongst his business associates he is known as Herr Ross, but I shall always remember him best, and with affection, as Private Rosenzweig.

Pioneer Long Lost Trails...

Gary Humprey's, Stuart McKay, Malcolm Nelson and Peter Sumpton - do you know them?

CAPT HUMPHREY'S

Trying to trace a Capt Humphrey's RPC, he served at 4 Armd Div HQ & Sig Regt in Hammersmith Bks, Herford, West Germany from around 1985-1987 (ish).

He was the families officer attached to HQ Sqn. I think he was posted back to the UK and his wife and daughter lodged with me whilst their married guarter was finished at their UK posting.

He was a late entry commissioned officer and at that time he was probably in his mid 40's.

I have found some photographs belonging to his daughter, I think her name is Yolanda but I cannot recall his wife's name.

Contact Chris Fielding (ex R Sigs)

abnormal-load-escorts@ hotmail.com

STUART McKAY

My adopted son is trying to find his biological father who was serving in Thiepval

Barracks in 1970/71 with the Royal Pioneer Corps.

His father's name is Stuart McKay and would be about 67 years old now and came from Scotland. Shortly after my now wife told Stuart she was pregnant he was posted to Aldershot

If any of you fine Gentleman have any idea of where Stuart is now, my son Graham would like to know about him.

We would be most grateful for any help you could give us. Thanks for any help you can give us.

Keith Sedge (on Facebook)

MALCOLM NELSON

Lucy Nelson the granddaughter of Malcolm is trying to obtain a photograph of her grandfather who sadly passed away in 1988.

Malcolm (23900069) served from 1965 to 1977, can you help. If you have a photograph please pass to RPC Association.

PETER SUMPTON

I am sending you this photo on

behalf of Mr Peter Sumpton, the picture attached is of his father and a friend

The soldier on the right is his father, but he doesn't know his name and is hoping that someone can shed some information about him and his friend in the photo.

You can reply directly to him via his own email address petersumpton.1@gmail.com

TRYING TO FIND **A LONG LOST PIONEER?**

SEND YOUR SEARCH TO royalpioneercorps@gmail.com





We got our man...

Pioneer Dougie Durrant has at least a books worth of his stories. Here is one of those stories, published for the first time.

Report: Dougie Durrant Picture: Dougie Durrant

WAS sat in Fort Monagh watching TV and talking to Moby when a shot rang out I ran to the Ops room while Moby kitted up as he would be first to go on foot as it sounded right outside the

gate. I got to the Ops room just in time to hear the contact report coming over the net, I was right it was just outside the front gate towards the junction of the Whiterock Road and the Falls Road.

I grabbed my kit and Bluce and made my way to the side gate as the IRA might have a present at the front gate and used the shot as a come on, we ran out with the adrenaline pumping around my body to the front where a call sign had secured the area around the front gate and the contact point where a soldier was being treated and it did not look good, he was a section commander who I'd patrolled with earlier during the week. I asked where do they think the firing point was?

We then got a good brief from one of the section commanders on what had happened and where the shots were fired from, across the road was a dentist, which looked right up the Whiterock Road, a nice location for a sniper.

I put Bluces harness on and asked the section commander if a follow-up had been in the house? "No" OK as I was walking towards it I had this feeling in my gut that I was being stitched up as it was too easy and things where not right then it came to me "The absence of the normal is the present of the abnormal"

present of the abnormal" The normal, take the owner of the property, why was he still here? I walked over to where he was sat in the back of a pig, Sir can you tell me what happened I'm only interested in what happened after the shots were fired.

In a firm but shaking voice he began to tell me that they had shot out the top floor window but that one of them was down by the front door with a wheelie bin, and after the shots were fired they took his car keys and ran out of the back door, Moby piped up "What was the car and registration" it was a green Volvo estate dark green and he then gave us the registration.

Moby knew it was no good tracking so he told the commander to get onto the net and inform everyone that if the vehicle is found to call this location so he could get me there soon as possible and no one to go near the vehicle.

I decided to leave the front door as I knew the shooters had left me or the follow up team a nice present. I went down the back ally with my bodyguard (BG) Bluce searching away 25 metres in front of me. We came to the back gate of the property and I was happy it was not booby trapped so I jumped over the wall next to the gate and looked in detail at the gate I could see there was a bit of a glove on the gate so I informed my BG who in turn passed it up the chain of command as it might form part of the evidence, Bluce moved up to the back door which was ajar and I could see in.

I called Bluce back as I could see the wheelie bin was laying down pointing at the front door with what looked like fishing line in front of it, my guess was it was a form of claymore waiting for the follow up team to kick the door in and "BANG" the device would go off and plaster the boys with what we would call Harland & Wolfe confetti in other words nuts and bolts.

By the time I had got back around the front ATO had arrived with the RUC SOCO so I briefed all of them. Moby had received the call he wanted, the vehicle had been found in the Turf Lodge by the flats, "Tell them not to go anywhere near the vehicle" Moby shouted as we boarded the QRF vehicle.

We got up to the Turf Lodge and the locals by now were out in force shouting

and throwing stones and any other shit they could get their hands on. Moby got Jed ready and with the word of command Jed was now on track and of they went at speed "There must be more than one Doug.

Moby shouted we went down onto a small path which led down to the cemetery an ideal place for an ambush, we had been joined by the Commanding Officer and his team and he stayed back from us and gave us space to work, Moby was still going strong with him pointing out places of interest and me putting Bluce over it, we carried on across the cemetery as it's one of the largest in Belfast and a known hiding place for terrorist weapons every stop was searched in the finest of detail

We were coming up to the Whithrock Road near the rear of the Working Man's club, I shouted to Moby that we have almost come full circle with that Jed pulled Moby across the main Whiterock Road and across into the Ballymurphy.

He carried on despite the locals now taking interest in the dogs moving through the estate.

Moby continued on straight to a front door, which he kicked in and when straight up the stairs and into the bathroom, followed by the CO and his team, sat on the sink was an AK47 with a well-known terrorist sat in the bath in disbelief they dragged him out of the bath and threw him down the stairs into the arms of the RUC who had now joined us,

The CO came over to Moby and in a somewhat out of breath voice "Groundhog that was some track thank you very much for your effort.

I could see him and his men were pleased it's not often we get our man but this time due to Jed and Moby and a good team effort all round we got our man but I also knew one if not two were still out there and would no doubt try the same again at some point.

(Cpl Errol Pryce Aged 23. Shot dead by a sniper while on foot patrol on the Whiterock Road, Ballymurphy, and West Belfast. Duke of Wellingtons Regiment).





The following article describes Pioneer Corps graves Ireland. In the picture above the second grave along from the left is Pioneer Private Hardingham.

Report: Norman Brown RPCA Archive

N THE October 2013 edition of The Pioneer we published a letter from John Kileen which showed details of Pioneer graves in the village of Belmullet (Kilcommon Erris Church of Ireland Churchyard) in Ireland and in the October 2014 edition we published a letter from a

relative of one of these Pioneer soldiers. There are a total of 60 Pioneer graves in

Ireland, details are as follows: ABBEYLEIX NEW CEMETERY, Co OFFALY

Pte Dennis MAHER (1832642) died 13 Jul 43 aged 39 (Irish – Irish enlisted RA 21 Jul

41 transferred to PC on 16 Sep 41 AHAMPLISH CHURCH OF IRELAND

CHURCHYARD, Co SLIGO

Pte Hector Fullerton DONALD (13045398) died 7 Aug 40 aged 27 – British enlisted at Manchester into PC on 27 Jun 40

Pte Frederick Merrick ROBSON

(13031846) died 7 Aug 40 aged 49 -British enlisted at Sunderland into PC on 29 Jun 40

BIRR (CLONOGHILL) CEMETERY, Co OFFALY

Pte Brendan CONNOLLY (13014608) died 14 Aug 42 (aged 30) – Irish enlisted at Belfast into PC on 2 Apr 40

BOYLE (ASYLINN) CEMETERY, Co

ROSCOMMON Pte James GRADY (13014314) died 30 Sep 40 (aged 41) – Irish enlisted at Omagh into PC on 18 Mar 40

Pte William MURRAY (13118161) died 4 Sep 44 (aged 56) – Irish enlisted at Omagh into PC on 15 Feb 43

CARRIGANS CEMETERY, Co SLIGO

Pte John William ALLAN DCM MM (13031749) died 7 Aug 40 (aged 49) British enlisted at Ashington into PC on 27

Jun 40 (also served in 1914-18 war) CAVAN PROTESTANT CEMETERY, Co

CAYAN

Pte Robert John OWENS (7040209) died 14 Nov 44 (aged 59) – Irish enlisted at Omagh into Inniskilling Fusiliers on 8 Oct 41 transferred to PC on 25 Aug 42

DONEGAL

Pte Patrick O'DONNELL (14403586) died 15 Apr 44 (aged 33) – Irish enlisted at

CORNAMAGH CEMETERY, Co WESTMEATH

CONWAL CATHOLIC CEMETERY, Co

Omagh into General Service Corps (for basic training) on 28 Aug 42 transferred to PC on 12 Sep 42

64 | THE ROYAL PIONEER CORPS ASSOCIATION

Pte William FITZGIBBONS (13024090) died 19 Jul 40 (aged 36) - Irish enlisted at Omagh into PC on 27 Apr 40 Pte William HENRY (13102128) died 1

Mar 47 (aged 39) – Irish enlisted at Leeds into PC on 7 Aug 42

Pte Patrick REILLY (13040445) died 26 Nov 41 (aged 48) – Irish enlisted at Omagh into PC on 4 Apr 41

Pte John ROONEY (13028429) died 14 Aug 42 (aged 51) – Irish enlisted at Omagh into General Service Corps (for basic training0 transferred to PC on 8 Sep 42

CURRYKIPPANE CEMETERY, Co CORK Pte John HARRINGTON (13015879) died

23 Oct 46 (aged 41) - Irish enlisted at Llanelly into PC on 6 Jun 40

DEAN'S GRANE CEMETERY, Co DUBLIN Pte William BREEN (13024359) died 26 Aug 41 (aged 44) – Irish enlisted at Belfast into PC on 3 May 40

Pte Patrick FARRELL (1127676) died 30 May 44 (aged 38) - Irish enlisted at Belfast into RA on 10 Sep 41 transferred to PC on 10 Jul 42

Pte Michael FITZPATRICK (13122156) died 24 Mar 45 (aged 19) – Irish enlisted at Belfast into PC 17 Jan 45

Pte John LYNCH (13009951) died 1 Nov 46 (aged 38) – enlisted at Belfast into PC on 27 Jan 40

Lt Gerard Philip REGAN (281030) died 7 Dec 44 (aged – not known)

DOOHOOMA CATHOLIC GRAVEYARD, Co MAYO

Pte Emyr PRYTHERCH (13045853) died 7 Aug 40 (aged 26) – British enlisted at

Cardiff into PC on 11 Jul 40 DOUGLAS CATHOLIC CEMETERY, Co CORK

Cpl Daniel O'CONNELL (13040506) died

8 Nov 44 (aged 35) – Irish enlisted at Belfast into PC on 10 Apr 41

DUGORT CHURCH OF IRELAND

CHURCHYARD, Co MAYO

Pte Jonas Arthur HARDINGHAM (960651) died 7 Aug 40 (aged 23) - Irish enlisted into RA 5 Feb 40 transferred to PC 26 Jul 40

EASKY (ROSLEA) CEMETERY, Co SLIGO Pte Sampson JONES (13045155) DIED 7

Aug 40 (aged 26) – British enlisted at Manchester into PC on 27 Jun 40

EDERGOLE GRAVEYARD, Co CAVAN

Pte Edward CONLON (13040729) died 23 Sep 42 (aged 48) – Irish enlisted at Omagh into PC on 29 May 41

ENNISCORTHY NEW CATHOLIC

CEMETERY, Co WEXFORD

Pte James FORTUNE (14219703) died 1

Aug 46 (aged 51) – Irish enlisted at Omagh into General Service Corps (for basic training) transferred to PC on 3 Sep 42

FAHAN GLEBE CATHOLIC CHURCHYARD, Co DONEGAL

Pte John CAMPBELL (6980407) died 12 Jun 44 (aged 34) – Irish enlisted at Omagh into RA on 4 Sep 39 transferred to PC on 18 Sep 41

FINNER CEMETERY, Co DONEGAL

Pte Bertie NOTLEY (960642) died 7 Aug 40 (aged 19) – British enlisted into RA on 6

Feb 40 transferred to PC 26 Jul 40 GLASNEVIN (OR PROSPECT) CEMETERY,

DUBLIN CITY Pte Joseph BRAZIL (5125536) died 3 Feb

46 (aged 51) - Irish enlisted at Wolverhampton into Warwickshire Regt on 5 May 41 transferred to PC on 25 Feb 42

Pte Bartholomew DILLON (5115157) died 19 Feb 47 (aged 52) – Irish enlisted into Warwickshire Regt on 26 Jan 40 transferred to PC on 23 Feb 42

Pte Patrick FOX (13039933) died 18 Feb 43 (aged 42) – Irish enlisted at Belfast into PC on 28 Feb 41

Pte Michael HANLON (13024647) died 5 Oct 45 (aged 32) – Irish enlisted at Belfast into PC on 6 May 40 (De4serter 16 Nov 40 - 7 May 42)

Pte Alphonsus JUDGE (13025263) died 28 Apr 46 (aged 44) – Irish enlisted at Birmingham into PC on 8 Aug 40

Pte Michael Joseph MORAN (13039504) died 31 May 41 (aged 44) - Irish enlisted at Belfast into PC on 5 Jan 41

Pte Patrick MULVEY (13098273) died 26 Mar 44 (aged 41) - Irish enlisted at Belfast into PC on 5 Aug 41

GLENCOLUMBKILLE CHURCH OF IRELAND CHURCHYARD, Co WICKLOW

Pte Fred BURGESS (13045218) died 7 Aug 40 (aged 23) – British enlisted at

Manchester into PC on 27 Jun 40 Lt Valentine George STOCKER DCM

(139406) died 8 Aug 40 (aged 50) GRANGEGORMAN MILITARY CEMETERY,

DUBLIN CITY Pte Patrick SWEENEY (13024439) died 17

Jun 45 (aged 36) – Irish enlisted at Belfast into PC on 3 May 40

Pte Bernard WHELAN (13111211) died 14 Oct 46 (aged 53) – Irish enlisted at Holloway into PC on 12 Mar 42 (Also served in Dublin Fusiliers in 1914-18 war)

Pte Patrick WHITE (13098802) died 22 Aug 46 (aged 47) – Irish enlisted at Belfast into PC on 17 Oct 41 (Deserter from 2 Oct 43 - 23 Feb 44)

Cpl John Patrick WILLIAMS (4435075) died 7 Dec 44 (aged 50) – Irish enlisted at Belfast into Warwickshire Regt on 26 Jan 40 transferred to PC on 28 Feb 42

KILCOMMON ERRIS CHURCH OF IRELAND CHURCHYARD, Co MAYO

Pte William HULME (13045085) died 7 Aug 40 (aged 27) – British enlisted at Manchester into PC on 27 Jun 40

Pte John Halliwell WARHAM (13045397) died 7 Aug 40 (aged 25) – British enlisted at Manchester into PC on 27 Jun 40

KILCREGGANE GRAVEYARD, Co WATERFORD

Pte James DOOCEY (13122484) died 2 Aug 45 (aged 44) – Irish enlisted into PC on 23 Apr 45

KILCURLEY CATHOLIC CEMETERY, Co OFFALY

Cpl Michael FARRELL (7179249) died 14 Apr 44 (aged 42) – Irish enlisted at Belfast into Leimster Regt on 29 Dec 39 transferred to PC 31 Dec 39

KILLYDONNELL ABBEY GRAVEYARD, CO DONEGAL

Pte John McCARRON (13014896) died 29 Oct 43 (aged 49) – Irish enlisted at Londonderry into PC on 12 Apr 40

KILMACSHALGAN (ST MARY) CHURCH

OF IRELAND CHURCHYARD, Co SLIGO Lt Mervyn Charles MASON (64029) died 8 Aug 40 (aged – not known)

KILMURRAY CEMETERY, Co MAYO Pte John HEGARTY (14594249) died 1 Jul

44 (aged 40) – enlisted into General Service Corps (for basic training) on 4 May 43 transferred to PC on 17 Jun 43

KILNAMANAGH CATHOLIC CEMETERY, Co ROSCOMMON

Pte Bartholomew NEARY (13077763) died 25 Oct 43 (aged 24) – British enlisted

at London into PC on 5 Dec 40 KILPHEAK (GLENSWILLY) CEMETERY, Co

DONEGAL Pte Michael KELLY (13119114) died 13

Dec 45 (aged 51) – Northern Irish enlisted at Omagh into PC on 12 Aug 43

LITTLE BRAY (ST PETER'S) CATHOLIC CEMETERY, Co WICKLOW

Pte Daniel O'DOWD (13007599) died 2 Jun 43 (aged 52) – Irish enlisted at Belfast into PC on 18 Dec 39

LONGFORD (BALLYMACORMICK)

CEMETERY, Co LONGFORD Pte James KILLENEY (13008439) died 8 Aug 46 (aged 43) – Irish enlisted at Omagh into PC on 22 Aug 41

MOUNT JEROME CEMETERY, DUBLIN CITY

Pte Dennis COLLINS (13118068) DIED 28 Dec 43 (aged 47) – Irish enlisted at Belfast into PC on 2 Feb 43

Pte William Patrick MALONE (7606193) died 17 Oct 45 (aged 26) – Irish enlisted into RAOC on 15 Sep 39, transferred to PC on 28 Feb 40

Pte Francis McGOWAN (1127787) died 25 Apr 44 (aged 36) – Irish enlisted into RA on 14 Oct 41 transferred to PC on 13 May 42

Pte Joseph O'ROURKE (13014336) died 16 Feb 45 (aged 45) – Irish enlisted at Belfast into PC on 18 Mar 40

Pte Patrick POWER (13111557) died 21 Jun 46 (aged 35) - Irish enlisted at Belfast into PC on 26 Sep 42

RATHFRAN CATHOLIC GRAVEYARD, Co MAYO

Pte Arnold WALMSLEY (13045457) died 7 Aug 40 (aged 25) – British enlisted at Manchester into PC on 27 Jun 40 TERMON OLD GRAVEYARD, DUNCLOE, Co DONEGAL

Capt Thomas William CLAYTON DCM (21899) died 8 Aug 40 (aged 52)

Pte Thomas PETCH (13031745) died 7 Aug 40 (aged 49) – British enlisted at New castle Upon Tyne into PC on 26 Jun 40

Pte John George SURLEY (13031229) died 7 Aug 40 (aged 40) – British enlisted at Newcastle Upon Tyne into PC on 10 Jun 40

Generally the graves break down into two distinct areas.

Personnel serving in the British Army who died as a result of wounds or during leave, and those of bodies 'washed ashore' from the Battle of the Atlantic or as a result of air crashes.

During WW2 Southern Ireland was Neutral, although many of its population supported the Allied Cause.

A large number of Irish Personnel left the South and travelled to Liverpool or Belfast to enlist in the British Army. Some were serving soldiers in the Irish Army and 'deserted' to join the British Army with the full knowledge of their Commanding Officers, who allowed them to go on 'leave' to UK.

After the war they were classified as Deserters which meant they could not get employment in Government jobs and were not allowed state pensions.

In 2012 the Irish Government eventually gave a pardon/amnesty to the 5,000 survivors of this injustice.

You will note that a high proportion (16 personnel) died on 7th and 8th August 1940, this is a result of the sinking of the ship SS Mohamed Ali el Kebir. The ship, after the Second World War broke out in 1939, sailed to Britain.

Although Egypt was supposedly independent, in practice the British Empire controlled the country. In 1940 the UK Ministry of War Transport requisitioned the ship. Initially the Admiralty used SS Mohamed Ali El-Kebir as a Royal Navy stores ship, but then she was converted into a troop ship,

In 1940 SS Mohamed Ali El-Kebir left the Mediterranean for Britain.

At the beginning of August 1940 she was in Avonmouth, where she loaded mail and government stores and embarked 697 troops bound for the Mediterranean.

There were six officers and 243 men of the 706th Construction Company, Royal Engineers, six officers and 289 men of the 15th Company, Royal Pioneer Corps, two officers and 44 ratings of the Royal Navy, 20 Royal Marines, and 97 officers and men of the Royal Artillery and the Intelligence Corps.

The ship left Avonmouth on 5 August, escorted by the G-class destroyer HMS Griffin. At 2140 hrs on 7 August the convoy was in the Western Approaches about 230 nautical miles (430 km) west of Bloody Foreland in Ireland, making a zigzag course at 15 knots (28 km/h) when U-38 fired two stern-launched torpedoes at her.

One hit Mohamed Ali El-Kebir's starboard quarter, and she started to settle by the stern. HMS Griffin attacked and chased away the submarine and then went to rescue survivors.

Mohamed Ali El-Kebir had launched 11 lifeboats and more than 20 life rafts, and HMS Griffin then launched her two whalers.

The sea was rough, some of the lifeboats were swamped and some men were swept off the life rafts.

SS Mohamed Ali El-Kebir's civilian ship's doctor, Stuart Liston, and a military medical officer remained aboard to treat many wounded men and prepare them for evacuation.

Her Master, John Thompson, remained aboard until after the last lifeboat was launched.

He was last seen in a life-raft but did not survive. Dr Liston did not survive either. HMS Griffin continued to release depth charges to keep U-38 away. SS Mohamed Ali El-Kebir sank at 2340 hrs; two hours after she was hit. HMS Griffin rescued 766 survivors, including 62 wounded.

They were 549 troops, 154 Merchant Navy crew, 62 Royal Navy personnel and one DEMS gunner.

Some men were in the water for up to seven hours before they were found, and a number died of hypothermia after being rescued.

She continued to search the area for survivors until the next morning. She then took the survivors to Greenock, where she arrived on 9 August.

96 men were lost: 82 troops, four Royal Navy personnel, Captain Thompson and nine Merchant Navy crew.

Over the next fortnight, 33 bodies were washed ashore on the coast of County Donegal.

15 Company returned to UK and went on to serve in London during the Blitz before moving to the North of England where it remained for the rest of the War.

After note – in 2007 our Historian (Lt Col Starling) worked at the Defence General munitions Team in Bath and his head of finance was a Mr Tony Stocker a direct relative of Lt Stocker DCM who died in the sinking and is buried in Southern Ireland).

Although not a Pioneer the grave of Petty Officer JJ Tweed is an interesting story. When the body of British Royal Navy petty officer JJ Tweed washed ashore on Ireland's Clare Island in 1941, the local priest refused to allow his burial in the tiny church cemetery.

You see, Tweed was British, and a Protestant. So the victim of a ship battle on the Irish Sea had to be buried outside the cemetery walls.

Sixty years later, Father Ned Crosby of Clare Abbey, a 16th century Cistercian monastery, righted the wrong done decades earlier to Petty Officer Tweed.

He ordered the wall rebuilt so Tweed's grave was included in the main cemetery.

Parishioners at the abbey revere Father Crosby for that act, offered in the spirit of the peace that reigns today after centuries of Protestant-Catholic conflict in Ireland

Ed note: During the Second World War Ireland, apart from the six counties of Northern Ireland, remained neutral and it is estimated that in the British army alone, as many as 100,000 people from the island of Ireland served, and that at least 10,000 Irishmen were killed.

Again many more of Irish descent served with the Allied forces of other nations.

In addition to serving personnel, some 1,000 Irish civilians were killed during the Second World War in air raids on Belfast and Dublin.

The following article appeared in Berlin Bulletin Vol 34 Issue No 16 dated 29th June 1973

14 PCLU

A 18

Report: Norman Brown RPCA Archive

HE 14 Independent PCLU Royal Pioneer Corps first established itself in Berlin in the grim days immediately following the cessation of hostilities.

Its first offices, occupied in July 1945, were in Kuno-Fischer-Strasse

This article is intended to give readers of the 'Bulletin' a very brief history of the unit in Berlin and describe, again briefly, our function and the service we give to the Military and BMG communities.

The most important single factor in 1945-46 was the massive task of clearing the war damaged city and getting on with the rebuild and repair work. The Forces at that time employed some 35,000 civilians. Additionally, the services of every artisan available were directed to the 'Essential Services' office, where, under the direction of the RE, CCG, architects and Berlin town planning authorities, the rebuild was co-ordinated. It was the PCLU whom with their staff of 50, directed the civil labour to the task for which it was most suited. Our responsibility, then, as now, was to administer, draw up the terms and conditions of service, negotiate rates of pay, deal with recruiting and terminations, audit and advise. (It is only since 1968 that we have also become responsible for pay). The PCLU also ran a clerk/typing school, which normally had 20 students on courses of one month's duration, at the end of which students were allocated to units. During the very busy period of the Berlin Air Lift in 1948 our labour force swelled to about 45,000 and the PCLU staff to 60

Between 1945 and 1953 the PCLU had 4 homes. After two years in Kuno-Fischer-Strasse we moved to Koiserdamm, where we stayed for another two years.

We then moved to Karolinger Platz until March 1953, when we moved into the office accommodation that we now occupy in Summit House.

Fortunately, very few of our historical records were destroyed in the Summit House fire of 1971. On checking back, it may be of interest to note the vast improvement in wages. For example, in the immediate post war years, the pay scale for the industrial workers ranged from DM 0.63 per hour for the unskilled labourer, to DM 1.80 per hour for the most skilled artisan, compared with DM 4.18 to DM 8.03 per hour at the present date.

Various allowances can even improve the hourly rate by 10%, or more. Another interesting financial statistic is that the total cost for Directly Employed Labour, employed by units and NAAFI services in Berlin, has increased more that two and a half times between 1960 and 1973.

As stability returned to Europe, and with it a strong German economy and the affluence of today, the civilians in our employ returned to work for their home industry or set up businesses of their own, and our labour force was reduced to its present 4,200. However, not all employees, who began working with us in those early left. Some 40% of our present labour force have more than 10 years' service. It was considered that some recognition of this loyal and long service must be given. Therefore, on 6th May 1960 the Meritorious Service Certificate was introduced for those civilians who had 12 years unbroken service with the forces. Various other awards have been made in recognition of long service e.g. 1 extra leave days after 20 years' service. In 1970 the first certificate for 25 years' service were awarded and with a substantial exgratia payment. There have been no fewer than 551 recipients of the award in the British sector of Berlin between July 1970 and today.

One of the scariest commodities in the booming German economy is labour, so it is with some pride that we boast only a 5% deficiency against establishment in Berlin. This compares very favourably with the deficiency that exists in industry. We do have our problems however! Berlin has a very high immigration/emigration rate, and our annual turn over of labour in 1972 was about 125% of our total labour force, i.e. over 5,000. Also, there is a great deal of instability among the lower grade clerical posts and the unskilled industrial workers. Every working day throughout the year, the PCLU has an average of 30 people (1973 statistic) inquiring about work. We have had as many as 90 calls on the Supply and Demands office during a single day; and the strain this puts on the organisation is considerable. On our books we have 78 site numbers. We also have 890 domestics employed. This, in effect, means that we are endeavouring to satisfy 968 different customers, in addition to the 4,200 employees, most of whom have a contract or a pay query at some time or other.

Demands for labour are placed with the PCLU by units, to fill the vacancies on their establishment at the beginning of each month. Our responsibility is then to obtain the labour by demands on the labour exchange, through advertising, personal contact or whatever measures at our disposal. All labour is interviewed, tested (in the case of typing skills), documented, and then sent to the unit. We have a lot of difficulty in recruiting electricians, plumbers, vehicle mechanics and locksmiths since there is a much higher than average, national shortage of these tradesmen. It may interest readers to know that the Allied Forces in Berlin (employing some 12,500) are fourth in the employment league table after the Senate, and the two largest electrical industries, Siemens and AEG Telefunken.

There is a very mixed group of nationalities among our labour force. We have some 3,000 German nationals, 570 British dependants, 320 British nationals on the economy, 38 Americans, 120 Turks and many other including Indians and Italians. Although the unit has now been in Summit House for just over 20 years, the problems arising from its position and situation in the building have been increasing. For almost a year, a search for a new location has been carried out by our Defence Lands Advisor, who finally came up with the ideal accommodation for us. It is a separate house at 3 Badenallee, which is situated only 5 minutes' walk down the Heerstrasse from Theodor-Hans-Platz. We move in during the week 20-24 August.

In the near future, lots of young people on vacation from college or university will be staying with their parents in Berlin. It is during these long spells of holiday that parents become worried and youngsters bored. The PCLU often comes to the rescue. offering not only employment to fill these periods of boredom but also a wage to go with it. The jobs are not glamorous but they serve a very useful purpose in so many ways. At the end of this article I will list the current vacancies that can be offered on a temporary basis to the student dependants spending their summer holiday here. These vacancies will continue to be displayed regularly in future issues of the 'Bulletin'. On arrival in Berlin, sons/daughters should register at the PCLU and posts will be offered in rotation. Parents must appreciate that during the first day or two quite a lot of documentation is necessary in order to satisfy the German Authorities, and of course fulfil our own registration process. Parents should also note that German labour law prevents us from employing anyone under the age of 16 years.

Vacancies	
Storemen/Labourers	4
Labourers	25
Kitchenhelps	7
Cleaners Mess	2
Cleaners Office/Barracks	10



Kuno-Fischer-Strasse



Koiserdamm



PCLU, 3 Brigen Allee, immediately before the PCLU moved in

Visit to HQ 23 Group

In 1977 as part of the Silver Jubilee HRH The Duke of Gloucester was appointed the Colonel in Chief of the Royal Pioneer Corps. On 28th September 1978 he paid his first visit to HQ 23 Group RPC, Bicester. Amazingly this was 40 years ago! The following article appeared in the "Bicester Garrison News" issue No 104 dated November 1978.

Berein sein ges

Report: Bicester Garrison News Issue 104, Nov 1978 Picture: RPCA Archive

IS Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester, Colonel in Chief Royal Pioneer Corps visited Graven Hill on 28th September 1978. The visit was a most memorable occasion for all members of 23 Group Royal Pioneer Corps.

Although the day began wet and overcast HRH arrived from Kensington Palace on time to be met by Brigadier AF Mutch, Director Army Pioneers and Labour, General Sir Hugh Beach, Colonel Commandant Royal Pioneer Corps, Brigadier RN Cooke, Commander Bicester Garrison and Colonel NT Ridings, Commander 23 Group.

As now seems to be the fashion for visiting Royalty to Bicester, the first event for HRH was a drive in the Royal Train from B Site to Queen's Halt at Graven Hill. Despite rehearsals, and last minute checks by Mr Roy Halford and his team of Railway Specialists, the leading pilot locomotive broke down for a while necessitating a quickest than normal speed from the Royal Train. Fortunately HRH's driving won through and the train and entourage arrived on time at Queen's Halt.

After a parade on the square at St David's Barracks and visits to the Royal Pioneer Corps Mobile Display and Graven Hill Sergeants' Mess, HRH joined the Royal Pioneer Corps Officers and their ladies for lunch.

During the course of the morning HRH, who is a keen model railway enthusiast, was presented with a working scale model of The Pioneer locomotive on which he had been travelling by Pte JH Maxwell of 521 Company RPC. Prior to lunch, Brigadier Mutch also presented HRH with a silver statuette of a Royal Pioneer in Combat Uniform. These presentations were made respectively on behalf of the soldiers and officers of the Royal Pioneer Corps.

After lunch HRH watched several demonstrations of Royal Pioneer Corps activities. On two occasions HRH had a go. Firstly he decided to operate and drive a Hyster fork lift truck around an obstacle course, which he did remarkably well. Later he drove the Eager Beaver cross country fork lift truck and was duly presented with a crash helmet suitably fitted out with the RPC motto.

Owing to the enthusiasm and obvious aggression of the guard dogs he wisely refrained from taking part in that demonstration.

Before leaving on his purple route back to London and Kensington Palace HRH attended a Garden Party in the grounds of the Graven Hill Mess where he met mainly Pioneer soldiers and their wives. Finally, he took tea with the officers and was introduced to Brigadier SH Lawrence, Director of DSCS (Bicester).

At 1600 hours precisely HRH stepped into his Queen's Flight helicopter and, like all remarkable occasions, as the helicopter lifted off all Pioneers present felt that it had been all too short and hoped that such a visit would only be the beginning of a long and happy liaison between the Corps and its new Colonel in Chief.





The Award of the George Medal

13041170 Sgt Charles Frederick WAGHORNE (DOB 4 Apr 04) was awarded the George Medal in 1941 (published in the London Gazette on 30 Sep 41 page 5654), the following is the citation for the award

Report: Norman Brown RPCA Archive

T Bircham Newton on the 28th March, 1941, Sergeant Waghorne was in charge of a party of men who helped to block the entrance and ventilators of a bulk petrol installation where an explosion had occurred and fire had started.

Although he knew that a 500 pound bomb and six smaller ones were inside, he personally supervised and later completed the blocking of the premises. When this was practically completed and a further explosion had occurred from one of the smaller bombs, Sergeant Waghorne still maintained his position and only allowed members of his party to approach him singly whilst he completed the blocking of the entrance which had been re-opened by the second explosion."

The full story was published in The Royal Pioneer issue 21 dated December 1949 and submitted by Maj R Wallace-Bateman OBE MC.

224 Company of the Pioneer Corps was a good Company, it was formed in the Autumn of 1940 as a unit under the direct control of the War Office. It left 12 Centre at Liverpool a few weeks later to carry out repair and maintenance work on a large number of RAF Stations in the South-west of England.

While there, the Company gained a good name for itself for fine, willing work and in the early Spring of 1941 moved to East Anglia where similar work awaited them. The Company Headquarters was situated at Horsham St Firth near to Norwich. The Company was not divided into ten detachments, each of which lived on a separate RAF Station where the maintenance of the railways, bomb disposal and general defence work became the chief tasks.

One of these small detachments was station at Bircham Newton, nor far from Sandringham, under the command of Sergeant Charles Waghorne. Sgt Waghorne, before entering the Services in 1940 had been a Costermonger in the East End of London. His particular line was fish and doubtless his cheery face and unfailing good spirits had brightened many a squalid back street while his voice boomed out the merits of his wares through the neighbourhood.

He was short, square and bow-legged and his enemies, though there were few in number, suggested that he suffered from that common complaint, known in the vernacular as "Ducks Disease".

But what he lacked in height and presence, he more than made up by personality and leadership. One day there came an opportunity for these attributes to be displayed to the utmost.

It was a spring morning and the sunshine played lazily over Hanger and Landing Strip and turned the fresh grass on the station into a vivid green carpet.

On the runways there was little activity but in the workshops and hangers, mechanics sprawled over cowling and fuselage, tuning up the great bombers in preparation for the night trip. In the messes, the flying staff were taking their ease before the evenings work and there was hardly a cloud in the sky. Then, from out of the slight haze, came the sound of a single plane!

So accustomed were they in East Anglia to this kind of thing, that few paused in their labours to listen. Only the anti-aircraft posts sprang to life at the warning and the lean guns swung skywards in search of the raider.

At last, the post on the far side of the Station spotted the tiny black speck in the sky and the guns started to speak. One by one the other guns came into action. Little puffs of white smoke, like pieces of cotton wool, appeared in the sky and gradually closed in on the enemy machine as they chased it from cloud shelter to the open sky again.

Each moment the speck increased in size and soon the outlines of the lone raider could be determined as he sped ahead of the shell bursts. As the plane crossed over the station, it suddenly grew larger and more distinct as the pilot diver earthwards and then flattened out. A moment later the raider recovered height and two smaller specks fell from the place and rushed earthwards. He was actually bombing the Station!

The first bomb fell and exploded in the open ground near a Hanger but beyond a few upthrown clods of earth, little damage was done. The second bomb fell more to the right among some grassy mounds on the edge of the Flying field. Immediately a thin spiral of dense black smoke rose into the air which a few minutes later changed into a sheet of flame. This bomb had fallen on the Station Fuel Dump and gallons of valuable high octane petrol were soon blazing away.

A short distance from the Fuel Dump, some Pioneers were repairing an old machine gun post under Sergeant Waghorne. As the bomb fell they scattered but soon resumed their work when the raider had passed. On seeing the smoke rising the Sergeant became curious to know the cause and strolled over towards the mounds.

Before he had gone more than a step or so the smoke changed to flame and Sergeant Waghorne grasped what had happened. Hastily assembling his men he organised them into a squad to deal with the fire. With a Lance Corporal he advanced towards the flaming Fuel Dump, which was contained within earth walls and covered with an earth protected roof. The bomb had apparently penetrated this roof and had exploded amongst the fuel within the dump[, which was now fiercely blazing.

The heat was intense and Waghorne ordered the Lance Corporal to gather together the remainder of his detachment while he stayed to assess the work ahead. Then he ran back to his party and organised them into a sandbag carrying line. More Pioneers arrived and were added to the line until it stretched out towards the blaze with the Sergeant at the head,. In the machinegun post, others started, feverishly, to fill the sandbags and to pass them out.

One by one the filled sandbags were passed forward until they reached Waghorne. He carried them forward and then started to climb the grassy sloping side of the dump. With the sandbags, he hoped to block the hole in the roof through which was now pouring tall blue and orange flames and so, to eventually, smother the fire.

Taking each sandbag in turn, Waghorne carried it forward and placed it carefully in position, maintaining his position without a thought of the terrific heat from the burning petrol. To do this work he had to crawl out over the roof of the Dump which was hot to the touch. After about half-anhours work he had reduced the blaze to a mere flicker and many of the spectators thinking the excitement was all over, were turning back to their labours, when with a roar the Dump exploded and Sergeant Waghorne was thrown to the ground, his clothing burning and his carefully placed sandbags scattered in all directions. The blaze was now twice the size and rapidly increasing.

Without an instant's pause, Waghorne rose from where he had been thrown by the explosion, shook himself and started to beat out the flames which had caught his tunic. He gingerly felt his shoulder onto which he had pitched and clambered back to his position on the slope. It was a magnificent moment and revealed the man!

Once again he build up the hole in the roof, now much larger, calling for more and more sandbags as he confined the fire into more reasonable proportions and after about an hours work he had completely blocked the hole and stifled the blaze. Inside the dump the fire slowly died.

From time to time as he worked, others of his party offered to relieve the Sergeant but he waved them back and went on with the work.

When at length the work was completed, it was a very tired and smoke grimed Sergeant who descended the slope to find most of the Station Staff waiting to congratulate him, the Station Commander who had been hurriedly summoned from his office, his Messmates and the lads of his own detachment all wanted to shake his hand.

The Station Commander who on arrival had decided that the Pioneers were quite capable of finishing the work had only one worry. Only he and a selected few of his staff knew that, concealed within the Fuel Dump were three large Bombs, which, in the event of an enemy landing and the imminent capture of the Airfield would have been exploded to deprive the enemy of stored fuel.

One of these bombs had exploded under the intense heat of the fire and there was a danger that the others would explode at any time. But a little thing like that was hardly likely to worry Sgt Waghorne, a sorry figure with a black scorched face and singed clothing at that moment.

He had done a fine job and knew it and all he and his team needed was a complete rest.

That night I heard over the telephone, the story that the Station Commander had to tell and I gave the particulars he needed for the citation that was later to take Waghorne to Buckingham Palace to receive the award of the George Medal. The following is an extract from the war diary of 224 Coy PC.

28 Mar 41 13041170 Sgt C F Waghorne "At BIRCHAM NEWTON on 28 Mar 41, at 1410 hours, Sgt Waghorne was the NCO

at 1410 hours, Sgt Waghorne was the NCO i/c of a party of men who helped to block the entrances and ventilators of a Bulk Fuel Installation where an explosion had occurred and a slight fire started.

Although this NCO knew that one 500 lb bomb and six 40 lb bombs were inside he personally supervised and later completed the blocking of these entrances.

When these were practically completed and a further explosion occurred, which later proved to be one of the small bombs, he still maintained his position, only allowing his men to come to him singly whilst he himself completed the blocking of the entrance reopened by the second explosion.

He showed conspicuous courage and owing to his efforts not only were thousands of gallons of aviation petrol saved but a major disaster averted."

Recommended for the George Medal J B Graham Group Captain

(Ed note: readers might like to know that Sgt Waghorne's medals are in Lt Col J Starling's private collection) ■

Behind the Front

1 The following article appeared in The Times on 29th December 17, entitled "On this Day"

Report: The Times 29th December 1917

HREE articles published this week have directed attention to an aspect of our war operations which is far too little understood in this country. Much is rightly heard of the gallant

Much is rightly heard of the gallant troops who do the actual fighting, but it is not sufficiently realised that behind them is a vast and silent but highly efficient labour organisation without which the line could not be held.

Great Britain has gone very far afield for her labour units, and has obtained extensive native contingents from India, South Africa, China, Egypt, and even from Fiji.

A large number of Labour Battalions have also been furnished from these islands, and there are considerable numbers of German prisoners who are employed at a distance from the fighting front.

In accordance with international agreement.

The writer of our articles has dispelled the common misconception that the British Labour Corps is chiefly manned by conscientious objectors.

He says that this class of men only makes up a few companies, and he gives such a good account of the "conchies" that we are rather at a loss to understand why so many of them are kept at unproductive employment on Dartmoor and elsewhere.

The rest of the British Labour Corps consists of men who are over combatant age or are physically unfit, together with naturalised British subjects of alien birth.

The tasks of the British units sometimes takes them under fire, and they get plenty of hard work and very little glory.

Still more is this the lot of their officers, many of whom are distinguished men of mature years who have voluntarily undertaken a thankless task, in the full knowledge that honour and reward most necessarily pass them by.

When all is said, however, the greatest marvel of our immense labour organisation is that of the many thousands of men from tropical and subtropical lands who have been patiently welded into the military machine.

Nothing more surprises the visitor to the war area than to find companies of Indian and Chinese and Africans all over the great tract of country behind the British front.

Like the German prisoners, they do not enter the danger zone, but their presence, and the excellent work they do, furnishes an astonishing testimony to the organisation which has gathered them from the ends of the earth. ■



National Arboretum

Following the successful visit to the NMA during the Pioneer Reunion Weekend in June 2018 it has again been decided to visit the NMA during the 2019 Pioneer Reunion Weekend. Members will be allowed time to visit various memorials during the visit including the Logistic Grove where we will hold our church service.

Report: Norman Brown Picture: Paul Brown

OLLOWING the successful visit to the NMA during the Pioneer Reunion Weekend in June 2018 it has again been decided to visit the NMA during the 2019 Pioneer Reunion Weekend.

Details of the Weekend are shown on page 35. Members will be allowed time to visit various memorials during the visit including the Logistic Grove where we will hold our church service. The following sites are recommended to view

Poppy Field – the process has begun of planting rows of paper 'Thank You' poppies across a field at the Arboretum, each of them with the name of an individual written on the back. By the end of 2018 thousands of these poppies will be in place.

Nursing Memorial – this new memorial shows a globe cradled in a pair of hands, engraved with the names of more than 1,500 nurses of the Voluntary Aid Detachment and Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service who lost their lives in the First and Second World Wars.

RAMC Grove – Burgundy-coloured maple trees line the Medical Corps Grove, each one planted as a tribute to the Corps members who have been awarded the Victoria Cross. Only three men have ever received the award twice, and two of those were members of the Medical Corps. Arthur Martin-Leake and Noel Chavasse

Pegasus Bridge Memorial – This sculpture is among the newest at the Arboretum, sited on a plinth close to the river Tame. Its three Horsa gliders memorialise Operation Deadstick, which was carried out by 'D' Company, 2nd Airborne Battalion, Oxfordshire and Buckingham Light Infantry. The gliders were towed with their load of troops by Halifax aircraft to Normandy. Just after midnight on D-Day, the troops landed between the river Orne and the Caen canal to capture two vitally important bridges, enabling British airborne landings in Normandy.

Changi Lych Gate – Built in 1942 by prisoners of war from the 18th Division Royal Engineers, the gate that sits at the entrance to the Far East Zone is the original Lych Gate from Changi Prison in Singapore, where it used to mark the entrance to the camp cemetery. After the war ended it sat outside St George's Barracks in Singapore, before it was brought back to England and eventually reconstructed here at the Arboretum.

Basra Memorial Wall – This red granite memorial was originally built from local materials in Basra, Iraq, in 2006, with plaques that commemorate the 178 Armed Forces personnel who lost their lives during combat operations over six years of conflict. When it was brought to England, it was deconstructed and put back together again by members of the 37th Armoured Engineer Squadron.

Shot at Dawn Memorial – The Shot at Dawn Memorial commemorates the 309 British and Commonwealth soldiers who were shot during the First World War for offences including desertion and cowardice. Each stake stands for one of the soldiers who was shot. The statue in the front if of Herbert Burden, A Northumberland Fusilier who was just 19 when he was shot – a young man, but it is believed some would have lied about their age and been younger still. It is now also believed they were probably suffering from shell shock or posttraumatic stress disorder. The Memorial is the first place in the Arboretum where the dawn light strikes each morning.

Polish Forces War Memorial – Poles made up the fourth-largest Allied fighting force in the Second World War, and code breakers from Poland were instrumental in helping to crack the Enigma code. This memorial sits at the heart of the Golden Grove, planted in 1997, which contains golden-stemmed ash trees to celebrate the Golden Wedding Anniversary of The Queen and Prince Phillip and the lives of couples who were married in the same year.

When this memorial was proposed in 2009, it was realised that it would displace a bench in the middle of the grove dedicated by a local couple, Mr and Mrs Hicks. In the early days of the Arboretum, ashes could be buried on site – and the ashes of Mr Hicks, a former Grenadier Guardsman, had been interred underneath the bench in a casket.

With some anxiety, the Arboretum contacted Mrs Hicks to ask whether she would consent for her late husband's ashes to be exhumed and placed under the relocated bench.

Leave them there, was her response! She revealed that her husband had fought alongside the Polish Armed Forces in Italy during the war, and that she believed he'd have been thrilled to think he was buried under a memorial to the brave men and women of Poland.
The Centenary of the End of World War One

One hundred years have since passed on the day the guns of war after four long years did at last cease, at the eleventh hour, of the eleventh day, of the eleventh month, finally and at last reigned a fragile peace.

The churned up muddy bloody battlefields now in an eerie silence this day did at last bask, and those that had survived the carnage of the last four years had many questions to ask

The guns were now quiet and voices from the enemy trenches could now be clearly heard, after the death devastation anguish and pain, at last to both sides the welcoming song of a bird

Now only a bleak outlook from either side, not a plant or tree left standing in this violated ground, a thought of the brave men that had fallen in the thick clinging mud from which many were never ever found

Still the first aid stations, hospitals and medical staff did not cease for a moment from their devoted care, they had seen first hand the gruesome outcome of the conflict of which they all were tasked to try to repair

The agonies of the so called war to end all wars were not finished for so many and never would be, their broken bodies had yet to heal, still the nightmares they had endured forever they would see

Looking out upon the sea of makeshift crosses, each one a life given for this eventual peace, remember though the mental and physical suffering for many will for their lifetime never cease.

This armistice had been paid for by the very highest price anyone could ever give, that is to sacrifice your life for the future of your fellow man, so they can in peace live.

Will we the human race ever learn that conflict hath no victors, other than that of death?

by Paul Lewis Kennedy

Pioneers with T-Force 1945

T-Force was the operational arm of a joint US Army-British Army mission to secure designated German scientific and industrial technology targets before they could be destroyed by retreating enemy forces or looters during the final stages of World War II and its immediate aftermath. The above book tells the story of T-Force which is well worth a read. This small article details Pioneers with T Force and it first appeared in The Royal Pioneer issue number 26 dated March 1951.

Report: Capt W J Adams RPCA Archive

T-FORCE

THE RACE FOR

SECRETS, 1945 Sean Longden

> NE of the more spectacular roles of the Pioneer Corps, but probably the least publicised, was the part played by six Smoke Companies in 'T' Force.

In Brussels in January 1945, there were in certain high places, whispers of 'T ' Force, 'T' for Target. A long planned force, was, after a long period back-ground work and small scale experimental operations, coming into existence.

The duties of the force would be to follow in the wake of the assaulting troops, seize and guard certain specified targets, i.e. War Factories, Research and Experimental Establishments, Static Military Headquarters, Government Departments, Ministries, etc.

A list of targets to be seized and exploited was compiled by the Combined Intelligence Objectives Sub-Committee (CIOS).

Civilian Technical Experts "Assessors," were to be given acting Military rank (later known to the troops as "synthetic rank") and attached to this force.

They would examine all targets in detail, and, it was hoped, gather relevant data on the German secret weapons, new inventions, production methods, in fact anything which would help us in the war or be of important in the preservation of post war security.

The responsibility for the 'T' Force role went to the Brigadier Chemical Warfare (Brig Pennycock).

The question which was not completely answered for several months was, what unit could be allocated for the force.

Eventually it comprised: Headquarters, 3 Infantry Battalions, 6 Smoke Companies Pioneer Corps, 2 Bomb Disposal Coys RE, No 30 Advanced Unit RN and 'T' Force Investigators Camp.

At the time of the Rhine cussing its strength was approximately 5,000 all ranks.

The Smoke Companies were already under the operational control of CW and the large amount of transport held by them would solve the problem of how to make the force mobile, but the question was, how soon could they be withdrawn from their operational smoke commitments.

It was not until the 18th April that the writer's company could be turned over completely to 'T' Force operations, on the completion of their last Smoke commitment – Smoke Cover for the capture of Arnhem.

Apart from supplying transport to the Infantry and Sappers, drivers had to be found for large numbers of staff cars. It would probably be polite not to quote the number damaged by drivers whose driver training had been on Haslar equipment with an overall weight of over 13 tons.

The company was soon scattered over what appeared to be the whole of Holland Germany with transport attached to the HQ, and four companies of the 1st Buckinghamshire Battalion and to the REs, our Company HQ at Heaksbergen on the Dutch-German frontier, platoons as far apart as Imuiden on the west coast of Holland to Wilhelmshaven in Germany.

Our troops were the first to enter many towns both in Holland and Germany. At Rotterdam a company officer was offered the surrender of all German Naval elements in the port by the Senior German Naval officer, he had however, more pressing business.

As typical of the entry into West Holland I might quote the report of the adjutant of the 1st Buckinghamshire Battalion:

"The triumphal entry into West Holland was a sight not to be missed. Crowds of rejoicing people lined the roads for mile after mile all waving and shouting and displaying hundreds of flags.

Whenever the column stopped, they swarmed all over every vehicle and as we approached Utrecht, the vehicles were so bedecked with boys and girls that it was dangerous to proceed at more that 5 miles per hour, chiefly because the driver could not see, and lest the attachments might fall off and be hurt."

It was proposed to set up our headquarters in the Central Post Office and

Repeater Stations, and in due course we drew up in front of the building. For the purpose of seizing the target a platoon of 810 Smoke Company had been despatched in advance, and on our arrival the somewhat harassed platoon commander showed us a whole roomful of Boche all fully armed.

These men had been working in the Repeater Station.

This seemed scarcely good enough and we at once located the German officer in charge, whom we found also armed, and commanded that all arms be dumped centrally and that he hand over his pistol immediately.

To our intense surprise he said that was quite impossible as it cut right across the armistice terms which, he stated, clearly laid down that they were to retain their arms.

In our best German we told him that if ever he made another statement like that again, we should not only disarm him but would have him in chains.

"Armistice terms my foot" we growled, choosing our words carefully, "You take your orders from us and no argument."

He thereupon handed over the offending weapon and we collected all the arms of the platoon downstairs and stacked them in an empty room. Rarely, we agreed among ourselves, had we heard such Teutonic cheek.

We subsequently read the full terms in the Daily Herald. If only we could have got the daily papers a bit quicker we would not have fallen into those errors.

Another interesting target was the E boat pen at Imuiden, there a complete camp had been constructed under the sand dunes. One Pioneer platoon took over the area from several thousand German troops.

At the docks were a number of two-man submarines, in place of torpedoes they were filled with small stores for supplying the isolated ports which our armies had by-passed.

A few days later an irate SNCO arrived at platoon HQ complaining that several thousand cigarettes had been taken from the submarines. The Pioneers regretted that

they had not known of their existence. Keil was entered by 'T' Force and targets taken over, two days before the official entry.

On the morning of the 7th May the Guards Independent Armoured Brigade moved into Keil. They entered the town, after much spit and polish, in perfect formation and all at "attention", under the impression that they were the first troops to enter the town

The disgust of the brigade was well expressed by a guardsman, who exclaimed in a loud voice, "What the hell is 'T' Force it must have been here a long time – it has notices all over the place and the men have even got their washing on the line.

Short quotes about the units with which we were serving should give some idea of the spirit and quality of the force.

5 Bomb Disposal Company RE – No 5 Bomb Disposal Company had turned up by now, and had acquired accommodation further down the road near 30 Advanced Unit. We were soon reassured that if we had been worried in the past about unexploded bombs, Booby traps, mine lifting, diving operations or sage breaking, now was the time to relax; 5 Bomb Disposal Company were on the spot and ready for anything. This was no less than the truth as we found out afterwards; a more keen or versatile collection of specialists it would be hard to find and we very quickly became extremely attached to our Bomb Disposal Company and its Crib-Cracking Commanding Officer – after a short Cloak and Dagger course at the School of Burglars or whatever they call it, he boasted that he could now open his own safe in his Company office in five seconds.

30 Advanced Unit RN – we only had a small force of 30 Advanced Unit with us and the officers were usually out seeking information either inside the German lines or as a secondary course from leading platoons of our own troops.

This seemed to us rather a hazardous business if not a trifle foolhardy, and we said as much to one of the liaison officers on one of his frequent visits to our headquarters

'I quite agree," he said, sipping our whiskey, "the trouble is no-one can tell us where the enemy are. One simply goes on until an unfriendly incident occurs. Most unnerving", he added, refilling his glass.

With the coming of the Armistice the mobile role of 'T' Force gave way to a comparatively static job, areas were allocated to each Company both Infantry and Pioneer, and they settled down to a more interesting job of work – catering for the needs of large numbers of investigators from many countries.

The writer's company was allocated a large slice of the Ruhr and the entire heavy transport commitment for First Corps Area.

By this time demobilisation had commenced and many of the old faces were disappearing, then began the disbandment of the Smoke Companies, our Company was the last to go, but it was not the end of the Pioneer associatiOn with 'T' Force.

In May 1946 'T' Force was reorganised, First Corps 'T' Force a body of approximately 30 officers and 350 men (50 per cent Pioneers) with headquarters and four detachments plus an RASC Heavy Transport Company was formed, with the OC Smoke Company as 2IC and Pioneers in key positions throughout the force.

The services now provided by 'T' Force were as follows:

a. A reception service in the Zonal Executive Offices area.

b. An administrative briefing service as to conditions in the British Zone.

c. A technical briefing service on the conditions in any particular science or industry in the British Zone.

d. A passenger transport service.

e. A hotel service

f. A road haulage service

g. Service for the evacuation of equipment (including packing), personnel and documents.

h. A service for the tracing and recording German scientists and industrialists.

i. A technical intelligence information service.

In an officially approved article which appeared in the Daily Express of 9th October 1946, the value to the British Exchequer of the equipment and information unearthed by 'T' Force has been given as well over £100,000,000. Later Mr Molotoff honoured 'T' Force by assessing its value to the British Treasury as £2,000,000,000. Actually there is of course no way of computing it value in terms of money.

An organisation which was scheduled for a very short life lived on, and the force was not disbanded until July 1948. In this very brief and condensed version

of 'T' Force activities, the writer has tried to avoid personalities and present the picture of just another job.

For the interest of readers I will however, quote the RPC Companies concerned: 803, 805, 806, 810, 845 and 846.

Last chance to buy the **Fighting Pioneer**

I only have half a few signed prints left, get your orders in. First come, first served...

HAVE Pioneer cufflinks, Pioneer badges, Pioneer books, Pioneer shirts, Pioneer this and Pioneer that, however in my view this is the must have Pioneer item that needs to be on every Pioneer's wall.

It is signed by the last Commanding Officers' of both 23 and 168 Pioneer Regiments and the picture depicts the role of the Pioneer through many campaigns.

If you have not got one of these prints, than the time is now to get one! First come first served.

The cost is £20 - this includes postage which is around £5.00 each. Payment can be made via cheque or Paypal. To make payment via Paypal login to payment and send payment to: royalpioneercorps@gmail.com

p.s. I forgot to mention the size! It is 750mm x 650mm in size!





An autobiography of Fred Vernon Blake

Fred Vernon Blake was born Seigfried Bachenheimer. This autobiography was told to Robert Barth in 1989. Born 3rd April 1915, Brannschweig died 22nd July 1992, Ilford.

Report: Robert Barth Picture: Robert Barth

Y NAME is Freddie Blake, and I was born in Germany, a little place called Braunschweig, which is about 60 miles from Hanover, in the year of 1915 the year after the outbreak of the First World War.

We lived in a detached house with trees around it while we were young, and as time went on, being Jewish we were hounded a bit, and were put into some skimpy flats in the centre of the town, and having to leave most of our possessions behind there wasn't a very happy situation. By that time things had become worse this must have been about 1933/34.

I don't obviously remember too much for the first year - I was too young to remember anything. Later on as I began to understand the situation I realised that the situation in Germany wasn't all that marvellous. Food was short, and lots of people had great difficulty making ends meet. One thing I do remember is that at some weekends, my mother and all the children - my sister and my other brother went onto local farms to buy some food butter and bread and potatoes and whatever you needed, and that augmented any rations we had at that particular time.

At the end of the First World War, things didn't improve - there was the recession people had lots of problems. I went to school - not that I liked it all that much. I was brought up in a very close-knit family community, and that made life a bit difficult. I didn't go out a great deal, obviously that meant not too many friends, but later on my sister had her school friends in, which gave us a little bit more access to other people - to meet other people, to talk to other people.

I remember then the background to anti-Semitism started - there were the swastikas painted in graffiti all over the place, and my uncle and I whenever we went out used to carry a bit of chalk, to finish off that square, so that it became a square instead of a swastika - a square with a plus sign. That had a limited effect on anything anyway – they were springing up all over the place.

There was one street in our town, where forest workers lived with their axes and cutting tools, and all they had out on the street were red flags - they were all communists, or at least that's what it seemed to me at the time. Then in 1933 when Hitler came into power they all suddenly turned into swastikas. Whenever the brownshirts went through that particular street there were pitch battles these workers came out with their axes and there were some really murderous scenes there. But it just goes to show the situation there - when he came to power all the red flags turned to swastikas, and that part of the group thought they would just have some fun with the Jews.

I then worked as an apprentice to a dental mechanic - to become a dentist; I was a Stätlichgeprüftedentist. After my four years' apprenticeship, we did some very intricate work, particularly for hospitals, using very complicated appliances. In fact I passed my examination as dental mechanic that year, and I've got a diploma to prove it. At the final examination with the prizegiving at the time, there was one particular chap there who knew I was Jewish, and as the whole thing finished off with the Horst Wessel song - the Nazi song, I had to stand there in the middle of it and do the same thing - I daren't do anything else under his watchful eye. He let me get away with it that time - I don't know whether he was just teasing or whether he thought the better of it, but he never gave me away otherwise I probably wouldn't have been alive today.

After that, things became worse - things seemed to be hotting up a lot - the brownshirts seemed to be all over the place, and we didn't have much chance. The man who employed me - Herr Wiedermauer said that he was sorry, but he wasn't allowed to keep me unless I was to carry on as an apprentice. Just for something to do to earn something - I kept on for a fifth year as an apprentice - it was the only chance I could get. When the fifth year was up, he said, "I'm sorry, that's it – I can't keep you on any longer – people will realise that I'm just keeping you on for the sake of it."

A group of people stayed in the top room of the synagogue in Leipzig, which was converted into bedrooms, kitchens and so forth, and I think there must have been about a dozen people or more, some of the girls who stayed there did the cooking and washing while we the boys went out to work or whatever, on various local farms. That was now getting onto 1936 - already 3 years after Hitler was there, and life became much more difficult for the Jews. We tried to keep ourselves to ourselves; we had no alternative, as contact to the outside world was very difficult - people were afraid to contact them. We stayed there for about a year or two, and then I got a visa to go to Sweden.

There were about a dozen of my age group left in Braunschweig at the time one of them still had their old house, and we had musical evenings there - some playing the piano, others on violins, and we were all lying across the room enjoying the classical music. Then we older boys thought we'd get together to learn some more about the Bible, but as the Jews in particular were not allowed to be in groups of more than two or three, and we were about a dozen, we did it officially. So we stayed in a public place, in a room in a hotel, where we could all sit round a table. so if anyone came in there should be no problem as we had permission. Except one day it blew up in our faces - a couple of brownshirts came in, they must have known we were there - I remember the words.

"We've heard enough! Everybody out! Follow us!"

So one of them went in front, there being twelve people, and one of them stayed behind. Going out, we had to go through a fairly narrow stairway, where only one person could pass, so we walked down the stairs in a long snake. The way downstairs, at the bottom of the stairway, the first brownshirt turned left and the last one - if he couldn't see us, he couldn't catch us anyway - and I grabbed a boy behind me, and we turned right. We got on our bikes, and pedalled quickly - not home, as that could have been too dangerous as they had a list of people who had attended - to the local rabbi. As it happened the boy behind me was the rabbi's son.

We explained what had happened, and they made arrangements to take us to Hanover for a week or so, possibly until either things died down, or find out whether they knew our names and came for us.

The others meanwhile were taken to some kind of prison or Gestapo headquarters, and through the influence of the Jewish ex-servicemen in Germany they were released later on.

None of them would talk - they all looked terrible - they must have had quite some ordeal, and one of the boys had been killed, and the others wouldn't talk. All you could get out of them was that they slept on stone floors overnight while they were there for the week. Some of them needed psychological treatment after that experience.

SWEDEN

Anyway I came to Sweden, there I went to Skönen on a big farm, and I enjoyed my work there - it was hard work, and the weather always seemed to be beautiful. We started off before breakfast at 5 o'clock in the morning to milk the cows - they had about 30 cows there. Then we went back to the kitchen - there was really very good food there. Then after that in the summer we went out to the field to plough and do whatever was necessary at the time. I soon got used to it - I enjoyed particularly the harvest time, getting the hay in and so forth.

We bred horses there - riding horses for the Swedish Cavalry, and every 6 or 12 months they had a show on, and we got the horses ready, because all the horses bred during that particular year would be sold, and if your horse was good enough, it would be taken up and bought by the Swedish Cavalry at that time. Whilst I enjoyed all that, my 18 months was nearly up, that was in 1939. I apparently was a good enough worker for him to make the effort to go all the way from Skönen which is in the southern part of Sweden to Stockholm, to see the government there to get an extension. All I got was three months extension, which was neither here nor there, for August to October. I said I wouldn't go the first month, but I went the second, and when I got to England, which was my next destination, 10 days before war broke out. Obviously I didn't know it was going to happen - nobody knew.

The farm I had worked on in Germany was more or less a market garden farm, with a lot of fruit trees, and between them, long rows of vegetables - potatoes, even strawberries.

Coming to Sweden it suddenly became a real job farming, with hundreds and hundreds of acres of grazing and farm land - everything a proper farm would be like. On the farm you ought to know what you're doing - I was very good particularly at ploughing. You're standing there with two horses in front of you, and the reins behind you so when you turn left or right the horses do likewise. The field itself was full of stones, and you had to be careful you had to hold the plough very gently - if that hit a stone the darn thing ripped your arm off if you held it too tightly, and these stones I'm talking about were 3' by 4' by 4' thick. I could plough a pretty straight line in the beginning it was all done by hand, but later on he had an old tractor, which was very tricky to handle. The only tools were a hammer and a chisel, and that's how he managed to repair his tractor - no pliers or spanners or anything. So if there was anything wrong he hit it with the hammer.

There was always something ready for the dinner table. In the evening coming home astride the cart pulled by two horses, getting their harnesses off, and getting them fed and watered.

I learned to plough, I learned to sow, to harvest, to cut hay. I loved his animals - the horses - he had some riding horses which he bred, and I had to take the mares to the stallions - some beautiful animals. Then he had a couple of cold-blooded horses like Shire horses, that were only about two or three years old, and their backs came up to the height of my head - they were enormous beasts - young and cunning. They were let loose every night after they did their work, and every morning they had to be brought back to be harnessed for their work. The other riding-horses were fairly easy-going, and they had to work even if they were in foal – within reason of course – they wouldn't do any hard work like ploughing, but other things like pulling carts they were doing almost right up until they foaled. The big shires - I got on well with them - they got so excited when I came in with the corn - they could smell it. They were jumping about in their boxes, with hardly enough room to get by.

The warm-blooded horses were kept in the stables and the cold-blooded in the fields, and once the Shires were standing down in a dip some place, and I was standing on top there watching the farmer trying to catch them - it was almost like a rodeo, when he would run one way and they run circles round him. He couldn't do a thing with them. It usually took him about half an hour to catch them, and he used brute force to do that. He was stupid about it - he showed them the harness, and the moment they saw that they were off - they knew he wanted them for work.

"Shall I do it?" I said

He looked at me "What the hell do you think you can do I can't? You're new you've got a big L-plate on you - you're a learner."

"Give it to me - I'll try it."

So I took a handful of corn, put the harness behind my back, then the horses watched me coming towards them, and stood still - they didn't run away because they thought I was feeding them. I caught one, put a harness on, then stood on the other side of this one to catch another one, and in two minutes I had both the horses up and ready for work. After that he left it all to me. He never forgave me for that, I don't think - he was maltreating them, he wasn't very sensible about the whole thing. I remember one day I was feeding them, and he came in with the whip, and I don't know what he had against him, but he smacked the horse on the behind, which then kicked out and kicked him in the thigh - he couldn't walk for weeks. If there was any problem in the neighbourhood they called on me.

I remember getting them ready for the show; they were washed, and their coats were made shiny with paraffin - they looked beautiful. Sometimes they had difficulty foaling, and the farmer - not because he liked the horses, because he didn't, but because he didn't like to lose the horses would sit up all night with the mare and assist where necessary.

There were hundreds and hundreds of heifers running loose - most of them were in calf, and he just let them loose. So early next morning we went out to look for calves, and most of them were in good condition, but sometimes the stupid heifer would lie down against a stone, so when the calf came out it was squashed against the stone, and was dead by the time we got there - we had to bury quite a lot of the calves.

In the winter when there wasn't much else to do apart from maintenance, we had quite a lot of fun - we had shooting parties. My farmer had a big forest, and they shot rabbits and pheasants, and being one of

the clubbers, we had to drive the pheasants towards them. The pheasants were clever whenever they took off they made a hell of a din with their wings - they sounded like a crowd clapping. And one pheasant, instead of going towards the others, went out the other way - a clever one that one was. The pheasants and rabbits were hung out overnight in the freezing cold - they had to hang to tenderise, then this farmer's wife, who was a good cook, cut them up into small pieces with redcurrant - that was the first time I'd had redcurrant with wildfowl. They had one Jersey cow there - beautiful all the others were Friesians, and they were paid on the fat content of the milk, so the quantity was there from the Friesians, and the fat content was added to it from one Jersey cow. Occasionally one lot of that cow's milk was put in a big basin about 12 or 18 inches in diameter, and there was about two inches thick of cream lying on top, and she used it for cooking, and making cakes, and putting in coffee and tea

He didn't give me anything as wages, and when I realised he was taking advantage of me, I went up to him one day and said that I needed some money - I couldn't buy cigarettes, I couldn't buy razor-blades, or anything. I don't remember how much it was - it was pennies - in kronen, but I managed to persuade him to give me something. I stood my ground - I wanted some more, and I insisted, and in the end he gave it to me.

Then we had newcomers in to be trained - there was one chap there who must have been about my age, maybe a little bit younger, who wasn't very practical, to say the least, and he was told to take the harness off a horse. To take a harness off a horse, there are about 20 or 30 buckles on a harness, which you could take to pieces to clean or replace it, and he took every single buckle off, when all you have to do is take two or three. The farmer did his nut. That was only one thing.

Also in the cowshed was a bull, and a big bull at that - his neck was so big that my two arms couldn't reach round it, so you can imagine the power of that thing. All he was held down with while he was in the stable was by a ring through his nose which was chained to a hook in the wall. Whenever some of the farmers brought their cows to be mated with our bull, I was out once, and he was told to bring the bull out, as there was a cow that needed servicing. What happens is that there is a long stick about 2 foot long with a bit of chain and a ring at the end, and you put the ring on the chain on the stick through the bull's nose first, because that's how you control it - then you take the chain off from the wall. What the fellow did was to take the chain off the wall first, and then he tried to put the chain through the bull's nose, and he was in the cowshed - can you imagine? He didn't give two hoots - he saw all the cows there - he had a lovely time. It was a hell of a job getting that bull back, because he was squeezing in between the cows trying to get out, because everything else was blocked up - he nearly ripped the sides of the cows open - he weighed tons it took quite a while to get disentangled there. After that I think the farmer asked for his removal. It was a pity in a way - we could have done with some help.

ENGLAND

When I got to England I was put to work on a farm in Gravesend in Kent, on a big dairy farm with hundreds and hundreds of cows, of course all mechanical. There were two very nice young English families with babies, and they looked after me very well there was no problem from any racial point of view. I remember distinctly one morning at 11 o'clock I heard on the wireless news of war between England and Germany. Obviously it worried me, because of how it would affect me.

I met with my cousin in London, who was also from Germany - Dortmund. I heard there was a group of Jewish boys, particularly from Germany, who were keen to join up with the British Army, because they felt they had something to fight for after all.

So I got everything in motion, and in February 1940 I joined up, (Ed note: he enlisted at Colchester and joined 6 Centre Pioneer Corps (Skegness) for training on 14 Feb 40 and given the service number 13801381) after training I went to a large camp at Sandwich. It was full of mostly Jewish boys - there were some Catholics there who also had been kicked out by Hitler, and our company was the 88th Company Pioneer Corps.

We had what they called training, which mostly consisted of marching around a parade ground with sticks - they wouldn't let us have rifles as we were Germans - and after three months we were sent to France, with the British Expeditionary Force.

By that time we had to support the French, who were fighting the Germans, particularly as Hitler had started the Anschluss, invading Austria, and later on towards the East. He went through the Maginot Line to the west - England was bound by convention to help the Allies.

We were stationed then in Rennes, in the north-west of France, where there was an ammunition dump I've never seen anything like - it was so big they had to have a train to go through it to pick up and deliver goods. Some of the shells were as long as ten feet, and must have belonged to the Big Bertha, and had to be lifted by crane onto the carriages.

Our camp didn't have its own air-raid warning, but they had a fellow sitting up on a raised platform with a type of hut on top, who would listen for any sirens from Rennes to give us warning, as sitting on top of that type of powder-keg wasn't an ideal situation. Sometimes we were called out in the middle of the night to unload an ammunition train. Time didn't make any difference - if it came at one o'clock in the morning it meant out and unloading all the ammunition.

So we were sitting in this tent when we had the time off once to watch the film 'Mrs Miniver'. Anybody who's seen that film knows that during it a siren goes off. Well the fellow on the pole thought he's heard the siren from Rennes - he blew the alarm, and didn't realise that the warning came from the tent and not from the town of Rennes.

So panic-stations and everybody had to get together and were told where to go. I was chosen to be a stretcher-bearer. So of course all the others were in trenches, and we were in a hut, exposed to any exploding shells if the Germans should attack. We soon realised that it wasn't an air-raid warning - by that time the film was finished and we never saw the end of it.

As the Germans broke through the Maginot Line we had to march back - we weren't given lorries and things for transport - we marched all the way from Rennes to the coast - quite a distance. On the final bit of the journey we ended up in Le Havre. There were a lot of rumours there of course - Le Havre was a big port, and there was an enormous building in Le Havre with big gates for the docks.

They said it was a big ammunition dump so we didn't feel all that marvellous. Each platoon sergeant had a rifle - those were the only weapons we had - not much protection against attack from an enemy. I was given a rifle that was the first time I'd handled one, with a clip of ammunition with five bullets in my pocket - not on the rifle, because they thought in an emergency I might shoot somebody by accident. I was on duty from 8-12, standing at the gate, in British uniform with a steel helmet and a rifle in my hand with no bullets in it. Some of the little Frenchmen there who were slinking in and out with their flat caps could have been anybody, so I was very pleased when my stint was over.

We moved off next morning to St Malo, and went onto the racecourse ready to be picked up by any British boat that happened to come along. All day we sat around the racecourse, and when a plane appeared in the sky we didn't know whether it was British or not, so we crawled under the privet hedges. Our kitbags were pulled through the other side of the racecourse by French, who pinched all stuff - it didn't matter later on because we were not allowed to take kitbags on board the ship, only people.

On the dock-side there was food, cigarettes, clothes for the officers - beautiful material. Just as it was beginning to get dark, quite a fair size boat was coming along - I think that particular ship was designed for a couple of hundred people took about 800 on board.

While we were going on board, lorry loads of trucks and drivers were coming along, dumping their trucks on the quay, and getting on board hopefully to get back to England. We heard on the news that some sappers were left behind to blow the rest of the food, lorries and anything else of any use to smithereens, so that they wouldn't fall into the hands of the Germans. That same night, the RAF went over and bombed St Malo as well.

Next morning we arrived in Southampton, we were then loaded onto trains in the mainline station, where there were thousands of soldiers milling about with the Salvation Army, the Women's Voluntary Service, each one coming along with cups of tea. We were then sent to rest camps to be reorganised - our company was kept together though most of the others were always split up, and there was chaos. We were sent to Cornwall, from where we could almost see the coast of Wales. We stayed there for three weeks - it was a rest camp with not much duty or parading or anything like that. Anyway our company was all in one piece.

Next we went to London, during the Blitz of 1940-41. We were stationed in the Coborn School for Girls in the Mile End Road, in a big dome-glass building - lovely school I should imagine, but we weren't too happy with the glass roof, a fear of being spiked to the nice wooden floor if a bomb fell through it. We slept on mattresses on the floor in the big hall, and during the day our job was to demolish any houses that had been bombed. Suddenly we became professional demolishers.

Whenever a house was finally demolished, our place was really topped up first class - all the wood was put on one side, all the bricks cleaned on one side, and all nice and tidy, and sand was put over it so it looked an absolute picture.

When the officer in command of the London area came to visit us, we got a recommendation. As we were digging on one of these places, as most of them had cellars that needed to be filled in, we found quite a big rabbit still alive, that we kept as our mascot for quite a long time.

One particular night they had the big firebombing of London. From our place which was slightly higher than London we could see that almost all of London was on fire it scared us stiff.

One night just before the bombings started, I had the day off and went into the West End, Regents Palace Hotel, just to have a look round. When the sirens sounded I thought I'd better get back, so I went down on the bus as far as the Bank, when they dropped incendiary bombs there. All the wardens came out with their sandbuckets to put over the bombs, and the bus wouldn't go any further.

The next thing was to get on the underground to get back to Whitechapel, and then a bomb was dropped at the end of the tunnel where the train comes up, so of course the train stopped, and we all had to get out and crawl along a very narrow passageway to the nearest station. Walking back from Mile End to Whitechapel back to the barracks - I had to be back before 9 o'clock - you could hear the bombs dropping; if you could hear it a long way off you knew it was safe, but if you could hear it very loud you knew it was not very far off. So every so often you had to duck into a doorway hoping that the bomb was not too near.

There were the anti-aircraft guns firing away, and later on the night-fighters came out, the only thing was the searchlights grabbing the sky all over the place looking for the German bombers.

The following night we were very lucky they dropped a bomb in the cemetery opposite us, in between two houses, and the blast from that shook our building - I thought it was going to collapse any minute, and carried further down until it hit another building where there was a group of soldiers stationed like ours, and did a lot of damage there and there was a lot of carnage.

From there we were sent to Hereford to dig trenches just in case of a German invasion.

Next we went to Chepstow and our job was then to help some French Canadian lumberjacks cut down trees, and all they had were 14-pound axes. Can you imagine the fun? Swinging a 14-pound axe all day long without knowing how to handle it we were pretty whacked. But we had a lovely time there weather-wise - it was beautiful. We would take a lorry up from the camp to the forest, and somebody's job was to fell the trees, somebody's to take the branches off, some other ones to cut the logs into certain sizes for pit-props. After about three weeks my leave was coming up, and I went to Swansea for some reason though I don't know why, although I remember I had toothache - I went to a dentist that someone had recommended, and the toothache had started on a Sunday of course when nobody was around, so I had a lovely time.

When I got back the company had gone there was a letter there for me with a travel pass, to take the train to go to a place called Mumbles, that was near Caswell Bay - half the company was stationed in Caswell Bay Hotel, and the other half was further south. I remember arriving in the pitch dark by bus, walking a long way up from the bus station towards Caswell, up the hill, and all I could hear was the rush of the waves breaking against the stones and the rocks.

I reported back and they sent me down the hill where they'd kept a place for me. Obviously there wasn't much else to do as our plan was already mapped out for us. We were in a place where Penclawdd they had cocklefields - I remember seeing the cockle-women out in the morning picking up the cockles.

Our job then was to build Nissen huts for Italian prisoners-of-war - what a joke - with a big fence around it. The weekends I spent walking through Swansea, which was really dead enough of life, with not much doing, although there were a couple of places like the YMCA or TOC-H you could go to. I found out about the Jewish community in Swansea itself, and some of the girls there were interesting to talk to. I didn't know at the time there was another girl there - she saw me, but I never saw her; I didn't know anybody there, so I didn't know who to look out for.

By that time we had formed a band, and while we were in Penclawdd, and I played the violin in our 'Continental Band'. The officer who arranged it enjoyed doing it, because whenever we went out, he always had free drinks - I think that's why he kept the band going.

I asked the sergeant who played the tenor saxophone whether I could practise on his sax. So, having built Nissen huts, I went to the last one in the camp - so as not to disturb anybody and nobody would disturb me - and I practised saxophone. I managed to get a couple of tunes out of it, and one day when we played in Newton, that other girl was there as well - not that we met - that was yet to come. Anyway, one day I went down to the TOC-H, and serving at the counter was a girl called Leah Kramsky - I didn't know her, but she realised I was Jewish, so she said to me,

"I'm finishing shortly, and I'm going to see my sister in hospital."

"I've got nothing to do," I said. "I don't know anybody - I'll come with you."

So we went to this hospital, which had written across the front of it 'Hospital and Nursing Home' - I thought her sister was having a baby or something. In the bed, there was a woman called Esther Kramsky, and we had a chat, and we kept in touch from then on, and when she was better, she said I should come to see them up in Bishopston.

"What do you do?" I said.

"I'm a clippie."

I met her in the bus station in Swansea, and we made a couple of trips around, and I was given the job of ringing the bell. She introduced me to the family then, and we kept in touch. Things seemed to work out, and within about a month or so we got married - in September 1942. From there we went to Sennybridge in Brecon, which was a fateful place - there was an artillery range outside there, and as the bus came up that way anyway, Esther came to see me quite often.

While we were there in the camp, word came round that our Pioneer Corps, having done such a marvellous job over all these years, doing all these things, had come to be appreciated, and we were absorbed into the British Army proper. But to make life easier for us, we were asked to change our names, which would have given us away to the enemy if we had had to go abroad, particularly for D-Day, and we were moved into various groups.

(Ed note: they were also given the opportunity of changing their service number as those prefixed "1380" could be identified as "Alien, probably German or Austrian, his new service number was 13041531)

With my background knowledge of dentistry, I was put into the Army Dental Corps, which was later on the Royal Army Dental Corps. All the doctors were put in the Medical Corps, all of which helped relieve pressure from the British Army in any case. I think some even joined the RAF, if they had any flying background.

I was then posted to Maidstone, to later on go down to Ashford in Kent to take up my job in forward position to get the troops dentally fit for D-Day, in our little dental caravan with all the equipment in it. While we were there, the first doodlebugs came over, and they were hitting Maidstone like nothing on earth.

Looking out of the window watching them it seemed to most of them that there was an enemy fighter being shot down in flames. It wasn't very long before we realised that once the noise of the rocketpropelled doodlebugs stopped, they came down and exploded, and that this was another weapon which Hitler had at his disposal to hit London.

Then they put the barrage balloons up all round London, to stop them getting through as much as possible, so if the doodlebugs hit the wire of the balloon they either swung round and went back or came down outside any populated area. Next morning my train went down south to Ashford, and we could see the doodlebugs coming north to London, so they were overhead all the time.

Some of them were chased by fighter planes, but the Spitfires and so forth were just not quick enough; some they tried to hit down with ack-ack fire, but they could just never hit them. Later on they had the Lightnings, which were faster, and they came down.

There were some daredevils there. Being in a flat countryside in Kent, you could see for miles what was going on - the fighters coming along and tipping up the wings of the doodlebugs to make them come down before they reached the towns, instead of shooting them down, which would have been too dangerous as they would have exploded before the planes had time to get out of the way.

I was standing on a wall which surrounded a field where our caravan was, and one landed about half a mile away, and the blast knocked me of the wall - they were powerful things packed with explosives.

Later on I walked over to have a look at it, and there wasn't much of a crater there, it was almost flat. But the blast from that bomb sheared the corn in just the same way as if somebody had cut it with scissors to make a bowl of a certain radius and up again the other side - it was an unbelievable sight. There was a house a hundred yards or so from it, which had all its windows knocked out, though nobody got hurt. My leave, whenever I had it, was taken up in Maidstone.

Then came D-Day, and we were concerned as to whether our caravan would go over there if one of the caravans that had gone over with them had been hit, they would need a replacement straight away, and we were next on the list - as it happened we weren't needed.

By that time it was getting towards the end of the war, and I was then posted to Rye in Sussex, and there we treated our own people who had been prisoners-of-war in Japan, now repatriated, some of them were in real states. They were fed like hell then after being starved, and they all looked bloated. While I was in Maidstone later on for a short time, we had a lot of rookies coming in, and one of the boys who came in to our surgery was my cousin Eva's husband from Germany.

After Rye, I was demobbed, and then I went back to Swansea. I first tried to do something in my job as a dental mechanic, but without any backing, I finally ended up working for my father-in-law. So we thought we'd make the effort, and leave to go to London. We decided on Ilford, and we've been here ever since. I've worked hard - tried to do my best to keep the family, and build up a business, which is quite successful I should imagine.

Ed note: The following is an extract of the War Diary of 88 (Alien) Company Pioneer Corps:

Early history not known as 25 pages of the Diary were destroyed whilst the unit was in France. Went to France Apr 40

21 May 40 Took up a defensive position with 87 Coy on the Montvillers Road.

100% armed

1 Jun 40 Stationed at BETTON France (6 Gp) - Loading and unloading for CRE

15 Jun 40 All kit and stores were lost when evacuating LE HAVRE on 20 May 40 - all papers and stores which could not be carried were abandoned or destroyed

16 Jun 40 Entrained (69 & 93 Coys already on the train)

Arrived ST MALO all remaining kit apart from 1 haversack per man is adandoned.

17 Jun 40 0730 hrs Arrived SOUTHAMPTON proceeded to Alexander Palace

20 Jun 40 Moved to WESTWARD HO

8 Jul 40 Moved to BERRINGTON – defence work in Wye Valley ■



Northampton Branch enjoying the sun at the Conservative Club, Northampton
Picture: Paul Brown



Congratulations to Craig and Hayley Winspear, married 8 Sep 18



■ Jake the Peg with his extra leg. Capt TC White on left then Jimmy Dunbar, Dave Stoten, Tony Robinson and Sgt S Woodward on the right Picture: Supplied



Billy Dilkes turns 50!

Picture: Supplied



Micky finds the belly dancers at Founders Day

Picture: Supplied



Micky finds more belly dancers at Founders Day

Picture: Supplied



Ladies Dinner Night

Picture: Supplied

Picture: Supplied

ROGUES GALLERY



■ Mick Pearsall's helmet in memory of his father Cpl David Pearsall



Mr Peter Thomas and Mr Norman Brown with Councillor Linda Grooby, Mayoress of Buxton, Derbys
Picture: Supplied



Sherringham Jolly

Picture: Supplied



Sherringham Jolly

Picture: Supplied



Reg Lane getting dancing lessons from Micky

Picture: Supplied



Neil Salt with VC holder Bill Speakman. Bill passed away last June. Picture: Neil Salt



 Congratulations - Jay Mormon gets married (former member of Railway Tp)

Picture: Supplied



■ Pioneer Reunion Weekend, Coventry

Picture: Scouse Bradley



Picture: Neil Salt



■ Pioneer Reunion Weekend, Coventry. What a sight! Picture: Scouse Bradley



Pioneer Reunion Weekend, Coventry

Picture: Scouse Bradlev



Pioneer Reunion Weekend, Coventry

Picture: Scouse Bradley



Pioneer Reunion Weekend, Coventry

Picture: Scouse Bradley



Pioneer Reunion Weekend, Coventry

Picture: Scouse Bradley

ROGUES GALLERY



■ Pioneer Reunion Weekend, Coventry

Picture: Scouse Bradley





Pioneer Reunion Weekend, Coventry

Picture: Scouse Bradley



Pioneer Reunion Weekend, Coventry

Picture: Scouse Bradley



Pioneer Reunion Weekend, Coventry

Picture: Scouse Bradley



What a dancing couple! Jenny Bone and Major Crook at Reunion Weekend, Coventry. Picture: Supplied



Pioneer Reunion Weekend, Coventry

Picture: Scouse Bradley

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

ROYAI

PIO

ROYAL

PIONEEF

ORPS

15



THE MENT THE REAL PROPERTY OF THE PROPE



HAVE a mixed bag of photographs for this edition. We have recently come across another batch of negative photographs from the son of Bill Elliott activities over the years. No doubt, you will see some of these in the not to distant future.

The photograph at the top is a Pioneer recruitment photograph, do you recognise who is posing for the camera? The painting on the right is a Drum Major of a Regiment of the Line and Pioneer of the Grenadier Company of the same circa 1815.

The great photograph opposite is a member of the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps, as he prepares to put on his gas mask during drill. He is a Veteran of WW1 and was one of many enrolled in the Pioneers, an organisation open to men of 20 to 50 years and specializing in

Pioneers, an organisation open to men of 30 to 50 years and specialising in construction and repair work. Over the page we have a rather young Pioneer marching! And on the facing page, we have a Pioneer Wiring party at work at the Pioneers' Depot on the East Coast. This could of been one of 3 centres WŚ

2, 4 or 6). Over this page we have a blast to the future with the 2018 publication from the National Army Museum, featuring Pioneers at work.

Maid

0

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







National Army Museum



Royal Pioneer Corps Association



Introduction

The National Army Maseum is the leading authority on the British Army and its impact on society part and pressus. Through our collection, we preserve and share the starties of thousands of ordinary people with extraordinary responsibilities.

The construction of injugging sever maneurum experience maches out to la, regardhess of ago, genders, trees or milgions. We showcase the readsh and depth of our collections in new and engaging ways. We induce throughts and libra as well as real stories of real people and we challenge the ways people librah allocal the Berlah Army and their relationship with R.

The Manusan's values in bold, to use its rich historical and developing contemporary collections to foster gridpile a surreness, anderstanding and knowledge of the British Arroy. Its indices and linger: And through this exploration, encourses, convention and before shout an organisation that has played a magte role in shaping not oright the Visit the world around us.

Food Cover Royal Planeer Corps rathery mathematics Facing Page The National Army Maseum.



Fundraising

The National Army Manman is a registered charity (no. 227903). Established by Royal Charter in 1960, its none costs have historically been funded by grant-in-all from the Milastry of Debron.

In the cuttient economic classis, the Massian would be unverse to may as this grant in add to sequent can consta as well the work we do in terms of outreach, learning for schools and young propis, and to develop our collections and exhibits. It is probable that grant in add well be reduced in the frame.

We therefore depend on the philanthropic support of charitable trusts and foundations, individuals and conservial companies in order to fulfil our mission to hold the story of the British Army and its extraordinary people in trust for the nation.

It is a statural fit for the National Army Moseum and the Association to work together on cost fundationing initiatives in the future.

Facing Page: Royal Pioneer Corps personnel loading ship



Events

The National Army Museum's public programmes attract and engage diverse audiences, train families and school groups to externa and serving military.

Our calendar of events is particularly popular. Guest and calebridy speakers provide unique and entituding talks covering a wide range of subsect matter concented to the littleh Anny.

A British Army officer fails with polie about his father's poethanous Vesteria Cross A Christea Pensioner shelds a tear for the constanting officer he lost during the Kornaw Wal. Seet estentions are surprised to hears that their deployment ind to petrol radioning back home former constantions, cain due with each other 50 years after their

and many similar experiences demonstrate the value of our and why the blational Army Massum will always be a home one for the wider British Army community, including the

are a number of ways in which the National Army Massum ages working with the Association on events, from invitations sumembers to potential gaset speaker apportunities.

Facing Page Battle dress bisuae word by Sgt Max Kahn, Pioneer Carps, 1949





Media and Audience

"The Natio triamph" The Snings

The National Army Museum would also like to explore a reciprocal relationship with the Association based around print and social

The National Army Maanam has envisible on-site and online audiences, with the ability to disseminute important updates and information to thousands of people in the UK and abroad Animal visitors to the National Army Maneurs 250,000

Annual visitors to the National Army Huteran website National Army Museum Pacobook followers 24,779

National Army Massam Teitter Informers 15.400

National Army Massian Instagram followers 1396

National Army Moseam e-newsletter audience 12000

TripAdvisor reviews rated Excelant/Very Goof

Facing Page Royal Pictures Corps repairing a road-

Collecting

The National Army Museum is committed to working with the Association to collect significant artifacts and record personal stories for porterity. These activities will enhance a world-leading Collection: Fine and Deconstitive Art 50,000 storths on paper, over 450 oil paintings, 1500 linne of silver and 1200 constrain.

Uniferent Over 80,000 imms. Constitution one of the world's largest collections of occurational contains.

Medals and Badget Over 20,000 Individual medals Including 36 Victoria Crossed and

Weapone 1.000 edged weapons, over 200 polisarms, and over 1.700 firearms.

gegeneen hver 12.000 items of personal equipment, edentific instruments, sodels and distruma, masical instruments, flags, attocut and horse

Weblicken 40 innexs, ranging from monorcycles to aronouzed weblickes.

otographs. Films and Sound 0.000 images dating from the 1040s to the present day, along with 0.000 unages cating from the 1040s to treatment.

y \$2,000 volumes published since the early sinteenth century. In the largest library in its field readily accessible to the general

Facing Page More detector No 4A, with battery case, headed, and cables, and casvas holdal, 1944, supplied to The Pinneer Corps and Pinneer Battalions of the Indantry Divisions.



Legacies

The No nal Army Mi in is losen to grow awareness of its ridicals have the opportunity to leave a

- y Museum also promotion Tybute Faode as a tariting notecome special. A Tribute Fund in named after n died and becomes a permanent memorial to especially relevant to the families of British Arrey personal Tr
- Friends and family can contribute to a Tribute Fund as they with with the money from it being used to support the work of the National Army Manusm to memory of that sufficiential

Facing Page Royal Ploaver Corps loading railway wagoes Back Cower Cap badge. The Pioneer Corps. 2943





The 70h Annual General Meeting of the Royal Pioneer Corps Association held at The Royal Court Hotel, Coventry on 16th June 2018

President: Colonel A Barnes TD JP Chairman: Colonel D Clouston MBE Secretary: Mr N Brown Members Present: 49

HE Chairman opened the meeting at 0900 hrs by welcoming all present and apologised for the change of time for the meeting. He wished that thanks to the Secretary

for organising the weekend be recorded and hoped everyone has a good weekend. After receiving apologies from Col RF

McDonald, Mr P Thomas, Mr R Popkin, Mr N Smillie and Mr P Wegg

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 Pte HWG Bowey – served 1959-1965, Ex LCpl R Sweetland - served 1970 – 1982, Ex LCpl D Weller – served 1956 – 1959

Ex Cpl W Sears – a WW2 veteran who

died at the age of 100, Ex Cpl PJ Heppenstall – served 1981 – 1997, Ex LCpl D Pearsall – served 1961 – 1983 – a former member of the Corps of Drums, Ex Cpl CE Clapton – served 1973 – 1989, Ex Sgt KC Ball – served from 1982 with 68 Coy/168 Regt, Ex Pte P O'Driscoll – served 1959 – 1962, Ex Pte J Rodd – served with 34 Coy RPC

Ex WO1 F Lyle – served 1961 – 1984 – a regular attender at Pioneer Reunions travelling from Dublin, Ex WO2 AE Foster – served 1952 – 1974 retiring as CSM 521 Coy, Ex WO2 GK Compton – served 1942 – 1969 known as Cloggy also retired as CSM 521 Coy

Lt Col RJ Bennett – served 1951 – 1983 another regular attender at Pioneer Reunions, Ex Pte DB Smith – served 1979 – 1983

Ex Pte J Evans – served 1966 – 1972, Ex Pte JA Salmon – a WW2 veteran who served 1942 – 1947, Ex WO2 F Lustig – another WW2 veteran who served 1940 – 1947, Ex Brig AF Mutch – another WW2 veteran who served 1939 – 1980, a former Director of the Corps, Ex Pte George Pringle – another WW2 veteran who served 1940 – 1946 who died at the age of 100, he was until a few years ago a regular attender at the Reunions, Ex Pte JC Cairns – served 1972 – 1976, Ex Pte GW Steer – served 1969 – 1983

Ex Pte EK Whittingslow – served 1948 – 1950, Ex Sgt J Wilcox – unfortunately we do not hold his service records

Ex LCpl A Humphries – served 1951 – 1953, Ex Pte Sir Geoffrey Whardale KCB – another WW2 veteran who served 1940-1942 Ex SSgt AG Francis – served 1963 – 1985, Ex Pte F Salusinszky – another WW2 veteran who served from 1941 – 1946 died at the age of 100, Col TN Buck – served 1951 – 1983 former CO of HQ 23 Group RPC, Ex Pte W Bailey – another WW2 Veteran who served from 1941 – 1946, Ex Sgt F Lusby – served from 1951 – 1962, Ex LCpl L Bromley – served 1979 – 1985

Ex Pte SW Timms – former member of Corps of Drums, Ex Pte H Rooney – another WW2 veteran who served from 1942 – 1947

Ex Pte T Swift – served 1971 – 1974.

ITEM 1. MINUTES OF 69th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1. The minutes of the 69th 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:

Maj A Mycroft, Maj R Teague and Maj G Crook

ITEM 3.

COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

3. Col Clouston gave the following report:

Welcome to the 70th Annual General Meeting of the RPC Association, the 4th to be held here at Coventry. I am pleased to see such a good attendance especially those who have travelled long distances I hope you are all enjoying the weekend.

The Association has, in my opinion, had another very successful year. Following the Reunion held here last year there have been numerous other reunions and Pioneer "get togethers".

The Past and Present Pioneer Officers' Dining Club held a dinner last October in the Bicester Garrison Officers' Mess ably organised by Maj Billy Dilkes. 72 sat down to an excellent meal and the principal guest was Maj Gen Capps the Brigade Commander. The next dinner is to be held on 19 Oct 18.

The 39/93 Club had a successful meet at Aldershot organised by Mr Ian Dewsnap, however I am informed that it was his wife Laura who did most of the work. The Nostalgia Group had a meet at Skegness and raised the magnificent sum of £2,165 for the Association. A "Pioneer Jolly" was held at Sherringham two weeks ago and raised £303 for the Association. The WOs' & SNCOs' Pioneer Reunion Club took 156 Association members to the Army v Navy Game at Twickenham and are to hold a Ladies Dinner Night in Bicester on 11 August. Other Pioneer meets have been held at Blackpool and Liverpool – it is great to see that the Pioneer family are still holding these events.

We must also not forget our 3 Branches namely Northampton, Bicester and the Northern Branch, these are all holding meetings and organising functions.

We must also not forget the Cenotaph Parade, last year we had 97 members march in the RPC Contingent – a record number. We did have Pioneers marching in other contingents i.e. Aden Veterans and The Not Forgotten Association. This year we have already received 108 requests for tickets.

The total membership of the Association is slightly down on last year, this is mainly due to the deaths of members which have already been read out by the Secretary and also by members not informing the Secretary of change of address. The latest copy of the Pioneer Newsletter has resulted in some 28 being returned "Gone Away" or "Not Known at this Address".

No doubt in the next few weeks we will have them complaining that they have not received their copy of the Newsletter.

Although we have come under the RLC umbrella since 2005, we still have members sitting on the RLC Committees so we still have a say on future plans.

Finally we have already booked this hotel for next year, the dates are 14/16 June, I hope to see you all here once again.

ITEM 4.

GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

4. Mr N Brown gave the following report: As the President/Chairman has stated this, in my opinion, has been another good year for the Association. Pioneers are meeting all over the country so keeping the bonds together. My one concern and the one I mention every year is change of address. Once again following our last posting we have received 28 back marked "Gone Away" and 4 marked "Died" one marked "Died in 2011" so for the last 7 years we have been sending a copy to a dead person. If you are going to move please let us know and likewise if you are going to die let us know that as well!

This year the WOs & SNCOs Pnr Reunion Club took 156 personnel to the A v N at Twickenham, this match was sold out as early as the previous mid November. The Club is again making this available to all Association members but I must have returns in by 1 October.

We have already booked the hotel for next year, the dates are 14/16 June, a booking form will be sent out with the October Newsletter, there will be a cut-off date of 1 May 19. On Tuesday of this week I had a member try to book himself and two others in. At that late stage they had to book with the hotel and it is a lot dearer. If you would like something different next year please let me know suggestions are always welcome.

As you probably noticed the last edition of the Newsletter was slightly late, this was due to my son Paul being extremely busy at work. We have decided to cut the colour newsletter down to once per year and the other one will just be a photocopied black and white update. This will save about £5,000 per year.

Thanks to all who bought raffle tickets last night we made £350 profit as all prizes had been donated. Thanks also to those who have donated items for the auction tonight especially to Mr Bob Gillespie who has made some wonderful items, please bid highly (After minute note: the auction made £1,050).

The Chairman has already informed you that the Nostalgia Group made £2,165 on raffles and auction during their weekend in Skegness and the Sherringham Jolly raised £303, both amounts were donated to the Association.

Our photo library continues to grow, I recently scanned in about 5,000 negatives most of which came from 522 Coy at Kineton, and were probably taken by

Scouse Bradley.

Finally, once again I would like to thank my son Paul for all the work he does for the Association, both in preparing the Newsletter but keeping our social media going.

ITEM 5.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEXT REUNION/ AGM

6. The date of the next Reunion/Annual General Meeting will be 14-17 June 2019.

ITEM 6.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6. There being no further business the meeting closed at 1045 hrs.

N BROWN Secretary

War History

A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps 1939-1945 by Major E H Rhodes-Wood and converted to electronic format by Norman and Paul Brown is available to buy for only £10





BY MAJOR E. H. RHODES-WOOD

Converted electronically by Norman and Paul Brown





Hardback versions of these 368 page books go for around the £100 mark!

Get an electronic version for only £10 today!

To buy yours visit: https://tinyurl.com/y7xa4vlz

Press Cuttings for 1991-2000

The following have been taken from our archives. These cuttings are all from the years 1991-2000. It is the intention in future Newsletters to print details from other years.

Report: Norman Brown RPCA Archive

HE following have been taken from our archives which detail Pioneer related events from various publications. These cuttings are all from the years 1991-2000.

Oxford Mail 4 Jan 91 Soldiers head for the Gulf

More Bicester soldiers have been sent to Saudi Arabia as a result of the Gulf Crisis.

The latest group, comprising more than 150 men from 187 Company, part of 23 Group Royal Pioneer Corps, flew out to the Middle East under the command of Major Colin Langford.

The soldiers have gone to reinforce the Army's 7th Armoured Brigade, also known as the Desert Rats, nin north-eastern Saudi Arabia.

They will join more than 200 other Royal Pioneers from the Bicester-based 518 Company, who flew out in October.

Their work will involve defence and security duties. They will also provide support to the Royal Engineers and to the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Although the men from 187 Company are based at Northampton, about a quarter of them live with their families in the Bicester area.

At the moment there are no plans to send further Royal Pioneers out to the Gulf.

London Gazette 29th June 1991 G47

187 (Tancred) Company Royal Pioneer Corps, Major C D LANGTORD 518 Company Royal Pioneer Corps, Major C CODE 908 Pioneer Labour Support Unit, Major M J WYKES

908 Pioneer Labour Support Unit, Major M J WYRX Northampton Chronicle & Echo 10 Jan 91 Welcome to Hell Hole One OFFICIALLY, THIS IS ASP 2 BUT THE PIONEERS HAVE ANOTHER NAME FOR

The huge allied ammunition supply point in the Saudi desert guarded by Pioneers against the constant threat of terrorist attack and known fondly as Hell Hole One.

IT

From his position inside the heavily camouflaged machine gun position a soldier stares out across the sea of sand stretching into the distance as far as the eye can see.

Private Alan Whitticker of 518 Company, The Royal Pioneer Corps, turns away for a moment to rest his eyes from the glaring landscape, which he knows all too well can play tricks on those who gaze too long across its barren contours.

"It can get a bit monotonous out here," he admits, reflecting on the heat, the dust and the sheer tedium of life out in the desert. For several day he and his partner will remain camped at the position on the edge of the vast ammunition dump, taking turns to watch over the vast expanse of desert for any sign of movement 24 hours a day.

This is ASP 2, a major allied ammunition supply point in the middle of the Saudi desert and guarded by a platoon of Pioneer soldiers against the ever present threat of terrorist attack.

To the 30 Pioneers beginning their third month in the dry and dusty heat of Saudi Arabia it's known fondly as Hell Hole One. For those serving here, rain-lashed Northampton might well seem a million miles away. Here in the desert they say it hasn't rained for four years and the heat when the men first arrived back in October beat down relentlessly, reaching temperatures approaching 40 degrees centigrade. Now its cooler, more like a decent English summer without the rain. But at night the temperature plummets to below freezing.

Despite a cooling off in the weather in what is the Saudi winter, conditions remain dry and dusty and troops are still urged to drink several litres of water a day to avoid dehydration. And the dust, It's a fine white powder that gets everywhere. A truck might be spotted several miles away as it churns up a white plume of dust billowing high into the air.

There are four strategically placed observation posts overlooking three and a half miles of barbed wire which stretches along the perimeter of ASP 2, with further sandbag positions dotted in between to enable the Pioneers to put up staunch resistance in the event of enemy attack.

Not that Hell Hole One is anywhere near the front line. Holding, as it does, vast number of artillery shells, rockets, grenades, as well as small arms ammunition, it needs to be in a position likely to be safe from large scale assault in the event of war.

From here will come a steady stream of trucks feeding the forces on the front line with a constant supply of ammunition. The position needs to be safe and secure, which is why the Pioneers are there. The camp is shared by a similar number of Americans on the far side, which makes for friendly rivalry and excellent trading partners. There's also a small number of Ordnance Corps personnel, including several women whose task is to ensure the ammo is kept in the right conditions. Indeed it was a strange sight to see petite Leicester girl, 18-year-old Liz Olderson, emerging from the mess tent, brandishing a sub-machine gun.

I asked her how she felt about being camped out in the desert with so many men. "It's not too bad," she giggled. "They're pretty well behaved and generally are quite sweet in falling over themselves to look after us." The men sleep either in their observation posts, or eight to a tent in the small canvas settlement nestling just below the vast ridges bulldozed from the sand to protect the crates of ammunition, which remain hidden from view. No-one will say exactly what they are guarding out there. But a direct hit on this lot might blow a hole in the desert half a mile wide, one soldier surmised matter-of-factly.

Officer commanding 518 Company in the Gulf is Major Colin Code. He is happy that morale is reasonably high, despite the long period his men have spent in the desert and the daunting prospect of January 15.

"I try and keep the men as busy as I can," he said as we sought sanctuary from the sun in the mess tent, where we had just eaten a basic but hearty squaddie fry-up. "Basically we are only here to provide skilled manual labour and security and defence for certain installations. Some of my men have also helped sandbag field hospitals. We also put up 172 tents to provide transit accommodation in Al Junail for 3,700 men, along with miles of sandbagging. That took us just five days," he added proudly.

Some of the 195 men of 518 Company also provide heavy lifting expertise with specialised equipment at Al Jubail airport, to help cope with the constant stream of military hardware and supplies flooding in by the minute. Some men were undergoing live ammunition training on a desert range several miles away, while two platoons were moving out that day in support of front line units along the Kuwaiti border to perform various unspecified tasks.

As for life at Hell Hole One: "It can be very boring," said one soldier. Here spells of intense concentration mingle with long periods sitting around, trying to keep cool. "The mail from home is critical to morale," admitted Maj Code, adding that the simple knowledge that his men were in the thoughts of those back home was a great comfort.

Otherwise, chasing lizards had been one of the hot favourites in leisure pursuits when the men first arrived. But it became too exhausting under the hot desert sun and quickly gave way to the current pastime of scorpion hunting.

'One soldier was bitten by a viper as he slept. He had to spend four days in hospital'

The desert plays host to a number of unsavoury creepy crawlies, including poisonous vipers, spiders and several species of scorpion, which have already been responsible for the first Pioneer casualties in the Gulf.

"One soldier was bitten by a viper as he slept. He remembers waking up briefly after feeling a nip on his arm, but went back to sleep. In the morning his arm had swollen to huge proportions," explained Major Code. "He had to spend four days in hospital, but he's all right now," added the major. Another soldier was bitten by a camel spider, a cuddly creature as large as a fist: "It bit right through his boot and gave him a similarly nasty nip".

The scorpions too are capable of delivering a sting to put a man low for several days, though as yet it's not proved to be any deterrent in pursuit of the regimental record for catching the largest number, currently held by the Queens Own Hussars, with an impressive tally of 14.

Some of the men keep them as pets to pit against those found by the Americans in scorpion fights, a contest, which, at the moment we are losing.

And so the hunt goes on to find new contenders. "Usually you can find them under larger rocks and scrub," Private Simon Norton told me. "I'll see if I can root out any for you now," he gushed enthusiastically, laying his rifle down and heading for the nearest rock. At which point I decided to slip away quietly to watch a convoy of trucks winding in the distance along the road below as the desert sun began to set.

Northampton Chronicle & Echo 17 Jan 91

PIONEERS TO SEND 180 OUT TO GULF Troops trained in Northamptonshire are moving out to reinforce the others in the Middle East.

As the temperature in the Gulf crises hots up, six platoons of the Royal Pioneer Corps, trained at Simpson Barracks, are jetting out over the next two weeks to Saudi Arabia.

Although the Pioneers, traditionally known as the Chunkies, are used as body recoverers in times of conflict, their move to the Middle East does not suggest war is imminent, according to the Army.

Captain Lesley Wilde, spokesman for the Army at Simpson Barracks said, "We do not anticipate they will be doing this in the initial stages.

"They are just going out there in support of the forces in the Gulf for administration and construction work."

The six platoons – 180 soldiers – are meeting at Bicester next week. An advance party of 30- soldiers – one platoon – is flying out in a Hercules jet on Tuesday from RAF Lyneham.

"There will be quite a large contingent actually from Simpson Barracks, but we haven't got the exact figures. They have all passed through here in their training at some stage," Captain Wilde said.

The troops will be armed with their usual SA 80 rifles while they are in the Gulf.

Over the next two weeks, the advance party will be joined by five other platoons and in all 180 Royal Pioneers will be stationed in the Middle East.

The moves have left a charity event in the lurch. Members of the Royal Pioneers were due to spend 36 hours laying lengths of track for the Northampton Steam Railway Preservation Society tomorrow. Doug Chapman, publicity officer, heard yesterday that the soldiers would not be able to attend.

He said, "I feel very disappointed. We spent a lot of time and effort preparing for this, I am extremely sorry for the troops who are having to go to the Gulf. I am an old soldier myself and know what it is like."

Oxford Times 18 Jan 91 POURING INTO THE WAR ZONE

Several F-111E aircraft from the 42nd Electronic Combat Squadron at the USAF base at Upper Heyford flew to Saudi Arabia last month.

More than 300 soldiers from 23 Group of the Royal Pioneer Corps, whose headquarters are at St David's Barracks, Graven Hill, Bicester, went to The Gulf in October and December to support the 7th Armoured Brigade, known as the Desert Rats.

The soldiers are from 518 and 187 Companies of 23 Group and while most are from Bicester they have been joined by Pioneers from Simpson Barracks, Northampton, and Germany.

Eltham Times (Kentish Times) 31 Jan 91 SON JASON TELLS MUM HE'S READY FOR DEATH A WAR TO WHICH 'THEY GO OUT BOYS AND COME BACK MEN'

True Brit Jason Squirrell does not fear death fighting for his country in the desert. Jason, 20, a private in the frontline Royal Pioneer Corps, accepts he may not return from the Gulf conflict but is not afraid of war, said his mother Pam.

From her home in Fendyke Road, Belvedere, the proud single mum said: "He is looking forward to it because that is why he joined the army, to fight for his country.

"He is coming to terms with the fact he may not come back. We have talked about it, you cannot brush it aside because it is possible it will happen.

"He is coping with the prospect of death very easily. He does not want anyone to be unhappy because he is doing the job that he wants to do."

The young soldier, a former pupil at Erith School and Bexley and Erith Technical High School, has grown up quickly in the weeks since he arrived in Saudi Arabia on New Year's Day.

Mrs Squirrell said: "Trey go out boys and come back men. His letters are a lot different from the last time he was away. He sounds very grown up and a lot more mature."

She is right behind Jason's decision to make the army his career after joining up from the Territorial Army two years ago.

The Pioneer Corps, nicknamed the Chunkies, support the infantry, artillery and other regiments, building defences and carrying out heavy work as well as fighting.

Northampton Chronicle & Echo 21 Mar 91 FIRST PIONEER TROOPS RETURN

The first of the Northampton-trained Royal Pioneers have flown back from the Gulf to be reunited with their families and friends.

More than 140 soldiers from 518 Company of the Royal Pioneer Corps touched down on English soil last night after spending five months in the Gulf.

The troops, who were trained at Simpson Barracks and some of whom are based in the county, jetted in to an unnamed military airbase before going on to their Bicester HQ to be greeted by senior officers.

They have been given a month's leave after their prolonged stay in the Saudi Arabian desert. During the conflict and the build-up to it the Pioneers performed vital support duties, such as guarding ammunition dumps like Hell Hole One, transporting equipment and helping build "tent city" with the Royal Engineers.

None of the Chunkies, as they are traditionally known, was injured during the conflict.

Capt Leslie Wilde at Simpson Barracks said: "Most of them will now go straight on leave. They've been out there since October so it's well deserved. Everyone here is very relieved that they're coming home safely."

A date for the return of the rest of the Pioneers, the Simpson Barracks based 187 Company, has not yet been fixed.

Northampton Chronicle & Echo 19 Jun 91 LAST CHUNKIES TO COME HOME

The Royal Pioneers are on their way home to Northampton after a six month spell in the war-ravaged Gulf. The final 40 men from the Wootton-based 187 (Tancred) Company are due to touch down at Brize Norton in the early hours of Saturday or Sunday morning.

Most of the Pioneers – 150 originally went out from Northampton – are single, but two of the men will be reunited with their wives and families.

The Chunkies served in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. After taking part in the war, the Pioneers have been helping to recover stores and equipment from the battlefield for shipment back to Britain.

Northampton Chronicle & Echo 21 Jun 91 ROY'S PICKED FOR PARADE

Staff Sgt Roy Morrison was today due to be one of three men representing the Northampton-based Royal Pioneers at the London parade to welcome home Britain's Gulf troops.

Sgt Morrison has been with the 187 (Tancred) Company for three years. He left for the Gulf last October and returned in April.

Simpson Barracks spokesman Major Colin Spears said of Sgt Morrison: "He has been selected as the representative of 187 Company, and in particular because he lives in Northampton. The people of Northampton gave us a lot of support, for which we were very grateful."

Sgt Morrison and two other men, one from 518 Company in Bicester and another based in Germany, were picked to represent the Royal Pioneers

Hansard 11 Feb 92 REGIMENTS AND CORPS (TITLES)

Mr. Burns To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any decisions have been made regarding the titles of regiments and corps of the regular Army.

Mr. Archie Hamilton The following titles have been approved The Royal Dragoon Guards (amalgamation of 4th/7th Royal Dragoon Guards and 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards) The Queen's Royal Hussars (The Queen's Own and Royal Irish) (amalgamation of the Queen's Own Hussars and The Queen's Royal Irish Hussars) The King's Royal Hussars (amalgamation of the Royal Hussars (Prince of Wales' Own) and 14th/20th King's Hussars) The Light Dragoons (amalgamation of 13th/18th Royal Hussars (Queen Mary's Own) and 15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars) The Queen's Royal Lancers (amalgamation of 16th/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers and 17th/21st Lancers) The Royal Logistic Corps (The Corps will form in April 1993 by the amalgamation of the Royal Corps of Transport; the Royal Army Ordnance Corps; the Royal Pioneer Corps; the Army Catering Corps; and the Postal and Courier Service, Corps of Royal Engineers; as announced in "Britain's Army for the 90s" (Cm 1595) published in July 1991). The titles of other new regiments will be announced when decisions have been taken.

Oxford Mail 11 May 92 SOLDIERS RECEIVE ROYAL MEDAL HONOUR

Three Bicester soldiers have been honoured for their work.

Major General Geofrey Field, Colonel Commandant of the Royal Pioneers, presented the trio with their British Empire Medals at 23 Group Royal Pioneer Corps headquarters at St David's Barracks.

Warrant Officer Brian Fielding, Corporal Michael Carr and Lance Corporal Roy Sellstrom received the awards in the Queen's New Year's honours list.

The BEM is given for exceptionally valuable service and a devotion to duty, proving an inspiration to others.

Gulf

WO Fielding, who is married with three children, spent 17 years with the Pioneers. He served in the Gulf War and after

going to Saudi Arabia in October 1990. Cpl Carr, who is married with two

children, has completed 13 years service with the Royal Pioneers.

He is a clerk, previously with the Bicesterbased 521 Company.

Cpl Carr helped organise support

operations in the Gulf War.

LCpl Sellstrom, who is married, has spent more than six years with the Pioneers.

He works with 521 Company on support duties for the Royal Army Ordnance Corps

Berlin Bulletin 20 Nov 92 VISIT OF BRIG CB TELFER ADC DIRECTOR OF ARMY PIONEERS AND LABOUR

Brigadier Telfer returned to Berlin last week to visit 14 Indep PCLU RPC, a unit he commanded some ten years ago. As a result of the reunification of Germany many changes have taken place since those days and, in preparation for the final withdrawal of the Forces from the city, the PCLU is now devoting a considerable effort towards the retraining and outplacement of the civilian members of the Brigade. This need for training and new jobs was something that the Director was able to emphasise in his meetings with members of the Senate and local business leaders – many of who he knew from his own time in the city.

During his visit to the new PCLU accommodation Brigadier Telfer was briefed on the changes within the Unit and on the plans for our remaining time in Berlin. During his meeting with the staff he presented Frau Monika Kupper with her Meritorious Service Certificate and they were able to reminisce about the time when they were both new to 14 PCLU.

Northampton Chronicle and Echo 26 Mar 93 THEIR LAST POST THE PIONEERS ARE LEAVING NORTHAMPTON AFTER 33 YEARS

Bright sunshine and thousands of Northampton people greeted the 212 men of the Royal Pioneer Corps as they marched through the town centre for the last time.

The Corps which will be merged into a new unit next month, was exercising its right to march through the town after being granted the Freedom of the Borough in 1984.

Security was tight with barriers put up along town centre roads and scores of police officers patrolling the marchers' route, ending outside the Guildhall.

The Corps, with bayonets fixed, were led by the band of the Grenadier Guards to the Guildhall where they saluted Northampton Mayor Frank Tero – in full ceremonial regalia – and the Duke of Gloucester, Colonel-in-Chief of the Corps.

After the Duke had inspected the troops, permission was granted by the Mayor for the Corps to parade through the town one last time. Before marching off, the Corps saluted the people of Northampton – a fond farewell after 33 years at Simpson Barracks.

Daily Record 26 Aug 93 JASON'S MOMENT OF GLORY

Disabled Bosnia veteran Jason Black was given a boost as he lay in his hospital bed yesterday.

The 19 year old squaddie from Markinch, Fife, was presented with a UN medal after serving in the peacekeeping forces in former Yugoslavia.

Jason's mum and dad, Roberta and James Black, looked on as Lieutenant Colonel lain Milne, commanding officer of Jason's unit in the Royal Logistic Corps, made the presentation at the Southern General in Glasgow.

Jason was accidentally shot by his best pal in Bosnia two months ago

Northampton Chronicle & Echo 7 Mar 96 HOLY SEPULCHRE CHURCH

The Duke of Gloucester was at the Holy Sepulchre Church in Northampton yesterday (Wednesday) to celebrate the completion of phase two of its restoration.

Almost \$1 million has been raised to restore the church to its present state and another £100,000 is still needed.

It was first built in the year 1100 in the centre of Northampton and was visited by the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1989 when phase one of the refurbishment was completed.

The Thanksgiving service is to pay tribute to all the benefactors who helped raise the cash to restore it to its former glory.

One new addition is a door donated by the Royal Pioneer Corps which offers a better wheelchair access.

Churchwarded John Kightley said: "It's world famous and survived all that time – even through the Great Fire of Northampton in 1675".

The Holy Sepulchre Church was built by the first Norman Earl of Northampton Simon de Senlis as a thanksgiving for his safe return from the First Crusade.

It is only one of four round churches left in England – the others are in London, Essex and Cambridge.



The Trustees

Service of Thanksgiving for the completion of Phase 2 of total restoration of Northampton's world famous church

Dedication of the New South Aisle Door to mark the long and treasured connections of the Royal Pioneer Corps with the church over many years.

In the presence of H.R.H.

The Duke of Gloucester & EV.C.

WEDNESDAY 6th MARCH 1996 at 11.a.m. CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE SHEEP STREET, NORTHAMPTON

Guest Preacher The Right Reverend Paul Barber

Bishop of Brixworth

R.S.V.P. 9th February 1996 John Kightley, Founder Trustee 22 Lyncrest Avenue Northampton NNS 5PE

VETERAN'S 50-YEAR WAIT FOR MEDALS

Old soldier George Jacobs put on his best bib and tucker yesterday when he finally received his World War Two Medals.

More than half a century after completing his service in the Royal Pioneer Corps, he was presented with his Defence Medal, 1939-1945 Medal, Victory Medal and his North-West Europe Medal.

Accompanied by his daughter Doreen

James, George received his decorations from ex-Royal Marine General Sir Robert Ross, chairman of the Wiltshire branch of Staff at Land Command HQ in Wilton, near Salisbury, had the medals specially mounted for the ceremony in the museum of the Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment in Salisbury Cathedral Close.

George, now aged 91, of West Harnham, Salisbury, never got round to completing

the forms required for the medals but decided recently it was time to collect them. He was helped by SSAFA Forces Help, who take a special interest in ex-servicemen and women.

Squadron Leader Ken Trice, Salisbury divisional secretary, said: "When one of our workers spoke to Mr Jacobs she discovered he had never applied for the medals.

Like many people he just wanted to get home but we thought he should have them."

They applied for the medals and duly received what was owing to George, a father of four who worked as a bricklayer in civilian life.

Part of George's war service included work with a special smoke unit which camouflaged cities to try to fool Nazi bombers.

He landed in France shortly after D-Day and saw service in Germany. ■

Congratulations...

Thank you to members for purchasing Derby Draw Tickets. The Association made a profit of £850, this helps the Association to carry out its work. The results are...



LABOR OMNIA VINCIT

keep the Association going.

Service Records

WOW! THANKS Norman- that was amazingly quick!!?

I already have the info from the war commission thanks though! But I will definitely apply for his service records as you suggest next. Many thanks again for your swift response - much appreciated! Michelle

Grandfather

THANK YOU very much for your prompt response.

I was amazed at the level of detail in the records you provided as my grandfather only really discussed his camp guard duties to me prior to his passing away in 2004. My most sincere thanks and appreciation. Joseph Gerrard George Smith

Thomas Blundell

I WROTE to you a long time ago concerning Thomas William Blunden who served with the Pioneer Corps in WWII and I believed to be my biological father.

Despite what they tell you in advertisements for data banks like Ancestry. com I suspect it is very rare to be able to locate people, especially for events taking place during WWI and WWII as well as the Irish rebellion.

In fact I now believe that despite the miracles of computing and the possibility of storing vast amounts of data, recent history well, armed with the info you were kind enough to find for me I located the origins and life and death of my assumed father.

It turns out that he had a son with his first and only wife and this son married and produced a son and two daughters of his own (the son would be a step nephew).

I contacted the aforementioned son and he agreed to take an ancestry DNA test. I just received the results today and my DNA matches the step-nephew's DNA showing that everything has fallen into place.

So thanks to your efforts I have located the family links I have been missing for the past 73 years.

I can only say, again, a great thank you for your help. It just remains for me to find out what my father did between the wars (he enlisted in the Argyll and Sutherland highlanders in 1923 when he was 21 years old who knows what he did from then until the outbreak of WWII). Rod Devine

96 | THE ROYAL PIONEER CORPS ASSOCIATION



Heartrending

nd him not

Press Cuttings from Pioneer defending officer Glenn Honey

We believe you

HAVE JUST read the excellent edition of The Pioneer and this reminded me of my time in the RPC

I enclose for your records cuttings from several national newspapers of a court

martial held at Longtown in 1959. I was the defending officer, a very junior National Service 2L. I found it rather daunting to say the least. Glenn Honey

Picture: Glenn Honey

Are

Numbed

Thank you Susie for the donatio

I AM sending you a donation of £20 which I will get in the post tomorrow this is a small gesture in appreciation for your most helpful response and advice.

Keep up the good work we must always keep these memories alive for future generations.

Susie Pilling



Motto



GARY HOWE supports West Bromwich Albion. What an unusual motto!

Proudest things



NO MATTER where you live in the world there's always a reminder of some of the proudest things you've done.' **David Woolliscroft**

Unusual Red and Green on his headstone



I AM wondering if anyone might be able to help me, I am sure most of you know Andrew (Ginge) Roberts has "red and green forever "written on his headstone.

Our children have been asking what it means and what the flash stood for.

Does anyone happen to have a link please to the story of why the pioneers were given that flash, I would really appreciate if you could post in the comments anything that could help.

The older the children get the more questions they have! Also if anyone has any photos of Andrew that you can send or funny stories, the kids would like to hear about them. Many thanks Lindsey Roberts

WHEN THE Corps was renamed from the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps to the Pioneer Corps in Nov 1940 Wine Red and Apple Green were adapted as our colours.

During the beach landings in Op OVERLOAD, D Day a Red and Green Beach Identification Flash was issued to Pioneers. These colours were Scarlet Red and Brunswick Green due to shortage of cotton. In 1946 our RPC Standards were paraded in London. Each Standard was paid for by ex Commanding Officers these standards were of the original colours Wine Red and Apple Green. Later in the Corps history our lanyard was designed with the colours of Scarlet Red and Brunswick Green. When the RPC was amalgamated into the RLC in 1993, 23 Pioneer Regiment started to wear the Scarlet Red and Brunswick Green Flash that we are familiar with today. However this flash was unofficial and never cleared by the Army Dress Committee and in 2005 the Regiment were ordered to remove it from its dress. Since then Red and Green has come more sufficient to Pioneers. Taff Teague

The following is from the Association Historian, Lt Col J Starling:

IN 1993 the Royal Pioneer Corps was amalgamated into the newly formed Royal Logistic Corps.

Prior to amalgamation the Royal Pioneer Corps wore the distinctive Khaki Beret which was surrendered on amalgamation into the newly formed Corps.

The Commanding Officer of 23 Pioneer Regt tasked his Sqn Commanders to produce a distinctive insignia to denote the . Pioneer CEG.

Initially to be worn by members of 23 Pioneer Regiment.

A number of suggestions were made including the crests were (prior to disbandment) hanging in the Officer's & Sqt's Messes.

OC 187 (Tancred) Company (Maj J A Starling) and 2IC (Capt R G Bennett) decided to copy the Army of Service Stripe worn in World War 2.

This stripe was worn on both sleeves of battle dress apart from personnel in Southern Command (who wore the Southern Command Flash – a shield with the Southern Cross in Star but backed by the Arm of Service Colours).

The only major change was the flash was twice the thickness of the original (1/2" and not 1/4")

The design was agreed during a CO's O Group in April 03 and Capt R G Bennett arranged for manufacture.

Five Flashes were issued to each soldier, paid for by the PRI.

It was to be worn on Shirt Sleeve Order, Jumpers and DPM.

Eventually other Pioneers not within the Regt (168 Regt, 170 Coy and HQ NI) also started to wear the Flash. Lt Col J Starling

Hope to be Old camera in loft there next year!

MY WIFE and I would like to thank you for the very enjoyable weekend you organised that was held 15-17 Jun at the Royal Court Hotel

You go beyond the call of duty in the way in which you get it organised and are prepared to change the agenda to suit the circumstances.

Hope to be there next year and see all the old smiling faces yet again. Frank and Tina Berry

Received his medal

I AM writing to thank you for your help regarding my grandad, Kenneth Adams.

He received his medal this week. If it wasn't for your assistance he would never have received it. We are all so proud of him and grateful to you. Sheena

Home Thoughts



HOME THOUGHTS from abroad! Former 525631 Capt David Mills 522 Coy & 4PLSU 1986 - 1991. Now 71 and now residing in La Nucia sunny Spain. Thought this maybe an alternative photo for the magazine. Sunshine and Remembrance don't usually coincide. Capt David Mills



■ The Pioneer Pub and Pioneer sneakers

I'VE HAD an urge to write, I was in my loft the other day doing one thing and another when I came across an old camera still with film in it.

I took it down to the spare bedroom to have a look at it and it was on photo number 19, so I knew it had either 5 or 17 shots left in it depending on whether or not it was a 24 or 35 film.

Then I saw a couple of copies of The Pioneer sitting on the side and I thought I know I will take some Pioneer pics to finish the film off and see if the camera works or not.

Here are 2 pictures one showing the Pioneer public house in Northampton and the other my Pioneer pumps. I wanted to wear them and stand on the coffee table and get the wife to photo them but she

Picture: John Winterburn

said that I must have bumped my head whilst in the loft. I therefore had to take them off and photo them.

I bought the camera in Banjaluka in 1996 when I was on a reservist tour and I bought the pumps in Tewksbury in 1999 when I was doing a FTRS contract at Ashchurch. **Neil Moreton**

PS. Ex 34 Coy RPC(V), ex S-Type engagement 187 Tancred Coy, ex regular 187 Coy, ex 168 Pioneer Regt RLC(V) and two years MPGS just to finish with so only the Chelsea Hospital left! Give my regards to Pat Morley but not my phone number!!! (Keep up the excellent work)

Ed Note: Pat says hi and he says that he already has your number :)

National service 1935

THE FOLLOWING is my short service record as far as I can recall:

I was called up for national service in Nov 1935 and trained at Hermitage Camp, Wrexham

After training I went on a cadre, after signing on. When I finally passed out I was posted to 206 Coy Nescliffe, then posted to 522 Coy CAD Kineton, working at Radway. After promotion to Corporal I was posted to Long Marston and I used to cycle each weekend to Kineton as I had met a girl there.

We married in 1957 at Avondaset and we are still together.

I went back to CAD Kineton to become a Corporal in the railway section under Sgt Gennings, and when he went I became Sgt in charge.

I was then sent Fyllngdales Moors, stationed in Scarborough, until I retired in 1963. I remember the bren gun carriers taking us across the moors and dropping us as close as possible to the site.

22934635 Ex Sgt Adam (Jock) Oldham

LETTERS

Remembrance



In memory of Mark Embersons Grandad



Picture: Mark Emberson

group of Pioneers at Bergen Belsen Approximately 50,000 people died at Bergen Belsen, among them was Anne Frank, the most well known child diarist of the Holocaust era.

After evacuating Bergen-Belsen, British forces burned down the whole camp to prevent the spread of typhus.

Just got back from the jolly

MY WIFE and I (and Mia) have just got back from the 2018 Sherringham Jolly camping / caravanning weekend organised by Peter Wegg

A fantastic, great and memorable weekend was had by all and we thank Peter for all of his hard work in organizing such an event for fellow Pioneers & family which was truly remarkable. It's these events that keeps the "Pioneer Spirit" alive regardless of Rank, Pioneer cap badge, colour of your beret, what medals you have or how long or what year you served.

We are looking forward the next Sherringham Jolly and I urge other Pioneers to stay in contact with Peter Wegg for detail of the next Pioneer Sherringham Jolly.

P.S Thanks again to Ian Stopford who saved the day on Saturday morning as I forgot the Butane gas for the burner and couldn't make any coffee and in true Pioneer style helped me out of a situation. Steve Baron

Ed Note: A great weekend, looking forward to the next one!

PION

A GREAT read

once again just one question how do you do it I take my hat off to you and Paul for all your hard work and I do so much like your Last Post entry not in a morbid way but to see who has gone such as Ross Bennett a great man as was all the others keep it going pal. **Dusty Bryant**

I WOULD like to say a massive thank you to Norman Brown for a fantastic Reunion in Coventry, it was lovely seeing my Red & Green family James Upfield

ONCE AGAIN Norman Brown you did us proud thank you it was a great weekend. Peter Bevan

THANK YOU Norman, Paul and everyone who made this weekend special and yes I made sure Louis remembered to bring his uniform this year lol. Red & Green always XXX **Christine Powell** CHEERS FOR a great night Norman Brown, cheap beer, good food and great company. Paul Monaghan Ed note: hope you can stay for more than one night next year!

JUST GOT back from another great reunion thanks again Norman, see you all in London **Neil Salt**

THANKS FOR another fab weekend it was good to see everyone. The camo teddy is very happy in his new home! Jennifer Bone

THANK YOU very much for this information, especially the diary. It fits in with some of the information I already have and the things my Dad used to talk about Carol McVev

THE COMPANY war diary is exactly what I was looking for! Thank you so very much for providing such a valuable service. **David Law**



Write in or email us... **The Royal Pioneer Corps Ássociation**

c/o BGSU St George's Barracks ARNCOTT Bicester OX25 1PP

or email us at:



Thank you Sandra

I THANK you so much for the attached information and for taking the time to research it on our behalf.

A donation will be sent to RPC Bicester in appreciation. Very many thanks for the work you do.

Sandra Hocken

Slightly puzzled

MANY THANKS for your reply, I shall indeed request his Record of Service.

I am slightly puzzled why he was in the Ulster rifles though as he was born and brought up in Woodmansterne, Surrey and apart from knowing his son was born in Wales in 1941 (again a mystery) he never moved from there and all other his children were born in Surrey.

I shall send off for his records and then come back to you.

Paul Herdman

Another tremendous **Blood** on Grass **Brothers** weekend

JUST GOT home from a great Royal Pioneer Corps Reunion weekend at Coventry and my good Lady & I enjoyed meeting up with my old comrades and their good Ladies.

A big thank you to Norman & and his team for arranging another tremendous Blood on Grass Brothers weekend. **Roger Kirby**

Cuckoo Lan

REF THE stupid and misleading article on page 48 (Ed note - this refers to the article on the Training and building of the pyramid at the Royal Tournament).

Ex Cpl John McDonough should be ashamed of himself. Yes his mind was a blur

Firstly because water cannot be used in the Royal Albert Hall it is too heavy for the floor, plus they do not want the varnished floor damaged according to Mr Ralph Reader.

So I assume that 200 plus ammunition tins full of sand would have the same problem.

Secondly there are a lot of training sessions during the week to allow the lighting and sound engineers to set up their equipment.

I cannot remember whether we performed on the Friday evening in front of a full house or whether it was on the Saturday afternoon but I do remember that a full dress rehearsal was performed in front of a full house/audience.

The Royal British Legion have to make something out of it. No petals were dropped at the rehearsal.

If Ex Cpl John McDonough thinks that the powers that control the Royal Pioneer Corps would/could allow an exhibition to be performed in front of the Queen and or the public that would disgrace the Corps. He is not living in the Caribbean he is living in cuckoo land.

No officer that I can think of would have allowed this to happen. **Robert Setterfield**

Arthur died in the collision

MANY THANKS for your reply, really useful and interesting

I'm taking from this that Arthur died in the collision with a mine approaching Sword beach?

Michael Stanworth

(Ed note: he was a member of 144 Coy PC, the war diary for 6 Jun 44 reads: 1600 hrs - 51/2 section land NORMANDY, 2

sections with Provost Coy and 3 sections with R Berkshire.

Remainder of the Coy (51/2 sections) under OC are approaching in an LCI when it strikes an underwater mine which blew the forward part of the LCI off. 39 casualties, 12 killed & drowned,27 wounded. 22 attempts made to land the survivors but unsuccessful due to the tide. Return to the UK in LSI)

Have you moved?

GOOD AFTERNOON, I keep receiving package letters to my address for Mr GMS Goddard.

I don't know if they are important as I never open them, but have sent a few back to the post office now advising this person is not at the address.

I have lived at the address for 6 years and prior to that was another family, I believe there has been a mix up with address

somewhere along the line but I wouldn't want someone to miss out on important documents.

Many thanks. Gemma Reed

Ed note: Ed note: so for 6 years we have been sending him a newsletter twice a year - what a waste of postage - please let us know if you move.



From the Front Line

Report: Norman Brown Picture: Supplied

HIS BOOK is an extraordinary record of a family's military service over the last one hundred years. Thanks to careful editing of preserved family papers, each individual tells his story

through letters and diaries that capture the military scene and reflect family ties that bind them all closely. The eight family members served in South

The eight family members served in South Africa, West Africa, Korea, Aden, the Falklands and Afghanistan, as well as both World Wars.

Two lost their lives and others were wounded.

Three became generals, and many were decorated.

While their records may span a century during which warfare changed greatly, the tone of the letters remain surprisingly constant, reflecting confidence in their fellows, a pride in service to Crown and Country, and a critical eye for what is going on around them, was well as love of family and understatement of the dangers.

The part that wives and mothers play in the story also shines through strongly.

Their observations, as well as the emotions conveyed in their writings, create a unique narrative and show how difference people cope with the experience of war.

FROM THE FRONT LINE – FAMILY LETTERS & DIARIES 1900 TO THE FALKLAND'S AND AFGHANISTAN AUTHOR: HEW PIKE ISBN: 9781844158126

The British Empire

Report: Norman Brown Picture: Supplied

N 1939 Hitler went to war not just with Great Britain; he also went to war with the 500 million people of the British Empire scattered across every continent and ocean of the

world. Because in the years since 1945 that Empire has disappeared, the crucial fact that the British Empire fought as a whole during the war has been forgotten. All the parts of the Empire joined in the struggle from the beginning, undergoing huge changes and sometimes suffering greatly as a result. The war in the desert, the battle of the Atlantic and the Malaya campaign, and the contribution of the Empire as a whole in terms of supplies, communications and troops, all reflect the strategic importance of Britain's imperial status. Men and women not only from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and India but also from Africa, Burma, the Caribbean, the Middle East and Polynesia all played their part. The British Empire and the Second World War seeks to place the British Empire at the centre of our understanding of the Second

World War.

Ed note: the following are some extracts from the book:

Page 182 – Perhaps most remarkable were the newlycreated African units, such as the African Pioneer Corps of the British Army's Pioneer Corps, that took tens of thousands of men from East, West, and Southern African territories to the Middle East and Southern Europe, where they formed the backbone of the 100,000 strong logistics army that kept the supplies coming to the imperial troops of the Eighth Army. The Pioneer Corps was the military labour force of the British Army.

Page 185 – Official casualty figures (for African Pioneers) were 7301 dead, including 900 soldiers drowned when the troopship SS Khedive Ismail was sunk in 1943. The Kabaw Valley campaign in Burma cost 11 (East African) Division 1244 casualties. In one horrific episode in 1942, 202 soldiers of 1823 Pioneer Company surrendered on the fall of Tobruk and were murdered by their captors.

Page 185 – By 1944 there were fifty-six East African Pioneer Companies.

Page 259 – The Greece and Crete campaigns in the spring of 1941 cost the Pioneer Corps over 4,500 men.

Page 260. Pioneer Corps HQ consisting of a core of British soldiers were sent out from Britain to organise the recruitment and training process that was to see over 10,000 Batswana, 3600 Swazi and 22,000 Basuto recruited into the British Army and dispatched from Durban to the Middle East. (Of these, Basutoland lost 1216 soldiers, 63 going down with the troopship SS Erinpura en route to Malta in May 1943, Bechuanaland lost nearly 400 and Swaziland 122.

Page 263 – The Pioneer Corps Base Depot at Qassassin camp was capable of accommodating 26,000 soldiers. It was a base for acclimatisation, training, rest and recreation and dispersal. The Pioneer Companies, each consisting of about 350 soldiers, were dispersed throughout the region in Labour Groups (one group usually comprising six coys) that nearby army commanders could draw upon when necessary.

THE BRITISH EMPIRE AND THE Second World War Author: Ashley Jackson ISBN: 1-85285-417-0

The Last Post

Since the last newsletter it is with great sadness to report the following deaths

ROONEY HUGH (5837080) EX PTE 13 APR 18 (AGED 95). SERVED FROM 12 MAR 42 TO 23 **JAN 47**

We published details of him receiving the Legion d.honneur in the April 2018 edition of the Association Newsletter.

SWIFT TREVOR (24175574) EX PTE 2 APR 18 (AGED 65). SERVED 1971-1974

MORGAN NIGEL (24898187) EX PTE (AGED 47)

JONES DAVID EX MAJ (SERVICE DETAILS NOT HELD BY RPCA)

Lt Col John Allen writes: I knew and worked with him prior to his joining the Corps and later he was one of the officers who worked for me on a 'balkan' project.

To expand on my last message I knew him when he was a WO1 in the Ll.

He worked closely with me in JHQ and I recommended that he should take a commission in the Corps and he was then accepted and duly passed the board.

To celebrate we went to a local 'gaststube. (with regrettable but memorable post celebration effects) I presented him with an Officers No 2 dress, sam browne and cane!

He later worked for me on Balkan Ops. I liked him a lot! I regret his passing. All best again John.

MADOX CYRIL J (22113696) EX PTE 8 JUL 18 (AGED 87)

Burglars broke into his home and stole his life savings on 3 Jul 18. Dementia sufferer Cyril was at home with his wife Vivian, 81, who has motor neurone disease, when the raid happened. Cyril joined the Association on 3 Oct 51.

WILLIMOT GRAHAM E (24687771) EX PTE 18 JUL 18 (AGED 55). DISCHARGED ON 28 JAN 93

LIVESEY CHARLES (23939603) EX CPL 29 JUL 18 (AGED 73)

FARMER PAUL (24046372) EX PTE 25 APR 18 (AGED 73). SERVED OCT 65 - NOV 74

MYERS MICHAEL HUGH MBE (430674) MAJ (RETD)

Joined the Corps in 1953 and was first posted to 263 Coy RPC and then to 524 Coy RPC

He was then posted as OIC 15 Det PCLU Celle (Part of 98 Group, Hanover). He was then posted back to 524 Coy in Episkopi, Cyprus and in 1959 this Company was amalgamated with 518 Coy. In 1959 he took a party into the Sahara Desert for adventure training.

He left 518 Coy in Jun 61 and then served for a short period with the Singapore Guards Regiment.

A posting to Borneo followed where he was awarded the MBE, his citation reads as

102 | THE ROYAL PIONEER CORPS ASSOCIATION

follows:

Military Intelligence Officer GSO3 (Int) -15 October 1963 - 23 June 1964

During the period 15 Oct 63 0 15 Feb 64, Captain MYERS was GSOIII Intelligence at HQ British Forces BORNEO, but was in fact working at the equivalent of Brigade HQ level (CENTRAL Brigade).

In spite of having had no previous Intelligence or Staff Training he quickly showed he was ideally suited to his job.

He worked extremely long hours without any relaxation and together with one other Captain performed the Staff work which would normally be done by the whole 'G' Staff of a Brigade HQ.

He produced very accurate and detailed intelligence assessments and his work was of great assistance both to those above him and below him.

He travelled far and wide to assess situations on the ground and never spared himself however tired he was.

During the period 25 Feb - 12 Mar he was acting MIO TAWAU in a situation made dangerous by the large INDONESIAN population of 19,000. During this period he personally planned and then commanded a series of small joint military, police and Special Branch operations which culminated in the elimination of an extremely dangerous, armed INDONESIAN gang of fanatical saboteurs and subversion agents who had been at large for some months.

The success of these operations were entirely due to his imaginative planning, and determined and courageous leadership in seeking out and closing with this dangerous gang, with a very small force of Malay soldiers and Police.

After these successful operations he was switched to the important post of MIO **KUCHING**

He quickly settled down and pursued his task with tremendous energy and enthusiasm.

With an instinct for following up the right reports however small he would move out to investigate at any hour of day or night. Due to his sincerity and his language ability, he had the gift of getting on with and gaining the confidence of local Police Officer, Chinese, Dyaks and Malay, to all of whom he has been an inspiration.

He is without doubt an outstanding Military Intelligence offer who has as well achieving excellent results, gained the confidence and admiration of all with whom he has served.

In March 1964 he returned to 518 Coy until December 1964 when he was posted to 45 Group. In September 1965 he was posted to B Det 3 PCLU (45 Group) before returning to UK in September 1967 to 521 Coy RPC at Bicester.

In March 1968 he was posted to the RPC Trg Centre, Northampton as OC Training

He was a wonderful man and a very dear and loyal friend.

I will never forget when I arrived at a parade in Herford with my Sam Browne on upside down. Bob was respectful but very firm. I never did it again. A great man, and a fine soldier. A great loss.

GOVETT PHILLIP HENRY(14260294) 6 OCT 18 EX PTE (AGED 95) SERVED 20 AUG 42 - 7 APR 46

Photo on page 5 of Apr 16 Newsletter.

Cyril Maddox

Wing a post he held until he retired later that year.

Nigel Morgan

POOLEY EDWARD (24274579) 18 APR 18 EX PTE (AGED 65) SERVED 1972 TO 1978

ALDRED JOHN ROBERT (23362121) 17 DEC 17 EX PTE (AGED 75)

Joined RPCA in 1957 whilst serving in 196 Coy

NICHOL DAVID (24175344) 21 APR 18 EX LCPL (AGED 73) SERVED 1970 TO 1975 (521 COY)

STAPLEY ROBERT (BOB) EX MAJ 16 SEP 18

Lt Col NM O'Connor writes: So saddened to hear of the untimely death of Bob Stapley.

From trooper to RSM in the QOH and finishing his career as a Maj in the RPC.

He was ideally suited to Labour Resources. He introduced a 'whiff of grapeshot' into the interpretation and application of the 1955 Tariff. An absolute star.



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

More items are being added all the time - there are new Pioneer red and green tops and even Pioneer red and green socks! PIONEER *****

And finally...

Common sense, Army Instructions, Army Recruitment, the Pioneer Reunion 2019, Op Banner and can you spot the mouse?

Report: Norman Brown Cartoon: MAC

N Obituary printed in the London Times Today we mourn the passing of a beloved old friend, Common Sense, who has been with us for many years. No one knows for sure how old he was, since his birth records were long ago lost in bureaucratic red tape. He will be remembered as having cultivated such valuable lessons as:

- Knowing when to come in out of the rain;

- Why the early bird gets the worm;
- Life isn't always fair;
- And maybe it was my fault.

Common Sense lived by simple, sound financial policies (don't spend more than you can earn) and reliable strategies (adults, not children, are in charge).

His health began to deteriorate rapidly when well-intentioned but overbearing regulations were set in place. Reports of a 6-year-old boy charged with sexual harassment for kissing a classmate; teens suspended from school for using mouthwash after lunch; and a teacher fired for reprimanding an unruly student, only worsened his condition.

Common Sense lost ground when parents attacked teachers for doing the job that they themselves had failed to do in disciplining their unruly children. It declined even further when schools were required to get parental consent to administer sun lotion or an aspirin to a student; but could not inform parents when a student became pregnant and wanted to have an abortion.

Common Sense lost the will to live as the churches became businesses; and criminals received better treatment than their victims.

Common Sense took a beating when you couldn't defend yourself from a burglar in your own home and the burglar could sue you for assault. Common Sense finally gave up the

Common Sense finally gave up the will to live, after a woman failed to realize that a steaming cup of coffee was hot. She spilled a little in her lap, and was promptly awarded a huge settlement.

Common Sense was preceded in death,

- -by his parents, Truth and Trust, -by his wife, Discretion,
- -by his daughter, Responsibility, -and by his son, Reason.
- He is survived by his 5 stepbrothers; - I Know My Rights
- I Want It Now
- Someone Else Is To Blame
- I'm A Victim

- Pay me for Doing Nothing Not many attended his funeral because so few realized he was gone. If you still remember him, pass this



'Guess what, Mummy? I'll get a bedtime story and the nice man says the SAS will love it if Binky Winky Snookum Woofums joins too.'

on. If not, join the majority and do nothing.

N Council Instructions govern the very life of a soldier. At the War House very, VERY senior officers, red-tabbed and beribboned, sit in solemn conclave and decide that this shall be done or that shall not be done and the results of their deliberations are printed by the hundreds of thousands and shipped all over the world.

In the sweating heat of a Burmese jungle, the frozen islands of the Arctic, the waterlogged mountains of Italy and the shell racked fields of France harassed Adjutants read these portentous and momentous decisions which they mark in red pencil for the immediate attention of worried Commanding Officers and hollow-eyed Quartermasters. Staff Officers on every battlefront go into secret session. Guns are withdrawn from the line for involved adjustments to be made to them. Here and there someone packs his kit and sets off across the seas on His Majesty's lawful occasions. Certain documents are burned behind closed doors and before witnesses. One man puts up red tabs and another takes his off. Oh: a very serious thing is an ACI and to be respected as such. Wars must cease a moment whilst they are read and studied. Many tons of priority cargo must lie waiting on quaysides to give shipping space to the millions of sheets of paper on which they are printed over the signature of the Secretary of State for War

We received one today. The Adjutant's few remaining hairs turned slightly greyer. He tiptoed in to the Colonel's Office and with a trembling finger drew it to the Old Man's attention. The Colonel became very grave and called a conference of all officers.

"Gentlemen," he said. "An ACI has just been received with which you should all immediately be acquainted. It is not for us the question the orders of the Army Council and I am sure that the loyalty and integrity of you all cannot be questioned. No matter to what extent this Instruction may affect us as individuals we must, as soldiers, ensure that it is enforced without fear or favour. The continuation and favourable outcome of the war throws on each of us responsibilities which it is our duty to carry out without consideration of the personal risks involved. You will remain standing with heads uncovered whilst I read the





Instruction which has arrived within the past hour."

I do not know how the others were affected for I was watching in a sort of stupid fascination a vein pulsing madly on the Colonel's left temple. He suddenly looked an old man, as if the vigour had been drained out of him. The Orderly Room was quite silent, even the air had a feeling of being suspended. One remembers moments like this; the impression of them remains throughout the years in clear cut outlines. All over the world similar conferences would be taking place as men - some young with the down on their cheeks still soft and girlish; others old in the service of the Empire to which their lives had been dedicated as men listened tensely and with pride to the solemn words of the distant High Gods of War. We were surrounded by the peace of an Italian garden, but many of these others would have the beat of gunfire in their ears and the chatter of machine guns as a throbbing background, or the whine and whistle of a falling bomb growing ever louder and louder, and half of their minds would be judging the spit second of the explosion whilst the other half was focused on the solemn pronouncement they were hearing. It was for this we had given the months and years of our lives, for this we had left our homes and loved ones and the comfort and

security of our civilian existence. At times it had all seemed a pitiful waste, but in such a moment we became aware of the tragic necessity for all the discomforts and heartaches which are born of war. We at least had been spared for this one hour; so many others sleeping eternally in the ditches and fields of the five continents and beneath the restless waters of the seven seas would never know the thrill of it.

The Colonel gave a little grunting cough and the paper in his hand trembled and made a gentle whispering sound. One of the men was whistling outside as he swept the driveway, the broom going swish, swish, swish as it licked the gravel. A passing lorry, changing gear recalled us the first wailing notes of an air raid siren.

The Colonel read, gravely, unemotionally.

"No expense to the public will be admissible in connection with the fitting of ATS suspender ends." We had sworn to fight to the

finish! 🔳

HE winner of "Find the Cuneo Mouse" was Tony Lunn. Well done Tony. A prize will be on its way to him shortly. It was on page 57, on the chap on the

right. 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 6th June 2019.

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



Pioneer Reunion 2019

PIONEER *

On page 35 we describe a parade to be held on 17 Aug 2019 to mark the 50th Anniversary of the start of Op Banner.

Pioneers served in the Provence from the early days of this Operation and continued to serve until amalgamation into the Royal Logistic Corps. The roles covered were varied from dog handling, VCPs, working at the maze, driving and working at stores depots.

In the next large issue of the Newsletter we intend to publish details of the Pioneers in Northern Ireland and would like to hear from you.

Can you let us have your stories and photographs if you have any (these will be returned within 7 days).

From our records we know that 3,230 Northern Ireland medals were issued to RPC personnel.

Coming up in the next newsletter ...

Op Banner 50th Anniversary Special
 News
 Forthcoming events
 Your
 Pioneer Reunion
 Blast from the Past
 Digging through the Archives
 Your
 Photo Gallery
 Book Reviews
 Press Cuttings
 And much more!

Your stories Your Letters

Views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the British Army or the Ministry of Defence. Whilst every care is taken to ensure that The Pioneer publication is accurate as possible, no responsibility can be taken by the Royal Pioneer Corps Association for any errors or omissions contained herein. Furthermore, responsibility for any loss, damage or distress resulting from any article in The Pioneer itself, howsoever caused, is equally disclaimed by the Royal Pioneer Corps Association.

THE ROYAL PIONEERS

In the beginning was the word and the word was God in the beginning and God and all else was darkness and void and without form, so God created the heavens and the earth. He created the Sun, the Moon and the Stars so that light might pierce the darkness. The earth God divided between the Land, the Sea and the Air, and he filled them with many creatures.

The Dark, salty and slimy creatures that inhabited the murky depths of the oceans God called Marines and he dressed them accordingly.

The fighting creatures of the Air God called Paratroopers and these he clothed in uniforms that were ruffled and drab.

The creatures of the Land God called Soldiers, with a twinkle in his eye and the sense of humour that only he could have, God created the Army Catering Corps and The Royal Corps of Transport. God gave them trousers too short, jackets that were too big and pockets to warm their hands. He gave the cooks bright white uniforms and hats that they could spill their many meals onto.

To adorn their uniforms God gave them badges, cords, ribbons and patches, he gave them emblems, crests and all manner of bright shiny things that glittered and devices that dangled. When you're God, you tend to get carried away at times.

On the seventh day God rested and on the eighth day at 0700 hrs sharp he looked down on the earth and was not happy, God was definitely not happy. So God thought about his labours and in his infinite wisdom he created a divine creature in his own image, and God called this creature a Royal Pioneer. These Royal Pioneers were to be the backbone of the British Army and he gave them many wonderful things.

He gave them immense memories to retain all information and knowledge. He gave them skills with weapons, explosives and building that no other soldier had. He gave them a weird sense of humour that only a Pioneer could understand and finally he gave them many wonderful uniforms.

He gave them practical fighting uniforms so that they could wage war against the dark forces of Satan. He gave them smart uniforms for their daily work and training so that they may be sharp and always ready. He gave them dress uniforms, stylish things so that they might promenade with the ladies on a Saturday night and impress their pants off.

And at the end of the eighth day, God looked down on the earth and saw that it was good, but was he happy? No God was still not happy, because in the course of his labours, he had forgotten one thing, God had not done an assault pioneer course. He thought about this, pondering over it for some time and finally satisfied himself with the knowledge that not even God is good enough to become a Royal Pioneer



The old, the unfit, the misfits - supposedly unsuitable for active service, they ended up in the Pioneer Corps. Before they knew it, they were over in France labouring to make things easier for the fighting forces.

There they soon found out it wasn't as easy as everyone expected, for they were now in the front line and fighting for their very lives...



LABOR OMNIA VINCIT