

THE PIONEER

In memory of all
 Pioneers who made the
 ultimate sacrifice.
 'We will REMEMBER THEM'
 In Remembrance



OP BANNER 50TH ANNIVERSARY

AROUND 3000 ROYAL PIONEER CORPS
 SOLDIERS WERE AWARDED THE
 GSM NORTHERN IRELAND CLASP





Front Cover

In memory of all Pioneers who made the ultimate sacrifice

Picture: Paul Brown



Back Cover

Pioneers after the Cenotaph March, London 2018

Picture: RPCA Archive

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EDITORIAL

WELCOME to the November 2019 edition of the Association Newsletter, our largest edition to date, and a very big thank you to all contributions and letters. It has been a year since our last major edition (November 2018), this is due to a decision to only produce one colour Newsletter annually.

I hope you enjoy this informative, bumper edition – and as ever, I welcome your feedback and personal contributions for future editions. You will notice that this edition contains details of the Pioneer service in Northern Ireland to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the start of Op Banner, I hope you find it interesting.

Once again I must remind you to inform us when you move, following the distribution of the Newsletter we normally have about 50 copies returned "Not Known at This Address". If we already have your mobile number we then send a text asking for your new address – we do our best to keep in contact with all members.

It has also recently been noted that you do not inform us when you change email address, if you have not been receiving Association updates it means we do not hold your email address please send it to us.

Although it is now 26 years since the RPC was amalgamated and 5 years since the disbandment of 23 Pioneer Regiment the Association still has an active membership of nearly 2,900. We would like to increase this, if you are in contact with any former Pioneers (either RPC or RLC Pioneers) ask them if they receive the newsletter, if not please send me their details and I will gladly send them an application card.

This edition contains a long list of members who have sadly passed away, our sincere condolences go to their families and friends.

During the year it is pleasing to report that members are meeting at various locations throughout the country, i.e. 39/93 Club, Nostalgia Group, Bicester, Northampton and Northern Branches. Other informal gatherings have also taken place, one such gathering is to be held at Sherringham on 5/6 June 2020 organised by Mr Peter Wegg who has negotiated discounted rates at Breck Farm campsite. If you have a tent, caravan or motorhome I am sure you will enjoy the weekend. If not there are various B & Bs and hotels in Sherringham.

I would like to thank members for their

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STOP PRESS

■ The Royal Pioneer Corps Association Reunion returns to Bicester, 12th to 13th June 2020

STOP PRESS

■ Booking for Cenotaph 2020 now being taken

STOP PRESS

■ If you change address, remember to notify us, we will not resend a newsletter again

■ Articles, thoughts and photographs wanted for the next newsletter



strong support at the Pioneer Reunion. I know from discussions with members that the event continues to provide us all with an opportunity to catch up with old friends and, of course, to recognise and remember our service and "swing the lamp".

Following the Reunion Weekend at Coventry (for the 5th year) it has been decided that next year the Reunion will return to Bicester, the dates are 12/13 June 2020. I hope you can make it. A booking form is attached with this newsletter, you will note that only serving personnel can be accommodated in barracks. 50 double rooms have been reserved at the Travelodge in Bicester town centre (unfortunately they do not have single rooms).

The Association is subsidising the cost of accommodation, can I advise you to book early. Once the 50 rooms have been filled we intend to book other accommodation probably in the Premier Inn, mini-buses will be provided to transport members throughout the weekend.

In these tricky time of data protection, to publish and circulate lists of who attends which function, I realise that some may hesitate to commit to attending events for fear of not knowing who else amongst their former

comrades will be there. Well, I would say come along regardless. You are bound to know someone and they will be delighted to see you, it is also an opportunity to make new friends.

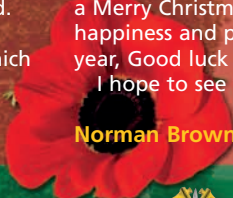
It is appreciated that some of the readers of this newsletter keep them for posterity, however, for those that just dump them can I suggest that you leave them in a waiting room i.e. dentists, doctors or hospital. That way we may find other ex Pioneers who would like to join the Association.

Once again I am enclosing tickets for the RPC Association Christmas Draw. We have extended the draw until 3rd January 2020 and not the date published on the tickets, due to this bumper newsletter taking a lot of time to produce. Please do your best to either buy them yourself or sell to family and friends. Further tickets can be sent on request.

It is my sincere hope that every reader of this message, and those dear to him/her, will spend a Merry Christmas and will enjoy every happiness and prosperity during the coming year, Good Luck and very best wishes to you all.

I hope to see you all at Bicester in June!

Norman Brown



Can you spot the mouse?

The winner of "Find the Cuneo Mouse" was Mr G Haighton.

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

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

Can you spot the Cuneo Mouse in this edition?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Entries should be submitted (by letter, email or telephone) by 31st January 2020.

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

Good luck.

PLEASE SUPPORT THE CHRISTMAS DRAW
Tickets are enclosed with this newsletter





■ THE OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION exists to help officers find employment and to provide advice and financial support to relieve hardship amongst those who have held a commission in the Armed Forces, their families and dependants.

As the only tri-service charity dedicated to working with the officer corps, we support serving reservist and former officers to enable them to achieve a sustainable and fulfilling transition from military to civilian life.

We proudly champion the skills and qualities of the officer job seeker to employers.

For former officers and their families, there widows/widowers and dependants, we provide advice and, where needed, financial support to ensure they are able to live with dignity and without hardship. We provide a confidential and impartial service to those who need our support.

To arrange a career consultation at your nearest Officer Association office please call 0117 906 3580 or email: admin@officersassociation.org.uk

Register for OA Employment Service via www.officersassociation.org.uk

To speak to them about their Grants and Welfare support please call 0207 808 4175

■ IF YOU live in or near London area, could you spare two or three days over a week or fortnight helping Service veterans and their families in need? The SSAFA London Centre Branch urgently needs more volunteer caseworkers and divisional administrators.

The SSAFA London Centre Branch has four regional divisions broadly within the North and South Circular Roads and two specialist divisions: the homeless Veterans Aid and Prison-in-Reach.

Over 12 months, the 83 volunteer caseworkers of the Branch have dealt with 6,700 cases in central London, where many veterans tend to congregate, and dispersed £1.2m in goods, help and support for ill and indigent veterans and their families on behalf of the Services and other charities.

The SSAFA London Centre Branch is pleased to recruit anyone of the right aptitude, dedication and temperament. Among the most suitable are former Servicemen or their spouses, some of whom may have completed a second career or who now may have a little time to spare for volunteering.

If you are in good health, live in central London, or, are resident within 40 or so minutes of commuting to central London and would like to give a little back to your former comrades of all the Services and their families in distress, then the Branch would like to hear from you.

Please call 0203 900 2040 and leave your contact details, or, better still send your contact details by email to: ssafarecruite.loncen@gmail.com

The Branch will then get in touch with you to explain what is involved in being a SSAFA volunteer caseworker and how to join this team passionately dedicated to looking after all those who have served their country, but who now have fallen upon hard times, along with caring for their families.

Walking Western Front Way

A Pathway stretching more than 1,000 kilometres has been opened along the First World War's Western Front



A PATHWAY stretching more than 1,000 kilometres has been opened along the First World War's Western Front. Known as The Western Way, the route starts at Nieuport on the Belgian coast where the King Albert monument is a lasting reminder of the war and finishes on the French/Swiss Border and is marked along the way by flowers of remembrance.

The WW1 graveyards at Mailly-Maillet are part of the route of the path. It has already been described as "the most beautiful road in the world" and will be a way for the world to remember the conflict of the WW1 when more than 20 million people died.

The inspiration of the project stemmed from a letter written by 2Lt Alexander Gillespie, of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, shortly before his death at the battle of Loos in 1915. He wrote that he dreamed of a "long avenue between the lines from Vosges to the sea

The note, which was sent to his headteacher, described the officer's vision of what might happen to the front after the war and was later published in the national press. Here is the timeline of the development of the Pathway:-

1915 – 2nd Lieutenant Alexander Douglas Gillespie of the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders writes home from the front line to tell of his vision of 'a via sacra' (a sacred road), a route for peace between the lines;

"when peace comes, our government might combine with the French government to make one long avenue between the lines from the Vosges to the sea...I would make a fine broad road in the 'No-Mans Land' between the lines, with paths for pilgrims on foot and plant trees for shade and fruit trees, so that the soil should not altogether be waste. Then I would like to send every man, woman and child in Western Europe on a pilgrimage along that Via Sacra so that they might think and learn what war means

from the silent witnesses on either side."

1915 – Gillespie killed in action on the 25th September 1915, days after writing the above letter home about a route for peace.

2015 – This letter is rediscovered by Sir Anthony Seldon, one of our trustees, who develops the idea of this grand and unifying vision as the future of commemoration.

2016 – The idea catches the attention of enthusiasts who walk sections of the route in 2016 and 2017 to gauge interest, viability and support.

2017 – The Western Front Way charity is formed to ensure that this vision is brought to the attention of key stakeholders in time for the end of the centenary.

2018 – The Western Front Way makes giant strides, seeing the idea begin to grow across Europe and gain support from key sites along the route.

2018 – They become the voice of future commemoration heard globally, and seen as the way to ensure the first world war becomes an eternal memory, as well as a route for peace for all conflict.

2019 – May – The Western Front Way sees the first plaques go up on points of note along the route (find out more under plaque to plaque on our website).

2019 – June – The route is mapped, marked and made available to all for free, just as was intended with walkers, cyclists and others making their own journeys along the path for peace first written about in 1915.

2019 – Summer and Autumn – Walkers begin their own journeys, sharing their experiences and stories online as the message spreads.

2019 – Autumn Communities continue to put up Plaques along the route and host a series of local launches.

2020 – Spring The Final route with all Plaques published and freely available for all walkers to follow in 2020 and beyond.

Shrouds of the Somme

After last years Cenotaph Parade Paul took the opportunity to visit the Shrouds of the Somme Exhibition at the Queen Elizabeth Park. Each shroud represents a fallen soldier at the Somme. There are 72,396 shrouds.



Pictures: Paul Brown



Pioneer John Jenkins

Pioneer D-Day Veteran John Jenkins who was given a standing ovation from Queen and Donald Trump turns 100. Happy 100th Birthday John!

JOHNSON served as a Platoon Sergeant with the Pioneer Corps during World War Two.

A D-Day veteran who took part in a secret reconnaissance mission to look at the beaches of Normandy for the Allied forces is celebrating his 100th birthday.

John Jenkins is marking his centenary with his family in his home city of Portsmouth.

Earlier this year, he received a standing ovation from the Queen and US President Donald Trump when he addressed heads of state during the D-Day 75 commemorations on Southsea Common.

Describing being the centre of attention, Mr Jenkins said: "I've never been a nervous sort of person when faced by people of a higher rank because they are only human beings the same as I am."

Despite reaching a century, Mr Jenkins said he does not "feel any different".

"I think to myself 'how did I get here?', but there it is, time creeps up on you and before you know it you're in your 100th year, which is amazing really," he said.

Mr Jenkins was awarded an MBE for his role as a Company Sergeant Major in the Territorial Army after the war.

He said keeping fit is the secret to reaching 100.

"I've always been a keen keep-fit chap, I always used to like PT at school," he said.

"I became a physical training instructor in the Army, I also used to do a lot of amateur wrestling in my younger days so that kept me pretty fit." Mr Jenkins, who said football is a "big part" of his life, also keeps active through his role as boardroom

steward at Portsmouth FC and as a volunteer at the D-Day Story museum.

After leaving school, he became a bellboy for the Cunard cruise line in 1933 before he attempted to join the Royal Navy but was turned down because of his eyesight.



He went on to join the Hampshire Regiment of the Army before moving to the Pioneer Corps, in which he served as a Platoon Sergeant during the Second World War.

For his role in D-Day, Mr Jenkins was awarded the Legion d'Honneur, France's

highest honour. Mr Jenkins said: "It's something you never forget."

"I landed on Gold Beach, someone said to me 'What did it feel like?', and I said 'It was terrifying' - it was the only word I could think of at the time."

His granddaughter, Alison Baynes, explained Mr Jenkins had also been involved in a secret mission to carry out a reconnaissance trip to the Normandy beaches ahead of the landings to take sand samples to select the appropriate landing sites.

She said: "He was told to keep it a secret so he hadn't told anyone about it, not even his wife."

Mr Jenkins went on to become a trolley bus driver after the war before working as a crane operator at Portsmouth Naval Base.

He was married to Peggy and has one daughter, two granddaughters, five great-grandchildren and a great-great-grandson.

In 2015, he became the oldest man to abseil down Portsmouth's Spinnaker Tower at the age of 95 and in 2012, he even carried the Olympic torch.

In recent years, Mr Jenkins' volunteer work has been recognised.

He was awarded Portsmouth Volunteer of the Year in 2016 and National Museum and Heritage Volunteer of the Year 2019.

Sergeant Jenkins set foot with the second wave of assault and supervised 25 men of the Pioneer Corps "to set up an ammunition depot on the land to feed the troops."

Watch John get an standing ovation by typing this link into your browser... <https://tinyurl.com/rx8qftd>

Pictures: Mandel NGAM / Getty / Press Association Article: Associated Press







■ THE GOVERNMENT has given the Office for Veterans' Affairs a £5 million funding boost.

The newly created government set-up ensures that ex-Servicemen and women have access to medical treatment and training.

It will also tackle the growing number of homeless veterans.

Charities, MPs and stakeholders have often expressed the need for a coordinated approach to caring for former Armed Forces personnel.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans, Johnny Mercer, said, "We're already hard at work bringing together the right people across government, and this new funding will be instrumental in making this vision a reality."

■ ON BEHALF of the 23 Pioneer Fijian Veterans we would like to thank you and the Royal Pioneer Corps Association for the contribution towards the Fijian Reunion held at Gloucester. Thanks to your generosity we were able to pay towards the cost of Hallmark Hotel in Gloucester, a bouncy castle and food for our children during their sports activities.

This event was a unique opportunity to meet up with former Fijian comrades from the 23 Pioneer Regiment, who came together to celebrate life, success and achievements of the past years and to rekindle relationships with old friends, foster new ones and have the opportunity to listen to inspirational speakers at the Black Tie Dinner

The main Guest Speakers were Member of Parliament for Cheltenham Constituency, Hon. Alex Chalk. Former CEO and Director Shell Service Engineer for Australasia, Chairman Diamond Key International, Councillor Griffith University Brisbane Australia, Director Confederation of Queensland University, Mr. Josaia (Joe) Mar.

It was an evening of Celebration, Empowerment and Success. After the event everyone was motivated, focused, inspired and passionate about facing the future and most importantly we enjoyed the night with our Fijian Pioneer family. We will be holding this event every year and we look forward for your support in whatever way. I will be sending some emails and addresses for those who will be joining the Association next month. Thank you very much for your support and we look forward in working with you in the near future. Marika Rakaseta.



Royal Pioneer - 100 years young

In November 2018 I was invited to the 100th birthday celebrations of Major Thomas Samuel Rogers MBE



■ Major 168329 Thomas Samuel Rogers MBE

Picture: Supplied

N November 2018 I was invited to the 100th birthday celebrations of the above office at Hurst Green Methodist Church, Surrey. It was a pleasure to meet him surrounded by his family and friends.

During World War 2 he served in 252 Coy as a Lieutenant, 63 Group as Capt (Adjutant) and 161 Coy as Major (Officer Commanding) before being posted as DADPL to 1 Corps in 5 Feb 46.

The following is a copy of the citation for his award of the MBE:

Capt T Rogers has been Adjutant to this Pioneer Group HQ for 21 months, during

which he has served in Syria, Palestine, Egypt, England, France and Belgium, and has had to deal with Pioneer Coys and civilian labour of ten different nationalities.

His work throughout has been of an exceptionally high standard, especially, during the period of preparation for the invasion of Normandy, and the rapid advance through France and Belgium.

He has contributed very materially to the efficiency of the Pioneer Companies who have worked in the Second Army Roadhead.

Unfortunately Maj Rodgers died on 24 June 2019

Congratulations...

Thank you to members for purchasing Derby Draw Tickets. The Association made a profit of £1750, this helps the Association to carry out its work. The results are...

1st £1000

Antony Van Dyck - 39311
E Barber, Worksop

4th £100

Broome - 35597
P Leat, Sheffield

2nd £500

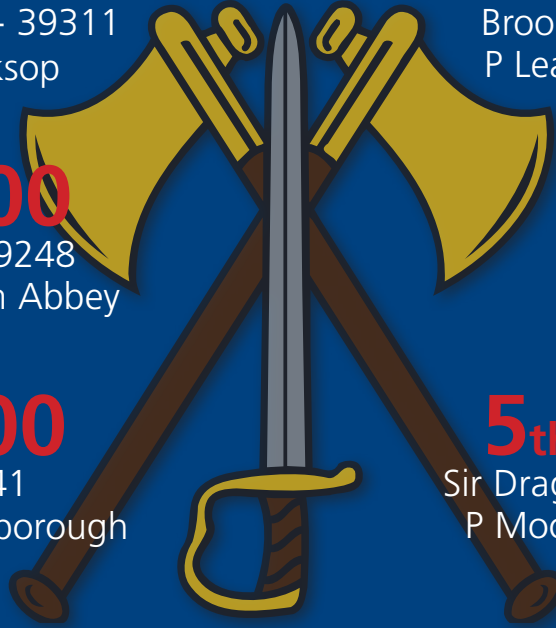
Madhmoon - 19248
S Barron, Waltham Abbey

3rd £200

Japan - 13841
J Emmerson, Peterborough

5th £50

Sir Dragonet - 36888
P Moore, Bradford



Other Horses Picked :-

| | | | | | |
|----------------|-------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------|---------------------|
| Bangkok | 26141 | H Sinclair, Glasgow | Hiroshima | 23279 | G McLane, Andover |
| Circus Maximus | 20838 | R Scott, Cirencester | Mohawk | 00388 | B Aveyard, Aberdare |
| Line of Duty | 43838 | M Rankin, Edinburgh | Humanitarian | 12920 | J Lowe, London |
| Norway | 46905 | G Scragg, Bournemouth | Capt of Good Hope | 47520 | R Nurse London |
| Sovereign | 34585 | B Robertson, Lisburn | Surfmann | 44262 | K Peacock, Flitwick |
| Pablo Escobarr | 30110 | R Flanagan, Barnsley | Telecaster | 32630 | A Dobson, Durham |
| Alfastik | 19030 | J Barker, Manchester | | | |

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.

We have extended the draw until **3rd January 2020** and not the date published on the tickets, due to this bumper newsletter taking a lot of time to produce.



■ THE Government has introduced a Veterans ID Card available to all those who have served one or more days in the UK Armed Forces. It will be introduced in two phases:

Phase 1 – Phase 1 started on 18 Feb 19 for all those leaving or who have left the Armed Forces since 17 Dec 19, these veterans will receive the card on their Service Leavers Pack. Veterans may also keep their MOD Form 90, with a corner cut off.

Phase 2 – Applications will be made available to the wider veteran community (those that left before 17 Dec 18) before the end of 2019. There are estimated to be 4.8 million service veterans who are entitled to the ID Card. You will be required to submit a passport sized photograph with your application form. More information is expected shortly.

■ THE 39/93 Club had a “meet” at Newport, although the number attending was rather low, those who attended enjoyed the weekend which had been organised by Mr Norman Wall.

As well as having a meal in a local restaurant members enjoyed a visit to Norman’s local rugby club. In 2020 they are to meet at Bournemouth on 27 March, if you wish to attend please inform Mr Les Rowley on 07955 237932

■ 221 MEMBERS and their guests attended the Army/Navy match at Twickenham last May with 108 travelling on two coaches from Bicester

Bookings for this event must be made by 1 October the previous year as it is now sold out by early November (capacity of 82,000). For 2020 we have ordered 225 tickets with 84 travelling from Bicester. If you wish to attend in 2021 please order your ticket by 1 Oct 2020.

■ 42 MEMBERS attended the 50th anniversary of Op Banner held at the National Memorial Arboretum on 14 August 2019 – 50 years after the British Armed Forces were deployed on a peace-keeping mission in Northern Ireland.

Their objective was to support the Royal Ulster Constabulary and help restore law and order, ending a conflict that had erupted between Catholic and Irish Nationalist civil-rights protesters and Ulster Protestant loyalists during a spell of political and sectarian violence that led directly to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement.

What might have been a swift operation descended into almost four decades of guerrilla skirmishes against the British Armed Forces led by the rise of paramilitary organisations from both sides of the community, as well as an on-going battle on the streets of the UK that many thought would never end.

The Service was led by ITV anchor Alistair Stewart OBE and was a poignant tribute to the conflict, from the helicopter flying low over the massed ranks to begin proceedings through the delivery of the Exhortation and Kohima Epitaph by the Legion’s National President, Lieutenant General James Bushall CB CBE.

Between the years 1969 to 1993 (when the Corps was amalgamated into the RLC) 2,912 Pioneers served in the Province.

You can read more about Operation Banner in this issue on page 36.

The RLC Museum

The new Royal Logistic Corps Museum is more than twice the size of the old one is now being built



■ The Royal Pioneer Corps Museum when it was at Simpson Barracks

Picture: RPCA Archive

THE contractors have erected the outer steel frame for the new RLC Museum at Worthy Down. Opening to the public in spring 2021, the new exhibition space is more than twice the size of the current display area and will allow many more exhibits to be shown.

Every inch of the new museum building has been carefully designed, from the double height central gallery with viewing platform, to the large and impressive medal room. Alongside a dedicated research room, there is a presentation room and gift shop. With a large vehicle store visible to the public and a café on site, the new museum will offer visitors a lot more to see and do, allowing us to show off many of the treasures we currently have hidden away.

The museum display cases and galleries will also all be new. Working with PLB, the museum design specialists, the new galleries will have exciting new display cases, interactive activities, new text panels and touch screens, along with many more uniforms, weapons and hither to untold stores from The RLCs past.

Broken down into 12 time zones, called “epochs” the new museum will tell the story how the Corps and its predecessors supported the Army since before the Battle of Waterloo. Starting in medieval times and progressing through to today’s RLC, including every major war or conflict, the story of logistics will unfold. From the provision of black powder and musket balls, to modern artillery shells and complex engine assemblies, NSNs and computerisation, the complex nature of military logistics will be told.

The RLC Museum has recently acquired a Chinese Labour Corps (CLC) Cap Badge and intends to use it to tell the story of how

during WW1, the Labour Corps recruited large numbers of foreign or “alien” labourers to support the war effort, including a significant number of Chinese.

In April 1917 the first members of the CLC arrived in France. Recruited directly from China and arriving by steam ship, by 1918 nearly 100,000 had been recruited. They had British officers, often former missionaries from China and British NCOs, although they had their own rank structure which included Lance Corporals known as “Gangers”.

Issued blue uniforms, with felt caps and well paid by Chinese standards, they worked behind the lines where they dug trenches, built roads and railways, repaired tanks and, after the war, cleared ordnance, buried the dead and restored the land to agricultural use.

The Chinese labourers were tall and strong, due to a rigorous recruitment and selection process, although an eye condition called trachoma was prevalent and in total about 1,000 of the labourers died in France from disease, accidents or enemy action. Unfortunately, their bravery was rarely officially recognised and of the 52 MSMs awarded to the CLC only five went to Chinese soldiers. 66475 First Class Ganger Liu Dien Chen was recommended for a Military Medal for encouraging other CLC to continue to work whilst enemy shells were exploding close to them, but regulations forbade that he receives the award, which was reduced to an MSM.

The last CLC returned to China, via Canada, arriving in September 1920. An often forgotten and unrecognised contribution to the British Army in WW1, they were members of the Labour Corps, so can be considered predecessors of the modern day RLC (via RPC).

THE PIONEER

Hungry Dewsnap

A rare photograph of Dewsnap eating on parade at last years Cenotaph Parade in Whitehall. Who says eating is cheating?

Picture: Paul Brown



SPENCER COMPTON
EIGHTH DUKE
OF
DEVONSHIRE
K.C.
BORN 1833-DIED 1908



Over a ton at Cenotaph

We had over 100 marchers in the Royal Pioneer Corps contingent at the Cenotaph Parade at Whitehall on 11th November 2018

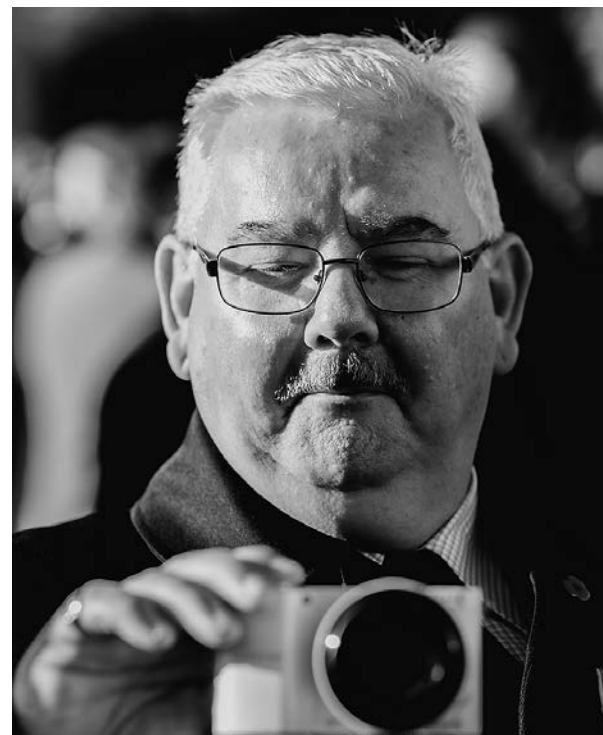
ON 11th November 2018 (the 100th anniversary of the end of World War 1) 102 Pioneers marched in the Pioneer Contingent at the Cenotaph Parade in Whitehall. Members had travelled from all over the country to achieve this record attendance, many staying in London from the previous Thursday (attending both the Field of Remembrance and the Cenotaph Parade). Other Pioneers were marching in other contingents i.e. Aden Veterans, Not

Forgotten Association and our recent In Pensioner Roy Palmer marching with the Chelsea Pensioners.

Once again the contingent was led by a sprightly Brigadier Charles Telfer (the last Director of the RPC) and our parade marshal was Mr Peter Thomas (ex RSM) who managed to keep most of us in step! As is usual after the Parade we met for a chat (and a beer) in the Civil Service Club, Whitehall. Although we did not get a mention on the BBC this year as we

marched past the Cenotaph, two members were interviewed and appeared on television, they were Desmond (Dusty) Bryant and Glen Lath (both came across well!).

We hoped to increase the number this year but unfortunately a number of members have had to cancel because of sickness, hospital admission etc. If you wish to march in 2020 please let me know soonest to enable me to bid for the required number of tickets.







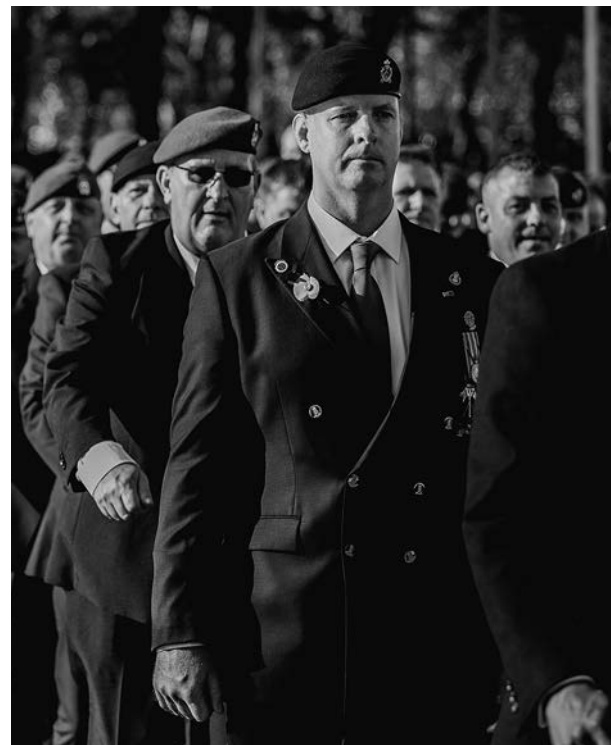


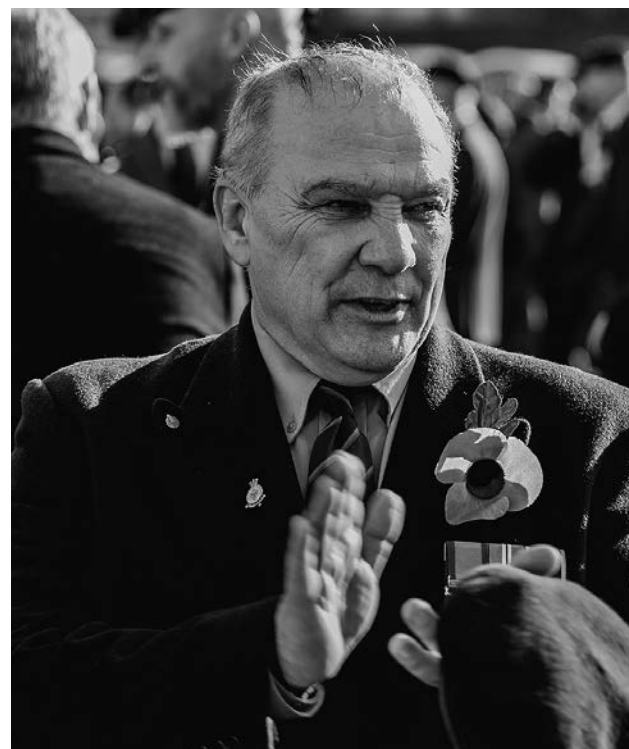














JOIN US

I see them here, I see them there.
I See Chelsea Pensioners, everywhere
Looking resplendent in their scarlet uniform.
It is totally different from the norm.
Ex military persons of indeterminate age
Proudly parading on the world stage.
How can you join their illustrious ranks.
It is not too difficult to be frank.
Having army service is a good start.
Honestly and fully filling forms is a big part.
Being unencumbered by a spouse,
is a phrase they often use.
Surrendering your Army pension
to pay your dues.
Fit or infirm, it matters not a lot.
Being over sixty five, that is the slot.
A panel then sits, to appraise their needs.
Checking those forms and your deeds.
Not every applicant will make the grade,
But at least you tried and the first step made.
For a four day stay, you could be invited down.
With a chaperone to show you round.
You are being appraised so do not forget.
They are checking you out, you're not here yet.
You had a brilliant time, interviews and all.
Then home you go and wait for that special call.
With little expectation you wait and sweat,
Thinking of those pensioners that you have met.
When at last you are asked,
"To come on down",
You are representing. Hundreds of
years' service to the Crown.

The Royal Pioneer Corps Association Reunion Weekend was held at the Royal Court Hotel, Coventry on 14th to 16th June 2019

THE poem to the left was written by In Pensioner Roy Palmer, who read it out at the start of the Reunion Weekend which, for the 5th year, was held at the Royal Court Hotel, Coventry in June 2019. Entertainment was provided on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings with carvery meals provided on each night.

The Annual General Meeting of the Association was held on the Saturday, the

minutes of this meeting are shown on page 106.

Following the meeting the two coaches left for the National Memorial Arboretum. Once again the Logistic Grove was flooded (as in 2017) and our Church Service had to be held in the Chapel, this was conducted by Capt Kev Jessop.

Following this a group photograph was held on the steps of the Memorial.

Members then had the opportunity to

visit the parts of the Arboretum not under water before the buses departed for the Alrewas British Legion Club.

Once again we enjoyed the Club's hospitality and a very nice buffet.

It has been decided that the Reunion for 2020 should return to Bicester, a booking form is enclosed with this newsletter.

It is hoped that more members will attend and re-visit their old stomping grounds.

Picture: Paul Brown



REUNION WEEKEND

15th - 18th June 2019





Following the success of the Arnhem Battlefield Tour in 2017 it was decided to travel on another tour but this time a World War One Tour. (THE GNOME MADE 9!)

WE had ordered Polo shirts with the wording "Pioneer WW1 Battlefield Tour August 2019". However an administrative mix-up meant we ended on another WW2 Tour!

Six bodies left Northampton by coach on 9 Aug 19 at 0950 hrs to make their way to Folkestone where they met the remaining two who had travelled from Cambridge. The eight were Mr Tom Appleyard, two Bob's, McGinley and Fox, Pete Thomas, Chris Bunn, Norris Taylor and Norman and Paul Brown. They were to travel to Valkenburg for a Battlefield Tour of the Netherlands. Most people when talking of WW2 Battlefields talk about Dunkirk, Normandy, the Battle of the Bulge and the

crossing of the Rhine – the fiercest fighting in Holland is often overlooked. During the battles of the Netherlands a number of Victoria Crosses were awarded, details of some of these are shown below.

It was pleasing to note that our guide was to be Jonathon Ball, the same guide we had during our last tour to Arnhem in 2017. He has had a lifelong interest in WW1 and WW2 and certainly knows his subject by diligent research.

On arrival at Valkenburg (at 2200 hrs) we booked into our hotel the Wakram and took the short walk into town for an evening meal and, of course, a few beers.

Saturday morning we travelled to Overloon where the 1st Suffolk's made their attack in Oct 44, and then to the Overloon

Windmill site where both American and British troops fought. We visited the Overloon War Cemetery (this contains one Pioneer grave – Pte John Rowntree) and then visited original WW2 trenches before making our way to the superb Overloon War Museum. During our visit to the museum the Santa Fe event was being held. This event included an original military camp and hundreds of military vehicles from several armies together with a military market, the food served at the event was in the style of 1940-45.

The battle for Overloon "Operation Aintree" commenced on 12 October, the British XXX Corps having taken over from the Americans on 7 October, however the Germans had brought up reinforcements.

Pictures: Paul Brown



Sgt Eardley, who was in a most exposed position, at once charged over 30 yards of open ground and silenced both the enemy gunners.

The attack was continued by the Platoon but was again held up by a third machine gun post, and a section sent to dispose of it was beaten back, losing four casualties. Sgt Eardley, ordering the section he was with to lie down, then crashed forward alone and silenced the occupants of the post with a grenade.

The destruction of these three machine guns posts singlehanded by Sgt Eardley, carried out under fire so heavy it daunted those who were with him, enabled his platoon to achieve its objective and in so doing, ensured the success of the whole attack. His outstanding initiative and magnificent bravery were the admiration of all who saw his gallant actions". London Gazette 2 Jan 45.

On our return to our hotel and after an excellent evening meal we decided to have a beer (or two!) in the hotel before walking into town. On the bar was a gnome which advertised one of the local beers, this gnome was kidnapped (hence the title above – the gnome now made 9 of us), we gave the hotel a ransom note stating that if

the ransom, eight beers, was not paid we would return his nose in a separate envelope. The waitress then brought 8 beers to our table, unfortunately these beers were in shot glasses so we declined them. We then once again went into town for a few more beers before returning to the hotel, the waitress then refused to serve us as the gnome had not been returned. We overcame this obstacle by getting one of the other travellers on the coach to order our beers! During the night one of our party (no names mentioned Uncle Tom) decided to leave his room in the middle of the night dressed only in his underwear but he did take his pillow for some reason. He got some funny looks from newly arrived hotel guests (this was approx 0300 hrs) before he managed to find his way back to his room.

Next day the gnome travelled with us and at various locations we took his photo and sent it to the hotel's Facebook page with messages requesting that the ransom be paid.

Today the tour concentrated on the fighting between eastern Holland and Germany, along the River Roer. We started by visiting the Burnsum War Cemetery (no Pioneers in this cemetery). We then looked

at the fighting for Gelsenkirchen nicknamed "Op Clipper" which commenced on 18 November 44. A visit to Sittard War Cemetery followed (again no Pioneer graves) but we saw the grave of the youngest recipient of the Victoria Cross, Dennis Dommini. Nineteen year old Dennis Donnini was from Easington Colliery, Co Durham, the son of an Italian immigrant father, Alfredo Donnini, and English mother, Catherine Brown. He had two older brothers, Alfred had been captured at Dunkirk in 1940 and was a prisoner of war and Lewis had been killed in May 44. His two sisters served back in UK with the ATS. There was little doubting the family's loyalty, yet his father Alfredo had been interned as an "Enemy Alien" because he had been born in Italy, even though he had lived in Britain for over 40 years.

The citation for his VC reads as follows:

"In North West Europe, on 18th January 1945, a Battalion of The Royal Scots Fusiliers supported by tanks was the leading Battalion in the assault of the German Positions between the rivers Roer and Maas. This consisted of a broad belt of minefields and wire on the other side of a stream.

As the result of a thaw the armour was unable to cross the stream and the infantry

had to continue the assault without the support of the tanks. Fusilier Donnini's platoon was ordered to attack a small village.

As they left their trenches the platoon came under concentrated machine gun and rifle fire from the house and Fusilier Donnini was hit by a bullet in the head. After a few minutes he recovered consciousness, charged down thirty yards of open road and threw a grenade into the nearest window.

The enemy fled through the gardens of four houses, closely pursued by Fusilier Donnini and the survivors of his platoon. Under heavy fire at seventy yards range Fusilier Donnini and two companions crossed an open space and reached the cover of a wooden barn, thirty yards from the enemy trenches.

Fusilier Donnini, still bleeding profusely from his wound, went into the open under intense close range fire and carried one of his companions, who had been wounded, into the barn. Taking a Bren gun he again went into the open, firing as he went.

He was wounded a second time but recovered and went on firing until a third bullet hit a grenade which he was carrying

and killed him.

The superb gallantry and self-sacrifice of Fusilier Donnini drew the enemy fire away from his companions on to himself. As the result of this, the platoon was able to capture the position, accounting for thirty Germans and two machine guns.

Throughout this action, fought from beginning to end at point blank range, the dash, determination and magnificent courage of Fusilier Donnini enabled his comrades to overcome an enemy more than twice their own number."

We were then briefed on Operation Blackcock. The intention of this Operation was to clear German troops from the Roer Triangle, formed by the towns of Roermond and Sittard in the Netherlands and Heinsberg in Germany during the fighting on the Western Front in the Second World War. It was conducted by the British Second Army between 14 and 26 January 1945. The objective was to drive the German 15th Army back across the rivers Roer and Wurm and move the frontline further into Germany. The operation was carried out by Lieutenant-General Neil Ritchie's XII Corps by three divisions: the 7th Armoured Division (Major-General Lewis Lyne), the

43rd (Wessex) Infantry Division (Major-General Gwilym Ivor Thomas) and the 52nd (Lowland) Infantry Division (Major-General Edmund Hakewill-Smith). The operation, named after the Scottish black male grouse, is once again relatively unknown despite the sometimes fierce battles that were fought for each and every village and hamlet within the Roer Triangle. Here we learned of the award of another Victoria Cross awarded to Eric Harden, his citation reads as follows:

" In North-West Europe on 23 January 1945 the leading section of a Royal Marine Commando Troop having come under intense machine-gun fire was ordered to make for some houses close by. Four of the section had been wounded and were left lying in the open.

Under continuous fire Lance Corporal Harden at once went forward and with great coolness and bravery attended to the four casualties. He then carried one of them back to cover. He was ordered not to go forward again and an attempt was made to bring in the remaining casualties with the aid of tanks, but this proved unsuccessful owing to the heavy and accurate fire of anti-tank guns.



A second attempt under a smoke-screen also proving unsuccessful. LCpl Harden insisted in going forward with a volunteer stretcher party and succeeded in bringing back another badly wounded man. He went out a third time, and whilst returning with the stretcher party, he was killed.

Throughout this long period LCpl Harden displayed superbly devotion to duty and personal courage of the highest order. His action is directly responsible for saving the lives of the wounded brought in, while his complete contempt for all personal danger, and the magnificent example he set of cool courage and determination to continue with his work, whatever the odds, was an inspiration to his comrades and will never be forgotten by those who saw it.

It is pleasing to record that the local

inhabitants of the village have made a small remembrance garden in his memory and a service is held annually on 23 January to remember him.

We finished our tour at the Eyewitness Museum in Beek. This museum depicts WW2 through 13 vivid dioramas in which 142 life-size figures bring harrowing scenes from WW2 to life. From the bleak reality of the trenches to daily life in Nazi-occupied Holland, the scenes use only original WW2 clothing and artefacts to offer an authentic vision of wartime Europe. In addition to these, visitors can discover a host of rare WW2 paraphernalia, and uncover real-life accounts told through letters, film, photography and interactive media.

That was the final of our tour, on our return to the hotel we had another

excellent meal and decided, for a change, to have a few beers. We returned the gnome (without receiving the ransom!), however it must be noted that the gnome quickly disappeared behind the bar so we could not even say goodbye to it but we think he had enjoyed his day out.

An early rise on the Monday, and after breakfast it was on the coach for the long journey back to Calais where the two from Cambridge stayed on the same coach and the remaining six changed to another. A long delay at Calais, caused by an earlier storm, meant that we were now slightly behind schedule but we arrived back at Northampton just after 1900 hours. All very tired but all enjoyed the tour – we hope to have another tour next year but this time definitely a World War One Tour!

WW2 BATTLEFIELD TOUR

9th to 11th August 2019



Photo: Henry Eric Harden VC



Photo: Overloon War Museum



Photo: Ysselsteyn German War Cemetery



Photo: Overloon War Museum



Photo: Standing on German positions that still exist today



13015608 PRIVATE
J. ROWNTREE
PIONEER CORPS
18TH. APRIL 1945 AGE 38



WE SMILE WITH THE WORLD
BUT WE DON'T FORGET
IN MEMORY HE'S WITH US YET.
WIFE & FAMILY

4
A

The 73rd Past and Present Pioneer Officers' Dinner was held in the Bicester Garrison Officers' Mess, Ambrosden on Friday 18th October 2019

THE 73rd Past and Present Pioneer Officers' Dinner was held in Bicester Garrison Officers' Mess, Ambrosden on Friday 18th October 2019.

47 sat down for an excellent meal which was preceded by grace being said by Capt Lenny Henry (and what a grace it was!).

This was followed by In Pensioner Roy Palmer reading the following poem he had composed for the evening, this was followed by him getting the Marsh Gibbon Silver Band to play happy birthday and encouraging everyone present to sing happy birthday to the Corps which was 80 the day before (17 October).

Brigadier David Clouson, Sir, Distinguished guests, WELCOME to you all. David, Chairman of the RPC Association, wants you, to have a ball.

We are at the Pioneer Past and Present Dinner, get together.

Remembering times, some good or bad, but mainly to have a blether.

What a mixture have come tonight, Officers new but mostly old.

Who once again are invited, back, into the fold.

Lt Col Lyndon Robinson, Commander of Bicester Garrison is here.

His successor Lt Col Alex Atherton has

come, just, for the beer.

Alex was a former Squadron OC, in 23 Pioneer Regiment.

That was after the years, in the RPC that I spent.

Maj Matt Barton took the responsibility, for organising this wonderful event.

From Major Billy Dilks, Lucky Bastard, whom to Cyprus willingly went.

Four Octogenarians including myself, are happy to be here tonight.

Let's hope they keep going and put up a good fight.

Age has its privileges, people stand for you, or hold the door.

Respect is for your age, not just, for the

Picture: Paul Brown



rank you wore.

I look around and spot those few faces,
from a distant past.

Brig Telfer, Director of the Royal Pioneer
Corps, the very last.

Colonel Dick McDonald, who always had
a good word to say.

Apologies to Col Kenneth Broome, I met
for the first time today.

Major Martin Murphy, passed his
Commando Course, So, strong and brave.

While Maj Taff Teague, from Aberdeen is
trying, to you upstage.

Lt Calvin Shenton, the interloper, who
left to join the Navy.

Did at a time (when drunk) and his
thoughts were very hazy.

Lt Col Starling, our Historian, is a very
quiet man,

Just retired from Shrivenham when asked

why? he replied, because I can.

Six former Warrant Officer Class One,
have joined us here again.

Let us hope, from shouting their heads
off, they refrain.

Looking round I spot winners, I see faces
old and new.

Sitting, staring or looking at me, I
recognise a motley crew.

Thinking who the hell is this silly old git,
in front of me.

Worry not, I won't keep you much
longer, because I need a pee.

Some of you, will be eligible to join me,
at my place of abode.

We need more Pioneers, to help me ease
my load.

Your music tonight is supplied, by the
Marsh Gibbon Silver band.

When the night is finished please give

them, a great big hand.

Apologises for not mentioning you all by
name, time is getting short.

I've been told, to close this rubbish and
my speech abort.

Maj Matt Barton had organised the night
which included red and green lights both
inside and outside the mess - Maj Billy
Dilkes will have to work hard next year to
beat this!

Talking of next year the dinner is to be
held on Friday 16th October 2020.

We will be celebrating Pioneers being in
Bicester for 80 years

We are hoping to have 80 to sit down to
celebrate this 80th anniversary.

Please add this date to your diaries -
Friday 16th October 2020 !



OFFICERS DINNER NIGHT

19th October 2018



FUTURE EVENTS

2019 - 2020

FIELD OF REMEMBRANCE - 7TH NOVEMBER 2019 AND CENOTAPH PARADE - 10TH NOVEMBER 2019

■ 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 - 25TH JANUARY 2020

■ The Branch is, once again, to hold a Burns Night in the Conservative Club, Billing Road, Northampton on Saturday 25 January 2020.

The usual burns meal (haggis etc) will be available or an alternative meal for those who request it. Bookings can be made to Mr P Thomas, 69 High St, Roade, NN72NW. The cost is £10 per head.

SHERRINGHAM JOLLY - 5/6 JUNE 2020

■ Following the success of the last two events (2016 and 2018), Mr Peter Wegg is organising another for 2020.

It is expected that the itinerary will follow the format of the previous events:

Fri – arrive at Breck Farm campsite (you can book in advance on 01263 588236 – the postcode is NR25 8QL) from 1400 hrs onwards. Report to reception on arrival and you will be pointed to “Camp Chunk”.

Personnel not camping and who intend to come to the evening BBQ please use JMX Taxis (01263 820000) who have a special price for Pioneers – simply use the magic work “Pioneers”.

Sat – Meet at the town memorial at 1055 hrs for laying of wreaths. Blazers, ties and medals etc please.

The remainder of the day is for you to enjoy the delights of Sherringham.

Sat evening – Jolly buffet at the Tyneside Club from 1900 hrs, casual wear for the evening. It is intended to hold a raffle – items for the raffle would be appreciated.

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

PIONEER REUNION WEEKEND – 12/13 JUNE 2020

■ For 2020 the Pioneer Reunion Weekend moves back to Bicester. A booking form for the weekend is enclosed with this newsletter. At the time of going to press the arrangements are still being organised.

However it is envisaged that a fantastic weekend will be guaranteed.

39/93 CLUB- 27 - 28 MARCH 2020

■ The Club is to hold a ‘meet’ at Bournemouth on 27/28 March 2020. Personnel who wish to attend should book into the Seafront Travelodge. Further details can be obtained from the Mr Les Rowley (Tel 01628 481477)

PIONEER PAST AND PRESENT OFFICERS’ DINNER – 16 OCTOBER 2020

■ Once again this dinner is to be held in Bicester Garrison Officers’ Mess, Ambrosden.

Officers wishing to attend should contact the RPC Association by 1 October 2020 also stating if they require accommodation.

FIELD OF REMEMBRANCE 5 NOVEMBER 2020

■ The Field of Remembrance will be held at Westminster Abbey on Thursday 5 November 2020.

If anyone would like a cross or wreath placed on the RPC plot on their behalf they should contact the Association by 1 August 2020.

Tickets are now required for this event and those can be obtained from the Secretary RPC Association.

As has become practise we will hold a London Lunch immediately after the Field of Remembrance, this year it will be held at the Lord Moon of the Mall which is just below Trafalgar Square in Whitehall.

CENOTAPH PARADE – 8 NOVEMBER 2020

■ The Cenotaph Parade is to be held at Whitehall on Sunday 8 November 2020. In the last two years we have had over 100 march in the RPC column.

If you wish to attend please apply for a ticket by 1 August 2020.

Members are reminded that they must be on Horse Guards by 1010f hrs.

The Northampton Branch of the Association will, once again, be running mini-buses to the event.

If you wish to travel with them please inform the RPC Association.

Poppy Cabs in London provide a free taxi service from the following points: Victory Services Club, Union Jack Club, Kings Cross (main line), Liverpool Street, Paddington (main line), Fenchurch Street, London Bridge, Victoria (main line), Victoria coach station, Waterloo (main line), Euston and Marylebone.

Make sure you get in a Poppy Cab or you will be charged.

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

Op Banner 1969-2007



Pioneers from 39th and 40th Armoured Infantry Bn, Italy



Our records show that at around 3000 Royal Pioneer Corps soldiers were awarded the GSM 1962 Clasp Northern Ireland together with quite a few Officers. Unfortunately we do not hold the records for RLC Pioneers who served in the province between 5 April 1993 when the RLC was formed until 31 Jul 2007. We are publishing extracts from "The Royal Pioneer" and "The Sustainer" during Op Banner

OPERATION BANNER was the operational name for the British Armed Forces' operation in Northern Ireland from August 1969 to July 2007, as part of the Troubles. The British Army was initially deployed, at the request of the unionist government of Northern Ireland, in response to the August 1969 riots.

Its role was to support the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and to assert the authority of the British government in Northern Ireland. At the peak of the operation in the 1970s, about 21,000 British troops were deployed, most of them from Britain. As part of the operation, a new locally-recruited regiment was also formed: the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR).

After the 1998 Belfast Agreement, the operation was gradually scaled down from 1998, after the Good Friday Agreement, when patrols were suspended and several military barracks closed or dismantled, even before the beginning of IRA's decommissioning.

The process of demilitarisation started in 1994, after the first IRA ceasefire. From the second IRA ceasefire in 1997 until the first act of decommission of weapons in 2001, almost 50% of the army bases had been vacated or demolished along with surveillance sites and holding centres, while more than 100 cross-border roads were reopened.

Eventually in August 2005, it was announced that in response to the Provisional IRA declaration that its campaign was over, and in accordance with the Good Friday Agreement provisions, Operation Banner would end by 1 August 2007.

This involved troops based in Northern Ireland reduced to 5,000, and only for training purposes. Security was entirely transferred to the police. The Northern Ireland Resident battalions of the Royal Irish Regiment — which grew out of the Ulster Defence Regiment — were stood down on

1 September 2006. The operation officially ended at midnight on 31 July 2007, making it the longest continuous deployment in the British Army's history, lasting over 38 years.

According to the Ministry of Defence, 1,441 serving British military personnel died in Operation Banner; 722 of whom were killed in paramilitary attacks, and 719 of whom died as a result of other causes.

Our records show that at least 2,912 Royal Pioneer Corps soldiers were awarded the GSM 1962 Clasp Northern Ireland together with quite a few Officers. Unfortunately we do not hold the records for RLC Pioneers who served in the province between 5 April 1993 when the RLC was formed until 31 Jul 2007.

The following are extracts from "The Royal Pioneer" and "The Sustainer" during Op Banner.

The Royal Pioneer Issue 101 dated Dec 69, Page 12 – Notes From Ulster

Our detachment of one officer (Lt WG Mortimer) and 25 men (led by Sgt R White) arrived in Belfast on 1 Oct 69.

The morning papers carried the story of how the Marines had been stoned on arrival in Belfast the day before.

Our trip by coach to Lisburn, although perhaps apprehensive, was uneventful.

The main role of the section here is to provide a 24 hour guard for the Headquarters, Northern Ireland.

Other duties so far have included: escorts for vehicles; building a defence post; erecting Twynham Huts and IS training in the latest riot squad techniques.

Issue 102 dated Mar 70 Page 15 – Notes from Ulster

We had a very welcome surprise on Boxing day, when Sgt Gregson paid us a visit from 24 Bde.

Despite repeated efforts on both sides to make a return visit in the form of an indoor shooting match.

Sgt Gregson's platoon managed to escape unscathed to England. Perhaps we shall have more luck with the replacements from 8 Bde.

After completing the Twynham huts in camp, we were allocated one for accommodation and we have yet to decide whether this was by way of reward or not.

Page 23 – 24 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn (PI Sgt: Sgt R Gregson)

Our 6 month tour in Ireland has at last ended.

The advance party left on 17th Jan and the remainder on the 29th.

It has been an experience and we found that once you understood the local lingo life became more friendly day by day. As a result one or two of our lads have become engaged to local girls.

One of our tasks is guarding a Rebroadcasting Radio Station, this is some miles from civilisation and about 1700 feet above sea level.

It is guarded 24 hours daily by a NCO

Londonderry. We were heavily committed with guard duties in Camp and at the Rebroadcasting Stations. Often Cpl Bloor would need to use his 3 tonner as a snowplough to get the mail through and so keep us in touch with the world outside.

When we moved to HMS Sea Eagle things began to hum – Ireland won the European Song Contest and the riots broke out!

The Platoon took over the guard duties at Craigavon Bridge Londonderry and relieved other troops for riot duty in the City Centre. We were complemented on our work by the officer Commanding Grenadier Guards.

Issue 107 dated Jun 71 (No entries for NI in issues 104-106)

Page 15 – HQ Northern Ireland

Since these are our first notes we have a lot of ground to cover.

We are keeping a friendly eye on our other Corps comrades out here – the four men with 39 Airportable Bde, the Platoon with 8 Bde and the 206 Coy Detachment in Kinnegar. Our duties frequently take us to this part of Belfast so we are often able to share 'experiences' over coffee.

Page 16 – 8 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn (PI Sgt: Sgt L Freeman)

Page 15 – HQ Northern Ireland

The Easter period was the main event, but apart from the odd bang and a couple of marches things were quiet.

TAC HQ deployed to Victoria Bks in the City of Londonderry and from this location they established communications.

The D&E element of TAC HQ provided the escort to the Brigade Commander, Brig JAC Cowan MBE.

One NCO and two men also took up duties as security guards within the immediate area of HQ.

Remaining members of the platoon were in Ebrington Bks at the Bde HQ on security guard in and around the HQ compound. Several more were on stand-by to provide armed vehicle escorts, and all were in constant demand throughout the day and night.

Issue 110 dated Mar 72 (no entries for NI in issues 108-109)

Page 17 – Detachment Kinnegar Northern Ireland

These are the first notes from this detachment although it has been in existence for almost a year. We are a mixed bunch of Pioneers made up of NCOs and men from 206 and 522 Companies, but we have worked as a team and although the work load is heavy all have worked well and are a credit to their Companies and the Corps.

Page 17 – D & E Platoons – 5 Airportable BDE HQ & Sgt Sqn

We are now in Northern Ireland where we arrived on 26th October. Within days one of the Squadron vehicles was fired on by IRA gunmen and on the 7th Nov one



young signalman was shot and killed and another wounded by the gunmen.

We have all settled down and for many of us this is our second tour here. Our duties are to defend the Bde HQ. Having been on patrol with the 15/19 Hussars on town patrol we hope soon to be able to have some of our men with them on patrol duties. Another of our duties is to control helicopter landing zones in our area. We had a mine scare but prompt action prevented trouble.

Issue 111 dated Jun 72

Page 1 – Editorial

A letter to the Editor from HQ 3 Inf Bde
As you know, this Brigade HQ has a RPC Defence Platoon.

The young men who make it up work extremely long hours and do a great job under most trying circumstances. They have certainly made their name as hard triers among the staff of the HQ.

Among their many other activities they carry out occasional border patrols to supplement the effort of the Infantry Battalions.

Page 20 – D&E Platoon 5 Airportable Bde HQ & Sig Sqn (PI Sgt: Sgt J Lund)

The Platoon has returned to Tidworth after a 4 month tour in Lurgan N Ireland.

Prior to handing over to SSgt Brown, D&E PI 3 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn, we had a busy time. Twice during the last four weeks we had to go on to town location and to riot control areas during the civil rights demonstrations in Armagh and Newry.

On a Sunday we spent 16 uneventful hours in Newry. We went prepared with riot kit – large riot shields, Baton round guns plus ammo and CS canisters. The men wore visor helmets, carried arms and

wooden batons.

In the last weeks of the tour our sentry post was fired on by a hidden gunman and a Land-Rover manned by LCpl Price and some members of the Platoon was stoned and the side window smashed by a billiard ball.

The ball finished up on LCpl Price's knee. His remark – "they might at least have given us the set" – but he declined to go back for the rest!

During the marches in Lurgan we went out on town patrol with the tank squadron and took over the patrols by vehicle whilst the squadron handed over to their reliefs a Royal Artillery Battery. We were involved during this period in the minor riots in the Kilwilky area.

On one of the Sundays of the civil rights marches when we were returning from the Helicopter LZ, we were cut off by about 300 marchers – they only 'attacked us' with abuse! Before leaving Lurgan we had a farewell dance and were surprised at the number of girls who attended.

They outnumbered the lads by at least 3 to 1. Needless to say it was most successful. One of the lads has become engaged to a girl whose brother had served in the Corps.

Issue 112 dated Sep 72

Page 16 - 39 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn (PI Sgt: Sgt WHA Price)

Sgt John Dennison has left us for 522 Coy and we hope he will be very happy in that unit.

We are usually out on escort duty most of each day. Whatever other jobs the Platoon is called upon to do the lads always willingly tackle them and give of their best. Work is hard and the hours long but we enjoy it.

**Issue 113 dated Dec 72
Page 18 – 518 Coy**

2LT Gordon Downey together with Sgt Dunbar and thirty Pioneers instead of departing to BAOR for a nice little session of exercise etc found themselves in Northern Ireland on Operation Motorman! They are back now complete with campaign medals.

During their time there they were employed in a variety of Pioneer tasks, including handling stores, providing vehicle escorts, and building defences around permanent Army Posts. This last task caused our only casualty. A sub section was working on a Post in the middle of the Creggan.

Pte Brannan was quietly working on top of a 10 foot sandbag wall when all of a sudden a nasty little IRA man shot him off the top of it. Believe it or not the only damage discernible was a gun shot wound in the arm. Talk about luck. When we heard about it some unkind fellow said words to the effect that it was just as well it was Brannan as he was the only chap he knew who could fall off a cliff and land on his feet! (or was it head?). Seriously though, after a short spell in hospital Pte Brannan rejoined the unit and his family in Bicester and we are delighted to be able to say that he appears none the worse for his experience.

**Page 29 – 39 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn (PI
Sgt: Sgt WHA Price)**

Maj Gen JM Sawers MBE, Signals Officer-in-Chief (Army) visited us recently and when talking to Pte Murphy (who is the DC escort) asked if he had seen any of the fighting in N Ireland, to which Murphy answered – “yes, but only in the NAAF with the troops over here.”

**Issue 114 dated Mar 73
Page 26 – HQ Northern Ireland**

Since the escalation of disturbances here Corps news and reports of activities have not appeared too frequently in the Magazine. An initial attempt to rectify the situation is made here and it is hoped to produce notes from the other RPC elements for future issues.

Many changes have taken place since the departure of Capt Arthur Holmes, in April of last year. Capt Mike Sheffield-Parker filled the immediate need for a Garrison Adjutant for the first six months of his tour and then handed over to Capt David Cunningham, who, it is understood, volunteered for the job in preference to an appointment in BAOR! Since that time, Capt Sheffield-Parker had adopted the roving commission of Staff Captain PL for Northern Ireland and is on call to the HQ Staff and Employing Units for all matters affecting some two hundred RPC soldiers.

Currently there are RPC elements, of various strengths, located throughout the Province, Lisburn, Lurgan, Londonderry, Kinnegar, Armagh, Omagh, Newry, Belfast, Aldergrove, The Maze (formerly Long Kesh) and on the “Maidstone”.

Good reports of our soldiers efforts are as numerous as we have come to expect. This is particularly encouraging in Northern Ireland, because in addition to the pressures and problems previously experienced in theatres such as Aden and Cyprus, Ulster has political problems, particular to the Province, which have provided British Army with constantly changing situations and pressures of a magnitude and type it has not experienced before.

RPC soldiers are rarely employed on labour tasks here and for the majority of the time, the accent is on Defence duties,

whether they be Garrison Guards, Security Dog Patrols, Regimental Police Duties, or Escort Duties for Senior Officers and VIPs. Overall, RPC personnel are tasked continually (too often, some will tell you!) but, in the main, they find the work refreshing and rewarding.

A final note: A vacancy on the next Map Reading Course has been applied for on behalf of Capt Pat Baird, late of 206 Coy, who succeeded in arriving in Northern Ireland for a few weeks, en route from Long Marston to BAOR! (It must be the lure of the GSM!). Sincerely, it was a pleasure to see him, even though, as a member of the ASVU, recognition was difficult with the long hair, collar turned up, hat pulled down and armed with a newspaper complete with holes carefully cut at eye level!

**Page 26 – D&E Platoon HQ Northern
Ireland (PI Comd: Capt Sheffield-Parker,
PI Sgt: Sgt J Lester, RP Sgt: Sgt JE
Skerritt)**

Tasks within the Platoon are somewhat different to those one would expect. We certainly get plenty of Escort and Operational duties and in recent times we have comprised parts of the escorts for Mr Heath and Mr Whitelaw. However true to our reputation for flexibility one detail went something like this – Task: Collect one ‘Baby Grand’ piano from Ulster Museum. Dress: Civilian Clothes. Weapons: 9mm Pistol, to be concealed under jacket.

That particular task proved to be quite interesting. Sgt Lester’s terrier dog ‘Charlie’ – the Platoon mascot – was almost a case for the taxidermist after savaging a badger, in a similar condition, in the Museum vaults. In addition the vehicle driver (RCT) left the building retching and to the cries of ‘cannibal’ after biting the end off what he





thought was a sweetmeat and which the irate Curator informed him was a human arm and hand some hundreds of years old!

Page 27 – 3 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn (PI Comd: SSgt D Brown)

The Platoon formed at Shoeburyness, Essex in October 1971 and after hectic training which everything from thunder-flashes to the 'kitchen sink' was thrown at us we departed for Northern Ireland in February 1972.

Our duties are many and varied and include manning the Bde Helicopter Landing Party vehicles which dash off at irregular intervals morning, noon and night to secure the six landing strips which surround the Bde HQ complex. We have done this so many times that the local ladies produce cups of tea like magic when they see us coming. Other tasks include escorts for the Comd and the Staff Officers, and of course the inevitable guard duties – when it is a case of 'black your face you're on next'!

The accidental death of Pte Bowen in August was a great shock and he has been missed by us all. We send our deepest sympathy to his relatives and friends.

Page 27 – 8 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn (PI Sgt: Sgt L Freeman)

On a wet and windy day in November last, 10 men including four Pioneers made their withdrawal from "Slieve Gallion". This was a remote Re-broadcast Station some 1500 ft above sea level, and situated some 28 miles from Derry (as the crow flies) or a two and a half hours journey by road, this being due to diversions from easy accessible but restricted highways.

Immediately before their return to Barracks, the few remaining crew struck camp under the watchful eye of Sgt Des

Jackson of 'A' Troop. Radio Operators, Drivers and Pioneers alike began the dismantling of three heavily built Sangars, and the demolition of the ablutions area. Generators were finally switched off and the power cables supplying the Radio Cabin and the security lights were recovered and stored. This was followed by the dismantling of the Radio Masts and the double perimeter wire. The Generators were hitched to their vehicles and all accommodation stores were checked and placed in trailers. Meanwhile, Pte Len Davidson (ACC) was frantically leaping around the Mobile Kitchen searching for his hoard of "playboy" and "Mayfair" magazines, and could be heard cursing the Pioneer element for lifting them and hiding them in their bed-rolls. At the same time he was trying hard to prevent the same grubby little fingers dipping into the surplus Compo sweets and chocs.

On their decent from "The Hill", four rather weather-beaten faces turned to take what they hoped would be the last glimpse of "Call Sign 99 X-Ray", and all four sincerely wishing that the only rapid pips they hear in future are those of the Greenwich Time Signal. (Rapid Pips – an indication at base that the present Automatic Re-Broadcast Station is at fault, either through power failure – or an unattended parcel of you-know-what).

During the last quarter we had the pleasure of meeting up with three old faces – belonging to the Pioneer Dog Handlers attached to 8 Inf Bde. They are Cpl Bob Scott with his retriever 'Sam'. LCpl Abe Kearsley and his Alsatian 'Prince' (both engaged in arms search) and Pte Eric Barton with his enormous bloodhound called 'Solomon'. A recent new face to the Dog Section is Pte Jim Foulton and his Labrador

'Bisk'. Both 'Bisk' and 'Solomon' are trackers.

Cpl Scott and his merry men are all under the wing of Sgt Rod Knight (RAVC) who arrived from the RAVC Training Centre Melton Mowbray. Most of their time is spent leaping in and out of vehicles and helicopters, and carrying out their searches throughout the whole of the Bde Area. A recent interesting find was made by Cpl Scott and his faithful friend 'Sam' when the latter uncovered a quantity of explosives contained in milk churns, at Claudy.

**Issue 115 dated Jun 73
Page 22 HQ N Ireland (Staff Capt PL: Capt MJ Sheffield-Parker, Adjt Lisburn Garrison: Capt DF Cunningham)**

Liaison visits by Capt Mike Sheffield-Parker to RPC Units in the Province have now become almost a daily routine, and in spite of "old age" and spectacles, a transfer to the Army Air Corps is not yet out of the question based on recorded flying hours alone!

On this subject, the series of helicopter incidents which seem to befall the Staff Capt PL, have followed him from BAOR, and the most recent of these happenings occurred during a return journey from Armagh to Lisburn. Just after a lift off a call for assistance was received from the RUC to locate three men who had, a few minutes previously, robbed a nearby bank and were making a get-away in a dark blue Mini-car. The sincere but unlikely description of the occupants was: "Three armed men; one black man, one dressed as a priest and one transvestite"! After a series of acrobatics ending in an unsuccessful search, the pilot made the final apt comment: "With that description, even if we find them, who does what and to whom?"



Page 23 – D&E PL Northern Ireland (PI Comd Capt MJ Sheffield-Parker, PI Sgt: Sgt J Lester, RP Sgt: Sgt JE Skerritt)

Our unsung heroes, the members of the Platoon Security Dog Section, led by LCpl Kevin Simm, took their charges to Ballykinler beach recently for a breath of fresh air and a training stint. These soldiers are faced with nightly patrol, around a wide Garrison area, in all winds and weathers, and this day at Ballykinler brought some much needed relief.

Sgt Lester (taking a break from packing his MFO boxes) and Pte Finn recently assisted the RAF in the movement of stores, by helicopter, from Sleive Gallion to the outskirts of a small, nearby town. During the final stages of the Operation they were surrounded by a dubious looking crowd of youngsters, who, although genuinely interested in the proceedings, were half expected to start throwing bricks. However, all was quiet, with the exception of one youth who persisted in spitting! Sgt Lester, in his true fatherly fashion, promptly picked up the boy and sat him fairly and squarely on the radiator of the Land Rover. True, the lad immediately ceased to spit, but it remains a moot point whether the cure came from the interest shown in him or the direct contact with a hot radiator!

Page 24 -Belfast – a Night on the Town by Pte PA Combo

I had been in Northern Ireland for a short time only when I was detailed, with several other members of the Platoon, to take part in a Joint Service Security Operation, designed to set up a Check Point in the Belfast area. The task, which was to take place at night, was commanded by a Flt Lt (RAF) with Infantry and ourselves in support.

This was to be my first operational duty

outside the confines of Lisburn Garrison, and needless to say I was a little anxious, particularly as some of the older hands seemed to settle immediately into a routine. The RPC Element was to operate from a vehicle in the role of a "Pick-up" Squad and also as Liaison Party, between the Infantry and the helicopter carrying the soldiers who were to set up and man the road block.

The Operation was conducted smoothly and quickly. From the time that we were in position, to the time that the helicopter (without lights) briefly touched down to disgorge the Infantry and the first vehicle was stopped and examined, took approximately three minutes.

For the remainder of this night Operation, I was positioned as a sentry about two hundred yards from the vehicle. During this time, a cold, black and uncomfortable period, I began to think back on my recruit, fieldcraft training: "Watch the horizon"! "Don't look directly at the target until the moment of action"! After a while, I was imagining objects unknown crawling towards me and each small noise was magnified a hundredfold. Eventually I was praying for success at the Check Point, so that we could move in and conduct the ultimate purpose of our task as the "Pick-up" Squad.

Unfortunately our haul was a modest one that night. However, I felt that I gained a good deal of valuable experience from the Operation, as doubtless did many an unsuspecting motorist passing at that time!

Page 25 – A Bird's Eye View – By Pte CL Taylor

On 26th March I was told by my OC that I was to accompany him to Armagh, where I was to attend the Civil Court as a case witness. Although unexpected, I was quite

looking forward to my busman's holiday, with a break from routine work and a leisurely trip through the Irish countryside. My anticipation was increased, although with mixed feelings, when Capt Sheffield-Parker told me that, due to the short notice and the time factor, he had arranged for a lift with Army Aviation, in a Scout helicopter.

I had not flown before and the prospect of this journey excited me. However, my ardour was somewhat dampened when, on that cold, blustery day, at 0800 hours, the helicopter – without doors! – landed to collect us. "A bit draughty", I thought, "but, never mind, it will be an experience!"

My experience was extended when, to my horror, I noticed that there was only one passenger seat, in the front of the aircraft, and nothing where the rear seats were supposed to be – just bare floor and a rope to hang on to! I could see Capt Sheffield-Parker talking earnestly to the pilot, over the radio head-set, and confirming that there were two passengers. Apparently the pilot was happy with the situation and pointed out that his helicopter had been modified to work with the Battalions and had no doors or rear seats so the Infanteers could disembark quickly and deal with any tactical situation which arose.

"Charming", I thought to myself, "One moment I'm enjoying the prospect of a day off; the next, I am a thousand feet up in the air, over 'enemy' territory, in a Meccano covered engine with no seats, no doors, only a strap to prevent me from joining the birds and freezing cold to boot!" By the time we reached Armagh, some thirty minutes later, I was cold, but feeling quite an old hand at the flying game.

I am sure that I would have enjoyed the return journey even more but it was not be

be my day. Apparently ten minutes after take off we were called, over the radio, to investigate a white Ford Zephyr which was driving along the motorway at an unusually and recklessly high speed. Without further ado, we went into an alarming side slip and the ground seemed to approach at tremendous speed, until we were, literally, sitting on top of the Zephyr and keeping pace with it along the road. The overall picture defies the imagination. The pilot was concentrating on the task in hand; the driver of the car was frantically waving his fist. Capt Sheffield-Parker was anxiously scanning the surrounding area for telegraph poles, pylons and overhead wires, and your truly was hanging on to his solitary strap for grim death, wondering just how much I was expected to endure in the cause of justice.

Looking back on the event (with both feet firmly on the ground) I suppose I enjoyed the experience really. However, if there should be a next time, my first job will be to convince the OC that, in the interests of the Service (and humanity!) we should change places.

Page 27 – 39 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn

Despite the numerous social functions the Platoon has been kept particularly busy, and last month we suffered our first casualty. Pte Moulton headed a brick whilst escorting the SDS vehicle along Springfield Road; however, we are pleased to say that he soon recovered and returned to work after having spent two restful days in hospital.

Page 28 Detachment Ord Depot Kinnegar (NCO IC Det: Sgt VR Allinson)

Sgt "Geordie" Allinson arrived at Kinnegar at short notice to fill the gap left by the untimely death of Sgt Robinson, Cpl Dargie and Pte Hunkin of this Detachment

attended the funeral in England.

Although the circumstances prevailing in Northern Ireland are not of the best, we find that most of the soldiers enjoy the change and several have decided to volunteer to extend their tours here. It seems that there are more RPC cap badges to be seen in the Province than in England at this stage, but we send our fondest regards to all those left behind!

**Issue 116 dated September 1973
Page 21 – 522 Company**

The needs of N Ireland are making great demands these days on our dog section and in June we lost our longest serving member, Pte Colin Hayward, who, with five others, was posted there; more are due to go soon, and with such a high turnover rate, there are very few long standing members left

Page 25 – HQ Northern Ireland (Staff Capt PL: Capt MJ Sheffield-Parker, Adjt Lisburn Garrison: Capt DF Cunningham)

Mr Edgar O'Balance the Public Relations Officer from HQ Eastern District visited N Ireland to compile 'local boy' stories from soldiers from all Arms stationed in the Province.

Together with Capt Sheffield-Parker and (once again) the PR photographer, the Province was toured and Cpl Nicholson (39 Bde), Ptes Sellars, Roberts and Taylor were duly photographed and interviewed whilst engaged on Stores, Security, Defence and Escort duties respectively. It is expected that articles on some or all of these soldiers will appear in local newspapers in Lincoln, Nottingham, Leicester and Derby in the near future.

Page 26 – D&E Platoon HQ Northern Ireland (PI Comd: Capt MJ Sheffield-

Parker, PI Sgt: Sgt JK Skerritt, RP Sgt: Sgt D Jackaman)

The structure of the Platoon is now firmly fixed and, unlike the other D and E Platoons in the Province, attached to Brigades, its functions are of a more static nature. Basically the Platoon is divided into three elements – Regimental Police Staff, Dog Section and General Duties Section. Within the General Duties section the employment scope is very wide and we have Cpl Willey installed as the GSM's Orderly NCO, LCpl Clements filling the post of Assistant Instructor in the Gymnasium, LCpl Botes 'running' the QM Department, Pte Taylor as the 30 metres Range Warden, Pte Reid producing dubious 'local' cartoons in the Printing Shop, Pte Finn saving lives (so he says) in the Swimming Pool and Ptes Carter and Thompson (228) safe guarding the Security of G Branch, HQ N Ireland.

Page 28 – 3 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn (PI Comd: Sgt D Brown)

We claim to have the fittest soldier in the whole of the Corps – Pte (Benny) Mullane. The unit recently entered a team for the Morne Mountain Race – 7 Peaks, over 3,000 feet per Peak, a distance of 10 miles. Mullane ran it in 2 hours and 40 mins and broke the record by some 20 mins. As the photographer could not keep up we have been unable to produce a photograph to mark this tremendous achievement. Benny was on 24 hour guard the night before. Well done. Any challengers?

Page 32 – 8 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn (PI Sgt: Sgt WP Browne)

The traditional Orange Marches on 12th July 1973 went off peacefully. We are looking forward to the next march which is the Apprentices March and takes place on



the 12th August, and hope it goes as quietly as the last one. In the Squadron Athletics we had a decisive win in the 1 mile event when Pte Moore came in a very good first.

Page 32 – 39 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn

Travelling in any city can be a problem especially to the driver who is unfamiliar with the area. Belfast is no exception to the rule with its maze of tiny streets, one way systems and roads which invariably have more than one name. However, even if our vehicle crews master all that, they are still faced with further problems – terrorists, bombs, brick throwing, school children and a long list of 'Out of Bounds' roads.

The drivers and escorts in the troop are but a few of the military personnel who are required to drive under these conditions and who are faced with the fears and frustrations of this unhappy city, this particularly applies to those employed on SDS duties. Their job required them to run the gauntlet of bullets and bricks twice a day and their routes take them through some of the worst trouble spots in the Brigade area. It is therefore these members of the squadron who catch most of the stones, bottles and on occasion the bullets.

Their day begins with the receipt of a telephone call informing them at the Brigade brief for the previous 24 hours has been completed and ready for despatch to HQ Northern Ireland. Having completed this task they prepare their vehicles for the morning SDS, have a quick breakfast and report to the comcen to collect the despatches. The crew are responsible for checking the route, these change daily for obvious security reasons, briefing themselves on any changes to Battalion boundaries and finally obtaining clearance

to proceed along the route to their first port of call. A quick radio check is made and the SDS is ready to leave.

The SDS vehicles always travel in pairs, each vehicle carrying escorts. This requires a fair amount of expertise by the drivers and understanding between the vehicles crews, for the vehicles must remain in sight of each other, often in very dense traffic, and the escorts are required to be alert at all times and capable of reacting to any situation that may arise. They must be prepared to give covering fire if either vehicle comes under attack from gunmen but at the same time be capable of restraint if opening fire means endangering innocent life.

The SDS is a convenient way to tour the Brigade area and see the problems that the troops on the ground are faced with. If you travel with them you soon become aware of the strain that is imposed upon crews. The vehicle is just entering the Anderstonstown area when one of the escorts puts his head through the hatch and warns the driver that there is a group of young children playing by a parked lorry up ahead, the driver slows down and pulls out to give the lorry a wide berth. As the Land Rover draws level with the stationary vehicle there's a shout from behind "Look out they have a pile of bricks", the driver pulls the cord which raised the front cage just in time to save the windscreen from being smashed by a house brick. At the same time the escorts take cover as a hail of stones, bricks and bottles strike the side of the rover. Once clear the driver picks up speed, details of the incident noted and reported to the next Tac HQ on the SDS run.

If one joined the Battalion Tac HQs by the shortest and most direct routes, the SDS complete round trip would be

approximately 25 miles and under normal conditions could be completed in about 2 hours, but due to the security situation and route restrictions, the run can take up to 5 hours which means 10 hours travelling a day under great pressure.

The camp gates are always a welcome sight at the end of such a trip, but there is always the possibility that when the driver reports into the comcen they will be greeted with news that there is a stack of immediate despatches that must be cleared straight away and so with half a cup of coffee inside them the SDS crew leave once more to face the perils of the city.

One can argue of course that the Belfast Battalions are on the ground every day and do not have the relative safety of Lisburn to return to.

The difference here is that our SDS crews are faced with two years of this existence rather than the 4 months tours of the Battalions. It is for this reason that a high standard of proficiency and sense of purpose is required by our crews.

To alleviate the strains and tension incurred from their duties we are always striving to find ways and means to give the drivers and their crews a break from their duties. This is often difficult with all the restrictions imposed on movement in Ulster, however 4 members of the troop have recently returned from a 4 day cruise with the Royal Navy, aboard HMS Ashton.

Although we are not sure exactly what they did or where they went, they all returned with tales which, if truth, should be submitted as a prologue to "The Cruel Sea".

Whilst in the majority of military stations, SDS duties are associated only with Royal Signals personnel, in 39 Brigade we have come to look upon RPC personnel who





escort the SDS vehicles as being an accepted part of the SDS team.

**Issue 117 dated December 1973
Page 25 HQ Northern Ireland (Staff
Capt: Capt MJ Sheffield-Parker)**

The great cry to be heard throughout N Ireland at this time is "Give us more Pioneers"! Certain units have acquired additional tasks and responsibilities and are faced with the continuing problem of finding the manpower to cope with them, from within existing resources. To date demands for extra RPC support have ranged from an increase by six men to a request for a complete D & E Platoon.

This has resulted in the SO3 commuting frantically between HQ N Ireland G and Q Branches, Bdes HQs and relevant Units in an attempt to investigate, advise and assist in balancing the safeguarding of RPC interests with the current limitations placed on the provision of manpower to N Ireland.

The light relief, in this context, is provided by the RSM, 3 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn, who regularly tracks down Capt Sheffield-Parker, during his visits to that HQ, with the optimistic offer to "unload the four ton truck load of Pioneers" which he hopefully expects to see immediately in the wake of the Staff-car. The Corps representation in the Province, at this time, is a little short of 200 all ranks and there is no doubt that, if it were humanely possible to add 25% to that figures, such an increase would be absorbed without difficulty.

**Page 25 – D & E PI Q Northern Ireland
(PI Comd: Capt MJ Sheffield-Parker, PI
Sgt: Sgt JE Skerritt, RP Sgt: Sgt D
Jackaman)**

This has been a hard but rewarding period for the Platoon, with an increase in the daily routine responsibilities and also in

the range and variation in one time labour tasks. Sgt Skerritt and his "merrie men" set off recently for Belfast Town Centre to remove the remnants of the Army Recruiting Office which was demolished by an explosion, and to assist in the re-housing of that Office in a nearby military barracks. Another new and recurring task involving the Platoon members, is assistance in the testing of new equipment and weapons regularly being adapted to conditions peculiar to N Ireland.

It is pertinent to emphasise that the soldiers are not "guinea pigs" on the receiving end of these tests but are required to demonstrate the weapons and equipment before Senior officers.

Page 25 – 39 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn

The marches appear to have subsided, the majority of the D & E PI have returned from leave and we have therefore been able to turn our attention to a number of social activities.

**Issue 118 dated March 1974
HQ Northern Ireland**

Staff Capt PL: Capt MJ Sheffield-Parker; (Designate) Capt DWG Tilleke, Clerk: Cpl DMJ Graves)

By the time that these notes are in print, Capt David Tilleke will have assumed the Staff appointment and Capt Mike Sheffield-Parker will be installed at 444 MCLG.

Sometime in February we anticipate the assistance of a Pioneer Section from 23 Group, to tackle the important security task of the renovation of perimeter defences at the Maze Prison, Long Kesh. In view of the ever increasing sensitivity of that establishment, this task is yet another opportunity for the Corps' representatives to show their qualities so much admired by the many and varied Arms and Corps

servicing in the Province.

**Page 24 – D & E PI HQ N Ireland ((PI
Comd: Capt MJ Sheffield-Parker,
(Designate): Capt DWG Tilleke, PI Sgt:
Sgt J Skerritt, RP Sgt: Sgt D Jackaman)**

During the period, there has continued to be an ever increasing awareness of the immense responsibilities involved in ensuring the maintenance of a high level of security within Lisburn Garrison, a Garrison containing three major Headquarters. Under the direction of the Deputy Garrison Commander and Headquarters Commandant, Lt Col PKA Todd RCT, the main workload for this vital task devolves on the Platoon with its three main elements, namely, the Dog Section, carrying out nightly perimeter patrols; the Regimental Police Section, responsible for the control of entry and exit to and from the Garrison of all vehicles and personnel, and the General Duties Section, continually repairing and maintaining the physical perimeter defences.

Whilst carrying out these vitally important tasks, which, by their nature, give the individual soldier little return in the terms of job satisfaction, the members of the Platoon have continued to gain the respect and admiration of the considerable number of senior officers with whom they are in regular, daily contact.

**Issue 119 dated June 1974
Page 1 – Editorial – Stop Press**

All in the Corps were delighted to hear that Cpl MH Smith had been awarded the British Empire Medal for Gallantry whilst serving in Northern Ireland. Congratulations.

**Page 28 – D & E PI HQ Northern Ireland
(PI Comd: Capt DWG Tilleke, PI Sgt:
Sgt J Skerritt, RP Sgt: SSgt D Jackaman)**



There are at present 181 Pioneers all ranks employed in Northern Ireland. Pioneers can be found in such varied occupations as patrolling the streets in Claudy to unloading stores in the Ordnance Depot at Kinnegar. Within HQ N Ireland and the Brigade HQs we are totally committed to guard duties and VIP escorts.

These are key posts which require a high degree of vigilance, conscientiousness and operational "know how". At times we are escorts to Bomb Disposal (EOD), SDS and MAOT and we can be called upon at any time to mount personnel or vehicle checkpoints within our formation area. Dog handlers can be found throughout the Province on either guard duties or specialist sniffer duties.

Every Pioneer in N Ireland works long hours but it is made worthwhile because we know that the positions we hold are of vital importance to the formations we support.

The majority of Pioneers in Northern Ireland are young men of about 25 years of age, by the time they have completed their D&E Training course and various courses over here they quickly become proficient in all aspects of infantry and IS training drills. By definition the jobs we do are exacting and entail a certain degree of personal risk. However, so far this year we have only had one casualty, LCpl Blasby who was blown up in an ambush in the Londonderry area. He is now, you will be pleased to hear, completely recovered. Nevertheless we have had several 'near misses'.

Over the past three months we have had two very welcome working visits from elements of 522 and 518 Companies. SSgt McGeough came over with 16 men to clear the obsolete security defences from the Long Ash perimeter and completed the task

so quickly that they were able to help erect a considerable amount of new wire fence. Their hard work and cheerful attitude earned them the praise of the Engineers.

At the present moment Cpl Duncan Cameron and a half section of Pioneers from 518 Company are busy dismantling the defences at Gosford Castle. Again morale here is very high and after four days the job is already at least one day ahead of schedule.

Page 30 – 3 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn

Since last we contributed to the Corps Magazine the changes have been well and truly rung. We have lost SSgt Joe Brown – he of the small stature and fast growing reputation. All the platoon would like to wish Staff Brown the same success in future postings as that which he earned and enjoyed here.

SSgt Brown was the last member of the original D&E PI which formed at Shoeburyness three years ago.

This meant that SSgt Fielder had an almost brand new platoon to take over on his arrival in Lurgan. However we are able to report that he has moved fairly comfortably into the swing of things. Also amongst the new arrivals is Cpl Boyce whose efforts to oust his room mate have thus far been foiled by the latter's apparent immunity to reggae.

Following the shooting incident in which SSgt Brown and LCpl 'Dai' Morgan narrowly escaped injury a further attack was made on one of the Pioneer Landover's in November. Once again the vehicle was fired at as it slowed at a roundabout and once again the occupants, this time Ptes McKelvey and Steve Newton, escaped with nothing more serious than a cold sweat, though the vehicle was not so fortunate.

Page 30 – 8 Inc Bde HQ & Sig Sqn (Brigadier's Rover Group: Ptes Cassy, MacPhail, Miller. Deputy Commander's Group: Ptes McKay, Jackson, Sullivan

These are the most important tasks that the Platoon has, as the security of the Brigade Commander and his Deputy when out of Barracks is in their hands. The Rover Groups are on call at any time day or night and may be called on to visit any part of the Province from Londonderry to Belfast.

As the Commander and the Deputy Commander visit the scene of most of the shooting incidents the Rover Group are often in places where there are known terrorist strongholds and could come under fire at any time – this thankfully does not happen too often.

The daily visits the Rover Group make to the Bogside and Creggan areas of Londonderry usually result in the collection of trophies roaming from small pebbles donated by the under ten age groups, to house bricks donated by the over tens, not to mention the almost daily re-paint jobs needed on the vehicles themselves.

On Sunday 16th March the Deputy Commander's Group on patrol down the Foyle Road came under fire from a sniper position, with the result that Pte Sullivan now has a pair of army issue terrorist holed anklets which he displays for all to see, complete with a two hour story of how it happened – all for the price of a pint! We agree that it's a good job that he is so thin as there was no great damage to body or soul.

On other days the groups may be called on to do a tour of all border checkpoints in the Londonderry area. This is usually an all day job and can result in many hours spent in the ditches and hedgerows of the border roads.

At present a detachment of 8 Bde Pioneers under Cpl CR Bunn are resident guard for the RUC Station at Claudy. In the best traditions of Beau Geste this police station is well fortified and acts as a small operations centre for local security force activities. From this police station intrepid Pioneers mount foot patrols around Claudy and have successfully managed to keep the peace during their sojourn.

A hard job well done and often commented upon to this effect by the Brigade Commander, Deputy Command and most of the staff Officers.

Page 31 – 39 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn – Pleasant Memories

During September and October of last year, soldiers from all over Ulster took part in 4 Exercises in Cyprus. This unit was chosen as the sponsoring unit for Ex Hot Tail, the last of these exercises. The exercises were designed to allow soldiers stationed in Ulster to carry out recreational training to a more peaceful and pleasant climatic environment. During the two weeks all thought of troubled Ulster passed into oblivion and everyone relaxed and enjoyed the kind hospitality of the units stationed on the Base.

The New Year brought with it a New Brigade Commander, Brig RF Richardson OBE. Before Brig ACS Boswell OBE departed the members of his Rover Group invited him to a surprise drinks party and presentation ceremony.

Issue 120 dated September 1974 Page 17 – 518 Coy

Our Irish detachment also returned to the fold in July and we welcomed many newcomers to the Unit who have tried hard (but unsuccessfully) to become permanent

fixtures at COD Kinnegar. Whilst in the Emerald Isle, our Detachment under the watchful eye of Cpls Ledgeway and Patel have been involved in stores handling as well as every day security duties – as escorts, armoury picquets and on car searching.

Page 24 – Northern Ireland

HQ N Ireland: SO3: Capt DW Tilleke, Cpl D Graves

D&E Pl Lisburn Garrison: WO2 R Brothwood BEM, Sgt M Skerritt

3 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn: SSgt J Fielder, Cpl J Anderson

8 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn: Sgt W Browne, Cpl D Freeman

39 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn: Sgt J Peters, Cpl M Scoggings

Cod Kinnegar: Sgt J Ward

At the present time there are 172 Pioneer all ranks in N Ireland and the past few months have been fairly quiet apart from the Ulster Workers Council strike. This strike drove the IRA into their holes and allowed the security forces a breathing space from shootings and bombings. However, with all the differing contingency plans we were all held within barracks awaiting the word to aid the civil power in the running of essential services. This was a trying three weeks for all concerned and we were quite pleased to return to some form of normality.

Since the strike the IRA have been relatively quiet but we expect them to start their summer offensive fairly soon. We have been visited by two TV celebrities in the past month. Harry Secombe came to Lisburn and Londonderry and managed to cheer us up with a never ending spate of jokes at his CSE show. Given half a chance we feel that he would have made an

excellent Pioneer. Talking about recruits the lads from 3 Bde were recently visited by the reigning Miss TV Times. Better looking than Harry she was soon recruited into the Corps.

Issue 121 dated December 1974 Page 2 – Editorial

On the 22nd November we learned that SSgt D Jackaman has received the CinC's commendation for his work at Lisburn Garrison during his tour at HQ N Ireland. Congratulations. This is yet another favourable comment for the RPC in N Ireland.

Page 27 – Defence and Employment Platoons Northern Ireland

HQ: S Capt PL: Capt DWDG Tilleke, Clerk: Cpl TH Campbell

Pl Comd: WO2 R Brothwood BEM, 2IC: Sgt I Williamson, Provost/Security: Sgt LC Kelly

3 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn: Pl Comd: SSgt J Fielder, 2IC: Cpl JL Anderson

8 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn: Pl Comd: Sgt W Browne, 2IC: Cpl DJ Freeman

39 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn: Pl Comd: Sgt JC Peters 2IC: Cpl JJ Poole, CQMS: SSgt D Barrow

COD Kinnegar: Pl Comd: Sgt JS Ward, 2IC: Cpl AK Patel

Army Dog Unit: Section IC: Cpl K Thom
1 Regt RMP: Cpl GT Hague, LCpls NR Smith, JT Carruthers

HMS Mainstone: LCpls CM Gorrod, PR Wodd

As can be seen from the above list of RPC Northern Ireland personalities Pioneering is a team affair. Wherever there is action of any kind you will find that versatile all rounder – the Pioneer. This last quarter has been a busy time for the Corps



marked by operational personal and sporting achievements. Although some of the operational jobs we do are routine and often terribly monotonous it is always pleasing to hear that we are very much appreciated by our senior officers and contemporaries alike. One such officer Major K Morgan-Jones, the head veterinary officer for the Province, has insisted that the following passage be included in this issue "there are at present over twenty Pioneer dog handlers in Northern Ireland."

DOG HANDLERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Over the past three years the Corps has provided handlers in all four roles of employment in the Province. The Defence Platoon RPC at HQ Northern Ireland has provided defensive cover, the nerve centre of operations, with its Security Dogs, while Pioneers with the Army Dog Unit, RAVC have handled Guard Dogs, Arms and Explosives Search Dogs and Trackers to good effect.

Although at any one time there can be anything up to forty cap badges serving with the latter Unit the RPC can say that they have contributed well to the excellent record of dog handlers in Northern Ireland and earned their coveted 'Red Paw of Ulster' badge. Cpl Taffy Smith earned much more than that as he was awarded the BEM for his part in saving the life of a young Light Infantryman and for his outstanding services in and around Crossmaglen. Others too like LCpls Kirby, Rogers and Stainton, with his famous tracker dog, have been in the 'thick of it' and have helped to uncover massive totals of explosives, arms and ammunition and find the terrorists using them, thus helping to minimise loss of life of soldiers and civilians in this strife torn Province. It was an RPC handler, Pte Pope, who caught Frank Duffy trying to escape from the Maze Prison this year and the excellence of the patrolling teams is such that there have been no break-ins to this Headquarters. A high standard of training and application is required by these patrols, it was all the more rewarding, therefore, for LCpl Logan to come fifth in the Military Section of the Army Dog Trials.

The above devotion to duty is representative of all Pioneers in the Province and has often been put to the test in shooting incidents within the Brigade Defence and Employment Platoons. If the reader of these notes thinks that Pioneering is all glamour don't be mistaken, we have had our share of tragedies. On 26th August at about 0800 hours a Landrover came under fire from a terrorist ambush. Although reactions were fast a casualty was sustained. Pte Philip Drake was mortally wounded. He was subsequently buried with full military honours at his home town of Wellingborough. Pte Drake was an exceptional person and a true Pioneer, always cheerful and willing to help others he died for his friends in the highest tradition of the British Army. His devotion to duty has been an example to us all. He will be sadly missed.

Page 28 – 3 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn

Our notes for this edition are overshadowed by the tragic and untimely death of Pte Phil Drake who was the victim of an ambush laid for the Pioneer Landrover as it returned from the married quarters

having changed the guard. Pte Drake was one of the characters of the Brigade always cheerful and willing to lend a hand, and through his duties at the married quarters he had won a place in the hearts of wives and children alike. Mrs Drake has the sympathy not only of the platoon but of the entire Brigade and their dependants.

In the past few weeks we have had eight new arrivals in the platoon, which is a welcomed relief, we have four more yet to come, bringing our total strength to 42.

Once again we have had a sharp reminder that at all times we have to be alert, Pte Fairhurst being narrowly missed by a sniper's bullet whilst on married quarters guard.

Page 30 – 8 Infantry Brigade

Having read the last five publications of "The Royal Pioneer" I thought that it was about time an 'outsider' put pen to paper and submitted an article for inclusion in your Corps Magazine, and as I am due to leave shortly, here goes.

Firstly, I would like to explain that I am not really an outsider, because it has been my privilege to have worked very closely with the Pioneers during my tour in Northern Ireland.

The aim of the article is to give a brief description of the everyday tasks carried out by Pioneers in Northern Ireland – particularly in Londonderry – hoping that it brings back some (happy) memories for ex members of the D & E Platoon of 8 Bde who may read their Corps Magazine, and an insight to anyone fortunate enough to be posted to the best Platoon in the Corps.

The Platoon is ably led by Sgt 'Paddy' Browne and he is supported by Cpls 'Chippy' Freeman, 'Dumpling' Bunn, and 'Slim' Forsyth, LCpls 'Smiler' Vick, 'Scouse' Barnes and 'Inky Fingers' Murray.

Five members of the Platoon form part of the permanent Rover Groups for the Bde Comd and Deputy Comd, they provide escorts to all parts of the Province in both uniform and civilian clothes – the Platoon also mans a small guard room twenty four hours a day, provides an NCO for the Armoury and a Pte to assist in the Sqn Office.

Periodically the Platoon has been responsible for guarding the RUC Station at Claudy for a period of two weeks at a time, and at the moment are assisting the UDR in guarding a Power Station. They are also looking forward to a two month commitment at Magilligan Prison.

During August/September two men have been assisting in the running of a Boy Scouts Camp in the area, and from time to time they are called upon to guard a Radio Site on some remote hill. The Platoon also takes its turn in providing a barman – on a monthly basis – for the Squadron Club.

Up to three soldiers and one JNCO find themselves on the odd Military Training Course which is run within the Bde, and we were pleased to have three members of the Lisburn Platoon on the recent course.

Despite the busy, and varied life, there is still time for leave, and the occasional R & R trip Ski-ing, Sailing, etc, as well as the odd night out. I could write a book about some of the amusing incidents that have taken place, so I will just mention a few. A certain Private man agrees to get married once a fortnight, and other members of the

Platoon are very popular with the local population – female of course. During the Ulster Workers Strike a Private, who shall remain nameless, was told to get the necessary equipment to carry out an escort duty to Lisburn and wait outside the Guard Room for the RSM – being keen he jumped on the first vehicle which stopped and ended up on the top of a hill unprepared to camp out for a few days, but the Radio Detachment really appreciated the extra hand.

Pioneers posted to 8 Inf Bde are proud to show the flag in Londonderry.

We get the odd visit from the SO3 HQ Northern Ireland, who manages to arrive when we are busy – but then again life is always busy in shiny 8. In closing I would like to send my regards to all Pioneers with whom I have had the pleasure to serve during the past eighteen months, and thank them for their hard work and loyalty to the Headquarters.

Page 45 – Obituary – Private Phillip Victor Drake, Royal Pioneer Corps

The Corps lost a very fine soldier when Pte Phillip Drake was killed by a sniper in Northern Ireland on the twenty-sixth of August.

Philip the son of a widow and the eldest of six children had always wanted to be a soldier. He joined the Army Cadet Force in his home town of Wellingborough as soon as he was old enough and when he reached the age of seventeen he enlisted into the Regular Army and began his service at the Royal Pioneer Corps Training Centre, Simpson Barracks, Northampton.

He was a popular recruit who did well in training and he found the recruit course so interesting and rewarding that he told his mother he would have been happy to do it all again. A posting to 522 Coy followed his pass-out in May 1971 and he stayed with the Kineton unit until July 1973 when he was sent to join the RPC Defence and Employment Platoon attached to 3 Infantry Brigade in Northern Ireland. It was while on active service with this unit in Craigavon that he was tragically killed.

His normal infantry anti-terrorist duties that included periods of guard duties at married quarters areas and he had become greatly respected by the families and was very affectionately regarded by the children. At his death there were many individual and spontaneous expressions of appreciation from these families who had got to know and like Philip for his ever pleasant and helpful manner. At the funeral address the padre from the unit in Northern Ireland, who had known Philip personally, remarked on his popularity and the special bond that he had forged with the children under his protection.

The funeral was held at Wellingborough on the 2nd September and was attended by military representations from units of the RPC and Northern Ireland as well as The Royal British Legion and the ACF. The funeral marchers were led by the Mayor and Mayoress of Wellingborough and many local people lined the route and attended the graveside ceremony to pay their respects.

Condolences and sympathy on behalf of all members of the Corps have been extended to Mrs Drake and she has said that she has been much comforted in her



Picture: LCpl T Burden with his dog NQ N Ireland



Picture: The funeral of Pte Philip Drake in Wellesborough, 1974. Pte Drake was shot by a sniper in N Ireland while riding in a closed landrover, he had not even been visible to the fire.

tragic loss by the deep concern expressed by all military personnel with whom she has come in contact. She says also that she has taken a great deal of support from the knowledge that Philip was a popular and respected member of a very fine organisation.

Let us do everything we can to be worthy of that tribute and keep fresh the example and memory of Private Philip Drake of the Royal Pioneer Corps

Issue 122 dated March 1975

Page 1 – Editorial

The following letter was received by Capt DWDG Tilleke, HQ N Ireland: "From 10th City of Belfast Bn, Ulster Defence Regt, Lisles Drive, Belfast, BT9 7JG dated 12 Dec 74. As we come to the end of a year it is right that Gwynne Davies and I should put on paper our admiration for the way your men carry out their duties. It does not seem to matter in what conditions they carry out their monotonous, boring and often unpleasant work, at whatever hour of the day or night, in rain, at rush hour or in the deserted hours, they are almost invariably cheerful – and always firm and efficient. (Signed) David McMurtrie Lt Col"

Page 14 – Defence and Employment Platoons Northern Ireland

HQ: S Capt PL: Capt DWDG Tilleke, Clerk: Cpl TH Campbell

PI Comd: WO2 R Brothwood BEM, 2IC: Sgt AW Wildman, Provost/Security: Sgt LC Kelly

3 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn: PI Comd: SSgt J Fielder, 2IC: Cpl JL Anderson

8 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn: PI Comd: Sgt W Browne, (Designate) : Sgt BC Carty, 2IC: Cpl DJ Freeman

39 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn: PI Comd: Sgt JC Peters 2IC: Cpl JJ Poole, CQMS: SSgt D Barrow

COD Kinnegar: PI Comd: Sgt J Lund 2IC: Cpl R Hather

Army Dog Unit: Section IC: Cpl K Thom 1 Regt RMP: Cpl J Farrer, LCpls NR Smith, JT Carruthers

HMS Mainstone: LCpls KB Tarr and GT Cannon

Pioneers in Print – "Pioneers take the title" – "Pioneers in N Ireland". What's this all about – "Over 200 Pioneers in N Ireland". What with the RPC Boxers coming over from England and winning all the Army titles, coupled with newspaper articles advertising the Pioneer cause we are going through a very good period indeed here in N Ireland.

The war front is still blazing although activities seemed to have cooled down somewhat, nevertheless we are as usual fully committed with guard and escort duties. In the early part of January reinforcements from 518 Company headed by Cpl Johnson began security duties at Lisburn Garrison in support of the overworked Headquarters D & E Platoon. During the latter half of 1974 this platoon led by WO2 Bob Brothwood was working in excess of 90 hours per week and in this intense working period they earned the praise of all the senior officers. It is felt that their example of typical Pioneer spirit should not pass unmentioned. The reinforcements, a half section, are working extremely well and have settled down remarkably quickly. At the same time a small detachment from

206 Company arrived at the Engineer Field Park at Antrim. These intrepids led by Cpl Taffy Evans were tasked with all manner of jobs. So far they are well up to schedule and have already received praise for their efforts from their temporary commander. Meanwhile time goes by and the regular N Ireland team, the D & E Platoon, carry on as normal.

Page 14 – 3 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn

Thankfully the last couple of months have been quieter in the Lurgan area – periods of ceasefire have been punctuated by short spells of terrorist activities. The platoon has however been kept busy both with security tasks and the extensive squadron training programme currently in full swing.

Page 14 – COD Kinnegar

Unlike other postings in N Ireland the RPC contingent at Kinnegar are more concerned with typical Pioneer worksite duties. They support the Ordnance Corps within this large and complex depot. Over the past year they have worked at full tilt occasionally sallying forth on operational escort duties. At the present time the platoon commander, Sgt Jack Ward, is saying his farewells and Sgt Lund is settling into the driving seat. Sgt Ward during the last six months has led his platoon in many differing tasks and has shown by his example that even a RPC senior rank is not afraid of work. He organised and successfully completed with the support of his platoon, a host of jobs and will be sadly missed by the Commanding Officer and all ranks.

To show their appreciation Sgt Ward was presented with a replica cannon by his fellow sergeants and an electric clock by the platoon. With this resounding send-off we wish him all the best in his home station.

Page 15 – Sgt WP Browne

At this point it is only right to say that the morale and well-being of all Pioneers throughout the Province is dependent on the leadership and tolerance of their senior ranks. This has also been demonstrated by Sgt Paddy Browne at Londonderry. He is shortly to leave us and once again he will be difficult to replace at 'shiny 8' Brigade, Sgt Browne has led a happy and hardworking fully operational platoon. The Londonderry D&E Platoon are almost totally concerned with infantry type duties and in this difficult and diverse field they have excelled. At the present time they are deployed on operational escort duties and various guard tasks in highly sensitive areas. We also wish Sgt Browne all the very best in his new posting.

Issue 123 dated June 1975

Page 15 – Defence and Employment Platoons Northern Ireland

HQ: S Capt PL: Capt DWDG Tilleke, Clerk: Cpl TH Campbell

PI Comd: WO2 R Brothwood BEM, 2IC: Sgt AW Wildman, Provost/Security: Sgt LC Kelly

The ceasefire continues and work in the Province carries on much as before. Pioneers guard many of the key military installations in Northern Ireland are still required to maintain the highest standards of preparedness and vigilance. Our working hours are on the decrease and it is even

reported that at some locations Pioneers have the occasional day off – a rumour that CSM Brothwood and his NCOs are trying to stop!

Meanwhile notwithstanding onerous and monotonous duties morale and esprit de corps is good. At HQ N Ireland our famous Checkpoint Charlie, now fondly known as Checkpoint Chunky, is nearing completion. Its gantries, flashing lights, observation points and sangars dominate the entrance to the Garrison. Without its intrepid Pioneers, headed by such stalwarts as Sgts Wildman and Kelly, Cpls Bell, Field and Fitzgerald, the checkpoint would be as characterless as the steel from which it is built. The Pioneers manning this operational pink elephant are always alert and prepared for any eventually. They have a reputation for efficiency combined with cheerfulness. Appreciation has been expressed by Commander Land Forces downwards.

LCpl Tich Marr our longest serving dog handler has just been forced on leave for a well-deserved rest – it is rumoured that he has taken his dog with him.

On 1st May 1975 Pte Graham Hayes, a long standing member of the D & E Platoon, was killed in a tragic accident. He was a willing chap who always gave of his best in everything he tackled and he was well liked by his contemporaries and seniors. His untimely death has grieved us all and we would like to take this opportunity to express our deepest sympathy to his family.

Issue 124 dated September 1975

Page 15 – 518 Company

Cpl Johnson and half a Section returned from HQ N Ireland at the beginning of May having completed four months in the Emerald Isle. For most of their tour they were attached to the D & E Pl of HQ N Ireland on security duties. Their primary task was the manning of the Vehicle Check Point near the HQ. This they did with such drive and energy that many of the visitors arrived with worried looks in case they had mislaid their identity cards. After the ceasefire the section had a fairly quiet time. The only incident of the tour arose when a car attempted to drive straight through the VCP. A little brandishing of rifles brought the car to a swift halt. The occupants were then arrested and handed over to the RUC. As a precaution the car was blown up (in case of bombs). Later it was learnt that the car had been stolen by two joy-riders.

Issue 125 dated December 1975

Page 15 – Defence and Employment Platoons Northern Ireland

HQ: Capt PL: Capt DWDG Tilleke, CSM: WO2 RR Brothwood BEM, Clerk: Cpl TH Campbell, VCP Comd: Sgt AW Wildman, Provost Sgt: Sgt L Kelly

Lately things have been quiet operationally, and we are told that the ceasefire still holds but we have had many comings and goings.

When Ptes Ken Hood, Smudger Smith and Chris Rix decided to buy motor-bikes little did they realise that the registration plates would have consecutive numbers. In between duties at 'Checkpoint Charlie' they get around the province. A number of others in the unit have donned leathers and the 'vroom, vroom' can be heard all over the Garrison.



Picture: Guard of Honour for DAPL NI May 82 - Capt Crook, WO2 McWilliams, LCpl Ball, Sgt Power, Cpl Groom, LCpls Roberts, Walton & Smith Pres Flannery, Phelps

Sgt Wildman and the stalwarts on the VCP continue to work at full stretch for long hours. Sgt Wildman's recent census of vehicles passing through in a nine hour shift totalled 1900 (by lunchtime he had counted 700), approximately one car every six and a half seconds. The VCP personnel are constantly being praised for the work – here is one of many (this from Garrison Security Committee): "The RPC personnel employed on security duties are to be congratulated on their diligence and cheerfulness in a trying task".

RPC personnel assist in catering for the families in the Garrison especially during the holidays. LCpl Smythe runs the Garrison swimming pool. Sgt Wildman and Kelly train the youngsters in .22 shooting and Cpl Smithson helps in the gymnasium. WO2 Bob Brothwood is a dab hand with a badminton racket, watches over recreational facilities within the platoon.

Issue No 126 dated Mar 76

Page 19 – D & E PI HQ Northern Ireland
(SO3 Capt: Capt DWDG Tilleke (Designate) Capt DT Cooper, CSM: WO2 RR Brothwood BEM, VCP Comd: Sgt AW Wildman, Clerk: Cpl TH Campbell.

The Xmas period has passed along, so it would seem, with a flurry of activity by the opposition. However here at the Headquarters things carried on very much as normal and a reasonable time was had by all.

As a farewell gesture to the D&E Platoon and as a morale booster our intrepid leader has been on to PR to arrange for a Miss Pioneer to be selected, and to visit us in N Ireland, so we look forward to meeting and entertaining the lucky lady. There will be no difficulty in finding volunteers for escort duty once she arrives.

Pioneers throughout the Province continue to enhance the Corps name. At the present time we have two detachments from 518 Company on emergency reinforcement tours. At COD Kinnegar SSgt Daniels is already earning a reputation for being the iron man of the Corps and earns the praise of his superior officers. His band of intrepids continue to fulfil an extremely flexible role, caught between depot duties, guards and escorts through operational areas – they do a first-class job. At 325 Engr Park in Antrim Cpl Duncan Cameron, of Gosford Castle fame, a veteran of N Ireland continues to lead his half section in exemplary style. It is usual for them to finish their onerous tasks with days to spare.

Capt Tilleke will be extremely sorry to leave N Ireland. In the two years or more of his tour he has seen many Pioneers pass through and at all times has been impressed with the diligence, conscientiousness and above all the loyalty to our cap badge that has been displayed by all ranks. The Corps strength over here has gone up in the region of 20% and this reflects favourably upon our ability as all round operational soldiers. Capt Tilleke thanks all Pioneers for their unswerving support during his tour in N Ireland and wishes them all the best for the future.

Page 19 – 3 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn

We now have our own OC – Lt MD McMahan – he arrived in November and brought with him SSgt McWilliams and nine reinforcements, so the platoon is now 52 strong and we are all thoroughly enjoying our role here in NI – with overtime!

Our flag flies high and all RPC soldiers work hard and achieve good results. Special mention must be made of the long hours of work and of the guards and escorts. This

together with VCPs and patrols through Lurgan has really switched us on and we form a versatile part of the Bde Signal Sqn. We are well represented in the football and hockey sides of the Sqn and LCpl Hunkin is proving an asset to the Bde football team. Our OC represents us at hockey.

SSgt McWilliams runs the after-hours activities and is doing well even if all the films are X certs. All volunteers (good Corps men) are welcome here in 'Bandit Country'.

Issue 127 dated June 1976

Page 13 – D & ER PI HQ Northern Ireland

(SO3 P&L: Capt DT Cooper, CSM: WO2 M Tighe, VCP Comd: Sgt AW Wildman, Clerk: Cpl TH Campbell)

On 6th March Capt Tilleke caught his ferry bound for the joys of BAOR and he was followed on 1st April by CSM Brothwood complete with wife and dogs on route for 13 Group. We wish them and their families well and hope they have a happy tour in Germany.

Capt Cooper and CSM Tighe have settled in – unfortunately for the platoon they have each come unaccompanied and frequently appear at inopportune times to 'see what's happening'! CSM Tighe finds time to 'sling his hook' occasionally but never stops mumbling about the low cost of fishing in the province, compared to Bicester.

It is rumoured that he may ask for an extension because the fishing is so good. Capt Cooper on the other hand seems to spend a lot of time in civvies – he says that he is visiting pioneers throughout the province but we think this is an excuse to play James Bond and wear a shoulder holster. CSM Tighe has claimed a record – he arrived on 30th March and his posting order out of Ulster arrived on 31st March!

The recent marked increase in terrorist activity and violence in the province has meant a great deal of extra work for every member of the platoon. We have been engaged in carrying out vehicle patrols, foot patrols and mounting snap Vehicle Check Points (VCP). Even the clerk and armoury storemen have had to pick up rifles and be soldiers.

Capt Cooper has developed a very smooth line of chat which he tries out on all the dolly birds, milkmen and bakers. Only the milkmen seem to respond and he can often be seen with a 'pinta' in one hand and his rifle in the other.

CSM Tighe has become expert at directing traffic and threatens to transfer to the RUC. CSM Brothwood had to spend his last fortnight wearing a flak jacket and do some real soldiering – take note Black Mac and Supermac.

Unfortunately we have no further news to report on the selection of a Miss Pioneer, but Capt Cooper still has regular meetings with PR.

Page 13 – 3 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn

We have been hard at work and play here in Lurgan. The platoon has gone from strength to strength with all members carrying out their tasks with determination, although they vary consistently. Mention must be made of the long hours our soldiers work, both on guard at our three guardrooms and patrolling the areas which are our responsibility, and of the spirit in which our Joint NCOs have carried out their tasks as patrol leaders.

This together with street patrols in Lurgan has given us much pride in our role here. At present we are preparing for the move to our new Bde HQ at Portadown.

Issue 128 dated September 1976

Page 11 – 518 Company

The new Kinnegar detachment, due to take over duties in July was subjected to a rigorous training programme which included day and night vehicle check points. 2Lts Webb and Shaw out for an evening drive (the latter newly arrived at Bicester) somehow managed to get stopped by one of our practice VCPs. 2Lt Webb decided to make a run for it but 2Lt Shaw opted to come along quietly – which turned out to be a wise decision, since 2Lt Webb was later apprehended after getting thoroughly soaked in a chase around the training area.

Page 13 – COD Kinnegar Detachment – Super Soldier Competition 22-23 May 76

On 22nd May 1976, 20 competitors reported to Palace Bks at 0900 hrs for the start of the competition. Ptes Donnelly and Spink represented the Detachment.

The contest consisted of the following events, 100 metres, weapon handling, cycling, assault course, basketball, swimming, tennis, pistol shooting, weightlifting, exercises in the gym, football and steeple chase. Personnel from the Officers Mess, Sgts Mess, ASD, VSD, JSD, OKD Cpls, ODK LCpls and ODK Ptes took part in the competition.

When they reported to the Bks they were carrying an assortment of kit – track suits, SMGs, denims, running kit, plimsolls, starting blocks and various other aids for the competition and bicycles, green army type.

The first event, 100 metres, was won by Pte Donnelly with Pte Spink coming in a creditable third. This gave both our lads a good start in the competition. At the end of the first day Pte Donnelly occupied first

place and Pte Spink was not far behind in sixth place. On the second day Pte Spink did well on the assault course managing to get round in the record time of 1 min 75 secs. Unfortunately they did not do very well in the tennis taking fourth and fifth positions. At the end of the competition they finished in third (Pte Donnelly) and sixth (Pte Spink) places. A very creditable performance considering that it was the first time that they had participated in this type of competition. The result of the competition is shown below:

1st-Sgts Mess; 2nd-SSD; 3rd-Pte Donnelly; 6th-Pte Spink

On 14th July the COD Kinnegar detachment returned to Bicester after six months in Northern Ireland. The detachment was involved in a variety of tasks – modernising the Ord Depot, picquet duties, escort duties and USD support in moving stores and transport.

Page 19 – D & E PI HQ Northern Ireland

(OC: Capt DT Cooper, CSM: WO2 ME Tighe, PI Sgt: Sgt A Wildman, Clerk: Cpl P Watts)

Since June both the terrorist situation and the role of the Platoon have become more complex. The various terrorist groups on both sides seem to be lacking in cohesion and control from above, resulting in a marked increase of wildcat cowboy activity. (There are those that say the same of the D & E Platoon!). The altered pattern of illegal activities has meant a change in the role and deployment of the Platoon. A Patrol Group ably led by Cpl Smithson has been founded and he even has his own vehicles. The role of this Group is to carry out the many routine foot and vehicle patrols and checks to which we are now committed. We have had one or two hairy moments on



these patrols, including several support vehicles and some suspect Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). Two of the most memorable were the brown paper parcel which Capt Cooper investigated which turned out to be a set of pornographic magazines. He is still complaining that once back in his Land Rover the magazines disappeared and he still hasn't read them. The other suspect "bomb" turned out to be a bag of cement but Capt Cooper and the Garrison Adjutant had a fun ten minutes trying to pull it out of a hedge. The SO3 is still trying to say that it was the cement dust that turned shis hair white and not fright.

Within three days of the cement bomb we were involved in the follow up operation after the Maze Prison breakout on 4th May and we manned road blocks in the areas of the prison. Fortunately the weather was kind and we sweated all day. Our only casualty was Cpl Geordie Millsip who hit and cut his head on a Land Rover whilst following up a contact report. His wife still doesn't believe him! The burst of activity was followed the next day by a 240 lbs car bomb in the main street in Lisburn. The damage caused was considerable, about one and a half million pounds worth. Since then there have been several threats against the camp but there have been no real incidents yet. Perhaps it is due to our continued vigilance?

The Lisburn Garrison Dog Trials have just been held and Cpl Crinson was the winner, just one point ahead of LCpl Parker. The standard of dog handling was extremely high and even Merlyn Rees, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, had a look as he drove past – whether this was in admiration or fear we do not know! Our winners will now go forward to the Northern Ireland

Trials at the Maze in August.

Capt Cooper seems to live on the Press Desk these days but he has managed to persuade Radio Oxford to come out and do a programme of interviews with the Pioneers in the Province. This should be broadcast either in August or September in the Oxford-Bicester-Didcot areas.

Issue 130 dated March 1977 (No entries for N Ireland in issue 129)

PAGE 6 – 518 COMPANY – PRISON GUARD FORCE

New Year's Day HMP Magilligan on the banks of Lough Foyle in Northern Ireland. The surrounding countryside is beautiful with the lovely rolling hills of Donegal across the Lough. Whilst the countryside is attractive the purpose of our presence here is grim. Although there are many other pioneers in the province we are the first independent RPC unit to come to N Ireland during the present troubles and naturally we are pleased at scoring a first.

The administration and training in preparation for the tour was extensive and intensive. All members of the PGF underwent training at Bicester and two weeks special training for our unaccustomed role. The programme included all infantry skills and we proudly boast that we are as well equipped to carry out our role as any teeth arm unit. All subjects, with the exception of radio training were taught by our officers and NCOs. The aim of the training was to bring all ranks up to date on the techniques of operations in N Ireland and to achieve a standard which would enable us to operate independently in an infantry role. We believe we have achieved that aim and are ready to deal with whatever emergency arises.

HQ Platoon

The advance party arrived on 15th December, a wet and dreary day. Having been here before on recce we knew what to expect but the chief clerk and pay sergeant seemed disappointed that it did not come up to Butlin's standard.

We were housed temporarily in the Weekend Training Camp and soon settled down and began to learn the tricks of the trade from our counterparts in 40 Commando RM. On the 18th December the main party arrived with Lt Webb and SSgt Daniels, and the handover took place.

Preparation for Christmas festivities took a main priority at this time but it was no easy task as everyone would be on duty. However everything went off well and we all had an enjoyable time.

An excellent Christmas dinner was prepared by our number one chef and his merry band. The Q Cpl, our courier and barman, was kept busy organising the Excelsior Club bar for the lads.

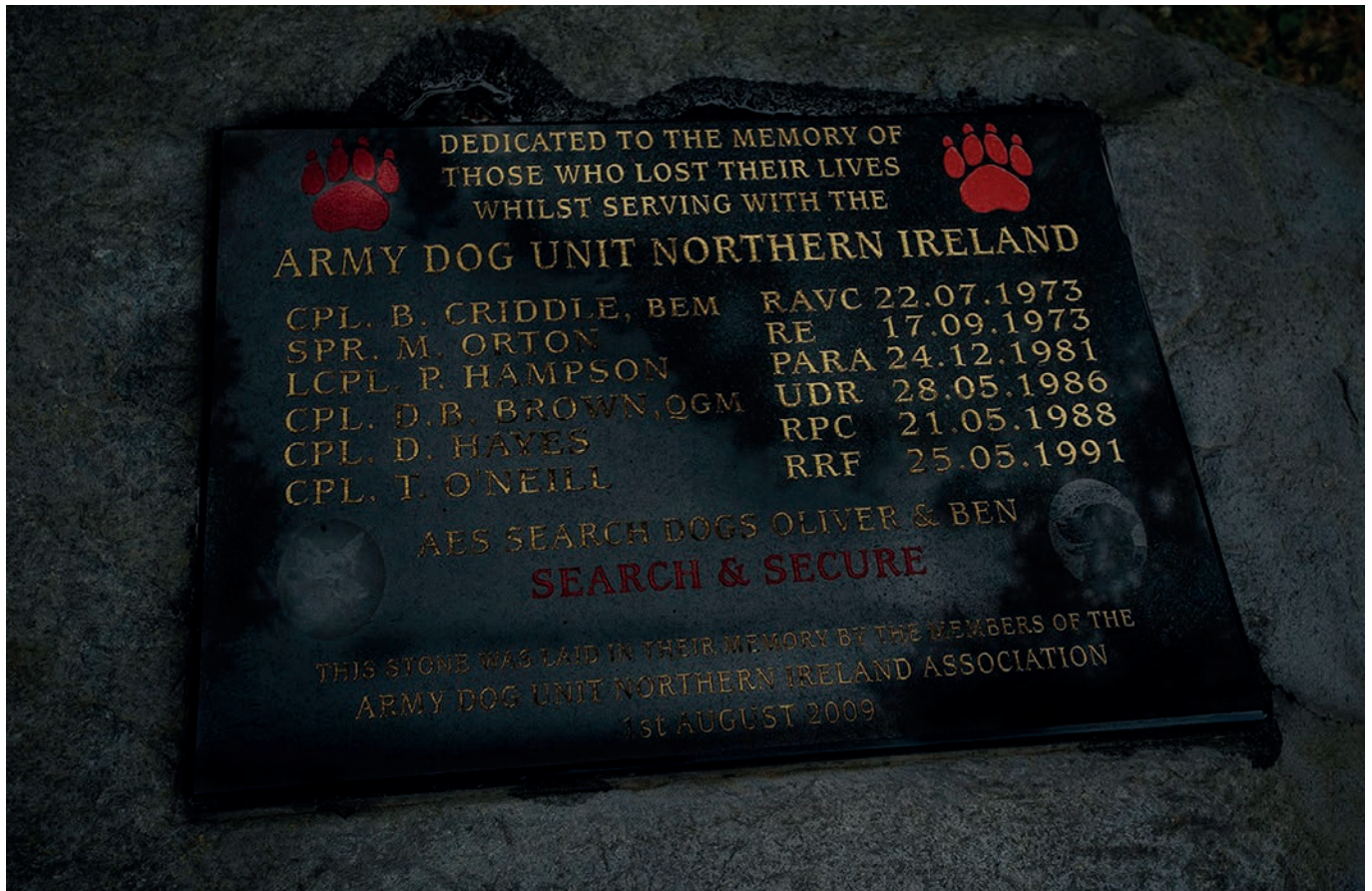
There is always a rush to get their ration of two pints of beer per night. Our Q known as the elusive Pimpernel ran around in circles and was heard muttering to himself, even in his sleep, about gloves and radio sets etc, but of course he managed to get most of our requirements.

Our MT NCO was heard constantly enquiring, 'where am I going to get the drivers'.

In the background were the ops office and the chief watchkeeper trying to convince us that they knew it all, whilst quietly the three musketeers CSM, Chief Clerk and the man everyone loves the Pay Sgt were working away getting everything organised.

We have now all settled down into our routine of duties.





Callsign 42

On 17th December 42 Section left for Northern Ireland. The journey was smooth and on arriving at Belfast Docks we were met by our section commander. We were all very keen to know what our task would be and he gave us a short briefing on what we would be doing for the next four months.

Arriving in camp we checked on the accommodation and when we saw our rooms, especially the wall paper, we decided it was as good a place as any to spend Christmas and New Year. Having received a briefing on our various tasks the section comedian remarked

"Now that we've seen what we have to do you won't mind if we sit this one out?" 42C is very quiet these days and says little except to tell us that it is only four months and three weeks before we call him Mr.

We were without our 2IC for two weeks due to some misadventure on his part but his replacement fitted in well considering that he came at the last minute.

42H has improvised a 'fridge' for his bottles of pop – he hangs the bottles out of his window by a piece of string tied to the bed.

Callsign 43

Had we been Father Christmas this is what we would have brought for our leaders:

Sunray: A spy glass as he is always lurking around somewhere

Sunray 41: A new pair of boots with 6" heels and spurs

Kestrel: A set of wings to help him flap more easily

Playtime: A set of Dinky toy landrovers
Mushroom Major: A pair of wellies and some braces

Secret Squirrel Minor: A find

Q Cpl: A reissue of army uniform

Secret Squirrel: A James Bond kit

Playtime Minor: A new swastika

Mushroom Minor: Can't provide until he comes of age

Sunray Minor 41: An action man outfit

Seagull: Some real soldiers

49 T: Shorter ladder in the towers

Mushroom Minor Minor: Some moustache wax

Sunray Minor 43: Some spare ammo

CQMS: A new hat and a Sherlock

Holmes' pipe

Sunray Minor 44: A brain transplant

CC: A new Palitoy typewriter

Sunray 44: A Cpl for 44 Section

Sunray Minor 45: An extra ration of beer

Pay Sgt: Another bank account

Sunray 45: A new lung machine

Sunray Minor 42: A new suit of civvies

Sunray 43: Some sticky buns and an extra-large girdle

45C: A hairnet

41H: The record "Silence is Golden"

Sunray 42: A year's supply of slimming tablets

We offer no prizes for identifying the players!

Callsign 44:

In order to keep idle hands busy

Mushroom Major has organised four competitions, not that anyone has much spare time. The team ping pong league is an inter-section competition and like the superchunk competition, has yet to get under way.

Callsign 45

At the beginning of 1976, 518 Company going to Northern Ireland seemed just a silly rumour as far as some of us were concerned and who would have imagined that on 1 January 1977 we would be at

Magilligan Prison.

The training for N Ireland started at Bicester with our own programme, led by Secret Squirrel (alias Cowboy Joe, Alias B G (Boy General)). The early morning PT was helpful, even if it was just to see all HQ Staff jogging along with us. The chief clerk with his bionic battalion, average of 30+ was a real sight for sore eyes. The Company was split into five sections and one reserve section. Two sections were sent on a two weeks search course with Mushroom Minor and a good time was had by all.

The next most important stage in the training was the two weeks at the special training areas. We saw ourselves on film afterwards and could see what went wrong. Among our film stars was the CSM very cool with a Robert Redford smile. When Sunray Minor 44 was blown up and asked control what he should do he was told "Pull yourself together and report back here!"

After leaving the training area for Bicester we proceeded on pretour leave for two weeks – all returned safely – no absentees. On Friday 17th December we headed for Magilligan. Arriving at the Prison we relieved 40 Commando RM and at 1300 hrs on 18th December 518 Company was fully employed on its new duties.

Issue 131 dated June 1977

Page 7 – 518 Company

Since our last notes the Company has again become an entity, albeit for a short while. The return from Northern Ireland took place overnight on the 14/15 April and went extremely smoothly, even the Irish Sea was quiet and all had a good night's sleep during the crossing.

The main party was due to arrive at 1400 hrs but they arrived some thirty minutes earlier and even the OC must have set a

record from Liverpool to Bicester. The handing in of kit and equipment, arms, etc was planned to take about four hours before departing on leave - it really is surprising what an incentive can do!

At the conclusion of the tour congratulatory messages were received from the GOC Northern Ireland and the Comd 8 Bde.

COD Kinnegar. This is a permanent task for a senior NCO and 14 men working in the Ordnance Depot and the tour of four months duration is a popular one, particularly with the single – the number of engagements and pending marriages resulting from these tours is remarkable.

Page 12 – 8 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn

(PI Sgt: Sgt LW Turner (Designate: Sgt J Tapping

We have said a fond but sad farewell to Sgt Bill Turner who has joined 518 Company on promotion – congratulations and good luck. Sgt Joe Tapping has taken over and Cpl Sheehy and family, the magnificent seven – Ptes ‘Huggy Bear’ Amoah, ‘Piggy’ Raphael, ‘Lumpy’ Cordon, ‘Big Boy’ McMahan, ‘Baby Face’ Nichols, ‘Smiler’ Holden, ‘Shorty’ Clapton have all joined us.

The platoon is kept busy and the Brigadier’s Rover Group is out most of the time escorting the Comd around his area. Cpl Steve Page has just completed a ‘drinker’s dream’ – he worked behind the bar of the Squadron Club for a month! He has booked his holidays in the Bahamas this year!

Many members of the Corps have happy memories of their former Corps or Regiments and it is a change to meet someone who has happy memories of being a Pioneer.

Maj Iain Cameron RMP, OC 176 Prov RMP here in Londonderry, joined the Corps at Wrexham, he was there for one day and then moved to Northampton. He remembers such notable members as RSM JK Atkins now Maj (QM) MBE, CSM RJ Bennett nor Maj (QM) and Cpl George Lineham now Capt and others too numerous to list. He would be pleased to hear from these Pioneers.

Issue 132 dated September 1977

Page 11 – 518 Company

Those who knew the unit a year ago will hardly recognise it since there has been an almost complete changeover. This will ensure that there is plenty of new blood for our second Magilligan tour, although stalwarts such as LCpls Wigley, Rayner and Ptes Bertram, Wright cannot resist the temptation to go back again to show the sprogs how it should be done. They are to be seen with the rest of the force practising VCPs, riot drills, signals, etc, around Graven Hill and muttering about having to wear flak jackets in mid-summer.

Issue 133 dated December 1977

Page 12 – 518 Company – PGF Magilligan

From reports received, and the PGF newsletter, it would seem that the untouchables are firmly ensconced in HMP Magilligan. Those of us who have heard Maj Geoff Hill muttering threats regarding locking away naughty idle individuals in the company now smile knowing that he has

been at least 50% successful. While the stalwarts get on with the job back at Bicester, we know that the PGF are working – to a certain extent! The rumours of a merger between Cpl (Service with a Smile) Biel’s social bar and the Mecca Empire are unfounded. Eric Morley feels that the HMP social club lacks customer attraction – except for off duty soldiers looking for somewhere to have a couple of beers. Besides, the bouncers on the front gate can get nasty. While on duty Capt Nick Harcourt RE and Lt David Morgan assure us that the lads are producing the goods in true Pioneer fashion. Capt Harcourt also stresses that this includes the two sections of Sappers with the PGF. It won’t be long now before the PGF returns home to Bicester, in time for the Christmas festivities.

Issue 134 dated March 1978

Page 5 – 518 Company – PGF Magilligan

The wanderers have returned to the fold. Mid-December saw the reappearance of Maj Hill, Capt Dickson, Lt Morgan and “Main” back at Bicester. Some three weeks previous to this event Colonel Ridings had been the bearer of a Video Tape Recording made by the wives of the lads in Magilligan. This tape was a preview of the welcome to come, although the decorum was such that Cpl Biel’s wife could only stare wistfully at the camera. Mesdames Bryce, Murray, Cheeseman and De-Leslie managed to say a few words to their husbands which no doubt accounted for their early arrival back at Bicester.

There were farewells to Capt Harcourt RE and his merry band of sapper who departed for Barton Stacey., We hope that the friendships made can be kept up.

After the “Salts of Magilligan” had shaken the sand of Magilligan Point from their boots, it was off home for a well-earned rest.

Issue 136 dated September 1978 (No notes from N Ireland in issue 135)

Page 14 – D & E Pl 3 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn

There is never a dull moment here in Portadown with the members of the platoon constantly being involved in tasks both routine and unconventional.

The Director, Brig AF Mutch visited Portadown on 13 June. He was greeted on arrival by Maj JJ Ventham OC Sig Sqn and Capt McMahan and visited the Bde Comd before meeting all members of the Platoon both on and off duty.

We were all very pleased to welcome our Director who had plenty of news for us on the future of the Corps (I hope we don’t get too many volunteer applications for BAOR or Belize).

The Platoon has carried out a number of operational tasks at the Omeath VCP, as part of the Signal Squadron commitment. This particular job is an excellent outlet for our soldiers to display their ability in the Infantry role. We all enjoy tasks with the Roulement unit in Portadown carrying out street patrols, bomb watch, mobias and VCPs.

NB. Anyone wishing to come to lively and worthwhile posting must have passed their Battle Fitness Test.

Issue 137 dated December 1978

Page 15 – D & E Pl 8 Inf Bde and Sig

Sqn (PI Sgt: Sgt EO Tappin)

A great deal has happened to the platoon since the last Corps notes were written. There seems to be an endless amount of work to do. However, we still find time to send a few people away on exercises and adventure training. Cpl Goodman and Pte Cole went on exercise Summer Rump – canoeing on the River Wye in Wales – which they both enjoyed. Pte Wilkins and Cole (yet again) also went skiing in Scotland.

With escorts, street patrolling in the city and manning TAC HQ, the diary is more than full than it has been for a long time. So it’s back to the grindstones lads!

Issue 138 dated March 1979

Page 3 – 206 Company

On 17 Jan we were delighted to be visited by the DAPL. In the morning he presented the GOC Northern Ireland’s commendation to Cpl Danny Curran. Unfortunately Mrs Curran was unable to be present for the event as she recently gave birth to a baby son.

Page 14 – D & E Pl 39 Inf Bde

(OC Capt JFJ Allen, CSM: WO2 Willcocks, Pl Sgt: Sgt Burden, Pro Sgt: Sgt I Dewsnap, Clk: Cpl McCloskey

It has been a long time since we have had a mention in this magazine so we decided it was about time we put matters right.

We have had a number of visitors to the platoon, from the COC, General Sir Timothy Creasey, downwards and all have left with an excellent impression of Pioneers. The most recent visit was in fact by Maj DDLI Davies, who spoke to most of the lads and outlined the current planning and posting structure in the Corps, the 64 Dollar question asked of him being, “When do I go to Germany?”

Speaking of Germany, there is no truth in the rumour that Sgt Burden has been promised a posting there in return for a pair of patrol boots. Maj Davies toured most of 39 Inf Bde and 3 Inf Bde and saw Pioneers in a variety of operational tasks where all concerned spoke most highly of their Pioneers both attached and under command. Visits from across the water are always very informative and much appreciated by the lads.

We have a section of Pioneer Dog Handlers ably marshalled by Cpl Jock Ritchie, who periodically puts on displays consisting of Obedience, Agility and the Dog/Handler Relationship.

Towards the end of each display there is a show of how the dog goes into the attack of his victim. Unfortunately during one recent display whilst Sgt Burden was in the baiting suit the dog “got the better” of him – what a shame we don’t award “Purple Hearts” for wounds sustained in theatres of operations.

It is now the time to start training, but it is rather difficult at the moment with snow and frost about, the dogs won’t want to work, they would rather play or is it the handlers.

Issue 139 dated June 1979

Page 5 – 518 Company

The third overseas detachment that we have out at the moment is the Forkhill detachment in Northern Ireland. They went



in early March under the command of 2Lt Wilde of 521 Company. They are involved in helping the Engineers demolish damaged buildings, building new structures, defending helicopter landing sites, escort duties and finally defending the camps.

As they are living in a rural area they are having quite a holiday in between mortar attacks, like the one in March which devastated some buildings. Luckily nobody was hurt in the fracas.

They are living in fairly cramped conditions but for all that they are enjoying their time there, after all, they spend some of their time in the evenings at various disco's and dances, chatting up the fair sex, so it can't be too bad.

**Issue 140 dated September 1979
Page 5 – 518 Company**

Our first Northern Ireland Detachment has returned to the fold at Bicester and Lt Jones and his band of heroes has departed. 2Lt Wilde and Sgt Davison (who is staying on a while longer in the province because he doesn't have to pay for his food and accommodation) and the first detachments did stirring work at Forkhill, Crossmaglen, Newton Hamilton and Castle Dillon.

At Crossmaglen "3 to a hole" they dug the foundations for a new police station out of heavy slate and shale. All the RE pneumatic equipment had gone "US".

At Forkhill the stalwarts had to be called back to instruct the new RE Sqn in the skills of laying 11 ton concrete caissons complete with mounting bolts for scaffolding. Conditions were bloody, work was hard, but most of the time the lads were cheerful and morale was high.

We confidently expect that Lt Jones' section will carry on the good work in exactly the same manner, keeping alive old skills and attaining new ones.

Page 17 – D & E PI 3 Inf Bde

(OC: 2Lt JF Wright, PI Sgt: Sgt AC Fill)

Life for the Platoon speeds along as usual like a "Gazelle" on overdrive. The lads justify our X factor by pushing out the odd 25 hour day and stag-on through the night like Trojans.

Regular operations in S Armagh and in our own TAOR provide war-stories to while away the quiet hours, whilst we continue to be deployed province-wide in our other role flying the Corps flag in support of many other units and cap badges. As a direct of this type of work Cpl Roy Ainsley has been awarded the GOC's Commendation for meritorious service.

We continue to cultivate a good relationship with the locals, Cpls Thompson, Waugh and Pte Carter during their bit in the battle for hearts and minds by running a Disco in the local children's home.

The Platoon are also building a Death-Slide for our Children's Summer Fete under the watchful eye of Sgt Fill, this being "The year of the Child" – the RSM offered to be the test pilot.

The unit feature story for this edition must be the one about Pte Rudge when rescuing a broken down vehicle in Belfast, he borrowed a worn pair of tights from an obliging Woman Police Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary to replace the broken fan belt, discovered they were too short to reach all the pulleys and so returned them to their owner nicely knotted and oiled. Initiative bursting from every pore he dashed into a shop to buy another pair, when asked what size tights he required, he casually replied, "To fit a 69 mini..."

Page 17 – D & E PI 39 Inf Bde

(OC: Capt JFJ Allen, CSM: WO2 MD Smith, PI Sgt: Sgt T Burden, Provost Sgt: Sgt T Power)

We have somewhat hectic time during the last month so, not least of which were the departure of some familiar faces and the arrival of some new ones.

During the period 5-7 June we were visited by the Commander 23 Group whose feet hardly touched the ground during his lightning tour of the Province. The visit was very much appreciated by all ranks and considered most worthwhile and beneficial to all. The Commander was given the opportunity to visit Pioneers both on rural and urban operations – and although perhaps a fleeting glimpse it demonstrated some of the various and multiple operational tasks undertaken by the Corps within the Province.

We have also had the company of Lt L Gregori for five weeks (he called it his RMCS summer vacation!) and now he is convinced that he is grade one "Sneaky Beaky". At least he left us smiling.

Page 17 – Ordnance Depot, NI

Two members of the Corps took part in a sponsored run organised by Ordnance Depot Northern Ireland on 1 August in aid of Charities representing Huntington's chorea and Action Cancer.

The run took the form of a 30 mile course comprising 3 runs of 10 miles, from Portavogie to Hollywood and the sum of £200 was raised on behalf of these charities.

The two Corps soldiers who joined with three RAOC soldiers for the run were Sgt Wallace and Cpl Robinson.

The Commanding Officer and all ranks of Ordnance Depot Northern Ireland would like to thank them for their participation in raising funds for such worthy causes.

Issue 142 dated March 1980

(No details in issue 141 from N Ireland)



Picture: This picture is in our archive for Northern Ireland, however we do not yet have a name of the Pioneer. Do you recognise the Pioneer?

Page 7 – 518 Company

November saw the changeover of the Northern Ireland sections with 2Lt Le Sueur taking over from Lt Jones. The tour in the province brought to the forefront some of the section characters, who became well known to the Royal Engineers. Ptes Openshaw, Wisby, Rawson and Hanford impressed everyone with their cheerfulness and hard work. However all members of the section deserve a mention for the effort they put in. The section proved that humour is not restricted even in a tense area like Northern Ireland.

The adventures of Pte Openshaw became so well known that it was rumoured that he was going to sign on to do a tour at Butlin's for the summer season (behind the wire). A happy and cheerful personality, Pte Openshaw is a good example of the way in which the Pioneer always stays on top – even if he's up to his knees mud and concrete.

One particular episode of the activities of this character – 518's answer to the Hulk – should not go unrecorded. Although Newton's Law of Gravity has been known for over two hundred years, Pte Openshaw, Cpl Fallon and LCpl Shields were not aware of its existence – until recently that is. They proved that three Pioneers standing on the end of a long plank acting as part of a piece of scaffolding, cannot be expected to remain in situ if the other end is not secured! The resultant force proved that Pioneers cannot defy gravity – and all three have now sampled the delights of "Free Fall Parachuting" without the use of a parachute, (well 20 feet is a long way down). Cpl Field, Pte Nelson and Lt Jones will also remember that you can have a "smashing" time taking a convoy from one workshop to another, especially when you have a hedgecutter on tow.

With the changeover of the Section in November, we were fortunate to have been inspected by the GOC Northern Ireland, Lt Gen Sir Timothy Creasey on the day of the departure of Lt Jones' section. The GOC was visiting the Royal Engineers Squadron, he was introduced to all the personnel in the section, and his kind words of appreciation on the hard work carried out by them during the stay in Northern Ireland were much appreciated.

Issue 143 dated June 1980

Page 7 – 518 Company

The second half of the detachments tour at Castledillon would appear to have fallen on the closed season. The Brigade area was very calm with few incidents that affected the Squadron. The highlight being yet one more Op Tonnage. This saw the detachment involved in the mundane but vital work of unloading stores and mounting guards.

February saw a change of tempo with the departure of 11 Fd Sqn RE and the arrival of 34 Fd Sqn RE.

It also marked the arrival of a Suspect IED at Castledillon gates. However, it was not long before ATO was tasked and it was shown to be a hoax and little more than an empty suitcase.

Meanwhile work progressed on the sites. The Para's look on with glee as their new accommodation block continues to grow out of the mud, it now having received floors and a roof.

However, the RUC at Crossmaglen are

even nearer to moving in as the finishing trades go to work on their new police station. Mid-March saw the wheel come full circle with the arrival of a fresh detachment from Bicester, ready to be flung into the vigour's of yet another OP Tonnage.

Page 18 – Defence Pl Portadown (Pl Comd Lt S Bailey)

We now have a new platoon Comd in the shape of Lt Bailey late of 206 Coy. Sgt Freeman who used to be the platoon Sgt has now left us for a lucrative job in civvy street and Cpl Kirby has been promoted Sgt and has taken on the important job of the platoon second-in-command.

On the work side of life, the platoon continues to provide a vital presence in the security of the families in Portadown.

The Guardroom and Sangers are in the process of being redecorated thus giving a smarter and more comfortable place of work for us.

Lt Bailey discovered that working in a Sangar and patrolling the quarters is a lot harder than most people think, but was pleased to see the professionalism displayed by his men.

So amid all this insane activity the RPC continues to carry on in the best traditions of professional soldiers.

Issue 144 – dated September 1980

Page 7 – 518 Company

The Northern Ireland detachment has continued its task within the border areas of South Armagh. 2Lt Wilde returned there for a short period to assist the detachment, and Sgt Millsip joined them on promotion.

To say that this work is dangerous is an understatement, our detachments have been mortared and shot at.

The most serious casualty was Cpl Pullen, who received a gunshot wound in his side. We are glad to say that he has now fully recovered and is back in Bicester.

The 21 men working from Castle Dillon are the fourth detachment we have sent there. The first detachment put up the cover-from-view screening which enabled the work to continue in relative safety.

The building in Crossmaglen is now ready for occupation. This has been a popular task, one which gives a great deal of satisfaction seeing a building rise from the muddy wastes of South Armagh.

Demolition seems to be the theme for the latter part of this tour, as Sgt Millsip is co-ordinating work in Lurgan where Cpl Murray, and his crew have started taking the base apart.

This seems to be going very well and the base is coming down in record time, in fact if the resident unit does not hurry up and leave, they will not have a base left to remain in, as LCpl Openshaw, Ptes Hamblin, James and Lancaster, have thrown themselves into the work with such gusto that they are way ahead of schedule.

Cpl Palmer's section have done sterling work in Crossmaglen, working with LCpl Adams, who recently completed two years in Lisburn with the Defence Platoon.

In Forkhill, LCpls Cole and Spencer stepped into the breach left by Cpls Pullen abrupt departure, and are doing very well.

Their section has thrown themselves into the work in there very enthusiastically and has even passed on some good tips to the Engineers!

Issue 145 dated December 1980

Page 12 – 518 Company – Castle Dillon Despatches Aug/Oct 80 (Lt M Le Sueur)

The arrival of the new detachment in mid-August was unfortunately marred within a few days by a tragic accident in August. As a result of the accident LCpl Lee died two days later and Pte Light is still in hospital where he is slowly progressing. This event left both detachments, the Sappers and the civilian staff with a great sense of loss. In the few days LCpl Lees had spent at Castle Dillon he had impressed everyone with his keen sense of purpose and amiable nature. The sympathies of the detachment are extended to his family. Pte Baylon who was also involved in the accident received twenty odd stitches in having his ear sewn back on. However, he has now fully recovered, in fact the accident did not impede him returning to UK for planned leave.

During the tour work has continued steadily at both sites. The new RUC station at Crossmaglen is now complete and the accommodation block at Forkhill should be completed in the very near future. The detachment has again taken part in another Op Tonnage resupplying the South Armagh Garrisons. Pte Gibson, looking all the world like some latter day stagecoach guard, rode shotgun on one vehicle. However these days the 7th cavalry take the form of the Commandos hedge hopping helicopters. The only notable incident during this operation was a bomb exploding prematurely on the route only hours before the start. The usual stone and paint throwing incidents took place throughout the journey.

We are now preparing for our R and R and a few well-earned days out of the province. Some people will stop at nothing to get extra leave – LCpl Johnson managed an extra two weeks by having his appendix removed.

Issue 146 – dated March 1981

Page 5 – 518 Company – The Armagh Connection Oct 80/Jan 81

Early November saw the detachment increase to 36 Pioneers and Lt Graham take over command from Lt Le Sueur. The "new boys" completed one week's training in Ballykinler which was very varied and kept everybody working 14 hours a day. Lt Graham managed to encourage a few smiles when he volunteered to be the villain in the guard dog demonstration. He managed to cover all of 20 yards before he was unceremoniously grounded by a dog the size of a Shetland Pony! Upon arrival at Castle Dillon the detachment soon settled in, the lucky ones remaining in base for guard duties were able to sample the delights of the twice weekly discos.

Life on the sites became very busy with LCpl Watmuff's section running the Crossmaglen mud pie construction competition. Off duty the platoon was writing to every single or unattached girl in the UK, and actually received replies! LCpl Maughan and Pte Gibson were continually competing to see who got the most mail, have read it, they would promptly pass it amongst the platoon and compare notes! Cpl McPhillips section received some type of record by digging up and burying one particular length of cable at least a dozen times. Pte Broady developed a meaningful

relationship with the cement mixer and had to be prised away from the thing at the end of each day.

Near the end of the tour Maj Othen's last visit to the detachment fortunately coincided with the farewell party. The new detachment soon arrived full of enthusiasm under the command of Lt GC Hardy. As will all other detachments they had undergone vigorous training, and had been attached to the 3rd Bn The Parachute Regiment for this.

During the tour one of the sections was put on a task repairing the married quarters perimeter fence after storm damage. They were so successful on this task that when the Royal Engineer supervisor went on R and R they were left to carry on under Cpl Thomas. The jobs themselves have been wide ranging, from cement mixing and digging, to plumbing and interior decorating. LCpl Shaw has found that the finer points of plumbing were more complicated than he expected, whilst Pte Woods has found a substitute girlfriend – his dumper truck! LCpl Docherty was seen digging up the floor of one of the blocks in search of gold or water, it was difficult to be sure which one.

Pte Young has found a talent for boasting even though it was often in defence of the flower of Scotland and Billy Connolly. Lt Hardy found that there was more to running a 518 Company detachment in Northern Ireland than met the eye. He had to run the Squadron reinforcement training, as well as holding the fort at Castle Dillon and supervising the personnel out on the sites.

Since its arrival in the province, the detachment has seen the following private soldiers promoted to Lance Corporal: Shaw, Baker, Gladdin, Irwin and Fallows. It is hoped that the rest of the tour will continue to be as enjoyable as the first part.

Page 4 – Defence Platoon - Lisburn Garrison (Pl Comd: WO2 R McWilliams, Pl Sgts: Sgt TE Power, Sgt D Nicholson)

Since Christmas the platoon has been fairly quiet, but this is shortly to change when Sgt (Taffy) Power returns from his All-Arms-Drill Course, no doubt he will be only too pleased to demonstrate to all his abilities on the square.

On the sporting scene, although the platoon is committed to working round the clock, we still manage to keep ourselves physically fit as the Defence Platoon from Portadown discovered when they were thrashed 22 – 1. No more to be said on this subject except they have asked for a return match in 1988.

Entertainments within the Garrison over the next three months is going to be enjoyed by all as the Garrison Adjutant, Capt Homewood, is building up a reputation as the man for all seasons. The last show the Adjutant organised turned out to be a fantastic evening as most of the performers were TV personalities. Roll on the next show, applause from all members of the Garrison.

We welcome to Headquarters Lisburn Garrison, Lt Col MJ Grinnell-Moore, Maj Harrison and family and wish them a very pleasant tour in NI.

We are sorry to be losing in March from the Regimental Police, Cpl Kirkham, who is posted to BAOR. We thank him for all his hard work over the past two years and wish

him and his wife the best of luck in his new post.

Page 30 – Congratulations

Sgt T Burden and LCpl N Butterworth on being awarded the GOCs Commendation for service in Northern Ireland.

Issue 147 dated June 1981

Page 5 – 518 Company – Northern Ireland Detachment

Work is now picking up after the winter period (not that it every really slowed down), The detachment has seen another change of command when Lt Hardy returned to the Company as 2IC and Lt Graham moved back into the hot seat.

This has been a busy period for the detachment, in February the resupply of the sites meant much hard work outside our normal run of tasks. This re-supply required a bulk load of stores to be moved from Castledillon through South Armagh to the two worksites. This entails much hard work in the preparation and stockpiling ready for the move. Security arrangements have to be made for the loads protection but even with this protection there is still something that makes the skin crawl and the hackles rise when passing a car with a long antenna and when driving over culverts. The detachment were employed as drivers, escorts and guards.

In February we were visited by Maj Powell in his new capacity as OC. He listened patiently to everyone's complaints, achievements, war stories and certainly had his work cut out in interviewing every member of the detachment. A task not helped by the fact that the ground crews at Heathrow Airport decided to hold a one day strike which meant that he had to shorten his visit by a day. All visits and interviews were crammed in, leaving sufficient time for a detachment smoker organised by Sgt Bryant and Cpl Oliver. As the evening progressed Cpl Docherty and Pte Young gave some awful renditions of some Billy Connolly type songs, proving that a Scotsman with a beer is about as intelligible as a Matabele tribesman with a lisp.

As the tour progressed the tasks were reduced resulting in a reduction in numbers of the next RPC detachment. Our remaining tasks however have still to be carried out as efficiently as ever by the four sections, commanded by Cpls Docherty, Oliver, Salt and Thomas.

9 Parachute Squadron RE returned to Aldershot in March and as the only remaining inmates of Castledillon, we welcomed 3 Field Squadron RE, an efficient and very friendly Squadron with whom we immediately integrated.

All good things come to an end and early in March Lt Graham and half the detachment, not unwillingly, gave up their places to Lt Coates and some of the new detachment, the remaining changeover taking place over the following two weeks.

Page 7 – An Operation in Ireland by Cpl PN Thomas

After weeks of stocking up stores in Castledillon the time came to move it all out to the worksites. This was to be done by road through South Armagh, notorious for its high terrorist activity.

I was called to attend an O Group. We were given routes, appointments and most

important, timings which were crucial if the operation was to be a success. In our support we were to have the Infantry and Royal Engineer Search Teams to provide convoy protection. My task was to be 'tail end charlie' for a packet of nine vehicles. This entails keeping the lead vehicle informed of the gap between front and rear, thus ensuring the convoy stays together.

At 1800 it was time to get ready. I put on my Camcream and donned by Flack Jacket and Webbing and made sure I had my Field Dressing. I drew my weapon from the Armoury and checked my ammunition. Each round was cleaned and carefully placed in the magazine as I could not afford any stoppages if we made contact.

We were ready to move, engines running but lights out, our vehicles were to be first out. Word came down the line and off we went driving without lights for the first mile or so. The route which would take about two hours through narrow lanes and back roads. The convoy was making good progress but this was no time to relax. As we passed parked cars on the roadside I could not help but think how much explosive they could hold if they were car bombs. The roads were dark with no street lights, not knowing what was round the next corner kept me alert.

It started to rain as we reached a steep hill which reduced the convoy speed to about five miles an hour, this could well be a good ambush position for the IRA. At that moment I saw something in the hedge on the roadside but to my relief this turned out to be one of the supporting Infantry Soldiers. As we passed him I thought how lucky I was to be in the vehicle but I'm sure he was thinking how lucky he was to be on the ground.

At 2050 hours we were meeting our objective and I could see the welcome sight of lights of the base. As soon as we pulled in, other pioneers from our detachment swarmed onto the vehicles and began to off-load. The turnaround time was very important because we have to be off-loaded before the next packet arrived. This was not to be the end for me though; we still had the return journey to do. During this operation I was to make ten trips in all, each as demanding as the first.

Issue 148 dated September 1981

Page 6 – 518 Company – Northern Ireland Detachment by Lt DA Voice and Sgt MR Kell

There I was, sat in my comfortable office in Castledillon when the phone rang, "Ext 39", I says, "2IC, 518 Coy here, Corps Magazine notes required as soon as possible", "Right", I said, "be with you next week".

"Sgt Kell" says I, in my most authoritative voice, "2IC wants magazine notes by tomorrow, what have we got". "Not a lot" came the reply". "Not good enough, we must give them something, what about our move over here on the 6th July", "No, that's no good" replied Sgt Kell. "Well then, what about our deployment to Crossmaglen and Forkhill", "Don't be silly, Sir, who would want to know that". "Yes, I'm sorry, that's no good. Well then, you give me some suggestions". "Well Sir, you could mention the escort job we did on 22 July, you know, that 2 mile long convoy we took



BELFAST
TELEGRAPH



from Castledillon to Belfast and back without losing a vehicle". "Yes, that's a good idea, I'll use that, what else?" "Well, what about the work the boys are actually doing on the sites!" "OK, I could include that – one problem though, what exactly are they doing?" "That's easy Sir, just send all the photo's you've got in front of you, then everyone can see what they are doing!" "Oh yes, I didn't think of that, well done Sgt Kell. Now what else, shall I mention how much everyone is looking forward to their R and R, or what about the fishing, sailing and canoeing on Castledillon Lake?" "No, I don't think that's really what is required Sir, I'll tell you what Sir, ring up the 2IC and tell him we haven't got anything for next issue of the Corps Magazine but we will have for the issue after that". "Good idea Sgt Kell, why didn't I think of that!!!!"

**Issue 149 dated December 1981
Page 2 – In Memoriam**

Two members of the Corps have recently lost their lives whilst serving in Northern Ireland:

Pte Stephen Humble – 26 August 1981
Pte Sohan Singh Virdee – 4 September 1981

Our sincere condolences and sympathy are extended to the families of our late comrades.

Page 6 – 518 Company – Northern Ireland

As autumn descends upon us once again, it is time to get out our Wellies and Raincoats, and start singing "Dancing in the Rain" as the heavens open up yet again and the worksite once again turns into a quagmire.

Work is progressing rapidly on both

worksites. Due to the recent departure of 3 Inf Bde the resident RE Sqn now has more patrols being undertaken by the detachment.

A recent exercise planned by the RAF to fly in supplies to Forkhill and Crossmaglen by Chinook Helicopter was cancelled when it was discreetly pointed out to them that neither helicopter landing side was big enough!

We are now looking forward to our return to Bicester in November and to a well-earned Christmas break.

**Issue 150 dated April 1982
Page 7 – 518 Company- Northern Ireland Detachment**

The platoon arrived in the province in two parties. The first party arrived on 4 November and the second on 11 November. After an intense NIRTT (Northern Ireland Reinforcement Training Team) Course the platoon was passed fit for role on 21 November.

Two sections were immediately deployed, one to Crossmaglen and the other to Forkhill.

The work on these sites range from painting, plastering and floor screeding to the reinforcement of the new building roofs with sandbags.

We have seen the arrival of 8 Field Squadron RE and the departure of their predecessors. SSgt Davison has also returned to the Company in preparation for his posting to Germany and he has been replaced by Sgt Fitzgerald.

Pte Pascoe has entered a sponsored slim in aid of Guide Dogs for the Blind. He's going to be told about it when he returns from Crossmaglen!!

Pte Galloway was most surprised to find out that the electric wall driers are not

normally used to dry your hair with.

The detachment spent Christmas in Castledillon. One of the high priority tasks was the collection of the Christmas trees!

Page 7 – Cpl VN Wall, Royal Pioneer Corps

On 3 February 1982 at Headquarters South East District, Lieutenant General Sir Paul Travers KCB, the General Officer Commanding, presented Cpl Wall with a Commendation for his actions during an operational tour in Northern Ireland in 1981. Colonel WM Thomas, Commander 23 Group Royal Pioneer Corps, Cpl Wall's Commanding Officer, was also present for the ceremony.

Cpl Wall enlisted into the Corps in February 1966. He was born in Crumlin, Monmouthshire in 1949 and was a miner before joining the Army.

He has served with 521, 518 and 206 Companies and was involved in the evacuation of Malta.

He terminated his service in 1976 and then worked as a shot blaster in a steelworks until re-enlisting in June 1980. Since re-enlistment, he has served with 518 Company in UK, Northern Ireland, Belize and Denmark.

He is a keen sportsman who particularly enjoys playing rugby.

Cpl Wall was a tug-of-war enthusiast during his earlier years in the service. The enthusiasm, energy and devotion to duty which he has displayed has not only earned him the commendation, but has also resulted in his rapid promotion since his re-enlistment.

**Issue 151 dated September 1982
Page 11 – 518 Company – Northern Ireland Detachment**

After many signals and telephone calls,

the idea permeated through that it was time for an article for the Corps magazine.

Well, here we are, 27 refugees from 518 Company, happily installed in Castledillon, "Castle where?" one may ask – as yet, no-one has found out!! Castledillon is the nerve centre for Pioneer Operations in South Armagh, although the Platoon is assisted by 32 Fd Swn RE. One described Castledillon as 'nerve centre' and indeed it is, for the Platoon Headquarters and One Section reside here, while the remaining Section (each Section being eight men strong) are in Belfast and Forkhill respectively. Everyone has been working very hard and the completion dates for the jobs are getting close. Already, Crossmaglen is all but finished and soon the Section will be pulling out of Forkhill.

Amazingly enough, the local inhabitants believe that the rocket proof buildings we are helping to construct are in fact anti-nuclear shelters, into which the local Government will disappear on 'the day the Third World War breaks out'.

The Section in Belfast under Cpl Brown is doing a staunch job, and often tells us of the delight of dodging the bottles and rocks whilst on site – rock throwing and bottling being quaint local customs.

Life in Castledillon is very relaxed. SSgt Tranent does all the work and keeps his Platoon Commander out of the proverbial, whilst said Platoon Commander (who shall remain nameless – especially as he is writing this article) is often seen jogging around the location in sports kit trying to look busy and going to the office, only when a free cup of coffee is in the offing.

Page 13 – 521 Company

We still continue providing soldiers in support of the Ordnance Depot at Kinnegar

in Northern Ireland. This attachment proves to be a favourite amongst our men with many requests for extensions or second tours. Although the hours worked are long and arduous the real soldiering aspect of the job makes life more interesting and satisfying for the men.

Issue 154 dated September 1983 (no entries for N Ireland in issues 152 and 153)

Page 35 – Obituaries – Alice Patricia Purvis

The murder of Mrs Alice Patricia Purvis by IRA gunmen on 10th May whilst staying at her mother's home in Londonderry shocked the Nation.

Bravely she stood in front of her husband when masked gunmen burst into the room where the family was watching television and she was deliberately shot.

Alice Purvis was a popular and respected member of every unit in which her husband had served. At the Petroleum Centre RAOC where SSgt Purvis is the senior member of the Royal Pioneer Corps Detachment and where she was also employed, the news of her death was met with horror and grief.

She is remembered as a lady of great character and charm, for the active part she took in the Wives' Club and other unit functions, as one who welcomed (and comforted) new wives, and who tenderly guarded her 'chicks'. Each Christmas Day every soldier in barracks not on duty was assured of a welcome at the Purvis home.

At the same time as her funeral service in Londonderry a Service was held at West Moors, conducted by the Blandford Garrison Padre. It cannot be recalled when so many people – military, civilian staff and families have ever assembled in the unit before.

Our deepest sympathy goes to Staff Sergeant Purvis who at the time of writing has had five operations since the shooting, to her son and daughter and to her sister Mrs Ann Wasson, also injured in the shooting.

Issue 155 dated December 1983 Page 12 – 521 Company

Detachments to the Northern Ireland Ordnance Depot at Kinnegar come and go and the regular turnover time is always a hectic one. This is a well sought after detachment by many members of the unit even though the working hours are long. The limited social life is good and the soldiers are well looked after. One of the few opportunities the OC has of getting out of Bicester is his regular four monthly visits to this detachment. Is he trying to get his Northern Ireland Medal the hard and long way??

Issue 156 dated may 1984 Page 7 – 206 Company

We have one LCpl and four Ptes detached to 655 Sqn AAC for six months in Northern Ireland.

Page 9 – 518 Company – Antrim Detachment (Sec Cpl: Cpl K Hood)

We arrived at Antrim on 11 January and spent the first few days settling in and becoming accustomed to our new environment.

On the following Sunday we all set off for Ballykinler on a one week NIRTT Course and the journey turned out to be an obstacle course in itself. With all the heavy snow that had fallen we eventually ended up pushing the transport half way around Northern Ireland. After much sweating and swearing we finally arrived at our



destination to be met by a CSgt, who informed us that we would be required to run everywhere whilst on the course, which was not good news for the elder members of the section (namely Cpl Hood) – who nearly had a stroke on the spot!

The hours were long and the work was hard but everybody enjoyed it and with all the training carried out we all passed the BFT in under nine and a half minutes, including Cpl Hood.

The end of course examination showed that the lads had learnt a considerable amount with scores of 90 and 95% which was extremely pleasing, and with everybody rejoicing we returned to Antrim.

Upon our return, our first task was to assist in the repair of a button on fence at Whiterock which took us about a week. Having no experience of constructing this type of fence before the section needed to learn fast, which they did, and got stuck into the job, working extremely hard.

Back in Antrim, Ptes Fletcher and Jacques found a new dance craze in the Bridge Inn Disco, called 'head banging', in which other people banged their heads.

They found this quite sore and I am glad to say that the craze has now worn off.

One of the main tasks that we have been involved in so far during the tour was to block off some of the roads between Northern Ireland and the Republic.

With the media coverage of the job some of the lads found themselves apparently on television.

One of who, Pte Tatlock, now goes around asking people if they want his autograph (it must be great being a star!).

Other tasks with which the section have been involved include escorts both in uniform and covert, which the lads enjoy very much.

We are now looking forward to R and R in March and in May we are due to return to the Company and I am sure more detachments, hopefully in the sun.

Issue 158 dated October 1984 (No entries for N Ireland in issue 157)

Page 14 – 518 Company – Northern Ireland Detachment

As this article was being written the detachments was coming to the end of their tour at Massereen Barracks, Antrim. It had been an interesting experience for them all but more so for the younger members of the section as it was a 'first' for most of them in Northern Ireland. Ptes Bainbridge, Hall, Howe, Holland and Norwicki were all first timers but quickly settled down and into the routine with 33 Indep Fd Sqn RE. Pte Norwicki has since left the Army on routine discharge but still keeps in touch by letter with members of the section.

As new boys to the Northern Ireland scene the work has been interesting. The art of pouring concrete, fitting together scaffolding and the general construction of security fencing is now second nature to them all and especially fencing. With all this 'meccano' to play with none of them are keen to leave. The detachment has been employed all over the Province although the majority of the tasks have been in the Belfast and Londonderry areas. They are due to return to Bicester in the next few days with a task well done.

Page 15 – 521 Company

At the time of writing, the next detachment for duty with the Ordnance Depot in Kinnegar are undergoing training prior to their move. They can be seen in various shapes, sizes and guises moving

around the confines of Graven Hill. The training is hard and fair and we are delighted with their shooting standards on both SLR and pistol. At the peak of physical fitness they have no problem in passing both the Combat and Battle Fitness Tests.

Page 18 – Lisburn Garrison Defence Platoon

(Comd: WO2 RD Wallace, Sgt L Morrison)

We bid farewell to WO2 Searchfield who leaves us on promotion, we hope he enjoys his Falkland Island Tour. We wish him well and congratulate him on his award of the GOC's Commendation. Sgt Stough, LCpl Reeves, Collard, Ptes Andrews Whitley, Ross, Davidge have also left us for greener pastures.

We welcome WO2 Wallace, Sgt Morrison, who has recently been promoted, LCpls Gallaway and Black and Ptes Peacock and Evans.

The Dog Section commanded by Cpl Prescott has been fully involved in the Hearts and Minds campaign giving demonstration at the Lisburn Garrison Fete and Crumlin Village Dog Show. They have also performed well in the NI Dog Competition. It should be noted that the Lisburn Dog Section is now the largest dog unit in the Corps.

There is little opportunity for sport in Lisburn, but the Platoon has formed a football team which has met with some success against local units. Sgt Morrison has finally hung up his pads after a good season of cricket representing Garrison and a local club.

In July and August the Platoon held its annual clamp at Warcop. This complete change in routine involved a section orienteering competition in the Pennines, Range practices on an individual battle run,



Picture: DAPILs cover-protection Group
Pte Coles aloft LCpl Battenworth right



close-quarter shoots and grenade throwing, and a raft race won by Cpls Shaw's section.

The Platoon field a minor unit shooting team for Bisley including Sgt Stough, Cpl Prescott, Kirkham, Rix, LCpls Lovell and Hands. The team came a creditable 18th out of 45 and intend to do better next year.

Issue 159 dated April 1985

Page 17 – 518 Company – Northern Ireland Detachment

Approaching the end of their four month tour are the present Northern Ireland detachment based in Antrim.

Comprising of Cpl Perry, LCpl Forbes and Ptes Davies, Ainslie, Thompson, Beamont, Whittle and Nash. The section, working alongside the resident Royal Engineer Squadron, have undertaken numerous tasks throughout the province.

A number of the section were involved in the recent border closure near Enniskillen, where a road bridge was demolished and the border sealed with a large concrete barrier on the North side, while several members of the Irish Army looked on from across the river.

One item of particular interest in the area was the generator powered TV set which was rigged up to ensure that no-one missed the Monday evening episode of Coronation Street!

The most popular task carried out during the tour was the construction of a ski-slope for this year's Northern Ireland Youth Festival at the Kings Hall, Belfast.

The invitation to the preview, before the show was officially opened to the public, was accepted and the boys spent an enjoyable evening browsing around the numerous exhibits of which the ski-slope was the centre of attraction.

However, the day of our departure draws

near, and although the section have had a terrific time in Ulster.

The general feeling is one of great excitement at their imminent return to Bicester. Well almost!

Issue 160 dated August 1985

Page 12 – 206 Company – Detachment, 655 Sqn ACC, Northern Ireland

The Coy continue to man a detachment with 655 Sqn AAC in Northern Ireland where they are responsible for re-fuelling of aircraft on operation tasks. LCpl Stonebanks leads the detachment of Ptes Blunt, Abercrombie, Eden and Hughes. All are now experienced, not only in the re-fuelling techniques required for different aircraft, but as Night Sun Operators on operational tasks. On the recreational side of life, wind surfing, sailing and fishing are enjoyed.

Page 21 – Northern Ireland – Rebadging Parade Northern Ireland

On 20 February over 100 Pioneers serving in Northern Ireland gathered together to celebrate the changing of the Cap Badge. There were representatives from Lisburn Garrison Defence Platoon including the PVCP Section, dog handlers, Garrison Police and the QM's Department; 3 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn, 30 Bde HQ & Sig Sqn; 33 Ind Fd Sqn RE; Ordnance Depot Kinnegar and NIPG. Many wives, families and friends came to give their support.

The day's programme began with rehearsals at 1000 hrs conducted by WO1 (GSM) Hardie, Scots Guards, the Garrison Sergeant Major. There had been little opportunity for the contingent to practice the drills and this rehearsal gave them the sparkle they needed.

At 1115 hrs the parade was taken over by Capt Hall RPC the Garrison Adjutant and

SO3 P & L NI and the guests arrived. We were privileged to entertain Brigadier HM Rose, Comd 39 Inf Bde and Comd Lisburn Garrison, Col RD Buchanan-Dunlop, Chief of Staff HQ NI, Lt Col AG Coward RA, Deputy Garrison Comd, Lt Col JG Barbon RE, Comd Engrs, Lt Col JS Regan RAOC, Comd Sup and CO Ord Depot NI and Lt Col JA Tanner RAVC, CO ADU NI. In addition there were representatives from all units in Northern Ireland which employ Pioneers.

At 1130 hrs Maj Gen JDG Pank the Commander Land Forces arrived to inspect the Parade. He was met by Lt Col Piper RPC. Our Cap Badges were changed and the General was invited to inspect the Parade. During the inspection Capt Hardy read a short history of the Corps and its Cap Badge including details of the Corps role, past and present, in Northern Ireland.

On completion of the inspection the Commander took the dais and addressed the parade, congratulating it on its turnout and drill, and praising the Corps for its magnificent effort in the Province. The Parade then marched past and fell out to the HQ NI Officers' Mess Annex where all ranks entertained their guests to the Celebration Cup and Buffet lunch.

Page 22 – Ordnance Depot Kinnegar (NI) (PI Comd: Sgt Nelson)

We say farewell to Sgt Newton, our previous PI Comd, who has recently been posted to 187 Coy and also to LCpl Doyle who has been posted to sunny Cyprus. We wish you both the best of luck. We welcome Pte How and family who have been posted from 4 Armd Div. Pte How was heard to boast that he had done his last Exercise for a while, only to be told that we're going on exercise in Sep and Oct this year.

The 521 Coy Detachment changes over in July and we thank them for their great work in the past four months. We will welcome the new detachment with a NIRTT Course two days after their arrival. That's life in Northern Ireland.

Page 22 – Defence Platoon Lisburn Garrison (Pl Comd: WO2 RD Wallace, Pl Sgt: Sgt Morrison)

During the next few months the Defence Platoon has quite a busy period with two sections away from the 14-23 Jun on their annual battle camp at Warcop and the remainder training from 22-26 July. Our shooting team under the guidance of Cpl Rix are away to Bisley and our best wishes go with them.

WO2 Wallace at present doesn't know whether to get a job with British Airways. 'I believe he is learning to fly'. The platoon wish him the best on his resettlement. Meanwhile we would like to welcome Cpl Kewley and family and hope he enjoys his stay.

For the second year in succession HQ Lisburn Garrison entered the Northern Ireland Skill at Arms meeting with a predominantly RPC team. As with last year our main aim was to finish high enough in the min or units competition to qualify for entry to Bisley.

After the first day we were a bit disappointed to find ourselves in last position. This was probably due to 'competition nerves' in our largely inexperienced team. The second day was much more rewarding and our true form started to return. By the end of the second day we were lying fifth overall and feeling much more confident.

The last day's shooting was the Section Match in which we needed to finish in the top three to qualify. Much to our surprise we won the event outright and this gave us the much needed points to qualify for Bisley. At the time of writing Bisley is only days away. This year at Bisley we hope to finish higher than last year's team which earned a credible 16th place.

Page 23 – Provost Staff Lisburn Garrison

Recently the Provost Staff have participated in two 10km Road Races in the Province. The first, held in Lisburn, was well represented by Garrison Staff including the Adjutant, Capt Hall, the Garrison Sergeant Major, WO1 Hardie Scots Guards and Sgt Paige, Cpl Kirkham, LCpls Holloway, Richards, Forrester and Nichols of the Corps.

In the Belfast Road Run the Garrison Sergeant Major – in the Veterans Section – won a Gold Medal whilst the younger element of Cpl Kirkham, LCpl Holloway, LCpl Richards, LCpl Forrester and LCpl Nichols all settled for a faster time – but Bronze Medals.

Training for these events is carried out in between a heavy workload of clamping parked cars who either do not know or choose to ignore the new road and parking rules in Thiepval Barracks. Sgt Paige is hoping that his efforts will soon be recognised by honorary doctorate from the College of Traffic Wardens.

Page 23 – Dog Section, Lisburn Garrison (Sec Comd: Cpl Townend)

Due to a complete changeover of the handlers in the Lisburn Garrison Dog

Section we decided it would be easier to give out news in verse:

We said our farewell to Cpl Prescott and Cpl Townend took his seat
Farewell to Jenkinson and to Badger, they're now walking civvie street.
Privates Long and Walker are posted and we've shot at Warcop without a loss
We've displayed our skills for 233 and shown our paces to our Boss
Private Stevenson was in the Trials and in September he got wed.
'Sarn't Major' Wallace did some baiting, but we can't print the words he said.
We're now the biggest Pioneer Dog

Section

A fact, you'll note, of which we're proud.
We've said it all, so bye from us,
New Badge, New Beret, Old Friends, New Crown

NOTE

We gave a display at the 233 Sig Sqn Fete and a demonstration to the Deputy Garrison Commander. Private Stevenson competed in the NI Dog Trials and came 10th.

Page 23 – 8 Inf Bde HQ & Sig Sqn Detachment – Londonderry

(Section Personnel: NCO IC Cpl Butterworth, LCpls Davis, Dawson, Hindmarsh, Neary and Seales, Ptes Colclough, Fieldhouse, Kirkwood, Kohut and Spedding.)

Firstly our congratulations go to LCpl Hindmarsh on his recent promotion. We say farewell to Cpl Hacking who has left us for 13 Signal Regt and in the same breath welcome Cpl Butterworth from 518 Coy.

The Pioneer Section here in Londonderry is fully integrated in the Brigade Signals Sqn and plays an important role in the Brigade Headquarters. The Section is operationally employed as the Brigade 'Rover Group', providing armed escorts to the Bde Comd and Dep Comd when they visit the City; and to their vehicles on other operational tasks within the City limits. Rover Group has an interesting working relationship with the locals. Presentations are frequently made to the Group in the form of high velocity bricks, stones and bottles. Pte Spedding, whilst on 'top cover' Sentry was particularly honoured when he nearly received the 'Order of the Shovel'. Fortunately it just missed him. Thankfully the locals haven't caught up with our new Capt Badge; the presentation of the 'Order of the Axe' has yet to be bestowed.

We also run a very busy armoury, weapons moving in and out at all times of the day and night. LCpl Neary is at present detached to NIRTT where he takes great delight in posing as 'Paddy Irish'. One of his favourites being the victim in a search demonstration. On the sporting scene, LCpl Dawson plays for the Sqn cricket team and LCpl Hindmarsh runs in the athletics team. Socially, the Sqn 'Waterside Bar' is the centre of attraction; run at present by Pte Spedding whom we now suspect of possessing a numbered Swiss bank account.

Issue 161 dated December 1985

Page 9 – 187 (Tancred) Company – NI Detachment 'A Bridge too Far' – Cpl Brennan

On 28 July, eight members of 5 platoon arrived in NI to begin another task. Our task

was relocating bridging equipment. The first problem we came across was trying to identify the various parts of the bridging equipment, however with the assistance of Pte Royston who has spent a few years with 206 Coy, our job was made a lot easier. The team consisted of: LCpl Smith, Pte Royston and Blight our MHE operators, who both logged over 115 hours on the fork lifts. It was said that Pte Royston tried to bribe Blight for the use of his forklift because his fork lift had a puncture for two days! Ptes Murphy and Kerridge carried out the creosoting of over 1,470 pieces of timber, using 70 gallons of creosote. Ptes Turton and Tomsett were working on bridging panels; spraying, drilling and re-greasing. In 21 days we either moved, refurbished or replaced two Bailey Bridges, one Heavy Girder Bridge, one Pier Set, Two Grillage Sets. A total of 9,302 items, totalling 275 tons.

Page 19 – Northern Ireland

The DAPL made a two day visit to Northern Ireland in October.

On arrival at Aldergrove Airport he was met by SO3 P & L NI, Capt El Hall who immediately transported him to HQ NI where the Brigadier met the Commander Land Forces Northern Ireland, Major General AS Jeapes.

HQ 39 Inf Bde was the next stop – to meet Brigadier HM Rose and Pioneers of the Bde Rover Group. A demonstration by the Dog Handlers of the Lisburn Garrison Defence Platoon followed.

That afternoon Brigadier Hickman donned his flak jacket to visit the 20 Pioneers who are doing an emergency tour in West Belfast with 1 Green Howards. At the Shamrock Club, Lisburn Garrison that evening the DAPL met and chatted to Soldiers and their wives. The day ended with a small Dinner Party attended by all Royal Pioneer Officers serving in the Province.

First stop the following day was at the Ordnance Depot, Kinnegar where the Director met the 24 Pioneers serving with that Unit, then on to Antrim to 33 Ind Fd Sqn RE where a helicopter was waiting to take the party to Fort George to visit the Pioneers working with that Unit, a brief stop was made on the way at a very windswept Airfield at Ballykelly to meet the four Royal Pioneers employed with 655 Sqn AAC.

The final visit was to 8 Inf Bde and Sig Sqn where the Brigadier visited military sites in Londonderry.

It was hectic but very interesting two days which afforded an excellent opportunity to observe at first hand the wide variety of tasks now performed by members of the Corps.

Issue 162 dated April 1986

Page 11 – 518 Company – Northern Ireland – 33 Ind Fd Sqn RE by Cpl J Ferry

As the detachment set off for Antrim to assist in Op Nicola naturally there was a bit of excitement in the air, as the majority were going on their first tour of the Province.

With eight volunteers, and two not so willing members, we eventually arrived four hours later to find that we weren't expected and thus dumped in a storeroom, which we had to make from scratch.



After a basic NIRTT course, we were immediately attached to 33 Independent Field Squadron for a month of escort duty. As expected Pte McGilligan got into the swing of things and always went home every Friday.

At the beginning of November we finally started Op Nicola and started to work with 325 Engineer Park and 20 Field Squadron RE but soon lost Ptes Miles and Weaving who went to Omagh and LCpl Cooke and Pte McGilligan who went to Armagh.

Our main jobs were assisting in the MT and providing stores throughout the Province for the blast walls which were being built around UDR and RUC Stations and of course supplying kit for bomb damaged areas.

On the bright side of life, congratulations go to Pte Donaldson on passing his HGV 1 test in Feb after only one week of driver training, unlike Pte Pickering who still has trouble avoiding bricks on the road with an Escort and Pte Mundy who likes hitting lorries whilst Break Dancing in a Fork Lift Truck.

Ptes Corner and Pte Ball were also delighted with themselves as they both passed the Hyster test.

Spirits have been exceptionally high throughout and a well deserved drink was taken when everyone celebrated Pte Munday's 21st Birthday in February.

Page 12 – Northern Ireland – 20 Field Sqn RE by Cpl LK Yates

The section arrived in the Province on 10 Jan and since then we have hardly stopped packing and unpacking our suitcases.

We stopped in Girdwood Park, Belfast for a week, from there we moved to Drummand Bks, Armagh where we stayed for eight days. Just as we thought we were settling down we moved to Portadown. The

accommodation for us was in a single room in a Portacabin, however, it did have one advantage – we didn't have to unpack our suitcases here, we just lived out of them.

Having stayed in Portadown for a couple of days we were on the move again, only this time to Ballykinler to attend the NIRTT course. We went there as a section and attended the Infantry course which we all got through without incident.

At the moment we are all back at Portadown where we have been entrusted to build a Blast wall around the cookhouse which consists of digging out the foundation, putting up form work and stations, pouring the concrete and finally putting the Blast slabs in position.

When we have finished this job we have been promised R & R in March.

Page 12 – Northern Ireland – Ordnance Depot by Cpl J Thompson

518 Coy took over the Kinnegar Detachment in Nov from 521 Coy. On arrival we were met by 2Lt Davies RAOC and Sgt Nelson RPC. After a short briefing everybody settled into their accommodation. On the Sunday it was off to Ballykinler for a NIRTT course, after which we could now be let loose on the streets of Northern Ireland. Work started on the Thursday morning after bidding farewell to 521 Coy, all smiles, went back to Bicester. The work consists of Guardroom work, checking vehicles and visitors into camp, QRF and Mobile Patrols outside of camp. The lads settled into the work quickly and so far have had a good tour, we now have only five weeks left and are looking forward to returning to sunny Bicester.

Ptes Hill and Day decided to do something for the local children's home. After some thought, it was agreed to hold a sponsored 24 hrs Darts Marathon.

Everything went well especially as the bar was open for the whole time. They raised £366.00 for the children's home. The money was used to buy a video and tapes and was presented to the Home by Ptes Hill and Day on 1 Feb.

We look forward to 187 Coy taking over in April and wish them a good tour whilst they are here.

We would like to thank 2Lt Davies and Sgt Nelson for all their help they have given us.

Issue 163 dated August 1986 Page 10 – 518 Company – Northern Ireland Detachment by Sgt I Mountain

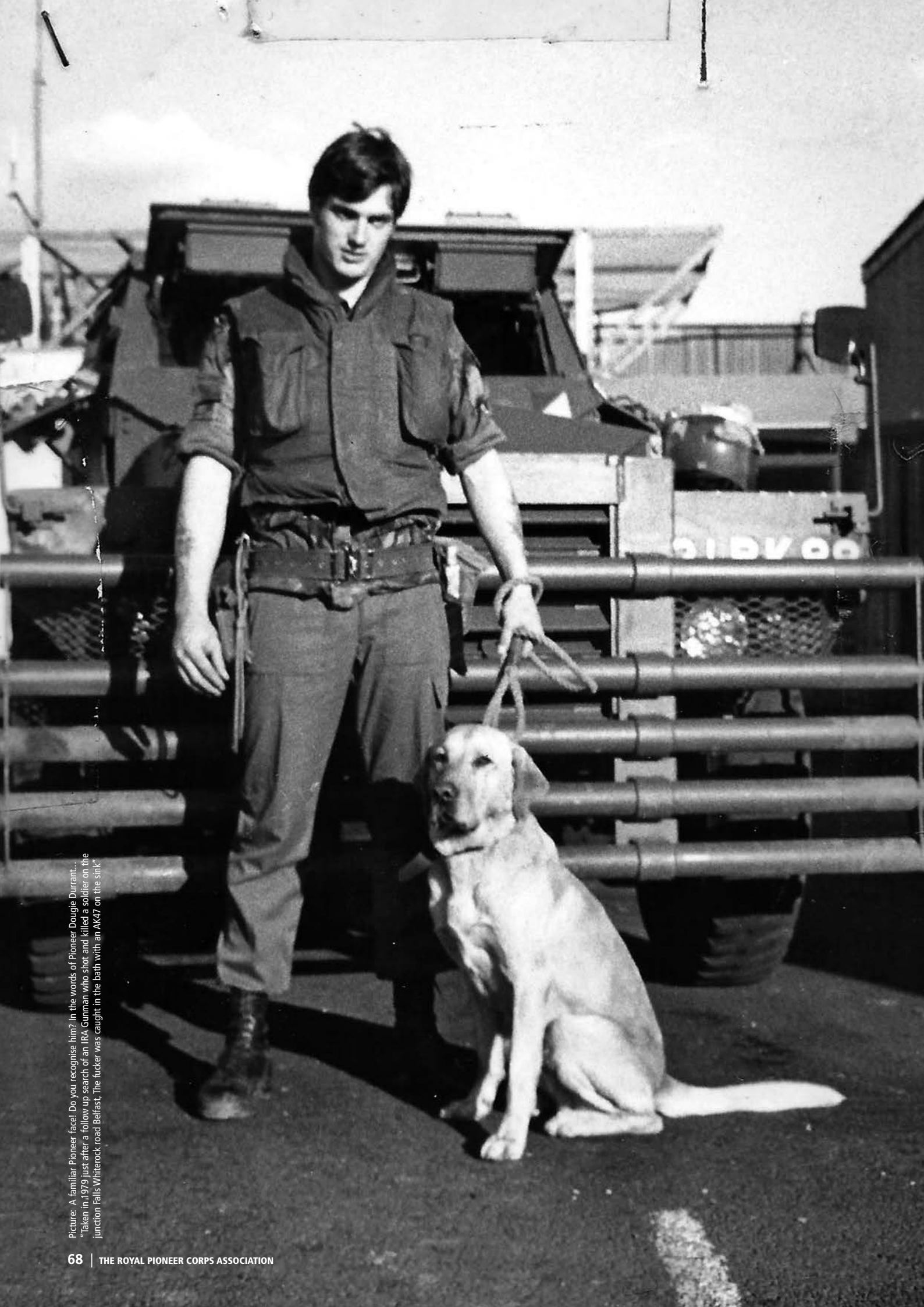
Twenty-two of us left sunny Bicester for a better climate in the rain-soaked fields of Antrim, Northern Ireland. We met there the other nine members of the Platoon who had stayed on from the previous tour. After spending a week at Ballykinler on the Infantry NIRTT Training Centre we returned to Antrim where the Platoon was split into three sections.

Cpl Shaw's Section started off at an RUC station building cover for view fences. The Section was split into two half sections; Cpl Shaw and Ptes Tully, Smith 778 and Michaels went to another RUC Station to help build helipads.

LCpl Crook and Ptes Brannon, Carnegie, Brown went to an RUC station where they helped 7 troop knock down the station, which had been mortared, and build concrete blast walls.

Cpl Wilson stayed at Antrim and was assigned to help Plant troop dig a cable trench two kilometres long with Ptes Bullimore, Nasher Nash and More. They enjoyed the good weather.

Ptes Blackford, Davies and Gibbins are still helping 3 troop build a garden shed and enjoying a splendid summer.



Picture: A familiar Pioneer face! Do you recognise him? In the words of Pioneer Dougie Durrant...
"Taken in 1979 just after a follow up search of an IRA Gunman who shot and killed a soldier on the junction Falls Whiteock road Belfast. The tucker was caught in the bath with an AK47 on the sink"

LCpl Hanna and Ptes Bailey and Meredith were assigned to 33 Sqn Resources to help maintain equipment and stores and keep Loftys concrete pump on the road, so he and Pte Bailey could roam the province dumping concrete. LCpl Hanna would like to thank Pte Meredith for making his van look more realistic with dents made by his forklift truck. Congratulations to Pte Bailey for passing his MHE test. We must not forget Pte Ahmad who has kept our rifles up to a high level of cleanliness.

And last, 325 Engineer Park, where Cpl Richards helps run a Stores Section with Pte Mac McGilligan, who, having passed his MHE test, is causing us great problems trying to get him off the Hyster. Our congratulations to Pte Wyres who has passed his Class A driving test (who is next), it's got to be Pte Tatlock.

Finally, what more can I say, (they'll never forgive me) Ptes Donaldson, Haffenden and Dixie Pickering are all well thought off in 325 MT. Our best wishes go to Pte Pickering who leaves the Army in July, we wish him good fortune. We welcome LCpl Flavell, Ptes Sourfield, Sweeney, Stanley, Farrell and Wright who have just arrived in the Province to help with the heavy workload.

Issue 164 dated December 1986

Page 9 – 518 Company – Northern Ireland Detachment Kinnegar by Cpl Mykytka

On 18 July, 16 of us made for Heathrow Airport to fly north to Hollywood not to the USA but Northern Ireland, better known as Ord Depot Kinnegar.

On arriving we were briefed by a number of members of the depot on security and the duties we were to perform.

The next day the Ord Depot held a small fete in which we gave a hand. In the evening we were invited to the TA Centre for a farewell drink with the lads who we were replacing, this turned out to be a very enjoyable evening.

Sunday with terrible heads we were sent to Ballykinler for a three-day NIRRT Course, which was full of information about Ireland's do' and don'ts. Back from the NIRRT Course and full of knowledge of what to do if it happens, it was time to start work.

Our work consists of working in the guardroom or the Kinnegar Crystal Ball, as all information seems to be passed through or held there – anything from 'Where's my transport?' to the Daily Mail.

The hours are long and tiring with a 12 hour shift then on to a 24 hour, then sleep the next day – some of the detachments seem to sleep for the full 24 hours, but a road run soon wakes them up when on the 12 hour shift, yawn.

From time to time you get a chance to get out and about, for instance where a vehicle has to be escorted to the docks, it makes a nice change. But most of the time our task consists of Camp Security.

Congratulations to LCpl Chappell on his promotion to Cpl. Well done!

On the sporting front Cpls Chappell and Dawson and LCpl Gannon represented Ord Depot Northern Ireland in the Northern Ireland six-a-side football who were narrowly beaten by 5 UDR, the eventual winners. Ord Depot came fifth out of 40 teams. (not bad, eh, considering four out of the six players were Pioneers?)

Page 14 – 518 Company – Northern Ireland Detachment by 2Lt MJW Lincoln

Three Platoon arrived in the province in mid-July, right in the middle of the highest tasking period for the engineers. The men were split into four groups, each with a different role.

One team went with Cpl Tarr into Fort George, Londonderry, to assist 30 Sqn RE in putting up protective roofing inside the Fort. The killer to moral wasn't the bad weather and primitive working conditions, it was the beer, or rather the lack of it!

A second team went to 325 Engr Park RE to assist as MHE operators and drivers. Cpl Flowers led this team with a smile on his face, something to do with the vehicles helping him to indulge in his favourite hobby – women!

The remainder went to 33 Ind Sqn RE, one team into the resources dept and the rest as support for the vast number of province-wide tours. After an interlude we welcomed Cpl McCabe to the fold, who – once again – went to work on the only military concrete pump in the province.

The trench on Divis Mountain is finally complete. Pte Farrell, the man-mountain, can honestly claim to have spent a week on active service in a trench waist deep in water! In usual soldierly fashion, any man who stands to gain even a few pounds has applied for his civilian clothing allowance.

Congratulations to Pte Teague and his wife on the birth of their first baby (we have all seen the photos!). The same also to Pte Mundy who, not through lack of trying, went eventually on the longest R and R on record. He got married and had a honeymoon – all whilst on active service.

Page 26 – Lisburn Garrison

(Gar Adj: Capt CD Langford, Def Pl: WO2 RD Wallace, Sgt K Shield; Prov Sgt: Sgt BT Pigg)

You may not have heard of us but we are here! Lisburn Garrison continues to exist. Vehicles still turn up to the Permanent Check Point (PCVP) and, much to the chagrin of the occupants, are stopped and checked. Dog Section carry out their nightly patrols protecting life and property and biting evening joggers. The Garrison Police continue to clamp illegally parked cars and the Pioneer element of the QMs Dept help the Camp run smoothly.

The beginning of this period (June-ish) saw the departure of Sgt Paige and Sgt Morrison with their families and the arrival of Sgt Pigg and Sgt Shield with theirs while at the end of it we said farewell to Capt Hall and welcomed Capt Langford into his new job as Gar Adj.

In the meantime life has carried on as normal as possible with everyone doing their jobs and trying to maintain their sanity at the same time.

Despite the obviously busy time we've been having we also manage to get people away, not only on leave, but also on courses. LCpl Varndell and Pte Leach attended a Junior NCO course in October at Northampton while Pte McDowell has just returned from his 2-1 course there complete with his tales of horror.

Pte Sealey is currently away on his B3 clerks course and Ptes Hadley and Sealey (again) have completed Basic Canoeing Courses in York and Scotland respectively. Pte Houston spent a week on military

training with Tpt and Movement Dept HQNI in the Cairngorms carrying out activities such as orienteering and survival (although we're not sure if he managed the latter. Finally, several soldiers attended Dog Handling courses at Melton Mowbray, names Ptes Mills, Young, Wood and Horne.

A whole host of personnel have come and gone, too many to mention so suffice it to say that if you've left, a fond farewell to you and your families and a warm welcome to those who have arrived. Notable among the above are Cpls Barbour and Duffy, LCpl Bodiam and Pte Was to whom we extend our best wishes for their futures in 'Civvy Street'.

Our congratulations are extended to the following members of Lisburn Gar:

LCpl and Mrs Dooney on the birth of their daughter, Siobhan Louise

Ptes Hogg and James on their recent marriages (not to each other we hasten to add), LCpl Thomas, on his recent marriage, and to Pte Miller on his forthcoming marriage to Miss Diane Jeffries.

That's it for now, the Platoon is now gearing up for Christmas and all it entails and will be looking to maintain the level of activities so that there is plenty to write about in the next entry.

Issue 165 dated April 1987

Page 11 518 Company – 3 Platoon

We have recently returned from a tour in Northern Ireland, working on all the soft jobs out of the way down on the Borders and in that picturesque and peaceful town known to all as Londonderry, or Derry depending on who the town council of the day is.

The tour went well with no casualties but with a couple of near misses. What with LCpl McDermott wanting to know what a Mk 10A Mortar looks like as its coming down on you and Pte Parnell arguing with the back axle of a JCB whilst still in the cab of a 10 tonne vehicle; we have plenty of war stories to tell.

Page 13 – 518 Company – Antrim Detachment Dec 86/Mar 87

(Cpl Simpson, LCpl Bruce, Ptes Fairholme, Harrison, Clements, Gray, Peacock, Falcus and Gibbons)

We arrived at RAF Aldergrove on 3 Dec 86 and were met by Cpl McCabe and Pte Done. Both of them were looking very happy as it was their last day. A short tour of Antrim on our way to camp did little to raise our spirits as it was even smaller than Bicester.

At the end of the week Cpl Simpson, LCpl Bruce and Pte Clements set off for Ballykinler to do a NIRRT course which only added to LCpl Bruce's list of war stories.

The following week three more went off to work in resources, Cpl Simpson performed contortionist acts with a map in one hand and addresses in the other while driven round Belfast. Pte Fairholme is now allowed to have nuts in his Yorkie after passing his HGV 2.

The rest of the men have been attached to whichever troop requires them at the time, concreting, fencing and roofing at various locations. Pte Clements was given the opportunity to show his bricklaying skills even though his wall did finish at a rather unusual angle.

Ptes Harrison, Gibbons and Peacock have

all had spells in hospital – all due to overwork! Congratulations to Pte Gray on his marriage to Rhoda on 7 February.

Page 19 – Northern Ireland – Lisburn Garrison

(Gar Adj: Capt CD Langford; Defence Pl: WO2 J Whittaker, Sgt K Shield, Provost Sgt: Sgt BT Pigg)

The last three months have been a fairly quiet time apart from run up to the Christmas period when everyone held their various functions. This included the Defence Pl 'do', which was arranged by Cpl Wood and went very well. Pte Sealey's novel approach to the raffle provided the talking point for the evening.

The Platoon is currently mounting mobile patrols in the area immediately around the barracks. This provides a welcome change to the normal routine and is likely to become a permanent task even though some are beginning to think their Recruit Training NCO's adage "You're employed 24 hours a day in the Army" might be true!

The biggest change over this period was the arrival of WO2 Whittaker as the CSM and the departure of WO2 Wallace who leaves us on completion of his service. He's not going far though, as he's taking up the job of Head Patrolman in camp. We wish him the best of luck and hope he'll keep in touch with the platoon. (He'll have to if he wants to get into camp!)

The Christmas period went well with nearly everyone having leave either over Christmas or New Year with sufficient men left in the block to justify gunfire. That went off early Christmas morning with the CSM and Sgt Shield rousing everyone with a cup of coffee liberally laced with rum. Sgt Shield took great pleasure in the special treatment they gave the previous night's shift who had been kind enough to give him a very early phone rendition of 'We wish you a Merry Christmas'.

During this period we have again had several people away on courses. The CSM arrived on Sunday and departed the next on a Search Advisers Course. He follows this with a Fire Officers course and then a NIRTT course and hopes, eventually, to have enough time to attend a Golf Skills Course. Ptes Figures, Cordy and Brasted have all passed their 2-1 courses and Ptes Redman, Brasted and Watkins are all now qualified Dog Handlers.

Issue 166 dated August 1987

Page 9 – 518 Company – Op AMULET NI by Sgt L Margitson

Four platoon departed from Bicester on 7 January for a month's training with 51 Fd Sqn RE Ripon before departing for Northern Ireland for a four month tour. Some of the platoon were young soldiers who have come straight from training and some who are going back for the second or third time. Sadly Sgt Margitson missed the training as he had to do his AAD course first before joining the platoon again.

After arrival at Ripon we were shown to our accommodation. The next day we were told what we were doing in NI and the locations where we would be working. The next day we started training and for many it was 'I've done this before' and the platoon was showing the RE how it's done and what we were capable of. PT was taken by Cpl Field, which to most was tiring and to

others a piece of cake. The RE thought we were mad doing PT in the snow. After three weeks' training the platoon and 51 Fd Sqn RE went to Lydd and Hythe for pre NI trg which was tiring due to the lack of sleep.

On arrival in NI with the advance party at Aldergrove airport we were transported to Ballykelly by road. On arrival we were put to work immediately to set up the accommodation ready for the main party which was arriving later. The accommodation stores had to be consolidated and sent out to the work site. This was hard work but it was completed in time.

On the morning of 21 Feb the manpower was sent to the sites by road and helicopter. We had three main working sites, 325 RE Antrim with 10 men, St Angilo with three men and Rosslea with four men, the remainder stayed at Ballykelly. The work varied from working on construction sites, escorts Military or Civilian, cleaning stores, driving/MHWE Ops training.

Issue 167 dated December 1987

Page 17 – Northern Ireland – Lisburn Garrison

(Garrison Adj: Capt CD Langford, Def Platoon: WO2 J Whittaker, Pl Sgt: Sgt Haddock, Provost Sgt: Sgt BT Pigg)

Since our last report there have been many changes within the platoon, this was the reason for the last entry being missed. We hope this will bring you all back up to date with the news from the sharp end. The pl would like to take this opportunity to wish the following good luck in their new postings: SSgt Shield, Cpl Kewley, Cpls Varndell, Brandon, Blair, Thomas and Ward, Ptes Leach and Hammond. Welcome: Sgt Haddock, Cpl Griffiths, LCpls Street, Nelson, Hilton, Warner, Mitchell and Mendez, Ptes Williams, Chalice and Hodge. Congratulations also go to Ptes Cordy and Young on their marriages and to SSgt Shield and Cpl Kilbride on their promotions.

Grand Charity Disco. A bright idea by Ptes G Lath and J Leach of Lisburn Garrison's Royal Pioneer Corps Defence Platoon has raised £1,300 for local charities.

They had the notion of sponsoring a 49 hour disco in the Garrison's Shamrock Club and, after a lot of hard work and planning by them and their friends, the big event came off on 27-29 March this year.

It was a tremendous success and it also provided a lot of good clean fun for all those who came along and looked in during the two-day marathon.

After the returns had come in and everything had been finalised two substantial cheques were handed over recently to the Lagan Valley Hospital, Lisburn and the Ulster Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, £975 and £325 respectively.

Northern Ireland Dog Trials. Congratulations to Pte McDowell and guard dog Manx for their creditable sixth position in trials, the team have only been together a few months. A 1st position is on the cards for next year.

Lisburn Garrison Summer. This is an annual Fete and the Platoon are always heavily involved in the initial stages on tentage erection and during the Fete with both weapons stand and an arena display by the Dog Section.

8 Inf Bde (Londonderry). The new 8 Inf Bde

Rover Group Commander Cpl Speight takes this opportunity to let the Corps football team know that he can soldier as well as football.

Issue 168 dated April 1988

Page 8 – 187 (Tancred) Company – Northern Ireland Detachments

Currently the Company has detachments in Antrim with 33 Independent Field Squadron RE and at COD Kinnegar. This will soon be increased with further detachments deploying to 325 Engr Park and the Roulement Sapper Squadron.

Antrim. Cpl Spencer's section had been employed on a project involving the construction of a link road on Divis Mountain. This task required the use of plant equipment and a lot of hard graft. Several members of the detachment took advantage of the sporting facilities at Antrim to participate with the Squadron in a variety of sports.

They were quite happy to hand over to Cpl Emery and his section in time for Christmas. The new detachment started work straight away and were employed on a variety of tasks. Pte Cooper has been reported to the Monopolies Commission for his complete domination of Hyster Operating.

Cpl Emery, on the other hand, has moved into the MT Section where he hoped to become a second James Hunt. LCpl Davies is busy beaver away as a chipper and the remainder are employed on a variety of tasks either within the resources park or operationally outside.

Kinnegar. The Kinnegar detachment provides security for the COD. Cpls Townsend, Clapton and Norman and their men continue to mount guards, vehicle checks, foot patrols and mobile patrols. They occasionally get out and about on various escort duties.

In spite of the heavy workload and the unglamorous but crucial nature of their job they must be enjoying themselves. Half of them have asked for extensions.

Page 22 – Northern Ireland – Lisburn Garrison

(Garrison Adj: Capt CD Longford, Def Pl WO2: WO2 J Whittaker, Pl Sgt: Sgt J Haddock, Provost Sgt: Sgt BT Pigg)

We've had the normal postings in and out and the platoon would like to take this opportunity to welcome our new personnel and bid farewell to others. Welcome Cpl Thompson, Ptes Edmonds and Howells. Farewell Ptes Figures, Horne, Woods and Galer. Congratulations go to Pte Reay and wife on the birth of their son Stephen John

Def Pl Christmas Ball 1987 by LCpl Harding and Pte Sealy. It all started in August when we had our first committee meeting. In the later months we got down to some serious wheeling and dealing with LCpl Harding doing his famous Arthur Daley impression which worked wonders for our deserving cause.

We welcomed the company of our official guests who included the Deputy Garrison Commander and his wife, the Garrison Quartermaster and his wife and the Garrison Adjutant, all five of whom thoroughly enjoyed themselves, as they said in letters of gratitude.

This ball went well for the platoon and



the committee who had put in a lot of hard work, not forgetting the Wives' Club who supplied us with a fantastic buffet. I think the highlight of the night was the raffle. We had £700 worth of prizes to give to the lucky winners. Congratulations go to Pte McDowell from our Dog Section, he being one of the luckiest who won three prizes and walked away with one of the major prizes. All in all it was an excellent event enjoyed by all.

Indoor Tug-of-War by Cpl Golding. It all started when Sgt Haddock settling into his new post as Pl Sgt, stumbled on a memo about the NI Indoor Tug-of-War competition to be held at Lisburn, and with no hesitation proceeded to enter a team for each weight.

With only two weeks for training sessions, due to 'Pl commitments' and the big day arrived. With no experiences in Tug-of-War we were informed by Cpl Griffiths who has a good knowledge of the sport, not to have any breakfast. So all very hungry we arrived at the Garrison Gym for the weigh-in.

After a very hard day's pulling we were a tired but pleased Pl, coming runners up in two weights the 560 and 640 kilos and third in the heavyweight.

Qualifying for the UK indoor competition 'by coming runners-up in the two weights', held at Aldershot on 2 December, we had only two months preparation.

So, on 1 December we departed Lisburn a fitter team with a little more knowledge. A good night's sleep, 'with not a can of beer to be seen' the first night. Up early for a run the day of the competition, now ready for the big day.

After the weigh-in, the competition started. Well, at the end of the day we were outclassed, so we returned to Lisburn not disheartened but knowing we had

gained more experience.

Now the Christmas festivities are over the training starts again with new techniques to learn.

Football by LCpl M Mendel. Having arrived in Lisburn on 5 October to my surprise I discovered we failed to enter a team in the NI Ireland Minor Units, so with the CSM's blessing and Sgt Haddock's help, I started training a team. What I saw was quite unbelievable so many talented individuals and I mean individuals. Our first friendly proved my point – no team play, we went down 3-1 but since that very first game we have played five more friendlies without loss.

When the squad first formed up we were fourteen strong, we are now twenty strong. We are now feeling very confident as a team and looking forward to the start of the new season.

Look out 521, the sixes could be back in N Ireland this year.

**Issue 169 dated August 1988
187 (Tancred) Company – 4 Section
Search Team**

The section has been together since May. For the first month we trained in all aspects of being infantrymen in Northern Ireland, covering both individual and team skills. 4 Section is a search team and along with the rest of the Coy search teams we attended the All Arms Search Team course at Chatterden. This course, run by the RE, was very intensive; we learned a lot and now all are experts in the various types of search equipment. We hopefully made all the mistakes that we ever will make and, touch wood, we won't make any in the coming months.

One of the high points was when Pte Kemp found a remote controlled Claymore

which had not been found by any unit since Christmas. With that, and the very good final results, the team returned to Bicester to practice and wait in anticipation of making a find in Northern Ireland.

**Issue 179 dated December 1988
Page 13 – 187 (Tancred) Company – Op
Gala 2 – NI Detachment 325 Engineer
Park**

Operation Gala was a Pl task under the command of Sgt Wrigley. Two sections went to Ballykelly where they worked very hard during the four-month detachment. LCpl Fairhurst had an extremely interesting time. One highlight of his tour was being bricked by a mob of hooligans in Belfast, while driving the OC and 2IC of the Squadron, luckily the only damage was a smashed window, and perhaps a damaged ego. Then he had a traffic accident with a motorcyclist who slid some distance down the road without his motorbike.

On reaching the rider LCpl Fairhurst was most sympathetic and diplomatic asking "Why didn't you have your lights on mate?"

Meanwhile Pte Burrows 'pulled out all the stops' as a mechanic, he was quoted as saying 'It's amazing how breaking down in the middle of Belfast improves your mechanical skills'.

The remainder of the section worked in the Receipts and Issue Department of the Squadron. It was here that Pte Walker was able to show his expertise as a carpenter.

Other tasks included MHE operating, respraying of equipment; which was carried out by Ptes Roberts and Townsend. Pte Todhunter found his niche in the servicing bay working both MHE equipment and light vehicles. The only real drama in all these departments was that Pte Roberts decided to fill up the Hyster's hydraulic tank with

fuel because he mistakenly thought it to be the fuel tank. Luckily Pte Todhunter was able to spare Pte Roberts' blushes and expertly fixed the vehicle in rapid time.

It was a quiet detachment with only a few eventual moments to ease the tension of a posting in NI.

Page 18 – 518 Company

(OC: Maj CG Hardy, 2IC: Capt R Stapley, Ops Offr: Capt AG Brown, Pl Comds, Lt R Mannion, Lt SN Evetts, 2Lt G Goodwin, CSM: WO2 RNE Kirby, CQMS: SSgt PJ Pullen, Int SNCO: SSgt K Shields, Chief Clerk: Sgt KA Blundell, Mil Acct: Sgt A Cheyne, Detached: 2LT PAM Brown, Ex Long Look: 2Lt SJ Berry)

This has been an eventful (often traumatic) period for the Coy, three months' training culminating in ten days' intensive field firing at Lydd and the five days' NITAT package left the Coy ready to get stuck into the 'NI Problem'.

A smooth journey and a quick handover meant that some men were on the streets within one hour of arrival; one adventurous soul (new to the Province) decided to go on a jog to admire the Irish countryside.

Now we are firmly in the saddle and have experienced the joys of crown control on the sectarian divide in the towns of Portadown and Lurgan, hoax bombs and murders in Lisburn, cordons and VCPs everywhere and most recently we have taken part in a large operation to cover the extradition of a Maze escapee and covered the resulting mayhem and protests that followed.

A Word from the CSM. We are about to walk out on our reliefs, 3 Field Bty 47 Field Regt RA, and everyone is walking around with smiles on their faces, the dreaded wall runs completed, the minimum being 28, the most completed was by LCpl Phillips – 125. LCpls Phillips, McGrundy and Pte Hardie ran five special laps of the wall in aid of Ulster Hospital's intensive baby care unit and raised £129.

On the search side Cpl Durrant is going away in a sulk due to his not being able to have a 'big boy' (HGV) to search. The 2IC has just issued everybody with their Coy photo and tour mug which is a completion of cartoons and sketches of incidents, some funny and some not so funny during the tour.

Ops Platoon by Capt Brown. The Ops Platoon consisted of five loosely related groups. The Ops Room staff, the Comcen, the Int Cell, and tacked on as a matter of convenience the OC's Rover Group and the Tall Lodge staff. Capt Brown the Ops Officer commands the Pl when he can get them all together.

The Ops Room staff consists of Sgt Groom the Ops Pl sergeant and assistant Ops Officer, and radio operators, LCpls Meldrum, Smith and McGrady. During training Sgt Groom administered the Pl and understudied the Ops Officer. The various groups tend to look after themselves, leaving Sgt Groom free to administer the Ops Officer and sort out his mistakes. Many of the Pl envy the radio ops, sitting in their plush swivel chairs out of the Irish rain, stuffing their faces with cheese and egg sandwiches from the cookhouse and reading The Sun. In fact, they are highly skilled specialists, capable of holding

conversations on up to three telephones at once while operating radios with the other hand, toggling the prestle switch with an elbow and listening to five difference voices simultaneously. The real pressure on them however, is the constant mental strain of never being sure just how much they can say over the air before one of the many tellings off, always to be found lurking round the Ops Room, comes crashing down on them.

The Comcen operators, Sgt Cayhill R Sigs, LCpl Phillips, Ptes McLean and Hardie – and Kiddle – probably have the cushiest job in the Company Headquarters. What makes it slightly difficult for them; however, is the way the typewriter/teleprinter sort of thing always starts being and throwing out paper right in the middle of the children's cartoons. Watching TV under these conditions is extremely difficult and they are to be commended for their endurance. Pte McLean has recently been spending some time as escort to the ATO, a job which certainly gets him out and about. Unfortunately, at the time of writing he is still detached and is thus unable to describe his duties in detail.

I can't tell you much about the Int Cell, you understand, except to say that it's lead by SSgt Shields and consists of Cpl Wood and LCpl Moore as briefers with Cpl Reyat combing the tasks of photographer and office manager.

The OC's Rover Group is commanded by LCpl Warburton, together with Pte Richards and Pte Halliwell who recently replaced Pte Stubbs. A second team is usually put together from the 2IC or CSM, the 'day off' radio and Comcen operators and Pte Carnegie, the Company Headquarters general dutyman whose usual task is to keep the Ops complex from completely falling apart by doing jobs everybody agrees are absolutely essential and which everybody is sure somebody else must be responsible for.

Finally, mention must be made of the Tally Lodge NCOs, Cpl Green and LCpl Douglas. Nobody is quite sure exactly what it is they do but they do it well.

One Platoon. It has been good to work as a Platoon but several people are due to leave the Coy and Pl, Cpl Mullane and Pte Waghorne are back off to 521 Coy. Well done to both of them.

Pte Blackford (having taught his team commander, Cpl Hands, everything he knows) is going for a long holiday to 9 Sig Regt. Cpl Hands himself having just got the hang of NI tactics is staying in the Province to command a Mobile Bath Unit.

Perhaps the slimmest and fittest member of the Pl, Pte Redfern, is joining the new defence unit in Rheindahlen.

Cpl Chambers has finally mastered the Orders Process and is being promoted as a result. He may now be able to spend more time mastering the intricacies of squash.

Cpl Wyres unfortunately left the Province early due to an eye injury. He spent the most dangerous moments of the tour in a hospital bed. We wish him luck for a full recovery.

Ptes Taylor, Brewster, Garrach, Kemp and Mason have now sufficiently mastered their role in the search team that they will be able to find their boots at any time of the night given unpredictable tasking. Having

spent two days on holiday with the Royal Navy, Pte Smithson can find his boots in the middle of the night on a rolling ship.

Two of the most quiet members of the Pl, Ptes Spence and Brown are now less quiet. LCpl Ahmad is not and never will be one of the quieter members of the Pl.

The budding medic Pte Rowlands has been given Pte Baker to practise blood transfusion on. Meanwhile Pte Corfield is practising his Welsh on his team Comd and Ptes Locking and Voyce were last seen in the NAAFI practising their 'Brum' on each other.

Two Platoon. A 'well done' must go to all the men of the Pl, including those who have dropped out along the way, Bevis, Jones, Hodson, Pepper, Jones et al.

We have now been here at the Maze for about nine weeks. The time has passed fairly quickly with the five day shift cycle, which basically involves a five day shift on the towers, with five towers to man with two soldiers to each tower.

The five day patrols phase was the most enjoyable of all the phases, the majority of our patrols were Vehicle Check Points in the town of Lisburn and involved doing vehicle plate checks and sending them over the net to the Ops Room for verification and searching the vehicles thoroughly. I was pleasantly surprised with the co-operation and friendly advice afforded us by the drivers of the vehicles that we checked, it must become a little tedious to have your car checked regularly, sometimes three or four times a day.

At the beginning of the ninth week 2 Pl were tasked to take over from 3 Pl at HMP Belfast for five days. The duties there were to man the various towers and the mini Ops Room.

Now I know how a prison officer feels locking up all those doors every day. There were many incidents during our stay at HMP Belfast and also the towers had a few shots fired at them, luckily none of them hitting us.

Roll on the quieter life at Bicester!

Three Platoon. 3 Pl raring to go were set at large at the Maze Prison, even Pte Glover came off his first stag with a grin on his face, saying 'That was great'. However, after four days this changed to 'Oh no, not my stag again'.

LCpl Brandon must be mentioned for a number of smooth run patrols, however this may have been due to the fact that the Ops Room hadn't a clue what he was saying in his thick Scottish brogue and so just answered 'OK, Out'.

Pte Mitchell has had to go on a 'Crash' diet, so that he can squeeze through the towers trapdoor.

On a more serious note, the Pl has been performing very well. Cpl Durrant and LCpl Flavell carrying out a number of well organised searches. All of the Pl has been putting in exceptionally long hours, with the minimum of complaint.

Sadly Sgt Eastabrook has decided to leave the Corps, and now is bound for the MPSC at Colchester. Many of the Pls good results and high morale is due to his hard work and personality; he will be sorely missed. At least we have an excellent replacement in the form of Cpl Robinson, who has been a great asset to the Pl as a team comd.



CQMS Department by CQMS Pullen.

Since finally arriving at the Maze, there have been more takeovers of stores, accommodation etc. LCpl Aspinall and Pte Scourfield have been left behind in Bicester, LCpl Crawford took great delight in taking over as Rations Storeman, we're convinced he's hiding, we cannot remember what he looks like.

Halfway through the tour and all is well apart from the wall runs, in which the Q staff are behind apart from the Q; just shows who does all the work. Hope he doesn't read this issue of the magazine.

Mess Staff by Sgt Kell. In April the Mess staff were assembled at Bicester, and apart from the normal training. Sgt Kell was sent to the ACC Depot to learn the art of being a Mess Manager.

Pte Lawson soon got into the swing of things, having attended a previous course. We took over the combined Officers' and Sergeants' Mess at Lydd where we started to put our training into practice. As a side-line, LCpl Fixter ended up running a pub (although I am sure the only reason he enjoyed it was because of the barmaid).

The pub itself was open all hours beating the change in law by about a month. Pte Lawson ran a shop and Pte Staples became the sweetie king selling everything I'm sure your dentist would not approve of.

Soon after our arrival in NI, LCpl Fixter and Pte Farrell took over the Officers' Mess and Ptes Lawson and Sharples took over the Sergeants' Mess. Most of our work tends to be routine, apart that is, from the occasional siren going off and the constant stream of visitors passing through.

LAD REME by Sgt Petrie. Most of the Coy by now will have grown accustomed to a small band of warriors wearing blue

berets. We don't mean 64 Sqn RE, but the happy band of the REME. Within the camp we are situated far enough away from the Ops Room so as not to wake them with the banging of our hammers.

Our band consists of five volunteers from units in BAOR. Sgt Petrie, LCpls Hold, Lunt, Cfn Braban and last but not least the Coy Armourer LCpl Hellwell, who we believe is applying for a posting to 518 Coy to work in the VQMS Stores.

Work has been varied and quite taxing, especially as the PGF, for some reason, has the oldest vehicle fleet in the Province. We have certainly been kept busy, often working quite late in the evening. A couple of the lads have even had the pleasure of going out on mobile patrols with the OC and his merry men. We are pretty sure it's because he feels that little bit safer with a blue beret around.

We thank the following for ensuring that we had a constant stream of work; Sgt Margitson and the 'Cowboys' of the MT section, the Chief Clerk for keep LCpl Lunt busy and lastly the wall mobile, speed bumps and bollards round the Maze.

On a final note, Sgt Petrie and LCpl Holt are not volunteering their services for 518 Coy's tour of the Maze in 1989.

Sports. During our stay at the Maze we shared the camp with 64 Amph Engr Sqn RE, the current BAOR soccer champions. We put a side together and gave them a fright going down 3-1 in the first game and 5-1 in the second. Look out 521 Coy.

We also played 64 Sqn at rugby, and true to form we lost that as well, however, the Coy put on a spirited display against a side that plays together regularly. It should be noted that this is the first time the Coy has been able to form a rugby team for many years.

Life at the Maze by Pte Kibble

Oh no not another alarm
Which one, fire, mortar or tantrum?
It was my turn on the phone
I was going to call mum.
Where did I leave my rifle?
Where is my iniba vest?
Now I have found them,
Is my magazine like the rest?
Should it be yellow
Or should it be red?
If I get the wrong one
The CSM will have my head.
Time now to load
Off to the loading bay
The prisoners cannot escape
Come what may.

Running now to man my post
Do my job like the rest
Suddenly someone shouts 'Stand Down'
It was only another test.

In conclusion it should be noted that the contributions to these notes were made at varying times during the tour and we have since returned safely and are continuing with usual tasking commitments. Until next year.

Page 21 – 521 Company – NI Detachment – Kinnegar

On August 26th we sent a small detachment to Kinnegar. On completion of the standard one week's induction course, the detachment took over the guard duties which left little time for social activities or sport. Guard duties have now been accompanied by the occasional escort duties. However, it is not all work, LCpl Vick and Pte Shepherd are playing for Kinnegar Depot football team, which is doing rather well against stiff local opposition. Pte Keen

is also playing for the Depot squash team, currently he is rated fifth in the Army.

Page 22 – 522 Company – Five Platoon

The main detachment this year has been four and a half months of duty with the Ordnance Depot Kinnegar. A detachment of 18 including Cpls Sealy, Gowdy and Astil joined Sgt Dawes, the resident SNCO there. We arrived in April and after two weeks of training at Kineton and a further three days training in Ballykinler, we were ready to start.

We assumed out duties and things soon got down to normal. Tasks included camp security, escorts and occasional patrols with the Ulster Defence Regt. During the tour most of us managed five days R & R. Cpl Astil and Ptes Smith, Hutchinson and Rees, were selected to play football for the Depot. We arrived back in Kineton in September and were granted three weeks leave

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Page 9 – 187 (Tancred) Company (OC: Maj El Hall, 2IC: Capt FJ Hardie MBE, Ops Offr: Capt MJB Buckingham, Coy Offrs: Lt DM Hughes, Lt CG Fling, 2Lt PA Vignaux, 2Lt C Curtis, 2Lt JS Reid, RSM: WO1 T Appleyard BEM, CQMS: SSgt M Robinson, Pay Sgt: Sgt P Watmough RAPC, Chief Clerk: Sgt J Patel, Typist: Pte P Tufton)

Continued training for the Prison Guard Force task dominated the latter months of 1988. With no intention of resting on its laurels the Coy went to Thetford for a final week's training to concentrate on rural skills and shooting and, at last, a night off for a Coy Smoker.

Following leave we were complete in the Maze by 15 December and Cpl Spencer had completed his mandatory 50 wall runs before Christmas only to be upstaged by Sgt Humphries who ran the equivalent of a marathon on Christmas Day raising £400 for the Children's Ward at Northampton Hospital. More sedentary members notched up their circuits at a slower rate, even mindful of the Gunner who failed to complete his quota and was left behind to do so, it wouldn't happen in 187 or would it?

The tour has been an undoubted success, however many members of the Coy will be due for postings on return to Northampton. They will all be missed, all contributed greatly to a successful tour and the best wishes of all who remain go with them. Those who remained behind should not be forgotten and a special thank you is extended to our wives who remained at Bicester and Northampton in a supporting role, a special thanks goes to Mrs Bennett and friends who organised and ran the children's Christmas party at Bicester.

The Colonel-in-Chief, His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester accompanied by the DAPL and CO 23 Group visited the Prison Guard Force on Monday 13 February. Following a dramatic touch down in gale force winds by a red helicopter of the Queen's Flight, His Royal Highness went to the Coy administration block for a briefing on the PGF role by the OC, Ops and Int Officers. He then discussed the systems for controlling operations on the ground with A/Ops 2Lt Curtis and the duty watchkeeper 2Lt Reid.

Later the visiting party joined members drawn from the Coy for lunch in the Long

Kesh Sergeants' Mess and met fellow pioneers from Lisburn Gar Defence Platoon, 33 Independent Sqdn RE, 325 Engineers, the Rover Groups from 3 and 8 Bdes and a member of the Army Dog Unit. After lunch Cpl Craggs and his search team demonstrated their skills as they searched a goods vehicle and Cpl Mardell crashed out his Quick Reaction Force (QRF) team to what was on this occasion an imaginary task for demonstration purposes only.

In an ever increasing wind, our visitors departed from the Maze to visit a farm in the Ground Defence Area (GDA) where 2 Pl commanded by 2Lt Vignaux and SSgt Morrison, were carrying out a cordon and search operation as part of the Coy's policy of dominating the GDA. On this occasion results were negative.

There had been no opportunity to rehearse any of the day's activities and the name of our Royal Visitor was not released until 0830 on the day. All members of the Coy are to be congratulated on the professional manner in which they carried out their duties and on maintaining the interest of our Colonel-in-Chief.

Page 10 – Operation Granada by Cpl Craggs 187 Search Assistance to the Royal Navy 7-12 January 1989.

Pte Burke and myself left The Maze for the Royal Navy Berth at Moscow Camp, bound for HMS Kedelston a 35 year old mine hunter. We were soon underway and after a quick trip round the boat ('oops 'ship) we donned our immersion suits within five minutes to board suspect vessels. A couple of fishing boats were first on the agenda. This involved only a small boarding party so rank having its privileges, Pte Burke found himself tearing across Belfast Loch. Nothing was found. Next came an ocean-going yacht which belonged to a Det Chief Supt of the RUC and it was my turn to go. After a brief chat and a check of his documents we returned to Kedelston and lunch.

About 1400 hours the tannoy announced 'Hands to full boarding party, away sea rider' which was the signal for us to climb back into the monkey suits and go. A full boarding was done in two waves, Burke and myself in the second wave. This time it was a Swedish Freighter and while Burke searched the holds, I was busy in the crew's quarters. Nothing was found. The next one was a fuel tanker from Liverpool, again all clear so back to the Kedelston for a well-earned cuppa.

That night we both spent a couple of hours on the Bridge, taking a turn on the wheel (which wasn't a wheel just a lever) and doing a good job of it. The third day saw us landing on the southern coast of Ratnlin Island to carry out a search of caves, possible hides/landing areas which took about four hours, we collected some good Int on possible transit hides, etc. That evening the weather became a little rougher going up to force 6 but this did not worry us very much. Day four was quite busy with several ships/boats being boarded but again no finds. That night the weather decided it would find out if we were sea worthy by going up to gale force 10 and staying like that for 24 hours. During lunch I ended up sitting on the deck with my dinner in my lap. Needless to say no searches were

carried out, but we did put ashore in the sea rider to collect radio and outboard motor spares with Burke and myself acting as cover. Luckily we had the ever present immersion suits which kept our clothes dry.

First light of the last morning saw us entering Belfast Loch once again and small boarding parties on two fishing fleets took up to 1500 hours then into dock and transport to the Maze with the Navy suitably impressed by us Pongos. It was a good week's work and some new friends were made and a request to come aboard again soon.

Page 11 - Wall Running by Capt FJ Hardie 187 (Tancred) Coy

with an athlete and fitness reputation to uphold took the unique activity of wall running to its heart and set new goals and horizons which no doubt future PGF units will strive to emulate and surpass.

The Commander 39 Inf Bde set the figure of 28 laps at approx 2.2 miles per lap as being minimum number to be completed by individuals on a ten week tour. The OC upped the figure to 50 laps with never less than two laps at a time and from then on enterprising Pioneers developed the 'Sport' in differing forms.

Cpl Spencer, PTI extraordinary, set the tone when he chalked up his 50 mandatory laps before Christmas Day. This was a particularly good achievement as daylight hours were few and alarm practices many. Spurred by this example, and ever alert to the opportunity of raising money for the Coy's favourite charity, Sgt Humphries elected to run a marathon (13 laps) on Christmas Day. With style and little apparent effort he completed the run and raised almost \$300 for the Northampton Children's Hospital.

Interest picked up with the New Year together with surprisingly mild dry weather though strong winds from differing directions promoted topical discussion on the merits of going round clockwise or anti-clockwise. Discussions of timings also were more frequently heard and the Tally Lodge system of recording the laps was tightened up to present over exaggeration on the number of laps run. No doubt when the tour is complete, further revelations on how the system was beaten will come to light. However the practise of hitching a lift on the wall mobile, hiding in a tower or waiting out the time in the warders gym than claiming five or so was sussed early on. Meanwhile Sgt Watmough was doing a nice line in selling running kit specialising in waterproof jackets and skin tight trousers to decrease wind resistance or to emphasize the trimmed down waistline and haunches of certain members of the Coy. Trade picked up especially after the OC bought a pair to match his red hair and became even more recognizable from afar. Unfortunately the vast sums spent on surveillance systems do not run to colour monitoring sets.

Flushed with the success of his marathon, Sgt Humphries set out on Sunday 5 February on yet another attempt to raise money for the hospital, this time the completion of a phenomenal 20 laps or 44.4 miles approx. He was accompanied along the route by numerous pacemakers who took turns for a few laps to help break the dreadful monotony of pounding round the light grey walls on a flat concrete



surface. To his immense credit he finished seemingly as fresh as when he started in a time of five hours 33 minutes and even gave a second finishing burst to ensure LCpl Smilie, the Coy photographer, got it right.

To commemorate the sport and provide lasting momentous of their achievements, trophies were produced and presented by the OC at the end of the tour. The maximum number of laps nonstop was won by Sgt Humphries with 20 laps. The maximum number of laps completed on the tour was won by Sgt Watmough with 136 laps. The fastest single lap round the wall was won by Lt Vignaux on a timed race on Sunday 11 February with a time of 10 min 50 sec.

Many runners will have set and obtained their own personal goals which were equally worthy, some, due to the high work load had more difficulty than others in finding time to get our and put the laps in, a few had to be driven, but what is certain is that the grey walled circuit of the Maze is indelibly stamped on the memory of all on PGF 2.

A Day in the Life of the Operations Room by Capt Buckingham.

It's midnight and 2Lt Curtis is desperately trying to stay awake, Sgt Bamford, our signals Sgt, has just handed over to LCpl Hulse for the 'Doom Watch' shift as duty signaller/vengeful operator. Meanwhile Sgt Stainton is drawing a very graphic trail on the map board as he follows Cpl Paton's various deceptive movements from his Lurk position to carry out a Vehicle Check Point (VCP) on one of the main Tactical Area of Responsibility (TAOR) thoroughfares and for a change it is raining and blowing a gale.

The Quick Reaction Force (QRF) Comd stirs as his radio crackles out another vehicle registration number and Mr Curtis still

hasn't made a brew. His excuse is that he has completed the night-time paperwork and so he departs at around 0200 hours. Throughout the night the patrols go in; mobile or foot as the Coy maintained a presence on the ground for 12-14 hours a day.

It's 0800 hours and the Ops Offr arrives in the Ops room looking the worse for wear. Not a bad night – he only received two phone calls during the early hours. A quick read of the Northern Ireland reports and then it's into the briefing room for OC's Prayers. Meanwhile the day watchkeeper has arrived in the guise of 2Lt Reid who smiles as he takes over from Lt Hughes, Int Offr – he must have been working another of his extras off.

Throughout the morning the radio waves chirp with constant Locstats, 'P' Checks from the patrols on the ground, and the many radio checks and suspicious sightings carried out by the Towers Pl.

On all we monitor five radio nets, one RUC net, and have a direct link to the H-Blocks. Then of course we have to mention the ten telephone lines and the constant flow of unwanted visitors through the Ops Room door. It is busy. The quietest time of the day has got to be between 1330-1350 hours when 'Neighbours' is on TV. The Ops Offr and watchkeepers are keen fans – as yet the terrorists have not been coerced to work around these times.

Throughout the afternoon Ops Offr and duty day signaller take it in turns to carry out their favourite pastime of running around the famous wall. Often however, the OC manages to dash all plans by having a tantrum – he tended to lose his temper a lot in the early days of the tour. Into the evening and 2Lt Curtis's shift come around again as he relieves Capt Buckingham at 1800 hours. Throughout all this the patrols

continue – tonight it is a VCP on the M1 Motorway and in the early hours it is a security check of the local estates.

The work in the Ops Room never ceases – the faces change but the lights and radios never go off. Often the cry of 'Int – Line 2' or 'Whose turn is it to go to the NAAFI?' breaks the pattern of work. All who have worked here have worked extremely hard – although those on the ground have taken some persuading that such is the case.

Page 12 - PGF Patrols by Cpl Spencer

Deploying to HMP Maze with the advance party I was able to sample all three disciplines, Towers Pl, GDA Pl and Patrols Pl before the main body arrived in the Province. I was put on Patrols Pl first and I will now give a brief outline of what it's all about.

Patrols Pl works in the Urban and Rural areas of Lisburn, which is situated approximately 2.5 miles North East of the Maze, a ten minute journey by modern Land Rover or half an hour in our old antiquated fleet.

Our Pl was not on Patrols until the sixth week which was good in a way as it was quite difficult at times. The composition of each multiple consisted of two teams of four men driving two Land Rovers. The rovers carried all the normal VCP equipment ie cones, lazy tongs, flashing lights, stop signs, red torches and other vital equipment such as tea flasks and sticky bars.

After a thorough kit and equipment check the patrol would move daily to the Ops room at Thiepval Barracks, receive a unit brief and the teams' comds the day's tasks. The multiple would then move onto the ground and start the first of up to 20 VCPs during the coming patrol.

From a commander's point of view, the job is demanding as many things have to be



done, but it keeps you alert checking on routes, monitoring the radio net, ensuring the VCP is tactically and safely sited and giving assistance to the local population.

From a soldier's point of view it's hard graft and application, setting up the mechanics of the VCP, getting in and out of fire positions, directing traffic, searching vehicles, chatting to vehicle owners and occupants and above all staying alert and protecting the team commander while he is getting on with his job. Both soldier and commander must pull their weight or it won't work.

The main tasks while on patrols is VCPs but from time to time there are other tasks such as route clearance and we are starting to get on foot in support of VCP teams as a change in tactics.

Patrols PI was physically demanding but was a welcome break from the Maze routine. More importantly it is a key part in the SG strategy to prevent the movement of terrorists and their arms and munitions around the Province – in this respect there is a sense of achievement at the end of a Patrol Phase.

Page 22 – Northern Ireland – Defence Platoon HQ Lisburn Garrison

(Gar Adj: Capt RD Breeze, Def Pl: WO2 RH Smith, Pl Sgt: Sgt J Haddock, Provost Sgt: Sgt BT Pigg)

There have been a few changes since our last notes and we would like to welcome to the fold Capt Breeze, Cpls Hanna, Murray, LCpls Smith, Merrit, Ptes Noble, Cranwell, Dallas and Maughan, and bid farewells to Maj Langford, Cpl Golding, LCpl Dooney and Pte Sealey who has decided to transfer to the RAOC and is at present on three months' probation. We wish them all the very best in their new posts.

Congratulations go to Sgt Haddock on his promotion to SSgt.

They say December is the month of the silly season, last year was no exception. With so many functions taking place within the Garrison the Platoon took great pride in setting up the JRC for our Christmas Ball

After spending nearly £800 on prizes and a careful selection of the buffet the long awaited night arrived. It wasn't long before all our guests arrived and the function got on the way with a group followed by a comedian and filling in between, a Disco. The main event of the evening was Pte McGuinness who assisted the comedian and also gave us his version of the 'Ireland Fling' an excellent performance but alas no pay.

The draw took place at intervals and some of the lucky winners were Cpls Golding and Griffiths, LCpls Street and Mitchell and Ptes Mephram and Redman. The hard work and organisation that went into the event paid dividends and an excellent night was enjoyed by all.

His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester visited the Def Pl at Lisburn Garrison on Monday 13 February following lunch with 187 (Tancred) Coy, HRH was accompanied by DAPL and CO 23 Gp and arrived by helicopter and was met by the Commander, Lisburn Garrison, the Garrison Adjutant the Garrison Sergeant Major.

During his visit HRH toured the vehicle check point and the main gate speaking to the members of the shift. He showed great interest in the Sangar and spent some time discussing the duties of the sentry and arcs

of fire.

LCpl Murray introduced the Dog Section. His Royal Highness witnessed a display by Max and Benson. Their handlers LCpl Errington and Pte McDowall then discussed the merits of the job including details of their dogs' abilities.

Despite gale force weather and sleeting rain Sgt Haddock and a search team displayed explosive detection and LCpl Lincoln and his search dog Cobbler gave a demonstration of vehicle search techniques.

Following a discussion with the Garrison Commander, His Royal Highness departed. Despite the atrocious weather which dogged the visit His Royal Highness left in the knowledge that Pioneers, while dispersed in penny packets throughout the Province, have an effective and worthwhile role to play.

Issue 172 dated October 1989

Page 11 – 518 Company –

Commendation – 24581223 Pte MC Farrell

Pte Farrell was a Roulement soldier on his first four month emergency tour with the Army Air Corps. His previous experience of aviation was nil, and he had been trained locally by 655 Squadron Army Air Corps at Ballykelly.

On February 5 at 0100 hrs he was detailed to act as the ground handler to monitor the start of a Gazelle that had been tasked to react to an incident. The weather conditions at the time were poor, with driving rain and high winds.

Following the rotor engagement, he carried out his post start check of the aircraft when he spotted oil on the sideboard side just below the ECU cowling. He instructed the commander to close the aircraft down and REME assistance was sought. Further investigation revealed an oil leak from the ECU filter housing. The effect of such a leak, if it had not been detected, would have led to the aircraft commander having to carry out a night emergency landing.

Pte Farrell by carrying out his duties in a diligent and professional manner despite extreme weather conditions and by displaying commendable vigilance, was awarded a Commander Aviation's Commendation.

Issue 173 dated March 1990

Page 16 – Defence Platoon HQ Lisburn Garrison (Capt RD Breeze, WO2 T Power, Sgt G Griffiths, Sgt I Mountain)

Well hello, we are not the forgotten Platoon despite any rumours you may have heard. We have had a few events here, and a lot of comings and goings. We would like to say a fond farewell to all those who have left our fold and hello to all our new arrivals and wish them and their families (should they have a family in tow!) a pleasant and happy time here.

We have please in announcing the following postings/promotions – WO2 Power taking over from WO2 Smith. Sgt Griffiths, taking over from Sgt Pigg; Cpl Street and LCpls Brown and Wilmott. Hopefully there will be more in the not too distant future.

In June the Platoon was involved in the Garrison Fete, running a bottle stall manned by Cpl Murray, LCpl Errington and Pte Brown 661 (now departed with his family to

BAOR) and gained £85 for the Garrison charity fund.

In August Sgt Mountain and Cpl Murray ran .22 shooting competitions for the children's activity scheme during the school holidays. Some of the girls would have fared well on a professional range. It was enjoyed by all who attended.

We have been quite fortunate in sporting events in 1989. We entered the Garrison six-a-side leave in football, volleyball and hockey, faring middle-to-good in all events. We entered the 11 a-side football which involved playing in the NI Challenge Cup, but lost in a well-fought match against 5 UDR. We beat 22 Postal and Courier Unit in the Yorks and Lancs Cup. In the minor Units League Group B we have won two out of three games so far, but were defeated in the NI six-a-side by 26 Sqn RCT.

Our next main event was celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Corps. This resulted in quite a few strange faces being seen in the Garrison Church. Capt Breeze (who organised the whole event) invited the following units to attend: 39 Inf Bde Rover Group, 518 Coy (who sent some representatives), Antrim (who made the most of the facilities afterwards) and Armagh 3 Inf Bde (who had such a good time they could not recall leaving). The remainder comprised the Def Pl Dog Section, QM's Dept and GPs. It was well organised and thoroughly enjoyed by all. The icing on the cake would have been a free drink for all, but alas, Capt Breeze declined. The real cake, some half metre square, soon disappeared even though there was only a handful of children present.

We are looking forward to the visit of the DAPL, and have said farewell now to Comd Lisburn Garrison/Comd 39 Inf Bde, who paid some high compliments to VCP and Dog Section staff on their professionalism in carrying out a very responsible job.

Province Wide – 655 Sqn ACC.

Members of the RPC detachment serving with 655 Sqn have been attending Adventure Training in Scotland at weekends. A good time was had by all.

Ord Depot Kinnegar. On the football front the depot football team is heavily reliant on the skills of Cpl Spencer and Ptes Collins and Stanningford who are, by all accounts, their star players.

33 Indep Fd Sqn RE. Sgt Blackburn is very successful in running the Sqn's Cross Country Team of both Pnrs and Engrs.

325 Engr Park RE. Pte Davis is the leading light on the Rugby field as is Cpl Browne who is also a member of the Water Polo team and their Swimming Instructor. Pte Clarke is shortly off to Cyprus to take part in an inter-service parachute competition thanks to a grant from Corps funds.

Def Pl Dog Section by LCpl Errington.

Def Pl Dog Section is saying cheerio to some of the lads again as they move on to new postings. Pte Waddington is off to Germany, Pte Bowler to Civvy Street, Pte Watkins to Cyprus, LCpl Hogg to Cyprus and Cpl Thompson to 187 Coy. We hope they all do well in their new postings.

I would like to say thank you to Ptes Waddington, Harrison, Bowden, Kohut and Noble for their help in setting up a charity function to raise money for the guide dogs for the blind. Also thank you to the Gutter

Band and NAAFI Staff, plus WO2 Hocham and Cpl Michael of the Printing Department, without their combined hard work none of the above would have been possible. Lisburn Garrison raised a total in two nights of £1,109. The money raised will pay for a dog and training.

Dog Section would like to congratulate Mrs and LCpl Hogg on the birth of their son Luke, and congratulations to LCpl Brown on promotion.

Issue 174 dated October 1990 Page 14 – 518 Company – 2 Platoon PGF Tour HMP Maze

Although the platoon had a lot less training time than the previous PGF tour, we nevertheless performed well under prevailing conditions owing to the invaluable experience some members of the platoon had gained on a previous PGF tour. Special mention must be made of the inseparable Cpl Lees and LCpl Flavell whose performance was an example to the rest of us.

The tour went without too many problems for us and we were able to attend some Cross Country runs, ten pin bowling, prison visits, Lisburn discos as well as a charity walk run by several members of the platoon. We did manage to fit in some hard work but maintained a sense of humour. The younger soldiers recently out from DQD will have gained some invaluable experience on their first tour of NI.

It would be impossible to mention all the characters in the platoon by name, however, best of luck goes to the search team in whatever they do, all those members from attached companies, not least to 187 Company and to Sgt 'Say yes Paul' Harper, the man with Burtons life membership.

3 Platoon. It was a cold wet night, Sgt Robinson flinched as beads of sweat ran down his neck – yes it was definitely raining outside. Sgt Robinson could tell as a thick fog had built up on the inside of the window – so this was the 'sauna' HMP Maze. Between rolling Land Rovers, swimming through swollen rivers and getting sunburnt on the sun bed, 3 Platoon did Northern Ireland, or should it be said Northern Ireland did 3 Platoon. The members of the 'Fighting Third' were subjected to all this and hardship, hunger, deprivation, exhaustion and above all mice in 'B' Tower. The platoon for the tour was formed in May/June and got off to a good start with two weeks leave and then straight back to Otterburn for plenty of live firing to get used to the SA 80. The highlight of this was a Company attack in which 3 Platoon had to take a position on top of the hill. After much sweating and the loss of a few pounds the position was taken. However, in keeping with the Company's new watchword 'flexibility' the attack had to be stopped so we could be rushed to fight a range fire.

NI training started in earnest in July with lots of lectures on the skills required for the tour. The priority was on patrolling techniques and reaction to incidents. Sgt Durrant was given a free rein to set up a number of IED incidents. He seemed to be doing well until as a finale he decided to set up a fire bomb. Unfortunately it was a bit too close to a recently refurbished house;

with flames shooting up the side of the building Sgt Durrant saw his newly acquired promotion going out of the window. Luckily with 518's newly gained experience in fire fighting the patrol under test reacted very well to the situation.

Then came the tour, with 3 Platoon taking all the driving skills awards; Pte Hepburn attempted the near impossible by trying to drive his Lane Rover on its side along a main road. He was doing okay until he came across a kerb.

Further excitement came during the week we were at the Crumlin Jail with the opportunity to go to Girwood to do some patrolling in Belfast. It was there that 2Lt Potter got scalped by the CQMS in Girwood who thought it would be great fun to give 2Lt Potter a No 1 haircut. With no more major driving awards to be won 3 Platoon returned with the Company to Bicester for a well earned leave.

Congratulations go to Sgt Robinson and Shani for the arrival of their son Shaun Lloyd. Also to Sgt Durrant and Sgt Evans on their recent promotions. Goodbyes go to newly promoted Lt Potter Cpl Bagguley, Pte Stephenson and Pte Fordham. Welcome goes to Ptes Ramage, Dore, McEwan, Nicholls, Kay, Joy, Colston, Jones and Heron who have all arrived from DQD. Sometime over the year I am sure that they will all settle into Company life well. With detachments to Belize and Cyprus coming up in the near future a warm year looks in store for the members of the 'Fighting Third'.

Page 20 – Defence Platoon Lisburn Garrison

(Capt RD Breeze, WO2 T Power, Sgt I Mountain, Sgt G Griffiths, Cpl Shan)

Well! Here we are again not much has happened since the last entry. We would like to say Hello and Good Luck to all new arrivals in the platoon and say a fond farewell to all those who have left on postings out.

Sport. On the sporting scene we have done well by winning the Garrison six-a-side football trophy this year. We also won more games this season than last – at the 11 a-side football with Cpl Tappin's guidance and hard training. We supported the league table at the six-a-side hockey, not bad as this was our first go at the sport for some time. At volleyball we started off well but came joint second from bottom. It's the taking part not the winning Boz!

Courses. Platoon members have done well in the last couple of months in courses and we congratulate the following for passing their course: Cpl J Merrit, Pte Bozckko, LCpl Brown, LCpl Nash, Ptes Bentley and Moir on passing their APTI courses, but to name a few.

Charities. Time and effort have resulted in us doing quite well in this department, we collected a large sum of money for the following charities, BLESMA, Red Cross, MS, SSAFA and Guide Dogs for the Blind.

We are now looking forward to our Summer Draw in which all the Pioneers in the Province are invited to spend Capt Breeze's money. The date is 27 July 90 which is being organised by Cpl Street and 'B' Shift – should by all accounts be a good night.

The next big event is the Christmas Draw which will be organised by Cpl Hanna and

'A' shift – look forward to it Lofty.

I'll now hand you over to LCpl Errington for news on the Dog Section.

Dog Section – Lisburn Garrison. We have had a few changes in the last few months in the dog section, with personnel leaving and new lads posted in, and a lot of new dogs posted in too.

First we would like to welcome Cpl Shaw in replacement of Cpl Thompson who is now basking in the Belize sun, plus Pte Petrie from Cyprus, Pte Havercroft from 521 Coy and finally Pte Chadwick and wife, and hope they have settled into their new quarters.

We say cheerio to Pte Howell who replaced Pte Petrie out in Cyprus and we hope his measles have cleared up.

Dog Section has gone up in the dog world – we have 2 Rottweiler's, compliments of the Adjutant Lisburn Garrison, who we would like to ask if he would lend us some arms and legs, because we are getting short of them and the stores have no more in stock.

Lastly Pte Cranwell is getting married – Defence Platoon would like to wish you all the best.

Issue 175 dated Spring 1991 Page 19 – Ordnance Depot Northern Ireland (Sgt Murray, LCpl Beasley, LCpl Tyler, Pte Bancroft, Pte McGhee)

Well! Here we are again, the boys from Kinnegar, all alive and well and bulging from turkey and Christmas overdoses, also the ancient art of mince pie dodging – thanks very much REME.

Well, life at the Ord Depot is very much like it always is – busy! The usual amount of issues and receipts keep our lads, or should I say lad, in Freight Delivery Services (FDS) busy to say the least, so good on you Pte (I am now engaged) McGhee and also congratulations on your future marriage.

Life in the CQMS Department is as ever, varied with a recent change of CQ's, which rumour has it Pte Bancroft (Taff) personally overlooked or is it overseen, and is the AB115 a permanent fixture in his hands?

On a sporting front we have had a very good result in the Army Cup (Minor Units) (Northern Ireland League). The Kinnegar Logistic Base won 2-1 in an extremely close hockey match, so congratulations to them and to our only Pioneer in the team LCpl Taylor (Distribution Executive), we now go on to play in the UK about February time so our sights are set on winning the title. And to round things off, the football team have won a match – how? Nobody knows – but the won! Well that is all for this episode so all that is left to say is, 'Good luck to Pioneers everywhere, especially those involved with Op Granby, our thoughts are with you'.

'COWABUNGA'

Issue 177 dated Spring 1992 (no entries for N Ireland in issue 176)

Page 11 – 518 Company – 1 Section – Antrim

On 11 May 1991 six men from the section left RAF Lyneham for Northern Ireland with tow of us being delayed to circumstances beyond our control. We managed to get to grips with the quirks of the job easily enough and settled into the task.

Pte Richards had to put his vast medical



Picture: VIP HQ NI Jun 78 Cpl Theobald and Cpl Ridings chat

experience into practice on several occasions, luckily not with anyone in the Section. He did however have to render first aid to a closed circuit TC control box, that was mortally wounded when someone took a dislike to it. As we thought we were only in Northern Ireland for four months we were dumbstruck when it was extended to six months. Then we moved into new accommodation. I think its nickname said it all, 'Tenko'. To sum up the tour, the worst bit was the start and the best part was the end. As it went, our luck didn't even hold up on the journey home, with several delays and just as an added insult, movements they manifested our weapons to Germany and the RCT decided to take them home!

Page 24 – RPC Northern Ireland

Life in the Province continues to demand a high state of vigilance and professionalism from all our soldiers. This clearly suits the majority of people over here as applications for extensions of tour continue to be most popular. In fact, it becomes distinctly difficult to get rid of some people once they get settled.

Despite the pressures of work, there have been a number of sporting achievements worthy of note. Sgt Durrant has been awarded the captaincy of the Combined Services rugby team for this year and Cpl Nash has played a number of games for the Combined Services cricket team.

Prior to his departure WO2 (CSM) Power represented almost every team at .22 small bore shooting and progressed to finish 14th in the Army.

He also monopolised the trophies in the Northern Ireland Army Golf Championship, collecting eight out of the 12 trophies available, and represented Northern Ireland in the Army Gold Association inter-district championships – well done.

With the nucleus of RPC soldiers based around Lisburn, it is the Lisburn Station sports side that has attracted most of the Pioneer soldier support. Cpl Haines, Cpl Nash, LCpl Gibson, LCpl Holloway, Ptes Brently, Clay, Linkins and Northall all played for the station football team and Capt Gascoigne has now muscled in on the Station hockey team. Sgt Durrant, Cpls Shaw and Nash have played for the Station rugby side. Pte Ambrose's contribution to the cricket side is also worthy of note.

In March the DAPL visited all RPC personnel in Northern Ireland at their various units. He presented LCpl Tatlock and Cpl Nichol with their Gold medals and bar. During the Gulf War LCpl Tatlock was attached to 207 Sig Squadron and Cpl Nichol to 187 Company

PI HQ (WO2 McGinley, Sgt Mountain, Cpl Haggart). Since the last issue of the Corps magazine the Defence Platoon has seen a period of total change.

The inevitable staff changes have occurred. Since the last set of notes were submitted we have said farewell to Capt Breeze and we welcome Capt Gascoigne.

We have also bade farewell to WO2 (Gold Tour) Power who is off to sunny Cyprus for his sins and we welcome WO2 (Bob) McGinley. Congratulations also go to Cpl Haggart and his wife Shirley on the birth of their new son, Zack.

A Shift by Cpl Hanna. In the last few months A shift has had a complete turnover. I will start with the FNB (Flipping New Boys).

We welcome LCpl (Big Boy) Green to the shores of Ireland after a minimum of nine years in BAOR.

Pte (Boxhead) Bell who has not quite the hang of English yet, but he is getting there, and last but not least Pte Andy (I'm always on a course) Stevenson.

Fond farewells to Pte Mickie Moir who is off to Rheindahlen, as a lance corporal – well done and Pte Peter Ferrer to 522 Company.

B Shift by Cpl Haines. Well, it has been a long time since we had a mention in the Corps Magazine. A lot of changes have happened and the shift has had new replacements, but unfortunately we have to say farewells to a few members of the shift – LCpl 'Nelly' Nelson is off to far flung shores at Rheindahlen 'Lucky Lad', also LCpl 'Legionnaire' Kirkwood and Pte 'Remo' Ambrose who have seen the grass greener on the other side of the fence.

They start their Resettlement Courses soon. We welcome LCpl Pete Salt and his wife and also Pte Bob McInnes and his wife. Ptes Cooke and Clarke (the brothers grim) are also now in the shift but are settling in well. As for me, my two wonderful years are up and my wife and I are off to 1 ADSR at Verden in May.

C Shift by Cpl Emery. During the past few months C Shift has seen many faces come and go. It's been goodbye to LCpl Stacey who is off to 187 Company, but before he went he passed Junior Brecon and APTI's Course – well done. Pte Brentley who is off to 521 Company and in the next few months Pte 'Long time, Short time' Farrell is off to 13 Sig Regt. Welcome to Ptes Brown and Wembridge plus their families from 518 Company and LCpl Lanford from 522 Company. I hope they all settle down and enjoy their tour here.

Dog Section, Lisburn Station by Cpl Shaw. The Dog Section is now having its happy time due to all the postings in and out. We would like to welcome LCpl Salt and family and also Ptes Turton, Northall, Steven and Wembridge to the Province and the Dog Section. We say farewell to Ptes Clay, Davis and Sayers who are going back

to UK. I am posted myself and will be replaced by Cpl Brennan who will takeover IC Dog Section in mid February 92. The Section would like to congratulate Ptes Cranwell and Havercroft on passing their JPC, well done. We almost had Pte Ferrer, he came, he saw, he got bitten – he left to go back to PCVP....

Issue 178 dated Autumn 1992 Page 9 – 187 (Tancred) Company - 7 Platoon – Armagh

Having been told to cancel our plans for the summer, 7 Platoon formed up at Tidworth to start its attachment with The Second Battalion The Light Infantry. We were attached to A Company (Ops), and started training immediately. Three hard months and one NITAT package later, we deployed to Bessbrook Mill (BBK) fully prepared and operational.

The job itself involved patrolling for lengthy periods (between 48-72 hours), dominating the ground as a Company.

The patrols are long and hard, frequently wet, and the weights carried by the men are heavy.

The weather proved to be inhospitable at first but the summer did eventually turn up in the Province, and life out on patrol improved greatly.

Other tasks for the multiple include proving the Airborne Reaction Force (who stay on immediate notice to move) and provide manpower wherever it is required for cordons, town patrols in Newry and also providing relief in place of other multiples in the outstations who are going on R&R.

From the beginning, the platoon began operating in two multiples, one being commanded by Lt White and the other by SSgt Chambers. Each multiple has several teams.

The platoon is definitely a happy one, and the tour is proving to be a good experience. The greatest pleasure has been seeing a relatively inexperienced group of young soldiers turn into a very professional team.

Page 12 – 518 Company – 2 Platoon

In May, LCpl Layzell and five members of the Platoon went to Northern Ireland to provide driving skills for various units. Also in May, LCpl Turner took his fire team to Aldergrove to work with 655 Sqn AAC. They formed part of a ground crew and are responsible for the refuelling of the aircraft used and some minor maintenance.

Page 13 – 6 Platoon – NI Detachment

Throughout the tour we were employed on security duties at Kinnegar Logistic Base and patrols of the local area. The detachment was split into two shifts of nine men, each shift doing 24 hrs on and 24 hrs off. Cpl Davis and Wall, LCpl Langridge and Ptes Thomas, Daintith and Francis took part in a number of rugby games, one being Officers and SNCOs v J/Ranks with the J/Ranks putting up a good show. Cpl O'Hare and Pte Smith 744 also represented the unit at cross country, with Pte Smith doing very well and returning to the mainland to take part in a championship event with Cpl O'Hare who was trying not to show his age by being left behind.

The six months passed without too much excitement other than some of the lads getting engaged or married to some of the lovely looking ladies of Kinnegar. On 23 March 1992 we buried ourselves getting

the Guardroom spick and span for the visit of DAPL. The visit passed off successfully with DAPL briefing the boys on the new Corps.

We have had a few comings and goings within the Platoon, so we would like to say farewell to Cpl Wall back to 521 Company, LCpl Langridge to 1 ADSR, Pte Thomas to RSF, Pte Smith 744 to Def Coy RPC HQ 1 (BR) Corps and Pte Heathcote and wife to 522 Company. We wish them all the best for their future. We would also like to welcome Cpl Helliwell, LCpl Boczeko, LCpl Cockburn and their families, also Ptes Woolcroft, Price and Thompson into the Platoon and hope they enjoy their stay with us.

Page 29 – HQ Lisburn Station

It is with some sadness that we must report the demise of HQ Lisburn Station in its present form. As from 10 September 1992, the Station will amalgamate with 15 Sig Regt to form the first HQ and Sig Regt in Northern Ireland. This has very few implications for the soldiers on the ground as it just means they report via a slightly different command structure. The long standing Station Adjutant's post will, however, become the new 2IC of the HQ Sqn responsible for Station matters.

These matters aside, the last reporting period has been a most productive one for the troops in Lisburn. We are very fortunate here to be in an area that has just had a very large military sports complex completed with sports hall, bowling alley, swimming pool etc. We have also just completed the refurbishment of the RPC run 'Summit Club' which is proving to be the most popular watering hole in the Station. All of these new facilities on our doorstep are being well used and are most welcome. Some would also say long overdue.

On the sporting front, Sgt Sheehan has now put together a very promising football team for the new season, the most difficult part of the organisation being the manipulation of the shift rosters to ensure players are available. Hopefully a full report on their success will follow. Capt Gascoigne has captained the Station cricket team this season who have achieved a semi-final place in the NI Major Units and actually won the Lisburn area cricket league. There were sizeable contributions from Sgt Sheehan (wicketkeeper), Cpl Hookway, LCpl Gibbons, Langford and Holloway. Cpl Holloway's effort in organising all of the matches is also worthy of note – many thanks!

Lisburn Station managed to successfully monopolise the RPC non-central small bore competition this year with their A and B teams coming first and second. The C team was also somewhere near the top! LCpl Hulse also won the best individual shot followed by Capt Gascoigne who won the best Officer shot. Preparations are now underway to enter a Defence Platoon team into the NI Skill at Arms meeting. Hopes are very high about lifting a few trophies and also a qualification for Bisley (while it still exists!)

The Station summer ball – Caribbean Night' went off extremely well this year. Thanks must go to Cpl Tappin and wife Babs, as well as LCpl Holloway (and girlfriend) for all their efforts that went into the preparation for this evening. The ball was swamped with Pioneers, all of whom

had a marvellous time.

For the future, we have a two boat fishing trip organised to set sail from the Antrim coast in a few weeks. This is mainly thanks to LCpl Langford who has put in all of the spade work to organise it. The Adjutant, however, is slightly bemused by the fact that it was organised on the day when he had an exam – but I'm sure this is just coincidental.

Pte Dais is also looking forward to his almost free trip to the Caribbean on Exercise Caribbean Venture courtesy of the Station PRI and RPC funds. A report will follow.

HQ Defence Platoon. Since the last time the Corps magazine was published, the Platoon has seen a complete change over. Goodbye to Platoon Sgt Ian Mountain and his family who were posted to 518 Company on his promotion to SSgt – well done. His replacement, Sgt Pat Sheehan, has his feet under the table now and his wife and family are settling in. The Platoon also bids farewell to Cpl Haggart and family who are off to 28 Sig Regt for his sins – good luck.

At the moment we are busy renovating our bar but that is another story.

'A' Shift by Cpl 'Brummie' Lewis. Since our last write up, there has yet again been a few more changes with the likes of myself and LCpl Kerridge arriving from 19 Inf Bde, also Pte Kitt from 187 Company, Pte 'Gringo' Stapleton from Rheindahlen, and finally Pte 'Big Oz' Osborne from West Moors – welcome to you all.

On the courses front, congratulations go to LCpl (what course next) Gibbons for passing his Assault Pioneer and Unit First Aid Instructor, also LCpl Kerridge on passing his Section Commander's and is now constantly looking at his right arm.

Fond farewells are extended to LCpl Gibbons on posting to 522 Company, Pte Andy Stevenson on promotion to Dog Section – well done – and last but not least Pte Rowlands who is moving on to civilian life.

'B' Shift by LCpl Kirkwood. Since the last time we were lucky enough to appear in the Corps magazine, we have had almost a complete shift change. We welcomed Cpl Ward and Pte Clarke from Rheindahlen, LCpl Cresswell and Pte Clarke from 522 Company and also Pte Thornton and Pte Jordan from HQ 1 (BR) Corps. We said farewell to Cpl Haines on his posting to Verden and Pte Ambrose to Civvy Street.

Congratulations go to LCpl Cresswell for passing his Section Commander's and to Pte Howson for passing his JPC.

'C' Shift by Cpl Emery. The last few months on the PVCP have been quite eventful. Farewells to Pte Farrell on posting to 13 Sigs and to Pte Johnston and family who have moved on to Civvy Street – good luck, you'll need it. Welcomes to LCpl Stott, Pte Whittaker, Pte Davis, Pte Dale and his wife Catriona, Pte Joy and his wife Sue, and last but not least Pte Tharby and his family. So far, everybody seems to be settling in.

Congratulations go to LCpl Stott on his recent promotion, LCpl Langford on his forthcoming promotion. Pte Whittaker on passing his JPC, and finally to Pte Joy and his wife Sue on the birth of young Jason Michael.

Cpl Emery has recently returned from RAF Bicester where he passed his gliding course



with flying colours.

The next few weeks are going to be hard but that will be no problem as all the lads get the job done.

Summit Bar Refurbishment. (Designer – WO2 McGinley, Builders – Bricklayers Cpl Lewis, Pte Henderson Carpenters: Cpl Hookway, Pte Henderson, WO2 McGinley Plumber: LCpl Conlon Touch Up: Cpl Tappin Gooffers: Cpl Emery, Sig Brookes, Mrs Cherie McGinley and Mrs Babs Tappin). The Summit Bar, originally known as the 'Posties Bar' was inherited by the Station HQ just over a year ago. The Station Adjutant and the Defence Platoon WOIC were appointed by the Deputy Station Commander (DSC) as chairman and treasurer.

The Summit Bar is well known for its reputation and good atmosphere and is always well supported, but sadly in need of redecoration. After many months of ear bashing, the Adjutant finally relented and was persuaded to approach the DSC for his approval to submit a proposed plan which was to be undertaken by the PSA, at an estimated cost of £11,000.

Regrettably this proposal was rejected by higher command, due to insufficient funds. Already knowing the outcome and being true blue Pioneers, this was a minor setback. Anticipating what was expected, the work had already started, by way of begging, stealing and borrowing from contractors working on camp.

A week later the Adjutant decided to look in – he gave a gasp and thought ... there goes my career prospects. He then decided to invite the DSC to see what looked like a derelict building. Not saying too many words at this stage (probably because his chin was on the floor), DSC promptly authorised the sum of £2,000 from the Station PRI to offset the basic needs for tools and materials, in order that

we could continue the task.

With money in our hands, there was no turning back now. Two weeks, 2,500 bricks and about four tons of cement later, with the help of the Dog Section's 'borrowed' wheelbarrow, the bar was taking shape. Those looking in must have thought the second Berlin Wall was being erected. Two large pillar supports stood either side of the bar ends. These became time capsules, containing everything from Pioneer Badges and Berets, to front car wings (belonging to Jim Henderson after a slight bump) and anything else that was lying around.

At this stage, Cpl Hookway was prised away from his love of football and cricket to become a master of wall décor, and anything else to do with wood, and leaky 'Connie' Conlon eventually stopped the leaks after five attempts. WO2 McGinley naturally thought his main job would be supervising – wrong!

It was, 'Sir, a hud of cement here or a pile of bricks there etc, etc ... Apart from the back aches and a few more grey hairs (with worry), eventually he could see the light at the end of the tunnel. The grand opening date was set, 29 July 1992 at 2000 hrs. It was now obvious that extra hands were needed prior to the opening. So the QRF were sent for – Cherie, Babs, Vic Emery and his girlfriend Tina.

At 1930 hrs the final touches were taking place, a bit of wood stain here and tile grout there etc. The opening ceremony took place at 2100 hrs with a speech by the DSC, followed by a presentation of a clock to the members of the Defence Platoon, which now hangs proudly on the bar wall. I would just like to personally thank everyone who helped out with this task, without your support this achievement would never taken place.

Spotters' Convention – 13 March

1992. Everybody says that Friday the 13th is unlucky. Well allow me to put that right. The Defence Platoon's Spotters' Convention was a complete success. It all started about four months ago when LCpl Hulse, LCpl Gibbons and myself were watching the famous James Whale Show. Suddenly he brought on some real life train spotters. Well, we all started 'creasing up' laughing. So that's where the idea came from.

At first I had some cards printed up and handed them to various members of the Platoon, including the new CSM. Before long everyone wanted one of these Spotters' cards. So we made rules that if anyone was caught by the count of ten in the bar without his card, he would have to buy all the members of the GTSA (Geordie Train Spotters Association) a drink. Guess who got caught first! Me, £7.80 it cost me! I was as sick as a parrot. So now the card goes everywhere with me.

This was becoming a popular event so on the run up to LCpl Price leaving the Province, LCpl Hulse and myself decided what better way to see him off than a Spotters' convention. The date was set for Friday the 13th. Now all we had to do was get some clothes. Some certificates made up and, of course, a prize.

Well let me tell you, Oxfam, War on Want and the Salvation Army couldn't believe their luck when about 20 squaddies rolled in asking for various articles of clothing. They must have made a fortune. Then there was the certificates. Printing Section, with the help of Ross Reed, Bruce Coward and Andy (RAOC) couldn't do enough to help. So thanks for that. Then came the crunch – the prize. Thanks to the CSM, a Thomas the Tank Engine Bubble Bath was duly mounted on wood and inscribed with 'Awarded Spotter Number One'.

So now we had the date, the prize, but

no bar, as both barmen Andy Holloway and LCpl Gibbons were working, but thanks to the CSM he allowed the latter off duty for the night. All we needed now was a judge. Who better than he, who without his help, things would not have got off the ground. Yes. You've guessed it – the CSM.

Well the venue was set, I was still unsure whether or not people would turn up but, with thanks to the whole of the Defence Platoon, Armoury and the Station Police, the place looked like Paddington Station on a busy Saturday afternoon.

Well to finish, the CSM did the judging and first prize was awarded to (would you believe it) myself. Second place was, of course, LCpl 'Scouse' Hulse. Third prize went to the Provost Sgt Durrant and finally, the only lady Spotter of the night, Sara Van Lierop ('Flip Flopp' to friends) was awarded the Thomas the Tank award. So all in all, it was a brilliant night. Special thanks to Babs Tappin for supplying the chocolate engines, Thomas, Percy and Edward, as consolation prizes, and thanks to Steve (the photographer) Tappin for some excellent pictures. Well that's about it until the next one. The Rab C Nesbitt night coming soon at a bar near you.

Issue 179 dated Spring 1993 Page 8 – 1287 (Tancred) Company – 4 Platoon – Op Banner Tour – 2LI Detachment, South Armagh

The Platoon formed up in December 1992 at Tidworth at the start of what was going to be a ten month detachment with the Second Battalion The Light Infantry.

Our detachment was ultimately South Armagh, so we started what was to be rigorous training, culminating at Hythe and Lydd with the NITAT package. Once completed the Platoon was more than ready for the province and we deployed feeling prepared if a little apprehensive.

The Platoon operated as two multiples of 12 men, one commanded by Lt White and the other by the intrepid SSgt Chambers. It was not long before we were completely wrapped up in what was happening in the province. It proved to be a long, hard and demanding tour, made easier only by the Light Infantry's help and guidance. We were based at Bessbrook Mill and formed part of A(OPS) Company doing town patrols in Newry, bomb clearances, route security, key point protection and cordon and search operations. Routine patrols became common place. Ops Company also took part in its own independent rural operations, often for periods of over 48 hours. The Platoon also took its turn in providing the airborne reaction force, which involved a lot of time flying in Lynx and Puma helicopters.

Without harping on about the old jokes, it is a shame that LCpl McDowell managed to destroy the photo of his intimate but brief relationship with a cow. Pte Tonge is still being ribbed about not yet needing to shave regularly, and believe it or not, we still have not discovered how old Pte 'Frankie' Cannon really is! On reflection it seems that the time in the province did pass quickly but at the time it seemed to last forever. The entire Platoon have spent enough time aboard helicopters to be able to take proficiency flying tests.

Not wishing to dwell on the numerous close calls, both Lt White and Cpl Hulls now

know what it is like to be shot at. We have walked passed bombs which have been found by later patrols, and some of us were even dropped from a Lynx helicopter only six metres from a device. We have flown in hot pursuit of cars trying to escape across the border and have even made some arrests, but for all of this we still managed to have a lot of laughs during the tour.

In conclusion it is safe to say what a privilege it was to serve with the Light Infantry. The Platoon made some good friends, and they looked after us in a first class manner. Without their help and guidance the tour would have been much longer and darker and we were sorry to say goodbye to them.

I doubt if our memories of the tour will ever fade. It was an interesting and invaluable experience during which we worked very hard and we all made it back in one piece.

Since returning the Platoon has taken some well earned leave, worked with the RE Posties at Millhill and staged on the gate at Northampton.

Page 15 – RPC Northern Ireland – Lisburn Station (Capt R Gascoigne, WO2 McGinley, Sgt Sheehan)

Lisburn Station has now completed the amalgamation with 15 Sig Regiment, and comes under control of HQ Squadron. The Station Adjutant is the 2IC HQ Squadron and the WOIC Defence Platoon is double-hatted, keeping responsibilities for the RPC personnel and also heading up the Regimental Training Team. The amalgamation has had very little effect on the working lives of other RPC personnel in Lisburn, who continue to contribute to the security of Lisburn Station with distinction.

In November 92 Lt Col IA Milne, CO 23 Group visited all RPC personnel in the province to update them on the formation of the Royal Logistic Corps., He was particularly impressed with morale of the troops throughout Northern Ireland and paid tribute to the wives of the soldiers who play such an important role in supporting their husbands. The visit culminated in an RPC party held in Lisburn Station which saw the largest gathering of Pioneers and their wives to have occurred in Northern Ireland for some considerable time. Pioneers from Antrim, Aldergrove, Londonderry, Kinnegar and Armagh all made the effort to make the journey and were made welcome at what turned out to be a memorable evenings entertainment.

Defence Platoon 'A' Shift by Cpl Lewis. It's a sad time, as these notes go to press, for this is the final article for the Royal Pioneer Corps magazine before we join the RLC. For many of us it will be our third cap badge. However, I'm sure we can show the new Logistic Corps what the Pioneers are made of.

On the work front, the threat is still high and the hours long, but someone up above has looked down on us, and agreed to install barriers (I wonder how many car roofs we can dent now). So hopefully work should become a little easier.

On the course front, well done to Cpl Lewis for passing his SAA at Warminster and a welcome to LCpl 'Tony' Sheridan on his arrival from Depot, Arborfield.

It's not all work here, and we do get some time off for social and sporting

activities. The RPC Christmas party this year was particularly good and if Pte 'Eartha' Kitt keeps scoring goals for the Station football team with the regularity he is at the moment, we all feel that international honours could be just around the corner!

'B' Shift by Cpl Langford.

We must say a sad farewell to Cpl Ward who leaves the PVCP for 39 Inf Bde, and a big hello and congratulations to Cpl Langford on his promotion. 'B' Shift has seen a lot of people coming and going, but nonetheless pulled together to form a good team.

Currently B Shift PVCP is going through an extensive battle on the football field, with B Shift Dog Section. It is a pity that Pte Clarke does not know the rules. Fortunately for the Dog Section they will be able to get their own back in the forthcoming rugby match planned for the near future. The Medical Centre has been booked!

Cpl Langford continues to endeavour to organise fishing trips after the success of the last trip which had only one problem – the chief clerk being sick on the boat! We must also remind the Sergeant Major about his worm experience. In short he is scared of them.

I must say a fond farewell to Pte Jordan who is leaving for Civvie Street. We wish him good luck for the future and I, too, LCpl Cresswell, will be doing the same in the near future and joining the ranks to Civvie Street. I wish all the members of the Royal Pioneer Corps all the best for the future as they join their new Corps at the same time as I venture into pastures new.

'C' Shift by Cpl Emery.

The last few months have been very hard, especially over Christmas and the New Year period, where the shifts moved into 24 hour duties routine for ten days. On saying that, I would like to say hi and good luck to LCpl Kelly, Pte Hayes and Pte Keel who have just joined C Shift on the PVCP. Also I would like to say good luck to Pte Whittaker who is to be promoted and has moved from the PVCP to the Dog Section, also to Pte Davies who will be moving to Dog Section too – thanks for the work.

In February this year LCpl Kelly was getting married and we all wish him good luck for the years to come. Our man, LCpl Dave Stott is yet again on another course – this time it is Physical Training Instructor – God help us on his return. Hopefully it will not be long before he is sent on yet another course. Dave is now becoming known as 'I'm on a course Dave'.

Dog Section by Cpl Brennan, Once again a very busy period for the dog section here in Lisburn. Son we hope to have out full complement of dogs allowing all handlers to have their own individual dog.

Despite the heavy workload, a number of the section have managed to get away on courses; LCpl Rudd, Ptes Cooke and McInnes have all successfully completed the Assault Pioneers Course and Pte McInnes has also done his JPC.

We welcome LCpl Whittaker to the section who arrives on promotion from the PVCP, and we must say goodbye to LCpl Salt and Ptes Northall and Kohut who are all leaving the Army. We hope they leave with fond memories and we wish them all the best in their newly chosen careers.

Congratulations also go to Pte and Mrs Karen Baker on the birth of their baby girl



Chelsea and Pte and Mrs Denise Brown on the baby girl Samantha Louise. An extra thanks also goes to Pte Tharby for helping to deliver his next door neighbour's baby on the living room carpet – well done!

This year it was the dog section who took on the organisation of the RPC Christmas Party. Special thanks must go to the following people for providing such a memorable evening: Cpl Brennan, LCpl Stevenson, Ptes Kohut, Wembridge and Tuplin. Support given by Mrs Denise Brown, Mrs Angela Sheehan and Babs Stevenson is particularly worthy of note.

RP Staff by Sgt Durrant. The RP Staff continue to give support to the Station by taking on the huge variety of tasks that are handed down from the Headquarters. Occasionally we even get a prisoner for the night!

Sgt Durrant continues to make his presence felt on the rugby field for the Combined Services, but despite his near legendary reputation could not prevent the officers from beating the Senior Ranks in the 15 Sig Regiment annual confrontation (Yes, it's the Corps Magazine as well!).

Unfortunately we must say goodbye to LCpl Holloway who leaves the Army in the near future. His pleasant personality and prowess on the sports field will be sorely missed and we wish him all the best for the future.

Cpl Hookway and LCpl Kerridge continue to provide good service for the Station football team and LCpl Thomas seems to win every golf tournament that he enters at the moment. His recovery from a broken leg incurred while out running appears to be progressing well.

With the forthcoming amalgamation of the Corps into RLC, it was decided by the Supply Depot that it would be a good idea to invite representatives from all the

amalgamating Corps to a mediaeval banquet. This was done in some style with copious amounts of food and drink, and the occasional visit to the stocks (to be pelted with food) by some unfortunate people.

Training – WOIC Def Platoon by Cpl Marshall. On the formation of HQ NI and 15 Sig Regiment a new Regimental Training Wing was stabled, staffed by WO2 Bob McGinley (RPC), Sgt Jim Stillie (R Signals), Cpl Bob Marshall (RPC) and Cpl Peter Hutchins (R Signals). The Training Wing's main task is to provide all mandatory training for the Regiment (800 plus personnel). In addition to this the Training Wing runs a five day pre-course training prior to all Royal Signals Detachment Commander's Courses. This pre-course is open to all R Signals personnel in the province as well as RPC attending all upgrading and promotion course. The Training Wing are also responsible for the course bidding, Ranges, PT, Wpn Conversation and organising many different competitions, the most recent being the CO .22 Shooting Cup. The Sqn HQ Team consisting (yes) all Pioneers, Captain Bob Gascoigne, WO2 Bob McGinley, Cpl Brummie Langford, LCpl Ian Cresswell and LCpl John Green, and yes – we won! We hope to do well this year at NISAM in order to qualify for Bisley for the first time as a Regiment. The Training Wing also provides training support for other units within the Province as and when requested.

Starting this year, we are tasked with running training days for the Regiment involving on duty pistol users, aided with evasive driving skills. (Vehicle mounted live firing Pistol CQB and Vehicle anti-ambush drills). Real Bodie and Doyle stuff, or in my case, more grey hairs.

Exercise Highland Fling was a hill walking

expedition in the Scottish mountains by 21 Regiment RCT. LCpl Stott and Pte Clarke were the lucky two participants to take part, their fitness was put to the test; over four days the team was having to complete approximately 20 miles a day. The team consisted of eight men at the start and only finished with four. LCpl Stott and Pte Clarke with the team leader, and one other managed to complete the exercise. Well done.

Finally, the Training Team would like to congratulate Cpl Marshall (after completing a three month course) on passing his MAGB Course (Makes a good brew).

Charity Night. After the refurbishment of the RPC run Station Club (Summit Club), it was fitting to adopt a charity on behalf of the club. As fate would have it, we were approached by a field worker from Rumania to see if we could help with the plight of Romanian orphans.

We agreed to adopt two orphans at a minimum of £50 a year each. On 17 November 1992 a charity evening was organised with a target of £200 for the charity being set. The evening proved to be a tremendous success and thanks to the efforts of the organisers a total of £434 was raised.

Congratulations go to Capt Gascoigne for winning the pool competition and to WO2 O'Connor for winning the darts. WO2 O'Connor deserves a special thanks as it was his efforts that almost single handedly raised £200. Thanks also go to the other organisers WO2 McGinley and his wife Cherie, Cpl Tappin and his wife Babs and to Cpl Hookway. Well done.

**Issue 180 dated "Final Edition 1993"
Page 22 – 518 Company – 2 Platoon
by Pte Norris, Sgt S Stainton**
Half of Two Platoon returned from N

Ireland in Nov 92. Five members were attached to 655 Sqn AAC at RAF Aldergrove and were members of the ground crew for seven months, working on the start/shut downs and refuelling aircraft. During this time the squadron had several visits including one by the former Page Three girl Linda Lusardi. Another five members of the platoon were assigned to JCUNI, whilst Cpl Swindle took a section to Canada for seven months.

Page 22 – 518 Company – 4 Platoon, Kinagar Det (Sgt Walker, Cpls Hindmarsh, Woods, LCpls Beckett, McGallum)

After the short detachments of Mill Hill, erecting fencing the Press launch at Andover (QMG) and the refurbishment of the 'Tin City' NITAT in Sennelager, Germany (If that wasn't enough – a couple of days leave and it was back to packing bags). This time for a six month tour of sunny Kinnegar in the Province. The alarm clocks sounded at 0200 on the 11th Nov 92, everyone was bright eyed and wide awake except Ptes Bavin and Fallon who thought it was a wind up, "we can't be going away again so soon!" (Welcome to 518 boys!). After a farewell brief from the OC Major Wilde, it was on the transport for RAF Lyneham, only to be told that there was the usual flight delay. Not to worry only 8 hours. On arrival at our new home for the next six months, we sought our accommodation for a rest after a hectic day only to be told that it was the same as outside, however after the "draft" in the NAAFI, we didn't really notice. The NIRTT course was the next thing we had to encounter, by the end of the course everyone was suffering from "death by viewfoil". After taking all that in it was down to the serious business of staggging on 24 hrs and 24 hrs off.

On the social and sporting front most of the platoon have been kept busy one way or another. Sgt Walker and Cpl Hindmarsh making frequent trips back to the mainland to play rugby for the Corps. Cpl Wood, LCpl Beckett and Pte Clark have represented the unit at football, trophies were won by Pte Harrison and Carlson at basketball, Pre Carlson also represented the unit at rugby, cross-country and squash – a bit of all-rounder to say the least. Cpl Hindmarsh successfully organised a Pool competition which was won by a Ptes team including our very own Ptes Wrigglesworth and Booth, and last but not least Pte Sinnott who played in the NI Badminton Championships – Someone's got to play the girly games!! A more relaxing note, LCpl McCallum and Ptes Dennick and Booth tried a bit of sub aqua diving. We've also got four of the platoon taking driving tests at the end of March (God help us!). On the subject of driving tests, thanks to Pte Spearman, there will be a new answer to the Highway Code question, "What should you never wear when crossing a dual carriageway?" Answer: "A Walkman". Well that's about it, except to say we never got any of those 24 hours courses we were promised in between duties.

Page 26 – RPC Northern Ireland

On Sunday 4 April 1993 RPC representatives from units all around Northern Ireland gathered in Thiepval Barracks, Lisburn for the re-badging of the four Corps for form the Royal Logistic Corps. A very sad day for the member of the RPC and one which marked the end of

a very proud and productive era for the Pioneers. There can be no doubt that the 'Pioneer Spirit' will be transferred over into the new Corps and that it will be all the better for it.

The parade in Lisburn went off very well, even though most of the rehearsals were carried out in driving rain, and even sometimes snow! Luckily, on the day, we were blessed with glorious sunshine and as the Pioneer Flag was lowered, accompanied by the playing of the Pioneer march, for the last time, even the most hardened Pioneers admitted a deep sense of regret and sorrow. There were more than a few lumps in the throat and wobbling chins than many would care to mention. We must all now look to the future.

The Pioneering work in the Province will continue, do doubt in the same professional and spirited manner as ever. As we enter the new Corps we do so in the knowledge that we are well equipped to meet all future challenges.

The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated October 1993 (First mention in The RLC Journal)

Page 182 - 23 Pioneer Regiment At any given time, we have men deployed around the globe providing Pioneer Support wherever and whenever required. At present we have troops in Bosnia and Croatia, Belize, Canada, The Falkland Islands, Northern Ireland, Australia and New Zealand

The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated February 1995

Page 38 – 23 Pioneer Regiment – 187 Squadron

We are currently supporting 1 RWF in Kenya, 3 Para in Botswana, 19 Brigade HQ & Sig Sqn in Bosnia, BATUS, Falkland Islands, Ascension Island and of course the UK and Northern Ireland.

In November 5 Troop having just returned from Northern Ireland, attended a Regimental Battle Camp at Sennybridge.

The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated August 1995

Page 310 – 23 Pioneer Regiment – 187 Squadron

The last few months have seen troops completing a successful tour of 46 (Northern Ireland) Workshops at Antrim and 655 Sqn AAC at Aldergrove.

Page 310 518 Sqn – On 10 October 1994 1 Troop departed Bicester for a six month detachment at Kinnegar Logistic Base (KLB) in Northern Ireland. Only a few members of the troop knew what to expect in Northern Ireland as 1 Troop are quite a young troop and had not been in the Province before. As it happens we arrived there just as the cease fire was taking hold, so the tour turned out to be a quiet one.

Soon after arriving at KLB the troop departed for the Infantry NIRRT course at Ballykinler. This lasted for a week, which saw patrol tactics, IED Drills, ECM equipment and various other subjects, including a lot of 'death by view-foil'. After completing the course it was back to Kinnegar and straight into the task which the lads were keen to get on with. The troop was broken down into two sections and covered the guard duties. Quick Reaction Force (QRF) duties, patrols and escorts. It took no time at all for the lads to

be full conversant with the task..

We found time to play various sports for the workshop, with Sgt Hughes, Cpl Moody, Pte Murphy and Pte Harvey playing football against the Senior Ranks, winning easily. R&R was a God-send, especially for those who had to wait until the end.

The nine days entitlement is well-deserved (and indeed well-received). We finally completed the task on 31 March after handing over to 2 Troop 522 Squadron, wishing them well and hoping they have as successful task as we did. We were reluctant to leave.

The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated October 1995

Page 390 – 23 Pioneer Regiment

The CO visited all soldiers of the regiment serving in Northern Ireland with 25 Engineer Regiment in Antrim, 5 Regiment AAC in Aldergrove and 46 Northern Ireland Workshop in Kinnegar. This was the first time since taking over command that the CO (Lt Col Mark Baker) had been able to visit the Province and see soldiers of the regiment at work on an operational tour. (An interesting picture of soldiers of 187 Squadron working for 25 Engineer Regiment appeared in the 10 July edition of Soldier magazine.)

The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated February 1996

Page 51 – 23 Pioneer Regiment – 522 Squadron

Most of the troops have been away on priority one tasks in Antrim, Kinnegar, the Falkland Islands and Bosnia.

The troop detachments based in Kinnegar and Antrim have just recently returned to UK. Good team spirit and enthusiasm kept them going through the monotony of guard shifts. 16 Troop managed to arrange for most of their soldiers, two at a time, to assist with the Naval coastal patrols.

The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated April 1996

Page 118 – 23 Pioneer Regiment – 187 Squadron

No sooner were 1 Troop and attached personnel back to work following post Angola leave then some of them were off again in October with 3 Troop to 46 Northern Ireland Workshop in Kinnegar and 5 Troop to 25 Regiment RE in Antrim and 5 Regiment AAC in Aldergrove as part of the continuing commitment to Northern Ireland. The cease-fire has yet to produce a peace dividend for this squadron, with a further two troops deploying as a roulement in April 1996.

The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated August 1996

Page 277 - 23 Pioneer Regiment - 522 Squadron

In addition to the other detachments the squadron has sent detachments to Northern Ireland to carry out security tasks in Kinnegar and Antrim

The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated October 1996

Page 378 - 23 Pioneer Regiment - 187 Squadron

We continue to be spread to the four winds, with two troops carrying out priority 1 tasks in Northern Ireland and the



remaining three being employed on security duties and priority 2 and 3 tasks.

**The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated February 1997
Page 40 – 23 Pioneer Regiment – 187 Pioneer Squadron**

Two troops are still in Northern Ireland and the other have been busy on exercises, adventure training and, of course, a bit of leave.

46 Northern Ireland Workshop

Detachment: The detachment to 46 Northern Ireland Workshop was for the period of April to October. 4 Troop have also just completed a six month operational tour in Bosnia serving with both the Rapid Reaction Force and Implementation Force. It just goes to show, "Join the Army and see the world". Some members of the troop have only been in the Army for just under two years and have three medals to their name.

The task in Northern Ireland is to provide security for Kinnegar Station and escorts for moves of personnel and equipment around the Province. On 17 Jul 96 the QMG, Gen S Cowan CBE, visited 4 Troop of 187 Sqn, 23 Pnr Regt were on the programme to be visited. As we are the Guard Force roulement troop attached to Kinnegar Station, this was a welcome visit, we usually only see VIP visitors when they are entering and exiting the camp. The QMG spoke to members of the troop. He was mainly interested in the personalities and what they had achieved in their time.

**The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated April 1997
Page 125 – 23 Pioneer Regiment – 187 (Tancred) Squadron**

The seemingly relentless drain on manpower continues, with tasks still finding

their way to 187 Squadron. We have just about had time to catch our breath before launching into the next round of Priority 1 tasks, which include Northern Ireland and the Former Republic of Yugoslavia.

Since returning from Bosnia, two troops have been deployed to Northern Ireland, tasked respectively with security duties and Royal Engineer support at Kinnegar and Antrim. When troops are not deployed on essential security duties there is the opportunity for sports, courses such as dog handler, mechanical handling equipment operator, artisan and of course ATDs.

**The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated August 1997
Page 297 – 23 Pioneer Regiment – 187 (Tancred) Squadron**

Two troops have recently deployed to Northern Ireland: 4 Troop, under 2Lt Pelan, are at Antrim attached to 25 Engineer Regiment; 5 Troop, under 2Lt Comer, are at Kinnegar attached to 46 Northern Ireland Workshops. Neither Troop Commander has spent more than a few days in Bicester this year, having spent the first few months of 1997 attend the Platoon Commanders Battle Course at Warminster.

Page 298 – 518 Squadron.

We continued to be heavily tasked, with 7 and 9 Troops deployed to Kinnegar and Antrim respectively.

The deployment of 7 Troop two days before the Lisburn bombs acted as a timely reminder of the worrying increase in terrorist activity and was a useful focus throughout the tour of the vigilance required. Cpl McInnes, the Troop Assault Pioneer, was tasked to upgrade the camp security and erected a kilometre of triple coiled concertina wire around the weaker areas within two days.

The troop made a useful contribution to

the unit, both at work and on the sports field, with several soldiers representing the base at football and cross-county. Well done to LCpl Lane, with a creditable seventh in the Northern Ireland cross-country championships.

A training package was introduced for the troop when off duty, using the facilities at Palace Barracks to carry out ATD training, so the pleasant experience of going into the gas chamber was unavoidable. Six soldiers were also trained to Cat C standard, thanks to the hard work of Cpl Tibbs, the troop driving instructor.

**The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated October 1997
Page 395 – 23 Pioneer Regiment**

We remain dispersed on operational tasking, with troops under the command of 2Lts Pelan and Comer in Northern Ireland.

**The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated February 1998
Page 41 – 23 Pioneer Regiment – 187 Pioneer Squadron**

We continued to be detached on tours of Bosnia and Northern Ireland.

This period also saw the return of 4 and 5 Troops from Northern Ireland, however, as 5 Troop returned from Kinnegar, 2 Troop were departing these shores to replace them.

**The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated April 1998
Page 154 – 23 Pioneer Regiment – 187 Pioneer Squadron**

The last few months have seen us finish our troop tours in Kinnegar and Antrim and a return to Bicester to take on most of the regiment's non-operational exercise commitments in addition to a few other tasks.

The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated June 1998

Page 238 – 23 Pioneer Regiment – 522 Pioneer Squadron

SSgt Davies and his troop have taken over from 187 Pioneer Squadron in Northern Ireland

The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated October 1998

Page 408 – 23 Pioneer Regiment – 522 Squadron

Our role as the regiment's operational tasks squadron continues and we have a troop in Bosnia with 2 (UK) Regiment and another on security duties in Northern Ireland.

The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated December 1998

Page 476 – 23 Pioneer Regiment – 522 Pioneer Squadron.

We welcomed back 13 and 14 Troops from Bosnia and Northern Ireland respectively, happy that their return now means the days of tumbleweeds blowing through the squadron lines are over for a few months at least. For 14 Troop the departure from Kinnegar was particularly poignant as they were not replaced by Pioneers.

This ended a twenty-seven year commitment to the security of Kinnegar Station and the occasion of the withdrawal was marked by a small parade and a presentation to the troop by the CO 46 Northern Ireland Workshop. Their tradesmen, together with soldiers from 21 Logistics Support Regiment, will now have to man the gates in Kinnegar in addition to their other duties.

The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated June 1999

Page 222 – 23 Pioneer Regiment – RHQ & 144 Squadron

It seems not that long ago that most of the regiment was in the UK and on regimental exercise. Now just four months later, we have soldier sin Bosnia, Northern Ireland, Macedonia, Canada, Italy and the Falklands.

The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated June 2001

Page 237 – 23 Pioneer Regiment – 518 Pioneer Squadron

The Squadron was warned just before Christmas that it is to undertake the Roulement Transport Squadron role in Northern Ireland. This is a one off and a first for the Pioneers. It presents the problem of all the Squadron personnel having to obtain a Cat C driving licence.

This will allow everyone to gain a Specialist Qualification and also undertake an operational tour, but it does present us with the short term problem of driver training which is now underway in earnest.

The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated February 2002

Page 45 – 23 Pioneer Regiment – 518 Squadron

The Squadron has been tasked with the roulement Transport Squadron role in Northern Ireland commencing Spring 2002; it is to drive the Saxons and the Taverns in support of four resident battalions and the Police Service of Northern Ireland. This task

came as something of a surprise to the Squadron, only 20% of whom had any form of driving licence in July of this year. Since then there has been some frenetic training in driving skills. Hazmat qualifications and a plethora of MR management courses. With four months remaining before deployment, 70% of the Squadron now have C+E licences. It just goes to show; anyone can drive a truck! As we head towards the New Year we look forward to the Lydd training packages.

The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated April 2002

Page 155 – 23 Pioneer Regiment – 518 Squadron

The OC and command team completed their recce of Northern Ireland at the end of November amidst some of the busiest public order situations the security forces have had to conduct in recent years. This provided a good focus for future training and ensured that the recce was used to its full potential. In the meantime the remainder of 518 Squadron have been driving around Bicester in the newly arrived Saxon Patrol variant vehicles. The transition between Pioneer Squadron and Transport Squadron is bounding along, with soldiers qualifying daily on a new vehicle or acquiring a new category licence. The officers and seniors have been busy on various courses at DS, ensuring that vehicle documentation and accountability will be as sound as the soldiers' new found skills. The new role has provided an excellent opportunity to increase the number of licence holders within the regiment, We have achieved in a matter of months what would otherwise have taken a year or two to complete.

The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated June 2002

Page 259 – 23 Pioneer Regiment – 518 Pioneer Squadron

We have been busy putting the final touches to pre-deployment training for our Roulement Transport Squadron role in Northern Ireland. During February the Squadron was away in Wales practising rural and urban patrol techniques on Exercise Axeman's Chase and Exercise Axeman's Baton respectively. The former was conducted in some of the foulest weather imaginable at Sennybridge Training Area; the latter was conducted with support from 1 Scots Guards, 11 EOD Regiment, 4 GS Medical Regiment and Media Operations Group to whom 518 Pioneer Squadron wishes to express its gratitude.

We are currently undergoing testing by OPTAG, after which we will be the first Pioneer Squadron to take on the RTS role.

The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated August 2002

Page 356 – 23 Pioneer Regiment – 518 Pioneer Squadron

The Squadron are still deployed on Op BANNER. Look for their update in the NI CSS Regt.

Page 359 – Northern Ireland CSS Regiment – 26 Transport Squadron

Operationally, the burden of the Squadron's Girdwood Detachment that had become permanent since August 2000 was slightly eased by 518 RTS taking on those tasks, in exchange for the slightly less busy

Portadown Detachment, in support of 3 Royal Irish.

The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated October 2002

Page 461 – 23 Pioneer Regiment – 187 (Tancred) Pioneer Squadron

Other activities undertaken lately include 187 (Tancred) Pioneer Squadron soldiers serving with 518 Pioneer (RTS) in Northern Ireland on Op BANNER.

Page 461 – 518 Squadron

After a long hard year of training for the Squadron's Op BANNER tour, the time had finally come, and on 25 March 2002 the advance party were on their way to Northern Ireland. The remainder of the Squadron followed soon after, and it wasn't long before the Pioneers had truly established themselves within Belfast and Londonderry.

The driver role is a new one for a 'Pioneer' Squadron to fulfil, and all members of 518 Squadron were keen to show that they can drive as well as any other unit. The Commanders and Pioneers on the ground used the skills they had learnt in the build-up training and applied the '23' ethos to the job at hand. The leadership and quick thinking shown by many of our soldiers on the ground have earned countless messages and letters of praise from the infantry battalions we support. For example, Pte Martin, who when left with a team on the ground after the Multiple Commander had pursued a number of suspects on foot, re-organised the team, got them into his Tavern and then moved to provide a cut off. As a result three joyriders were stopped and arrested. Pte Crowie put himself in great danger in order to save the life of a Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) officer. Pte Crowie manoeuvred his vehicle into position to draw the crowd's full attention in order to allow the PSNI to extract to safety.

Despite being back in Bicester, it has not been easy for the Surge Troop. As well as normal regimental duties they have also been carrying out continuation training on the Saxon. In late May they were responsible for moving GWR Saxon over to Northern Ireland for the marching season. No matter what's reported in the news, the tempo of operations has increased out here and 518 Squadron are going to be even busier over the next few months.

The Royal Logistic Corps Journal dated February 2003

Page 54 – 23 Pioneer Regiment – 518 Squadron

As the Squadron entered its last month in the Province the pace of life seemed to accelerate, not only did Belfast remain the centre of excellence for public disorder, the Sqn also seemed to become a very popular to visit. Our new CO, Lt PA Jones MBE (an ex-Trucky) came to visit and even with his back-ground was highly impressed by the level of expertise achieved. When given the opportunity to drive a Saxon Patrol he readily accepted, but was somewhat surprised by the Public Order scenario the instructor forgot to mention! We also received a visit from Brig Wallace, Commander of the newly formed 104 Logistic Support Brigade, which not only acted as an excellent dress rehearsal for the CO's visit, but also saw the Brigadier visit



HQ Northern Ireland to promote the cause of The RLC in the RTS role. Despite being a new role for the Pioneer CEG, the RTS has been an excellent tour and offers training and development opportunities in an operational environment that are unrivalled in the rest of the Corps, particularly at JNCO level. As the tour ended, the Sqn was rewarded with many plaques and presentations, one particular gift was the Thin Red Line painting of the battle of Balaklava in 1864, a battle honour of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders when they halted a massed charge by Russian cavalry. We were particularly proud to receive such a gift, as it has never before been awarded to an RTS.

With morale soaring, we return to comparatively sunny Bicester at the end of September looking forward to our well-earned four weeks POTL. Some quality time was due with families and the majority of the singles headed for Playa Las Americas!

Book of Remembrance

The Book of Remembrance was presented, and is maintained by The Guild of St Helna. It may be seen in the Garrison Church of St Columb, Thiepval Barracks, Lisburn. The Book contains the names of all Service Personnel who have given their lives in Northern Ireland since August 1969. The Royal Pioneer deaths are:-

- 24198258 Pte I BOWEN (3 Inf Bde) RTA Belfast
- 23547930 Cpl B CRIDDLE RAVC KIA (Ex Pioneer)
- 24175954 Pte PV DRAKE (3 Inf Bde) KIA ambush
- 24304270 Pte G HAYES (DE& PI NI)
- 24348257 Pte S HUMBLE KIA
- 24493514 LCpl G LEE (COD Kinnegar) RTA ■





■ Pioneers Bevan and Bone prior to Remembrance Parade Picture: Supplied



■ Bob McGinley chatting up the waitress at the Organisers Ball, Gosforth Park Picture: Supplied



■ Eddie after a pint Picture: Supplied



■ In Pensioner Roy Palmer with the Duchess of Cornwall Picture: Supplied



■ Micky finds more belly dancers at Founders Day Picture: Supplied



■ Nat Chaun's Trike Picture: Supplied



■ Pioneer Neil Butterworth Picture: Supplied



■ Field of Remembrance, 2018

Picture: Supplied



■ Prior to Remembrance Day

Picture: Supplied



■ Field of Remembrance, 2018

Picture: Supplied



■ Eddie after a pint

Picture: Supplied



■ Field of Remembrance, 2018

Picture: Supplied



■ Brigadier David Clouston presenting our In pensioner Micky Hull with his Christmas present

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Brigadier David Clouston presenting our In pensioner Roy Palmer with his Christmas present

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Soon to be an in pensioner Dewsnap with our in pensioner Roy Palmer

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Pioneer Officers Dinner Night 2019

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Paul and Daniella Offord married on 13 Sep 19

Picture: Supplied



■ Painting by David Molloy

Picture: David Malloy



■ Canal Boat Trip, organised by Northampton Branch

Picture: Supplied



■ At Chelsea Hospital with our two in pensioners

Picture: Supplied



■ Rolling Thunder - tens of thousands of bikers descended on London in April in support of Soldier F, who is accused of killing two civil rights demonstrators in 1972.

Pictures: Paul Brown

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



Report: Paul Brown
Pictures: RPCA Archives

HAVE dug deep into the Archives and have found some fantastic photographs featuring the Labour Corps and the Chinese Labour Corps that as far as I am aware have never ever been published.

The photograph at the top is the Chinese Labour Corps, paving the road to victory. Our new Eastern Allies helping to make the roads, so necessary for the transport of supplies.

The photograph on the right is a Chinese ration party, they can only eat special bread of their own making (1917).

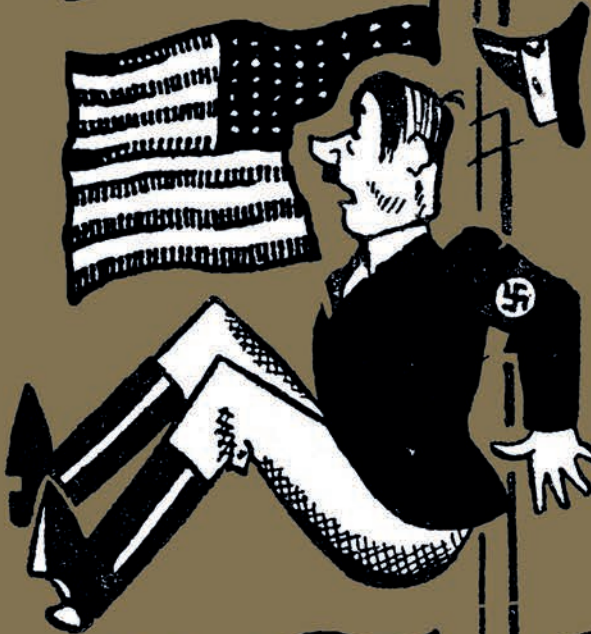
On the opposite page are two fantastic photographs. The top one is the Chinese Labour Corps in 1917 and the bottom one is the inside billets of 49 Labour Company, 1919 Cologne.

Over this page we have another set of great photographs of the CLC loading oats and making bread.

The facing page at the top has the CLC felling wood for railway construction.

The bottom of the page was taken on 14th July 1917 and is titled "the lighter side of lumber work, a toy junk free from the U Boat menace".

Until next time. ■



Digging through the archives...



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









Building Paveway Camp at Mali Belaceva



Building the refugee camp at Obilic. This was a former army Barracks which had to be first cleared



Cpl Scouse Ellis, Lt Paddy Cope, LCpl; Hawkins, Cpl Norman



Sgt Kev Haines and WO2 (SSM) Jimmy Hamilton with capture Kosovo Liberation Army weapons



Building the refugee camp at Obilic. This was a former army Barracks which had to be first cleared



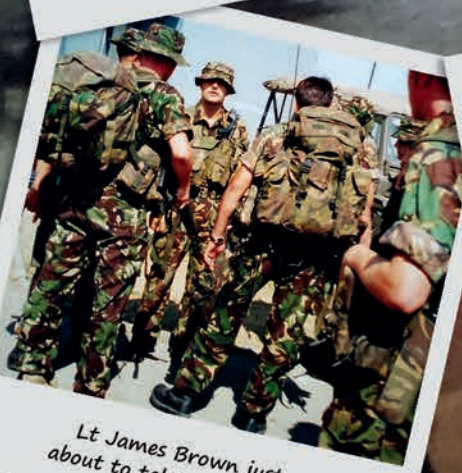
The Nail Factory at Veles and Pte Lenny Henry



Kosovo Teretna railway station



Sgt Kev Haines



Lt James Brown just about to take out a patrol



Preparing for a train guard.



Pte Thorne



Maj Al Mulholland (OC 518 Sqn).



WO2 Jimmy Hamilton seeing a small child safely home



WO2 Jimmy Hamilton, SSgt Pat Patterson (only partly visible), Lt James Brown, WO1 (RSM) Dave Finnigan, Sgt Ricky McCracken.



Pte Schofield showing his artisan skills



Lt James Brown and Sgt Jackson



Ptes Schofield, Hough, Hewitson and Olesen



Operation Agricola

These excellent photographs were sent in by Major Mike Tickner. In his words... "I have just realised that this year is the 20th anniversary of the Regt deploying to Kosovo. 187 Sqn deployed in the spring. 518, 144 and RHQ deployed on 15 Jun. 522 took over in Sep. Initially we went to the Nail Factory in Veles in Macedonia. On 21 Jun we deployed into Pristina in Kosovo and lived in the Wool Factory. 518 Sqn then moved into Kosovo Teretna railway station where we conducted train guards, ran a railhead to 5 Airborne Bde and 4 Armd Bde, built cantonment sites for Kosovo Liberation Army weapons, built Paveway Camp (main ammo storage site for the British Army), built a refugee camp at Obilic and individual troops conducted patrols with 1 R IRISH. We returned to Bicester on 3 Sep 99. Attached are a number of photos which might be of interest to the readers".



Bicester Garrison

I was recently given a copy of the booklet celebrating 50 years of COD Bicester and Bicester Garrison 1942-1992. I have re-produced Chapter 3 as many of us at one time or another served at Bicester

Report: By Lt PJ Killeen RPC
RPCA Archive

HQ I was recently given a copy of the booklet celebrating 50 years of COD Bicester and Bicester Garrison 1942-1992. I have re-produced Chapter 3 as many of us at one time or another served at Bicester.

Men from 521 Company RPC are deployed to the COD in support of the Depot tasking and share with the RAOC in the celebrations marking the 50th Anniversary of the Depot.

In July 1941, 216 Company Royal Pioneer Corps arrived in Bicester where they were engaged in the initial stages of construction of the planned Central Ordnance Depot. In August of that year, together with a Construction Group, Royal Engineers, work started on site preparation, marking out of boundaries, clearance of the irrigation systems, drainage of the area, the laying of roadway and installation of the Railway. Within a year, the RPC and RE construction teams had completed all tasks allocated and had constructed many of the Nissen huts which would be used to accommodate the troops and provide office accommodation. Their task complete, the RPC land RE returned to other duties away from Bicester.

%21 Company RPC arrived in 1951 and have been stationed in the area continuously since that time. Prior to 1951 the Company, which was formed in 1948, had been centred on Bordon, Hampshire with Detachments in Aldershot, Longmoor, Southampton and Gosport. The move to Bicester, meant that Company Headquarters and 12 Sections were accommodated in a single barracks for the first time since its foundation and a normal Garrison routine could be established in which the whole Company were able to contribute.

On move to Bicester, 521 Company occupied part of No 3 Camp, sharing the barracks with the REME Battalion which supported the REME Workshops and the Railway Group RE. As a Company, the RPC featured in all Garrison sporting activities with a very high success rate especially in Boxing, Athletics, Football and Rifle Shooting. The Football team played an active part in the Oxfordshire Thursday FA League, 2nd Division and in 1952 LCpl Patterson, the Team Captain, was top scorer in the league with 21 goals. He left the Army and became a professional with Hull City. In 1956, 521 Company beat 18 Battalion RAOC by 10-0.

Meanwhile, the Company made great improvement to the Camp conditions,

installing better lighting, laying paths and improving the drainage. There was a time when the Camp would suffer heavy flooding during bad weather and the Nissen huts would be awash with the flood waters. Splendid gardens were laid out and produce from these was sold to boost PRI funds. No 3 Camp was at Lower Arncott on the site now occupied by the DOE/PSA Headquarters and D Log IS(A).

The main contribution to Depot activities in the early days was centred upon support to the REME Workshop and the tasks undertaken by 521 Company included Crane Operating, Paint Spraying, B Vehicle repair and carpentry. Much help was also provided to the RE Railway Group in track maintenance and rolling stock repair. Some sections of the railway track within the COD are entirely 'Pioneer' built. When the Director of Pioneer and Labour, Brigadier GW Eden CBE, visited the Company in 1955, he named a COD Locomotive 'Royal Pioneer' to commemorate the close connection which the RPC had with the Railway Group.

The closure of 39 Base Workshop in June 1958 led to restructuring of 521 Company and its commitment to the COD, and some sections moved to the COD at Didcot, leaving Company HQ and 7 Sections only in Bicester; 5 Sections for employment in the COD and 2 Sections for the RE Railway Group. The tasking of the COD Sections deprived the men of the more skilled employments previously enjoyed with REME and resulted in a loss of prestige and morale, as the Sections were now routinely employed in such tasks as vehicle park maintenance, dismantling and assembly of racking and general labouring duties. The change of employers also necessitated a change in Camp and what remained of 521 Company moved to No 2 Camp and were accommodated with 15 Bn RAOC. No 2 Camp was located at the junction of Palmer Avenue and the Bicester/Thame Road. The camp was condemned at the time of move and the conditions were much harsher than had been experienced in No 3 Camp, but the move was made on the promise of an early transfer to the new barracks then under construction, at what is now St David's Barracks. No sooner that the move to St David's Barracks taken place, when the Company was moved to Didcot to work at 14 Battalion RAOC, leaving 2 Sections at Bicester for support to the RE Railway Group. This move took place in January 1959 and it was not until January 1961 that the return to Bicester was authorized. Exigencies of the Service intervened again

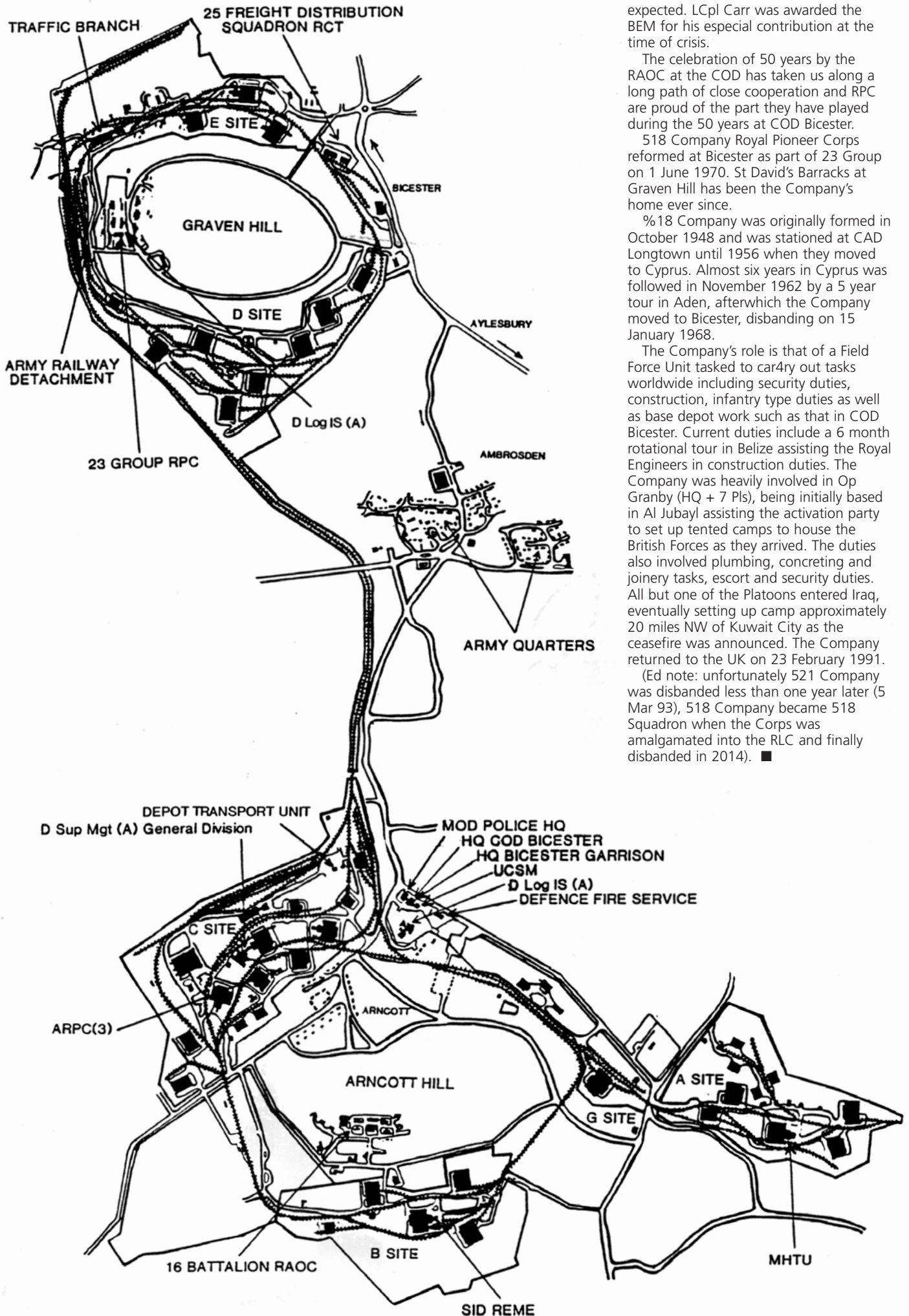
when, in 1964, all available men were despatched to Cyprus and Aden leaving only a small presence at Bicester. For several years from 1964 severe overstretch was felt with Sections as far afield as Aden, Borneo, Cyprus and Bahrain as well as all parts of the UK.

In 1968 the departure of a Section to Bahrain was featured on the BBC news and the activities of the RPC at Bicester were given a good airing. In that year (1968), the RPC gave assistance in the construction of the Garrison Swimming Pool and were part of the Issues team which quickly made emergency issue of 5000 tarpaulins to the area of Glasgow which had been severely damaged by a freak hurricane.

In 1970, Pioneers had been more integrated into the stores processes in the COD and were more involved in Receipts, Issues and Storehouse maintenance than hitherto. The Company continued to provide Sections to support operations in all parts of the world and to events within the UK as required and there were constant upheavals. Despite this, the RPC representation remaining at Bicester were able to take a full part in the sporting life of the area and always acquitted themselves well. Following the tragic fire at COD Donnington in 1983, a Platoon was despatched for 18 months in cleaning up the area, returning to Bicester in April 1985. In 1985 the formation of a Judo Squad was followed by success after success, culminating in the RPC having the finest Judo Squad in the Army and the Strongest Intermediate team in the country.

1989 was marked by the presentation of Civic Honours to the RPC at Bicester when a Scroll of Commemoration was presented by the Mayor of Bicester in the presence of the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire and the Director of Army Pioneer & Labour.

In August 1990 when Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait, 43 members of the 521 Company and all of 518 Company were deployed to the Gulf in support of Operation GRANBY and made a full contribution to the British role in that Operation. The work was complex, varied and onerous and in spite of all handicaps, the men performed all tasking placed upon them. At the end of hostilities LCpl Sellstrom and Cpl Richards were awarded the BEM and Captain Ralph received the MBE. The absence of 50% of 521 Company strength imposed many additional tasks upon those who remained behind. Detachments to Northern Ireland still had to be provided and the workload upon the available manpower was accepted with that degree of professionalism which is



expected. LCpl Carr was awarded the BEM for his especial contribution at the time of crisis.

The celebration of 50 years by the RAOC at the COD has taken us along a long path of close cooperation and RPC are proud of the part they have played during the 50 years at COD Bicester.

518 Company Royal Pioneer Corps reformed at Bicester as part of 23 Group on 1 June 1970. St David's Barracks at Graven Hill has been the Company's home ever since.

%18 Company was originally formed in October 1948 and was stationed at CAD Longtown until 1956 when they moved to Cyprus. Almost six years in Cyprus was followed in November 1962 by a 5 year tour in Aden, after which the Company moved to Bicester, disbanding on 15 January 1968.

The Company's role is that of a Field Force Unit tasked to carry out tasks worldwide including security duties, construction, infantry type duties as well as base depot work such as that in COD Bicester. Current duties include a 6 month rotational tour in Belize assisting the Royal Engineers in construction duties. The Company was heavily involved in Op Granby (HQ + 7 Pls), being initially based in Al Jubayl assisting the activation party to set up tented camps to house the British Forces as they arrived. The duties also involved plumbing, concreting and joinery tasks, escort and security duties. All but one of the Platoons entered Iraq, eventually setting up camp approximately 20 miles NW of Kuwait City as the ceasefire was announced. The Company returned to the UK on 23 February 1991.

(Ed note: unfortunately 521 Company was disbanded less than one year later (5 Mar 93), 518 Company became 518 Squadron when the Corps was amalgamated into the RLC and finally disbanded in 2014). ■

Ex Pioneer Diamond

Exercise Pioneer Diamond on 2nd-19th August 1992, looked like a perfect excuse for messing about on the water and drinking Hof beer!

Report: 13802444 Cpl Franciso Balaque
Date of Birth 2 February 1922

EXERCISE Pioneer Diamond, crew members: Skipper: Dick Hughes (Perm Skipper BKYC – REME) Mate: (Expedition Leader) Alan Tyson-Carter (SLO Verden/Kiel). Crewmen: (Watch Leader) Keith Jones (OC 9 PLSU). Watchkeeper/Scribe: Mark Duggan (OC Def PL/2IC HQ Sqn 3 ADSR). Workers: Dave Thompson (Def Pl 3 ADSR), Dean Jenkins,

#Dutch' Holland, Dave Wakelin, Steve Lauri (all 521 Coy RPC) and John Bartholomew (Rheindahlen Sy Force) Skipper: Dick Hughes (Perm Skipper BKYC – REME) Mate: (Expedition Leader) Alan Tyson-Carter (SLO Verden/Kiel). Crewmen: (Watch Leader) Keith Jones (OC 9 PLSU). Watchkeeper/Scribe: Mark Duggan (OC Def PL/2IC HQ Sqn 3 ADSR). Workers: Dave Thompson (Def Pl 3 ADSR), Dean Jenkins, #Dutch' Holland, Dave Wakelin, Steve Lauri (all 521 Coy RPC) and John Bartholomew

(Rheindahlen Sy Force).

2 Aug 92 Day 1 – an auspicious start, everyone arrived early. Unfortunately 'Tomo' forgot his sleeping bag. Most of us seem to have brought too much kit; either that or the storage space is too small!

After a quick introduction (where we all got to give a potted history and outline any previous sailing experience – mostly none!) It was time to get to know the boat. Having drawn the obligatory oilies (for those who needed them), we 'cast off fore & aft' and

set sail for a pizza.

We pulled in at the Olympic Centre and duly fed our faces, before heading back to our berth. On the return leg, John got his first chance to take the helm and did OK, once he sorted out which way on the tiller caused what on the boat!

Back at our berth, after a quick wash and brush up, it was time to sample some local brew. 17 more days of this won't be too bad (somehow I think not, however!)

3 Aug 92 Day 2 – 0625 hrs! What time do you call this! One Guinness to many perhaps, but after an excellent breakfast the world does not look too bad!

The Corps Director showed up yesterday – he is sailing on 'Avalanche' so we had the obligatory 'Team Photo' before we set sail at 1120 hrs, next stop Bornholm.

Unfortunately we started off all right but were becalmed so we 'Donked' for the afternoon and evening (Five and a half hours). At 2100 hrs the wind picked up enough to put all sails up and kill the engine. By now we are on a watch system (6 hours by day, 4 by night). 'Port Watch' has been renamed 'Puke Watch' with Dave

and John being entered in the formation Puking Team Finals.

4 Aug 92 Day 3 – still at sea but now the wind is making up for its earlier fickleness. We managed 9 knots with a reef in at one stage which isn't bad when you are running before the wind. Dave and John still puking! We eventually arrive at Ronne at 1530 hrs and dashed in just as the wind was getting a bit too strong! We moved next to a Jersey registered metal coaster from the days of Yore, however it is now a charter boat sailing from Rostock and Hamburg. The crew were friendly however, the paying guests were some of the most ill mannered, arrogant Germans that it has ever been my misfortune to encounter! That would have been acceptable if they had not been sailing under the old Ensign!

After a few beers on board, and polishing the brasses it was time to grab a shower before heading down town for some more beers. I was introduced to HOF beer (brewed by Carlsberg), which I regretted the next morning. The locals were friendly enough and the girls were young and beautiful.

5 Aug 92 Day 4 – Our neighbours left about 0830 hrs and we followed after some shopping for fresh rations and postcards. Next stop Christianso Island. Another stormy westerly wind so we 'reached' up the coast of Bornholm (Dave was OK but John puked again and this time Steve felt a bit dodgy too). Port watch crewed the whole journey (from 0900 – 1000 hrs) Christianso is a real 'one horse town', only the horse moved out! We had to moor at a special jetty due to our length. No fresh water available. Most of the crew went swimming and diving – the locals and other visitors seem to have an aversion to clothes while swimming and sunbathing so "sight seeing" was a very enjoyable pastime. 'Mad Dog' struck up an acquaintance with a couple of Scandinavian teenagers (female) and spent an enjoyable hour swimming etc.

6 Aug 92 Day 5 – 0630 hrs rise for 'Mother Watch' and away by 0930 hrs. 36 hrs approx of sailing ahead to reach Gotland. A fairly uneventful journey with good winds, running and reacting.

7 Aug 92 Day 6 – Gotland, Visby, main

town of Gotland. Swedish submarine and large warship moored in outer harbour. Moored ourselves equally between two floating restaurants/bars. It is medieval week here so the locals are wandering around in period dress, what is disconcerting is that they are all wearing knives, swords or axes (even the maidens).

Food was excellent, again, however bangers and mash did not stimulate TC's appetite so he decided on a pizza at a local hostelry and Keith, being a sociable chap, joined him.

After dinner and another shower it was time to do shore rig and quaff a few ales prior to answering the call of the bright lights. Yours truly (Mad Dog) decided to 'hang on on' and consequently my recollection of the evenings events is mercifully vague. There are rumours of falling asleep in one pub, consuming an oversize pizza and reports of two separate pairs of damsels being shown our lovely boat! However, not being one to listen to rumour we will move on to the next day!

8 Aug 92 Day 7 – Ouch! Mad Dog awakes with the grandfather of all hangovers. The remainder of the crew are fairly groggy however the 'management' is bright and cheery which makes us all the more miserable. At about 0930 hrs we attempt to set sail for mainland Sweden, however our engine morse key lever breaks and we have to wait for repairs till midday. When we do set sail there is very little wind, what there is in the wrong place! Two huge tacks and several hours later we are still plainly in sight of Gotland (having sailed ESE then WSW and losing sight of the island for a while before turning and coming back!). Time for the engine to go on and for us to head for a new destination. Instead of the planned Kalmar we are now going to sail to Karlskrone.

9 Aug 92 Day 8 – We wake to poor wind conditions again but we valiantly try (sails up, engine off – wind drops; sails down, engine on – wind picks up). We roll around in a heavy sea (still little wind) and John retires unwell for 12 hours.

Finally at about 1900 hrs we begin to near our destination. Dick asks Mad Dog to navigate us in! For those of you who have never seen Karlskrone, it is a classic sunken Fjord harbour with lots of islands, rocks, shallows and channels. Despite the age of time since I last navigated or even seriously used a sea chart, I manage with minimal prompting.

More Swedish submarines and naval institutions including a Military Island. As we turn into the berth area we manage to go the wrong side of 'a green' and get tuck in the silt. Cries of all hands forward and lots of heaves get us off quickly and we moor adjacent to the showers, sail shop and a seafood restaurant. Lots of spectators as we tie up and tidy up, and then an excellent roast chicken dinner.

Unfortunately since it is Sunday evening nearly every where closed at 2200 hrs. We did not venture out till about then so the town was deserted. After a number of failures the boys gave up and headed for a Kebab and bed, however the world

renowned @Mad Dog's nose for a beer' had recovered from Visby and was working overtime so Dick and I followed my nose and found a nice little Bar cum Café cum Pizzeria. On our way 'home' later we decided to spend all our loose Swedish change (as we were due to head for Denmark next). We found an all night grill near the station and I ordered a Masci Burger. It took two grown men to lift it and would have fed me for a week! (But somehow we managed to eat it all!)

10 Aug 92 Day 9 – A late rise and leisurely start to the day. A very friendly local tells us of Hand, which is an island along the coastal route to Copenhagen. It was occupied by the British during the Napoleon period and maintains close British ties today. We alter our plans to visit it.

We set sails at 1200 hrs (another big audience!) and head for Hand. Unfortunately the wind drops having started with us moving at 6/7 knots. Dick decides to heave to and indulge in a few aquatic activities. This was greatly enjoyed by us all apart from when Dick popped his shoulder out whilst Halliard swinging. Mad

Dog dives in to do his 'Bay Watch' bit, but Dicks shoulder goes back in! No medals today then.

Back on route to Hand, the wind fails to materialise but 35 degrees centigrade of sun keep the tans going. The heat haze is bad and Mad Dog mistakes the first sighting of the island as a "Cloud Formation". On arrival in Hand we lie up along side a Swedish Yacht and as the last rope is secured, the roast chicken dinner is served. Hand was very peaceful and it was a welcome break from the sailing. Whilst in harbour a gale warning came over the radio, forecasting Force 8. Thankfully it was a following wind for our direction of travel so we decided to set off. This turned out to be one of the biggest mistakes of the whole two week voyage!

The weather gradually worsened after dusk and starboard watch managed to wrap a 'skeet' around the propeller during the 7 till 11 watch. Throughout the night we were thrown around the sea and most of us got our fair share of water! However worse was still to come.

11 Aug 92 Day 10 – With the dawn

came even stronger winds (Force 7 gusting to 8) and very heavy seas. During the 0700 – 1300 watch, port watch experienced the teeth of the storm. We had to go down to the No 2 Jib and 3 reefs in the main. When the No 2 Job was being rigged the starboard foresail halliard snapped so we were working with only the port side. During the change the waves were breaking over the foredeck and Mad Dog was hot off balance and sent ¾ over the side, only being saved by his elbows, shoulder blades and Dutch handing on to his head. During all this one of the starboard stannion posts was bent some 25 degrees. John also saved a large expense when he spotted that the spinnaker pole was being washed over the side and grabbed it, causing the jaws to close around a shroud and this saved it. Dutch managed to get himself smashed into the Samson post and will wear the bruises on his inside leg (just above the knee) for some time to come. By this stage we had all been completely soaked especially those who had worked on a submerged foredeck. The decision was made to run for cover to Ystad rather than

risk any further damage or injury. Now came the fun bit, trying to find a temporary berth and manoeuvre with no engine.

We decided to moor at the grain silos in the large commercial part of the harbour and Steve was volunteered to do his 'Man from Atlantis' impression to try and free the propeller. This he managed eventually but in the process he somehow cut a large gash in one of his fingers when he caught it on the prop blade. At that point enough was enough so we headed for the yacht harbour and moored up to recover and sit out the storm. That night Dick, Mad Dog, Dave, Dean and Steve went to the cinema and saw Lawnmower Man (in English with Swedish Subtitles). We then all went to bed at about 2200 hrs absolutely drained from the fight with the storm!

12 Aug 92 Day 11 – We got up fairly late and finished off tidying up from the previous 36 hrs, prior to sailing for Copenhagen. There was still a very good wind (Force 4ish) but the seas were nowhere near as heavy and we managed a fast pace tacking down then reaching round the base of Sweden. We cut several hours off our journey by sailing through the Falsterbo canal. I enjoyed this especially as I was entrusted with the helm throughout our passage through the canal (while under power). Once through the canal it was time to change watch and within half an hour a weather front hit. Followed by a tremendous down-pour. Yet again starboard watch were drenched. We eventually arrived in Copenhagen at about 2330 hrs and the passage into the harbour got slightly exciting when we were trying to decode the myriad of lights marking all the shores and lanes.

The younger element of the crew wasted no time once in harbour and went in search of the nightlife of the Danish capital as soon as the boat was put to bed. The women were lovely but the night life was a little tame, however we managed to keep ourselves entertained until 0330ish.

13 Aug 92 Day 12 – Late rise and finish off the repairs and inspect the mast top were the morning priorities. Mad Dog winched Dick up the mast in the Boson's Chair. Dick repaired one of the deck lights and confirmed that the foresail halliard didn't damage the mast when it snapped. That afternoon it was time to do our impression of "Tourist Man". My particular favourite was the Tivoli Gardens, my least favourite was Dick's hour and a half route back to the boat!

Strangely enough, even though we all set off in different directions and at different times, we all ended up in McDonalds at about 1300 hrs without planning it.

Unfortunately the weather turned on us and we had a heavy down-pour at about 1630 hrs.

The evening meal was cooked by Mad Dog with assistance from Dick and Dean. It was a 'family recipe' for chicken Chinese style with pasta. The plan that night had been to hit the town at about 2000 hrs and have a really good night out, however the boys all lost their enthusiasm and decided to save what money they had left for Saturday. In the end only Mad Dog and Dave went out but they had a really good night anyway!

14 Aug Day 13 – Rising late we planned

to prep the boat, get a final bit of shopping and sightseeing done and leave about 1200 hrs. This was delayed to Hundested slightly since the last people did not return from town until 1210 hrs, so we did not leave till 1230 hrs.

The wind was very fickle and we spent half the afternoon on engine and half the time headed over doing 6-7 knots close hauled. During the journey we passed Hamlet's Castle at Helsingor. On our approach to Hundested the wind had a final go at us and as we were 'following the lights' it strengthened sharply taking us from 6 knots to 8 knots in seconds. Steve, on the helm, got quite a surprise at the rapid approach of the harbour!

During all that late afternoon and evening, Mad Dog was laid low by a mystery illness and retired to his berth, not rising until the following morning.

We were moored and the boat put to bed by 2300 hrs but no-one felt like going out so the delights of Hundested remain savoured.

15 Aug 92 0 Day 14 – A more usual rise time today with the aim of being away as soon as possible after the shopping for provisions was done.

Mad Dog rises early and is whizzing around like a lunatic getting everyone else motivated and busy preparing the boat. After an uneventful passage we arrived at Kertemunde at 2300 hrs, and as it's Saturday it's a mad rush to lie up and get out on the town. One point of interest on the approach to Kertemunde is that the leading lights to the main harbour are in line/adjacent to a set of traffic lights which are clearly visible at sea. The constant changing from red to green through amber cause some confusion before they were recognised for what they were. The night life in town was OK but it would have been nice to arrive at a decent hour.

16 Aug 92 Day 15 – Another prompt rise and swift departure. Again Mad Dog is skitting around getting everyone moving so that we might arrive in Suenborg at a decent hour. During the passage the wind is yet again in the wrong place but we make good speeds averaging well over 6 knots. We pass the huge bridge building project at Nyorg. We sail down the channel to Suenborg during daylight which would be tricky except that the skipper (Dick) knows the waters well. I am asked to navigate us in!

Tie up in Suenborg having squeezed into a berth just long enough thanks to a German who moored in the middle of the available space rather than close to the previous boat!

Sunday night out in Suenborg proved to be less than exciting and Rutus was closed. Dick and I returned to the boat at about 2300 hrs but the boys did not return till after midnight. Dean is 'well oiled' and does his impression of a herd of baby elephants on his way to bed, consuming a cold tin of bacon burgers on the way.

17 Aug 92 – Day 16 – Up late and departed about 1100 hrs since it is only a short hop to Marstal. En route the tops, functioning slide on the main mast was hammed, James and Dick went up in the Boson's Chair to attempt to free it. Dick and Mad Dog then spend 30 minutes trying to fix it, getting the odd nick and knock for

their trouble. Eventually it is fixed, however, the main needs an overhaul in the not too distant future. Following the channel to Marstal reaching up to 7.5 knots at some stages. Keith steers us into harbour and once we have tidied up it is time to finish taking the last 5 days grime off the brasses. The sun had at last made a reappearance so it was off to the beach for a barbecue that evening.

The BBQ was a roaring success with every one being responsible for cooking their own two chicken legs, T-bone steak and couple of bratties. Add to that the pita bread and various salads and everyone had more than enough to eat. After the mad scramble for the limited space on the grill it was time to get a little loosener down one's throat. Once the food had been consumed and the drink was flowing freely it was decided to explore the delights of the adventure playground that had been thoughtfully provided, adjacent to the B BQ area. Mad Dog tore through the knee of his jeans while everyone else discovered how uncoordinated they were after a few drinks when trying to mount a spinning flat roundabout.

Dave had also brought his 'sticky ball' along and this provided endless exercise and amusement especially when chasing the ball into the marina (Dave, Dutch and Mad Dog) or trying to retrieve it from a playful terrier belonging to a group of Germans who were also barbecuing nearby. Dave managed to strike up quite a friendship with the Dog, whose name was Terry.

As the sun began to drop most of us headed for the boat to change and relax before bed. Dean, Dave and Dutch had other ideas and made quite a night of it. They were re-joined later by Tomo, who, having smashed one bottle of wine on the way back to the boat (by dropping it), then consumed a second bottle his own and wandered off with a third bottle. How he found the others, in the dark, when totally drunk and after they had moved to a different beach, remains a mystery.

The partying continued well into the small hours when somehow they got themselves aboard a training ship full of teenagers and Dean spent a pleasant time engaged in intimate grappling with a young girl who closely resembled Bugs Bunny's sister! He blames the drink but we are not too sure.

To round off the whole evening Dutch and Tomo decided to indulge in slapping each other around head, unfortunately Tomo managed to knock Dutch's glasses off his head and into the Dock. He was all for diving in after them but thankfully Dave grabbed him to stop him drowning himself.

18 Aug 92 Day 17 – The next morning there were a few hangovers, however we are all keen to set sail and get back to Kiel and begin clearing up prior to 'hand back'. We sail out of Marstal with Mad Dog at the helm, in fact he spends most of the day there and manages to squeeze 8.1 knots out of a wind that never quite comes round to the beam. The seas were quite heavy but the weather was fine apart from one small squall and we sail all the way to the naval berths by BKYC, before going to engine. We finally tie up at about 1530 hrs. Then start the clean up.



That evening we revisited 'The Shack' to bid a fond farewell to Kiel after all have pizza's for tea.

19 Aug 92 – Day 18 – 0830 hrs – oh my head! Up and eat, including the full greasy breakfast. Next it was time to strip out everything that isn't nailed down and wash it even if it is.

The UK boys have a flight at 1755 hrs tonight we must get away on time. Dean is the incredibly hung over man still and got the prize of clearing the bilges since he 'swamped' Dick's sleeping bag last night!

REFLECTION – At 0600 hrs last Sunday morning I was driven to camp by my wife and met up with 5 strangers and one of my soldiers who I didn't really know.

When we got to Kiel, 2 more strangers joined our crew along with a skipper none of us knew. Two and a half weeks later these people are friends and acquaintances, individuals

whose characters I now know to one extent or another. We may never meet again or we may cross paths in future postings, either way they will remain part of a very good memory of a time well spent.

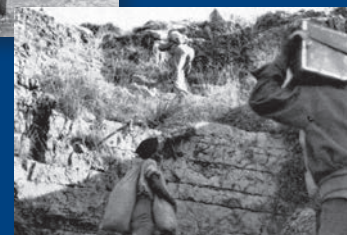
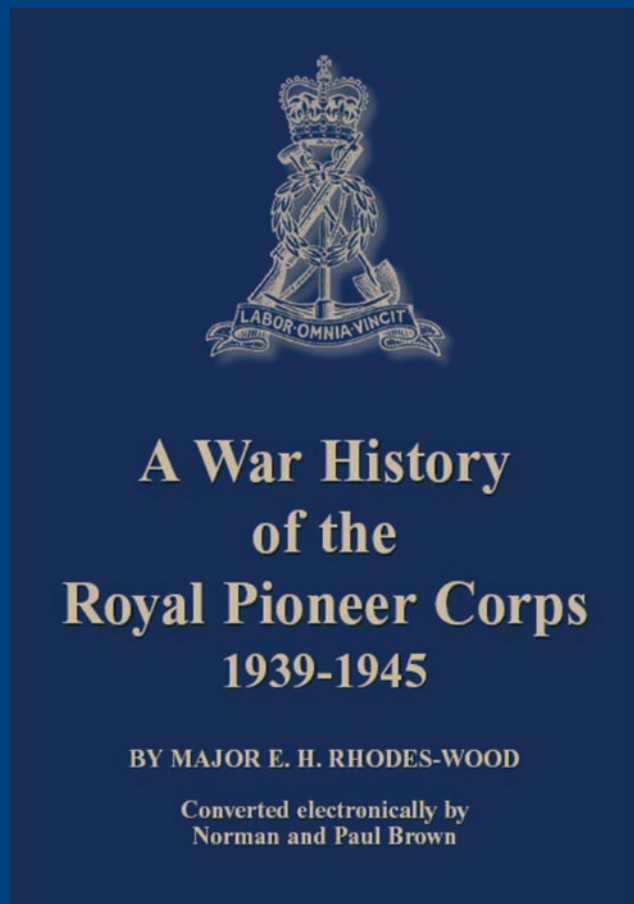
Some of us enjoyed the sailing (either confirming an interest in sailing or starting something new) other discovered that "life on the ocean wave" really isn't their cup of tea. Either way I believe we all learned a lot about ourselves and how we relate to each other especially when operating closely in a confined area over a sustained period.

Personally, I feel that 10 was too many for the ship and expedition, but these things are dictated by powers we have no influence over or input to. If, however, this should come to their notice, I believe with 6 we would have been more tested without being overstretched. ■



War History

This book was published in 1959 and is now long out of print, however copies on CD are available from the RPC Association at a cost of £10 (for e copy) or £11 to include postage.



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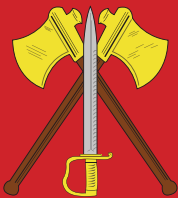
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APPENDICES

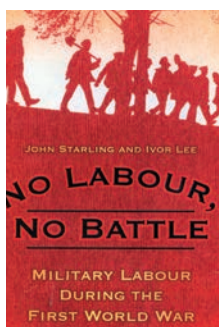
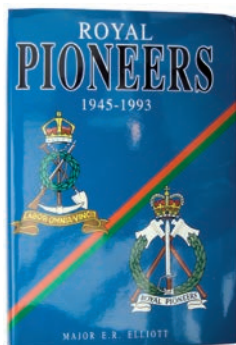
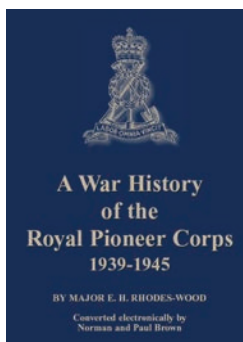
- A. Roll of Honour
- B. Honours and Awards
- C. Pioneers units with the BEF 1939-40
- D. Pioneer units in the London Blitz 1940-41
- E. Pioneer units with First Army in North Africa
- F. Pioneer units with Eighth Army in Sicily
- G. Pioneers units in the Italian campaign
- H. Pioneers units in the NW Europe campaign



Association Shop



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



VISIT THE NEW PIONEER SHOP AT

www.facebook.com/pg/royalpioneer corps/shop

More items are being added all the time - there are new Pioneer red and green tops and even Pioneer red and green socks!

AGM Minutes

The 71st Annual General Meeting of the Royal Pioneer Corps Association held at The Royal Court Hotel, Coventry on 16th June 2019

President: Colonel A Barnes TD JP
Chairman: Colonel D Clouston MBE
Secretary: Mr N Brown
Members Present: 49

THE President, Colonel A Barnes, opened the meeting at 0900 hrs by welcoming all present and then handed over to the Chairman of the Association.

ITEM 1. MINUTES OF 70th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1. The minutes of the 70th Annual General Meeting were unanimously agreed. There were no points arising.

ITEM 2.

2. The Secretary read out the names of those who had sadly died during the last year, they were:

Ex Pte Cyril Maddox – burglars broke into his house while he was at home on 3 Jul 18 and stole his life savings, he died 5 days later. Ex Pte Graham Willmott – he was discharged in 1993 Ex Cpl Charles Livessey – served in the mid 60s Ex Pte Paul Farmer – served from 65 – 74 Ex Maj Michael Hugh Myers MBE – he joined the Corps in 1953 and served until 1968 – he was in fact OC Trg Coy when I went through training Ex Maj Robert Stapley – commissioned into the Corps from the Queen's Own Highlanders Ex Pte Phillip Henry Govett – another WW2 ,Veteran who served from 1942 – 1946 Ex LCpl Michael Squires – served from 63 – 75 Ex Cpl Phillip Henry Marks – served from 55 – 57 Ex Pte David Rhodes – served from 58-62 Ex LCpl Thomas Arthur Garrett – served in the mid 70s Ex Pte Terence John Vine – served from 46-47 with 810 (Smoke) Coy and then T Force

Ex Cpl George Hazelwood – served from 1970-1882 Ex Pte Phillip Austin – served from 1972 – 1977 and then re-enlisted into the RPC TA in 1985 Ex Pte Ian Allen – served from 80 – 94 Ex Pte John Kerley – served 54 – 56 Ex Pte Vincent Lander – served 1959-1962 Ex Pte Joe Lynch – served 1973 – 1976 Ex Cpl Ian Farmer – served 1971 – 1993 Maj Gen Geoffrey Field – he was the last Colonel Commandant of the RPC and President and then Vice Patron of the RPC Association for over 20 years Ex WO2 Peter Howard Wayne – enlisted under his true name of Deter Wolf, he was one of the 10,000 German and Austrians who served in our Corps during WW2 – he served from 1941 to 1946 Ex Maj Alfred John Rickard – who served in the Corps from 1958 to 1984 Ex Cpl Bernard Cozens – served 1957 – 1967 Ex Cpl Ken Marshall – served from 1965 – 1977 as a Clerk Ex

SSgt Walter Bennets – served from 1966 to 1988 also as a clerk Ex Pte Stanley Heath – served 1966-1972

Ex Pte Francis Henry Farmer – an other WW2 Veteran who landed in Normandy with 323 Coy, he served from 1944 – 1947 Ex LCpl Peter Anthony Allen – served with 524 Coy Ex Cpl John McNeil Collins – served from 1945 – 1948 Ex Pte Joseph Fraser – served 1947 – 1949 Ex Cpl John Edwin Godley – served 1959 – 1065 Ex Pte Raymond Edward Watson – another WW2 Vet who served with 840 (Smoke) Coy from 1943 – 1946 Ex Cpl Melvyn Thornton – served from 1971 – 1981

Ex Pte Peter Block – another WW2 vet who served in our Corps from 1 Nov 40 until transferring to the Army Air Corps on 15 Apr 43. Prior to enlistment he was interned as an enemy Alien. He became a member of 21st Independent Parachute Coy and was to land in France ahead of the seaborne invasion force of Operation Dragoon. Ex Lt Col Darrell Cedric Ingle – served from 1962 to 1995. Most of you here will remember him as Commandant of the RPC Trg Centre in the late 80s.

3. There followed one minutes silence.

4. The following apologies had been received: Col RF McDonald, Mr P Powell, Mr A Fairhurst, Capt R Lane, Mr I Dewsnap, Mr D Rumble and Mr VN Wall.

ITEM 5. COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

5. The Chairman gave the following report:

I would like to start by thanking Norman for the work he does on behalf of the Association.

I am pleased to see such a good attendance especially those who have travelled long distances I hope you are all enjoying the weekend.

Unfortunately the active membership list of the Association has dipped to just below the 2,800 mark for the first time. This is partially due to the 34 deaths that Norman has just read out but the main reason continues to be members moving and not letting the Association have their new address, following the posting out of the April Newsletter a record 55 were returned "Gone Away" or "No longer at this address". There is a little good news however, since we met here last year 15 new members have joined the Association, these are a mixture of RPC and RLC Pioneers.

Apart from the Reunion here at Coventry, Pioneers continue to meet at various

locations in the UK. The Northampton, Bicester and Northern Branches all hold regular meetings and organise functions. The Pioneer Past and Present Officers Dinner which is held in October is always well attended thanks in the main to Maj Billy Dilkes, who this year is handing the reigns to Bicester Garrison Adjutant, Captain Kev Jessop. The Field of Remembrance was again well attended and the Cenotaph Parade last year had a record 102 Pioneers march, quite an achievement when we were only allocated 85 tickets. This year we have requested 110 tickets but will not know our allocation until early July, we already have 87 applicants. The 39/93 Club had a meet in March at Newport in Wales organised by Norman Wall and the Nostalgia Group had another successful get together in May at Skegness. The WOs & SNCOs Reunion Club purchased 245 tickets for the Army v Navy Rugby Match at Twickenham, in the past few years the Club have opened this event to all Association members, although members must realise that those attending must follow the rules of the Club.

The numbers attending this year are slightly down on previous years but we hope they increase next year

Norman has asked me to place on record the assistance he has been given by Maj Billy Dilkes during his tenure as QM BGSU and we hope Billy has a good tour in sunny Cyprus. He would also like to thank Lt Col John Starling for the large amount of historical research he has carried out. Our records are probably the best of any other Regiment or Corps and enable us to answer many queries from close relatives of former Pioneers. Finally to his son Paul, who not only produces such excellent Newsletters but continues to keep the social media side of the Association going. The work he did for the 75th Anniversary of D Day is just one example of the many hours of unpaid work he does for the Association.

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.

ITEM 6. GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

6. The Secretary gave the following report:

Last year we had 102 march at the Cenotaph, I have already received 87 applications to march this year but will not know our ticket allocation until early July. If you have not yet applied and wish to do so please send an email with the following details: full name, address, and service

number together with both date and place of birth.

Members are reminded if they wish to attend the Field of Remembrance they require a ticket, these can be obtained from the Association.

I have already submitted the names of over 40 members to attend the Op Banner Memorial at the National Memorial on 14 Aug 19, to attend you must be in possession of the N Ireland medal. If you have not already submitted your name please and wish to attend please send me an email. The British Legion will send out details to you by email.

I received an email from the National Memorial yesterday it appears if the rain continues that access to the Logistic Grove will be restricted. If this is the case we will hold a small church service in the Chapel at 1215-1230 hrs

Can I remind you that a Reunion photograph will be taken on the steps of the National Memorial immediately after the Church service. The coach will depart the NMA at 1330 hrs to Alrewas British Legion Club where there will be a free buffet, there is no requirement to pay the high food

costs at the NMA!

ITEM 7. ELECTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

7. 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: Lt Col J Starling, Capt R Lane and Capt K Jessop

ITEM 8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9. Mr J Phethean asked if the Reunion could be moved somewhere more central and suggested Blackpool, he felt that the Royal Court Hotel was out in the sticks and left members stranded.

10. Mr F Berry explained that holding a reunion in any coastal resort would be more expensive and explained as he lives on the south coast he would not be prepared to travel any further north than Coventry.

11. Maj B Dilkes gave an update on Bicester and the likelihood of new

regiments moving into A sites.

He explained that some Barrack blocks had been completely renovated and suggested that the Reunion returns to what was known as the home of the Pioneers. (After minute note: after canvassing members present over the weekend and also on social media, it was suggested that Bicester would be tried for the 2020 reunion).

12. In Pensioner Mr R Palmer suggested that all members should spread the word to their former colleagues and encourage them to attend future reunions.

ITEM 13. ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEXT REUNION/ AGM

The date of the next Reunion/Annual General Meeting would be 12/13 June 2020 at Bicester.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 0945 hrs.

**N BROWN
Secretary**

Long Lost Trails...

The following are trying to re-establish contact... can you help?

RONALD VIVIEN DAUGHTREY

My late dad Ronald Vivien Daughtrey (14877058) was in the Royal Pioneer Corp from 28 Dec 44 to 3 Jan 48 and was based at the German prisoner of war camp on Island Farm Bridgend I am just wondering if anyone can remember him. Contact Paul Daughtrey on Facebook

JULIAN (Taff) HOPKINS

Eddie Stalker is trying to contact Julian, they served in Belize and UK together, please contact eddie7761@gmail.com

BLENHEIM PALACE

James Stewart is trying to obtain a Squadron photo taken at Blenheim Palace, have you got one, if so please send it to RPC Association, we will have it copied and return it to you within 7 days.

HAVE YOU GOT A GROUP PHOTO?

My dad Melvyn Thornton has recently passed away and upon looking through all his belongings have come to realise we haven't got any photos of him in his passing out parade uniform, and not many of him in his Army days altogether. He was in the corps from what I can work out from 1971 to 1981 stationed at Kineton, Aldershot, Northern Ireland, Canada and maybe more, I was

just wondering if anyone out of the group could possibly have any photos with him on. Contact: sarahthornton144@icloud.com

521 COMPANY

I am looking for army buddies from July 1966 in 521 Coy, my service number was 24075319 (It's been a long time!). Fred Sparkes.

LEE THOMPSON

Who served in 187 Coy between 1991 – 1995. Paul Parlbly is trying to contact Lee, please contain Paul via Messenger.

GEORGE PUGH

Bethany Cook writes: "I am looking for information/people who knew my dad George Pugh. I was born in 1998 so I know very little about my dad's time in the army. If you can help me at all please let me know. Contact Bethany Cook on Facebook.

**IF YOU ARE TRYING TO
FIND A LOST PIONEER
THAN SEND US THE
DETAILS AND WE WILL
PUBLISH THEM ON
THIS PAGE...**



Learn locations of father

THANK YOU for the quick and thorough research on my grandfather. I have shared it with both my mother and my uncle who were delighted to learn the locations of their father.

They only vaguely knew that he may have been in Holland / Belgium at some point. Sometimes when people are with us, we don't know as much about them as we should, and then it becomes too late.

I will certainly get the book you recommended and make a donation to the RPC.

Peter Barrett

Excellent books

I WISH to make it quite clear that I do not tell you all this for reasons of self-praise. But I just remembered that when I first met you and your colleague at the Imperial War Museum many years ago I promised to keep you informed about my life and I know I haven't done so until now.

I cannot at this moment recall your colleague's name (Old age - mine.) but say yours in the Pioneer. If he is still in contact with you please pass my friendly regards to him.

With my best wishes. Eric Sanders. (Ed note: the two books he referred to in his other letter are excellent to read, details can be found at page 110.)

Eric Sanders

Service history

THANKS VERY much for the prompt reply, I have his service history from Army Records, but is very vague apart from the units he served with, they do not show his enlistment record or his discharge, his time in the DLI is well documented in the papers I had received. I never knew my father but the info you have supplied has helped a lot.

I am in London at the moment and the National Army Museum advised me to contact the Regimental Association, when I get home I will contact you again to order the cd. Thank very much for the info.

Colin Hartley

108 | THE ROYAL PIONEER CORPS ASSOCIATION

251 Company



Picture: Ronald Worthington

MANY THANKS for "The Pioneer", I always look forward to a good read.

I was going through some old photographs recently and came across these they may jog someone's memory.

They are members of Sgts Mess, 251 Company, Marlborough Farm Camp, Kineton.

They were Maj Freeman OC, Capt Warren, Lt Grant.

Some of the Sergeants are myself, Sgts Tuck (Friar), Gallagher, Buck.

My memory fails me sorry I cannot name the CSM or RSM.

They were taken 1949/1952.

Ronald Worthington

Thriller in two volumes

THANK YOU very much for sending me The Pioneer and the draw tickets which I shall send off as soon as my son has printed 20 address labels for me.

You probably have thousands of members and cannot possibly check on each of them, otherwise you might have taken me off your list just in case.

But as it happens I am still alive and my emotional connection with the Pioneer Corps is as strong as ever, although, my historical connection with to-day's regiment only goes back to the year in which I was attached to the Pioneer Corps company that guarded the German POW's with whom I worked for a year outside Taunton and then Evesham.

To bring you up to date. During the last few years of her life my wife suffered increasingly badly from dementia. Three years ago she moved full time to a home and died soon after. I moved to my younger son and family in SW London who have looked after me extremely well and lovingly

during my old age.

My older son who lives in Brighton and comes to visit me weekly has contributed equally lovingly to my amazing recovery. Why amazing? At the beginning of this century I wrote and published two autobiographies, one in German which was published in Austria and one in English which was published here. Two years ago I published a thriller in two volumes which is now being translated in Austria with a view to publishing a German version in due course.

During the last two years I was interviewed in Vienna in schools and by the press, radio and TV as a historical witness about my life experiences.

In December a branch of the Austrian Embassy in London arranged a public celebration of my birthday - I became 99 - at which the Ambassador on behalf of the Austrian President, gave me an award, the Cross of Honour for Culture and Science.

Eric Sanders

Congratulations!



■ Taff Rees, The best mentor at Change Step Getting his rightful recognition

Picture: Supplied

JUST BY way of information, Taff deals with guys in Immediate crisis from drug, Alcohol, gambling addiction, but also those with severe mental health issues.

Nearly on a daily basis he attends calls with guys threatening to harm themselves.

It is the extra mile he goes to help them help themselves.

When that job is done Taff is on the mountains as a volunteer Mountain Rescue leader.

Yep thats a pioneer by every sense of the word.

Labor Omnia Vincit, Taff Rees

Rog Brummie

Ed Note: Well done Taff. Well deserved!

THE PIONEER

■ THAT'S AMAZING, in one afternoon you've told me more than I could ever have found out alone - and I've been digging the internet for a while and asking all family members. Thank you so much - you have truly made my day. Many kind regards.

Helen Walker

■ JUST A short note to thank Norman for a wonderful weekend and spending quality time with quality people. Take care and stay safe, hope to see you all soon.

Eddie Butler

■ THANK YOU, the info you have provided is very appreciated. My Grandad has passed away, how I wish I could have told him some of this info about his father. I look forward to passing on this info to family members, especially my mum. Best wishes for the future and thank you once again.

Brendan Barber

■ THANK YOU for a brilliant weekend with great company, humour, a scuffle and 2 broken wrists. Looking forward to next year. Now it's time to bully those who weren't there and encourage them to attend next year.

Taff Teague

■ THANKS TO Norman Brown and his gang for another great weekend.

John Kear

■ THANKS, THE magazine is a credit to us, I have family from other regiments, they admire our magazines, there's is not a patch on ours. Thank you.

Colin Gibson

■ THANKS for a great weekend, it's always good to see old faces and catch-up. Anyone who hasn't attended before try and get to the next one even if it's for one night, a lot of effort goes into making these weekends happen. They really are a good laugh, cheap beer and good meal to top it off.

Paul Monaghan



Write in or email us...

The Royal Pioneer Corps Association

c/o BGSU
St George's Barracks
ARNCOTT
Bicester OX25 1PP

or email us at:
royalpioneercorps@gmail.com



Unveiling of The Tommies

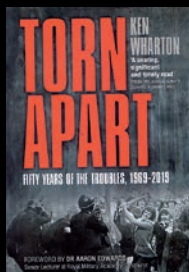
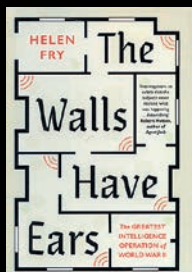
THE ATTACHED photographs are of me and Dennis Scaife (ex RE), we do our poppy collection on the trains and last year we went from Bridlington to Kings Cross and Newcastle via Hull and Doncaster and raised a good amount.

There are also photographs of Liam Dealtry.

We were at the unveiling of the "Tommies". Best wishes

John Winterburn

Ed Note: Unfortunately John, the photographs supplied are not of a high enough resolution for print and would not reproduce well.



The walls have ears

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

A HISTORY of the elaborate, brilliantly sustained World War 2 intelligence operation which tricked Hitler's generals into giving away vital Nazi secrets.

At the outbreak of World War 2, M16 spymaster Thomas Kendrick began work on a top-secret operation; the cells rooms of German prisoners in the Tower of London were to be bugged.

Listeners installed behind walls recorded their private conversations after the formal interrogations were over.

The eavesdropping mission proved so

effective that it would go on to be set up at three further sites – including, most spectacularly at Trent Park in North London.

On arrival at the stately home of Trent Park, high-ranking German generals and commanders would be greeted by the affable Lord Aberfeldy, second cousin of the King.

They were shown comfortable rooms and house servants were instructed to look after their every whim.

Little did the German 'Guests' know that they were in a huge stage set, that every plant pot and chandelier hid a listening device, and that Lord Aberfeldy himself was a fake.

They were then given 'phoney'

interrogations, wined and dined, and encouraged to talk amongst themselves.

All the while Kendrick's team would be listening to their bugged conversations, piecing together an incredibly detailed and comprehensive picture of the Nazi war effort.

In this way, the Allies gained access to some of Hitler's most closely guarded secrets – including plans for the replacement to the V-2 rocket and the secrets of the concentration camps – from those most entrusted to protect them.

THE WALLS HAVE EARS
AUTHOR: HELEN FRY
ISBN: 978-0-300-23860-0

Normandy 44

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

DAY and the seventy-six days of bitter fighting in Normandy that followed have come to be seen as a defining episode of the Second World War.

Its story has been endlessly retold in books, films, television series, documentaries and even comic books.

It is entirely familiar and yet it remains a narrative burdened by both myth and assumed knowledge.

In this new history, James Holland presents a broader overview, one that challenges much of what we think we know about D-Day and the Normandy campaign.

The sheer size and scale of the Allies' war machine ultimately dominates the strategic, operational and tactical limitations of the German forces.

Air power plays a more dominant role, and the mechanics and operational level of war on land, sea and in the air are laid bare. This was a brutal operation, and the shocking violence and carnage of the conflict are revealed in disturbing and

unflinching detail. In terms of daily casualties, the numbers were worse than for any one battle during the First World War.

Drawing on unseen archives and testimonies from around the world, and introducing a cast of eye-witnesses that includes foot soldiers, tank men, fighter pilots and bomber crews, sailors, civilians, resistance fighters and those directing the action.

Normandy 44 is rich in fresh and revealing analysis while remaining firmly rooted in the real drama of men and women at war.

It is an epic tale and this telling will profoundly recalibrate our understanding of its true place in the tide of human history.

(Ed note: the following is one extract where the Pioneer Corps are mentioned:

Page 322. "The 101st British Field Hospital was now up and running in its fields near Bayeux, albeit in a number of canvas tents. Because they were so close to the front they had a number of Pioneer Corps to protect them.

The following breakdown of the 21st Army Group also makes interesting reading:

BREAKDOWN OF 21ST ARMY GROUP PERSONNEL (AUGUST 1944) (Note 1)

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| ARMS | |
| Royal Artillery | 18% |
| Infantry (incl Airborne Troops) | 14% |
| Royal Engineers | 13% |
| Royal Armoured Corps | 6% |
| Royal Corps of Signals | 5% |
| TOTAL | 56% |
| SERVICES | |
| Royal Army Service Corps | 15% |
| Pioneer Corps | 10% |
| REME | 5% |
| Royal Army Medical Corps | 4% |
| TOTAL (for services) | 44% |

1. Percentages based on 660,000 men
2. The relative strength of the artillery resulted from doctrines evolved from First World War experience

NORMANDY 44 – D-DAY AND THE BATTLE FOR FRANCE
AUTHOR:
JAMES HOLLAND
ISBN: 978-1-787-63127-4

Torn apart

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

IN THE early twentieth century there was a war brewing on Britain's doorstep. Northern Ireland was filled with discrimination and suspicion, a sense of foreboding that would soon erupt into full-blown rioting.

As the fiftieth anniversary of the Troubles has past, Ken Wharton takes a through look at the start of the Troubles, the precursors and the explosion of violence in 1969 that would last until the Good Friday Agreement

in 1998. In all, the Troubles cost 50,000 casualties and nearly 2,000 civilians' lives across Northern Ireland, the Republic and England.

Utterly condemnatory of the paramilitaries, Wharton puylls no punches in his assessment of the situation then and seeks to dismiss apologists today. His sympathy lies first with those tasked with keeping order in the province, but also with the innocent civilians caught up in thirty years of bloodshed.

Torn Apart is an in-depth look at the start of the Troubles, looking at the seminal

moments and Northern Ireland today using the powerful testimony of those who were there at the time.

(Ed note: in the Dedications at the front of the book a well-known Corps figure is mentioned – "Dougie Durrant, ADU".

In Appendix 2 to the Book – Military Fatalities by Regiment – The Royal Pioneer Corps are shown as losing 9 men.)

TORN APART – FIFTY YEARS OF THE TROUBLES, 1969-2019

AUTHOR: KEN WHARTON

ISBN: 7807 50 988155

SAS Italian Job - three Pioneers mentioned

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

IN THE the hard-fought winter of 1945 the Allied advance though Italy stalled on the fearsome mountain defences of the Gothic Line. Two men were sent in, as part of a last-ditch effort to break the deadlock.

One was Michael 'Wild man' Lees, veteran agent with the Special Operations Executive, Churchill's shadowy 'Ministry for Ungentlemanly Warfare'. The other was legendary SAS commander Major Roy Farran, who – unwilling not to lead his men from the front – parachuted behind the lines against all orders.

Their mission: raise an impossible-seeming army from Italian partisans, escaped Russian POWs, French Foreign Legionnaires and even German deserters, in order to lay waste to the enemy's impregnable headquarters, killing the top Nazi generals based there.

Nothing like it had ever been tried before. If they succeeded, the Gothic line would fall, so saving countless Allied lives. If they failed, few would return alive.

Along with forty battle-hardened SAS warriors, Farran brought with him David 'The Mad Piper' Kirkpatrick, who dropped resplendent in tartan kilt. Kirkpatrick was charged to lead the assault, piping Highland Laddie, so providing an indelible British signature to deter savage Nazi reprisals against local villagers.

But as the column of raiders – Farran's 'collection of old toughs' – formed up, high command radioed through an order to stand down.

It was then that Farran and Lees took a momentous decision: in the spirit of Nelson, they would turn a blind eye to the order.

Come hell or high water, they were going in.

Relying on files declassified for the purpose of writing this

book, authentic eyewitness testimony, and working with the families of key figures involved, Damien Lewis reveals an untold epic of daring, ruthless rule breaking and shocking betrayal.

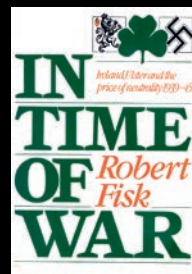
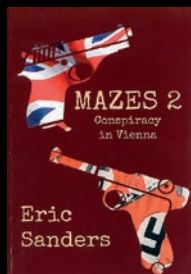
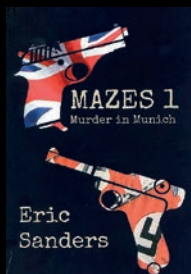
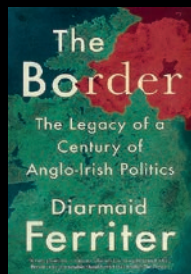
(Ed note: three former member of the Pioneer Corps are mentioned in this book, they are: 13201853 Paphael RAMOS who received the MM on 28 Aug 45. 13808212 Justo BALERDI, date of birth 25 Jul 20 who enlisted on 13 Oct 40 – name changed to Robert BRUCE with new service number 13041866. 13808268 Francis JERONIMO (spelt GERDNIMO in book) date of birth 26 Sep 17 who enlisted on 13 Oct 40 – name changed to Frank WILLIAMS with new service number 13041867)

SAS ITALIAN JOB – THE SECRET MISSION TO STORM A FORBIDDEN NAZI FORTRESS

AUTHOR: DAMIEN LEWIS

ISBN: 978-1-78747-513-7





Voice of Doom

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

THE memoirs of Wolfe Frank, which lay hidden in an attic for twenty five years, are a unique and highly moving behind-the-scenes account of what happened at Nuremberg – ‘the greatest trial in history’ – as seen through the eyes of a witness to the whole proceedings.

They include important historical information never previously revealed. In an extraordinarily explicit life story, Frank includes his personal encounters, inside and outside the courtroom, with all the war criminals, particularly Hermann Goering. This, therefore, is a unique record that adds substantially to what is already publicly known about the trials and the defendants.

Involved in proceedings from day one, Frank translated the first piece of evidence, interpreted the judges’ opening statements, and concluded the trials by announcing the sentences to the defendants (and several hundred million radio listeners) – which earned him the soubriquet “Voice of

Doom”.

Prior to the war, Frank, who was of Jewish descent, was a Bavarian playboy, an engineer, a resistance worker, a smuggler (of money and Jews out of Germany) and was declared to be ‘an enemy of the State to be shot on sight’.

Having escaped to Britain, he was interned at the outbreak of war but successfully campaigned for his release and eventually to be allowed to enlist in the British Army – in which he rose to the rank of Captain. Unable to speak English prior to his arrival, by the time of the Nuremberg trials Frank was described as being the ‘finest interpreter in the world’.

A unique character of extreme contrasts Frank was a playboy, a risk taker and an opportunist. Yet he was also a man of immense courage, charm, good manners, integrity and ability.

He undertook the toughest assignment imaginable at Nuremberg to a level that was ‘satisfactory alike to the bench, the defence and the prosecution’ and he played a major role in materially shortening the ‘enormously difficult procedures’ by an

estimated three years.

(Ed note: Frank Wolfe enlisted whilst interned on the Isle of Man under the name Hans Wolfgang Frank, he joined 3 Centre Pioneer Corps for training on 18 Dec 40 and was given the service number 13805126.

All “Aliens” at this time were given service numbers prefixed “1380”, however it became apparent that if captured they could be easily identified (most were German and Austrian Jews) so were given the opportunity to change both service number and, if they wished, their name.

He changed his service number to 13116641 and his name to Hugh Wolfe Frank. He transferred to the RAC on 26 Aug 43 and was later commissioned into the Northumberland Fusiliers).

NUREMBERG’S VOICE OF DOOM – THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF THE CHIEF INTERPRETER AT HISTORY’S GREATEST TRAILS
AUTHOR WOLFE FRANK
(EDITED BY PAUL HOOLEY
ISBN: 1526737515

The Border

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

FOR THE past two decades, you could cross the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic half a dozen times without noticing, or, indeed, turning off the road you were travelling.

It cuts through fields, winds back-and-forth across roads, and wends from Carlingford Lough to Lough Foyle. It is frictionless – a feat sealed by the Good Friday Agreement.

Before that, watchtowers loomed over border communities, military checkpoints dotted the roads, and smugglers slipped between jurisdictions. This is a past that most are happy to have left behind but might it also be the future?

The border has been a topic of dispute for almost a century, first in Dublin, Belfast and Westminster and, post Brexit referendum, in Brussels.

Yet, despite the passions of Nationalists and Unionists in the North, neither found deep wells of support in the countries they identified with politically.

British political leaders were often ignorant of the conflicts complexities, rarely visited the border, and privately disliked their erstwhile Unionist allies. Southern leaders’ anti-partition statements masked relative indifference and unofficial cooperation with British security services.

From the 1920 Government of Ireland Act that created the border, the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty and its aftermath, through the Civil Rights Movement, Thatcher, the Troubles and the Good Friday Agreement up

to the Brexit negotiations, Ferriter reveals the political, economic, social and cultural consequences of the border in Ireland. With the fate of the border uncertain, The Border is a timely intervention by a renowned historian into one of the most contentious and misunderstood political issues of our time.

(Ed note: there are 208 border crossings along the 550 kms frontier, this is more than the entire border between the European Union and the countries to its east, which has 137).

THE BORDER – THE LEGACY OF A CENTURY OF ANGL0-IRISH POLITICS
AUTHOR: DIARMAID FERRITER
ISBN: 978-1-788-16178-7

Mazes 1 & 2

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

IT IS unusual for us to do book reviews on fiction, however in these cases the books were written by an ex Pioneer (at the age of 97!). I recommend them as very good reads.

Eric Sanders was born in Vienna in 1919. In March 1939 he stood on the roadside amongst the crowds watching Hitler enter Vienna after the annexation (Anschluss) of Austria by Germany. Later that year, he and his family fled Austria separately. Eric and his parents were allowed into Britain and his brother was smuggled into British held Palestine.

When war was declared, Eric joined the British Army (as an 'enemy alien' in the Pioneer Corps, at the start of the war the only Corps that could enlist aliens). He subsequently transferred to the Special Operations Executive (SOE) – Churchill's

'Secret Army' as an operative trained to be dropped into occupied territories.

After the war he qualified as a teacher and taught until retirement in the 1980s.

Eric has written short stories for radio and published two autobiographies – one in Austria (Emigration ins Leben: Wien-London und nicht mehr retour) and one in the UK (Secret operations – from music to morse and beyond).

At 97, Mazes are his first two novels to be published.

MAZES 1 – is an epic thriller set during the rise of fascism in Europe. While the British establishment fears the spread of communism, agents in different European nations start to realise the growing menace of fascist movements. It's 1926 and things are changing in Germany. Out of defeat and with a belief of betrayal, a new force is emerging to threaten the fragile peace.

Ronald Burnley is a student at university, intelligent but aimless. All this is about to

change and he will start on a journey that criss-crosses the continent. Ronald encounters death, deceit and ruthlessness. But he also finds love and camaraderie.

MAZES 2 – This book continues the story from MAZES 1. In Germany the power struggles are dominating everyday life. The Nazis claim to be a democratic party, but its leadership continues to support the mayhem and violence perpetrated by its members.

One assassination plot has already been thwarted, but can Ronald Burnley, a British intelligence agent and his European counterparts stop the next one? British, French and Hungarian agents combine in a race against time.

MAZES 1 – MURDER IN MUNICH
MAZES 2 – CONSPIRACY IN VIENNA

AUTHOR: ERIC SANDERS
ISBN: 978-1-78719-463-2
AND 978-1-78719-464-9

Times of War and the price of neutrality

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

IN the yearly months and years of WW2, one of Churchill's most bitter frustrations was the memory of that day in 1938 when as an act of goodwill England had handed back to Ireland the 3 Atlantic naval ports of Cobh, Berehaven and Lough Swilly which the Royal Navy had 'occupied' since 1922.

To surrender 3 of the Royal Navy's finest harbours when Europe was about to go to war seemed to Churchill an act of lunacy. And, in strategic terms, it was.

The loss of those safe bases cost hundreds of British lives in the forthcoming U-boat war and Irish intransigence – as the English saw it – led to such bad relations between Dublin and

London that the British Army was warned it might soon have to invade the south of Ireland.

The British Foreign Office archives on this extraordinary episode are just one of the dramatic disclosures in the story of neutral Ireland and Ulster in WW2.

In Dublin, Eamon de Valera kept on good terms with both the German and British ambassadors, aware that Hitler might send his legions to Ireland as part of the invasion of Britain and that Churchill would think little of infringing what he called 'the so-called neutrality of the so-called Eire'.

The devastation caused by two night air raids on Belfast by German bombers – a moment that has never before recorded in such vivid and compelling detail – and the general aftermath of bitterness that followed it, go a long way to

explain the present devious relationship between Churchill, de Valera, Roosevelt and Hitler could history have been changed; when Britain offered Ireland unity in 1940.

Drawing on secret wartime documents in London, Dublin and Belfast – many of them published here for the first time – In Times of War is not only a unique and authoritative study of Anglo-Irish relations in a critical period of European history, it is also a lucid and engaging piece of historical writing.

(Ed note: although this book was published in 1983 it still a very enjoyable read)

IN TIMES OF WAR – IRELAND, ULSTER AND THE PRICE OF NEUTRALITY 1939-46

AUTHOR: ROBERT FISK
ISBN: 0-0233-975-144



The Last Post

Since the last newsletter it is with great sadness to report the following deaths

SQUIRES MICHAEL (23961524) EX LCPL 14 OCT 18 (AGED 72) – SERVED 1963 – 1975

MARKS PHILIP HENRY (23152382) EX CPL 30 JUN 18 (AGED 81) – SERVED 1955-1957

POPE LORNA – (WIFE OF LT COL PETER POPE) 30 OCT 18 (AGED 100)

Lt Col Pope commanded the Trg Centre, Northampton in the mid sixties

GARRETT THOMAS ARTHUR (TOM) EX LCPL 1 DEC 18 (AGED 72)

Served mid 70s

VINE TERENCE JOHN (14759175) EX PTE 23 NOV 18 (AGED 92)

Served from 4 May 46 to 26 Nov 47 with 810 Coy PC and then with "T" Force

HAZELWOOD AG (GEORGE) (24198044) EX CPL 21 DEC 18 (AGED 67)

Served from 1970 – 1992

AUSTIN PHILIP (24278947) EX PTE 26 DEC 18 (AGED 67)

Served from 1972 – 1977 (Enlisted into TA 1985)

KERLEY JDT (JOHN) (22988221) EX PTE 10 JAN 19 (AGED 83)

Served 1954-1956

LANDER VA (VINCENT) (23644118) EX PTE 4 JAN 19 (AGED 80)

Served 1959-1962

ADAMS A (24046137) EX LCPL 22 JAN 19 (AGED 70)

Served Jan 66 – Aug 74

LYNCH JOE (24240268) EX PTE 18 MAR 19 (AGED 63)

Served Aug 73 – May 76

FARMER IAN M (24137031) EX CPL 17 JAN 19 (AGED 71)

Served 1971 – 1993

WAYNE PETER HOWARD (13116554) EX WO2 9 FEB 19 (AGED 98)

Served 14 Feb 41 – 17 Oct 46 (originally named Hans Dieter Wolf, service number 13805468).

RICKARD ALFRED JOHN (403083) EX MAJ 18 DEC 19 (AGED 89)

Served 1958 – 1984

Maj John Rickard was commissioned into the Corps on 26 Apr 58 and then held a wide range of appointments during his 26 years service with the Corps from Training Company at the Depot in Wrexham to A Det 5 PCLU (during which time he ran two BAOR Summer Exercises involving both regular and Army Emergency Reserve Personnel).

A posting to C Det 1203 PCLU followed before returning to UK as OC 206 Coy at Long Marston – during his tenure the Company participated in the Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall and received great praise.

He then return to 5 PCLU in Hannover as OC before returning to the RPC Training Centre. He then returned to BAOR as OC 444 MCLG before his final tour as OC 453 MCLG.

COZENS BERNARD (23493303) EX CPL 10 MAR 19 (AGED 79)

Served 1957 – 1967

MARSHALL KA (KEN) (24031941) EX CPL 17 FEB 19 (AGED 71)

Served 1965 – 1977

HEATH STANLEY (24046898) EX PTE 10 NOV 18 (AGED 70)

Served 1966 – 1972

NOONAN JOHN (23744189) EX SGT 23 NOV 18 (AGED 74)

Served 1958 – 1978

BENNETTS WALTER (WALLY) EX SSGT 13 FEB 19 (AGED 82)

Served 1966 – 1988. Ex-Chief Clerk 206 and 522 Coys.

FARMER FRANCIS HENRY (14843899) EX PTE 14 MAR 19 (AGED 92)

Served 14 Sep 44 – 21 Dec 47 in 323 Coy PC (Normandy Veteran).

ALLEN PETER ANTHONY (23289002) EX LCPL 29 MAR 19 (AGED 81)

Served in 524 Coy.

COLLINS JOHN MCNEIL (14920682) EX CPL 1 APR 19 (AGED 95)

Served 1 Feb 45-27 Feb 48

FRASER JOSEPH H (19120899) EX PTE 16 FEB 19 (AGED 89)

Served 1947 – 1949

GODLEY JOHN EDWIN (23782845) EX CPL 20 APR 19 (AGED 76)

Served 1959 - 1965

WATSON RAYMOND EDWARD (14432023) EX PTE 3 APR 19 (AGED 93)

Served 1943 – 1946 with 840 Smoke Company. Details of his service were published in the October 2012 Newsletter.

NOONAN JOHN (23744189) EX SGT 23 NOV 18 (AGED 74)

Served 1958 – 1978



General Field



Maj TS Rogers

THORNTON MELVYN (24198410) EX CPL 25 APR 19 (AGED 67)

Served from 1971 – 1981

CARWOOD RODERICK (RONNIE/RON)(24491983) EX PTE 30 JUL 19 (AGED 60)

Served 1978 – 1995 later served with MGS as a Dog Handler.

HUDSPITH ROBERT HENRY (14699804) EX PTE JUN 19 (AGED 99)

Served from 17 Feb 44 to 10 Jul 47 in 233, 42, 398, 412 and 251 Coys.

ROGERS THOMAS SAMUEL (168329) EX MAJ 30 AUG 19 (AGED 100)

Served throughout WW2 finishing as DADPL 1 Corps. Awarded MBE as a Captain.

COCHRANE DAVID (522931) EX LT COL 7 OCT 19 (AGED 72).

Commissioned into the RPC from RMP in 1985 and retired in 2001.

BUNN CHRISTOPHER ROBERT 23996492) EX SSGT 19 OCT 19 (HIS 73RD BIRTHDAY)

Served from 1965 to 1987).

Tom Appleyard writes: Yesterday the Corp lost Chris Bunn ex Staff Sergeant of 22 years a veteran who served his country and Corps in Aden, Northern Island, Cyprus, Rhodesia and the Falkland Islands, and I lost a personal friend of over 50 years, my thoughts are with Sue and his Family at this sad time.

Rest in peace my friend your work has been done you can Stand down. "



Chris Bunn

Chris is also pictured on page 28 of this newsletter on the Battlefield Tour.

BERRY FEJ (FRANK) (23961021) EX SGT 25 OCT 19 (AGED 76)

Served from 1963 – 1976. A clerk who served in 206 and 522 Coys, 5 PCLU and HQ 23 Group RPC.



Frank Berry

SUTCLIFFE ALLAN GEOFFREY (24198178) EX PTE 24 JUN 19 (AGED 67)

Served 1970 - 1973.



Allan Sutcliffe

His grandson wrote the following:
I am writing this in honour and memory of the life of my Granddad Allan Geoffrey Sutcliffe, Allan was a good and a kind man he was also very proud and stubborn which

was a hindrance at times but he was always stuck in his ways, he did many different great things through his life he experienced many different adversities in life but never gave up and kept on going right until the very end, he did many different things for many different people he helped other ex-soldier find comrades who they had served with and lost touch and not spoken to in many years, he organized events every year for various different charities over the past 13 years.

On the 23rd December 1970 Allan Geoffrey Sutcliffe 24198178 enlisted for the British armed forces where he enlisted in the Royal Pioneer Corps, he went onto complete his training at Simpson Barracks. He then went on to serve in 522 Company dog section at CAD Kineton. On the 12th January 1972 he got deployed to Ebrington Barracks in Londonderry. I once heard a story about Allan, I don't know if it's true or not, but I heard he was the first Royal Pioneer to be a Deputy Commander's bodyguard and he served there until he left the Armed forces in the 23rd November 1973.

His Army service record reads "Private Sutcliffe does a thankless task in the depressing background of the Northern Ireland situation with cheerfulness and willingness. He is part of the detachment providing local security to the Brigade Headquarters. He has a volatile temper which he must control but gets on well with his fellows and is popular amongst them. He works well. He is well suited to continue doing work similar to his present employment".

Allan went onto to work at Kellingley Colliery in North Yorkshire just after leaving the Army in 1973 which he did until 1985 when he had to retire because of his health. During his work at Kellingley he went onto meet Elizabeth Cann, now Elizabeth Sutcliffe. When the pair first met Allan's grandma gave my Nanna five pound and said he was no good for her and told her to go back to Stockton, North Yorkshire. They were married on the 26th November 1974 and were married 44 years, they went onto have four wonderful sons Paul, Carl, Allan and Mark.

In 2004 Allan met a Sgt Trevor Leach who had started a group called the RPC Nostalgia Group this group was to bring old comrades and friends back together, from then they organized the first reunion at Allan and Elizabeth's family home where only Trevor Leach his wife Sheila and John Hatfield where the only people to attend.

In 2005 Allan was diagnosed with cancer of the oesophagus and Trevor was diagnosed with pancreatitis. Allan had to undergo a thirteen-hour operation to remove the cancer and shrink his stomach. They both were at different hospitals at the same time on the same day, fortunately Allan's operation was successful but when he eventually came around and the drugs had worn off he had received a bit of bad news as unfortunately Sgt Trevor Leach his brother in arms and very close friend had unfortunately passed away 1 hour after Allan had come out of surgery.

Before Sgt Trevor Leach had passed away, he had asked if Allan would take control of the RPC Nostalgia Group if anything was to happen to him, so when Trevor did unfortunately pass away Allan jumped at

the chance to run the group in memory of him. Since 2005 there has been 12 reunions in various locations which I find amusing because Allan couldn't organize a piss up in a brewery, the Group has grown from strength to strength and is still growing strong and the group as a whole since these reunions started has raised between twenty and twenty five thousand pounds over the past twelve reunions and the group now has two thousand and sixty six member and is still growing.

Unfortunately for Allan his battle was not over, in late 2018 he was diagnosed with prostate cancer and underwent radio therapy for 8 weeks and all was looking good during this time and he was walking eight to ten miles a day. He attended the Group meeting in 2019 little knowing that this was going to be his last. Unfortunately he had fallen seriously ill about a week after he got home and on the 24th June 2019 Private Allan Geoffrey Sutcliffe had lost his battle with cancer duty done soldier.

R.I.P Allan Geoffrey Sutcliffe a dear friend, a great husband, loving father and the best granddad in the world.

BLOCK PETER (13804512) EX PTE 15 JAN 19 (AGED 96)

Served from 1 Nov 40 in Pioneer Corps before transferring to the Army Air Corps on 15 Apr 43.

Marching to the airfield near Rome to be parachuted into southeast France, Peter Block and his comrades in the 1st Independent Parachute Platoon spontaneously burst into a rendition of La Marseillaise, but he probably started it. Although recruited from the Pioneer Corps as a German interpreter, Block was also fluent in French.

The platoons task was to land ahead of the 2nd Independent Parachute Brigade and mark out dropping zones between La Motte and Le Muy, 15 miles inland from the coast between Cannes and St Tropez, where the US, British and Free French seaborne invasion force of Operation Dragoon was due to land on 15 August 1944. Only light enemy resistance was expected, but significant German reserves were deployed locally and the parachute drop was to block the roads to the sea. The task of these pathfinders, as they were known, went without a hitch, but low cloud and mist confused the pilots of the US 51st Troop Carrier Wing so that many of the main body landed beyond their drop zones. Even so, the brigade captured its objectives, overcame enemy resistance in the area and held the ground until the sea-landing force arrived to begin its advance up the Rhone Valley.

Peter Block was born in Frankfurt am Main to Jewish parents. His mother, Juanita (nee Schoenfeld) died of cancer when he was three and his father, Marcel, a businessman, unable to care for him as well as working sent him to a kinderheim (residential care home) near Ulm until he was 12. Marcel would later die in Auschwitz.

Peter was sent to England to continue his education at a preparatory school in Amesbury and at Mill Hill School as a boarder. He began work at Keesing's Contemporary Archives in Bath translating and summarising articles in Le Monde and Neue Zürcher Zeitung. The fall of France

and the end of the "phoney war" in June 1940 brought an abrupt halt to this when he was interned with thousands of other aliens. He described the camp at Huyton, east of Liverpool, as rather like a university, with many academics among the inmates. Studies were available in almost anything from applied physics to obscure languages, but from November 1940 aliens could enlist in the Pioneer Corps to build roads and erect huts on army camps.

Block served with several Pioneer Companies until April 1943, when an airborne forces officer visiting his camp called for volunteers to join the 21st Independent Parachute Company to act as interpreters when dropped behind German lines. Of the 70 interviewed, Block was among the 15 chosen and parachute trained.

Dragoon was not his first operation. He volunteered for the appropriately named Operation Hasty, mounted in Italy to harass the German withdrawal route between Sora and Avezzano. Only 60 men were required from the 6th (Royal Welch) Parachute Battalion, but he contrived to be included despite no translation duties being anticipated. Against instructions, the officer commanding broke the group into three, which operated with some success for a week until the enemy set about hunting them down with far superior forces. Only half managed to reach Allied lines, Block among them, the rest were taken prisoner.

The 2nd Independent Parachute Brigade had hardly caught their breath after Operation Dragoon when they were hurried back to Italy to follow up the German withdrawal from Greece by occupying Athens to prevent a communist takeover. Despite a 35mph crosswind, the parachute drop on Megara airfield 40 miles west of Athens was successful, but the subsequent operations against communist groups in the south of the country were not popular with British troops, who felt that they were fighting former allies. Block, who had strong socialist inclinations, felt so strongly that he applied for a transfer, which was denied.

While studying economic history at the London School of Economics after demobilisation he met Hann Ruschin and they were married in 1952. Hann died in 1998 and he is survived by their son, David, a retired head teacher, and their daughter, Ruth, a retired social worker.

Block enjoyed a career representing pharmaceutical companies, specialising in antibiotics, mainly behind the Iron Curtain in East Germany, Bulgaria and Romania. After the collapse of the Soviet Union he discovered that the East German Stasi, or secret police, had an extensive file on him, suspecting him of espionage. He dismissed this as bureaucratic nonsense and a complete waste of time.

He remained active in retirement, endlessly curious about new developments of any kind and rejoicing in what he regarded as a wonderful and varied life. When failing strength made caring for himself difficult, he stopped the dialysis he had been receiving for five years and died a week later.

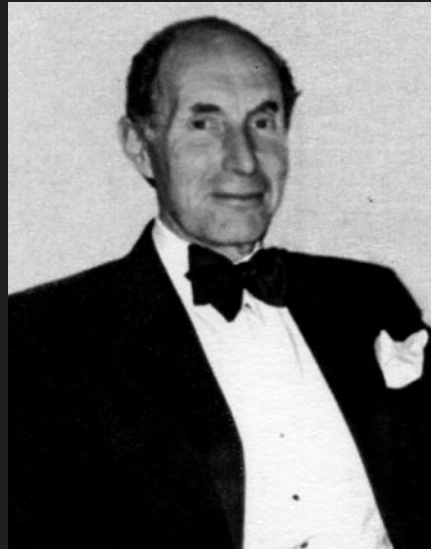
BLOCK PETER (13804512) EX PTE 15 JAN 19 (AGED 96)

Served from 1 Nov 40 in Pioneer Corps

before transferring to the Army Air Corps on 15 Apr 43.

INGLE DARRELL CEDRIC LT COL 27 APR 19 (AGED 76)

Darrell was the youngest son in a family of eight children born in Bredon, Glos. His father was in the merchant navy and when Darrell was four, the family moved to Gosport which was where Darrell grew up.



Darrell Ingle

When he was a young teenager, he wanted to be a dress designer, but his father was appalled at the idea so, at 16, Darrell joined the army as an apprentice.

It was a couple of years later, when he started training to be an aircraft mechanic, Darrell discovered he was colour blind. It meant an end to his career as a mechanic but led him into a profession for which he was probably much better suited. Not being quite sure what to do with him next, the army sent him to work for their recruitment office in London. There he excelled and soon found himself fast-tracked into officer training. He was then commissioned into the Royal Pioneer Corps where the combination of communication and logistical challenges suited him down to the ground.

With a promising career ahead of him he married Lynn in 1970 and they went on postings around the world, including Cyprus, Hong Kong and Germany. Their daughters Sarah and Emma were born in 1972 and 1974 and then, in the late 1970s, Darrell now a Major, found himself based at CAD Kineton. Postings to the Falklands, Germany and then as Commanding Officer at the RPC Training Centre followed before he returned to Kineton base as Station Staff Officer in the late 1980s.

Sadly he and Lynn separated, but they remained on good terms until her death in 2017. Darrell retired from the Army in the mid 1990s, but carried on working at the base as its security officer until he fully retired in 2005.

FIELD GEOFFREY WILLIAM OBE (470066) MAJ GEN 1 FEB 19 (AGED 77)

He was the last Colonel Commandant of the RPC and President and then Vice Patron of the RPC Association for over 20 years.

Major General Geoffrey Field, who has died aged 77, was Commander Royal Engineers (CRE) during the Falklands war.

In April 1982, Argentine forces invaded the Falkland Islands. Field was in command of 36 Engineer Regiment, which was dispatched to the South Atlantic as part of 5 Infantry Brigade.

Field, who had served in a commando brigade with Major General Jeremy Moore, the Commander Land Forces (CLF), was in command of all the Sappers. He remained with the CLF throughout the campaign, either embarked in the command ship, Fearless, or, later, in the Tac HQ ashore at Fitzroy.

Sapper reconnaissance teams, carrying satchel charges and Bangalore torpedoes, were often well forward. Where the Argentinian positions included barbed-wire obstacles, their job was to get the assault troops through these and, if all else failed, they were trained to throw themselves across the wire and let the infantry run over their backs.

Enemy aircraft came in so low that many of their bomb fuzes failed to arm and bomb disposal units had the hazardous task of dealing with unexploded 1,000 lb bombs on board several of the ships. Once ashore, in conditions of low temperature, wind, rain and mud, engineers were soon fully stretched, improving landing beaches, setting up water points, digging in command posts using armoured amphibious tractors, and checking buildings for mines and booby-traps.

The terrain, distances and the paucity of communications made command extremely difficult. The loss of stores, equipment and helicopter lift capacity sustained as a result of concerted air attacks on some of the largest vessels in the fleet had a significant effect on subsequent operations and it took all the resourcefulness of the CRE and his Sappers to overcome them.

A Chinook helicopter manoeuvres an APB, or airportable bridge, into position during the Falklands conflict, while Geoffrey Field's Sappers wait below.

In the final phase of the conflict, the assault on the enemy around Port Stanley, the Sappers played a key role in identifying unmarked minefields, breaching lanes through them and in providing close support to the infantry while constantly under fire.

Field was part of the British team at the signing by the Argentinians of the formal surrender document. The end of hostilities marked the beginning of a huge operation to put the Falkland Islands community back on its feet and provide for its future security.

Port Stanley had to be made safe once more, its airfield, services and outlying settlements restored and the battle areas, littered with unexploded missiles, bombs and ammunition, cleared.

The day after the surrender, Field personally neutralised a device consisting of three anti-tank mines coupled with two large propane gas cylinders. He was appointed OBE in 1983 at the end of his command.

Geoffrey William Field was born in Edinburgh on November 30 1941. His father served in the Scots Guards in the Second World War. Young Geoffrey (always known as Geoff) was educated at Daniel Stewart's College before attending RMA Sandhurst, where he was one of three Sappers to pass out in the top 10.

Commissioned in 1959, he was posted to 38 Field Squadron RE in Berlin shortly after the Wall had gone up and he had some exciting times carrying out reconnaissance patrols in the Russian Sector. A posting to 9 Independent Parachute Squadron included exercises in Libya and was followed by a staff appointment at HQ Royal School of Military Engineering.

Field was then second-in-command of 59 Field Squadron RE in Singapore. The Squadron supported 3 Commando Brigade and, after passing the commando course, he was awarded his green beret. He undertook staff training at the Royal Military College of Science Shrivenham and the Australian Staff College before being posted to the Master General of the Ordnance's Secretariat at the MoD. He was appointed MBE at the end of his tour.

After commanding 59 Independent Commando Squadron – the tour included deployment to Northern Ireland, and then to Coventry during the firemen's strike – he served on the directing staff at Shrivenham. In 1980 he assumed command of 36 Engineer Regiment, which initially supported the UK Mobile Force with roles on the flanks of NATO. Halfway through his command, however, it was re-roled to support 5 Infantry Brigade in the Falklands conflict.

In 1983, he returned to the MoD as Assistant Director Defence Policy. Two years in command of 11 Engineer Group was followed by an appointment as Director Defence Programmes, responsible for advice on the overall balance of the Defence Budget. After a year, he was promoted to Director General Logistic Policy.

The Logistic Support Review called for an adroit mixture of firmness and tact as it led to the demise of the Royal Corps of Transport, the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, the Royal Pioneer Corps and the Army Catering Corps, which were all subsumed into the newly formed Royal Logistic Corps.

In 1993 Field, who had made a notable contribution to the success of this major rationalisation, was appointed CB.

Field during his time as Resident Governor of the Tower of London

His final appointment was as Engineer-in-Chief (Army), but the job did not provide the scope that he was looking for and in 1994 he became Resident Governor and Keeper of the Jewel House, HM Tower of London.

One Easter, when he and his wife were hosts for an official lunch at Queen's House, where they lived, his wife asked him to buy some flowers for the occasion. Unfortunately he forgot but, resourceful as ever, he decided to pick some daffodils from the moat under cover of darkness.

The next day he was summoned to the guardroom by the Chief Yeoman Warder, who had received an intruder report. To his chagrin, Field had to watch CCTV footage of the culprit, clearly identified by his smart suit and compromised beyond question by two accomplices, his springer spaniel and collie.

His service for 12 years was recognised by his appointment as CVO.

As a younger man, he represented Sandhurst and Shrivenham at cross-country running, swam in the Army Championships and was the Berlin Brigade pistol champion. Later on he played golf for the Royal

Engineers Golfing Society, of which he was president.

Equally at home on regimental service or as a staff officer, he was admired and held in affection by those who served with him. He had a great sense of humour and was never happier than when off duty with his comrades and holding a pint of beer.

He was Colonel Commandant Royal Pioneer Corps from 1991 to 1993 and of the Royal Logistic Corps from 1993 to 1996.

Geoff Field married, in 1966, Janice Olsen, who survives him with their son and twin daughters.

**ALLEN IAN (24562275)
EX PTE 8 JAN 19 (AGED 56)**

Served from 1980 – 1994.

Ian was a regular attender at Pioneer functions, particularly the Cenotaph Parade. Ian will be missed by all.



Lt Col Ingle (on left) in Falklands



And finally...

St Patricks Weekend 2019, worlds largest gun, a Pioneer projectile, Chelsea Hospital toilets and yes the next reunion is at Bicester!

Report: Norman Brown / Paul Brown
Pictures: Norman Brown / Paul Brown

LIFE on a remote West Donegal small holding in North West Ireland may be, to some, an idyllic location and lifestyle. But to this bovine occupant it can be a pretty miserable existence. Out in all weathers, hock deep in wet fields, visited by a human for his daily tit pulling exercise and sex with Barney the bull once a year.

But there are also the good days, frolicking in the fields by the Atlantic shoreline and feasting on the rich grass on rare sunny summer days.

Occasionally things happen to help with this lonely and mundane existence. None more strange than on March 16th this year, a wet day, one of many in this month, which has been the wettest since the last one. About 3pm a motor vehicle approached down the muddy lane to my tumble down cowshed and turned in the slurry

covered gateway. After a few minutes, as the rain eased off, there emerged two elderly humans showing all the signs of an arthritic future. Slowly pulling themselves up to an erect position and wearing low shoes they were definitely not equipped for sightseeing at a wet and soggy Donegal farm. They approached the gate to the green pasture field. The smaller of the duo was the first to climb over the five bar gate. A small portly man who made the gate look tall as he heaved his creaking frame to the other side only to be confronted by an inch of standing water which engulfed his shoes. The other man, a much larger specimen in height and width cleared the gate and encountered the same problem. The smaller man, we will call him Paddy for simplicity, picked his steps carefully across the wet flooded field as best he could. Behind him the big fella, let's call him Norman, was having real problems. Standing well over eighteen hands

high and weighing about as much as Barney our bull.

He looked a Right Stupid Muppet (WO Class 1), as he followed in Paddy's footsteps across the field his greater weight meant that he sank to a greater depth. Now you may well ask. Where were they going? The only thing at the end of the field is a tumble down building, surrounded by a six foot stone wall with access steps. Getting to the end of the field their exit was blocked by a barbed wire fence. So back they came picking a fresh but equally soggy route and out over the gate. They decided to try another approach. This time, through the farmyard and across a swampy field littered with bulrushes and submerged rocks. Eventually they reached the stone wall of the ruin. Climbing the steps they were out of view for some time. Emerging back into my eye line they looked a pitiful sight. Wet, shoes full of farmyards finest and trouser bottoms caked in crap. Slowly they retraced their steps to the car, attempted to wipe themselves clean and they were gone.

Curiosity got the better of me. So I decided to have a look at where they had been. Up the steps I went (not easy when you have four legs) and looked behind the wall to see six identical shaped small monuments, each with words etched on their surface. Now I knew a bit about words, as I have learned to read Barney the bull's ear tag. So, all that just to see upright stones surrounded by a big stone wall and a half demolished building in a flooded field down a narrow laneway in the back of beyond.

As witnessed by Bridget Dairy Cow.
Templecrone – Termon, West Donegal

(Ed note: There are six Commonwealth War Graves at Templecrone Churchyard. To visit permission is required to enter private property by James McCole the landowner. If you go to YouTube and enter "Templecrone Church" you will see a marvellous view of the old church with the six Commonwealth War Graves shown on the left. ■



St Patricks Weekend 2019 and Templecrone Church

Coming up in the next newsletter ...

- News ■ Forthcoming events ■ Your stories ■ Your Letters
- Pioneer Reunion ■ Blast from the Past ■ Digging through the Archives
- Photo Gallery ■ Book Reviews ■ Press Cuttings ■ And much more!



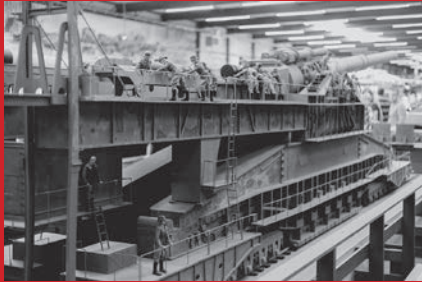


Can you spot the mouse?



On our visit to Overloon War Museum we saw a shell from the Railway Gun "Dora". The largest gun in the world. In 1935 the German High Command ordered F. Krupp AG, the Essen based industrial company, to develop a railway gun.

The gun should be able to attack fortresses like the French Maginot Line successfully. The project was named "Schwerer Gustav".



The ammunition had to be able to punch through 7.000mm of reinforced concrete and through 1.000mm of armoured plate. The firing range should be between 35.000 m and 45.000 m.

Already in 1941 the 400 tonnes barrel was tested at the firing bases Hillersleben. A few weeks later the complete gun was transported on several trains to Rugenwalde near the Baltic Sea, where it was assembled. Fully operational on a double railway, the whole installation weighted 1350 tonnes. The crew baptized this monstrous gun "Dora".

The first and only military operation in which the 80cm gun Dora played an active role was the attack on the Russian city of Sevastopol on the Krim in June 1942. Over 3000 people were involved in the construction work of the firing position and the railways, as well as in the assembling and operating of the gun. A further 770 soldiers were defending the area against attacks from the air and over land.



During the battle of Sevastopol a total of 48 projectiles, each weighing 7.1 tonnes were fired to destroy the concrete defence lines of the city. Obviously, the ammunition matched the requested specifications and was able to penetrate the ground to a depth of 32m, though it was not always possible to verify this. The accuracy however was not that good and the lifetime of the barrel was restricted to 100 rounds.

After Sevastopol had been conquered the German High Command intended to deploy Dora against Leningrad and Gibraltar. However, none of this happened. The gun was presented to Hitler in March 1943 and after that it played no military role whatsoever anymore. The same goes for the second gun of this type, produced by the Krupp company. Near the end of the war in 1945 the trains carrying these guns were parked at railway stations nearby the Army bases Auerswalde near Chemnitz. One of these guns was demilitarized by its crew on 14th April, when American troops were closing in. The other gun was transported to the area of Grafenwohr, where it was devastated by the Americans on 19th April. After the occupation by Russian troops of the Eastern part of Germany parts and pieces of these guns were brought together, where the Red Army collected its conquered Germany military material. Thus came an end to the story of the largest gun in the world.



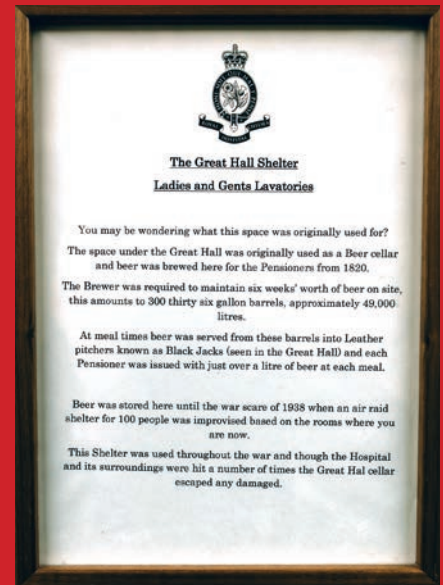
Also in the museum, we also saw a special Pioneer shell that was capable of doing more damage than the big German Dora! ■

LAST year I took the opportunity to visit our two Chelsea Pensioners - Micky Hull and Roy Palmer before Christmas to give them their festive presents.

After the participation of a beer (or two), it was not long before I faced the call of nature.

Who would have known that the toilets used to be where they stored

approximately 49,000 litres of beer! This was six weeks worth.



According to the sign in the toilets they were issued with just over a litre of beer at each meal! ■

YES the rumours are correct. The next Royal Pioneer Corps Association Reunion Weekend is going to be held at Bicester! The date for your diaries is 12th and 13th June 2020.

We will be having a BBQ at St David's Barracks. Also a church service at St David's.



We will also be venturing into Bicester to the Bicester and District Ex-Services Club. We also will have mini buses available to transport people.

A booking form is enclosed with this newsletter, please get this sent back as soon as possible.

We look forward to seeing you there. Dewsnap has said that he will buy everyone a drink! ■





LABOR OMNIA VINCIT