

THE PIONEER



PIONEER TREVOR-DEUTSCH

THIS PIONEER LOOKS LIKE A FILM STAR!
INSIDE, WE FEATURE A LOVELY LETTER
FROM HIS SON AND HIS STORY.



Front Cover

Pioneer Trevor-Deutsch

Picture Colourised by
Leonard Royston



Back Cover

Pioneers outside the Civil Service
Club after Cenotaph Parade

Picture: Paul Brown

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EDITORIAL

DOESN'T time fly? I recall writing last year when the pandemic had curtailed all of our activities. At least this year we've had the chance to meet face to face. Not least of those meetings was the reunion weekend and AGM at Bicester. I'm grateful, as ever, to Norman and Billy and the wider Bicester team for pulling all the detail together.

As voted at the AGM, Bicester seems to have been a favourite with the majority who attended. Personally, I enjoyed the ex-servicemen's club as a venue. It was big enough to hold us all and enough space to get round and meet old friends. Thank you to all who attended.

I'm also grateful to those of you who maintain active events out in the regions. It's the way we do our business and staying connected is as important now as it ever has been. So thank you.

I'm keen that the Council, and specifically myself as President, stay as aware of your wishes for the association as I can be. I'm often representing you all at various meetings and I can only speak with authority with your backing. Please feel free to get in touch if you

think we can help. Norman has all the contact details and acts as a good link with you all.

In the meantime, stay safe, continue to look after and care for each other as you have done so admirably over these turbulent times.

Wishing you, your family and friends all the very best.

Brigadier David Clouston MBE

THINK it must be agreed with all who attended the 2021 Pioneer Reunion held in Bicester on 3/4 September that it was a great success, this was the first time we had returned to Bicester since 23 Pioneer Regiment was disbanded in 2014 – a long 7 years!

It was unanimously agreed to return to Bicester in 2022 and the weekend of 1st/2nd July was chosen before we realised that it coincides with the Grand Prix at Silverstone. 65 rooms were booked at the Travelodge in Pioneer Square and these were allocated within 2 days! Unfortunately, we were unable to book further rooms at the Travelodge at Cherwell Valley as it was now fully booked as was the Holiday Inn and Premier Inn. We are trying to secure further accommodation, this reserve list

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STOP PRESS

■ We are still waiting for details of Paddy Mac's funeral, looks like the Pioneer will organise it! Details to follow...

STOP PRESS

■ Entertainment has already been booked for Reunion in July

STOP PRESS

■ Let us make 2022 Cenotaph Parade the largest Pioneer contingent ever!

■ Corps colours of 'Red and Green' finally explained - see page 100



will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. If you would like to be included on the reserve list please let me know.

We were only allocated 4 tickets for the Field of Remembrance so when I requested 110 tickets for the Cenotaph Parade I thought I would again be disappointed. I was surprised when I was allocated the full amount and then learned that the full 10,000 tickets had not all been allocated so I requested another 10. However, since booking I have been informed that 4 individuals can no longer attend so, if all turn up, we will have 116 on Parade which will be a new record.

In this edition my son has put together a very impressive 'Collectors Corner' featuring many pages, great work as usual, many thanks! If you have any unusual items please let us have details together with photographs, it is surprising what is out there.

We have a distribution of nearly 2,850 who receive the newsletter but I only have email addresses for about 750, if you do not receive the Pioneer updates from me can you please let me have your email address - please send it to: royalpioneer corps@gmail.com Please also inform me if you change your email address. I

must also ask you to inform me if you change your home address we are still receiving a large number of newsletters returned "Gone Away".

Once again we are published a long list of ex Pioneers who have sadly passed away, some of these are "Corps Characters" like John (Paddy Mac) McPhillips who sadly passed away in August. John was actually booked in to attend the Pioneer Reunion. Unfortunately John's relatives could not be traced and the coroner asked the local council to arrange burial. This, of course, would have meant a paupers funeral. Mr Steve Williams therefore arranged a just giving page with the intention of raising £4,000 for his funeral, at the time of going to press this target has been surpassed!

Finally may I ask you, once again, to purchase (or sell) the raffle tickets which are sent out with the Newsletter - unless you have indicated that you are unable to buy or sell them. The profits from our raffles help to pay towards the cost of running the Association i.e. printing and postage of the newsletters, the Pioneer Reunion etc.

Finally, from the 1942 Christmas Card below... Happy Christmas and a Victorious New Year!

Norman Brown



Can you spot the mouse?



The winner of "Find the Cuneo Mouse" was Patrick Ennis.

A prize will be on its way to him. It was of course on Billy Dilkes left shoe on Page 31!

We had six 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.

Good luck.



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New RLC museum opens

The new museum was opened by HRH The Princess Royal on 13th May 2021 and has received rave reviews in the press and from its first visitors. However, not resting on our laurels, much is planned for the future.

THE story of the new RLC Museum starts more than 10 years ago, when it became clear that The Princess Royal Barracks in Deepcut was to be sold by the MOD. The majority of the units in Deepcut, including The RLC Museum, were to be moved and rehoused in a brand-new barracks being built at Worthy Down near Winchester in 2019/20.

Trustees of the museum held many long and detailed meetings with architects from SKANSKA, who were building the new barracks, to determine what the new museum would look like. From these meetings a new museum building slowly emerged, going through many changes before a final design was agreed.

The new museum would have a large central gallery and mezzanine, offices,

archive and object stores, a vehicle store, a medal room, a research room and a café. The size of the new museum would broadly match the size of the old museum, along with its offsite storage locations. However, better and more efficient use of space meant that a much larger central gallery could be achieved.

The new museum was being built during phase three at Worthy Down and was thus

Pictures: Royal Logistic Corps



one of the final buildings delivered. It is an impressive black box building, controlling light, temperature and air humidity, capable of providing a stable and safe environment in which to hold the museum collection.

The delivery of a new and much larger gallery meant that the museum would need to more than double the number of display cases and this gave the opportunity to completely retell the story of the RLC and its predecessor Corps. Many more objects, including vehicles, uniforms, medals, archives and weapons could be put on display. New text panels, images, interactive displays and audio visual content could be incorporated. Moreover, the world class RCT Medal Collection, hitherto, hidden away in an officer's mess, was to be located within the museum, putting it on public display for the first time.

Fitting out and redesigning a new museum in this way, starting from scratch and building everything from new is an expensive business. Industry guidelines based on our new square footage of display area indicated that this whole process could cost up to £3 Million. Fortunately, a charitable donation of this amount was very kindly provided by an organisation called the DEFLOG VQ Trust, who had provided vocational and apprentice training to young servicemen and women.

Whilst a new building and money for an

internal fit-out were clearly essential. To help The RLC Museum realise its full potential, an experienced museum design company would also be required. This company must not only work in partnership with the museum team on the new design and retelling of our story but must also be capable of bringing in all the specialist sub-contractors who would be required.

A tender board and selection process commenced in 2017, resulting in PLB being selected as the museum partners for this project. They would assist with the museum deciding what stories it wanted to tell, how these stories would be told, what objects or archives would be displayed and how best to display them.

This process started with workshops and whiteboards and eventually led to computer generated images of new galleries and display cases, text panels and images. The story of The RLC was divided into 12 epochs or time periods, starting in pre 1794 and ending with The RLC today. Each of these epochs were then examined and discussed in detail, to determine what information or activity the museum felt needed to be told.

This sounds much easier than it was in reality. Each forming Corps needed equitable treatment and there so much that needed to be said, that tough choices were required.

The story also had to be "accessible", this means that a child of eight to a seasoned veteran of 80 must both be able to follow what is being said. Achieving a balance between writing a text panel for a visitor with no military knowledge, which will also be read by a historian with much knowledge is not easy. Do we assume that every visitor knows that "Lt Col" means Lieutenant Colonel or that LCpl means Lance Corporal, or even that one of these ranks is higher than the other?

Each and every object or piece of archive on display had to have a template written about it. This template described its size, weight and conservation requirements. The display cases were then designed to fit and hold these objects, with specialist mount makers designing mounts, mannequins or stands to ensure that everything was displayed to its best.

Images, films and audio visual content needed to be produced. Whilst some images came from within the museum archive, a great deal had to be sourced from other museums or commercial companies. Copyright and approval to display the images was required and needed to be paid for. The museum commissioned new film to be made and blended this with historic film in order to support the four looped film areas within the new museum.

Whilst this design activity was in full progress, the old museum had to be closed and the old display cases emptied and disposed of. The centre of the old museum was turned into a warehouse, with numbered pallets laid across the floor. The contents of both the main object store and main archive store were packed into boxes and loaded onto these pallets. The offsite stores were emptied into three ISO Containers and the vehicles loaded onto low loaders.

The use of pallets and ISO Containers gave the museum team a large measure of control during the move. The pallets were moved to the new museum central gallery and ISO containers dropped off at the rear of the new museum. We had allowed ourselves eight weeks to "put away" moving the objects and archive into our new stores, before we had to clear the central gallery for the construction of the new display cases.

Running a museum design project and a museum pack and move project simultaneously was challenging indeed and led to many long days and much weekend working. However, thanks to the support of the HQ RLC, PLB, the museum trustees and staff, everything was achieved on time and to plan.

The new museum was opened by HRH The Princess Royal on 13th May 2021 and has received rave reviews in the press and from its first visitors. However, not resting on our laurels, much is planned for the future, including WW1 external displays, new and exciting temporary exhibitions and links with local schools, universities and youth groups. Our story continues.

Major (Retd) Simon Walmsley MBA MA
Director The RLC Museum ■



**THE SPEED LIMIT ON
THIS CAMP IS
20 M.P.H.
AND IS ENFORCED**



THE ROYAL LOGISTIC CORPS MUSEUM







■ A NATIONAL network of visiting officers has been set up to give veterans caught up in historic legal processes “gold standard” welfare support.

Part of the Army Operational Legacy Branch, the team is spread around the country to assist those contacted by coroners or investigators.

As well as accompanying them to court if they have to give evidence, its personnel work closely with organisations such as Veterans UK, regimental headquarters and Service charities to direct veterans to other help.

Capt Rich Hind (R Anglian) is among these full-time Reserve service officers recruited to the role so far – all of whom have been selected for the military experience and empathy.

The 52-year-old explained how his primary role was to offer reassurance during a time of potential stress.

“A lot of them are wary,” he said. “They get a brown envelope through the door saying ‘something happened in the 1970s and we want you to go to court in three months,’ so the official thing is gaining trust and telling them we are here for them, and our care package is gold standard.

“They’re proud and often say they don’t need support, but when you scratch the surface you find out they may have had problems for decades and never even spoken about it to their partners, and then the legal proceedings bring it all back.

“They are in a sea of uncertainty and then you wrap this life-jacket around them and there’s a sense of relief.”

While most cases are linked to Northern Ireland, veterans of all past operations are eligible for help, including free legal advice provided separately by the branch’s lawyers.

Department head Col Orwyn Lewis said, “The Army recognises the service and sacrifices these veterans have made and we are dedicated to providing comprehensive, long-term support for every individual.

To contact the team, call 0781 007392 or email apsg-aolb-op-legacy-mailbox@mod.gov.uk

■ WHEN YOU reach pension age you will need to apply for your pension for it to be paid. You should submit your claim for your preserved pension using the AFPS Form 8 around 3 months prior to reaching your pension age (age 60 in AFPS75, age 65 in AFPS05 and State Pension Age in AFPS15).

To protect against fraud and potential security issues, the Form 8 should be completed, witnessed and returned by post to Veterans UK, MP335, Kentigern House, 65 Brown St, Glasgow, G2 8EX. You can find Form 8 on www.gov.uk – search for ‘AFPS Form B’.

Once they have received your application, they will tell you know that they have it and details of your pension payments will follow.

■ THE Army Forces Pension Scheme is paid by Equiniti, if your address details change you can notify them by phoning their Armed Forces pension helpline on 0345 1212 514 or emailing them at Veteransukpensions@equiniti.com

You can also write to them at Equiniti, PO Box 1246, Sutherland House, Russel Way, Crawley, RH10 0HZ.

Tommy Trotter!

A landlady spent four days reading out birthday cards for a 100-year-old D-Day veteran – including a letter from the PM



■ Tommy with Julie Cooper who runs the Last Post and The Don Memorial Museum

Picture: Supplied

TOMMY TROTTER turned a century old on 10 February 2021 and was sent 3,111 birthday cards from people across the world (including one from the RPCA President)

Among them was a birthday card from the Queen and a letter from Boris Johnson.

Julie Cooper, who runs The Last Post and The Don Memorial Museum in Thornaby, vowed to read out every single card when she made the appeal last month. However, she did not expect to receive over 3,000!

True to her word, the 56-year-old spent four days reading out the cards one by one over Facebook Live. She said, “I have done 16 hours, four hours a day for four days. A lot of them had long letters in them or letters attached to them. The videos will all go on a memory stick and he can watch them. They have come from all over the world. Matt Vickers the local MP sent a birthday card to Tommy with a signed letter from Boris. I think Matt had asked him for it. That was a highlight for Tommy. He was overwhelmed, he was quite emotional about it. He didn’t realise how many people knew it was his birthday! In the letter, which was sent by 10 Downing Street, Mr Johnson said: “It gives me great pleasure to write and send you my very best wishes for a happy 100th birthday! This is a truly marvellous occasion and I do hope that, in spite of the current difficult circumstances, you are able to celebrate in some way and reflect on all you have seen and experienced over the last century. I understand you are a D-Day veteran with a distinguished service record and hold the Legion d’honneur award. May I, therefore, take this opportunity to thank you, on behalf of myself and the whole nation, for your wartime service to this country. Many congratulations again on this very special day.”

Tommy, who had 12 siblings, grew up in Stockton and served in the Northumberland Fusiliers and the Pioneer Corps. He Landed on Omaha beach on 6 June 1944 – D-Day.

The pensioner was a daily punter at Julie’s bar and not wanting to let Tommy’s birthday go unmarked she set out on a mission to get as many cards to him as possible to mark his landmark birthday. He received cards from America, Australia, China, Zambia, France, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Cyprus, Italy, Spain, Malta and Belgium. He was also sent them by all of the regiments, schools, children’s homes and Holme House prison.

Julie, from Stockton, said, “A lot of people want to come and visit him once we’re open. He keeps talking about it, he just loves it. People really don’t realise what they have done for this man.”

She added, “I would like to say to everybody thank you so much for coming on board with the card appeal and for the messages. I didn’t expect this, I really didn’t, I’m over the moon.”

(Ed note: Thomas Trotter (14395388) enlisted into the GSC (for basic training) on 17 Dec 42 and transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 27 Jan 43 and joined 12 Centre PC. He was posted to 269 Coy PC on 13 Feb 43 and then to 231 Coy PC on 7 Dec 43 – this Company landed in Normandy on D day and was an airfield construction Company. He was posted to 96 Coy PC on 14 Feb 46 and then to 104 Fire Fighting Coy on 5 Apr 46. He was then posted to 61 Fire Fighting Coy on 16 May 46 and was transferred to the RASC on 1 Jul 46 when the RASC took over responsibility for Fire Fighting from the Pioneer Corps). He later served with the Northumberland Fusiliers.

A card from the President and all members of the Association was sent to Tommy)



■ Steve Henderson, laying a wreath at The Sherringham Jolly

Picture: Supplied

Sherringham Jolly

The 3rd Sherringham Jolly was held on 20/22 May 2021 at Breck Farm Sherringham. It will go down for most that attended as an absolute horrible wet and windy weekend.

THIS IS especially for Steve Kohut and his wife who on the first night lost most of their tent through the gale force winds. When he was packing up the next morning to go home he actually gave his tent away and vowed never to go camping in a tent again!

The only rest from the weather, was the Remembrance Parade on the Saturday morning, when for just an hour or so, the sun came out.

The parade again was well attended and all looked smart.

A big thank you goes to all who braved the weather to attend. Special thanks to Ben Little for playing the last post and Peter Wegg's family and friends who battled with the weather cooking the BBQ.

Peter spends a lot of time and effort in organising this event and his work is very much appreciated by all who attend.



■ Landlord's son joins the Pioneers at The Sherringham Jolly

Picture: Supplied



■ **'TELL US ONCE'** is a free service offered by the UK Government which allows you to report a death to most government departments and local councils at the same time, saving you additional effort during such a difficult period.

A Registrar will explain the service when you register the death. The 'Tell Us Once' service will then notify the relevant departments such as the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, HM Passport Office, HMRC, Department for Work and Pensions and local councils. Veterans UK is part of the Service which would notify us of the death in order to cancel Armed Forces Pension Scheme, War Pension Scheme and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Payments.

Using the 'Tell Us Once' service enables earlier notification of the death to Veterans UK which in turn means processing of Dependant benefits can be started quickly and this also reduces the risk of potential overpayments which your loved ones would need to address in their time of grief.

For more information please go to: <https://www.gov.uk/after-a-death>

Please note the 'Tell us Once' Service is not available in Northern Ireland.

■ IF YOU have a question about your Armed Forces Pension please call the JPAC Enquiry Centre on 0800 085 3600 or 0044 141 224 3600 if calling from abroad.

Open Mon to Fri 0700 – 1900 hrs, please ensure you have your Service and National Insurance Numbers ready.

For more info on the Schemes by visiting: www.gov.uk/guidance/pensions-and-compensation-for-veterans.

■ A LARGE number of AFPS members have not claimed their pension.

Veterans UK have recently carried out an exercise to trace those that may be entitled. They have written to around 13,000 members with a potential entitlement and so far around 5,000 responses have been received with approximately 3,000 of those pensions put into payment.

With most claims being backdated to the original due date (where a legitimate reason for late claim was established) this amounts to pay-outs of around £23m in pension payments and a further £20m in pension lump sums. If you have any friends or family members who have been contacted and invited to submit a claim that have not yet responded please encourage them to do so.

It is great news that they have traced those with an entitlement and put a large number of pensions into payment.

To prevent any delays, or any issues with tracing you at a later date, it is important you claim the pension you are entitled to and details are shown above.

■ IT IS important to be aware of pension scams and how to protect yourself against them. Your pension is likely to be your main source of income once you reach retirement, so it's important to do all you can to keep it safe from scammers.

During Covid-19 there's been a significant increase in general scam activity, so make yourself Scam Smart and learn the warning signs to keep yourself and your pension safe. The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) provide information on what to do if you think you've been targeted: <https://www.fca.org.uk/scamsmart/how-avoid-pension-scams>

Pioneer legend!

We were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Pioneer legend John (Paddy) McPhillips



■ Paddy, pictured at the Reunion Weekend, Coventry

Picture: Paul Brown

In early August John Kear was unable to get a reply from his friend John (Paddy) McPhillips so he asked on Facebook if anyone in the Blackpool area could visit his flat and check on him.

Tony Codling answered the call and visited the flat but was unable to get a reply so he requested the local police to carry out a welfare check. Unfortunately they found him dead in his flat.

Paddy was one of the Corps characters and attended nearly every Association function including marching at the Cenotaph for at least the last 25 years.

Everyone who attended the Cenotaph March last month in London wore a badge, featuring Paddy! to remember him! This details was passed to the BBC but they failed to give it a mention which was a great pity.

Paddy was a fairly secretive person and never talked about his family so no-one could contact any family member. The Blackpool coroner asked the local council to arrange a funeral, this, of course, would mean a paupers funeral. A number of people tried unsuccessfully to contact his relatives including contacting the school Paddy had stated on his facebook page that he attended – St Joseph's CBS Drogheda, who could find no record of Paddy attending their school.

Steve Williams even contacted people in Northern Ireland to try and trace his relatives which proved unsuccessful. Steve then decided to organise a Just Giving page to cover the cost of Paddy's funeral. This proved to be so successful that £4,200 was raised in a very short time – well done Steve!

Micky Banks has been in contact with the coroner and he and Maj (Retd) Mel Smith started to arrange the funeral once the coroner would release the body.

The RLC Drum Major has also been in contact to arrange a bugler for the funeral. Darren Burton has also contacted the RBL Riders Branch in the North West and they hope to provide a bike escort for the hearse.

Steve said that he would also like to say a personal goodbye to Paddy as he was his first Platoon Corporal when he came out of training in 1979 even though Paddy hated the thought that he came from Leeds and could not stand football – Paddy was a devoted Leeds United fan. Steve says Paddy would always help out if you had a problem, he really looked after his men.

Nat Chauhan has also said that he would also attend on his famous trike.

At the time of going to press we have learned that the Blackpool Coroner's office has located Paddy's sister and we are now awaiting further developments.

THE PIONEER



**PIONEER LEGEND
CARRIES HIS RED
AND GREEN BAGS
THROUGH THE
PEARLY GATES...**



REST IN PEACE
JOHN 'PADDYMAC' MCPHILLIPS





■ **STEPHEN DALE** - born Heinz Spanglet in Berlin, 1917 - is included on the Imperial War Museum's Voices Of War project to remember victory over the Nazis.



The account of a Jewish man who spent six weeks in a concentration camp before being hired as a special operative for Britain, has been included in a project by the Imperial War Museum to mark VE Day.

Testimony from Stephen Dale, born Heinz Spanglet in Berlin, 1917, forms part of the Voices Of War project, to mark victory against the Nazis.

His account is featured alongside that of an army nurse who served in Egypt and a Jamaican aircraftsman, among others.

The museum is marking the 75th anniversary from unexpected perspectives – by bringing voices of the past into people's homes across the country.

Spanglet, who spent six weeks in Sachsenhausen concentration camp, was interviewed by Imperial War Museum before he passed away.

He had been a seaman in the German Merchant Navy but was arrested as 16-year old in 1933 for anti-Nazi activities. On Kristallnacht he was again arrested and sent to Sachsenhausen for six weeks, where he was severely maltreated.

After release, he managed to emigrate to England in 1939 – where he volunteered for the army – but was interned and transported to Australia.

Returning to England in January 1942, and was accepted into the Pioneer Corps (87 (Alien) Coy) from which he volunteered to join Special Operations Executive. The unit engaged in espionage, sabotage and reconnaissance in occupied Europe to aid local resistance movements. He was captured while on operations, imprisoned in Austria, and eventually released on 12 April 1945.

Diane Lees, director general of IWM, said: "Originally we had planned to mark the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in public spaces around the UK.

"Due to the current situation, this is no longer possible.

"However, the need to commemorate this national anniversary and to remember the sacrifices made on our behalf by past generations is as pressing as ever."

Ms Lees said Voices Of War would bring the stories and memories of those who lived through the conflict directly to homes across the UK.

She continued: "We want the public to reflect on this important historical milestone as many others did 75 years ago – in the privacy of their own kitchens, living rooms, bedrooms and gardens – and be part of this important national moment with IWM and with the rest of the country."

Serving Pioneers

Here is a serving Pioneers Update from Head of Trade WO1 (RSM) Stevie Soper

I WRITE to you all at the end of yet another fantastic term of successes for the unfortunately ever dwindling number of Pioneers that remain in loyal service (small in numbers yet we still sustain a vast footprint over 14 units, so we're certainly not going quietly into the sunset).

The biggest highlight since my last update was certainly that of Norman and the team finally managing to pull off a fantastic Post-Covid reunion weekend in Bicester.

A Weekend that had a much bigger attendance from the RLC generation of Pioneers than in the few years before which was great to see and long may it continue.

As for the boots on the ground that are still serving and what we've all been up too - many are in units that are on the front line of conducting MACA taskings (Military aid to the Civilian Authority's) helping with the pandemic resistance efforts, as well as supporting the ambulance services and most recently the HGV shortages.

These taskings are all above and beyond the usual Regimental drumbeats of training and exercises, whilst in many cases troops have achieved this whilst learning to work more remotely than ever before.

Regarding my previous update on transfers.

All twelve service personnel that accepted the offer of transferring back in 2019 have now transitioned into their new trades, with ten of these individuals choosing to stay within the RLC and only two branching further afield (AWS & SASC).

I'm sure I speak for all of the readers when I say; I'd like to wish each and every one of them all the very best in their chosen new career paths.

I'm sure like many of you, we'll be keeping a close eye on how they flourish in the years ahead.

On the subject of flourishing in these new trades, SSgts Baz Rogers, Col Martin and Cpl Matt 'Chav' Soan all hit the ground running and were selected for promotion to WO2 and Sgt respectively.

These promotions happened almost instantly upon their transfers, it just highlights and goes to show their new trades very quickly discovered the calibre and work ethic of these fine Pioneer soldiers that they've so luckily inherited.

Other promotions since my last note to you all last year include: Rob Aspinall and Taff Hildreth both successfully commissioning to become LE's (apparently we all have to call Taff 'James' now that he's a proper grown up....Oooh!!!).

Pete Poole and Daz Cruttenden have both promoted to WO2 and moved into SP51 jobs at 151 and 158 Regts respectively.

As well as them John 'Fluffy' Payne gained his SSgt and moved to the new

Corps Headquarters in Worthy Down as an SQMS, someone's even been daft enough to promote yours truly to WO1 and give me the RSM appointment at 11 EOD & Search Regt RLC; and with that shocker there's clearly plenty hope for everyone that remains serving!

As for goodbye's firstly and most poignantly, we sadly lost a huge character in the Pioneer and Fijian community back in March; Cpl Eparami Rokodrava.

His untimely passing came whilst he was serving at 1 Regiment RLC in Bicester.

Like many others at the time 'Roko' was also in the process of a transfer.

It was a huge honour that a select few serving Pioneers were asked by the Commanding Officer and RSM of 1 Regiment RLC to assist and play a small part in his spectacular and thoroughly deserving send off for our Pioneer brother.

Our thoughts and condolences continue to go out to Roko's family, such an irreplaceable NCO and gent.

I'd like to also take this opportunity to pass on everyone's gratitude for the many years of service given to the Pioneer trade and wish the following individuals all the very best for their future careers now that they've transitioned.

Don't ever stop being proud red and green legends and flying the flag around the wider Corps and Army on behalf of us all and those that went before us:

Tom Northolt - Small Arms School Corps
Dave Herron MBE - Army Welfare Service
Rich Privett - RLC Supply Specialist
Darren Cox - RLC Mariner

RLC Drivers : Baz Rogers , Col Martin , Kev Keneally and Matt Soan

RLC Postal & courier Operator: Mark Harris, Para Prassad, Nigel Stephen and Ryan Nicholls

I'd finally like to wrap up this short update by wishing all the very best for their future endeavours to the following individuals on the completion of their full colour service.

Since the last magazine edition, the below have or are just about to retire from service.

Complete legends in their own right each and every one of them, we all owe a huge debt of gratitude.

Thanks to you all and to your wider families for their sacrifices.

Hopefully it won't feel too long till the next reunion weekend where we can hopefully have a long overdue beer and you can all spin the 'back in my day' dits as you settle in to being veterans:

WO1 Martin Jowett, WO1 Paul Jordan, WO1 Tony Avant, WO1 Andy Parker, SSgt Lee Jeapes, SSgt Stevie Weatherall, Sgt Lloyd Ampleford, Sgt Tony Bysouth, Cpl Jason Booth and Cpl Mark Beecham.

Stevie Soper

Congratulations...

Thank you to members for purchasing Pioneer Grand Draw Tickets. The Association made a profit of £2450, this helps the Association to carry out its work. The results are...



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 **6th January 2022** and not the date published on the tickets, due to this bumper newsletter taking a lot of time to produce.

THE PIONEER



"Hello to all my party goers hope you have all enjoyed your weekend, wasn't it great being back in the home of the Pioneers (Wow!) so good to be among my R&G Family partying like all good Pioneers can. Boy am I looking forward to next year, stay safe all, see you next party day."

Dusty Bryant

"Norman Brown, on behalf of myself & my son Nick I would like to thank you for yet another fantastic reunion weekend, enjoyed by the both of us, best wishes to you & all Pioneers, stay safe & see you in London"
Nigel (Cudgie) Smilie

"It was great to meet everyone at the weekend and meet all the guys...brilliant weekend...thank you to everyone who came."
Daz Pettit

"Just wanted to say how great yesterday was at the ex services club. Beer 2.00 a pint. Great atmosphere, great music and buffet, far too many great people and memories to mention. Norman Brown you did us all proud and speedy recovery to your lovely wife Marlene."
Wendy Micklethwaite

"Thank you Norman Brown and the team on a great Reunion back in Bicester. Fun, emotional and laughter. And all went by so quick. See you in November."
Taff Teague



"Brilliant weekend thank you once again for all your work in putting it all together."
Stephen Hall

“Great weekend great people and the Depot Garrison Bus trip was spot on well Done Billy Dilkes for all your efforts”
Tony Sheehan

“Thank you Norman it’s been a pleasure to meet u and its been absolutely fantastic weekend take care and Stay safe”
Aly Henson

“Brilliant weekend by all and yes Norman Brown you have done a great job.”
Stephen Moore

“A Great weekend Norman Brown looking forward to the next one thanks for your hard work.”
Frank Home

“Brilliant weekend Thanks to Norman Brown and everyone involved who made it all possible a special mention also to Billy Dilkes for the coach tour around the Garrison a very enjoyable afternoon and a great weekend, we look forward to the next one thanks again.”
Richard Corden

“Thank you Norman and all that helped put the weekend together to give so many a wonderful weekend, looking forward to the next, once again Thank You”
Fred Grundy

“Great Weekend Norman cannot wait for the next one thanks again for all your hard work for making these weekends possible”
Bluey Joyce



“I second that thanks to Norman Brown and his team, excellent weekend. Thanks also to Billy Dilkes for and outstanding coach tour and update on Bicester, Graven Hill, the deport and the way forward with regards to St George’s Bks.”
Robert Brown

“Thank you Norman for a great weekend and all that you do for us all had a great time see you in London.”
Ian Morewood

Picture: Patrick Scouse/Bradley

REUNION WEEKEND

3rd - 5th September 2021

“Just wanted to thank you for a great weekend.”
David Temple



Over 300 people attended the reunion over the weekend and all agreed it was a marvellous weekend and a great chance to see fellow Pioneers after such a long time.

Report: Norman Brown

Pictures: Scouse Bradley (p14,15,18) / **Paul Brown** (p16,17,19,25) / **Tracy Brown** (p20-25)

FOLLOWING the Annual General Meeting held at the Royal Court Hotel, Coventry in 2019 it was decided to hold the next Reunion at Bicester, unfortunately due to Covid last year's reunion was cancelled.

Over 300 people attended the reunion over the weekend 3/5 September and all agreed it was a marvellous weekend and a great chance to see fellow Pioneers after such a long time.

Members started to arrive early Friday morning and most were accommodated in the Travelodge's at Pioneer Square and Cherwell Valley Services – a mini bus was supplied from Cherwell Valley. Members had travelled from as far away as Northern Ireland, north Scotland and from the South West of England as well as quite a few from Wales.

It was noted by all attending that the Ex Services Club really appreciated the Pioneers by the amount of Pioneer Memorabilia which was on display within the Club. Many Pioneers were members of the Club and during the years many had been on the committee of the Club.

During Friday afternoon and early evening the Association Shop was located in the foyer of the Club. Mr Pete Thomas and his wife Chris together with Bob McGinley and his partner (and future wife!) Karen helped to sell the many items - thanks very much your support was very much appreciated.

Friday evening saw most gather in the Ex Services Club in Sheep Street where to everyone's delight the Club had reduced the price of all drinks to £2. The Club had also put signs outside welcoming the Pioneers back to Bicester - this was a really nice touch and was appreciated by all.

During the evening an auction was held and £1860 was raised, this was mainly due

to the items made by Bob Gillespie, these consisted of 5 replica weapons (SLR, SA80, 9mm pistol, SMG and GPMG (they looked very realistic!). Terry Crossland purchased 4 of these weapons for a bar he is opening in his garden, thanks Terry for your support.

Another item for the auction was a 9 carat brooch of the old cap badge kindly donated by Mr Brian Markham (son of the Late Maj Brian Markham) this item raised £300. This came with the original invoice from Garrards of London when it was purchased for £185 in 1982.

During the evening a buffet was supplied free of charge to all attending. The Club supplied enough food to feed an army not the 300 people attending!

Luckily on Saturday morning the weather was quite good and the sun actually came out! A church service was held in Garth Park and attracted a large number of members (some suffering from hangovers). Lt Col Billy Dilkes played the part of vicar and readings were given by In Pensioner Roy Palmer and the Association President Brigadier D Clouston. Norman (Taff) Wall played the bugle and he was pitch perfect!

Our Church Service followed a wedding which had taken place in the Register Office which is located in the park. They were taking photographs in the band stand which we had intended to use. However they moved on about 5 minutes before we were due to start.

After the service people made their way back to the Ex Services Club for the Annual General Meeting where 72 members attended. Following updates from WO1 Steve Soper (Head of Pioneer Trade in The RLC), Lt Col Billy Dilkes Chairman of the Bicester Branch, the President, Brigadier D Clouston MBE and Controller of the Association, Mr N Brown BEM a vote was held to decide the location of the next Reunion, it was unanimously agreed to return to Bicester.

Saturday afternoon was free to explore

the delights of Bicester (or those with large wallets visit Bicester Village). Lt Col Billy Dilkes had organised a coach to tour the new development at Graven Hill, enter St David's Barracks, our former home, and then go to St George's Barracks and see the new memorial garden within the Barracks and note the names of the Pioneers who had sadly lost their lives in Afghanistan. All who travelled on the coach remarked how much they had enjoyed it and the commentary from Billy. Our thanks also to Heyfordian Travel for supplying the coach free of charge.

On Saturday evening a live group (New Vintage Plus) entertained us, for those who preferred a disco instead of a group only had to go into the bar where the Club had supplied a disco. Although some members visited some of the other local ale houses in Bicester.

A raffle was held during the evening, this raised £1,015 thanks to the sterling efforts of Taff Wall who said early on the Friday afternoon that he hoped to achieve over £1,000. Thanks to all who donated prizes.

Another free buffet was supplied and once again there was loads of food. The ex Services Club certainly looked after us and made us feel very welcome.

It was noted that some members managed to stay awake and attend the local pubs who had late licences - some until 0300 hours. There was certainly some tired faces on Sunday morning.

Sunday was a return home day – filled, I hope, with many happy memories.

(It should be noted that the local Wetherspoon's The Penny Black ran out of food over the weekend – Pioneers always had large appetites! I will certainly warn them next year and perhaps also ask them for a discount (don't hold your breath!). Next Year's Reunion is scheduled to take place over the weekend 1/2 July 2022, I hope you all can make it. Let's see if we can have a record attendance. ■





















Cenotaph Parade 2021

We had over 76 marchers in the Royal Pioneer Corps contingent at the Cenotaph Parade at Whitehall on 14 November 2021

ON 14th November 2018 (the 100th anniversary of the end of World War 1) This year we applied for 110 tickets for the Cenotaph and at the end of September when the full allocation of 10,000 had not been met we applied for a further 10.

On the day however only 76 turned up to march which was very disappointing, a few (less than 12) had notified us that they were now unable to attend due to sickness or family circumstances.

Five people had also booked seats on the coach from Northampton and failed to show, in future seats must be paid in

advance and there will be no refunds. I'm sure that you will understand.

This year it felt a little strange without the late Paddy McPhillips not marching, he had attended every year for the past 25 years. I wonder if we managed to keep in step this year because Paddy was not there to put us out of step!

All marchers wore a pin badge showing Paddy's face, we hoped that the BBC would pick up on this (I had already sent them details) but, once again, we failed to get a mention. It is appreciated that they cannot mention every contingent that marches but it is now 3 years since we were.

The contingent was again led by a sprightly Brigadier Charles Telfer who did a splendid job.

It was pleasing to see some new faces this year including Lt Col Andy Parry, and Taff Teague.

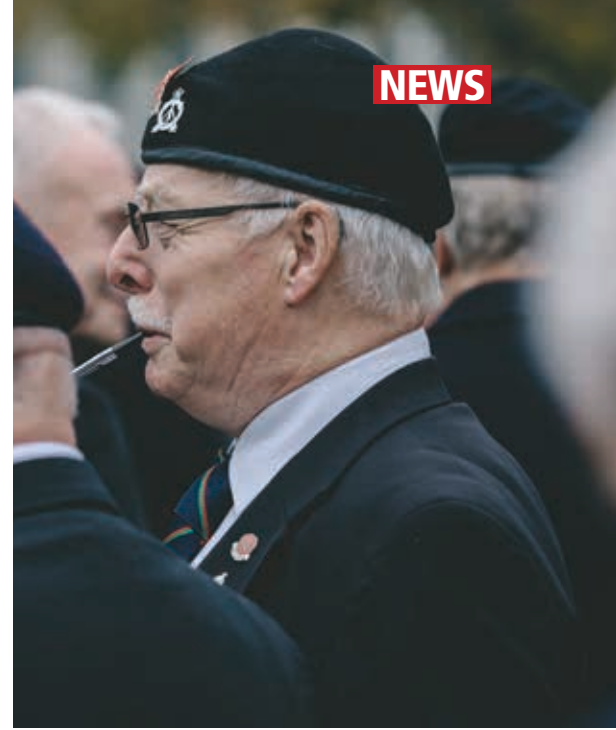
Pete Thomas was our Parade Marshall and even he commented afterwards that our drill was much better this year.

If you would like to march next year please supply the following details: Full Name, Place and Date of Birth, Full Address including postcode, service number and dates served and email address or telephone number. ■

Pictures: Paul Brown / Tracy Brown





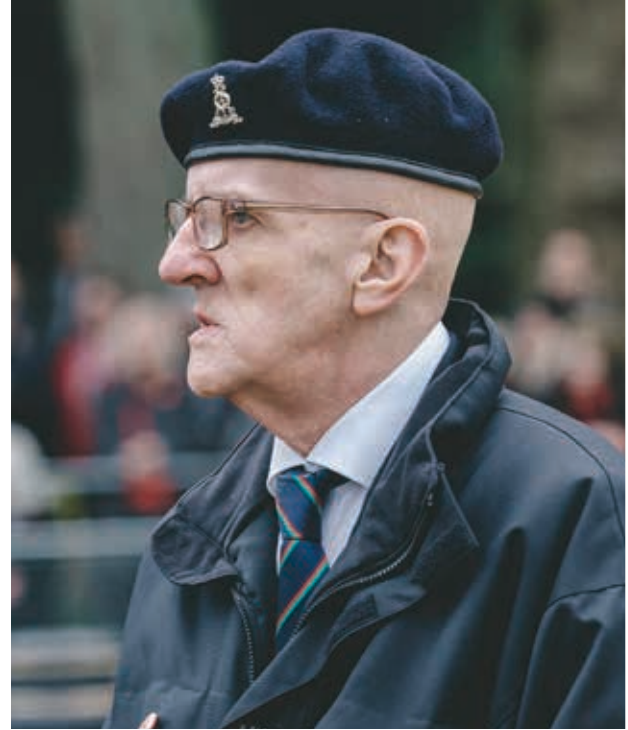




THE PIONEER





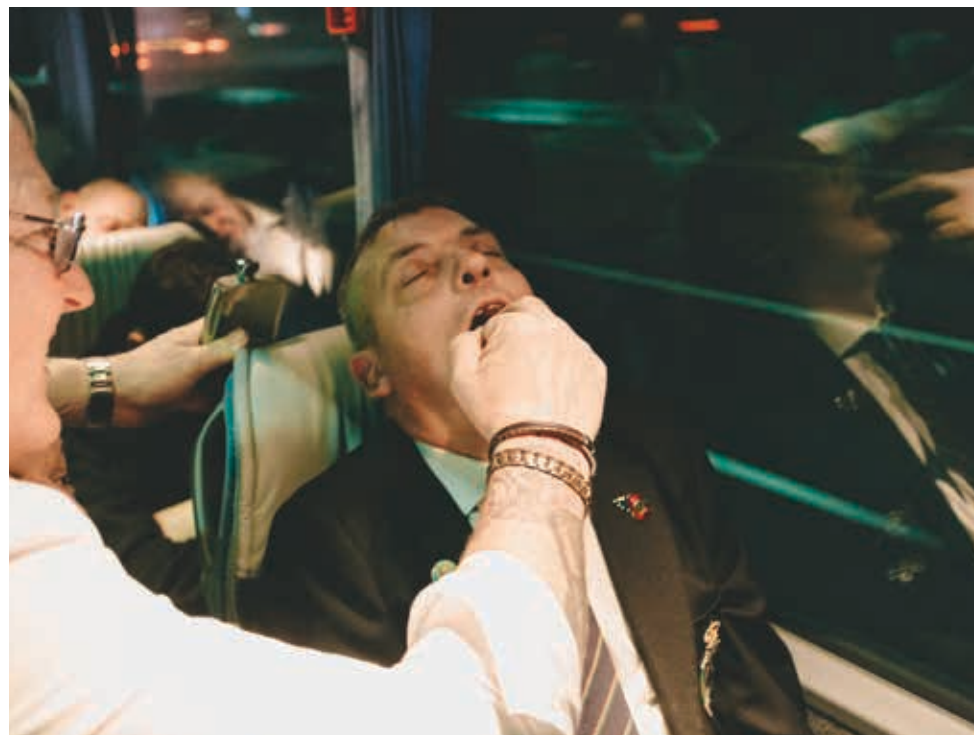














FUTURE EVENTS

2022

39/93 CLUB – BOURNEMOUTH - 11TH-13TH FEBRUARY 2022

■ The Club is to hold a meet at Bournemouth on 11-13 February 2022, all Association members are invited to attend. If you wish to attend please book your accommodation at the Bournemouth Seafront Travelodge and let us know you have booked (royalpioneer corps@gmail.com) further details of the weekend will then be sent to you.

ARMY V NAVY RUGBY AT TWICKENHAM - SATURDAY 30 APRIL 2022

■ This match is to take place on Saturday 30 April 2022. A coach has been booked which will depart from Northampton, pick up at Bicester and then travel to Twickenham. If you would like tickets for the game (prices at time of going to press are still unknown) or would like to travel on the coach please let me know - email: royalpioneer corps@gmail.com)

SHERRINGHAM JOLLY - 12TH MAY-15TH MAY 2022

■ This event in 2022 will be a 4 day event starting on Thursday 12 May with a visit to the museum. On Friday a BBQ will be held and on Saturday a remembrance parade at the town's war memorial, following this attenders are free to explore the delights of Sherringham.

On Saturday evening there will be entertainment and a buffet in the Tyneside Club. Sunday is pack up and go home.

At present 2022 is already full, so if you are one of the usual gang who has been before then you already have a place, (or if Peter Wegg has spoken to you already), but all others will have to wait and see if there are any cancellations.

PIONEER REUNION AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 1ST-2ND JULY 2022

■ This is, once again, to be held at Bicester on 1st and 2nd July and will follow the successful format of this year i.e. Friday afternoon meet up in the Ex Services Club with an auction in the evening (the Association shop will be open in the afternoon).

Saturday morning a church service in Garth Park at 1100 hrs followed by the Annual General Meeting in the Ex Services club at 1230 hrs. Saturday afternoon is free to shop and socialise. Saturday evening there will be live entertainment in the Club and a raffle (raffle prizes are always welcome!). A free buffet will be available on both Friday and Saturday nights.

We booked 65 rooms at the Travelodge Pioneer

Square and these were allocated within 2 days. At the time of going to press we are trying to find more accommodation (and campsites). If you would like to go on the list for accommodation or campsite please let us know (royalpioneer corps@gmail.com or by letter).

PAST AND PRESENT OFFICERS' DINNER - OCTOBER 2022

■ It is hoped to hold this dinner in October 2022 in Bicester Garrison Officers' Mess, Ambrosden. The date will be circulated when known.

FIELD OF REMEMBRANCE - 10TH NOVEMBER 2022

■ This is to be held on Thursday 10th November 2022, if you would like to attend please let me know. We normally are allocated 35 tickets, however, in 2021 we were reduced to only 4. This is normally followed by a London Lunch at a location still to be decided.

CENOTAPH PARADE - 13TH NOVEMBER 2022

■ This is to be held on Sunday 13th November 2022, if you would like to march with 10,000 other veterans please supply the following details (details are required by the Royal British Legion:

Full Name
Place and date of birth
Full Address (including postcode)
Service number and dates served
email address
Tel Number

We managed to apply for 120 tickets in 2021 As usual a mini-bus will leave from Northampton – if you would like to use this service please let us know when you apply to march.

Following the parade we normally gather in the Civil Service in Old Scotland Yard for post parade drinks and a meal.

NORTHAMPTON BRANCH

■ The Northampton Branch of the Association hold various events throughout the year, these include Christmas Function, Burns Night and a Canal Trip on the Grand Union Canal (this includes a meal) - you quietly glide along the canal looking at the various wildlife etc and is highly recommended.

Plans are also being made to visit the newly opened Royal Logistic Corps Museum at Worthy Down, this might include a trip to Plymouth to visit the South West Branch if this Branch manages to open.

They also organise Battlefield Tours, the next one is to Normandy on 5 June 2022 (just in time for D Day celebrations on 6 June).

They are also organising a World War 1 Battlefield Tour in September 2023 (this is planning ahead!).

If you do not receive updates from the Branch Chairman, Mr Steve Harrod and would like to please contact him at: steveharrod3088@hotmail.co.uk

THE PIONEER

~~Stalag~~
383

Ausweis

Nr 201

für TREVOR, J. W. Spil. ~~No. 17141~~
~~No. 388~~

Der Ausweis berechtigt lediglich zum
Betreten des Vorlagers und ist bei
jedemmaligem Passieren des Tores B
zusammen mit der Originalerkennungs-
marke dem Posten vorzuzeigen.

Er ist n i c h t übertragbar.

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Trevor-Deutsch

Ed note: my son Paul came across the photograph shown on the front cover on Facebook and made contact with the son of Heintich Hanz DEUTSCH. His son then sent the following message to the RPC Association

**Report: Norman Brown / John Starling
RPCA Archive**

MY father was born Hans Deutsch in Vienna in 1921. He was the only child of Bernhardt Deutsch and Rose Heggar. Rose my grandmother, was born Catholic and converted to Judaism to marry my grandfather – not a popular thing to do at that time. In 1938, sensing the trouble that was coming, the family made the decision to send my father to Palestine to live on a kibbutz near Haifa that had been started by one of my father's cousins – Vicky Jordan.

My father worked on the kibbutz until the war broke out. He was 17 and immediately joined the Pioneer Corps – within a very multinational group. He worked initially with the "Desert Rats" as I understand it. One day, while on leave in Cairo, his commanding officer convinced him to attend a dance organized by a local community group where he met my mother. My mother had sneaked off to the dance with her friends. Although she was only 16, she told my father (who was then 18), that she was also 18. Her ID showed she was 18 because her father had paid someone in the registry office to change her birth certificate for 1921 – so she could write exams.

Yes – love at first sight. They had one subsequent date – at the Cairo Zoo, and he was shipped off. My grandmother was of course furious at this and forbade my mother from communicating with him. That did not last as with the help of a friend, corresponded regularly with him.

Fast forward to 1941 and my father is defending Crete. This was the first time that the Germans use paratroopers in any significant way and Crete was captured (his experience in this battle is a story in itself). So Hans Deutsch, an Austrian and a Jew, fighting for the British, was captured by the Germans. In the transit camp, he wrote one quick letter to Vicky, threw away his dog tags and assumed the name "John Henry Trevor" (by then he had received a field promotion to Corporal) and was shipped to Stalag 383 as a POW (I have his POW ID with that name still). In the mean time, with help from so called "cousins", my grandparents were able to emigrate to New York from Austria.

He was very crafty, and was able to write to my mother and my grandparents using "John Trevor" and using fake names as recipients so no one could make any connection. His English was perfect and with the help of his "mates" he was able to survive 4 years in a German POW camp

with that name. He told me he would sleep with a pillow over his head just in case he would talk German in his sleep. The correspondence with my mother continued through that time and when he was finally released in 1945, he went back to Cairo.

As a testament to the name that saved him, the family name became "Trevor-Deutsch"

They were married on December 6, 1946 in Cairo. They moved to Canada in 1947 where, after a series of jobs, he became a very well known photographer in Montreal (probably most notably as one of the main photographers for the John Lennon/Yoko Ono Bed-In in 1969!

11 November 2020

(Ed note: the Association Historian, Lt Col John Starling, then supplied the following information)

Pal/12363 Pte Heintich Hanz DEUTSCH – 607 Company Pioneer Corps

The Pioneer Corps were generally the labourers of the British Army. A Pioneer Company was a unit of about 280 men divided into 10 Sections of 26 men and a small HQ. Each section was commanded by a Sgt. Two sections were commanded by a Lieutenant. A number of companies (between 4 and 20) within a geographical area would be commanded by a Group HQ under a Lieutenant Colonel.

He enlisted at Sarafand, the Pioneer Corps Depot on 17 September 1940 (date of birth given as 4 March 1921), and was discharged on 29 March 1946. He is shown as becoming a POW on 28 April 1941 as all those captured in Crete/Greece are generally shown as having been captured on 28 April 1941. You mention his promotion, being a Junior NCO Rank when captured meant work as a POW was voluntary, it was compulsory for Private soldiers. As a result, NCOs could select the type of work they had to do and more chance of being employed on farms rather than down coal mines.

His number suggests he was in 607 Company but I am afraid all the records of the units were destroyed in Greece/Crete so the only records we have are as follows:-

607 (Palestinian) Company (Originally 7th Palestinian Coy)

2 Jan 41	Left SARAFAND and moved to MERSA MATRUH
11 Jan 41	Moved into 603 Coy lines which are better situated – training
15 Jan 41	Embarked MERSA MATRUH

16 Jan 41	Disembarked SOLLUM attached to RAF for aerodrome work also guarding PWs
26 Jan 41	Section under Capt N E Lawrence left for TOBRUK
28 Jan 41	1 Sgt, 1 Cpl & 14 men killed at TOBRUK whilst handling explosives
30 Jan 41	All sections working with Squadrons of 202 Group RAF
1 Feb 41	Moved to TOBRUK
28 Feb 41	Moved to BARCE
5 Mar 41	Capt N E Lawrence recalled from detachment at BERSIS owing to OC having been admitted to hospital
18 Mar 41	Moved to TOBRUK for embarkation
21 Mar 41	Disembarked PORT PIRAEUS, Greece and camped 7 miles North of ATHENS
	(There is nothing to indicate who the OC is or if Capt Lawrence is still in command. The Diary is written by the same hand throughout and is legible but unfortunately it is not informative)
29 Mar 41	Moved to LARISSA for work on aerodrome
31 Mar 41	Diary ends

Following release by the Allies he would have been evacuated to Britain, but he then seems to have travelled back to Sarafand for discharge as he was present in Palestine during the conflict with the British. He served in Palestine and was awarded the general Service Medal (clasp Palestine) and the medal was sent to the following address - 162 Hayarkon Street, Tel Aviv, Israel. Employment was probably on dockwork or in one of the major supply depots.

Below is a record of events in Greece and Crete from a variety of sources, you will see problems encountered trying to evacuate the Palestinian Companies (due to the high proportion of Jews in the Companies). In fact the Germans treated all Jews as British Soldiers as they were worried against reprisals against Germans captured by the Allies. 607 Company is mentioned a number of times

GREECE (Col Renton)

We sent 2 Grps to Greece, a Cypriot Grp of 9 Coys and a Palestinian Grp of 8 coys - 5500 men. I also had a DADPL, Major Pennington from the Sudan. Capt Solfio, my Sraff Capt, had been attached to the Military Mission in Greece from some time in Jan. Courage took over the Cypriot Grp from Thorne-Thorne just before it left Egypt. T-T had been the only Grp Commander in the Desert for just over 8 months, and was twice mentioned in



despatches. Col Lister just out from England took over the Palestinian Grp from Lyndon who went as DADPL Alexandria.

The Coys arrived in Greece without anyone to look after them. I had been recalled to Cairo and was offered a few days leave there but worrying because coys went on ahead, Pennington and I wangled our passage on a fast convoy. Major Nicholson, out from England, who was to command 1002 Coy was also on board. Our ship was bombed without damage as we approached Crete, but delayed in Suda Bay as another ship in convoy was damaged by a one-man torpedo. Before leaving I was told that 2000 civilians employed in Crete, 1700 by CRE and 1000 by RAF, RASC and RAOC remainder. I arrived in Greece 1st April. One Grp (Courage) with 15 coys had arrived ahead of us. Behind Advanced HQ, was 81 Area at Larissa which was responsible for the port of Volos. Main HQ, was at Athens with 80 BSA who were responsible for the Piraeus area. The Germans began to invade Greece on 6th April. Pnr Cays - 604 and 607 were right forward with Anzac Corps one Palestinian and 7 Cypriot coys were in 81 BSA - 3 Palestinian and 2 Cypriot coys in 80 BSA. On 4th April Col Lister arrived with his Group HQ, 602 Coy and a number of officer and OR reinforcements for the other coys. 601 Pal Coy advance party and baggage arrived but the Coy move was cancelled and did not reach Greece. I wanted to get up forward to see the coys but was refused permission to leave Athens as many problems there on which I was required for consultation. During my whole stay in Greece I never succeeded in getting use of a car from GHQ.

The Commander of one of the Coys,

Capt M, who had gone forward to Larissa area before my arrival had made himself OC and signed himself ADPL. He was recently out from England. His location and employment statements were inaccurate and I sent Pennington to Larissa as DADPL in forward area. I also appointed Courage as Grp Commander of forward coys and asked him to try and combine this work with that of OC Troops, Volos, to which he had been appointed. Lister then took command of the coys in Piraeus area. The Piraeus Area Commander then said he wanted a DADPL so we sent him Cotton, Lister's 2IC. Lister then used Seager as his 2IC when necessary. Sub Area Commander at Larissa objected to Pennington's arrival and continued using services of self-styled ADPL.

We were asked to perform a rather unusual task. A ship carrying mules got trapped between mines in the gulf between islands of Saramis and Peiraens. Seager took charge. Men worked continuously for 24 hrs. They swam about 600 mules ashore, only 3 were lost, and then drove them to their mount depot. A serious bombing damaged the harbour and shipping a week after my arrival. 300 Pnrs under Seager and Capt G McCulloch (603 Coy) cleared the wreckage. Seager was taken prisoner later and awarded the MBE on release in 1945.

Civil labour was no problem in Athens. There was a most excellent Labour Exchange in being which provided all we wanted at few hours notice. PLCOs badly needed to recruit labour outside Athens and help services with pay and accounts. Cairo authorised local recruitment. I took Capt Knight, Greek speaking former resident in Athens, from one of the coys and sent him to Volos where he did excellent work.

On 14th April we were instructed to send 100 picked, armed men – preferably German - forward to unknown destination. These came from 603 and 606 Coys and were placed under Capt G McCulloch. Their job turned out to be assisting MPs in controlling traffic through Gravia. The next day we were ordered to send up 603 Coy (Seager) made up to strength from 602 Coy (C? J A Smith) to Lamia Thebes. Lister's Group HQ was to go forward with this Coy. Obviously something had gone wrong. It subsequently transpired that on the evening of 14th Larissa Sub Area Commander had sent for Coy Commanders and informed them enemy had broken through on left flank and coys were to retire at once. They were to take no kit and everything that could not be carried was to be burnt. No transport was available and they would have to hitch-hike. Coy commanders reacted different ways. Joe Winders of 1001 Coy was the most sensible. He went straight back to bed. The following morning assisted by Pennington he entrained his Coy and brought them all back with kit to Thebes where they detrained and joined Lister's force. Some coy commanders did not do so well, some did badly. Just before leaving for Greece 7 new officers out from England had been appointed to the Cypriot coys. In 3 coys both Coy Cdr and 2I/c were new and had no previous experience with colonial troops. The first arrival in Athens was the self-styled ADPL who arrived by car with all his baggage in a truck. He said he had been ordered to report to GHQ and leave his Coy to hitch-hike and did not know where or when his Coy would arrive. His coy was brought back intact by train by Pennington who had 3 coys with him altogether. It transpired that this Coy Cdr

had pinched his Area Commander's car.

Col Courage had been ordered to evacuate Volos on 15th and on his return I made him Grp Cdr all coys in Athens-Piraeus area, leaving Lister to command all coys in Larissa-Thebes area. He and majority of others were angry at having to return for what appeared to be no real reason. Coys were reformed and reorganised with view to sending them forward again. I was worried about 2 coys (604 & 607) forward with Anzacs of whom no reports were received. One got back in pieces. The other, Mackintosh-Walker (604) returned intact on 21st after brilliant handling. M-W was later captured and awarded MBE on release in 1945. When cut off by German armour he marched his men across country and over mountains intact, except for 70 men left with Lister who was short of men. Sgt Catt of this coy brought down an enemy aircraft with his Bren gun. He remained standing firing at the craft as it dived on his men.

The Situation was rapidly deteriorating and rumours of evacuation were rife. Col Courage sent with sealed orders to unknown destination. On 22nd it was obvious that no more coys should be sent forward. That day 4 coys and detachments of 2 others were ordered to embark for Crete - 21 officers and approx 1300 men. Most reached Crete safely.

Lister with 663 men was forward on supply lines. Communications were very difficult, with men at Thebes I had about 1300 still forward. It was reported that Lister was having a very bad time as the Supply line being continuously being bombed reducing the amount of supplies moving and the demand for labour accordingly. At midday Lister's Adjut, Sly, came back saying men had no work to do and were being heavily bombed and could they come back. I sent a reply to Lister saying he was under command of Anzac Corps and if they had no further need of them he could return. At 1900 hrs I managed to get transport and left Athens to go forward for the first time since my arrival 3 weeks previously. We reached Thebes in the early hrs before it was light. Contacted Brig Charrington of Armoured Bde and he arranged to send 2 coys from Thebes to Athens by rail and all I had to do was collect my forward elements and get them to Thebes by 1 am and he would evacuate them. It was near Thebes that I first realised we were likely to evacuate Greece.

The road forward from Thebes was impeded by aircraft which flew low attacking anything they saw moving. It was not until the afternoon that I found Seager and Winders who had already marched some way from Gravia and had their men concealed in bracken while Lister collected transport promised by Anzac Corps with a view to a move as soon as it got dark. I instructed them to report to Daphne Camp on their arrival in Athens. I left Thebes about midnight and reached Athens at dawn and reported to GHQ that all Pnrs were or would be shortly back in the Piraeus area. They informed me that Pennington had been instructed to write me off as missing and had been sent to Egypt and that all camps in the Piraeus had been evacuated to unknown destinations. I suggested that I control work at a port in the Peloponnese. GHQ said these were

already staffed and anyway they had no transport to convey Pnrs there. As all Pnrs were being evacuated to Crete I suggested that I go there and control them. They agreed but first I was to go round all camps and check that no Pnrs were left there before proceeding to Crete. At 1600 hrs I reported to Brig AQ that all Pnrs were clear of Athens with possible exception of 3 Cypriots who had strayed and was told to embark for Crete. I found a Greek ship, the 'Hellas', was sailing, boarded her shortly after 1700 hrs.

Evacuation arrangements at different ports were good. Unfortunately at one port, Nauplion, the secret destination to which Courage had been sent, a ship caught fire, ran aground and blocked the harbour exit. There were over 8000 troops there whom it was impossible to get away. Well over 2000 of these were Pnrs. Some got off on caiques, the remainder were despatched by rail and road to Kalamati. I had embarked on the 'Hellas' on evening of 24th but did not sail in her as ten minutes after I boarded her and had begun to make plans for AA defence enemy planes attacked and got 2 direct hits on the ship and wooden quay. The ship and warehouses were in flames almost at once. Men with MGs and light automatics kept up their fire to the last. All were killed or badly wounded. There was a number of wounded on board already and some women civilians. We did not succeed in rescuing all from the flames. I was slightly wounded and burned but swam ashore and removed to a Greek hospital where most of the casualties were accommodated. I contacted Sub Area who told me they would have to leave the wounded but would send an ambulance for me at midnight. This dropped me near Argos in the Peloponnese next morning where I was attached by Brig Lee to a convoy which was proceeding to Kalamati. We moved that night as movement by day was impossible due to bombing. We picked up a fair number of Pnrs in the convoy from 2 coys who had been dispersed. At Kalamati the troops collected there had been divided into 2 armies, North and South. South were the Australians under Brig Allen. North was under the command of Lister. Strength of each was approx 8000. I attached myself to the Force Cdr to ensure that the Pnrs got a square deal in allotment for evacuation if shipping did turn up.

The Aussies, all but about 300, were embarked that night. Brig Allen gave me his staff car as a farewell present which was most useful until the next day when it was hit by a burst of machine gun bullets and caught fire. Early next morning we commenced moving North Army to a ravine some 3 mile south of Kalamati. Kalamati was bound to be bombed the next day. The Navy told us there was no chance of ships arriving that night but there might be the following, the 28th. North Army consisted of all odds and sods, the only armed and efficient fighting troops being a NZ reinforcement battalion about 300 strong. Total Pnr strength was 2553 (1321 Palestinians and 1232 Cypriots).

27th and 28th were spent giving embarking serial numbers to troops. The Palestinians were given a high priority being Jews and we feared they and particularly the German Jews would get short shrift if they fell into enemy hands. The Cypriots

were put last, they could speak the language and at the worst could disappear into the hills and become civilians.

Air attack during 27th and 28th was intense. At 1530 on 28th our liaison with 4th Hussars, our covering force, reported no contact with the enemy and they were instructed to withdraw for embarkation. At 1900 hrs an officer arrived at HQ from Kalamati to report that:-

Advanced elements of the German armoured division had entered Kalamati at 1630 hrs and our troops were engaged with them on the edge of the town. Our troops advanced on Kalamati and cleared the enemy out of the town by approx 2300n hrs. Enemy casualties were 150 dead and 120 prisoners, ours were 22 wounded.

2 destroyers appeared off shore at 2030 hrs but had been incorrectly informed that the sea around the jetties had been mined and it was not safe to come in.

Honour of fighting goes to NZs but the Pnrs did their share. The NZ strength was less than a battalion and they did magnificently. Smith and Farsoun of our 602 Coy put 2 enemy machine guns out of action. 2 field guns, 3 armoured cars and 50 motorcycles were captured. Smith and Farsoun had been previously been mentioned in despatches - Smith for good work in Tobruk and Farsoun for gallant action during a bombing raid on Matruh. The captured enemy tommy guns were a welcome addition to our armament. The highlight of the fighting was the capture of the field guns. Our unarmed people had come out of the olive groves too soon, they were a moving black mass in the moonlight. The guns were just about to open fire when we got them with, the gunners, with our tommy guns. At 2330 I met the Brig on the beach who informed me that evacuation from Kalamati was off. I was to turn the army round and bring them in order of their serials to a beach below our HQ, where embarkation in boats would be attempted, and to instruct all COs to meet him at conference at 0300 hrs. We embarked about 500 men, including a large proportion of the wounded, in boats and so on to the destroyers. At 0300 conference the Brig informed us he considered the situation hopeless as we had no ammo left and no medical supplies and he had sent an envoy to the Commander of the German division to say we would lay down our arms at 0500. Any man who refused to surrender were to be gone by 0500. He thought all officers should remain with their men and hand them over in an orderly fashion, I informed the Coy Commanders I thought there was no chance of the Germans arriving by 0500, the earliest they could arrive would be about 1000 and there was plenty of time to get away, but as large parties would be vulnerable to air attack they should go in small parties of not more than 5. There was a dump of tinned food on the road just south of our HQ. myself would go south about 0530, if we were attacked it might be possible to organise resistance on the ridge above the next village if anybody had anything to fight with. I am sorry to say that very few got back to Egypt.

The Greek campaign had for the time being a serious and adverse effect on our strength in Pnrs. It is difficult to give an accurate figure of our casualties as men

kept on drifting back over a long period of time. Our total losses including those subsequently lost in Crete were approximately 36 officers and 3000 men. One officer was killed, one missing believed killed, one seriously wounded and POW, one slightly wounded and POW, the rest POWs. The losses in Greece and Crete had a serious effect on recruiting and two sources from which we had originally recruited had dried up and Director had to turn to East Africa.

Although military Pnr strength had been seriously reduced we had an increase in civilians - best part of 100,000 men employed in BTE and there were over 25,000 in Palestine. Henman had left Canal Zone and taken Owen-Lewis' place as DADPL Palestine, Owen-Lewis had taken over from Porcelli as ADPL, Sudan, Porcelli had gone to Canal Zone, Christie had come to BTE, Goddard was ADPL W. Desert with Statheras DADPL Tobruk. I was told to make an inspection of Palestine. It was estimated we had over 1,000 Pnrs in Crete and Pennington who reached Egypt safely was sent to get these out as quickly as possible but was taken prisoner there.

**REPORT ON GREECE Jan to Apr 1941
(LARISA AREA - 81 BASE)**

Major A.E.G. MUSITANU. P.C.

10 Jan 41 Ordered to proceed from Fayid Camp(Bitter Lakes) Base Depot to proceed to Cyprus to take over command of 1009 Coy, Cyprus Regt
13 Jan 41 Arrived. Cyprus & took over command
2 Feb 41 Embarked at Famagusta for Egypt and got G.1098 and transport
1 Mar 41 Embarked on 'Breconshire' for Athens
10 Mar 41 Arrived Larisa. No labour organisation existing. No Pnr Group HQ functioning. Only one Coy (1002) in area (Commanded by Capt. Meaken). Ordered by Base Cdr. to take over control of all labour and act as Labour Adviser at Base HQ. After conference on labour at Area applied for more labour.

22 Mar 41 I had under command 1001, 1002, 1003, 1004, 1005, and 1009 Cypriot Coys and 602, 603 and 607 Palestinian Coys, plus about 50 Italian POW labour and average daily of 190 civilians. Total labour strength of 2184.

Work - Off-loading supplies. Establishing dumps and stacking for RASC, RE and Ordnance, Road building, preparing camp sites, preparing ground and building runways for RAF.

All Services engaging civilian labour without proper control and accounting. Organised civil labour. Contracted costs plus 10%.

Civilians poor type - lazy. Mostly shepherds from surrounding country. Ages 16 to 75 years.

Labours demands always exceeded supply.

603 and 607 Pal Coys ordered forward and 160 men of other Coys out on detachment work left available Military labour available 1343. Demands approx. 2510

29 Mar 41 ½ of 1002 Coy and all of 1005 sent forward which reduced mil labour to 1009 bodies.

Transport position chaotic, disorganised and work slowed down in consequence

until Area Commander placed all transport under his labour adviser. CRE wanted at least 1000 labourers on roads alone. Railway operation also slow and inefficient with men kept hanging about during shunting operations. CRE would not permit dumps at railhead which was essential for speedy off-loading. Shortage of tools for road repairs. Trains made up with loads for civilians, loads for forward areas and loads for Area all mixed up. Wagons also in train make up reported to be for unloading which the Pnrs had only loaded up 4 days before.

On a date not stated 66 Group under Lt Col Courage, with Capt James as Adjnt and Lt Rose as QM, reached Greece to administer the Coys mentioned above but in fact never did so, the Grp Cdr, being appointed as OC Troops at Volos, with his Adjnt as Staff Capt, and QM as Camp Commandant.

14 Apr 41 Area Commander, Brig. Parrington, called urgent conference at 2300 to say Allied line had broken and falling back on Aliakmon River, and immediate evacuation to take place.

15 Apr 41 0300 hrs Orders that 1004 and 1009 Cypriot Coys and 602 Pal. Coy to leave at 0630 for new Base HQ at Thebes. 1001 Cypriot and 1003 Cyp to remain, clear ammo and petrol, and await further orders.

0630 hrs First 3 above Coys carrying rations, 1 blanket and light kit at railhead. G 1098 left behind.

0915 hrs AAQMG arrives states no wagons or trains available. Also no Greek engine drivers. Could Pnrs supply drivers, 4 found from 602 Pal Coy.

1300 hrs AAQMG (LtCol. Goodwin) comes again. No trains or other transport obtainable and Cypriots and Pals must get out as best they could.

1400 hrs. News that Base HQ staff had evacuated.

1500 hrs. ADOS arrived and said he thought Base HQ gone taking 1003 Cyp Coy with them. All telephonic communication gone following heavy air raid at 0915.

1530 hrs. 25 lorries arrived to convey 1004 and 1009 Cyp Coys to De-Merle railhead for entrainment to Athens.

1630 hrs. Transport for remainder arrived and 1001 Cyp and 602 Pal Coys evacuated. All Pnr labour under command now gone Writer then proceeded to De-Merle halting 1007 Cyp Coy met on road under instructions to join him at Larisa for work. Athens then knew nothing of evacuation orders.

At DE-MERLE arrangements made to entrain all Pnrs to Athens on transport bringing Australia reinforcements forward, the Aussies taking over the lorries which had brought Pnrs down from Larisa.

16 Apr 41 After 24 hr journey writer reached Thebes where new Base HQ reported there for instructions. Told Pnrs probably now in Athens. Phoned Athens, 80 BSA knew nothing of evacuation and ordered writer to Athens. Arrived there told by Brig Rankin they had no knowledge of evacuation of Larisa. By this time great flow of traffic of all description coming into Athens for which Athens through lack of information not prepared to receive. Base HQ sent AAQMG forward to organise traffic at Thebes. Lt Col Renton PC, arrived in

Greece to take over as ADPL. Renton and writer saw Base HQ who had no word of arrival in Athens of Pnrs

17 Apr 41 Cypriot Coys arrived Athens

18 Apr 41 1007 Cyp Coy ordered up to Lamia

19 Apr 41 Learned that 1007 should have gone to Thebes and not Lamia. The latter occupied by Germans this day

20 Apr 41 Coy required immediately to repair roads for traffic coming down to Athens. 1009 Cyp detailed and writer, as their original Coy Cdr, took them to Thebes. Bombed and machine gunned from the air throughout journey. Soon as planes appeared Greek engine driver stopped train and headed for cover. Cyps did the same, the train being stopped. By time all returned again another raid would start and driver would again disappear. Necessary to stand over driver and order full speed ahead when raids on. Later stopped to learn line blown up by bombing 6 kilos short of Thebes. Men detained and dispersed each side of Athens/Thebes road.

21 Apr 41 Writer proceeded on foot to Thebes to learn from only person visible, Australian Police Cp. that town evacuated and battle being fought in Lamia Pass 30 odd miles to the north. Returned on foot to Coy at 2200 hrs. Contacted CRE south of Thebes and dispersed Coy in small detachments along roadside for road repairs. Later Brig. Charrington (Force HQ) ordered Coy back to Athens for embarkation for Egypt.

22 Apr 41 Trying to get transport for Coy. None available. About midnight got 9 lorries from MT Support Grp and headed for Athens

24 Apr 41 Arrived Athens. Few Pal. and Cyp Cys there and learned that 1005, 1006 and 1008 Cyp Coys already embarked. They eventually reached Crete and were mostly taken prisoner.

Later in day told no instructions for 1009 Coy to evacuate. Got men bedded down. Each man issued 3 days rations and one blanket. At 1630 hrs orders to proceed at once to Navplion and on road all night.

25 Apr 41 Navplion. Coy dispersed in cornfields - also lorries despite orders to put all MT out of action. This fortunate move as evacuation shipping was destroyed by bombing and no evacuation possible thereafter.

26 Apr 41 Conference in afternoon. No Pnrs could be evacuated and ordered to Kalmata. Lucky still had transport.

27 Apr 41 En route to Kamata. Hazardous journey. Roads damaged by bombing and very narrow and circuitous over mountain. Two lorries over precipice with loss of life. All along roads were Greek and Yugoslav officers with families who had tramped hundreds of miles across mountains hoping to evacuate with Brit troops. Arrived Kalmata instructed to gather together all Pnr Coys. Approx 1252 Cypriots and 616 Palestinians, a total of 1868.

During night ordered to assembly beach but after 4 hrs wait told Navy could take no more. Moved into olive groves and hill cover south of the town.

28 Apr 41 Dare not move all day. Enemy planes flying at low level all day and machine gunning. Some Pnr casualties. In

afternoon message received to assemble on beach road at 2300. Did so with many thousand British and Dominion Troops. Also 1250 Jugo Slav officers and families. Firing now came from North of Kalmata Town and mixed force got hurriedly together to reinforce 4th Hussars who were fighting a rear guard action. A few men taken in small boats to ships lying outside. Naval officer IC Embarkation taken prisoner by German Paratroops.

29 Apr 41 At 2 am conference and Brig Parrington informed all that Navy now unable to bring ships to quayside owing to enemy action. Also Italian Navy waiting outside. Would try again tomorrow. Later Brig P said no possibility of our ships returning and every possibility of wholesale slaughter from air so he had sent officer to German commander to discuss terms of surrender. Terms were "Surrender at 0530 hrs or Luftwaffe would do the rest." Troops so informed at 0330 Lt Col Renton here this hour but got away eventually. At 0530 German Armoured Force arrived and Pnrs, part of force of approx 12,000 Brit and Dominion troops made POWs

Campaign on Greek Mainland and in Crete - 1941

These proved costly to the Corps in ME. Some 80% of personnel (about 50 officers and 4500 men) fell into enemy hands or were listed as missing). This figure was much higher than percentage of the whole expeditionary force. Many factors played their part - lack of initial basic training and consequent low morale, lack of planning for eventualities, lack of transport, inadequate communications between units and HQs, and inexperienced Cypriot NCOs who caused a breakdown between officers and men.

From Pnrs available in ME the CYP and PAL (Jewish) Coys were selected because they were the only Europeans.

On 2 March 1941, 2 Coys 1002 and 1007 - disembarked for Piraeus as advance party of the expeditionary force. 1002 went to Ekaterini district for road repairs on main Salonika-Athens road - the only road which our army could use for armour and transport to take up their positions. 1007 Coy remained in Athens area and commenced hurried preparation of camps to receive army main body.

The remaining 7 CYP Coys disembarked in rapid succession, all but one having come from those which had taken part on ops in W. Desert. The Coys moved north and were strung along the Athens-Salonika road engaged mainly on road and bridge repairs at Lavissa airport and on a few miscellaneous tasks with supplies.

1008 Coy stayed with 1007 in Athens area and supplied working parties for RASC, RAOC and RE units. This however was not enough to keep them fully employed and affected morale and discipline - prevalent feeling was 'happy holiday' mood and danger seemed very remote.

Advantage was not taken of spare time for training and in the case of younger officers their training was often inadequate. Nor did older officers and NCOs - mostly veterans of 1914-18 war - attach much importance to training. They had little experience of labour units and considered Pnrs as labourers and if there was no work the men were left to please themselves

what they did.

Got rude awakening. No provision made for retreat by units nor instructions given for planned withdrawal. Some cases units ordered back to Athens directly; other cases unit commanders got no orders at all and found they were in danger of being cut off by enemy. Some units had to fend for themselves for transport, lucky ones were given rail facilities.

Units began to disintegrate, particularly those who received no orders.

Confusion and doubt in men's minds caused by ignorance of officers as to what was happening was increased by wild rumours which fell on fertile soil and by appearance of considerable numbers of Greek Army dispersing in 2s and 3s on their way home. Men were piled on vehicles moving south. Parties under weak NCOs did not report at rendezvous outside Athens. Detachments some distance from their HQ took to the hills. Many of the Cypriots changed into civvy clothes and passed as Greeks.

1001, 1007 and 1009 lucky and entrained. 1007 had been ordered north but even OC had not been told where to detrain. Near Lavissa train was turned back as Germans were over-running Lavissa Plain. On way back 1001 detrained for work at supply points. 1007 and 1009 arrived at Kokkinia camp near Piraeus where Cypriots were being concentrated. These 2 arrived as complete units. Other Coys sadly depleted and small groups came straggling in. Of 1002, the northern most unit no trace.

1007 ordered north again to Lavissa to find town evacuated and losses sustained in repeated dive bomb attacks on railway station. Troops were dispersed into surrounding fields. Many wandered off and made their own way south. Remainder entrained but detrained few miles south by RTO who said Pnrs were required to load supplies for NZs holding last rear guard positions.

Again heavily bombed near station and men mostly made off into fields and south to Athena. Those actually employed on petrol, food and ammo dumps found attended kept to their work and stayed until NZs streamed back past them for evacuation on beaches. Every available vehicle loaded and remnants of 1007 Coy joined the convoy.

Meantime what remained of 1005, 1006 and 1008 Coys had been embarked on small Greek boats headed for Crete. Ship carrying 1008 was dive bombed and sunk in Melos Harbour but casualties not heavy. They then evacuated to Crete by destroyer only few hrs before Germans landed at Melos.

The other units at Kokkinia were moved to Lalamata, but priority given to fighting troops and Pnrs fell into enemy hands before they could be evacuated. Portion of 1007 Coy was captured at Kalamata also. Latter part of their convoy had been deflected to Megara to help a detachment of 1004 in embarking wounded and hospital cases. These two parties reached Crete.

Of original 2500 Cypriot troops approx 820 landed in Crete, officers had remarkable stories to tell. They had lost contact with higher formations and could do little to improve morale of men. There was very little clear information with which

to counteract demoralizing rumours current which magnified frustrated feelings of unarmed men who could not retaliate or even make attempt at self-defence. Conditions in Crete did little to improve morale - no tentage, no bedding, no clothing, minimum of rations and again not enough work. Those given work to do stuck to it unloading ships in Suda Bay but only enough work for 100 men.

When the airborne invasion of Crete started Pnrs ordered back into foot hills. Small parties sometimes sent to supply points and there worked well. But morale of idle men got lower and lower who from vantage point in hills could see parachutists dropping, bombs dropping out of aircraft and enemy aircraft machine gunning Allied troops with no opposition. When some 50 odd rifles were mustered and a party given a hill to defend alongside the Marines the men were elated and determined. On occasions some adventurous spirits joined night patrol and proved very good at this work.

When the evacuation of Suda Bay was begun Pnr units only discovered by chance what was going on. We had received no official instructions, evacuation beaches not known but thought to be on south coast. Pnrs moved off in groups and quickly made contact with withdrawing infantry and learned from them that Spakia Bay was the evacuation point. They crossed the mountains by devious routes and arrived in batches in Sphakia. Some were embarked but more than 300 officers and men taken prisoner. Approx 530 officers and men disembarked safely at Alexandria during 29:-31 May.

Same story for PAL Coys but in this case capture by enemy was very grievous as they were largely Jewish refugees who had already left Europe to escape persecution. About 2500 of the PALs were missing, killed or captured.

Lessons of campaign were very bitter ones. Greater part of Pnr Corps in ME had been lost and we had to begin all over again. Lesson - Pnrs must be treated as soldiers and receive basic infantry training. In or near operational areas must be fully armed and know that they can use their arms and considered by their commanders as capable of using them.

Evacuation from Kalamati - Greece Notes by Col. Renton

I arrived in the Kalamati area about 1000 hrs on 26 April. (He arrived from Greece on 16 Apr 41). Was halted about 7 miles north of Kalamati and told that movement south by vehicles was prohibited by day. Contacted Brig Parrington at his HQ in olive groves about 1700 hrs. Situation was then as follows:-South Force Australians, approx 7500, under Australian Col or Brig in olive groves south of Kalamati, North Force (miscellaneous) under Lt Col Lister (Gp Cdr. 43 Pioneer Grp) dispersed north of Kalamati. The strength of North Force approx 7000 and increasing. Brig Parrington asked if I wished to command the North Force. I suggested existing arrangements should not be disturbed and that I acted as Liaison Officer between the Brig and North Force. I had no staff. Lt Col Lister had 43 Grp and 66 Grp staff with him and had already made considerable progress for allotting serial embarkation numbers to

North Force. Moreover I was aware by this time that approx 2500 Pnrs had arrived North Force area, I wished to be free to assist in sorting these and restoring stragglers to their coys and also to supply them with rations. During next 2 days attended all Brig P's conferences but was often away from his HQ.

At 2045 on 26th the Brig informed that he did not expect any embarkation that night and there was as yet no sign of the Navy, and that if embarkation was not commenced before 2300 hrs none of North Force need parade for embarkation. Destroyers did reach the pier after 2100 hrs. Probably an hour was wasted. If this hour had been utilised properly the whole of South Force could have been evacuated, and some of North Force of whom 1,000 were ready and waiting for embarkation by 0300 hrs on the 27th.

About 7000 of South Force were evacuated on night of 26/27th. This took place in a most orderly and well conducted manner. Information from Navy was that ships which came on night of 26/27th could not return on 27/28th night. Ships might come on 27th but doubtful. Reasonably certain ships would return on 28th. Civilians brought rumours on 27th that Germans had landed at Patras. Brig P informed that he could not defend Kalamati with forces now at his disposal. He reconnoitred next village to Kalamati and decided that pass to this village could be denied to enemy. Germans seemed likely to arrive at Kalamati on 28th. Brig thought there were some NZ troops were between us and enemy. I offered to go north to check on this. This was agreed to when at approx 1545 hrs on 27th officer in command of 4th Hussars detachment (which he gave as 300 in trucks with a few Bren guns) arrived with information that enemy had occupied Patras. He was not in contact and asked for instructions as to possibility of embarkation. He was instructed to obtain contact and send us a liaison officer with information of enemy whereabouts. This liaison officer would return and inform him when to retire for embarkation on 28th.

Bombing on evening of 27th was especially severe. At 1900 hrs the Greek hospital was full, no ships arrived on night of 27th. At 0330 on 28th Brig P instructed North Force to disperse in foothills above the olive groves in which South Force had previously been dispersed. He informed me that in his opinion

- (1) 4th Hussars were sufficient protection
- (2) There was no chance of getting the whole force away.

I therefore informed the RE Port Commander, (Palestinian) some of whose personnel had previous experience of the coast, and 605 Coy (Pal) that they were at liberty to escape by any means. The 28th was occupied in giving instructions for embarkation that night. The Pnrs were dispersed by Coys but many other units were dispersed by groups and individuals which complicated the transmission of embarkation orders. At approx 1900 Brig P informed that troops were in contact with enemy at Kalamati and decided that as he had no troops other than those dispersed - and no artillery any attempt to recapture Kalamati was doomed to failure. Lt Col Goodwin and I disagreed with him and decided to attack immediately. I utilised

transport troops of 2/5 Australians for this purpose. Goodwin had contacted the NZs and was reported as doing magnificent work with Tommy gun. After satisfying myself that right flank was secure I advanced up the beach. Here an enemy MG was still causing trouble. Excellent piece of work by Capt CGA Smith of 602 Pal Coy who collected 2 Lewis guns and put this MG out of action. At 2330 met Brig. P on beach and informed him that the pier had been clear of enemy since 2300, that 2 guns and about 100 prisoners taken and our troops mopping up the outskirts of town. He ordered me to withdraw units to beach 3 miles from the town and await embarkation by boats. Units were to embark by correct serial nos.

I issued these orders. To protect our right and rear I patrolled the road out of Kalamati and found no enemy in foothills. Then withdrew flank guard to position nearer beach so as not to miss chance of embarkation and was therefore not in touch with events on the beach for next 1½ hrs. Brig. P instructed me to collect senior officers for conference at 0300. A few officers and ORs asked permission to swim to destroyers which was about 1 mile out from beach and I gave this. At 0315 Brig P congratulated all on spirited defence of town and said Navy would return on 29th if we could guarantee holding on. But all they did embark was 600 men. He estimated our casualties in holding the town would be in excess of that number and pointed out that ammo was limited, hospital full and no medical supplies available. He concluded by saying that he had already despatched an envoy to inform German commander that he would lay down his arms at 0530. He considered officers should remain and hand over their men in an orderly manner and do what they could for their men after being captured. All ranks who wished to escape should endeavour to do so before 0530. Troops who were going to surrender should form up in orderly bodies. I pointed out they would be bombed after dawn. He said this would not happen as he has surrendered.

My final orders to Pnr officers were that as the Brig had surrendered they were to inform their men they were at liberty to escape. I suggested parties of 3 or 4. Officers in charge of Pal Coys said if they stayed with their men they might save them from death or ill treatment but I said that if I thought this likely I would order them to remain and do so myself. They asked what chances of escape. I replied odds against considerable and chance of getting killed in doing so about even but I intended trying to do so myself. I advised escaping parties to push on down coast and look for boats.

In conversation with Brig P I criticised the order that armed troops got away first and unarmed troops and Serbian women left behind. If we had kept 2 Aust battalions behind until last the evacuation could have been protected. He implied that he had instructed armed troops to go first as these were valuable. I pressed for priority for Pal Jews, especially Germans and Austrians in the final embarkation. He was definite that British troops went first.

GREECE

Handwritten notes (Renton?)

8 Mar 41 1006 Coy disembarked

PIRAEUS

9 Mar 41 66 Group landed ATHENS and took over 1006, 1007, 1009 and 606 Coys in ATHENS and 1002 Coy at LAVTSSON?

CO (Courage) appointed OC Troops VOLOS and took his Adjut and QM with him.

Maj Murray assumed temporary command of Group 5 Mar 41

10 Mar 41 1009 Coy – arrived

LARISSA

13 Mar 41 66 Group state 1006

Coy is at VOLOS

15 Mar 41 Group arrived LARISSA 1004 & 1005 Coys – disembark in

ATHENS

16 Mar 41 66 Group and 1006 Coy – arrive VOLOS

1006 Coy unloading at pier

17 Mar 41 1005 Coy – ATHENS

docks

20 Mar 41 1004 Coy to LARISSA – RAF support

21 Mar 41 607 & 608 Coys – landed PIRAEUS

22 Mar 41 Mustano has under command – 1002, 1003, 1004, 1005 & 1009 CypCoys and 602, 603 & 607 Pal Coys

603 & 607 Coys – ordered forward

28 Mar 41 608 Coy – to LARISSA?

With RAF

1003 Coy – on POL

29 Mar 41 1005 and ½ 1002 Coy move forward

607 Coy – to LARISSA? on aerodromes

31 Mar 41 1005 Coy – located

LARISSA

2 Apr 41 Col Courage takes over Group HQ VOLOS area

4 Apr 41 43 Group and 602 Coy – arrive Greece

6 Apr 41 Germany declares war on Greece

8 Apr 41 Australians recalled to LARISSA leaving VOLOS undefended

11 Apr 41 Unloading ships at

VOLOS (66 Group)

13 Apr 41 VOLOS and ALMYRA bombed

1006 Coy – mines dropped in harbour now non-operational

14 Apr 41 Evacuation ordered

15 Apr 41 1004, 1009 & 602 Coys

ordered to THEBES. No transport – must

get out as best they can. News that base

HQ has been evacuated. ADOS thought

that Base has gone taking 1003 Coy with

them. Lorries arrived at 1530 hrs to take

1004 & 1009 Coys to ATHENS.

1630 hrs lorries arrive to move 602 & 1001 Coys. 1630 hrs 66 Group evacuation of VOLOS complete.

1006 Coy – to VOLOS then THEBES

606 Coy – located KOKIMA

16 Apr 41 Group arrived 3 miles

outside THEBES

17 Apr 41 66 Group (Courage)

organised BSA and in contact with 43

Group (Lister) at GRAVIA. Lister requires no

help.

Cypriot coys arrive ATHENS

606 Coy – located PIRAEUS

18 Apr 41 1007 Coy – ordered up

to LAMIA

66 Group – moved from THEBES to

ATHENS

19 Apr 41 Learned that 1007 Coy

should have gone to THEBES and not

LAMINA which was today occupied by the

Germans

20 Apr 41 1009 Coy to THEBES to repair roads for traffic coming down to ATHENS. Bombed and Machine gunned from air en-route. Engine driver stopped train and headed for cover. Cypriots did ditto. Raids continue and OC (Mustaino) had to stand over the driver and order full steam when raid was on. Line blown up 6 kms short of THEBES. Detrained and dispersed each side of THEBES/ATHENS road.

Nothing from 66 Group

21 Apr 41 Nothing from 66 Group 1009 Coy – to THEBES on foot. Battle being fought in LAMINA Pass 30 miles to North. Dispersed coy in small detachments along the roadside for repair work. Later Brig Charrington ordered Coy back to ATHENS for embarkation.

606 Coy – 4 + 120 fully armed left for unknown destination

22 Apr 41 606 Coy (-) & 1008 Coy – Embarked

66 Group moved to NAUPLION to organise evacuation and arrived at 1700 hrs. Group HQ to ARGUS (5 miles distant)

Mustano trying to get his men (1009 Coy) to ATHENS got 9 lorries at midnight.

1006 Coy – embarked ATHENS

23 Apr 41 1009 Coy – arrive ATHENS. Learned that 1005, 1006 & 1008 already embarked (they eventually reached Crete and were taken prisoner) Orders for evacuation issued – each man to have 3

days rations, 12 blanket. 1630 hrs ordered to NAUPLION

66 Group – has 5000 men under command for evacuation

Senior Officers arrived and took over BSA from 66 Group

24 Apr 41 601, 603, 604, 605, 607, 1001, 1002, 1003, 1004, det 1007 & 1009 Coys – arrive NAUPLION. The evacuation is behind schedule as ship has run aground and cannot be re-floated

1006 Coy – detached to KYTHERE

Colonel Courage was a WW1 veteran who had been recalled to serve. He was the heir to Courage breweries and had been captured in October 1914 at Ypres (as a Lt) and was captured in Crete in WW2.

Ed note: after sending a copy of John's reply we received the following from his son:

Norman,

Thank you very much for this. Timing is very good as Sunday is the 12th anniversary of his passing.

It's wonderful to see the stripes and Pioneer Corps badge in colour - I still have the badge and bakelite Pioneer Corps pin from his uniform.

One other bit you might find interesting is that he was in a camp numbered Stalag 383 and there is quite a lot online about it. He was a Scout in Vienna and 383 actually

had a Rover Crew in the camp which he was part of. I never knew this until Scouts Canada set up a display about them at their museum

He kept a low profile at the camp because of his background - so even years later he was hesitant to talk about it

They organized all the camp activities including a fencing team (imagine), Gilbert and Sullivan shows at Christmas, and anything else to keep up morale. Until I learned about this I could never understand why he loved "Hogans Heros" so much.

He told me that he could laugh at it because it was more true than one could imagine.

I recently reached out to Richard Clary, who played "Lebeau" on the series.

He was quite touched that the show was able to bring him some levity after what he went through.

Anyway, on behalf of my entire family, thanks for everything. It is greatly appreciated and just being part of your Facebook group has allowed me to really understand what you folks are all about and why he was so proud of being a part of it.

Best regards, Lawry

PS thanks also for the book - I look forward to the read (Ed note: We sent him a copy of the War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps)

I really wish my Dad were around to read it as well - I am sure he would have enjoyed it immensely. ■



■ Palestinian Pioneers carrying a girder

Picture: RPCA Archive



Rheindahlen Garrison

Ed note: this article was written in 1967, however I thought it might be of interest to the many members who served in Rheindahlen

**Report: Norman Brown
RPCA Archive**

LOCATED 5 miles west of the town of MOENLCHENGLADBACH. The camp was the first military installation to be established in the area since the Romans erected a fortified rest house along a military road during the reign of Caesar Augustus.

It was built for the British Forces by 2,000 German firms, supervised by the Royal Engineers, from blueprints drawn up by the Navy, Army and RAF. Excavation began in 1952 and the services moved in at the end of 1954.

Bulldozers cleared one thousand acres of the Rheindahlen Forrest, and Europe's biggest military establishment rose in 700 days – 3 miles long and 2 wide. It had cost £15,000,000.

The Camp

The camp is virtually a town in itself. The population nowadays (Ed Note 1967) totals about thirteen thousand by day and nine thousand by night, and there are more than two thousand married quarters catering for British, German, Belgians, Dutch, Canadians, Americans and French. There is hostel accommodation for a thousand German civilians, and there are two family hotels for servicemen, a hundred barrack blocks, eight schools, sixteen clubs and messes, three churches, two cinemas, a theatre, an Olympic-standard swimming pool, seventeen football and hockey pitches, twenty-eight tennis courts, four cricket pitches, an Anglo-German shopping centre, a hostel for visitors and a golf course, all this connected and surrounded by about thirty two kilometres of concreted roads.

Unique features among an impressive list of statistics was Europe's first district heating system fed to the main headquarters and buildings by 70 miles of pipes.

Joint Headquarters Building

The first foundation was dug on 9 April 1953 and the foundation stone laid jointly by:

Rear Admiral R St V SHERBROOKE VC CB DSO

General Sir Richard N GALE KCB KBE DSO MC

Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert M FOSTER KCB CBE DFC

On 1 July 1953. It was occupied and Command passed to within its walls on 4 October 1954.

The building which accommodates HQ BAOR, HQ RAF Germany (2 TAF), HQ NORTHAG and HQ 2 ATAF has about two thousand offices. The main corridor is three hundred yards long and there are four others of one hundred yards. The shell alone cost £33,000 and the completed building over £1,000,000.

Introduction

This brief is intended to show how Britain is giving effect to her determination to maintain BAOR as nearly as possible at its ordained strength of 55,000, what plans exist for the reinforcement of BAOR in an emergency, what is being done and has already been achieved in re-equipping and what are the general administrative, or logistic, problems and their remedies.

Manpower

It has been Her Majesty's Government's policy for some time that the strength of BAOR will be 55,000. This figure excludes troops in Berlin. BAOR is below this figure at present due to other world wide commitments. It remains our object to reach a strength of 55,000 as soon as we can, dependant on recruitment and commitments in other overseas theatres.

There are plans, continually revised, to reinforce BAOR with 3 (BR) Division in certain circumstances. Meanwhile the reorganisation of BAOR on to a basis of three divisional HQs and six brigade groups has been carried out to produce a better balanced order of battle.

Reinforcement

On General Mobilisation the strength of BAOR would be more than doubled within a matter of days. Reinforcements would consist of reserve units and individuals sent from Britain. Most of the individual reservists are found from the Regular Reserve and from the Territorial Army.

The plan to reinforce BAOR quickly was tested in 1962 and 1964 and was shown to be soundly based. These tests took the form of two separate exercises:

a. The Command and Staff aspects were tested as part of NATO FALLEX 62 and 64. This was coupled to exercise in the United Kingdom where units in reinforcing the order of battle were mobilised to the stage of movement to the Continent.

b. At the same time selected units in the reinforcing order of battle were mobilised in the United Kingdom and completed the mobilisation process by moving to the continent and drawing their vehicles and equipments.

Apart from these exercises the units in the reinforcing order of battle each year practise part of their mobilisation plan, and also carry out regular training for their BAOR role. In addition, key personnel visit BAOR to discuss the plans for the issue of vehicles and equipment, and their task on mobilisation. Some units actually train in BAOR.

Equipment

A flow of new equipment is now arriving in BAOR. However, it must be remembered that the Army has only a limited amount of money available and it is vital it should not be wasted on equipment that may become outdated before reaching the troops. It is a very difficult decision as to when equipment can be ordered in that the necessity and requirement for the most modern developments must be balanced against the need for getting something into the hands of the troops as soon as possible.

Experience has shown that it takes some time from the conception of a major equipment until it is in use but in this respect we compare favourable with our Allies. However, this is time well spent as what is the use of equipment that has not been rigorously tested to see that it meets Army requirements and will not fail the Army as a critical time? Planning, trials and tests are essential despite the time-lag.

Equipment for the Army is now being modernised in the greatest British military re-equipment programme ever put into effect in peacetime.

It is emphasised that BAOR requires a capability for operations involving immediate use of tactical nuclear weapons in the battle area, and, because the use of such weapons may be inappropriate in certain situations, a conventional capability too. With these factors in mind the equipment being provided is based upon the important factors of dispersion, mobility and protection. The Army's requirements for other roles, beyond BAOR, make it essential that as far as possible equipment must be Airportable.

Infantry

The new 7.62 mm General Purpose

Machine gun is now in service – it should be in full general use in twelve months. (This is replacing the 7.62 mm converted Bren. It is being made by a British firm under licence from Belgium).

Mortars

The new British designed 81 mm mortar – with longer range, greater accuracy and lighter weight, will replace the present three-inch mortar. The new mortar fires ammunition of NATO standard calibre.

Anti-Tank

The new lighter, more mobile “Wombat” long range anti-tank weapon is replacing “Mobat”. The Wombat will be carried initially in a quarter ton Landover and later in an Armoured Personnel Carrier. The Swedish Carl Gustav recoilless Anti-tank weapons is in service here.

Tanks

The Chieftain tank has been accepted for service in the British Army. It has been introduced into BAOR in 1967. Chieftain has already been described as the most powerful and up-to-date tank in the world and as “a world beater”. Its 120mm gun is far more powerful than the 120 mm gun on the existing Conqueror heavy tank. Its fire control system is the cheapest and most fool proof in existence and is in sharp contrast to other complex and extensive systems currently advertised. Chieftain has a multi-fuel engine and is extremely fast across country. It is deliberately squat design which reduces the tank’s target-risk. It is driven from a “bed” rather than a driving seat, the driver lying on his back to operate the tank, with the aid of a periscope.

The main tank in service, the 50 ton Centurion, has been “up-gunned” from 20 in to 105 mm and armour has been increased. Each Armoured Regiment has Tank Dozers and a Bridge-layer as part of their establishment and a certain number of tanks are fitted with Infra-Red night-fighting equipment.

Artillery

The new self-propelled 105 Abbot is shortly to replace the 25 pr. The Abbot fires high explosive, smoke and anti-tank shells to a range comparable with that of many medium guns. It can be made to swim rivers under its own power. It has been officially claimed that no other gun in the world, of this size and weight, can touch it. The American self-propelled 175 mm (M107) guns was introduced into service in BAOR in 1965 as general support artillery.

Armoured Cars

The new armoured personnel carrier, a tracked vehicle, is able to swim. It has ventilation to enable passengers to live in the vehicle for long periods under nuclear warfare conditions, and will be issued widely to give real mobility to Battle Groups. These vehicles are now arriving in BAOR. It is intended primarily for use by Infantry and the Engineers, although some are issued to other arms. It can carry a section of ten infantrymen plus two crew, with personal weapons, ammunition, equipment and rations for several days.

Battle Surveillance Equipment

Green Archer mortar locating radars are

new in service.

Radio

The present equipment is as good in performance as any possessed by any other Army. For the future, however, a completely new system – the HOBART – will be provided. The new system will cut down the size of field headquarters giving greater flexibility, and greater security. It will provide a trunk system of communications similar to GPO telephone service but by using radio relay and computer control.

Engineer Equipment

The German M2 Bridge has been accepted for service and is being provided late 1966. Amphibious, each section of the bridge is an integral part of its carrying vehicle which is driven into the water to form part of the bridge. In addition, sections can be used as Class 60 (tons) FERRY AND RAFT. The Centurion bridge-laying tank has now replaced the Churchill. It is essential that these bridges should be capable of moving with Armoured battle groups. A new assault trackway is being provided this year; it is carried in rolls on special dispensers fitted to normal three ton trucks can be laid very quickly direct from the tracks.

Army Air Corps

The BG11 47G has been selected as the Unit Light Aircraft and will be integrated into many units. As a result of Trials carried out it has been decided that certain major units in the Army are to have their own light aircraft. Issue of aircraft has started and will extend over the next five years. The first integrated flights have formed.

Training and Training Areas

BAOR has obtained more money for adventure training which means that a larger number of men can undertake this type of training. Adventure training assists greatly in bringing out initiative, the qualities of leadership, and is very good for morale.

In order to relieve the congestion in existing training areas, and the monotony of using the same ground year after year, by arrangements with other NATO countries, BAOR is sending a number of units to train outside BAOR and arranging inter-unit training on an exchange basis.

A series of inter-Brigade exercises are planned for the autumn of this year.

Logistic Background

In addition to the substantial peace operating stocks and the repair pool, war reserves of armour, vehicles, ammunition, petrol and supplies and other commodities are held on the Continent in peace. The stocks levels compare favourably with those of other nations.

The equipment, stores and vehicles for most of the units in the reinforcing order of battle, are held in depots in Belgium or in Germany. The vehicles are maintained on the “ever-ready” system which means that they are held at operational readiness. Equipment and stores are held in easy-handled unit racks for rapid issue and loading onto vehicles.

Other units move from the United Kingdom complete with their vehicles and equipment.

Accommodation

The provision of married quarters for all entitled officers and soldiers is making steady progress. By 1 April 1965 approximately 6,800 multiple hirings for soldiers were occupied and by 31 December 1966 it is estimated that a further 3,000 will have been built. This will complete the multiple hiring programme which started in January 1962.

Planning is continuing on the long-term plan for modernising certain barracks, and in addition improvement to other barracks are going forward.

Schools and Naafis

With the increasing number of families in BAOR the demand for school places continues to grow. Long-term plans are going ahead but until these are completed, certain palliative measures have been introduced to cope with the increases in the number of pupils.

The need for increased NAAFI shopping facilities to deal with the extra families has also meant the planning of new shops in some areas and increasing the size of existing shops in many garrisons.

ANGLO GERMAN RELATIONS

Official relations with the German authorities at all levels - Federal Government, Land and Local Government – are excellent, and our requests for facilities of all kinds are met with goodwill and generosity. We naturally recognise that the German authorities are bound to consider the competing requirement of the Bundeswehr as well as of the forces of other sending States, and that in consequence compromises are often necessary. We are also fully alive to the obligation we share with all other forces to take due account of German public and private interests when putting our own requirements forward.

Social relationships are less easy to develop, but with the assistance of the Joint Services Liaison Organisation everything possible is being done to ensure mutual understanding, and to make opportunities for all ranks to meet the German people and enjoy the sporting and social life of the country. We very much appreciated the occasions on which German officials and members of the public take the initiative in furthering these relationships, and would welcome anything the press and do to encourage such initiative.

A scheme to give as many troops as possible a basic knowledge of the German language is now well under way and the most modern methods of language training are being employed.

A factor worth remembering in this context is the presence of some 30 British Regimental Bands in BAOR, including Scottish Pipe Bands. These bands are keen to undertake public engagements and indeed do so on a wide scale both in the Federal Republic and elsewhere in Europe. Such engagements are normally only possible on the basis of paid engagement, plus all expenses for the bands transport, and for their board and lodging where necessary. Applications for the services of a band are best made in the first instance through local British Service Liaison Officers.

The number of British servicemen who

get into trouble is only marginally greater in BAOR than in UK, and is still remarkably low.

Under the Supplementary Agreement which came into force in 1963 we only retain the primary right to trial in cases arising on duty. However, in many of these cases we waive the right to trial, and in other cases with which we wish to deal the German authorities almost invariably waive the right of trial in our favour.

We take care to respect German rights and susceptibilities and to encourage members of the Forces to do the same.

NORTHERN ARMY GROUP BRIEF

1 Belgium Group, 1 British Corps, the 4th Canadian Infantry Brigade, 1 German Corps, and 1 Netherlands Corps, form Northern Army Group. In addition, some further reserve divisions become available after each nation has mobilised. Each nation is constantly improving its equipment to meet the needs of NATO defence strategy. It combines with Central Army Group (CENTAG), to complete the ground forces under the command of Allied Land Forces Central Europe.

NORTHAG's Zone of Responsibility

NORTHAG, with Second Allied Tactical Air Force (2 ATAF), is responsible for the defence of the northern part of the Federal German Republic. Its sphere stretches from the North coast of Germany southwards to where its forces are flanked by those of CENTAG. Mobile forces patrol the frontier between West and East Germany.

Ground

The NORTHAG area extends from the North Sea and Baltic, down through the Great North German Plain, to the Mittelgebirge whose hills are some 2,000 feet in height. Through this territory flows the Rhine River and along its banks cities like Cologne and Düsseldorf have been famous through centuries in the history of Europe. The Rhine Valley shelters factories, chemical and other scientific plant. Further to the East, the river Weser roughly parallels the course of the Rhine. The Ruhr Valley and its iron and steel works, whose output is the foundation of Europe's heavy industry, is compactly situated in the NORTHAG area. Along the North Coast, especially when considered in depth, are harbours and ports through which flow tons of materials to sustain the life and economy of the region.

Defensively, the Rivers Rhine and Weser (running South to North across NORTHAG) are the main natural obstacles to enemy ground forces advancing from the East, until, in the southern part of the Area, relatively low ground features such as Wiehengebirge, the Teutoburger Wald and the Egg-gebirge, are met with in the Mittelgebirge. In the main then, a vital but flat surface with, militarily, hardly a natural obstacle between the Iron Curtain and the Rhine.

Approaches

Over the North German Plain or through the Mittelgebirge are historic East-West invasion routes, and, even today, of primary importance to the enemy would be a drive over the northern plains through the Hamburg-Copenhagen area to obtain control of the Baltic, or towards the

important North Sea ports through the Bremen-Hamburg area. Hamburg is only 40 kilometres, and Bremen 120 kilometres, from Russian positions. Secondly, a thrust in the direction of Hanover and the industrialised western area of Germany, or to the Ruhr area direct – barely 150 kilometres away from the advanced Soviet positions beyond the border at Kassel. Julius Caesar was impressed by the vastness of the North German Plain but for modern mobile fighting forces these distances are short.

Climate

The North German Plain does not often sustain extremes of weather conditions. The climate presents no military problems to movement other than the normal military hazards involved in river crossings. In Winter, the Baltic freezes for some period. The North Sea does not freeze, but the coastal area can be very cold and very wet. Movement is hampered by snow normally only for a short period of the year. Cross-country movement by wheeled vehicles, however, may be considerably affected in winter by the soft, wet and muddy fields of this low-lying country.

The Soviet Threat

The air threat to Central Europe consists of long range bombers, based mainly in Western USSR, and intercontinental ballistic missiles, of Soviet tactical missiles in East Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia. The army is a modern, well-equipped fighting force, maintained at a high state of readiness and may be augmented by divisions of the satellite countries.

NATO's Mission and Strategy

NATO's mission was to prevent War, or, failing this, to defend the NATO's area. To carry out this mission the deterrent strategy was evolved based on two factors. These are firstly, the heavy strategic nuclear striking power possessed by the West which enables the NATO alliance to retaliate immediately with great nuclear power against the aggressor such as to obliterate any hope of gain from aggression; and secondly, the defensive strength of air, ground and naval forces deployed in Western Europe.

Command and Control

The Comd NORTHAG exercises command of NORTHAG through his Headquarters at Rheindahlen. HQ NORTHAG is an international headquarters staffed by officers and men from the nations represented in the Army Group. In peace, the forces assigned to NORTHAG remain under national command but procedures exist for them to be placed under Comd NORTHAG if the situation demands. At Rheindahlen is HQ 2 ATAF, thus a Joint Headquarters is established under one roof.

HQ NORTHAG Tasks

HQ NORTHAG functions primarily as a war planning staff, formulating emergency defence plans to counter surprise attack, and developing operational procedures for War, Communications and transport for the Headquarters are provided by a NATO Signal Regiment and a Transport Company which have on their strength officers and men of the several nations of the Army

Group. Although training is largely a national matter, HQ NORTHAG must organise combined exercises to ensure that its war plans can be smoothly implemented. NATO exercises are held to practice staffs, both NATO and national, and troops on the ground, in the execution of defence plans and operational procedures. Command Post exercises confront Commanders and their staffs with wartime problems and test battle plans. There is a high degree of cooperation with our nations, our corps are well trained, and our plans enable us to be ready at all times to defend our area of responsibility against any form of aggression.

Air Support

2 ATAF's tasks include helping to destroy the enemy's atomic capability and air forces; the air defence of the ATAF area; reconnaissance missions to give information to Commanders on which plans for counter-measures can be made, and to support the Army Commander by this means; support of Land Forces in preventing Europe from being over-run by the enemy, and protection of the offensive striking power in its area.

Nuclear Support

NORTHAG, in the ground role, has its own 8-inch howitzers. Honest Johns (free flight rockets), Corporals and Sergeants (command guided missiles which follow a ballistic trajectory at several times the speed of sound), for allocation to the several Corps as the situation demands.

The Francisca

The Francisca has been chosen as the formation sign of Northern Army Group because it symbolises the victory of an Allied Army in Western Europe against an invader. In AD 451, Attila, at the head of a Mongol army on horseback, which came as raiders over the Hungarian plains and right into France, was eventually defeated at Charlons-sur-Marne by the Roman General Aetius. Aetius was commanding an allied army of Gauls, Visigoths, Burgundians, Franks, Alans, Saxons and Britons. The Franks, armed with their Francisca or throwing axe, played a major part in this battle and ended Attila's attempted conquest of Western Europe.

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE GERMANY (2 TAF) A GENERAL, UNATTRIBUTABLE BRIEF FOR BACKGROUND USE ONLY

Royal Air Force Germany forms one of the major parts of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's Allied Tactical Air Forces. In addition to having national responsibilities for the protection of the West German airspace, it forms, with the Belgian, Royal Netherlands and West German Air Forces, the Second Allied Tactical Air Force, which, with 9th ATAF, composed of the Royal Canadian, French, United States and West German Air Forces, constitutes the air defence of Europe, controlled by Allied Air Forces Central Europe (AIRCENT) which is responsible to SHAPE.

Royal Air Force Germany came into being as the Tactical Air Force, formed under Fighter Command in June 1943, and was composed of Nos 2, 83 and 84 Groups, the two last named comprising ground and flying units working on a mobile base. Their location was constantly changing.



■ Rheindahlen Garrison Guardroom

Picture: RPCA Archive

The Command was retitled Second Tactical Air Force on November 15, 1943 and became part of the giant Allied force formed to liberate Europe. It provided fighter cover and air support from the start of the invasion. In August 1944 No 85 Group came under control of 2nd TAF and in the months that followed, the force's aircraft, notably Spitfires, Mosquitoes, Bostons and Typhoons, operated in close low-level support of the advancing armies and assisted in the dislocation of the enemy's communications.

In April 1945 the headquarters moved on to German soil for the first time to Suchten and later to Bad Eilsen. On July 15, 1945, 2nd TAF became known as the British Forces of Occupation, but reverted to its original title in September 1951. In October 1954, the headquarters moved to Rheindahlen and on January 1st, 1959, the command was renamed Royal Air Force Germany, but it is still often referred to as 2 TAF which it bears as its sub-title.

Today, though Nos 2, 83, 84 and 85 Groups have been disbanded, the tradition of 2nd Tactical Air Force is carried on by squadrons which are amongst the oldest and most famous in the Royal Air Force; Nos 2, 3 and 4 having been in existence for over fifty years.

Since 1957 Royal Air Force Germany's operational capability has changed from a conventional air force to that of a slightly smaller force with a nuclear capacity. Not only do its fighter squadrons make a considerable contribution to the air defence of the area but its striking power has increased tremendously.

Camberra Squadrons

Four stations near the Dutch and Belgian borders – Laarbruch, Bruggen, Wildenrath

and Geilenkirchen – house the Canberra light-bombers and medium range photographic reconnaissance squadrons.

The primary role of the Canberra strike force is to form a part of the NATO deterrent by providing "nuclear teeth" of 2 ATAF. This force helps to sustain NATO's concept of preserving peace by being part of a hard-hitting retaliatory strike force of sufficient strength to deter aggression. Precise navigational aids enables the Canberra's to get to their targets in all weathers at low levels.

The Canberra reconnaissance squadrons provide essential intelligence information for the Army and Air Force Commanders.

If need be, the Canberra force has the ability to operate with conventional weapons in any theatre, and for this reason undertake yearly detachments to Cyprus for training in this role.

The Canberra force also takes part in a considerable number of exercises to all parts of the Middle East which not only exercise the crews in operating from desert airfields, but train ground crews on these stations in servicing Canberra aircraft.

Fighter Role

The main role of the RAF's fighter force in Germany during peacetime is the investigation of unidentified aircraft in the 2 ATAF Area. Naturally "policing" the 30-mile-wide Air Defence Identification Zone which runs from the Baltic to the southern tip of the 4 ATAF Area along the East German and Czechoslovakian borders is a major task. This ADIZ is a buffer between East and West in which Aircraft are normally not allowed to fly, thus minimising the risk of an accidental conflict.

Flight plans of aircraft over flying the northern Germany area are filed with the

Air Traffic Control Centre in Hannover and these are passed to the chain of radar stations. Thus when an unidentified aircraft appears on the radar screen the Control and Reporting organisation reacts and the fighters investigate.

Throughout the 24 hours the all-weather Javelins maintain a constant state of readiness. These aircraft are being replaced with the supersonic all-weather interceptor, the Lightning, designed to provide a much improved reaction to ADIZ violations.

Close Support

The Hunter FRIIO squadrons based at Gutersloh supplement the longer range Canberra recon force providing the much sought after photographic and visual intelligence from the battle area.

Working with each Squadron is a Mobile Field Photographic Unit whose speed in developing and printing the reconnaissance pictures plays an important part in successful operations. Team-work matters, and practice has brought the pilots and the photographers to a very high state of efficiency.

Also based at Gutersloh is a squadron of Wessex Mk 2 helicopters, part of the short-range, transport force operating in the Army co-operation role. It delivers assault troops and urgent logistic support to the forward areas.

RAF in Berlin

No description of RAF activities in Germany would be complete without a reference to Berlin, where it maintains the Airfield at Gatow and has a representative at the Air Safety Centre, the only surviving part of four-power organisation. This Centre controls all air movements in the Berlin area and shares in the responsibility for three air



■ Visit of Brig Walker to Rheindahlen Garrison 1971

Picture: RPCA Archive

corridors leading to Berlin from the West. All movements in the northern and central corridors are handled by the RAF and those in the southern one by the USAF. The BASC itself, however, does not control aircraft in the corridors, that is done by Templehof, the centre acts as a clearing-house for information on movements. There are about 100 scheduled services daily into and out of Berlin, and the British controller at the centre handles up to 80 movements a day.

Winter Survival

The RAF Germany Winter Survival School operates at Bad Kohgrub in Bavaria, for three months each winter.

Here airmen are taught to survive and make their way to safety in case they should force-land in hostile territory.

They are taught to combat the elements using only limited materials at their disposal. Lectures and film demonstrate correct procedures. Then they have to put into practice what they have learned. Emergency landings are simulated in the isolated snow-covered mountains. In teams of four they have to make their way, often in waist-deep snow, to rendezvous 10 miles away, through a ring of searching German Para troops from a nearby training school.

For four days and nights they have to live with the minimum of food and shelter. Living quarters must be built from trees and brush. One parachute and a small amount of tinned food is allowed per team.

During the four days the RAF men undertake tough physical exercise and are taught the hazards of forest and mountains. They receive valuable instruction in trapping and snaring to supplement their rations.

Expedition Training

Royal Air Force Germany's expedition

training scheme is probably the most ambitious of any of the RAF Commands at home or overseas. This scheme is designed to bring out in both air and ground crews' self-reliance and confidence. They use their initiative in planning excursions which have included canoeing the whole length of the Rhine, trekking in Lapland and Austria, skin-diving in Southern France and Spain, and sailing at Kiel. All the expeditions have been of a vigorous and testing nature. The men come back from such ventures fit and well, confident in their ability to look after themselves, their morale high.

THE SECOND ALLIED TACTICAL AIR FORCE A GENERAL, UNATTRIBUTABLE BRIEF FOR BACKGROUND USE ONLY

NATO as a North Atlantic defence organisation was created on April 4, 1949. The first military NATO headquarters, which is known under the name of SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe) was formed on April 1, 1951. The first Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, was General Eisenhower.

The order for the formation of the 2nd Allied Tactical Air Force bears the date of April 2, 1952. This order was issued to Royal Air Force (Germany) which had its headquarters at Bad Eilsen at the time.

On the same date the headquarters of the combined forces in central Europe (AFCENT) with its sub-divisions, Aircent, Landcent, and Navcent, were also formed and the NATO command structure was thus made operational.

The first air forces of 2 ATAF in 1952 consisted of 2 Tactical Air Force, Royal Air Force (2 TAF (RAF) in the British Zone of Germany, two Netherlands Squadrons at Eindhoven, and three Belgian squadrons at Beauvechain.

With the giving of the order for the formation of 2 ATAF a clear directive was issued to establish an international staff with personnel from the Air Forces concerned (Great Britain, the Netherlands and Belgium) which would be able to operate entirely independently of national restrictions. In the beginning the formation of such an integrated staff met with considerable personnel problems. Belgium and the Netherlands in particular had to build up their own national air forces and thus could not detach the required number of men to fill the vacancies in the establishment of 2 ATAF. Consequently, the already existing staff of 2 TAF (RAF) had to fulfil the function of NATO until, in the years following, the number of integrated Netherlands and Belgian airmen could be increased. This target was reached in 1956.

In 1957-58 the formation of the first German Air Force units had progressed to such an extent that German officers could also be included in the staff of 2 ATAF. The ratio of the establishment provided for 25% Belgian, 25% Netherlands, 30% British, and 20% German officers. This distribution of strength was granted by the leading NATO authorities with effect from 1 January 1959.

When the occupational forces were transformed into sending States forces their operational tasks changed, too. Their defence mission entailed the necessity to move the staffs to strategically more favourable areas. For this reason the new headquarters at Rheindahlen near Moenchengladbach was built.

In October, 1954 the staff of 2 ATAF was moved from Bad Eilsen into the new headquarters building at Rheindahlen which is also the headquarters of Northern Army Group, the British Army of the Rhine, and RAF Germany.

2 ATAF is a tactical, not a strategical, air force which together with Northern Army Group is intended – within the framework of NATO – to deter any possible enemy. For this purpose, 2 ATAF possesses an effective early warning system which is part of the radar installations extending from the extreme north of Norway down to Turkey

Anti-aircraft missile batteries of the Netherlands, Belgian and German forces form a barrier against low and high-flying enemy aircraft. All-weather and daylight fighter squadrons of Britons, Dutch, Belgians, Americans and Germans strengthen the air defence system of 2 ATAF

One task of maintaining a deterrent is the continuous readiness for action of the air assault forces and the reconnaissance formations. The readiness for action is effected by the co-ordination of all forces which include not only the early warning system, air defence and air assault forces, but also a flexibility of planning, organisation, communications and supplies.

BUS SCRIPT FOR TOUR OF RHEINDAHLEN

(Before moving off)

Ladies, in a very quick tour we propose to give you a tour of Rheindahlen Garrison and Station. This whole complex was planned, cleared of forest, build and landscaped in two and a half years 1952-54. We would be only too pleased to stop and let you wander around the facilities but time does not allow this.

(Move off)

On your left is the building housing the major Headquarters and on your right you can get a good view of the spaciousness of the area and the standard to which it is maintained.

(Arrive Traffic Lights)

On your left is the larger of our two Forces Post Offices. As we drive along you see on your left soldiers and airmen's married quarters and on the right some of our six primary schools with a total enrolment of about 1,200 children.

These schools meet the needs of those who live within our Garrison perimeter and also those living in certain of the detached housing areas. There is a domestic bus service to deal with the movement of children who live a greater distance than 1,000 metres from their respective schools. The school curriculum follows exactly that of similar institutions in the United Kingdom. The schools are well provided and there are adequate recreational facilities close to them.

(Essex Drive)

This road is occupied by officers and round the corner we shall pass on the right the Officers Families Hostel which provides accommodation for those moving into the Garrison when Married Quarters are not immediately available.

There is a similar hostel for soldiers and airmen's families. The next building is the JHQ NAAFI which is the largest in the British Services and caters for everything from baby food to Mercedes cars.

It is run on a supermarket basis and families who live outside the immediate area are entitled to transport to do their weekly shopping.

As we move along, you can see that there is a very thriving German shopping precinct where much shopping is done

during the course of the year. The developer and proprietor of this site is Firma Paul Hammer of Hamburg and we have no direct control over this concern. In addition, in the centre of the Garrison there are canteens operated by YWCA and the Malcolm Club. The building on the right is our Medical Reception Station and Dental Centre dealing with the Army element and its families. There is a similar establishment operating under RAF command elsewhere in the town; the two together deal with the whole population. The building on your right is our local Education Centre where our soldiers improve their general education as part of the requirement for further promotion and where there are a variety of academic and craft courses available to servicemen and to their dependants. There is a well equipped language laboratory and we run a series of course in German and other languages. The Royal Air Force has a similar organisation and we share facilities where appropriate.

The next point of interest we pass is St Boniface Church of England Church. There are two other Churches, one dealing with the Roman Catholic congregation, the other with the Church of Scotland, Methodists, Baptists, and others.

We now propose a short tour of the camp, perhaps best described as a general viewing and you will see that we have our domestic housing development away from the centre of the main camp but within respectable walking distance of the shopping centre.

The central area is our Army playing field complex, pitches for rugby football, cricket, soccer and hockey. As we turn at the swimming pool of the left you will see a series of domestic messes which provide for the single or unaccompanied element amongst our servicemen and civilians of officer status.

These messes are small in size, each one being capable of dealing with accommodation and daily requirements of some 50 persons.

We are now abreast the swimming pool and I am sure that you will see it is a splendid facility for all who live here and for our locally employed labour and their dependants. It is of Olympic proportions and is a very well used facility.

As we turn right you will see our Fire Station and some of our tennis courts which are used by all. On the left is one of our two cinemas. As we turn the corner we pass the living accommodation of senior WRAC personnel. On your right is one of the junior soldiers' clubs which is heavily patronised by married and single soldiers and their wives and girl friends and by the WRAC. The club is operated by NAAFI but the users have their own committee which enforces rules.

(Buses drive slowly past Boiler House, Queen's School and Waterworks)

We now propose to drive round the perimeter. As we travel along I will draw your attention to one of our boiler houses which provides the domestic hot water and central heating for our town. There are a total of three and in a 12-month period they consume almost nine million litres of fuel. Close to the boiler house is our municipal engineer's office and workshops and incidentally there are other buildings behind and to the right where our Boy

Scouts and Girl Guides have their meeting place and HQ.

We are now almost abreast Queen's School. This is a secondary school (for children 11 – 18 years) with an enrolment of approximately 1,000. As you can see, much new work is in progress. The new project, to be completed by late '77, will improve facilities overall but most important, will centralise the whole of the student body in this one location. At present the school has three other smaller units dotted around the garrison and so there is much wasted time in staff and student movement. The cost of the new works was estimated at 12 million marks. The school has active liaison with similar schools in Moenchengladbach. The playing fields to your left support the schools as well as the servicemen.

The Water Works I believe may be of interest. We are self-sufficient in this commodity and the output of our station is between 2-3,000 cubic metres a day. We are drawing the water from 5 relatively shallow bores from the woods behind.

(Turn into Queen's Avenue)

As we turn into Queen's Avenue some of the buildings in this area are made available to our locally enlisted labour who have distant homes. Several people have been living here for as long as 20 years. There are canteen and welfare facilities available and you will notice the Oase Restaurant, which does a very brisk trade.

We are now travelling on the main road through the camp and are passing through the RAF Station facilities and where there is also accommodation of the Women's Royal Air Force. As you can see in addition the gymnasium and playing fields all improve the overall value of the complex.

(Turn right at Astra)

We pass on the right one of the other cinemas and on the left the JHQ Police Station. Here "Joint" relates to an integration between British, German and Dutch Police and we have a very effective relationship with the German Civil Police. You will of course appreciate that all roads in the area are completely open to German and other traffic. Straight ahead are two boarding houses for children from another large comprehensive school about 8 kms away.

(Turn left past 'F' Mess)

We will circle the main Army Sports grounds. On your right opposite the pavilion is one of the five military and four civilian officers' messes for single and unaccompanied personnel.

All the houses on the right are officers married quarters. You will notice that the sports pitches are marked out for cricket – a game which we are introducing to Moenchengladbach.

We now come back to the area of the central shopping centre and across the island we once more pass the medical and dental centre with JHQ immediately in front of you.

Our tour is almost complete and there is much that we have not shown you but I hope you will have gained some idea of this complex and the facilities available here in Rheindahlen to support the four principle Headquarters and other units.

(At Post Office)

Unfortunately we must now separate and I thank you for your attention. ■



Yardley Chase

The Yardley Chase Ordnance Explosives Stores Depot (OESD) was constructed by McAlpine Ltd in 1942 to store bombs & other pyrotechnics and some 36 bunkers in two distinct groups were built together with associated railway lines.

Report: Norman Brown
RPCA Archive

THE bunkers measure around 12 metres (39 ft) long, and about 6-8m (20-25 feet) wide and have rail/vehicle access. Some have loading beams adjacent for bomb transfer. Inside some wartime evidence remains such as coat hooks mounted on wooden battens. On the battens are engraved many soldiers names mainly from 1944.

The eastern munitions site is larger than its western neighbour and the bomb storage buildings, in addition to being less numerous, are also mostly surrounded by water-filled moats.

The storage buildings at the western site are surrounded by earth banks, both measures were to attenuate blast in the event of an accident.

The eastern and western sites were connected by a rail track as was each bunker (see map with routes). Three diesel shunters were purchased for use on the site which closed for depot purposes in late 1979/early 1980.

As well as storing bombs and other explosives it may well have housed chemical weapons. It's exact contents may never be known.

There is some debate as to whether Yardley was ever used to manufacture, rather than store, weapons.

We are grateful to Mr Dave Thacker for his input on this point, but our research indicates that the unbuilt Royal Ordnance Factory 20 was planned to be constructed in Kings Heath and was not connected to Yardley which itself was designated a OESD.

Equally the Royal Ordnance Depot at Weedon was principally used for small arms and shell storage rather than manufacture of the same.

There does not appear to be any evidence of filling factory buildings etc which would be required to undertake manufacture either.

A Sywell link is that the relief landing ground for the Aerodrome is located south of Denton about a mile away from the Yardley Chase site.

The depot was served by a branch off the Northampton-Bedford railway with the junction at the former Piddington Station and evidence of the route is still visible.

Yardley was also reasonably close to the former Quebec (later Simpson) Barracks at Wootton to which the Northamptonshire Regiment moved in 1939 having outgrown Gibraltar Barracks on the Barrack Road in Northampton (the original building is now owned by a Housing Association). Simpson

Barracks remained the home of the Northampton until 1960 when the regiment was amalgamated. The Pioneer Corps then moved in and the Barracks closed in 1993 when the site became used for housing.

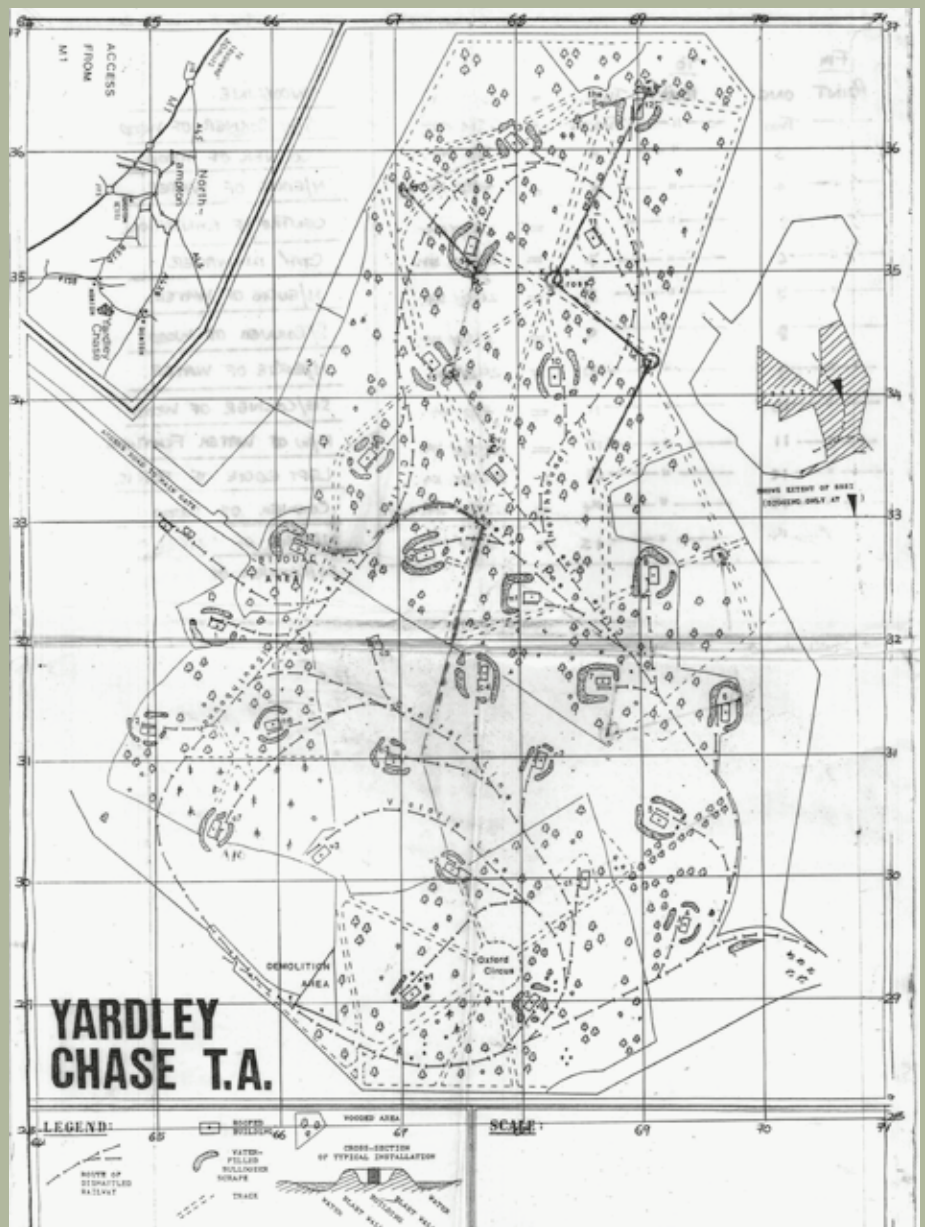
The site covers around 600 acres and was originally part of The Earl of Northampton's estate of Castle Ashby and was due to be returned to the estate after remedial work to return it to its previous state.

The cost of removing the bunkers was sufficiently high that it was cheaper for the MOD to retain it.

In 2014 the site was redeveloped as a Cadet Training Ground and is now a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

We wonder how many people drive along the A428 unaware of its existence! ■

Ed note: The RPC Training Centre took over the site as a training area in 1980 and in 1981 it was designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Because of its use, no chemicals had been sprayed on the site which has ensured a wide variety of different insects including a very rare moth which is only found at this location in UK.



Herosim in France

Three men of the Auxiliary Pioneer Corps, among the last batch of the British Expeditionary Force to leave France, owe their lives to the bravery of a Sergeant whose home town is Haywards Heath.

Report: Norman Brown
RPCA Archive

MANY brave deeds on the battlefield are never heard of again, and it was only by chance that a journalist was able to hear a story of heroism that might otherwise have been forgotten, except by those who witnessed the courage of a British soldier in the face of great danger.

It appears that Sergeant Ralph Tracey, of Haywards Heath, was in Northern France when the BEF had orders to evacuate. Trains bought the men to Rennes, and, in addition, there was a considerable quantity of ammunition.

Suddenly out of the sky came two German dive-bombers. In a flash they unleashed their bombs, and the men had to dash for cover.

During this bombing attack Sergeant Tracey had the misfortune to have his left hand shattered.

Remembering that there were three helpless wounded comrades still in the train, and noticing that the bombers were concentrating on the ammunition vans, the Sergeant – wholly regardless of self – managed to crawl to the compartment and pull his comrades one by one, to safety.

Covered with blood, gradually losing strength and having only the use of his right arm, Sergeant Tracey had got the last man away when there was a terrific explosion. The ammunition train had been hit by a bomb!

But for Sergeant Tracey's timely rescue three men would have been killed as the vans and train were smashed.

Some of the men of the Pioneer Corps who witnessed this daring rescue described Sergeant Tracey's action as the bravest they had seen.

When interviewed by a reporter at a West Wales hospital, Sergeant Tracey was reading a thriller!

He was loath to talk about what happened at Rennes, but admitted his unit was in "a bit of a jam." "Jerry," he said, "came down to within twenty feet, and let us have it.

Not content with dropping his bombs, he made full use of his machine guns, and the French and ourselves suffered casualties.

My arm was amputated and dressed at the casualty station, but some time elapsed before we left the shores of France for England.

A married man with five children, Sgt Tracey served throughout the Great War without getting a scratch.

Afterwards he spent sixteen years in the Regular Army, and when he was broke out again volunteered. "I am sorry I shall not be

able to see this war through," he laughingly declared to the reporter, "but we will get them yet!" And that was the feeling of the other soldiers who, like Sergeant Tracey, had sustained wounds but were in high spirits and warm in their praise of the hospitality shown them by the hospital staff and the people outside.

"They cannot do enough for us," was Sergeant Tracey's comment. He does not know the whereabouts of the men he saved, beyond that they left France.

Sergeant Tracey is the elder son of Mr Ralph Tracey, of Kent's Road, Haywards Heath.

On leaving school he joined the Merchant Service, and went round the world three times. He left the sea for the Army and spent seven years in the Royal Army Veterinary Corps.

On returning to civil life he became a window cleaner.

When war broke out he immediately volunteered and was placed in the Pioneer Corps. He is in his 39th year. His brother, George, who is 29, is in the Royal Navy.

He was married to a Portsmouth girl some seven weeks ago, and last weekend, with his wife, visited his parents at Haywards Heath. It was a joyous reunion.

Ed note: Sgt Tracey initially enlisted into the Royal Sussex Regt and was transferred to the AMPC.

He joined 1 Centre Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps on 2 Nov 39 – he was medically discharged on 18 Sep 40.

His service number was 6393890 and his date of birth was 5 Aug 01. ■



D-Day Russian help

Due to the heroism of one Russian Major during D-Day, the lives of many British soldiers were saved. The Association historian, Lt Col JA Starling, has confirmed that Charlie Georgiy and Maj G Tchapline were the same person.

Report: Norman Brown / John Starling
RPCA Archive

THE Soviet troops were, of course, not involved in the actual invasion of Normandy on 6 June 1944. However, Russians were among the ranks of the Allied soldiers during this famous battle and one of them even became a hero of this operation.

His name was Georgiy Chaplin, a Russian émigré, who served as a Major in the British army.

A namesake of the famous Hollywood actor Charlie Georgiy tied his life with Great Britain long before he immigrated to the United Kingdom. During World War 1 he, a Russian naval officer, was sent to serve on the E-1 submarine of the Royal Navy, which arrived in the Baltic Sea to fight for the Russians.

After the Bolshevik Revolution, the Russian army, as Chaplin wrote in his memoirs called, *Two Coups in the North*, turned into "a mass of unbridled filthy comrades' and the navy, although without losing any numbers, ceased to exist as a combat force".

He appealed to the United Kingdom's naval warfare force for a vacant place among its ranks, and got such

In August 1081, Georgiy Chaplin was sent to the main Russian northern city of Arkhangelsk to organise an anti-Bolshevik coup and prepare the city for the arrival of Allied forces.

After it was done, he occupied different commanding posts there, but when the White cause in the Russian North was lost, he emigrated to London.

In 1939 he continued his military career by joining the Pioneer Corps used both for combat and light engineering tasks. As a Major, he commanded the 120th Company, which constructed fortifications on the Shetland Islands after participating in the Norwegian campaign of 1940.

However, his finest hour happened on 6 June 1944. His Company landed on Jig beach, within the Gold sector, but was soon cut from the main forces.

Demonstrating outstanding courage, he bravely led his soldiers on a breakthrough, thanks to which they not only reached their brothers-in-arms but also completely crushed the German unit that stood in their path. For this act he was awarded the Order of the British Empire.

After the war, promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel he was an instructor at the RPC Depot, but sadly not for long. He died of an angina attack in 1950 at the age

of 63.

The following is an extract from "The War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps 1939-1946" by Maj HR Rhodes-Wood:

Notable amongst the units to land was 120 Company Pioneer Corps commanded by one of the most colourful personalities to serve in the Corps, Major G. Tchapline, DSO, DSC.

Born in Russia he had held a commission in the Russian Imperial Navy in which he won several high military decorations and commanded a destroyer squadron. Following the Bolshevik rising in 1917 he had held the post of Commander-in-Chief of White Russian Forces in Northern Russia and received his DSO for bravery in action whilst serving with the British Expeditionary Force at Archangel.

Joining the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps in the early months of the Second World War he had commanded 120 Company since its formation in July 1940.

It was typical of him that less than six hours after landing in Normandy he, with two of his officers, Lieutenants R M Allen and K H O'Malley, and sixteen men, was in action outside Ouistreham against an outpost of German Marines and brought back sixty-nine enemy prisoners without losing one of his own men. ■



Leicester City in WW2

On 29 June, 1942, the directors of Leicester City Football Club met at a hastily convened meeting. In attendance were the Chairman Alf Pallett, Len Shipman, William Wileman, Thomas Bloor and Sidney Needham. Tom Bromilow, the manager, was also present.

Report: Leicester City FC

THE meeting had been called because, earlier that day, the Main Stand at Filbert Street, already bomb damaged by the Luftwaffe in 1940, had caught fire and had suffered considerable additional damage.

Earlier in the war, part of the Main Stand had been requisitioned by the British Army's Pioneer Corps, whose function was, among other things, to perform light engineering tasks.

The Corps was using an area at the Double Decker end of the Main Stand as a disinfecting station and it was here that the fire started.

From this point, it spread across the stand towards Filbert Street, destroying in its progress the changing rooms, the referee's room and the trainer's room, which contained all of the Club's playing kit.

It also ruined the gymnasium, which was being used as a storage space by a local firm based in Kibworth. Most of the upper deck seating was damaged to the point over the changing rooms.

In addition, the ladies' room, boardroom and offices were badly damaged by water. The hastily convened meeting on that Monday evening in June 1942 covered a lot of ground.

It was decided that all of the financial records which, for some reason had been stored in the kitchen, were to be transferred to the secretary's office and other important papers were to be suitably packed and deposited in 'some approved place of safety.'

The Chairman, Pallett, reported that the Pioneer Corps Officer in charge had been instructed to ensure the safety of their area in order to minimise the risk of trespassing and pilfering.

The city surveyor was to be contacted to examine the damaged stand in order to determine any portion likely to be unsafe.

The destroyed kit was also discussed. This was a problem due to wartime shortages and rationing. The Chairman promised to contact the Board of Trade with a view to obtaining clothing coupons to replace the kit.

Bromilow, the manager, agreed to contact the military to see if they could help

out with kit and he was also tasked with obtaining balls and boots to enable training to be resumed.

Another director promised to contact the FA and the Football League to see if they could help. Finally, the Chairman pledged to make enquiries to determine what initial repairs were needed to enable the Club to carry on.

During the following week, the city surveyor, from a safety point of view, raised no objection to the old dressing room and

were informed that the building license had been received, and that arrangements were in progress for obtaining the necessary material to make replacement shorts (referred to as knickers) and for receiving replacement balls, boots and pumps.

A month later, despite the massive damage to the ground, the new 1942/43 season kicked off with a home match against Birmingham City in the newly reorganised War Time Football League North.

Played against the backdrop of the burnt out stand, Leicester City, with wartime stalwarts Sep Smith, Billy Frame, Bert Howe and Danny Liddle in the side, lost 1-0 in front of a crowd of 4,000. Despite the result, staging the match was a real achievement.

Three months into the season, in November 1942, the directors' minutes recorded that the

insurance company had advanced £300 for the loss of kit and equipment, of which £285 had been spent.

The minutes also stated that this was a better deal than the insurance settlement for the kit and equipment lost in the bomb damage to the Main Stand in November 1940.

That claim was settled at £117.

This was 15 per cent less than the original claim due to depreciation and it wouldn't be paid until after the war.

By the end of the year, a special 'Stand Reconstruction Account' was set up. The proceeds of any fire and war damage claims were to be paid into this.

Repairs to the ground were still a long way off being completed, but at least the immediate problems caused by the fire had been effectively dealt with, enabling Leicester City to continue playing. ■



the ladies' room being used in place of the destroyed rooms.

He also identified which areas of the damaged stand were unsafe and served notice that they would require dismantling.

The decision was taken that the steel work of the damaged portion should not be allowed to be requisitioned at scrap price and that the original cost should be claimed.

The Club was also informed that a building license was necessary before any repairs or rebuilding could be undertaken.

Also in the first week after the fire, the Board of Trade responded to the kit replacement request by asking for a detailed list of the lost kit for their consideration.

By the end of July 1942, the directors



Pioneer Special Ops

A WW2 Yugoslavia SOE Military Medal Group of six medals to Captain A Simitch, Special Operations Executive attached to the Pioneers sold for £20,400 on 13 Nov 19

Report: Norman Brown / John Starling
RPCA Archive

THE award of Military Medal was published in the London Gazette on 24 Aug 43 – Immediate Award. In Apr 43 it was believed that a most important resistance group existed in a certain area in Yugoslavia, but this group was in action against German forces and was being forced to move several miles daily, so that its exact location was not known.

It was decided that it would be most advantageous to send in a small liaison reconnaissance party to determine whether it would be practicable to send in a British mission.

Cpl Simitch volunteered to go as leader and wireless operator to the party being sent in, which was to consist of two natives of the country and himself. Late in Apr, they were parachuted in “blind”.

It transpired that they did not drop amongst the resistance group but amongst light enemy forces. They immediately had to abandon any idea of collecting most of their equipment, but managed, fortunately, to recover their wireless set, charging engine and certain necessary articles. They had to lay up during the day for three or four days and move by night only, relying solely upon information given them by local inhabitants. Within a week they managed to reach the resistance group to whom they were intended to go, and straight away opened up wireless contact with Cairo. The result of this fine effort has been that a British Mission, including Sappers, had been accepted and successfully dropped to this resistance group and useful sabotage against railway communications has been carried out.

It was entirely due to the leadership of Cpl Simitch and his determination, also the operation of his wireless set that success was achieved.

Included with his medals were a campaign medal box, addressed to him as Captain AS Stevens MM of 48 Chichele Road, Cricklewood, London NW2, 10 assorted maps covering Yugoslavia, Italy and Germany. A letter from the War Office dated 22 Jul 46 relinquishing his commission and giving him the honorary rank of Captain in the General List. A letter from the War Office dated 13 Mar 47 confirming that his name change from Alexander Simitch to Alexander Simitch Stevens had been noted and confirmed the return of the Deed Poll. A letter dated 1 Mar 49 noting his willingness to join the Intelligence Reserve. A newspaper cutting from the Kilburn Times of 10 Sep 43 confirming his award of a Military Medal even stating he went abroad in Nov 42 and was serving with the Intelligence Corps.

Two photographs of him in uniform with British and Yugoslav Officers on National Day in 1945. Together with copies of the London Gazette entry and citation and several modern reproduced photographs.

Captain Alexander Simitch Stevens was born in London on 8 Jul 1916 his father was Svetislav Simitch and his mother was Grace Simitch nee Stevens. He was educated at the Brompton Oratory in London. He left London aged 16 in Dec 1932 for Belgrade via Vichy and Nice with his paternal Aunt to visit his Father's family. Whilst in Belgrade he worked as a journalist under the tutelage of Terence Atherton who was Belgrade Correspondent of the Daily Mail and Sunday Despatch. Simitch was appointed Belgrade Correspondent of the Evening Standard and the Star, he later became assistant editor of the two papers travelling extensively throughout Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Romania.

He returned to England in Jul 1937 and then worked for almost three years as a staff reporter for the Sunday Despatch as well as working on a freelance basis.

He enlisted in Apr 1940 and was transferred to the Intelligence Corps in late 1941 and after training was posted to a “Field Security Wing” where he volunteered to be parachuted into Yugoslavia to make contact with the Chetnik leader- General Mihajlovic the leader of the supposed resistance forces.

He carried out training at various SOE establishments in England and Scotland including Fort William, he was one of a group that sailed from Liverpool in October 1942 aboard the “Themistocles” for West Africa, then overland to Cairo to prepare for his mission in Yugoslavia.

During the voyage to West Africa he met a number of Yugoslav émigrés who had fought in the International Brigade in Spain and was advised that Mihajlovic and the Cetniks were fighting alongside not against the German and Italian Occupation forces and that they (the émigrés) were planning to establish covert contact with the Communist inspired “Partisan” forces led by Tito, rather than Mihajlovic.

His transfer to Cairo was delayed by an extensive bout of Malaria, which he always considered a blessing in disguise as it in all probability this prevented him being sent to the Cetniks rather than the Partisans. Eventually arriving in Cairo (SOE/MO4) in the early spring of 1943 he refused to be sent to the Cetniks and expecting to be Court Martialled was pleased to be told that “Our plans have changed, we want you to go to Tito and the Partisans”.

Assigned to the Fungus Mission as the SOE liaison officer with two Croatian Canadian émigrés, Pavle Pavlic and Petar Erdeljac (who both became Lieutenant Colonels in the Yugoslav National Army),

the team was dropped “blind” in mid Croatia from a Liberator out of Derna.

Plans by SOE/MO4 officers (in favour of the mission) for Simitch-Stevens to be awarded a Commission to add gravitas to the mission (his compatriots were then already over the age of forty and known members of the Communist party), were thwarted at the last moment by Colonel Taplin, who asked “what do you want to go to these bloody reds for?” and so the first member of the British Armed Forces to establish contact with the Partisan Forces was a non commissioned Staff Sergeant. This fact did not go unnoticed by the Partisan officials that subsequently interrogated him; as it was initially seen as indicative of the lack of British interest and respect for their cause.

Fortunate to establish early contact with Partisan Detachments, the mission was taken first to the local divisional HQ at Brinje and then on by captured staff cars to the Partisans’ Croatian GCHQ where the local commander recognised Petar Erdeljac as a fellow fighter with the International Brigade in Spain, which helped lift much of the suspicion at the arrival of the Mission. Simitch was held incommunicado for over a week and interrogated exhaustively by the political Commissar Dr Vladimir Bakaric, who later became President of the Federal Republic of Croatia.

The importance of the “Fungus” mission has been much overlooked. It paved the way for all future missions to the Partisans (including the later missions, after Italy's collapse) by Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean and also Randolph Churchill, on his father's behalf as a personal emissary of Tito.

In the summer of 1943 Simitch was reassigned to the Slovenian GCHQ, with instructions to blow up a strategic three part road and rail bridge at Zidani Most, which carried much of the German troop and material movements from Austria to Hungary and Yugoslavia. His intended role was that of chief sapper, being lowered by rope to drill and place plastic explosives on the structure of the bridge, whilst a division of Partisan troops cleared the defending forces. Fortune once again smiled on him, the mission was called off. He remained in Slovenia for another 12 months until Jul 1944, before being taken out to Bari after 16 months continuous service in the field to find that he had been commissioned in Dec 1943.

He then spent some months with the “Rover Paddy” air strike liaison forces on the east coast of Italy, before returning to Yugoslavia for the landings on Pag and Vis as British Liaison Officer with the Yugoslav National Army as it raced north from Zadar to Trieste.

Arriving in Trieste with the Yugoslav National Army before the New Zealand

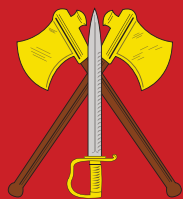
divisions under Brigadier Gentry of the Eighth Army, he accompanied Colonel Bencic of the YNA to Trieste Castle to negotiate the surrender of the Waffen SS Division ensconced in the Castle. He recalled the meeting with the German commandant as being very tense, the Waffen SS did not want to surrender to the Partisans (YNA) out of a mixture of pride at being defeated by "Bandits" and with much fear at the possibility of reprisals after years of butcher hook and wire rope hangings of the Yugoslav peoples. Simitch would recall with wry humour his trepidation at walking up the hill and then walking away with his back to " a very grim and hairy arsed bunch

of Waffen troops" after the initial negotiations had ended inconclusively. The YNA eventually took the formal surrender of the German forces.

He remained in the Trieste sector as Officer Commanding 13 Corps Liaison detachment with the YNA under Colonel Bencic at "Opatija Selo" near the now border town of Gorizia between Slovenia and Italy until May 1946.

He was extensively involved in the post war negotiations over the "Blue Line" disputes for Trieste and the Venezia Giulia sectors.

Captain Simitch died on the 28th February 1995. ■



Association Shop



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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!

Long Lost Trails...

The following are trying to re-establish contact... can you help?

RHINE SECTION

Ex Cpl D Jones (24265645) is trying to contact personnel who passed out of training with him Rhine Section (pass out date Jul 72). The full list of Rhine Section is as follows: Ptes Thomas, Hollingworth 641, Clark, Hollingworth 647, Carr, Jones 811, Ireland, Bonner, Christie, Devonport, Maclean, Morrison, Dean, Willmore, Hunt, Kewley, Pratten, Barrett, White, Shaw, Hardy, Ledden, Ross, Lawrence, Sgt Salmon, Cpl Sheehy, Ptes Hutcheson, Gould (Best PT), Jones 645 (Best recruit) Millisp (Best shot) Contact: taffyjones68@gmail.com

13015608 JOHN ROWNTREE

Heidi Geertsen writes: I am a member of the Dutch workgroup Overloon War Cemetery, that is trying to find relatives and or more information and photo's of the 281 killed soldiers, buried on our CWGC cemetery in

Overloon, the Netherlands. Overloon, well known for its war museum and heavy battle in October 1944. I am trying to find more information on 13015608 John Rowntree who died on 18 Apr 45. His parents were John Robert and Elizabeth Rowntree and his wife was Nellie Rowntree all from Bradford. Contact: heidi.geertsen@gmail.com

SGT JOHN MILCHIP

Stephen Molloy writes: Please could you help me locate an old friend and my Sgt in Soltau Germany where we were both part of the 7th Armoured Brigade, his name was John Milchip. Contact: stephen.molloy@hotmail.co.uk

CAN YOU NAME THE OTHERS?

The photo on the right photo shows Col Pat O'Connell as a young Sergeant, can anyone name the others in the photo. Contact: Email us at the RPC Association.

TRYING TO FIND A LOST PIONEER? THAN SEND US THE DETAILS AND WE WILL PUBLISH THEM HERE...





CAD Kineton

A brief account of the Development of the Central Ammunition Depot at Kineton, in the County of Warwickshire. 1942 – 1992. Foreword by Commandant Colonel H G Heap OBE

Report: Norman Brown
RPCA Archive

ON 8th October 1942, a steam powered locomotive arrived at Central Ammunition Depot Kineton. This pulled 2 ammunition wagons containing 25 pounder Gun Cartridges and it heralded the first 50 years of ammunition storage in this most beautiful setting in rural South Warwickshire.

It is impossible to calculate the millions of tons which have come and gone over these years, just as it is impossible to count the tens of thousands of people, both military and civilian, who have worked within the depot boundaries. All are part of the history of Central Ammunition Depot Kineton, the first 50 years of which are marked by the publication of this anniversary booklet.

These years have seen many good times and a few less happy events, some of which are recorded herein. A few of our local people will remember the arrival of the military in the area as construction of the depot began. Memories will move forward to the out loading operation as we prepared for the invasion of Europe in 1944 to be followed by the jubilation of Victory a year later; jubilation tinged with sorrow at the loss of so many servicemen and women in the quest for freedom. The old Nissen-hutted Marlborough Farm Camp evolved into a modern barracks during the late 1950s and early 1960s with further changes being completed in the mid-1970s. Only the original Garrison Church remains to remind us of the style of those early days and it is somewhat surprising to find that the "new" barracks does not have a name.

A variety of titles have been accorded to new-build projects over the years. In 1969, work commenced to construct 264 married quarters, the resulting "new village" being officially named, by Warwickshire County Council, as Temple Herdewyke which now embraces the whole of the barracks. By 1980, the original storage area, known as East Sub-Depot, had been knocked down and rebuilt to be christened Marlborough Sub Depot when opened by the Quartermaster General during a splendid pageant that many still remember to this day. Similarly, an even more memorable occasion was the opening by Her Majesty the Queen of the Edgehill facility in 1987; this replacing the West Sub-Depot originally added to the CAD in 1943/44. Modernisation has continued so that only 6 of the original rail-linked storehouses remain, 4 being used for general storage purposes and 2 by a tenant farmer.

I am indebted to the work undertaken by the contributors to this booklet, many of these having been coerced into action by the charm and threats of the Editor, Anna Lawrence. It is Anna to whom we all owe our thanks for this excellent publication as it is only her enthusiasm for the task that has brought it all together. I know she will join me in dedicating this labour to all who have worked within CAD Kineton during these First Fifty Years.

CAD KINETON – THE WAR YEARS

It is 1941 and Britain, supported by the nations of the Commonwealth, stands alone against Nazi Germany, her European allies having meekly surrendered to the military might of the German war machine. The United States has not yet entered the Second World War and we are most probably at our lowest in spirits as the news of the German invasion of Russia Operation "Barbarossa", begins on 22nd June. The hopes of all depend on the courageous defence of our shores by RAF Fighter Command, and of Bomber Command to carry the war to the enemy. At sea, the Royal Navy keeps vigil over the merchant convoys bringing vital supplies of food and war stores to our land. Losses in the air and on the seas are enormous. In London, at the War Office, the planners are thinking of the day when we will be strong enough to mount an offensive on mainland Europe and restore freedom and democracy to our weaker allies. The myriad plans include the need to build up stocks of ammunition, essential to provide the lethal firepower so vital to the planned invasion. The map identifies several areas where road and rail communications are good and the civilian population will be at minimum risk in the event of mass explosion. The MOD finger of fate points at South Warwickshire.

In London, after a preliminary reconnaissance, a site was determined and this was accorded the title "Central Ammunition Depot Edgehill", only to be quickly changed to "Central Ammunition Depot Kineton" to avoid confusion with the Liverpool rail depot bearing the former name. The project was defined to provide storage of 100,000 tons of land service ammunition of all types except chemical shells. A glimpse of the War Diary shows that the project provided 160 storehouses, in pairs on separate railway "whiskers", with a distance of 200 yards between each pair. The overall specification for the depot stated that it was to be rail-served (because of the shortage of road vehicles, drivers and labour), with 3 road/rail transit sidings, each to hold 40 wagons and to be accessible by

road. Five Districts were planned plus a "Repair Factory" to undertake simple repairs of ammunition not requiring Depot HQ offices, plus those for all other functions including regimental command and control in the "personnel camp" which was defined as Nissen-hutted with accommodation for 1,200 male personnel and 200 females of the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS). MOD directed that the new depot was to be constructed entirely by military labour consisting of Sappers and Pioneers. The defined site was to be "the area south of the LMS Railway line between Kineton and Fenny Compton and bounded by the Banbury-Warwick road to the East and the Banbury-Kineton road to the West, the South boundary being the high ground between Edgehill and Fenny Compton" (this latter point probably should have been Burton Dasset Hill). The living and administrative area was to become Marlborough Farm Camp. Between 2nd September 1941 and 8th October 1942, green fields rapidly became a military camp and ammunition depot, with electricity, water, sewage and telephones serving storehouses, offices and accommodation buildings, all springing from the land under the watchful gaze of Edgehill and Burton Dasset Beacon. The officer originally responsible for supervising construction was Major Ramsey RE who handed over to Lt Col S Emerson RE on 11th April 1942, the same day on which arrived the first senior RAOC officer, Lt Col G Caruana Dingli, together with his staff, an interim RAOC establishment for CAD Kineton having been approved as "1 x Lt Col, 1 x Sgt Clerk, 1 x LCpl Clerk, 1 X Driver with car 4 seater". Other points of particular interest recorded in the War Diary who separate NAAFI canteens of Pioneers, up to 800, and RE/RAOC soldiers, a Camp Theatre seating 500 people and 2 Fire Stations.

The early days

While all this building and development was progressing, the Second World War continued unabated, some extremely significant dates being as follows:

14 November 1941 – Sinking of the Ark Royal

7 December 1941 – Pearl Harbour attacked by Japanese. Next day, USA and allies declare war on Japan.

15 February 1942 – Surrender of Singapore.

30 April 1942 – Japanese complete the conquest of Burma.

30 May 1942 – First 1,000-bomber raid on Germany (Cologne).

18/19 August 1942 – Raid on Dieppe by

British and Canadian troops with very heavy losses.

Construction of the depot and camp had reached an advanced stage by 8th October 1942 when the first ammunition train arrived containing 2 wagon loads of 25 Pounder Cartridges, which were unloaded into Shed Number 5 the following day. From then onwards, the ammunition arrived almost daily, so that by the end of February 1943. Some 32,000 tons was held. The War Diary shows a great variety of units involved in the construction and development of the CAD, the list of these being too lengthy for inclusion here. The total strength of all units on 8th October is recorded as 70 officers and 2,700 other ranks, housed in a variety of accommodation ranging from railway carriages, new storehouses and old farms, to the partly constructed Nissen-hutted camp. On 5th December 1942, the first Commandant, Colonel K G Clissold, was appointed.

Down in the Depot

The original plans were nearing completion when the MOD, anxious to expand the storage space, took the decision to construct storehouses in the Radway area, sufficient to hold an additional 90,000 tons. The War Diary states "the new extension is to be located on the site of the Battle of Edgehill and its burial ground. Agreement was obtained from the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments to use the site with the condition that only one railway line should be driven across the burial ground." The plan was approved with considerable urgency on 15th March 1942 and railway construction started 3 weeks later but, due to objections raised by the Ministry of Town and Country Planning, other construction work did not commence until May. The next 12 months saw all functions of life in CAD Kineton expanding to meet the role of the unit within an Army preparing for the invasion of Europe with the result that, despite numerous difficulties, everything gradually fell into place so that by June 1944 all was more or less complete.

It was all moved by hand

Throughout these years the problems facing the officers and men were enormous, both in the continuing construction and in the storage and movement of the ammunition. Working conditions were far from satisfactory but these did not counter the energy and enthusiasm of all ranks to contribute to this vital piece of the war effort. All ammunition was physically handled by soldiers who, over an 8-and-a-half-hour day (plus breaks, parades, duties and regimental tasks), each lifted between 10 and 15 tons of ammunition. It is worthwhile to pick out a few interesting notes from the War Diary covering this period:

May 1942 – Some 2,300 troops were accommodated in a camp built for just 1,500. The MOD solved the problem by raising the scale of men per hut from 12 to 18! This is recorded to be a fortunate decision!

June 1943 – The first recreational train from Burton Dassett siding to Leamington Spa took 500 servicemen into town.

September 1943 – The Garrison Church was dedicated during a service conducted by the Bishop of Coventry. The Corps Band, 3 Major Generals and the Mayor of Leamington were also present. The Church is the only part of the original Marlborough Farm Camp which remains today.

October 1943 – The first females of the ATS arrived to cover driving, clerical and storage duties.

The magnificent efforts of all involved bore full fruit with the outloading of stocks in support of the allied landings in Normandy and the invasion of Germany in June 1944. From then until the end of the war, the CAD continued to play its part in the enormous British war machine, carrying out the many tasks which, even today, are typical at Kineton during those war years and their unit played a part in the victory which gave Western Europe the freedom it has since enjoyed.

A BRIEF HISTORY 1947 – 1991 CAD KINETON

1947 There were no quarters or hirings for CAD personnel. Single officers' quarters had no bathroom facilities – only a central bath house.

1948 The newly formed Chief Inspectorate Land Service Ammunition (CILSA) organisation initiated the Annual Inspection.

1949 Approximately 100 European Voluntary Workers (EVW) and a dozen clerks were the only civilians employed in the depot. All EVWs were employed in the repair factory, all other labour being provided by 25 Company Royal Pioneer Corps (RPC).

Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC) personnel, with the exception of those on regimental duties or clerks, were employed in the repair factory.

Twelve guard dogs and RPC handlers replaced the 2 man patrols in the ammunition storage areas, effectively reducing vandalism.

1950 A detachment of Women's Royal Army Corps personnel returned to Kineton to replace the company disbanded the previous year.

Five handlers and their dogs gave a display at Middleton Cheney Church Fete of routine obedience tests and dealing with intruders. This was the first time such a demonstration had been seen locally.

1951 Officers and troops were given a special showing of the MGM comedy 'Soldiers Three' at the Palace Cinema, Banbury. Prior to this, Cpl Bright, LCpl Welch and Pte Baker were taken by Rolls Royce to be officially welcomed by the Mayor. They were taken on conducted tours of several local places of interest before lunching at the Tudor Restaurant and later having dinner before joining the others from the unit.

1952 An inquest on Pte A B Anderton was informed that he had struck a 3.7 inch shell with a hammer, believing that it was not fused, in order to frighten inexperienced soldiers. A verdict of accidental death was recorded by the jury.

1953 Planning began for building permanent accommodation as the Nissen-hutted accommodation was seriously dilapidated.

The accounting system was changed twice during the year; first to a centralised account, then to a delegation of records to the 3 sub-depots.

1954 A new demolition ground was brought into operation in No 2 Sub-Depot.

A considerable amount of drill and dummy ammunition was stolen from No 3 Sub Depot.

The Planning and Work Study Branch was established by Maj F S Goodwin.

1955 A mono-rail tried out between rail transit sheds and storehouses was not accepted.

Pte P R Jones was electrocuted outside his billet due, it was recorded, to the crude and unsatisfactory wiring of a wireless set. The coroner, recording as verdict of misadventure, recommended a severe and rigorous inspection of all electrical installations in the camp.

1956 A separate Stocktaking and Reconciliation Branch was formed.

There was a great deal of adverse publicity due to disturbances in Banbury by soldiers from Kineton and American servicemen. Banbury was placed out of bounds for 6 months causing a great deal of bitterness. In Banbury, a demand was made for the ban to be lifted but the War Office edict was to 'Place Banbury Out of Bounds to Marlborough Farm Camp'. The ban was confirmed in the House of Commons on 4 June but was lifted on 23 June. Town patrols were instituted in Banbury.

1957 The rebuild programme was halted due to financial stringency but, to date, had provided 6 new barrack blocks, junior ranks mess, sergeants' mess, boiler house and kennels for the guard dogs.

The War Office decided that a central ammunition depot had to be closed and the choice was to be Kineton or Nesscliffe.

Ten thousand tons of ammunition had to be re-sited because dispensations regarding storehouse traverses were cancelled.

1958 On 31 October, 2 Pioneers were killed when an Army lorry was in collision with a cyclist. There were 7 soldiers in the vehicle which was on a routine daily trip between Kineton and Hinton-in-the-Hedges. Pte B Stanley RAOC, who was driving at more than 50 mph, was later committed for trial at Oxfordshire Assizes.

On 23 September, a tragic accident occurred at a level crossing when a 3 ton lorry was almost completely crushed by a 48 ton locomotive. Six soldiers and 4 dogs were killed.

The link road between A41 (B4100) and B4086 commenced.

1959 The Traffic Branch was formed under the direction of OIC Control.

The accounts and storage control systems were revised again.

1960 29 Coy RAOC won the Army Football Cup – the first company to win the trophy in its 71 year history.

1961 CAD Kineton was declared a permanent ammunition depot. Plans began for rebuilding.

1962 A public enquiry was held in the village of Kineton concerning Ministry of Transport proposals to close all roads and paths passing through CAD.

1963 The CAD Kineton establishment was reviewed by the Inspectorate of Establishments.

After a tip-off, Warwickshire Police were able to prevent a raid on 16 April. Three men were caught in the act of stealing 43 boxes of empty brass shell cases worth £260.

1964 On 1 April, the Ordnance Explosive Sub Depots (OESD) of the Ministry of Aviation became the responsibility of the Commander Ammunition Organisations. OESDs Ulnes Walton, Heapey, Yardley Chase and Pontrilas were added to the responsibility of CAD Kineton.

1965 The camp cinema was converted from 35 mm AKC-run cinema to a 16 mm cold light system. This enabled the auditorium to be reduced in size making the rest available for regimental training, courts martial and conferences.

Ten mobile homes arrived to ease the quartering situation.

Shorter working weeks were introduced for industrial and non-industrial staff.

The new Fire Station was officially opened. It was the first new station to be handed over since transfer of responsibility for the Army Fire Service from the Royal Army Service Corps to the RAOC.

The first Officers' Mess Summer Ball was held despite the fact that torrential rain submerged the lawns and threatened to remove the marquee.

1966 The EVWs' Triage Camp Hostel was closed with the majority finding private accommodation in the area.

WO2 (SQMS) Woods and his wife were murdered by his wife's ex-husband. There were some doubts at first as to whether or not the cause of death was a motoring accident.

Discussion took place on the problems involved in putting ammunition accounts and technical records on ADP.

1967 Phase III of the modernisation and rebuild was completed.

The new public road connecting the B4086 and A41 (B4100) was opened to the public.

A party from the Research Institute of Archaeology at Oxford searched the field at the rear of Graveyard Copse in the hope of finding cannon balls from the Battle of Edgehill. BBC's 'Tomorrow World' team accompanied the party. Use was made of metal detectors but only nails and horseshoes were discovered.

Assistance was given during a serious foot and mouth epidemic. Three detachments were deployed, working on farms in Cheshire and Shropshire.

1968 The Commandants' Conference was held at CAD Kineton for the first time.

CAD Kineton experienced some quite serious flooding and for a 24 hours period

80% of the depot was inaccessible by road or rail.

1969 The first mechanical handling (MHE) consisting of 4 reach and tier 4,000 lb trucks from Lansing and Bagnall was received in the depot.

An amenities centre, known as the Malta Block and containing nursery, clinic and thrift shop, was opened.

1970 CAD had 250 official visitors during the year. Many guests were invited for the opening ceremonies of the ammunition processing complex and the married quarters, the new village of Temple Herdewyke.

Army Fire Service road and rail appliances were fitted with radios, greatly increasing their accessibility and overall control.

The Army Department Constabulary strength was increased from 14 to an eventual figure of 60 all ranks.

The Triage Camp was demolished and the site became a recreational area for the married quarters.

1971 A detailed issues group was formed, comprising 4 of the largest explosive storehouses, saving time and transport on common user natures of ammunition.

A school of MHE was created after the fleet was increased from 10 to 40 equipments.

1972 The appointment of an assistant planning officer and central controller for works services improved liaison between the unit and the Department of the Environment.

Two ex-RAOC Chelsea Pensioners were entertained by the Sergeants' Mess during the Christmas season. Both were reported as having a 'high old time'.

1973 The Headquarters and Technical Headquarters moved into the new CAD HQ building.

1974 The Army School of Ammunition moved into purpose-built accommodation at Kineton.

1975 Owing to the difficulty in recruiting Ministry of Defence Police, the RPC Dog Section took over a proportion of night patrol commitments.

1976 'Green Goddess' machines, used by the RAOC and RPC, assisted civilian authorities in fighting disastrous fires in the Tamworth Wood area during a long period of drought.

1977 The return bus fare to Leamington was £1 and fewer soldiers below the rank of sergeant could now afford to run cars.

RAF Gaydon closed down and the gates to the entrance were hijacked and became the ceremonial entrance to the Officers' Mess.

Emergency fire cover was given during the national fire strike in the form of 7 Green Goddess engines.

Kineton's first MOD WPC was taken on strength.

1978 The civilian work-force remained below strength. The relative isolation of the Station and poor wages combined to make

employment at Kineton unattractive.

The occupation of the General Storage Area was further complicated with a change in ammunition and explosive regulations.

The Ammunition Repair Methods Development Unit (ARMDU) move to Kineton after 23 years at Bramley.

1979 The sub-depots were renamed Marlborough and Edgehill. East sub-depot, including the APA, was called Marlborough, partially restoring the original name of CAD Kineton (i.e. Marlborough Farm Camp). West sub-depot would be known as Edgehill, emphasising the links with the historic Civil War battle.

In order to overcome the problems created by manpower shortfalls, casual civilian labour was employed in the Ammunition Processing Area (APA). The first time civilians had been employed to work on ammunition in the depot.

Dual posting policies were introduced leading to an increase in WRAC numbers.

1980 OESD Yardley Chase was finally closed.

Marlborough sub-depot was officially opened by General Sir Richard Worsley KCB OBE. The cost of the rebuild was approximately £20 million.

1981 The winter of 1981/82 was one of the coldest on record. The lowest temperature recorded as -16°C on 18 December 1981. Three periods of heavy snow were experienced. The depot was effectively cut off on 2 occasions and all operations ceased.

1982 Two computer based systems were introduced during the year. The ICL ME29 was installed for ammunition accounting and 2 CPT 8000 work processors were introduced into the typing pool.

The Station provided accommodation and facilities for the Police and Ambulance Services during the Papal visit to Coventry.

The Annual Reporting Centre for reservists was attended by 414 reservists for kit inspections and training.

Following the Argentinian invasion of the Falkland Islands, CAD Kineton met all deadlines set by Op Corporate.

Civilian staff raised over £1,000 for the South Atlantic Fund.

1983 The Station provided accommodation and messing facilities for a police contingent providing support to the local police forces during the miners' dispute.

1984 A new course was designed at CAD Kineton to develop and enhance the skills and techniques of leadership among young ammunition technicians who were promoted as a result of their technical skill but had need of development as NCOs.

CAD Kineton sponsored a platoon of the Home Service Force, to be recruited from ex-service personnel living in adjacent Warwickshire towns and villages. The role of the platoon was to assist in guarding the depot during the transition to war, a task well suited to their military experience and reinforced by their knowledge of the local terrain.

1985 CAD Kineton participated in Ex

Brave Defender, the first national home defence exercise to take place in the UK.

The ammunition accounting system, Microfix, went live in April 1985. Due to its success, it was installed in other ammunition depots.

1986 More than 200 vehicles were trapped on the A41 Warwick to Banbury road during fierce snow storms in mid-January. A relief centre was in operation for 48 hours to help stranded motorists. The Adjutant and Quartermaster managed one trip with blankets and soup to Gaydon School before becoming snowbound. Other soldiers walked the A41 checking stranded cars for motorists in distress.

SSgt Britt shot W/Pte Inman with a 12 bore shotgun causing superficial wounds to his head, body and legs. Subsequently, a considerable quantity of explosives, ammunition and related stores was found in his married quarter. SSgt Britt was charged and found guilty and sentenced to 2 years imprisonment.

1987 The Beating Retreat and County Military Reception took place on 29 July. This occasion was the first combined affair by HQ Western District and County Military Commander, the Commandant.

1988 A visit by the Colonel in Chief, Her Majesty The Queen, took place on 24 March. Her Majesty The Queen honoured the Corps by visiting CAD Kineton where she inspected a Guard of Honour before lunching at the Officers' Mess. During an inspection of the depot, Her Majesty unveiled a plaque at the Edgehill sub-depot to mark the opening. The visit concluded with Her Majesty taking tea with invited guests.

1989 The Station Fire Brigade help the Children in Need appeal when 4 members tackled a 22 mile run.

Soldiers from CAD Kineton were attached to the local authorities to provide emergency ambulance cover during the ambulance service strike.

1990 The Stabling Area was completed. This has the capacity to safely store 3 ammunition trains.

1991 CAD Kineton provided manpower and resources to the forces in the Gulf for Op Granby.

The Gaydon section of the M40 motorway opened, improving access to CAD Kineton.

The RAOC EOD Memorial was dedicated. The memorial is in memory of the officers and men of the RAOC who have given their lives in the course of EOD service since 1945.

A new ADP system, AMANDA, was installed in the depot to provide a total control and accounts system for ammunition, operating in real time.

KINETON IN THE NEWS

DUMP PLANS TARGET CAD – Royal Leamington Spa Observer – Thursday 18 June 1992

'CAD Kineton looks set to become a much bigger dumping ground for ammunition with discarded equipment

being brought from all over the country to be burned in a new incinerator on the south Warwickshire site.'

COME ON LADDIE – GIVE 'EM HELL – Evening Telegraph – Saturday 23 August 1986

'This pint-sized soldier earned his corporal's stripes when it came to a sport of square-bashing. Paul Dunnell, of Cowper Close, Woodloes Park, Warwick, who attends Woodloes Middle School, was enlisted for the day with the Royal Army Ordnance Corps training wing at CAD Kineton as part of his ninth birthday present from his mum, Margaret.'

ARMY RESCUERS RESCUED – Leamington and District Morning News – Friday 16 January 1987

'More than 200 vehicles were trapped on the A41 Warwick to Banbury Road yesterday when weather conditions became so bad even the Army eventually had to turn back. Vehicles became trapped between Harwoods House and Warmington Hill when strong north-east winds caused snow drifts several feet deep.'

ARMED SOLDIER SEIZED ON RUN – Daily Mail – Monday 21 October 1985

'A soldier who went on the run with a sub-machine gun was captured last night after a nation-wide search. He was still carrying the weapon – complete with ammunition – when police seized him in Yorkshire, three days after he disappeared in Cornwall. His wife, waiting for him to return to their married quarters at 522 Coy Pioneer Corps' base, was very upset to hear he had vanished.'

RSC CALLS IN THE ARMY – Stratford-Upon-Avon Herald – 23 November 1984

'The Royal Shakespeare Company's next production at The Other Place, Stratford, The Desert Air, involves a British Secret Service Unit. In the interests of realism, the company asked the local army unit, CAD Kineton, to supply NCOs to drill its actors.'

BATTLE SITE BUILDING – Leamington Spa Courier – Friday 1 March 1985

'The Army is building on the historic Edgehill battleground in a bid to tidy it up. The site of the famous battle, the first major confrontation of the English civil war in 1642, has been dotted with army storage bunkers built during the Second World War. Now the damp, crumbling bunkers are being demolished, to be replaced by new storage sheds in one single group, which will be served by road.'

SHY HERO RESCUES DRIVER IN FLAMES – Warwickshire Evening Mail – Tuesday 7 February 1984

'A car driver was engulfed in flames as three vehicles caught fire in a pile-up outside one of Europe's biggest ammunition dumps early today. Fuel from a split petrol tank caught fire and the car driver was dragged from behind the wheel by a modest hero who has asked not to be named.'

ANGRY SOLDIERS TOLD TO SWEEP STREETS ON A SATURDAY – The Sun – Saturday 15 May 1976

'An army colonel came under fire from

his own troops last night – for reducing them to the ranks of roadsweepers. Colonel Keith Beresford has ordered 100 married soldiers at Kineton, Warwicks, to present brooms for a full-scale clean-up of litter around the camp today – their day off.'

THE BOOZE BRIGADE GO TO BLAZES – Daily Mirror – Wednesday 8 April 1987

'Boozy firemen were burning for some action. So they took their fire engine out for a drink. Then two of them went on to a party while their workmates settled down to sleep for the night. They were supposed to be providing emergency cover at one of Britain's biggest ammunition dumps.'

PEACE WOMEN TO PICKET ARMY BASE – Leamington and Warwick Evening Telegraph – Friday 20 May 1983

'Protesters are planning a Greenham-style picket at a Warwickshire ammunition depot next week. Women from Leamington and Warwick are organising the action outside the army ammunition depot at Kineton. The picket on Tuesday is part of the International Women's Day for Disarmament and the women are planning to highlight their campaign against war.'

(Ed note: Pioneers have served at Kineton since March 1942, the following Companies served in World War 2: 126, 136, 180, 222, 258, 278, 285, 313, 361, 408 and 410 Coy A large number of you will remember when 522 Coy RPC served there, this Company moved from Donnington to Kineton in December 1962 and stayed there until 1994 (becoming 522 Sqn RLC in April 1993, when it moved to Bicester. Although the Company was mainly employed within the CAD it did have detachments at Donnington, Chilwell, Thatcham, Bramley and Hereford. It also ran the Dog Section at Kineton.

The following is an extract from the diary of 522 Coy: "In 1971 the CAD was being palletised - one section (26 Men) palletised 400 pallets in a week!"

The predecessor Company at Kineton was 251 Coy which arrived in 1945 and served there until disbanded on 31 March 1962. In December 1958 five members of this Company were killed in a rail accident within the CAD.

Operation CORPORATE (Falkland Campaign). The logistic support and issues of ammunition were essential elements in the success of mounting the Task Force for the Falklands Operation. CAD Kineton was the primary depot and issued in excess of 5,700 tons of ammunition for the Operation.

The Pioneers of 522 Company played an important role in providing labour support, equipment operators and specialist train crews. The rapid movement of ammunition from the rail served areas of the depot against tight deadlines imposed great pressure on the depot as a whole and the rail system in particular, consequently for a period of eight weeks the RPC train crews were constantly on call to reinforce the civilian crews.

Cpl Graham Herrington was a key figure amongst the military operatives. As the senior train driver he worked long hours, he was often called to duty at all hours and frequently at short notice, for this he was awarded the BEM. ■

Major Lasenby

Report: Norman Brown
RPCA Archive

HERE IS a short history of Major James Arthur Lasenby. His Army number was 125310 and he joined as a Lieutenant on 24th August 1939, he was promoted to Captain on 25th April 1941 and Major on the same day.

His Association history is
Lasenby J A MC125310

Lt 25 Coy 13 Mar 40 - Jun 40,
Capt 25 Coy Jun 40 - 23 Jan 41,
OC 257 Coy 17 Feb 41 - 17 May 43,
OC 157 Coy 14 May 43 - 25 Apr 44,
OC 950 PCLU 26 Apr 44 - 13 Oct 44,
OC 959 Coy 13 Oct 44 - 11 Feb 45,
OC 960 Coy 12 Feb 45 - 26 May 45

His Mention in despatches is Lasenby J A
125310 Maj NWE LG 8 Nov 45, Page
5453 MC 68/Gen/8157.

25 Coy (Mar 40 - Mar 41)

2 Sep 39 Formed in WARWICK –
composed of 227 ORs of R Warwicks and
40 Gloucesters
Maj W C Gardiner – OC
Capt R N B Campbell DSO OBE – 2IC
Lt A A Collier MC

14 Sep 39 Landed in CHERBOURG
and proceeded to NANTES and thence to LE
CHATELIER (7½ miles South West of
NANTES) – part of 3 Group

24 Oct 39 Maj Campbell –
attached to new Coy in formation

1 Nov 39 Lt Harbottle – attached

14 Nov 39 Capt L E Lavis – to 2IC

2 Dec 39 Designated 25 Coy –
Reservists awaiting transfer to UK

15 Jan 40 2Lt Edie – attached

28 Jan 40 Lt A A Collier MC – sos
111 Coy

5 Feb 40 Lt Edie – sos

13 Mar 40 Lt J A Lasenby MC and
2Lt E W Wilson – tos
Working for RAF

4 May 40
Officers:-
Maj W C Gardiner – OC
Capt L E Lavis – 2IC
Lt J A Lasenby MC
2Lt E W Wilson

17 May 40
Standing by at CHENE POINT

21 May 40
Influx of refugees from Holland, Belgium
and North East France

23 May 40 Capt L E Lavis – sos 7
Coy
Lt E W Wilson – sos as 2IC 9 Coy
2Lt R W Redhead – tos

1 Jun 40 Located BOUGENAI,
NANTES Area – building aerodromes and
roads

15 Jun 40 Work cancelled and Coy
allotted defensive positions – posts taken
up at SUCE, NORT, CARGAFOU, LA BELLE
ETOILE and THOUARE. Roadblocks and
demolition points established
Capt J A Lasenby MC – serving 2IC

15 Jun 40 2000 hours –
conference called at BLAIN under Capt
Fairbankes (Nantes Sub-Area). Present CO
7 Group, OCs 12, 14 and 20 Coys. – 20
Coy Diary

Capt Fairbankes explained the
whereabouts of the enemy was unknown
and observation and defence line were to
be thrown out to cover the evacuation of
NANTES Sub-Area. An Observation Line
was in front of the BLAIN Canal held by 6,
25 & 37 Coys and a Reserve Line held by 5,
12, 14 & 20 Coys.

In the event of the Observation Line
being pressed by the enemy they would
retire through the Reserve Line which would
be held at all costs until ordered by the Sub-
Area to withdraw. 20 Coy positions were
PASSAGE DU CRAM to PLESSE, a line of 16
miles with 12 and 14 Coy to our immediate
right. Coy HQ would be at ST GILDES DE
BOYS. Reserve Coys to take up positions at
0600 hours 16th

17 Jun 40 No 1 BOD left suddenly
and the coy had to destroy a large number
of vehicles left behind along with a large
quantity of petrol.

1530 hours – ordered to retire to a line
about 3 kms in front of SAVERNAY. Linked
with 6 Coy on our left but no troops in
front or on right. Greatly handicapped by
streams of refugees and had to divert all
civil traffic away from ST NAZAIRE. Held
line until 0345 hours on 18th

18 Jun 40 Orders from GHQ to
proceed to ST NAZAIRE and embark. Road
blocks established before leaving. As far as
we could judge we were the last Coy to
leave the area.

½ coy embarked on 'Lancastria' and ½
on an Estonian ship
18 Jun 40 0430 hours – following
received from Nantes Sub-Area – 20 Coy
Diary

"To 6, 12, 14, 20, 25 & 37 Coys AMPC
and 104 & 110 Coys RE
From Nantes Sub Area – situation
believed fairly favourable. Withdrawal will
be carried out as follows. 37 Coy AMPC
with attached Anti-Tank rifles and 110 Coy
RE at 0300 hours to covering position
facing North and West of ST NAZAIRE on
the roads ST NAZAIRE-ST ANDRE DES

Recently purchased medals for Major James Arthur Lasenby MC and a short history

EAUX; ST NAZAIRE-ESCOUBIAC; ST
NAZAIRE-PORNICHET.

All positions close to ST NAZAIRE. 20
Coy AMPC with attached Anti-tank rifles
and 110 Coy RE at 0300 hours to position
covering ST NAZAIRE from East at river
bridge near cemetery. 6 & 25 Coys AMPC
and attached RA at 0330 hours to docks ST
NAZAIRE for embarkation. 12 Coy AMPC
with any attached at 0400 hours to ST
NAZAIRE docks for embarkation.

14 Coy AMPC with any attached ½ hour
after near Coy, 6, 12, 20 & 35 (25?) Coys
have passed through. Before embarkation
all vehicles will be rendered unserviceable.
HQ 37 Coy will be established on the road
ST NAZAIRE-ESCOUBIAC.

100 yards interval between vehicle will be
maintained. Orders for embarkation 20 and
37 Coys later."

20 Jun 40 Arrived PLYMOUTH – ½
coy moved to CLACTON and ½ coy to
OKEHAMPTON

1 Jul 40 Coy (less 96 Reservists
returned to their Depots) – located
CLACTON

15 Jul 40 Strength 2 officers and
23 ORs. Reservists returned to their
Depots. Moved to HUYTON

16 Jul 40 Reformed with AMPC
personnel

26 Jul 40 Moved to TAUNTON
Officers:-
Maj W C Gardiner – OC
Capt J A Lasenby MC – 2IC
2Lts J T Welbourne & V S Wright

7 Oct 40 Maj C A Joiner – tos OC vice
Gardiner

27 Dec 40 CSM G Bourne - sos on
commission (been with the coy since
formation)

11 Jan 41 2Lt T Kerr – tos

23 Jan 41 Capt J A Lasenby MC –
sos as Maj

257 Coy (Mar 41 – May 43)
Aug 41 Whole coy at
STRANRAER on dock and camp
construction

14 Sep 41 Capt L W Woods-Hulse
– tos 2IC vice Stratton (sos 27 Group)

31 Jan 42
Officers:-
Maj J A Lasenby MC – OC
Capt L W Woods-Hulse – 2IC
2Lts K Richardson, H W Murray, R K Ryder
& F Wilson

19 Jul 42 Capt E Wrightson – tos
2IC vice Woods-Hulse (sos as OC 146 Coy)

1 Dec 42 Capt E Wrightson – sos 837 Coy

14 Dec 42 Capt F H Norris – tos 2IC

31 Dec 42 Still on dock and camp construction at STRANRAER
Officers:-
Maj J A Lasenby MC – OC
Capt F H Norris – 2IC
2Lts W G Denness, F Moore & A C Livermore

4 Jan 43 Capt W W Gould – tos 2IC vice Norris

3 Mar 43 Capt C J Olive – tos 2IC vice Gould (sos 14 Coy)

17 May 43 Maj A J Jimenez MC – tos OC vice Lasenby

157 Coy (May 43 – Apr 44)

31 Oct 42 Moved to KIRKWALL – camp construction

31 Dec 42 Officers:-
Maj A J Jimenez MC – OC
Capt P C Rogers – 2IC
Lt W Bell
2Lts A S Uden, E Joyes, R S Prater & J W Stockwell

8 Apr 43 Capt (Bt Maj) J H Wilson – tos 2IC vice Rogers

6 May 43 Returned to mainland and proceeded to EDINBURGH

14 May 43 Maj J A Lasenby MC – tos OC vice Jimenez

24 May 43 Moved to GLASGOW – PW camp construction

6 Jun 43 Moved to KILWINNING – camp construction

21 Jun 43 Capt W D Burnett – tos 2IC vice Wilson

30 Jun 43 Officers:-
Maj J A Lasenby MC – OC
Capt W D Burnett – 2IC
Lt A Bayliss
2Lt Davies, Dutton, Higginson, Pilling, D A Briggs & Lang

18 Sep 43 Capt H Barnwell – tos 2IC vice Burnett

31 Dec 43 Officers:-
Maj J A Lasenby MC – OC
Capt H Barnwell – 2IC
Lts J G F Pilling, D A Briggs & S Horner
2Lt A Gomez

26 Jan 44 Moved to RAME, near PLYMOUTH – widening coast road between TREGANTLE and RAME

30 Mar 44 4 ORs killed and 5 injured in motor accident at SEATON

30 Mar 44 Possible casualties ALLEN, Private, HAROLD, 13076626 – buried Stand

GRANT, Private, JOHN ALEXANDER MCLEARN, 1648565, - buried Delmeny & Queensferry
SMITH, Private, SIDNEY, 10664884, - buried Brighthouse
MAHONY, Corporal, JOHN PHILIP, 13029312 – buried Seaton

13 Apr 44 Moved to LOSTWITHIEL – widening BODMIN-TRURO road

25 Apr 44 Maj I V Ashworth – tos OC vice Lasenby

950 PCLU (Apr – Oct 44)
WO/171/3255 – 950 Coy (1 PCLU)

26 Apr 44 Formed at PRESTATYN (No 12 Centre) under authority BM7820 (AG 14A) dated 16th Apr 44
Maj J A Lasenby MC (125310) – OC
Lt R S Edwards (254886) – Pay and Supervisory Officer
Sgt Graham, Pte Wittig (clerk) & Pte H Smith (Dvr/Batman)

11 May 44 Moved to CAMBERLEY and joined 32 Group

23 May 44 Joins 1st Corps

28 May 44 Moves to WEYBRIDGE to link up with 95 Coy

3 Jun 44 Moved to Marshalling Area HAYWARDS HEATH

9 Jun 44 Embarks NEWHAVEN

10 Jun 44 Lands GRAY SUR MER

13 Jun 44 Moves to RIVE Chateau and is attached to 115 Coy

14 Jun 44 Drew 25,000 Francs

15 Jun 44 74 civilians employed

17 Jun 44 Part of 32 Group – 134 civilians working

19 Jun 44 104 Works section RE main employer

20 Jun 44 Moved to LA DELIVERANDE – No 1 Roadhead

22 Jun 44 Visited Refugee camp at AMBLIE

24 Jun 44 300 workers

30 Jun 44 600 workers

16 Jul 44 252 workers handed over to A Mobile Group

17 Jul 44 2 Lt J L H Gandley (307559) – tos

24 Jul 44 Civil authorities paying 15 Francs an hour to clear rubble in CAEN

5 Aug 44 Payment of family allowance commenced

9 Aug 44 31 women start work at 8 & 9 Mobile Laundries

28 Aug 44 Transferred to 98 Group

(12 L of C Area)

5 Sep 44 Moved to LUC SUR MER taking over personnel from 953 Coy

6 Sep 44 Lt R S Edwards – sos to No 1 Pool

1 Oct 44 Units Austin Utility 4 x 2 stolen Part of 86 Group

7 Oct 44 Moved to LILLE

11 Oct 44 2,000 men available (various trades) from Mayor

13 Oct 44 Maj J A Lasenby MC – sos 959 Admin Unit

959 PCLU (Oct 44 – Feb 45)
3 Sep 44 Moved to DIEPPE

13 Sep 44 3 officers & 4 ORs tos

13 Oct 44 Maj J A Lasenby MC – tos OC vice Miller (sos 21 Army Group), 2,600 employees

11 Feb 45 Maj J A Lasenby MC – sos 960 PCLU

960 PCLU (Jan – May 45)

3 Jan 45 Moved To CALAIS with a sub-office at BOULOGNE

31 Jan 45 3,976 employees

12 Feb 45 Maj J A Lasenby MC – tos OC vice Darragh (sos 959 PCLU)

28 Feb 45 4,929 employees

30 May 45 6,597 employees

31 May 45 In addition to the present commitments in PAS DE CALAIS unit instructed to take over labour from 972 PCLU in the North of France. Sub offices at BOULOGNE, ST OMER, LILLE, ROUBAIX and ARRAS 17,061 employees

28 Apr 45 6,562 employed

26 May 45 Maj J A Lasenby MC – sos hospital 6,420 employees

EXTRACT FROM MONOGRAPH OF LABOUR 1946

The setting up of the Advance Base was marked by a large increase in the number of civilians employed.

The PCLU's, besides finding unskilled labour to relieve Pioneer Companies, provided skilled artisans in very large numbers for dilution in the technical services, which were thus able to double their output.

By 15th November a total of 49,241 civilians were being employed in France, Belgium and Holland.

The payment of these large numbers could no longer be carried out by the small numbers of PCLUs available so arrangements were made by which the Governments of the countries concerned took on this responsibility.

The employment of contract labour alongside directly employed labour caused

certain difficulties, chiefly because the latter were provided with a mid-shift meal. This was overcome to a certain extent by the provision of a mid-shift meal for contract labour as well.

When the V1 and V2 attacks on Antwerp began, the civilians did not evacuate the town and the work never suffered from scarcity of labour.

Danger pay at 30 francs per day was allowed for all civilians. Large numbers of Pioneers were also employed at Antwerp and their behaviour under the V1 and V2 attacks was no doubt an example and inspiration to the civilian employees.

On 1st January 1945 there were three Pioneer Group H.Qs, 23 British and 6 Belgian Companies working in Antwerp and its environs.

REPORT ON SECOND ARMY PIONEER UNITS DURING THE INVASION OF NORMANDY

950 (Major LASENBY) and 951 (Major GERRY) Administrative Units arrived at the start of the Build-up, and set up employment officers as follows:

950 Unit BERNIERES, moving later to DELIVRANDE and under No 1 Roadhead
951 Unit BAYEUX – under No 2 Roadhead

Lt CATSALL, Major GERRY's subaltern was unfortunately killed in a motorcycle accident soon after landing.

He was a gifted young officer with an intimate knowledge of the country and a great loss.

Civil Labour proved easier to obtain than was expected, and the total now employed in the Bridgehead area has reached 1,300. This figure may however decrease if men are taken for the new French Army, or unless the promised family allowance are made.

Major LIPSOOMBE arrived on 27 June as the officer in command No 1 Mobile Labour Group when formed.

Work has already started in enrolling the men for this Group and in borrowing personnel transport and stores until these came from ENGLAND.

War History – Page 282/283

In North-West Europe the fortnight following the conclusion of the Battle of the Rhineland on 10th March, 1945, was a period of intense movement and preparation for the Rhine Crossing, planned to take place on 24th March.

Demands for Pioneers became incessant and eighty-seven companies were massed under Second Army control for the assault.

Civil Labour Units of the Corps, slow to start in the difficult conditions existing in France early in the campaign, were now operating at full pressure and the enormous blocks of civilians they had working for the Allied cause in France, Belgium and Holland-29,000 in Brussels, where Major HA Mayne commanded 961 P.CLU; 17,000 in Northern France and the Ps de Calais controlled by Major JA Lasenby of 960 P.CLU; 10,000 in Belgium and South Holland under the administration of 957 P.CLU (Major EAM. Williams), and several smaller concentrations in other centres-made it possible to bring forward Pioneer companies into operational areas from the LofC for the great task which lay ahead.

A tremendous accumulation of ammunition, stores and equipment was essential for the coming battle, in addition to which roads had to be constructed, strengthened and maintained for the heavy traffic that was to pass over them. Vast tonnages of bridging material were brought forward and approaches to the river for bridging operations constructed.

Orders, Decorations, Medals and Militaria

A Great War 'Western Front' MC group of nine awarded to Major JA Lasenby, Pioneer Corps, late Royal Horse Artillery, who was decorated for gallantry in 1918 as a Forward Observation Officer when the building he was occupying was demolished by repeated hits from artillery shells, he and his signaller only escaping by means of a rope.

Military Cross, GVR; 1914 Star, with copy clasp (55575 WO2 JA Lasenby. RHA) later small impressed naming; British War and

Victory Medals, with MID oak leaves (2Lt JA Lasenby.) later impressed naming; 1939-45 Star; France and Germany Star; Defence and War Medals 1939-45, with MID oak leaf; Delhi Durbar 1911, silver, mounted court-style as worn, good very fine (9) £700-£900 M.C., London Gazette 26 July 1918:

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty as FOO in action. Throughout the day he displayed the highest courage and resource, keeping in touch with the infantry and his battery, although the shelling was heavy and continuous, and the building, which was his observation post, was repeatedly hit and finally demolished, he and his signaller only escaping by means of a rope.

The information he sent in was of the greatest value.'

MID London Gazette 8 November 1945: 'In recognition of gallant and distinguished service in North-West Europe - Major JA Lasenby, MC, Pioneer Corps.' Great War MID not confirmed.

Delhi Durbar 1911 confirmed on the roll of "N" Battery, Royal Horse Artillery, which notes that a replacement medal was issued in May 1934. Annotations on his Medal Index Card appear to indicate that replacement Great War medals were issued in September 1937.

James Arthur Lasenby served in France as a Bombardier, RHA, from 27 September 1914. Rising to the rank of Battery Sergeant-Major, he was commissioned 2nd Lieutenant on 21 February 1917, 'for service in the field'. He was promoted to Lieutenant on 21 August 1918, and retired on 1 June 1920. Placed on the Reserve of Officers, he was transferred on 21 February 1940, to the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps and served with this unit in North-West Europe in 1944-45.

He afterwards settled in New Zealand, residing at Somerset Place, Porirua East, and last had his nine medals mounted by the Disabled Serviceman's Shop in Willis Street, Wellington, in August 1967.

Sold with copied research and related ribbon bar. ■





WW2 Indian Soldiers

Seeing Kashmir in Sicily: How Indian Soldiers Felt During WW2

Report: Norman Brown / John Starling
RPCA Archive

WHEN VE Day was declared on May 8, 1945, Major R.G. Salvi, 2nd Lieutenant in the Maratha Light Infantry, British Indian Army, did not realise that the war in Europe was over. Sheltering in the mountains near the village Villa San Sebastiano in the Italian countryside, he heard a German soldier's rapid fire from a tommy-gun only inches away from his hiding place and prayed for his life.

"I felt as if 'Yamadoot' [the messenger of death] himself stood upon me with his noose ready," he recounts.

Salvi survived to tell his tale: 13 days later, once the Germans had left, a group of Italian villagers came to rescue him from the mountains. "The sleepless birds of the night, with the advent of dawn had left their dark abodes and fluttering their wings exuberantly were soaring high up into the endless blue sky," reflects Salvi. "Our hearts too rejoiced in the new-found freedom."

Salvi's 1983 memoir on the Second World War, *Whom Enemies Sheltered*, demonstrates the dominant presence of Indian soldiers in Europe during the Second World War. This wasn't simply the case towards the end of the war. When hostilities were first declared in Europe, Force K6, comprising four mule companies in the Royal Indian Army Service Corps, journeyed to France in support of the British Expeditionary Forces.

Several hundred such men were on the beaches at Dunkirk during its evacuation in May and June 1940, heartbroken at having to leave their mules behind. Thirty-three-year-old Dost Muhammed, a sepoy in the 22 Mule Company, was among them. His home was nearly 5,000 miles away, in Rawalpindi in modern-day Pakistan. Dost Muhammed died in France.

After defeating Axis troops in the Middle Eastern and North African theatres of war in 1943, Indian soldiers joined the Central Mediterranean Forces, invading Sicily in July 1943 and forming part of the Allied landings in mainland Italy in September 1943. A selection of these Indian forces were also sent on to Cyprus and Greece. Through letters exchanged between the home front and international battlefronts, the little-known emotional worlds of these soldiers are opened up for us. What were their thoughts and feelings on seeing Europe for the first time?

Colonial military enlistment and its legitimacy for travel opened the door for these men – a large proportion of whom

were from rural India – to unknown places, and new ways of seeing. While the letters themselves become agents of communication between remote villages spread across India and theatres of war thousands of miles away, they also show us how soldiers become itinerant spectators, engaging in – and often enjoying – encounters in new lands. Travel itself becomes an experience of emotions, and Europe, viewed through the eyes of Indian soldiers, the focus of intercultural exchange.

A sepoy in the Central Mediterranean Forces, part of the Allied forces in Italy, writes in Malayalam to family back home:

"As a reward for all our previous sufferings, Almighty brought us here to Sicily. We are supplied with British Troop rations. Sicily is a very fertile country. It is the Kashmir of Europe. Wherever you go, you will find groves of date palms and innumerable vineyards. [...] An Indian soldier is respected both for his fighting qualities and morale. The people here display no colour prejudice. The coloured are better loved than the white. [...] On the whole this is one of the happiest and most beautiful countries I have ever seen."

The viridescent Italian countryside serves here as a harmonious landscape for a cross-cultural appreciation that, nonetheless, indicates the presence of systemic inequalities in the army – the Indian soldier mentions receiving better quality British troop rations because this is a novelty. The soldier's letter also alerts us to the complexities of wartime relations. Being a colonial soldier on the victorious Allied side destabilises racial hierarchies to the extent that "the coloured" liberators become "better loved than the white".

An Indian captain in the Auxiliary Pioneer Corps is similarly euphoric:

"I am sitting under an olive tree and so many trees of almonds are standing nearby. No sooner there is a slight wind than all the ripe almonds fall down on the ground. Vineyards are hanging everywhere. Birds are chirping and orchards are found all over the area round about us. Vegetables are in abundance and fruits are more than I can put in black and white [...] Our relations with the local inhabitants are cordial and they are very social."

This Italian paradise's mellow fruitfulness is lovingly described by the writer. He too emphasises the restorative promise of a natural world in a strange country. After experiencing strenuous fighting in arid desert conditions in the Middle East and North Africa, Sicily, Greece and Cyprus seen for the first time by these Indian soldiers must have seemed lush, fertile and full of

new life – places of welcome in which to recover from war-weariness.

A sepoy in the Indian infantry describes how precious this respite was to his family in August 1943:

"I am passing some of the happiest hours of my life in a beautiful European island. We are free from every sort of restriction and shall never forget this liberty throughout our lives. [...] We could never dream of visiting these places at any cost and are fortunate in this respect."

But victory in Europe in 1945 did not mean that the war was over. On the other side of the world the Japanese threat loomed large. 700,000 Indian men would eventually form part of the cosmopolitan Fourteenth Army which served in the Pacific theatre of war – completely overshadowed in modern memory by European Allied triumphs. The Indian men stationed in Europe knew that, on returning home, their next transfer could be to the jungles of Burma. A Lance-Naik demonstrates this awareness in a letter to his loved ones from Italy: "If you insist I will get back home but I will have to go again towards the east where Ghulam Mohammed is now serving."

It was in battles at Kohima and Imphal on the Indo-Burmese border that men in the British Indian Army would come face-to-face with their brothers-in-arms – the soldiers in the Indian National Army (INA), comprising former prisoners-of-war in Southeast Asia and Indian expatriates, led by the charismatic political radical Subhas Chandra Bose.

The "new found freedom" that Major Salvi describes in his memoir was still a long way ahead, both for Indian soldiers serving in the British Indian Army, and for the INA men, who, just after the war, would transform into a rallying symbol for Indian independence. ■



■ A colour party leads the British Infantry contingent through India's Memorial Arch



Case No's 1147A/B

The Cases of 1147A and 1147B - Lance Corporal Scully and Lieutenant Charles Chittenden. Lance Corporal obtained the George Cross and Lieutenant Chittenden the George Medal

**Report: Norman Brown
RPCA Archive**

THE Case number of 1147A is of 1303955 Lance Corporal James Scully of 22 Faughart Road, Dublin of 256 Pioneer Corps, Birkenhead. His Civil occupation was of Hoist Driver.

Rescue of man and woman trapped at Carnforth Street, Birkenhead on 12th/13th March 1941 at night

Recommended by: Birkenhead Town Clerk and Controller No 10 (N Western) Regional Commissioner Recommends: G.C. dated 1/5/41. Documents:

- (1) Report by Controller.
- (2) Report by Chief Constable.
- (3) Report by Lieut Chittendon.
- (4) Statement by Mrs A Walsh.
- (5) Statement by Corporal M Doyle.

CASE CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE: 194. RECOMMENDATION: TREASURY RECOMMENDATION: GAZETTED: 194.

Case 1147B

The Case number of 1147B is of Lieutenant Charles Cumming Chittenden, 256th Coy Pioneer Corps, Birkenhead.

Brief Summary of Ground of Recommendation: As for 1147A.

Recommended by: Birkenhead Town Clerk and Controller

No 10 (N Western) Regional Commissioner Recommends: G.M. dated 1/5/41

Documents: As for 1147A.
CASE CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE: 194. RECOMMENDATION: TREASURY RECOMMENDATION: GAZETTED: 194.

Copy Extract from Report by Controller dated 23rd April 1941

Members of all three services were prominent on the 12th/13th March 1941. Some acted as units and others as individuals. The following case deserves special recognition:

No 1303955 Lance Corporal James Scully of the 295th Company, Pioneer Corps (home address, 22 Faughart Road, Dublin).

At about 11.30 a warden called at the Billets of this detachment and requested Lieutenant C C Chittenden to allow his men to help in connection with the extensive damaged cause by a land mine in Carnforth Street, Birkenhead.

The officer and 24 men immediately proceeded to the scene, searched for any survivors, removing debris by hand, and, later, co-operating with the Rescue Party.

The work of Lieutenant Chittenden and Lance Corporal Scully was outstanding and resulted in two persons being rescued alive from a dangerous position. Attention is drawn to the Chief Constable's letter of 11th April 1941 and to the statements attached to it.

Copy of Report by Chief Constable dated 11th April 1941

I have to inform you that in the nights of the 12th/13th March, several shops and houses in Oxtan Road and Carnforth Street were demolished by enemy action, a parachute mine having exploded at the rear of Carnforth Street.

Parties from the Pioneer Sections, stationed at 16/18 Shrewsbury Road, Birkenhead, were brought to the scene by Lieutenant Chittenden, and these men were the means of rescuing a man and a woman alive from the house No 7 Carnforth Street. The man died shortly after being brought out, but the woman is making good progress.

It would appear that, while all the soldiers worked hard, and are to be congratulated on the part they played under difficult conditions, Lieut Chittenden, and a L/Cpl named Scully, ran a great risk in going into the house in the first place, and exhibited great bravery in remaining there when they might have been buried at any moment.

I enclose statements from the rescued woman and Military personnel.

Copy of Statement by Lieutenant Chittenden

I am the officer IC Nos 9 and 10 Sections, 256th Coy Pioneer Corps, stationed at Birkenhead.

Shortly after 11.00 pm on Wednesday, March 12th 1941, an Air Raid Warden came to me at 16 Shrewsbury Road and asked me if I could detail some men to assist in the rescue of people who had been buried under houses which had just been damaged by enemy action.

I at once fell in 24 men and took them to the Carnforth Street Incident, where I saw another Warden who indicated where persons lay buried under the debris of wrecked houses.

I told off my men into working parties and a search was made. L/Cpl James Patrick Scully, No 1303955 of No 9 Section, located a man and a woman who lay buried beneath the debris of the house No 7 Carnforth Street and he at once reported this to me.

L/Cpl Scully decided it was just possible to penetrate the debris and get to where

the people were buried and with great difficulty he managed to do this. I followed him in to see what best be done to effect a rescue.

Scully asked for some wood to use as props to shore up the debris. We obtained some but as we had no tools for cutting it into proper lengths we had to improvise as best we could.

Meanwhile, Scully placed steel helmets over the faces of the trapped people and this proved to be a very wise precaution in view of the debris which could fall before rescue could be effected.

Had Scully not taken this wise precaution, I have no doubt the two persons would later have been more seriously injured or possibly killed outright.

The man appeared to be very seriously injured when we first discovered him, but the woman was conscious most of the time and Scully kept up her spirits by talking to her in a reassuring manner.

Sometime later a Doctor arrived and said he would give the trapped persons and injection of Morphine each; so Scully bared their arms and prepared them for the injection.

A Liverpool Rescue Party, under the command of a Mr Marsh arrived, so we borrowed a saw and some other tools and cut some wood into more suitable lengths and began to make a better job of shoring up the debris.

All available help was mustered and the men worked tremendously hard in their efforts to clear the debris which continued to fall.

Scully remained with the trapped persons and continued to cheer up the woman. He kept his head remarkably well and worked hard to prevent any more debris from falling on the injured persons.

We managed to insert a long plank so as to take most of the weight, and propped it, but soon, as a result of debris falling, the props began to sway out of position.

There was a very real danger of the mass of debris sliding down and burying the injured persons, and realising this, Scully placed his back under the plank to try and prevent the props from giving way completely.

He steadied them for a time but gradually the weight increased until the props slipped and left Scully holding one end of the plank.

I supported the other end and by this means we managed to prevent the debris from sliding for a time.

Scully could have got away at this stage, but appeared to realise that if he did so the debris would fall and probably kill the

trapped persons, so he stayed under the plank.

I managed to give him a drink and later a cigarette. Gradually the weight increased and forced Scully down until he lay across the trapped man.

From my end of the plank, I helped support the debris as best I could, and at the same time I had to reach over and support Scully's head to prevent him from being suffocated by having his head pressed against the debris and also to prevent debris falling on his neck.

I managed to keep his face clear but he was fast becoming exhausted. Despite this, he kept up his spirits and continued to talk encouragingly to the woman and showed wonderful courage all through.

The man was unconscious nearly all the time.

Scully was completely exhausted when he was released at approximately 6.30 am after having been in the above described position for about 7 hours.

He was at once removed to Hospital, from where he was discharged on Monday March 31st. He is now away on Sick Leave and is due to re-join his Unit on the 12th inst.

When he first entered the house it was apparent to all, himself included, that he was running a grave risk of serious injury or death, as the high walls nearby which appeared about to collapse at any moment. Had this collapse occurred, he must have been buried under many tons of debris.

He had a chance to get away before the weight became too great, but he preferred to remain, because he realised that if he released the plank there would have been no chance of rescuing the people alive.

I cannot too strongly emphasize my admiration for his bravery and his disregard for his own plight in his effort to save the trapped people.

The man was taken out alive but died on reaching the First Aid Post.

The woman also, was rescued alive and removed to Hospital, and it appeared that she had a good chance of recovery.

In my opinion this result was achieved only as a result of Scully's brave effort.

It was remarkable how he managed to sustain the weight of the debris for such a long time.

There were times when I did not think we should get out alive. The trapped woman, whose name, I believe, is Mrs Walsh, showed remarkable spirit and did all that Scully advised to do.

She is an old woman and her behaviour all through was really wonderful. I am informed that the man's name was Thorneley.

Copy of Statement by Mrs A Walsh

I cannot really say which of the two took the greatest risk. One of them who was buried, covered my head with his tin hat and shielded me with his body, kept talking to me and reassuring me that I would soon be out.

Then he bared my arm while someone put a needle to it. When he was released, he kept the planks and other things from falling on me by holding them up with his back.

I really don't know how he held them up. The other man was also very brave. He kept reassuring me. He also held a great

weight of debris from falling and burying us completely.

He refused to leave us although he could have done so, but he stayed holding the other man's head up and helping him and encouraging me. They were both very brave and showed great courage. I thank them with all my heart and they deserve the highest praise.

Copy of Statement by Corporal Michael Doyle No 10 Section, 256th Coy

I am attached to No 10 Section, Pioneer Corps, and shortly after 11.0 pm on Wednesday, March 12th 1941, I went in charge of a party to patrol Oxtan Road and the adjacent Streets to guard the shops and houses which had just been damaged as the result of enemy action.

Having posted my men, I went around on a tour of inspection and was informed that some people were buried under the debris of houses in Carnforth Street, so I went to see what I could do to help.

When I got to the house No 7 Carnforth Street, I saw that it had nearly been demolished and when I looked among the debris I saw LCpl Scully nearly buried by the debris. He was supporting a plank which was keeping a lot of persons who were buried lower than Scully was.

I also saw Lieut Chittenden holding Scully's head to prevent Scully being suffocated by having his head pressed into the debris.

I ascertained that they had been in this position for some time. Several men were busy removing debris, but more kept falling, and it was clear that it would be a difficult job to get Scully and the other two persons out alive.

Lieut Chittenden could have got out, but he stayed with Scully and later managed to give him a cigarette and a drink.

We got Scully out about 7.00 am and I took him to the Children's Hospital where I had a very difficult job to restrain him as he wanted to go back and see the job through.

I persuaded him to remain in the Hospital and then went back and helped the other people who were buried.

Scully was very exhausted and Lieut Chittenden was not much better off, though he did not go to Hospital. In my opinion, Scully's action in going into the damaged house at all, was a very brave one and the way he stuck to his work there, was remarkable.

Later he could not have got out, but he must have had a chance to escape before the debris weighed him down. Lieut Chittenden's behaviour was no less brave than Scully's.

He could have got out at any time and no one could have blamed him if he had done so.

The position looked absolutely hopeless and full of danger but Lieut Chittenden stayed there with Scully all through and his example made the rest of us work as hard as we could until we got them out.

I have spoken to several of our men who were there and everyone agrees that our Officer showed a splendid example and we are proud to be in his Sections.

Copy of Report by Private Francis Mulready No 13039447, No 10 Section

I am attached to the 256th Coy Pioneer Corps, which is under the command of Lt

Chittenden. Shortly after 11.0 pm on March 12th 1941, I was included in a working party which proceeded to carry out rescue work in Carnforth Street, where many houses had been damaged by enemy action.

I went with LCpl Scully to one of the houses which had been badly damaged, I think this was No 7.

Two persons were located, buried under the debris and we began to consider how to reach them.

There were high walls near and it seemed that these would come down at any moment, but LCpl Scully said he could get to the people by crawling through the fallen debris.

He got through and then Lieut Chittenden went in, and when they called for wood to prop up the debris I got some and handed it to them.

I could see the LCpl Scully was well inside the house, where it appeared the back kitchen had been, and Lieut Chittenden was near him.

I kept carrying away debris to try and clear the way for getting people out, but more kept falling, and LCpl Scully was slowly being buried, but I saw Lieut Chittenden holding the LCpl's head up and helping him keep up the debris.

We worked all night, but LCpl Scully did not come out, nor did Lieut Chittenden. I think the Officer could have got away at any time, had he wanted to, but as the night went on the LCpl became buried so that he could not have got out then.

He could have come out earlier on, but if he had done so the debris would have come down and buried the people more than they were, and this would have killed them.

We managed to get the LCpl out about 7.00 am the next day, after he had been there about 7 hours.

I don't know how he managed to keep up all that time, but I heard him talking to the woman who was buried, and he kept cheering her up by telling her that she would soon be got out.

I consider that LCpl Scully performed a very brave deed because he knew when he went into the house on the first arrival of our Party that he ran a great risk of being buried.

The walls appeared about to collapse and if they had fallen I do not think anything would have saved him.

Also, I consider that Lieut Chittenden showed just as much bravery, because he could have got away at any time but he would not leave the LCpl alone there, and he ran the same risk of being buried had the walls collapsed. ■



■ George Scully's sisters with his medals



Maralinga

A short story of Maralinga and the Pioneer involvement on Operation Brumbie

Report: Maragline Tours / Patrick Baird
Picture: RPCA Archive / Patrick Baird

IN THE 1950s, at a time when the cold war was raging, the British were looking for a place to test their long-range missiles and atomic weapons, and rather than test in their own backyard the British government approached Australia. The then Prime Minister, Menzies, granted permission.

With military testing sites already underway at Emu Fields and Woomera, outback surveyor Len Beadell was given the task of finding a suitable location closer to the railway. On reaching South Australia's large expanse of sparsely inhabited red desert on the edge of the Nullarbor he wrote 'We all knew immediately that this was going to be the place, the saltbush undulations rolled away as far as we could see, even through our binoculars'.

Within days Beadell's men set to work, their Land Rovers dragging lengths of railway for a temporary runway, roads were forged and, within a week, supplies started arriving from the UK. The village of Maralinga designed to house 2000 servicemen was created and an area the size of England was securely fenced off. Aptly named after the Yolngu Indigenous peoples word for thunder, the notorious history of Maralinga was about to begin.

On the 27th September 1956 at the dusty site called One Tree, the wind had died down and the countdown began for the start of Operation Buffalo. Five, four, three, two, one, boom, Maralinga's first mushroom cloud swelled over the saltbush country of South Australia.

Over the next thirteen months explosions at Marcoo, Kite, Breakaway, Tadge, Biak and Taranaki took place, seven major nuclear tests in total. But some of the worst contamination of the area was a result of the countless minor tests in the early 1960s which left behind radioactive and toxic chemicals including plutonium, uranium and beryllium.

Until 1978 for the most part the Australian public were unaware of the testing program taking place at Maralinga, with elements of the program shrouded in secrecy. And today many young Australians have never heard of Maralinga, few know the history of the blasts that shattered the local indigenous community and forced aboriginal people away from their traditional lands. Reports claim that aboriginal people were injured and killed by the testing and that generations of children have been still born or born with health problems.

The testing program at Maralinga sparked one of the most shameful episodes in Australian history when under a cloak of secrecy and without the knowledge of family, the bones of more than 21,000 babies, many babies and children, were harvested and underwent tests for the presence of the radioactive substance Strontium-90. The tests were conducted to determine the effects of the atomic fallout, particularly the effect on the food chain, cows feeding in fall out areas were believed to contain the dangerous substance in the milk they produced. The experiments continued for over 20 years and only recently has some of the information reached the public.

Decades later the true and full extent of the damage caused by the testing program at Maralinga to service personnel and local communities is unknown. In 1967 the British abandoned Maralinga leaving behind a contaminated landscape. After numerous clean-ups and millions of dollars the area was finally deemed safe to visit.

Much of the Maralinga village has been demolished and streets now wind past concrete slabs where houses once stood. Built with the intention of the program operating for 30 years, the village had all the facilities to accommodate the long-term occupation including a post office, chapel, cinema, barber, football fields and, for some relief from the intense summer heat, a swimming pool. Only six original buildings remain including the former hospital.

The long bitumen airstrip is long enough to land an Airbus and said to be strong enough to land the space shuttle. The centrepiece of the site is ground zero, the site where atomic bombs as powerful as Hiroshima were exploded and where over the eerie barren ground, life still struggles to regenerate.

In 2014 almost sixty years after the first atomic test at Maralinga, rehabilitation work was completed and the final parcel of the land was handed back to the traditional owners, the Maralinga Tjarutia people.

With the permission of the Maralinga Tjarutia people, guided tours of the site commenced in April 2015. The site has been developed for visitors with a camping ground, amenities and museum. Hundreds of kilometres of secure perimeter fencing surround the site and visitors are greeted at the locked gate by the tour guide and

caretaker Robin Matthews.

'Not Kazakhstan, not Nevada... but South Australia's Maralinga' reads the tourism slogan of Maralinga Tours and like the infamous nuclear testing sites of the US and Soviet Union, Maralinga too has a story to tell. Buried under the dust is a forgotten chapter in Australian history and for those ready, the secrets are waiting to be uncovered.

PIONEERS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA 1967 - MARALINGA

At the beginning of 1967 members of 23 Group became aware of GRANMA ALI (an anagram of Maralinga (but this was not divulged until later) an operation that would take place in Australia and that training for it was imminent. Once selections had been made we assembled at Graven Hill and were briefed by Lt Col Eric Smith the CO 23 Group.

We were to be part of a combined force of 72, made up of 28 RE, 10 RCT and 34 RPC under command of Major Bill Cook RE, in addition 4 scientist from the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment (AWRE) and their fatigue men would accompany us. Our task was to clear and clean the British nuclear range and get it to a radiation safety level that was acceptable to the Australian government and thus allow them to take the range back from the UK.

The men of Operation Brumbie (named after the Australian wild ponies) deployed in March and April, with the Pioneer Section moving in two batches, the first on 6th April, flying from UK to Maralinga with refuelling stops at Kuwait, Colombo, Singapore and Darwin.

These stops were all extended whilst mechanics did mysterious things to the engines. This was a little unsettling as our departure from Heathrow only took us for a 6 hour fuel jettisoning flight. One of our number, who had not flown before, stopped a passing member of the cabin crew and asked if it was normal for one of the propellers not to turn. Perfectly normal, she said as she ran to the cockpit. Six hours later we were back on a Heathrow runway and had a 12 hour overnight stop before trying again. It was something of a relief to reach Maralinga!

The last flight crash landed at Manson and, after a 24 hour delay, movement continued in a replacement aircraft.

Sgt George Lineham RPC (who retired with rank of Major) was the senior NCO on the flight and in recognition of his calm leadership throughout the emergency received a Commendation from the GOC in C Southern Command.

The Camp Adjt was not a member of Op Brumbie but part of the REME, RAF and civilian staff responsible for running the Camp and Airfield.

Once we were all assembled comprehensive briefings were given and films and photographs of the Tests shown. Great emphasis was given to the unique

dangers of radiation: dangers that were new to the majority of the Force.

Unfortunately, with the passage of time, our nominal roll had gone astray. It would be greatly appreciated if anyone recognising faces, would let Norman Brown or patricdnbaird@hotmail.co.uk, know.

Work took place over the whole of the range, an area slightly larger than the island of Ireland. This necessitated almost everyone becoming highly proficient at long distance desert driving and dealing with Land Rover faults.

The main tasks were the burial of radioactive material and capping the pits with reinforced concrete, removing many miles fencing, ensuring that the desert sand was not hazardous and filling a crater in which 4 aircraft and various other items had already been dumped. Ten 67 foot towers also had to be dismantled and buried.

We worked a six day week, with First Parade at 0700 and then a drive of at least 30 minutes to get on the Range. Work finished at 1700 followed by the drive back to the village. Field kitchens were set up at the various sites and provided first rate meals and snacks throughout the day. With cray fish, steaks, kidneys and other somewhat exotic food some yearned for basic fair. All soft drinks were free, and this was very welcome. Early in the task the OC experienced some difficulty in convincing the MOD that, despite being on a desert in South Australia, the temperature at the time of day we started was well below zero and our clothing did not account for this. Eventually sufficient leather jerkins arrived, and we could face the morning parade with enthusiasm.

The village had been built for scientists and others, both military and civilian and provided first class accommodation and facilities. There was a well equipped hospital a large swimming pool and cinema with a change of feature film every night. Educational classes were available, particularly for the, then, Army Certificate of Education levels 2 and 3. A number of hobbies were started, including wood carving and photographic processing a keen pop group was established and some enthusiasts learned to play the bagpipes. As there were no facilities off the Range charter aircraft were hired to give sections a 3 day break in Adelaide every 6 weeks.

From there some took the opportunity to travel to Melbourne or Sydney. In lieu of flights the journey to Adelaide could be made by train, but as the return trip used almost all the 3 day break, there were few takers. The trip, though, was through some stunning countryside including the Barossa Valley vineyards (not well known in the 60's) and across the Nullabor desert.

In specified areas, full protective clothing and respirators had to be donned and all members of the Force had to wear film badges to record radiation when on the range; these were checked regularly.

Everyone had to go through Health Physics caravans before leaving contaminated areas where they showered, were screened and clothing was changed.

During our time in South Australia there was a plague of mice. One night, Cpl Clark (back row 2nd from left in Section photo) found his room full of the little beasts and he set about dealing with them. Eventually just one was left, he raised his stick to dispatch, but the wise little chap sat up its back legs and looked at him. Instead of death he was offered some food. The kind nature of the Pioneers!

Other than mice there were kangaroos (Pte Lewis, back row far right in photo, in particular, was keen to make friends with them), dingoes and a wide variety of birds. Budgerigars and galas being particularly vociferous. On the less friendly side were snakes, scorpions, poisonous centipedes, funnel wasps and spiders, red backed being about the worst.

As the operation progressed the Section learned or perfected many skills. We were very fortunate to have an outstanding RE Force Command and one who encouraged a high level of cooperation between the two arms of the Service. Specialist concreting, carpentry, demolition of buildings and bunkers, plant operation, the collection and disposal of vast quantities of assorted debris ranging from cable to aircraft, radiation surveying and mapping and the use of a variety of scientific instruments.

Bunker demolition was challenging as they had been constructed to provide safe areas during nuclear explosions.

As Op Brumbie drew to a close it was decided that we should leave a memorial to our work and a concrete obelisk was constructed with large cap badges on each face and a steel Brumbie on top. This was unveiled at a parade by a very cooperative RAF SAC. As females were banned from the

range he agreed to dress for the occasion and very attractive he looked too.

There was more than a little fuss when photographs reached the Australian authorities in Maralinga village.

After we had had our fun we enlightened them and were able to tell them that 'her' clothes had been supplied by their HQ in Adelaide.

Although we were all glad to return to UK there was sadness that the Force had to split up, but pleasure in a job well done. Another example of how well Pioneers and Sappers worked together. It was pleasing that the Force SSM WO2 Tug Wilson RE later joined the RPC TA.

Colonel Cook, in a report to the MOD and AWRE paid tribute to the Pioneers

"The calibre of soldiers has been very high. ... Almost every pioneer has been taught a trade and without assistance of this kind the task would have been prolonged." ■



■ 2Lt Baird, Maj Cook, AWRE Scientist, Camp Adj, AWRE Scientist



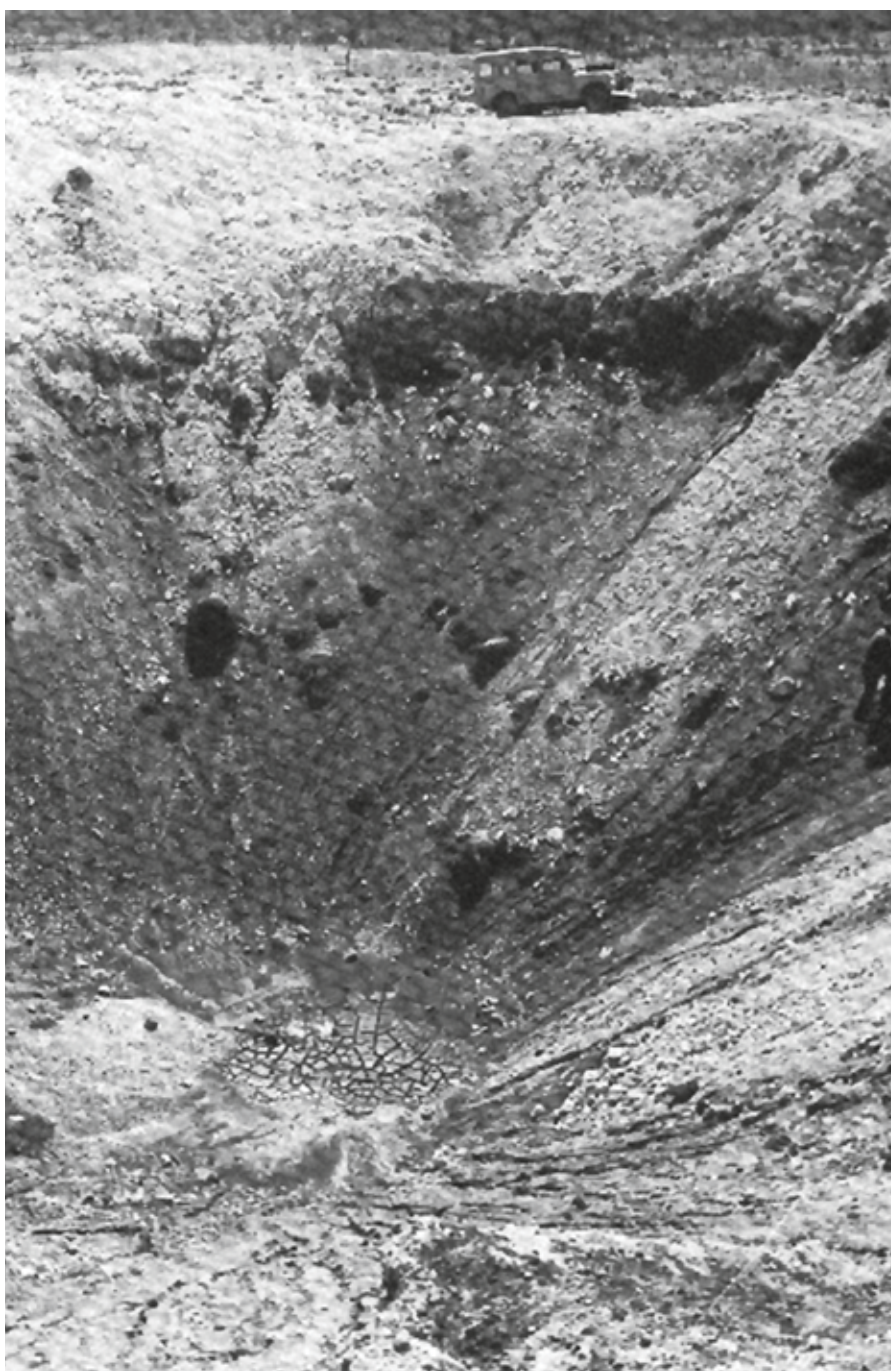
■ Hospital and MRS



■ Unveiling the Brumbie Memorial Stone



■ Looking down the main street towards the Church



■ A nuclear crater provided a good dumping ground

Operation Telic - Gulf War 2

After 5 gruelling months the Regiment returned home in Jun/Jul 2003, with another demonstration of how vital this Regiment was within the British Army.

Report: Norman Brown
RPCA Archive

23 Pioneer Regiment was initially tasked by 104X, to set up 2 locations in preparation for Op TELIC in Jan 2003. The 1st location was to establish the initial Theatre Reception Check In Centre headed up by OC 522 Pioneer Sqn, Maj King, 2IC, Capt Alex Atherton and a small team.

They would identify all personnel arriving into Theatre before loading on to coaches and sending them forward to the Main Theatre Reception Centre close to the border of Kuwait and Iraq. This location was headed up by Lt Col Peter Jones OBE (CO 23 Pnr Regt). Everyone arriving into Theatre would come through this area before being moved to different insertion points along the border.

RHQ, 144 (HQ) Sqn (including the Army War-Graves Teams), 187 (Tancred) Sqn and 206 Pioneer Sqn. 518 Pioneer Sqn were split into many areas in order to support the Main Effort (ME), but essentially headed up the Main Theatre Reception Centre.

Once all Brigades were in place the UK Armed Forces breached the Border with 23 Pioneer Regt heading towards BASRA in support of Humanitarian Tasks for displaced personnel. We set up base at the BASRA Airfield watching the Airstrikes and Artillery Bombardments by night and deploying with food and water by day supported by the Battalion of the Black Watch (Armoured Infantry), in their Warrior Fighting Vehicles. We had a number of small arms exchanges with Iraqi soldiers but these were quickly resolved by the use of the Warrior 30mm Rarden Canon.

We had a mixture of Embedded Press with the Regiment with teams from the Guardian and ITV (Romilly Weeks). They required constant supervision for both safety and to clarification of what they were

actually reporting. They worked really well.

After only 1 week, the Regiment was re-tasked to convert from Humanitarian Support to an Infantry (Light Role) Regiment and given its allocated Area of Responsibility (AOR) close to the Port of Umm Qasr. This area had already been taken by 3 Commando Bde but required stabilising as a number of problematic persons still remained hidden within the Town.

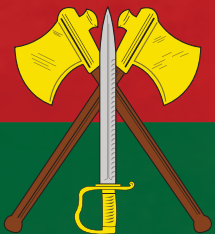
187 (Urban Patrols Coy) and 206 (Rural Patrols Coy) quickly established themselves under their new roles and got to work. This involved typical street patrols that replicated the Northern Ireland type patrolling and house raids during the silent hours. 522 continued to provide the Reception Centre task for follow on forces and engaged in other Pioneer General Tasks which would soon be taken over by our Reserve Regt (168 Pioneer Regt).

Negligent Discharges (ND's) were on the increase due to tiredness and the Regimental Sergeant Major (WO1 Billy Dilkes) was required to put a warning out to everyone over the seriousness of ND's to both injury or life.

He also sadly had to relay the devastating news that Cpl Matty Hull had been KIA from a Blue on Blue Air Strike with an US Airforce A10. Matty was in the process of transferring to the Blues & Royals on a permanent basis.

Apart from this fatality, the Regiment proved its versatility in so many different areas with Awards being presented to the War Graves Teams. Their work there under Capt Jimmy Shields was amongst the most difficult jobs you could imagine. The Regt received a Relief in Place (RIP) at Umm Qasr by US Forces, and the 168 remained in situ replacing 522.

After 5 gruelling months the Regiment returned home in Jun/Jul 2003, with another demonstration of how vital this Regiment was within the British Army. ■



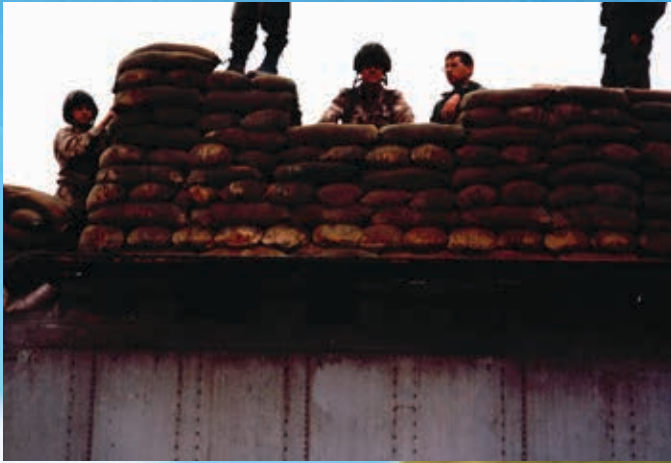
Blast from the Past

Last time we had an edition of Gulf War 1 photos... here are a selection of excellent photos Gulf War 2

BLAST FROM THE PAST









BLAST FROM THE PAST













■ Andy Temple / Paul Keogh in Scotland



■ Dave, Chris and Michael



■ Glen Lath cadging badges



■ Jed Bourne - Paying my respects yesterday. WE WILL REMEMBER THEM.



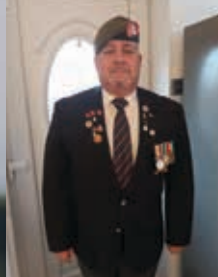
■ Charlie Brown celebrates



■ Cheerful faces before Parade



■ Gloucester Fijian Pioneers



■ Jed Bourne ready for Parade



■ Ian Stopford



■ Joe Johnson explains how to drink



■ Garth Lancaster, Kev Young, Doug Miller



■ Michael Mulvey - All set



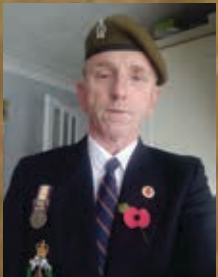
■ Michael Mulvey - in York



■ Gary McQueen and Phill Cook



■ Norman Brown with two beers



■ Peter House



■ Terry Crossland



■ Neil Butterworth



■ Pioneers waiting for the off



■ Steve Layzell ready for parade



■ Norman refusing another beer



■ Taff Powell ready for Parade



■ Roy Palmer and Kev Broome



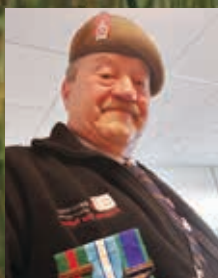
■ Richard Baker and Taff Shaw



■ The RPC Plot at the Field of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey



■ SSgt Buckers Buckley, 282 MC Sqn RLC, laying a wreath at the grave of Cpl Ginge Roberts, Acklam Cemetery, Middlesbrough... Lest We Forget



■ Taff - working but popping to parade!



■ What a motley collection



■ Patcho Meagher on his formula 1 scooter



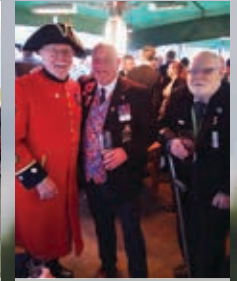
■ SSgt Buckers Buckley, 282 MC Sqn RLC, laying a wreath at the memorial to WO2 Charlie Wood, Albert Park Middlesbrough... Lest We Forget



■ Gloucester Fijian Pioneers collecting for British Legion



■ Mac McAllister - at Morecambe



■ Roy Palmer, Kev Broome and Neil Salt



■ Pioneers join the Paras

remembrance



■ Northampton Branch Christmas Dinner, The Yeoman, Wootton, Northampton
Picture: Supplied



■ Northampton Branch at Army/Navy Club, Northampton
Picture: Supplied



■ John Kear at the Association plot at Westminster Abbey
Picture: Supplied



■ Mick Micklethraite and Kev Hilton, posing outside No 10!
Picture: Supplied



■ Pioneers at Ibaravi Drive
Picture: Supplied



■ Northern Branch at the dogs
Picture: Supplied



■ Pioneers at the funeral of Dennis Hutchings Picture: Supplied



■ Pioneers at the National Arboretum Picture: Supplied



■ Ken and Kirk Smithson at vaccine centre Northampton Picture: Supplied



■ The Grandson of General Simpson (former Col. Comdt) and partner, with Norman Brown and in pensioner Roy Palmer Picture: Paul Brown



■ Nick Swindell with Northern Branch Standard Picture: Supplied



■ Remembrance at Bullington Prison organised by ex Pioneer Craig Perry Picture: Craig Perry



■ Pioneer Reunion Weekend

Picture: Supplied



■ Pioneer Reunion Weekend

Picture: Supplied



■ Pioneer Reunion Weekend - a welcome back to Bicester!

Picture: Supplied



■ Pioneer Reunion Weekend

Picture: Supplied



■ Pioneer Reunion Weekend

Picture: Supplied



■ Pioneer Reunion Weekend

Picture: Supplied



■ Pioneer Reunion Weekend

Picture: Supplied



■ Pioneer Reunion Weekend

Picture: Supplied



■ Pioneer Reunion Weekend

Picture: Supplied



■ Pioneer Reunion Weekend

Picture: Supplied



■ Billy on his tour of Bicester at Reunion Weekend

Picture: Supplied



■ Pioneer Reunion Weekend

Picture: Supplied

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



Report: Paul Brown
Pictures: RPCA Archives



ONLY have 2 pages this time to dig into the Pioneer Archives as my Collectors Corner pages which follow have taken up a lot of the available space.

However, I have found some great photographs from WW1 and WW2.

Above we have War Weapons Week, 10 Feb 41 Aberdeen (the Coy was in Aberdeen from 11 Jul 40 to 29 Sep 41 working on beach defences).

On the right we have a more recent photo - preparation for 2-1 Course Bicester 1979.

On the next page at the top we have an absolutely stunning WW1 photograph of the Labour Corps.

Photos of the Labour Corps are few and far between.

Thank you Douglas Miller for sending it in to add to our archives.

I count 3 men wearing the 'Blackpool Tower' badge!

Below the Labour Corps pic we have a WW2 photograph of Pioneers.

Unfortunately, I don't appear to have any details for this picture, however what a picture! Check out some of those berets!

Until next time. ■



**Digging
through the
archives...**

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





Collectors Corner

Welcome to our Collectors Corner pages, this time we discuss the WW2 era and also publish for the very first time, our findings on the Pioneers 'Red and Green' flash. Also we feature some of your Pioneer finds that you have unearthed on your travels !

Report: Paul Brown
Pictures: Paul Brown

AS I mentioned in the last issue, I have been collecting cap badges from an early age and thought it was about time I put together Pioneer Cap badges and cloth badges with the view to getting a complete collection and getting them framed.

Got a bit more space this issue, so will do a bumper Collectors Corner feature and will now focus on the WW2 era of the Pioneer.

I will see how this pans out as I go as there is a lot to cover.

I have the cap badges to discuss, the formation badges to discuss, together with an interesting feature on the WW2 Pioneer Flash, for which myself and Taff Teague have pooled together our findings that are in print and updated for the first time. To complete this, I will also follow on from the WW2 flash and feature the RLC Red and Green flash, together with some newly found documentation.

Also, I will feature some great Pioneer finds that various Pioneers have found on their travels since the last issue. Thanks in advance must go to Douglas Miller, whom has found some great finds and have sent us various ones in to scan and document. More on this as we go along...

So let's kick this off. Last time, we discussed the WW1 era of the Labour Corps which was disbanded in 1922.

The cap badge of the Labour Corps re-appeared in 1939 with the formation on 17th October 1939 as the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps.

As an addition, the WW1 civilian Non Combatant Labour Corps was also activated in 1939, becoming Non-Combatant Corps in 1940, with conscientious objectors.



Above we have the shoulder badge of the Non Combatant Labour Corps, raised 1939 and the shortening of it's name in 1940 of the Non Combatant Corps.

The NCLC badge above is as rare as rocking horse shit or as rare as hens teeth, depending on which phrase you like the best :)

As mentioned, the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps was also formed.

The badge chosen in 1939 for the AMPC and subsequently Pioneer Corps, was a revival of the Labour Corps badge, formed in 1915.

On 22nd November 1940 the title of the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps was changed to Pioneer Corps.

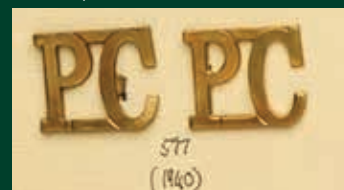
The Corps was fully combatant and at its peak in May 1945 included 12,000 officers, 166,000 United Kingdom personnel and about 400,000 Pioneers from others parts of the Empire.

Below we have, the shoulder badges of the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps.

Next, we have the slip on titles of the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps. Notice that there are 2 versions.



Next, we have the shoulder badge of The Pioneer Corps.



Below we have, perhaps my favourite Pioneer Cap badge. This is an Officers Kings Crown Cap badge and is in bronze.



And, below we have a silver Pioneer Kings Crown Officers badge, as worn on their No.1 dress.



Pioneer Finds...



■ Douglas Miller picked up this lovely Pioneer Pace stick. The bit you hold is shown. Very nice indeed!



■ The old man was given this lovely Pioneer door knocker! It is now on the door!



■ Douglas Miller snapped up another ink stamp! This time the Kings Crown 'Blackpool Tower'.



Below we have the other ranks' Kings Crown Cap badge and collar badges.



Other ranks' cap & collars

Below we have the bakelite plastic cap Kings Crown badge of the Pioneer Corps on the left and on the right we have the other ranks' cap badge for the coloured forage side cap.



Plastic, c.1941
H/m, U.R.s. for coloured f.s.cap

Below we have a Gilt Officers Pioneer Kings Crown Cap Badge on the left and a Pioneer White Metal badge on the right.



GILT OFFICERS

WM

I thought I would keep all the Kings Crown badges together, so have also included this late 1940s chromed 'Royal' Pioneer Kings Crown Cap Badge.



CHROMED

Also featuring the Kings Crown is this 'Royal' Pioneer Corps Embroidered Officers Beret Badge of the late 1940s.



Officers, embroidered

Beret badges, late 1940s

The Pioneer Corps on the date of 26th November 1946 was granted the title 'Royal'.

I will feature and discuss the various changes from 26th November 1946 onwards in the next Collectors Corner Edition - I just wanted to keep all the Kings Crown Cap badges together.

Right, back to WW2 - on my travels I came across a Collector who had an 'Officer Airborne Forces' badge in his Pioneer collection. It is very different to the embroidered one above.



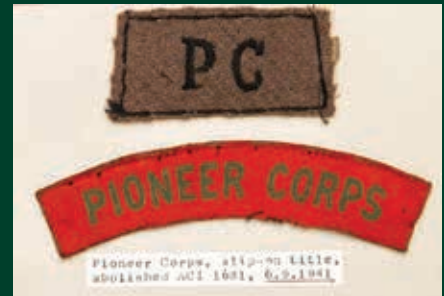
OFFICER AIRBORNE FORCES

I have never seen this badge before and cannot vouch for its authenticity. It may of been worn by a unit of Pioneers whom were with the Gliders, hence rare! More on this badge later, when I discuss 277 Coy.

If it is authentic it is certainly a very nice, very rare badge! - (Edit Note: I have found more info on this badge, see Page 100).

So, as you can see, so far we have quite a few variations of the aptly named 'Blackpool Tower' cap badge. The above cap badges largely remained unchanged, upto until 1985, apart from sizing and a change from the above Kings Crown to the Queens Crown. We will feature the 'Royal' Pioneer Corps and beyond in the next issue.

Now, let me show you the Shoulder Titles that were used during the WW2 period.



Pioneer Corps, slip-on title; abolished ACI 1681, 6.2.1941

The above Pioneer Corps shoulder title was abolished by Army Council Instruction 1681. This stipulated that In the interest of economy, and in view of the introduction of distinguishing strips authorised by ACI 1118 of 1940, the wearing of shoulder titles >

Pioneer Finds...



■ Douglas Miller picked up this lovely WW1 Crossed Rifle and Pick Ink Stamp. I have never seen one before and I doubt I will ever come across another one! Douglas kindly sent it to me to photograph and also to put some ink on and get an ink stamp! Probably the first time it has seen some ink since WW1!



with battle dress by personnel of the under-mentioned regiments and corps was to be discontinued:- RA, RE, R. Signals, RASC, RAMC, RAOC, CMP, RAPC, AEC, ADC, Pioneer Corps, Intelligence Corps, Recce Corps, ACC and APTC.

Shoulder titles were to be withdrawn forthwith from all personnel of the above mentioned regiments and corps at home stations other than those wearing service dress or those under orders for service overseas.

The above instructions did not apply to commands abroad where troops are clothed in khaki drill garments.

They are also known as slip on titles Slip-on titles were introduced into the British Army from about 1916, but withdrawn almost immediately the war was over.

With the reformation of the Army in 1920 the Army Council stated their preference for embroidered titles, however, as metal titles were cheaper to produce they stuck with them.

I am unaware of any authorised slip-on titles being worn with Service Dress prior to the introduction of battledress.

The next Pioneer shoulder titles were introduced via Army Council Instruction 905 on 12th June 1943.

I will go into more detail later about ACI 905 when I discuss the Pioneer Red/Green flash a bit later...



I won't show any Pioneer buttons this time - I will feature them in the next issue.

What I will also briefly mention is Army Council Instruction 1118 of September 1940 and ACI 2587 of 27th December 1941.

ACI 1118 basically mentions what distinguishing marks, such as rank badge background, arms of service and formations badges etc that you were approved to wear. For example, this Pioneer rank badge with it's red Pioneer backing.



Army Council Instruction 2587, basically cancels out ACI 1118. As stated earlier I will go into detail about these Army Council Instructions, when I talk about the Pioneer Red and Green Flash - did you know that the Pioneer Red/Green flash very nearly was light blue!

More on that in a moment! Let's talk about the Army Formation badges that Pioneers wore on their uniforms in WW2.

Formation signs were first used by the British Army in WW1 in order to provide an easy method of visual identification of the various units.

They were worn on the upper sleeve in pairs, on epaulettes, on head gear, painted on unit vehicles, and used on road signs.

It was also quickly found that the signs created a morale boosting esprit de corps as each unit became proud of its own symbol. After WW1 the use of formation signs was discontinued, they were reintroduced at the outbreak of WW2.

Divisional Signs were reintroduced early in 1940, but instructions were given in 1941 for all formation signs to be referred to as Formation Badges; the official American designation is Shoulder Sleeve Insignia.

I collect the Pioneer Formation Badges, some of them are extremely hard to find and some of them when they do pop up for sale are prohibitively expensive.

At present I have 4 original badges and 4 reproduction badges.

The reproduction badges are a bit hit and miss, some are quite good reproductions but many are pretty poor indeed. I doubt I will ever end up with a full set, but you never know! They would look pretty good framed with all the other badges in one frame!

Pioneers, were a part of many different Groups in WW2. Here are the badges that they wore...



21 ARMY GROUP, HEADQUARTERS BRITISH ARMY OF THE RHINE

The familiar sign of Field Marshall Viscount Montgomery's Headquarters first appeared in September 1943.

The badge worn on both arms of the battledress blouse or service jacket by all members of the HQ Staff of 21st Army Group was two crusaders' swords in gold, crossed, on a blue cross on a red shield. The badge was also worn by GHQ 2nd Echelon, 21st Army Group.

It was 21st Army Group which carried out the invasion of Europe in June 1944, fighting its way from the Normandy beaches to the banks of the Elbe, its Commander accepting the surrender of the Germany Army at Luneburg Heath on 6th June 1944.

When HQ 21st Army Group became, in August 1945, HQ British Army of the Rhine, the sign continued to be worn by the staff of the British HQ in Germany.



21st ARMY GROUP (GHQ AND L OF C TROOPS)

The HQ 21st Army Group sign, minus the crusaders' swords - i.e. a blue cross on a red shield - was worn by all ranks of the 21st Army Group GHQ troops and L of C formations and units not allotted to any lower formation which had its own distinguishing badge.



SOUTHERN COMMAND (UK)

The astronomical constellation of the Southern Cross set on a shield formed the basis of the Southern Command sign.

The colouring of the shield, forming a background to the five stars, varied according to the arm of the service of the wearer.

This obtained except in the case of Command Headquarters, the colouring of the shield in this case being the red, black and red horizontal bars of a Command HQ pennant and brassard.

There were some fourteen variations of this Command's badge, according to the regimental or Corps colours of the different arms of the service.

For example, the Royal Artillery's shield was halved, the top being dark blue, and the lower half red; the Sappers had a red shield divided by a dark blue diagonal strip; the REME shield had three vertical bars of blue, yellow and red; that of the RASC was half yellow, half dark blue; the Pioneers were red and green, as shown on the badge above - I have a nice original Pioneer version of this one.

In all cases the pattern of the stars of the Southern Cross was superimposed.



SECOND ARMY

The Second Army, formed in England in the summer of 1943, adopted a similar sign to that of the First Army, a blue cross being substituted for the red.

Second Army was raised for the invasion of Europe, and went ashore in Normandy on D Day, 6th June 1944, under the command of Lieutenant General Sir Miles Dempsey KCB, KBE, DSO, MC.

Forming part of the 21st Army Group, Second Army saw much hard fighting in the establishment of the beachhead, at Caen, and in the break-out which culminated in the German defeat at Falaise.

Then followed the drive across France, the crossing of the Seine and the Somme, the liberation of Brussels, and the sweep up to the banks of the Maas, which was held during the winter of 1944-45.

The spring of 1945 saw Second Army engaged in the clearance of the enemy between the Maas and the Rhine.

On 24th March 1945, it was 12 and 30 Corps of Second Army which forced the northern crossing of the Rhine. This was a key move.

Then followed the drive across North-West Germany - Munster, Osnabruck, Bremen and Hamburg - and to the banks of the Elbe, which ended in the surrender of the last remaining German armed forces.



FIRST CANADIAN ARMY

The First Canadian Army was raised in England on 6th April 1942, having under command by the end of that year the 1 and 2 Canadian Corps, comprising the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions and the 4th and 5th Canadian Armoured Divisions.

The 1 Canadian Corps with the 1st Canadian Division and the 5th Armoured Division left the United Kingdom in 1943 to come under command of the Eighth Army in the invasion of Sicily and Italy.

First Canadian Army, with the remaining Canadian forces in the UK, then came under command of 21st Army Group for the invasion of Europe, and the formation went ashore in Normandy in June 1944.

After the break-out from the beachhead the Canadian Army was allotted the coastal route in the sweep up the Channel coast through France and Belgium as far as the Scheldt estuary.

During the winter of 1944-45 First Canadian Army was located at Tilburg in Southern Holland; it then moved forward to Grave, near Nijmegen, for the operations which drove the enemy from the Reichswald Forest and to the north bank of the Waal.

Following the Rhine crossing the Canadian Army swung north and west into occupied Holland and fought westwards in the final operations which led to the capitulation of the Nazi forces and the liberation of Holland.

First Canadian Army's sign was a scarlet horizontal diamond with a centre band of dark blue.



1 CORPS

A white spearhead on a scarlet diamond was the badge of 1 Corps. The Corps formed part of the BEF, proceeding overseas in September 1939 to France.

It was among the formations withdrawn from Dunkirk in May 1940.

The Corps badge was adopted whilst the formation was part of Home Forces and was symbolic of the selection of this Corps as an assault formation.

I Corps was an assault formation for D Day, attacking with 3rd Division at Sword Beach and 3rd Canadian Division at Juno Beach. While I CTRE was kept under the direct command of I Corps HQ, a platoon of 19th Field Co was attached to 3rd Canadian Division to assist with beach obstacle clearance once the landings had been made. 1 Corps fought across France, Belgium and Southern Holland.

The formation formed the first static district of occupied Germany, taking over the control and administration of the Rhine Province and Westphalia in the final stages of the campaign.



8 CORPS

8 Corps has had two badges. As 8 Corps District (covering the counties of Devon, Cornwall and Somerset) of Southern Command in 1940-42, the badge of a black (Francolin) partridge on a white oval was worn. In February 1943, HQ 8 Corps moved to Scotch Corner, near Darlington, in Northern Command. The 9th and 42nd Armoured Divisions were placed under command and a new badge was adopted, the original badge being retained by the newly formed South-Western District which was raised to take over the former 8 Corps area in South-West England. 8 Corps' second badge was appropriate to the formation's new role, an armoured corps. It was a charging knight in armour in white on a scarlet square. 8 Corps formed part of 21st Army Group, landing in Normandy in June 1944. With the 7th and 11th Armoured Divisions under command it took part in the operations from the beachhead to the Elbe, moving into Schleswig-Holstein on the final defeat of the German armies, when it formed 8 Corps administrative district of the British Army of the Rhine, with its HQ at Plön.



12 CORPS

12 Corps, formed in Home Forces, was until 1944 located in South-Eastern Command. Its badge, familiar in Kent and Surrey, was three trees, an oak, an ash and a thorn, set in oval frame on a black background.

The three trees were chosen to link with the name of the commander, Major General (now Lieutenant General) Sir AFAN Thorne, KCN, CMG, DSO and "the Oak, the Ash and the Thorn" in "Puck of Pook's Hill," for it was in the Pool's Hill country that the Corps was raised.

12 Corps formed part of 21st Army Group for the invasion of Europe, and fought its way as part of Second Army through France, Belgium and Holland, across the Rhine, where it was one of the two assault Corps, and in the sweep through North-West Germany, Bremen and Hamburg falling to 12 Corps in the final operations before VE Day.



30 CORPS

Another badge adopted in the Middle East was that of 30 Corps, a black charging boar set in a white circle on a square black background. The 30th was one of the Western District formations, where it distinguished itself in the drive to Tobruk in November 1941, and the battle of the

Omars.

The Corps formed part of the Eighth Army at El Alamein, where it was composed of the 50th (Northumbrian), 51st (Highland) and the 7th (Armoured) Divisions.

Early in 1944 the formation was withdrawn from the Mediterranean and returned to UK to join 21st Army Group.

Landing in Normandy, the Corps under the command of Lieutenant General Sir Brian Horrocks KCB, CB, DSO, MC fought across France, Belgium and Southern Holland to the Rhine.

It was one of the assault formations in the Rhine crossing and drove deep into Germany in the final operations.

30 Corps became one of the Corps Districts of the British Army of the Rhine, covering the Province of Hannover, with the HQ at Nienburg.



AIRBORNE TROOPS

The well-known badge of Bellerophon astride a winged Pegasus in pale blue on a dark maroon background is worn by all Airborne troops, and where there were no separate badges to distinguish between the units of the 1st and 6th Airborne Divisions. Below the badge on a separate maroon strip is the word "Airborne" in pale blue.

The word "India" also in pale blue, is incorporated in the badge, below the hooves of Pegasus, when worn by Indian airborne troops.

It was in November 1941, that Major General FAM Browning CBE, DSO, MC was appointed GOC and the Airborne Forces began to take shape with the formation of the 1st Parachute Brigade.

This was the result of the hard work of experiment and development which had commenced in the summer of 1940. February 1941 had seen the first British airborne action.

On the 10th of that month the first British parachutists to drop on enemy territory landed in Italy near Monte Vulture with the object of destroying the aqueduct water supply of the Province of Apulia.

This was followed by the successful airborne action at Bruneval, near Le Harve.

From these beginnings the airborne forces grew, and by May 1943, two airborne divisions (the 1st and 6th) had been formed in the UK.





BEACH GROUPS

The fouled anchor in red on a pale blue background within a real circle was the badge of the Beach Groups.

These groups were composed of specialist units of the Army, Navy and RAF, formed in a complete amphibious formation.

The naval element was made up of RN Signals and RN Commandos, the RAF provided a balloon barrage section for the defence of the beaches and specialists who prepared the way for the RAF's airstrips; the Army provided an infantry battalion for the seizing of the beach and the defence of the beachhead perimeter, Royal Engineer Field Companies, Mechanical Equipment Platoons, A Stores Section and Transportation units, RASC general transport companies with DUKWs, a DID and Petrol supply unit, an RAMC unit, CNP traffic control, and a REME Recovery Section and Pioneer Companies.

Beach Groups first operated in the landings in Sicily.

On 6th June 1944, D Day, on the Normandy beaches beach groups troops landed with the assault troops and distinguished themselves in the establishment and maintenance of the beachhead.



AIRFIELD CONSTRUCTION GROUPS

The Airfield Construction Groups were composed of Royal Engineer Road Construction Companies and Pioneer Corps Companies.

Their circular badge, divided into three segments, incorporated their colours: the red and blue of the Sappers, and the red and green of the Pioneers.

The white geometrical design set in the centre of the badge was representative of the airstrips they constructed. Their task was that of rapid airfield construction for fighter strips in the forward areas.



BERLIN DISTRICT

Originally designated Berlin District (and later "Area"), British Troops Berlin, was adopted shortly after the occupation of the British Zone by the 7th Armoured Division and attached troops, for the Administrative HQ of the British sector. The formation badge was a black circle surrounded by a scarlet ring – symbolic of the encirclement

of the black spot of Europe.



NETHERLANDS DISTRICT

Originally designated West Holland District, this formation came into existence early in 1945 for service in BLA as one of the Districts of 21st Army Group's L of C.

The District was formed to cover, initially, the liberated area of Holland from Walcheren and the Scheldt estuary and south of the Waal, but later assumed responsibility for the military administration and rehabilitation of the Netherlands following the German surrender in May 1945.

It was then that the District was re-designated "Netherlands" and its HQ was established at The Hague.

The District's badge was a typical Dutch scene, a windmill, cottage and a dyke by the banks of a canal, the design being in light blue on a white background within a blue circular border.

So, I believe that this covers all of the Formation badges that Pioneers wore throughout WW2. I will cover the period after WW2 in the next Collectors Corner.

Now, I am squeezing in details of the Airborne Badge mentioned earlier and a few extra pages that I have come across >

Pioneer Finds...



186. Official Postcard No. 186. Copyright reserved. A British Labour Battalion at Work. Daily Mail War Pictures. ■ Douglas Miller picked up this lovely postcard, depicting 'A British Labour Battalion at War'. The rear of the postcard reads, A Labour Battalion making a road through captured territory on the British Front.



Pioneer Finds...

12 PETROL DEPOT
ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS

D COY 30 BN
DUKE OF CORNWALLS LIGHT INFANTRY



CHRISTMAS 1943



338 (A) COY

PIONEER CORPS

A happy Christmas to all ranks of 12 Petrol Depot R.A.S.C. - D Coy 30 D.C.L.I. and sections 338 (A) Coy P.C. attached. We hope that the fare (shown

on reverse) and programme of the days activities will make it a merry one.



9th Anti-Mine Coy. Capt.

CHRISTMAS SERVICE



06,45 hrs - REVEILLE

THE SERGENTS WILL BRING YOUR TEA...



07,30 hrs
CONDUCTED BY REV. G. H. WOOLLEY
V.C. DSR. MC.

CHRISTMAS DINNER



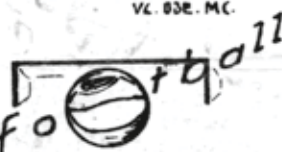
12,45 hrs D COY 30 D.C.L.I.
SECTIONS 338 (A) COY P.C.
130 PETROL DEPOT R.A.S.C.
12 PETROL DEPOT R.A.S.C.



08,45 hrs

BREAKFAST

10,30 hrs



12 PETROL DEPOT - R.A.S.C.
D COY 30 D.C.L.I.



CHRISTMAS TEA

17,00 hrs 12 PETROL DEPOT R.A.S.C.
130 PETROL DEPOT R.A.S.C.
D COY 30 D.C.L.I.
SECTIONS 338 (A) COY P.C.



21,30 - 23,45 hrs

FOOD AND DRINK - IN CANTEEN
HAVE A PARTY - !



15,00 hrs
CHRISTMAS BROADCAST
AFTERNOON FROM LONDON

TABLE TENNIS - DARTS TREASURE HUNT



20,00 hrs

CHRISTMAS CONCERT



23,59 hrs

AND SO TO BED...

12888888 ROTH E. P.C.

■ We picked up this lovely 1943 Christmas Day Menu from some of 338 Pioneer Coy. Designed by Pioneer13809536 Roth, whom enlisted at North Africa and was likely to be from the Vichy controlled concentration camps. They certainly had a good Christmas Day menu!



Airborne Pioneers

Before we went to press I had a discussion with our historian John Starling, I realised that we have an article on Airborne Pioneers! Also, in addition, I feature a few more badges that I have come across, including another Kings Crown Pioneer Cap badge!

Report: Paul Brown
Pictures: Paul Brown

BEFORE we went to press I had a discussion with our historian, Lt Colonel John Starling. I, soon realised that we had published a small article a while back on Airborne Pioneers!

I thought it would be fitting to include the article, in with the above 'Airborne Pioneers' badge and also to include a few additional items of the period that have cropped up, since I did the earlier pages in Collectors Corner.

The photo above is in the hands of a collector. I am hoping to get a high resolution copy of the photo to add to our archives. Great to see Pioneers wearing Airborne smocks! It is a cracking photograph of 277 Airborne Coy, Pioneer Corps. The collector states that it was took at Nijmegen in 1944, which would add up to what we have on 277 Coy.

277 Company, Pioneer Corps was involved in Operation Market Garden.

After the remnants of the British 1st Airborne Division had been evacuated to the southern banks of the Neder Rijn from the Oosterbeek Perimeter, 209 aircraft which had been dispatched from airfields in England landed at Oud Keent airfield (Grave). Integrated in the Airborne Forward Delivery Airfield Group (AFDAG), 277 Company unloaded supplies from incoming flights and facilitated the return to England of American glider pilots who had flown in the glider-borne elements of the US 82nd Airborne Division in the initial assault. We do not have accurate numbers of personnel involved.

Here is the article on 277 Coy, published in *The Pioneer*, British Army of the Rhine, 1943-1936 by Major S Clapp, PC, Officer Commanding 963 AUCL.

Airborne to Arnhem

September sunshine in 1944 found five puzzled members of 963 Admin Unit Civil Labour frantically packing kit. They had been informed they were part of 1st Airborne Division and they were already a day late in joining their new formation at an airfield. Arrival at Bulford did nothing but add to the puzzle. After two hectic hours they found themselves arrayed in red

berets and smocks, and were the proud possessors of a jeep trailer and para-troop helmets. Here, too, they met those who were to be their comrades, including 277 Pioneer Corps Company. This company had been recalled to England from Normandy after taking part in the land assault. They had been told they were wanted for a "special task", which had later turned out to be work with Airborne Forward Delivery Airfield Group, loading stores and establishing dumps.

Dawn the next day saw a huge crocodile of jeeps heading for the Midlands, each one bulging with newly fledged "Red Devils", travelling they knew not where but all seeking adventure. Such was the exuberance shown that if the destination had been Berlin no-one would have been dismayed.

Then followed two awful weeks of briefing and re-briefing, again and again, day after day. As the Allied Armies advanced so had the ultimate destination of the force to be changed. At long last final orders were received that the unit would be strategically placed just outside the left flank of the British spearhead.

The flight started in a gale and as England slowly swayed past details of briefing came to mind, "In the event of a plane getting hit the crew will bale out, airborne personnel will take their chance".

The skies over the North Sea proved boisterous and it was easy to sympathise with the unknown men who waved from a rubber dinghy 700 feet below.

To them the passing of such a mighty armada must have been symbolic – a big brother coming into a fight on the side of a smaller brother who had been knocked down by a bully. Towards the Belgian coast a British submarine nosed forward to its duty. It was difficult to imagine that the thing which looked like a huge cigar was in reality a dangerous fighting machine.

The Belgian coast, Brussels, long road convoys covered with white stars, others without visible markings, tiny puffs of smoke from German guns, changing camouflage. Nijmegen bridge being plastered.

This was the view from a grand-stand seat at one of the biggest two sided tussles ever staged. A sudden tilt, a rush of air, a slide across the sky and the landing was accomplished. Planes lined two abreast on a small wet green space surrounded by canals. There was no railway, no landing

sock; just wet grass and a few glider pilots waving silk squares to give wind directions.

Airborne in two hours

Here the men of 277 Company came into their own and with complete indifference to the fact that they were among the first allied troops to land in German occupied Holland they off-loaded the planes so quickly that none were grounded for more than a few minutes.

The entire flight of over 200 planes was off-loaded and airborne in approximately two hours.

Then a quick forming of patrols and guards, followed by a meal in hastily dug fox holes.

It was a quiet night, broken only by news that the Germans were pulling out from a village two miles away. Where noise had been expected, quiet was found.

At first light "963" became mobile. A short journey, and the fording of a canal, brought the party to the next village.

"Where is the Mayor?", they asked.

"There isn't one", was the reply.

"Where is the Labour Exchange?"

"There isn't one."

"Who runs the village?"

"Father X."

Invitation Decline

So, amid great excitement the first British jeep seen in the village pulled up at the Priest's house.

A mixture of Dutch and German brought out the information that manpower in the village was in short supply but that it was much better in the next town which was still held by the Germans. An invitation to accompany the Priest to the town was instantly declined.

A compromise was reached and a journey was made to the next village from where the unit was able to procure sufficient tentage to keep dry in the succeeding days.

Then followed a few lazy days with no one using civil labour and time being spent in ration hunting.

British supplies were not arriving and all had to get what they could where they could.

A civilian car and a knowledge of the language gave "963" a good issue of German rations which, although not good, certainly helped out.

Civil labour remained almost unwanted, for the units preferred to make use of 277 Company rather than take the risk of using civilians so far forward.



The force gradually broke up but 277 Company stayed on and with the REs built an alternative pontoon bridge over the river Wael, when the Nijmegen bridge came under shell fire.

This task was done under fire from which the company suffered eight casualties.

Chasing their tail

Officers and men of "963" spent most of their time chasing their sea-tail. This tail contained all their bedding and personal kit and went astray so long that at one time they despaired of ever having a clean shirt again.

Their day became dominated by laundry questions. Every day one of the unit washed his smalls and was then off duty until they were dry. The OC had the indignity forced upon him of appearing at Divisional HQ in beret, a smock, a pair of trousers and boots.,

This was a strange adventure. It would have been so different had luck and the weather been on the side of our fighting men.

For those who were in the operation it was thrilling to think that they of all the Pioneer Corps had been chosen for the job.

At least, even if they did not get the chance to help the men of Arnhem, they did make history by being the first Pegasus Pioneers.

Edit Note: I mentioned that the above story we have published recently before, however I have also come across another story of 277 Coy that was published in The Pioneer in March 1952. Here it is...

The Airborne Pioneers by F B Wooding (late OC 277 Coy RPC)

The following is written in response to a request for the story of the Pioneers in Nijmegen.

277 Coy was the first Pioneer Coy to arrive - four sections under Lt James reported for duty 27 September 1944, the remaining sections and HQ moved in on 28 September.

277 Coy were attached to 1st Airborne Division and went to Holland by air in Dakota planes from England on 26 September, landing at a temporary airstrip at Grave, a few miles south of Nijmegen.

They were part of a formation known as AFDAG (Airborne Forward Delivery Airfield Group) which consisted of 277 Coy PC and special units of Medical, RASC, REME, Provost and a Signals troop, under the command of Major Garland-Wells.

The object of the Force was the supply and maintenance of the Airborne forces of Arnhem, and they were to be landed - not dropped - near Arnhem as soon as the Airborne Division had secured control of the landing ground.

277 Coy was brought back from France on 30 August and attached to HQ Airborne Forces at Bulford Camp. When they were issued with the familiar scarlet berets and paratrooper smocks the excitement was terrific, although we had no idea of what sort of operation was planned and less than 5 per cent of the unit had ever been in a plane.

Jeeps, with trailers were also issued - our normal transport with heavy stores being sent to join the Seaborne part of the formation. After being briefed by Brigadier

Bower of Airborne Forces HQ we moved to Lutterworth Transit Camp to await orders. Whilst there we heard of the Airborne landings at Arnhem, and other areas, and a few days later the Coy moved to their allotted Aerodrome at Spanhoe in Lincolnshire, where we were strictly confined to camp.

Owing to the difficulties encountered by the Airborne Division at Arnhem, several plans for the AFDAG were made and cancelled; eventually it was decided to land the formation on a forward airstrip at Grave to establish a Forward Maintenance Control. The flight took place on 16 September 1944 and over 200 planes were landed without incident, the Pioneers doing a grand job, unloading the whole formation in under three hours.

Only 5 per cent of the Pioneers were airsick, and their enthusiasm was tremendous. I should mention here that only one Pioneer asked to be left out of the adventure, and he was a veteran of 57, whom we left behind at Spanhoe.

As it was found necessary to drop supplies by air the AFDAG formation was broken up and 277 Coy, was sent to Nijmegen to work with 30 Corps on road and bridge maintenance in the forward areas under the CREs 49, 50, 51 Divisions, and others.

During the period the Coy had a number of casualties by shellfire - 5 fatal (buried at Nijmegen) and 15 injured.

During November 3 more Pioneer Coys joined us in Nijmegen, where we spent Christmas 1944.

In the 1945 offensive 277 Coy took part in several special bridging operations including Blackfriars Bridge over the Rhine, bridges over the Rhine River, the canals Twenthe-Kirsten, and many smaller ones over numerous dykes. Being attached to 2nd Canadian Corps, 277 Coy were rightly proud of their red berets, which, by sepca permission, they were allowed to keep after being re-issued with khaki berets, and which were worn on leave to the surprise and suspicion of the MPs at home.

Last minute Collectors Corner...

So, just when I thought that I had covered all the Pioneer Kings Crown 'Blackpool Tower' badges, another one turns up!

I found it in the hands of a Collector. It is an Anodised badge, fairly rare, but they do crop up for sale!

The rear has a brass slider marked GROVE MFG. BHAM.



I also realised that I had missed the absolutely stunning WW2 sidecap of the Pioneers! What a sidecap! (not Airborne!)



Now, lets look at another badge that I have come across - Italian Pioneer Labour.



The Italians in Britain after Italy changed sides were known as Co-operators, the Co-Belligerents were those in Italy who fought on the Axis side.

Italy's declaration of Co-Belligerency offered Italian Prisoners of War held in Britain the opportunity to become Co-Operators. Formed into Italian Labour Battalions under their own officers, their prisoner of war battle dress with brightly coloured patches on trousers and jacket, replaced in May 1944 by a field service cap and chocolate brown battle dress, was worn with Italian badges of rank and printed 'Italy' designations, COD Branston being instructed in December 1943 to obtain 140,000 suits and designations.

Three months later the chocolate battle dress was replaced by a suit in spruce green, its colour 'as near as possible to that of the Italian Army's uniform' 'a service stripe in Italian national colours' being added below the 'Italy' designation. It is possible that the badge was added to this spruce green BD.

Those refusing to become Co-operators retained their patched battle dress without the Italy designation.

By February 1945 six Italian Artisan Works Companies were working in Britain, their turnout and compartment checked by Italian police patrols. As the war ended their number gradually diminished, the last Italian Co-Operator Company disbanding on 28th June 1946.

I have also realised that I have some more WW2 era badges to show you from the Spanish Companies, the Basuto Pioneer Companies and also the Indian Pioneer Corps, however my last minute, squeezed in, space is nearly up here, so I will discuss these in the next newsletter and leave you with something quite interesting indeed, the original WW2 Pioneer Flash and also for completeness the modern Pioneer Flash >



The Pioneer Flash

by Mr Paul Brown & Maj (Retd) R Teague

Published in print for the first time and now updated, let us dispel the many myths and legends of the WW2 Pioneer Red and Green flash! Did you know the flash was nearly blue in colour! To keep the history complete we also feature the later 23 Pioneer Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps Red and Green flash.



Report: Paul Brown / Maj (Retd) R Teague
Pictures: Paul Brown / Maj (Retd) R Teague

I was researching the origins of the original WW2 Pioneer Red and Green flash for this Collectors Corner page. Its origins have been something of myth and legend over many years.

After digging through piles and piles of Army Council Instruction documents, I discovered that the Pioneers Red and Green flash was very nearly light blue in colour!

Maj (Retd) R Teague also discovered the flash in a rare document, The Monograph of Labour 1939-1945. Combining our findings together and also adding further references from The Handbook of the British Army 1942, we have combined both of our research into this feature.

When Maj Teague joined the Pioneers in 1984 he was informed that the Corps Colours of Scarlet Red and Brunswick Green which then appeared on the Corps Flag, Stable Belt and Lanyard was, awarded for manning the Guns at Dunkirk and the other was a Battle Honour for D-Day, representing the blood spilt, Blood on Grass. We found that none of these were true.

We also found the following tongue and cheek comments on Facebook, whereby it was suggested that it is "was Uncle Bob

Fox and Uncle Tom, were the two Pioneers that rescued the guns and fired them in the Second World War".

We have studied many historical articles and found that the Pioneers did not get a Red and Green flash because of the mythical and nonsensical story that they manned the Artillery guns from fleeing Artillery troops or that it represented the blood spilt!

Published in print for the first time and now updated, let us dispel the many myths and legends of the WW2 Pioneer Red and Green flash!

Also to keep the history of the flash complete, we have compiled the history of modern RLC Red and Green flash, complete with an unearthed draft, dated 3rd December 2001.

So here we go, the history published for the very first time... firstly a bit of background history.

ARMY COUNCIL INSTRUCTION (ACI) NO. 419

ACI 419 was issued by the War Office, during the week ending 1 May 1940.

It stated that 'Divisional Signs or badges will not be worn by British divisions during the war.'

This policy did not apply to Dominion Divisions. Divisional Signs or badges may be worn by these formations at the discretion of the Dominion military authorities concerned'.

This was clearly in line with the purpose of denying the enemy the means of distinguishing ranks and arms of service.

However, even before the issue of ACI 419 of 1940, the policy was proving to be unsatisfactory as can be seen from extracts from the official correspondence that took place between Lieutenant General Viscount Gort, VC, the Commander in Chief of the British Expeditionary Force and the War Office.

36th MEETING OF THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF (CIGS) WAR COMMITTEE

A future Army Council Instruction would later be cancelled and work was already underway before ACI 419 was issued to make recommendations and amendments to allow such signs or badges.

At the 36th meeting of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) War Committee on 6th November 1939 it was

agreed that the DSW (W) in consultation with the Director of Personal Services (DPS) and Director of Ordnance Service (DOS) should make recommendations as to alterations to existing regulations for officer's rank badges and other distinctive markings for all ranks in Battle-Dress to meet the request of the Command in Chief (C-in-C), British Expeditionary Force (BEF).

This letter made various amendments and colour changes and these colour changes sent by the General Officer Commanding (GOC) in C, BEF to the War Office differed considerably from the colours

recommended by the War Committee to the Army Council, but the War Committee's recommendations in this respect were not sent to the C-in-C. An Army Council memorandum by CIGS (Secret OS35) stated that the War Committee had considered these proposals and recommended that the Army Council agree with them.

This is where it gets interesting!

Charles Montanaro, the Assistant Director of Ordnance Services (ADOS), stated in a letter dated 21 August 1940 that in the list of colours suggested for the Arm of Service Strips the Pioneers were going to get a Light blue flash! Also listed is the Army Education Corps (AEC) and they were going to get a white flash.

Now you may be wondering why have I listed the Army Education Corps (AEC)? Well it will become clear in a moment.

The Original colours for the Pioneers (AMPC) and the Original Colours of the AEC were crossed out in pencil on the list.

White was crossed out on the AEC Colours and 'Light blue' substituted and 'Light blue' was crossed out in pencil for the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps (AMPC) and 'Red and Green' substituted!

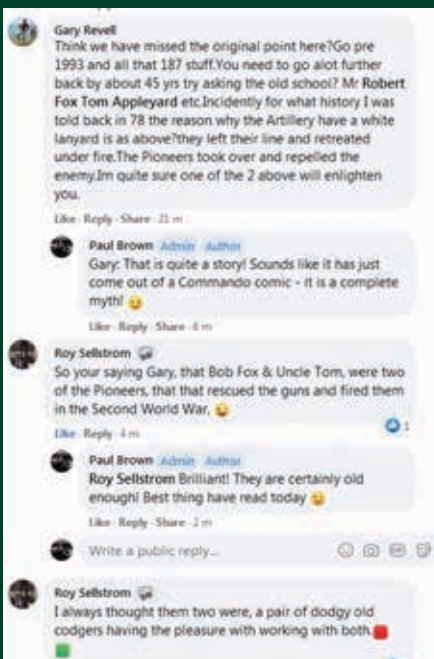
So the Pioneers nearly had the colours of 'Light blue'! The picture above in this post shows the WW2 flash (reproduction) of the Army Education Corps.

This light blue colour which is now the colour of the Army Education Corps was described as 'Cambridge blue' (which it is not, in 1950 the name was changed to Minerva blue).

So why were the colours crossed out and swapped around? Who knows!

This is not documented. If I was to have a good guess it would be this...

- White was not fitting for the AEC and light blue was.





- The Infantry (except Rifles) had a solid 'scarlet' flash.
- The Infantry (Rifles) had a solid 'Rifle green' flash.
- They amalgamated the colours and did half red and half green (not from the taking over of Artillery guns by Uncle Bob Fox and Uncle Tom!).

Either way, be very thankful that this instruction was crossed out and amended as Red and Green looks much better than light blue.

Edit Note: *The WW2 Pioneer Red and Green flash shown to the left is an original and rare as hens teeth! Good reproductions can be had on eBay for a few quid though. In my view they look better than the later re-issued RLC ones which we will discuss later!*

ACI NO. 1118

Based on the recommendations produced from the correspondence and discussions held between General Gort and the War Office, ACI 1118 published on 18 September 1940 and entitled 'Dress - All ranks', set out the first of a number of important instructions issued during the war that related to the subject of distinguishing marks etc. to be worn on the Army uniform (which in the main was the Battle Dress).

By its publication ACI 1118 of 1940 cancelled out the above ACI 419 of 1940 and over a period of time from December 1940 to September 1941 various minor changes and additions were made to ACI 1118 and finalised. Certain distinguishing marks had been approved for wear on the uniform during the period of the war, and these consisted of.

- Command headquarters, corps, divisional independent brigade group and independent brigade signs.
- Arms of service distinguishing marks, including coloured backing to officer's rank badges.
- Distinguishing marks for brigaded infantry in divisions, later to be referred to as 'brigade seniority strips'.
- Regimental flashes.
- Emblems that denoted previous distinguished service.
- Badges on steel helmets.

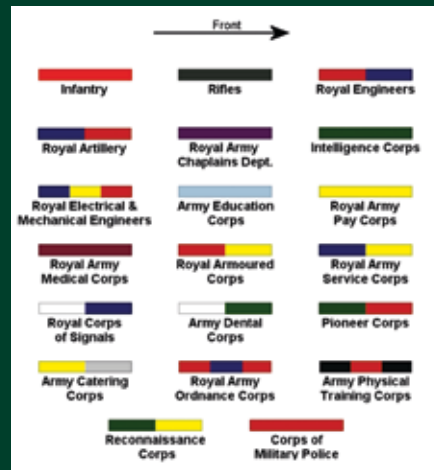
ACI No 1118 has the Colour of Red as the colour backing to an Officers rank badges and the colours of Red and Green to the coloured strip (flash) to be worn below shoulder strap.

The Army Education Corps had their 'light blue', designated as 'Cambridge blue'.

Where two or more colours are shown, the first colour was worn to the fore.

Formation signs were permitted to be worn on uniform below the shoulder title by those troops in independent brigades, divisions, (field) corps and command headquarters. Below this, troops of the

British Army wore an 'arm of service' stripe (2 inches (5.1 cm) by 1/4 inch (0.64 cm) showing the relevant corps colour (for the higher formations, these were most often the supporting arms, for example see below).



Until D-Day these signs were only to be displayed or worn in Britain, if a formation went overseas all formation markings had to be removed from vehicles (tactical signs excepted) and uniforms. This order was obeyed to varying degrees in various theatres of war. However all 21st Army Group formations wore their signs when they went to France.

ACI NO. 2587

A further order of December 1941, published as ACI No. 2587, regarding the wearing of signs, distinguishing strips, flashes, etc, was dated 27 December 1941. This naturally cancelled out the previous ACI of 1118 of 1940, together with all its additions and amendments introduced on 26 July 1941 (ACI 1329 of 1941). It set out the formation badges, arms of service strips, rank badge backing and regimental flashes for wear on uniforms during the period of the war.

ACI No 2587 did not change for the Pioneers, apart from their name. The Pioneers were now not the 'Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps' (AMPC) but now 'Pioneer Corps'. The colours remained the same as published in 1118 above.

It further specified the material of the uniform patch as printed cotton (ordnance issue), this replaced the embroidered felt (or fulled wool) or metal badges used previously.

In other theatres the uniform patch could be made from a variety of materials including printed or woven cotton, woven silk, leather or metal embroidered felt (or fulled wool).

ACI NO. 906

Just one year away from the Allied Invasion of mainland Europe saw the issuing of a series of instructions, the object of which was to ensure the maximum possible security coverage regarding the order of battle of British troops for embarking for service overseas.

Having published detailed instructions governing the wearing of distinguishing marks on uniforms at home, further instructions were issued by ACI 906 which concerned the removal of, and the wearing of, such distinguishing marks by all

formations, units, drafts and individuals either when proceeding overseas or on arrival in all overseas commands.

A notable exception was made to this ruling when the 21st Army Group embarked for the invasion of the Continent in June 1944.

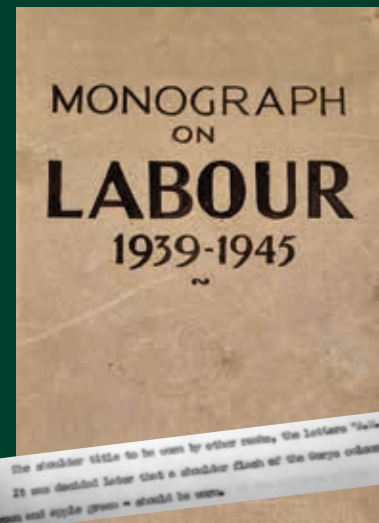
All formation badges, designations, flashes and steel helmet markings continued to be worn by all those troops who went from their concentration areas in England straight into battle in Normandy.

The specific colours of Maroon and Apple Green

So far, we have discussed the various Army Council Instructions and how we could of had the light blue colours of the Army Education Corps.

Only the colours 'Red and Green' are mentioned in these instructions. There is no exact specification of what the red or green is.

A rare document, called "**The Monograph of Labour 1939-1945**" that is over 90,000 words and getting on for 200 pages has the exact specifications of what this 'red and green' colour is.



Inside this hefty document it states "It was decided later that a shoulder flash of the Corps colours – maroon and apple green – should be worn."

I cannot read the War Office date on this copy of the document, however there is another copy that I will check shortly, I think it was put together in 1946.

The formation of the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps (AMPC) was authorised on 17th October 1939 by Army Order 200 of 1939.

The shoulder title to be worn by other ranks, with the letters "AMPC".

It was decided later that the shoulder flash of the Corps colours - Maroon and Apple Green should be worn. These were worn on D-Day as a Beach ID Flash to assist with roles and tasks carried out on the



Beachhead. These are the original colours of the Corps. Now the following article muddies the waters a little...

Different Colours of Wine-Red and Apple-Green Royal Pioneer Corps and Association Magazine No. 16. Vol. 3 Dated October 1948 by Major JE Mee RPC

On 21st August 1948 a parade took place for the Corps Branch Standards to be dedicated, formed up at Wellington Barracks with 27 Branch Standards of the Royal Pioneer Corps Association (200 Veterans and 250 Serving Uniformed Members). They marched to St Martin in the Fields for a service of dedication and then marched to the Cenotaph for a service and Wreath laying.

The Standards were reported that the design was easy to recognise; the effect achieves dignity and avoids tawdriness.

The division is horizontal, with the upper half Wine-Red and the lower Apple-Green.

Such are our true colours in spite of the Scarlet and Grass to which Ordnance issued flashes had accustomed us during the War. Superimposed on both colours is the Corps badge in golden-yellow, and beneath it in plain scroll of the same, bearing the title of the Branch in black lettering.

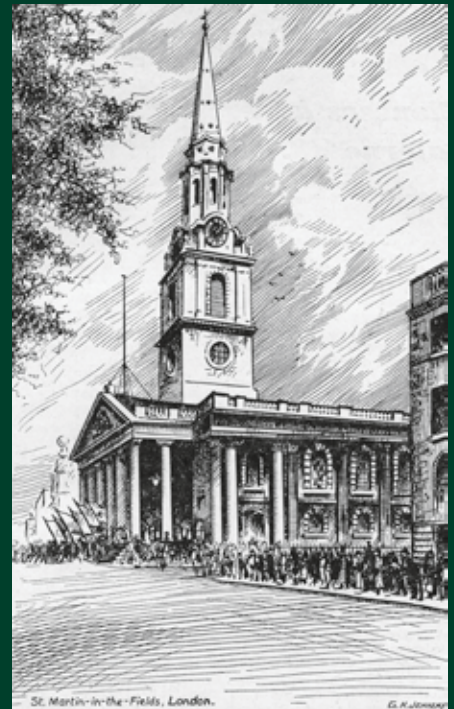
The flag is bordered by a deep fringe of golden-yellow, and the staff tipped with brass point. On the staff below the flag a small silver shield gives the name of the donor."



■ The standard Bearers leave St. Martin-in-the Fields after Dedication Service



■ The service at the Cenotaph and laying of Wreath by Col-Commandant on behalf of all Pioneers



■ St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London - specially drawn for the "Royal Pioneer Magazine", No 16, Vol 3, dated October 1948



■ 35 Coy, Pioneer Corps, Ostend, Belgium, 9 September 1945, look closely you will see the flash!

Picture: RPCA Archive



Conclusion so far...

So, what we have so far, are the Army Council Instructions that state that the colours for the Pioneers were to be "red and green" (light blue crossed out). This was elaborated further in The 'Monograph of Labour' to be the colours of "Maroon and Apple Green"

Later the Association standards were designed differently with the colours of "wine-red and apple green" as we can see from the article on the left dated Oct 1948.

This is an interesting article, it states that Wine-Red and Apple-Green are our 'true' colours and that the colours of 'Scarlet and Grass' are the colours to which 'Ordnance issued flashes had accustomed us'.

My initial thought was that the article on the left written by Maj. Mee was somewhat naive of the facts (Army Council Instructions and also the 'Monograph of Labour').

Facts that also seem to have been missed when the modern day Royal Logistic Corps Red and Green flash was re-issued by the Pioneer Directorate and a green colour of 'Brunswick Green' is mentioned, however more on that in a moment, let's go back to the WW2 era 'Red and Green' colours.

Colour Analysis

One of my specialities in print/publishing was the early utilisation / standardisation of colour in the print industry. Let me explain the difference between 'Maroon' and 'Wine Red' and lets re-produce these colours!

Maroon, becomes a colour when brown is added to red. The word 'maroon' is taken from the French word 'marron' for chestnut.

Wine Red takes it's name from the colour of wines produced in the Burgundy region of France. Other, alternative names are claret, bordeaux, grape, damson etc and follow the wine connection.

The difference between Maroon and Wine Red is that Maroon is a warm colour and Wine Red is a cool colour. Maroon also has a brown look to it.

In printing we utilise CMYK colours, which are Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and K means the Black.

I recognise Maroon to be something like c20%, m90%, y90%, k50%. Maroon is fairly easy to standardise, however Apple Green is not. The modern interpretation of Apple Green is a horrible green and bares no similarity to the Pioneer Apple Green. The modern interpretation for reference is c22.5%, m0%, y100%, k28.6%.

The Apple Green used by Pioneers is a slight variation and a slightly different shade of Apple Green. Granny Smith Apple Green has a breakdown of c86%, m56%, y83%, k74% which is very similar.

I have a WW2 plaque with the Pioneer colours. I have took a hit of the colours from the plaque and the colours are pretty much matched to the Granny Smith Apple Green.

The breakdown of the plaque is c92%, m48%, y83%, k53%, so both are inside tolerances, both share the same amount of yellow and apart from the k black are very similar. The lighting conditions would allow for the variation of the black.

Original Red/Green WW2 Flash

I analysed the Red and Green colours on my two original WW2 flashes. I was

expecting them to be similar to Maroon. I was surprised to find that it was neither Maroon or Wine Red or Apple Green!

The colours of the WW2 flash are Red c3%, m97%, y83%, k18% and Green c67%, m31%, y75%, k58%. This has quite a bit of yellow in there for the green, but the WW2 flashes do indeed have a lot of yellow in the green.

Neither colours are Wine Red, Maroon, Apple Green or Brunswick Green!

This produces the flash below.



Maroon and Apple Green

Now lets re-produce the Pioneer Red and Green flash with the official colours as mentioned in the Monograph of Labour. This is Maroon and Apple Green. Maroon is c20%, m90%, y90%, k50%. The Pioneers Apple Green as mentioned earlier is around c92%, m48%, y83%, k53%



Original WW2 Pioneer Standards

I also grabbed an original WW2 era standard from Norman, to measure what the colour values are. Is the red used in the standard a Maroon or a Wine Red or something else? And what of the green?



I got 2 main values for the red. These are c30, m100, y41, k40 - this corresponds to the colour of Claret. I also got another value of c33, m100, y44, k51 - this corresponds to the colour of Wine Berry. Both values are very close to one another.

I believe the red colour of the Association standard is indeed, a 'Wine Red' colour.

The green colour of the Association standard has a breakdown of c98, m18, y56, k5. This surprisingly, corresponds to a green colour of Viridian Green or Jade Green. Not Apple or Brunswick Green!



Wine Red and Apple Green

Now lets re-produce the Wine Red colour that was mentioned as being the so called 'true' colour as mentioned by Major J E Mee.

The 'Wine Red' colour used is from an original Association standard and the green we have used is 'Apple Green' as discussed earlier.



So, quite a few variations and if I was to hazard a guess...

So far, we have quite a few variations! The original WW2 flash bares no resemblance to the colours of Maroon/Apple Green or Wine Red/Apple Green.

Maroon has brown in the colour and if I

was to hazard a guess, than sometime after the Monograph was published, the official colours were changed from Maroon and Apple Green to Wine Red and Apple Green.

The reason is likely, that the colour of Maroon has a muddy appearance to it (because brown is in the colour) and the colour of Wine Red is more striking.

However, we have no documents or evidence to back this assumption up, apart from the article published by Major Mee in the Oct 1948 Pioneer newsletter.

Right, that is everything we have unearthed on the WW2 era flash. I hope you have enjoyed reading! However, it is not quite over, let's discuss the modern RLC 'red and green' flash!

23 PIONEER REGIMENT, RLC THE MODERN 'RED AND GREEN' FLASH

In 1993 the Royal Pioneer Corps was amalgamated into the newly formed Royal Logistic Corps.

Prior to amalgamation the RPC wore the distinctive Khaki Beret which was surrendered on amalgamation.

The CO 23 Pioneer Regt tasked his Sqdn Commanders to produce a distinctive insignia to denote the Pioneer CEG. Initially to be worn by members of 23 Pioneer Regt. A number of suggestions were made including the crests that used to hang in the Officers' & Sgts' Messes.



OC 187 (Tancred) Company (Maj J A Starling) and 2IC (Capt R G Bennett) decided to copy the Army of Service Stripe worn in WW2. This stripe was worn on both sleeves of battle dress apart from personnel in Southern Command (who wore the Southern Command Flash – a shield with the Southern Cross in Star but backed by the Arm of Service Colours).

The difference between the WW2 era flash and this modern flash was the thickness - the modern flash was 2cm in thickness. The WW2 flash was around 1.5cm in thickness.

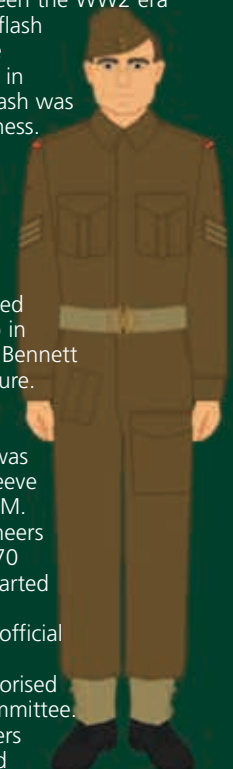
Also the colours are different. The modern flash does not use the original flash colours. The modern flash can be seen above.

The design was agreed during a CO's O Group in April 93 and Capt R G Bennett arranged for manufacture.

Five Flashes were issued to each soldier, paid for by the PRI. It was to be worn on Shirt Sleeve Order, Jumpers and DPM.

Eventually other Pioneers not within the Regt (170 Coy and HQ NI) also started to wear the Flash.

This flash wasn't an official order of dress and unfortunately not authorised by the Army Dress Committee. During this time Pioneers became very proud and



protective as a Regiment or Trade identification or Tactical Recognition Flash. The Flash was worn the same as the WW2 flash, with the front facing colour being Red and the rear Green.

In 2005 the Army directed that all unofficial badges or flashes were to be removed.

This was to standardise the dress across the Army. Pioneers being very proud and connected to the flash held onto it for as long as they could get away with it. But that came to a sad end in Easter 2005 when the Pioneer Flash was removed and later replaced by the RLC Tactical Recognition Flash (TRF).

However, some Pioneers continue to still wear their modern Red and Green flash, but with an element of stealth, inside the inside of their pocket... :)



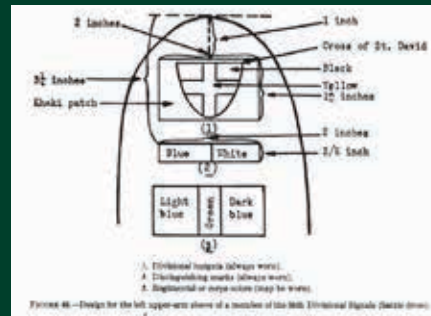
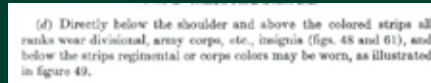
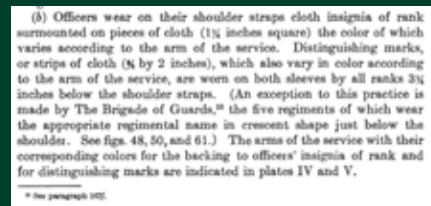
The RLC Pioneer Distinguishing Flash

We have recently unearthed a Draft document, entitled 'The RLC Pioneer Distinguishing Flash', dated 3rd December 2001.

This is an interesting document from the Pioneer Directorate and you can see both pages of this further below.

It would seem from this document that

the Pioneer Directorate did not know of the existence of the WW2 era Army Council Instructions, or of the existence of the Monograph on Labour 1939-1945. They quoted Pages 116 to 119 and Pages IV and V of the Handbook of the British Army



1943, however these pages just give basic instructions on where said flashes etc are to be worn. These pages are above.

On my last Collectors Corner, I also erroneously mentioned that the Pioneer Green was Brunswick Green. On further research there is absolutely no mention of this green colour in any official publication of any kind.

This 'Brunswick Green' colour was also erroneously mentioned in the draft at the bottom of this page, from the Pioneer Directorate, dated 3rd December 2001.

Where this specific 'Brunswick Green' colour comes from, we don't know! It appears to be another myth that has been propagated over the years.

Talking about myths and not Pioneer related, but never the less an interesting read is the myth about the white lanyard of The Royal Artillery.

The Royal Artillery supposedly got a white lanyard for their cowardice, when they deserted their guns! Then 2 Pioneers came along - Uncle Bob and Uncle Tom and manned them! (if only this was true!).

Of course this is a load of rubbish. Lanyards associated with dress came into use in the late 19th Century, when field guns, such as 12/15 pounders, used ammo which had fuses set with a fuse key.

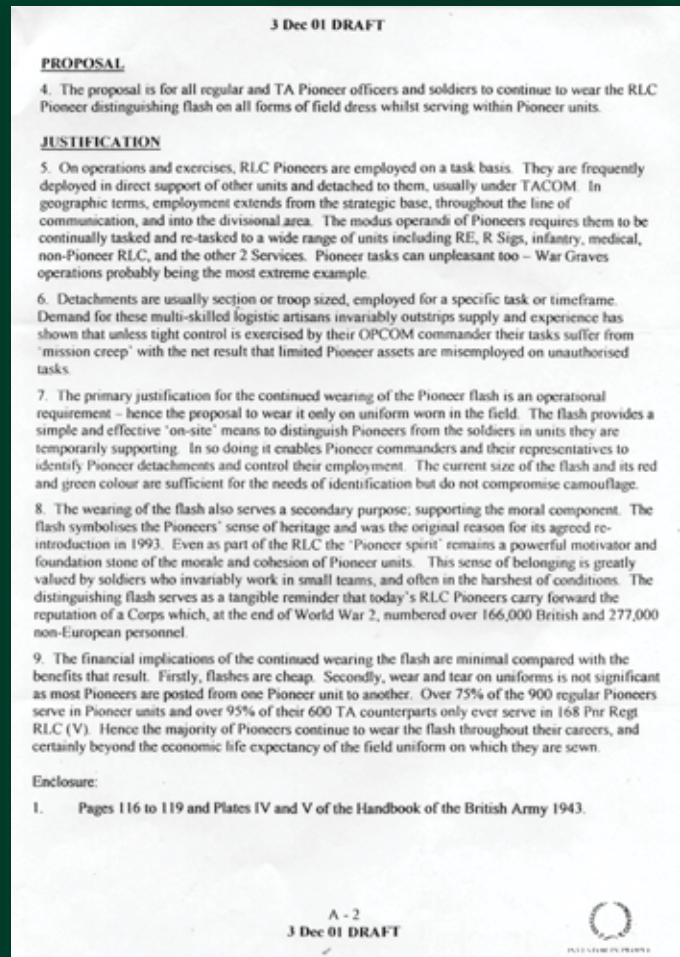
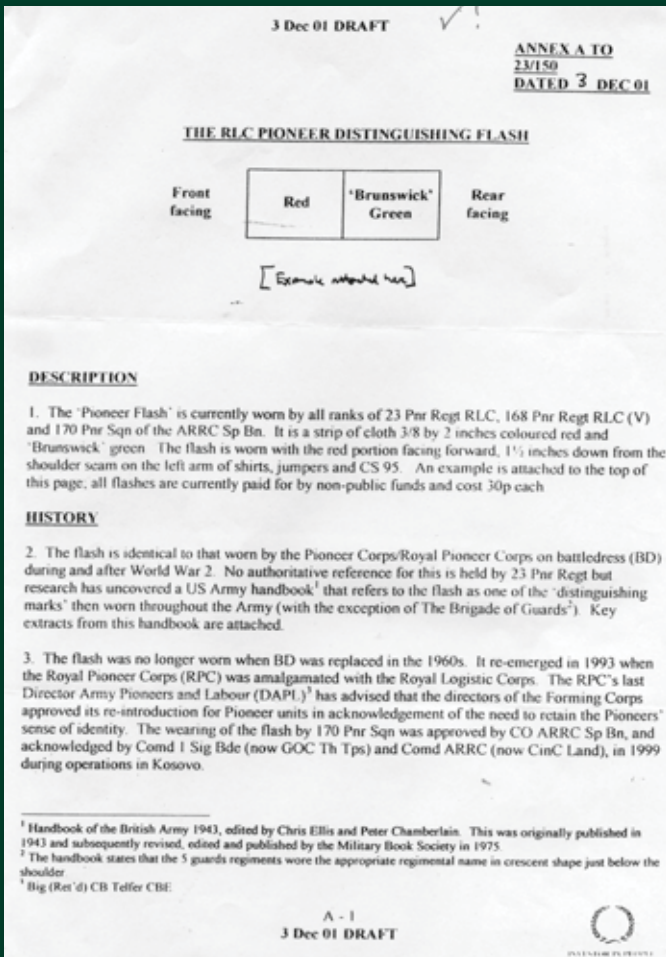
The key was a simple device, and every man had one, attached to a lanyard worn around the neck.

The key was kept in the breast pocket until needed. The lanyard was a simple piece of strong cord, but it was gradually turned into something a bit more decorative, smartened up with 'Blanco', and braided, taking its present form.

You can read more on this myth here www.26thregtra-asc.com/trra.html

Well, I am rapidly running out of space. I hope you have enjoyed reading these bumper Collectors Corner pages, featuring the most complete history of the Pioneer Red/Green flash ever published.

Until next time! ■





Pioneer Finds...



■ Douglas Miller picked up this lovely WW2 painted drawing of the 'Blackpool Tower' badge, painted by a Pioneer. Thank you for sharing it with us Douglas.

Pioneer Finds...



■ The old man picked up this lovely Christmas Card. Looking at the shoulder flash of the Pioneer in the card, it is an Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps card. Probably one of the best Pioneer Christmas Cards in his collection.



Pioneer Finds...



■ I picked up a 35mm slide of the locomotive, 'The Royal Pioneer Corps'. Now scanned in above. Great photograph of the side of the locomotive.

Pioneer Finds...



■ A lovely WW2 Pioneer Christmas card, probably one of the best.



Jehovah's Witness

THANK YOU for your kindness of sending me The Pioneer magazine. I respectfully return the magazine back to you, as I am a Jehovah's Witness now and cannot accept literature or be involved anymore. I would like to respectfully ask if I may please share something with you?

I am unable to speak to you personally, but I have some information that I would like to share with you, a sample of it is contained in the enclosed track (leaflet?).

Ed note: one of the most unusual reasons not to receive the newsletter! The letter goes on to give extracts from the Bible.

Name Supplied

What a year!

NORMAN, congratulations again on a tremendous magazine. Paul and yourself must be very proud of producing what must be the finest Regimental Magazine in the Army.

What a year! I trust that you and your family have kept clear of Covid and that you have a safe and healthy 2021 and thereafter.

Tony Buesnel

Pioneer Spirit

DEAR, Norman and Paul, I hope you both are keeping safe and well and managing your work despite the challenges of Covid-19.

Thank you both for your sterling work keeping the Pioneer going and for helping retain friendships and the wider Pioneer connections and networks – all very important during difficult times for so many young, old, serving and retired. Through the both of you the "Pioneer Spirit" lives on.

Mo Usman

Fantastic

ABSOLUTELY fantastic time & many many thanks to Norman Brown, Taff Thomas & everyone else involved in the organisation of the weekend. Here's to the next one & looking forward to it.

Terry Wyeth

Thank you

LIKE TO, thank the Pioneer association Norman Brown, Lt Col Billy Dilkes, Taff Thomas many more for a great weekend at Bicester great to see so many friends done us all proud glad we are back in Bicester.

Ted Kewley

At some point he was at Grateley

IN THE Lost Trails section of the June 2020 British Legion magazine, the following appeared: Looking for answers. Kath Tucker needs help identifying this regiment and where this photo may have been taken, as it shows her father Frederick Arthur William Hickie.

"He was never overseas due to health issues, but I know at some point he was at Grateley," she says. It's a family mystery she'd like to resolve.

On checking our records I found that he had been in fact a Pioneer, service number 13050104 and told her that we had his date of birth recorded as 10 Dec 14 and that he enlisted at Birmingham and joined 12 Centre Pioneer Corps for training on 4 Jul 40 and served until 7 Jan 46.)

I received the following reply: Hi Norman, thank you so much for your reply. You have told me more about my dad's

service than I ever knew. Me and my younger brother knew nothing about what dad did in the war as he forbade us to talk about it.

Mum said it was because he felt he had not "done his bit" like his brothers, one of whom served in North Africa and the other in Burma.

I was proud of my dad anyway, I only found these photos recently in a box of bits and pieces that my brother gave me out of his loft - he put them there when dad died in 1990.

From what I can gather from the writing on the album page that this photo was on - he was at Grateley for a period of time and that apparently was an ammunition dump. I will do as you say and write to the Army Personnel Centre and will let you know how I get on. Thanks again

Kath Tucker

Airborne Pioneers

MANY THANKS for coming back to me so quickly. The information you have provided is very helpful.

The war diary entry from 31 Aug 44 reveals that 277 Coy were based at Bulford and preparing for the planned drop at Arnhem. Bulford is very close to RAF Netheravon so I wonder if this marked the start of my Grandfather's association with 277 Coy.

My uncle recalls a story that he and another sergeant were called into the office of a Major, asking for volunteers to help in the spotting of artillery guns at Arnhem. I wonder if it might have been Major

Garland-Wells of 277 Coy.

The Airborne Pioneers article is also really interesting and thank you for the background information on the structure of a Pioneer Company.

My grandfather certainly appears to have been with them at Nijmegen based on his Service Records and the aforementioned documents we have from his time in Nijmegen in Sept / Oct 1944. Perhaps No.38 Group RAF provided some of the air transport.

I will happily make a donation to the RPC Association. Kind regards

Philip Winslow

We would have lost to Rommel if it were not for the Pioneers!

I HAVE moved to North Florida from Dunedin. Thanks for keeping us all informed, especially our rich Corps history.

When my selection papers came back in 1954 and I was told to report to the Royal Pioneer Corps, I had no idea who or what the RPC did. My father served with the Royal Artillery 1939 to 1946 through El Alemain to the Po River.

When I asked him about the RPC he told

me that although General Montgomery received the credit, Dad said the Officers and men of the Pioneer Corps kept them supplied to be able to eventually win.

Our supply of ammunition for the 25 pounders was always there, plus the water for tea.

Without the supply we would have lost to Rommel. Just a thought for today.

Terry Hobbs

Remembrance...



■ Land of Israel Memorial Plot, Garden of Remembrance, Westminster

Picture: Supplied

THIS YEAR a memorial plot was erected for the Land of Israel POW casualties as part of the "Field of Remembrance" ceremony.

The ceremony is the important opening event of the British Remembrance Day ceremonies in memory of those who fell in service of the British Army. The Israeli POW memorial plot has the names of more than 100 Jewish soldiers from the Land of Israel, who were killed in WWII as part of the Battle of Greece and in Nazi captivity, was commemorated for

the first time in history.

Representatives of the Jewish Pioneers - Families' Association (JP-FA), that initiated and promoted the establishment of the Israeli Memorial Plot, were invited to attend this ceremony and a delegation of JP-FA representatives, all children and grandchildren of Prisoners of War who returned from the battlefield and years of hard captivity, arrived in London from Israel to pay their respects to those soldiers who did not return from the war.

We will remember them.

Talya Klayner Dayagi

Thank you all Absent without leave!

I would like to thank Scouse Bradley for pointing out many years ago how the chap on the front of this newsletter looks like a film star. It is something that we have been meaning to share for sometime and having spoke to his son and getting the photograph colourised, he looks great!

Scouse has been taking photos and kindly letting us use them for many years. He has captured some memorable events and has took some great images.

We have not portrayed any on the front page as of yet, but I'm sure we will! Thank you Scouse.

I would like to thank everyone who helped the old man with the reunion, particularly the Duke of Bicester - Billy Dilkes. His coach trip and local knowledge of the area and events was very impressive indeed! Thank you!

Finally, I must thank the Mrs for taking some good photos during the Reunion evening, many are featured in this issue. I had a busy week at work and went for an early night! Until next year!

Paul Brown

I WOULD be very grateful if there is anyway the Association can help me. I am Absent Without Leave since 28th Dec 1972 (he then gave name and number).

I still have my Leave Pass and with my age over 72 I have medical issues and problems. (He then lists his medical problems).

Hoping for a discharge on compassionate medical grounds, be grateful for any help.

Please do not use my rank, number or regiment if replying to me.

(Ed note: we were unaware that he was AWOL and have been sending him a copy of the Association newsletters since 1972!)

Name Supplied

THE PIONEER

■ THANK YOU for a superb "Pioneer Newsletter" – it must be the best ever! Well done to you and your son. Col (Retd)
Ken Broome

■ I WOULD just like to say that having read the latest edition of The Pioneer it was fantastic. On behalf of all the Pioneer brothers a big thank you to you both for all the hard work you have put in, it is greatly appreciated.
Byrn Phillips

■ SIR, THANK YOU, Norman for you and your team in doing a wonderful job in the production of the Pioneer magazine. Yours sincerely
SW Hall (Ginge)

■ I WOULD, like to thank you for the information you were able to give my son David Morgan on my father Robert Thompson. I have pleasure in enclosing a cheque to help with the work you are doing.
Jennifer Morgan

■ NORMAN from my wife and I thank you from the bottom of our hearts. It truly was a memorable weekend. I look forward to the 14th Nov and the Cenotaph.
Lee Hanlon

■ THANKS AGAIN Norman for another great weekend was great to see everyone again see you next year.
Hayley Poole

■ JUST LIKE to say a massive thank you to Norman and all involved with the reunion, had a great time hope to see you all again next time.
Jed Bourne

■ THANK YOU Norman Brown and all your helpers for a great weekend,
Peter Wegg

■ THANK YOU Thank for a great weekend Norman Brown hope to see many more next year.
Kevin Law

■ THANK YOU Norman and your team for a wonderful weekend. Had a great time roll on next year reunion can't wait.
Steve Earnshaw



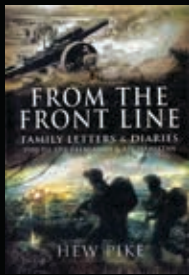
Write in or email us...

The Royal Pioneer Corps Association

c/o BGSU
St George's Barracks
ARNCOTT
Bicester OX25 1PP

or email us at:
royalpioneer corps@gmail.com





From the front line

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

THE BOOK is a unique record of one family's military service during the major conflicts of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Thanks to careful editing of preserved family papers, each individual tells his story through letters and diaries which capture the military scene, reflecting family ties that bind them all closely.

Eight soldiers of four generations write from the South African war, and operations in West Africa, Korea, Aden, the Falklands and Afghanistan as well as from both World

Wars. Two were killed in action and others were wounded. Three became generals, many were decorated, Lieutenant General Sir Hew Pike, who has compiled this book, describes commanding 3 PARA during their arduous advance across the Falklands and in the decisive battle for Mount Longdon. His son Will gives a revealing and thrilling account of his 2006 tour in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, also with 3 PARA.

While their records may span a century during which warfare changed greatly, the tone of the letters remains remarkably constant, reflecting confidence in their fellows, a pride in service to Crown and Country, and a critical eye for what is going

on around them, as well as love of family and understatement of the dangers. The part that wives and mothers play in the story also shines through strongly.

The book is a highly unusual and enthralling collection of correspondence which will appeal both to those with an interest in warfare and to others fascinated by family history.

Ed note: although this book was published in 2008 it still made very good reading and is recommended

FROM THE FRONT LINE
AUTHOR: HEW PIKE
ISBN: 184415812-8

Commando Coolie's Surviving Great War Hell

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

THE shells made day out of night. I could see all our landing craft on our tail and, about half a mile away, five ships which announced their identity almost at once by pouring on us a stream of forty-millimetre and small arms fire.'

'...this book remains one of the seminal publications on the Army Commandos ... from their inception as a raiding force to their ultimate development into battalion-sized spearheads – there is no better place to begin.' Neil Barber, author of Fighting with the Commandos

This is the true, compelling story of the Commandos, one of the most important units of World War 2.

The operations of No 3 Commando included raids and important support missions in the Lofoten Islands, Norway, Dieppe, Sicily, Italy, the D-Day landings, France and Germany. In this remarkable memoir their brilliant and courageous leader, Brigadier John Durnford-Slater, gives his first-hand account of the development and missions of the Commandos, providing a unique portrayal of the unit's exploits and the personalities of the men who wore the green beret.

Ed note: although this book was first published in 1953 it was later published in 1991 and again in 2020

COMMANDO
AUTHOR: JOHN DURNFORD-SLATER
ISBN: 1784385603

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

THOUGH largely invisible in histories of the First World War, over 550,000 men in the ranks of the Indian army were non-combatants. From the porters, stevedores and construction workers in the Coolie Corps to those who maintained supply lines and removed the wounded from the battlefield. Radhika Singha recovers the story of this unacknowledged service.

The labour regimes built on the backs of these 'coolies' sustained the military infrastructure of empire; their deployment in interregional arenas bent to the demands of global war. Viewed as racially subordinate and subject to "non martial" caste designations, they fought back against their status, using the warring powers' need for manpower as leverage to challenge tradition service hierarchies and wage differentials.

Ed note: this book is recommended for historians only as it goes into great detail; it must have taken years to research. It is also not cheap at a cost of £45

THE COOLIE'S GREAT WAR – INDIAN LABOUR IN A GLOBAL CONFLICT 1914-1921
AUTHOR: RADHIKA SINGHA
ISBN: 978-1-78738-215-2

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

TRAPPED in a living nightmare, the author, former-paratrooper Nick Dunn, one of the "Chennai Six" was wrongly imprisoned in an Indian jail.

While battling to be heard both at home and abroad. Although his family tried to publicise their plight.

Nick summoned the resilience and endurance of his elite training to survive inhumane conditions, keep himself alive and fight for his right to return home.

Kept in unhygienic squalid conditions it is surprising that he and his comrades did not die or catch some disease.

Throughout his long ordeal he never gave up hope of gaining his release and seeing his family once more.

False promises and expectations were made on a routine basis and at times the conditions were brutal. This ordeal changed his outlook on life considerably.

Ed note: I found this book very interesting and recommend it for all.

SURVIVING HELL
AUTHOR: NICK DUNN
ISBN: 9-78192-624959

Secret Commandos

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

JUNE 1942 The shadow of the Third Reich has fallen across the entire European continent. In desperation, Winston Churchill and his chief of staff devise an unusual plan: to form a new commando unit made up of Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria who escaped to Britain just before the war.

Many have lost their families, their homes – their whole worlds.

And now, in the crucial final battles against the Nazis, they will stop at nothing to defeat them, even changing their names and taking on British identities for the rest of their lives.

Trained in counter-intelligence and advanced combat, this top secret unit became known as X Troop.

Some simply call them a suicide squad. Drawing on extensive original research, including interviews with the last surviving members.

Leah Garrett follows the unique band of brothers from Europe to England and back again, with stops at British internment camps, the beaches of Normandy, the battlefields of Italy and Holland, and the hellscape of Theresienstadt concentration camp – the scene of one of the most dramatic, untold rescues of the war.

For the first time, X Troop tells the astonishing story of these secret shock troops and their devastating blows against the Nazis.

Ed Note: unfortunately this book contained quite a few inaccuracies regarding the Pioneer Corps so I sent a list of these amendments to both the publisher

and the author.

I also supplied them with service details of some of the personnel mentioned in the book. The following day I received the following email from the author...

"Thank you so much for this-- if we do a second printing your comments will be helpful. I so wish I had been in touch when writing the book as the personnel information on the men is invaluable (and I will share it with their families). Best regards Leah"

Professor and Director of Jewish and Hebrew Studies Department of Classical and Oriental Studies Hunter College, City University of New York Hunter West 1328

X TROOP – THE SECRET JEWISH COMMANDOS WHO HELPED DEFEAT THE NAZIS
AUTHOR: LEAH GARRETT
ISBN: 978-1-784-74311-6

SICILY '43 – The First Assault on Fortress Europe

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

COMBINED Operation HUSKY, the Allied assault on Sicily on 10 July 1943 remains the largest amphibious invasion ever mounted in world history, landing 160,000 men in a single day, more even than on D-Day just under a year later. It was also preceded by an air campaign that marked a new direction for the Allies, giving them dominance of the skies.

The subsequent 38-day Battle for Sicily was one of the most dramatic of the entire Second World War, involving daring raids by special forces, deals with the Mafia, attacks across mosquito-infested plains and perilous assaults up almost sheer faces of rock and scree.

It was a brutal campaign – the violence was extreme, the heat was overwhelming, the stench of rotting corpses and disease intense and all-pervasive.

And all while trying to fight a way across an island of limited infrastructure and unforgiving landscape, against a German foe

who would not give up.

It also signalled the beginning of the end of the war in the West, as the noose began to close around the neck of Nazi Germany, and the coalition between the United States and Britain came of age. Most crucially, it would be a critical learning exercise before Operation OVERLORD, the Allied invasion of Normandy, in June 1944.

Based on his own battlefield studies in Sicily and new research, Sicily'43 offers a vital new perspective on a key turning point in the war. It is a timely and powerful account by a master military historian and will fill a major gap in the narrative history of the Second World War.

Ed note: I have read many books by James Holland but consider this to be his best. Although he rarely mentions supporting troops concentrating mainly on Infantry and Armoured it is still highly recommended. A Group Headquarters and 19 Pioneer Companies were deployed in Sicily

The first pioneer company

ashore was 1977 Bechuana Coy, which had been trained in smoke duties. The Company entered Syracuse a few hours after its capture and quickly laid out the circuit.

British Pioneer Coys landed on the beaches with the Beach Groups and handled the supplies ashore.

The first Group, and Companies, from the Middle East landed at Syracuse on D + 3 together with the DDL Eighth Army. They were employed on port repair, dock work and providing labour for Depots.

No. 19 Group with eight Companies had sailed direct from England to do an assault landing near Catania but were landed at Augusta on 19th July. This Group was employed on FMC work and road repairs for 13th Corps until Catania fell, when it was first employed on road and dock clearance and then carried out normal work on the port, railhead and dumps.)

SICILY '43 – THE FIRST ASSAULT ON FORTRESS EUROPE
AUTHOR: JAMES HOLLAND
ISBN: 978-1-7876-3294-3



The Last Post

Since the last newsletter it is with great sadness to report the following deaths

CATER EROL FRANK (EX W02) 13095656 18 APR 20 (AGED 99). SERVED FROM 17 JUL 41 – 8 DEC 48 THEN RE-ENLISTED AND SERVED UNTIL 16 JUL 63

HANKS DENNIS CHARLES (EX SGT) 22678509 15 MAY 20 (AGED 86)

Served from 19 Jan 50 – Mar 54

JOSLIN ERIC FRANCIS (EX SGT) 13035808 27 DEC 20 (AGED 106) SERVED FROM 28 JUN 40 – 28 JAN 46

His family posted the following on Facebook: In loving memory of a dearly loved, Dad, Grandad, Great Grandad, Great Great Grandad and faithful, loyal friend.

Eric Francis Joslin peacefully passed away in his sleep on 27th December 2020, aged 106 and half years, he passed of old age.

Eric was one of life's gentlemen known for his determination and zest for life. Bringing laughter, sunshine and fairness to all who met him.

Serving as a pioneer in world war 2 with over 60 years dedication to the masons and much much more, he touched so many life's and will be remembered fondly by all.

Sadly due to Covid the family have massively reduced the numbers attending the funeral. He will be taking his last journey from Boyce View Drive in Benfleet through to Tarpots and up to Sadlers roundabout across to Pitsea Cemetery.

HOWARD LESLIE (EX CPL) 13021683 3 JAN 21 (AGED 104)

Served 9 Apr 40 before transferring to the Berkshire Regiment on 15 Oct 40

HOULTON DAVID (EX COL) 450378 2 JUN 21

Served in the Corps as a Capt from 1959 – 1961 before transferring to the Queens Division

FOSTER JF (JOHN) (EX CPL) 24198629 17 APR 21.

Served 1971 – 1983 (His son Kev (also an ex Pioneer) would like to thank all members who sent messages of condolence).



SUTTON TR (TERRY) (EX W02) 24116745 (AGED 70)

Served 1968 - 1990

JORDAN GRAHAM (EX CPL) 24175321 2 JUN 21 (AGED 69)

Served 1970 – 1992

LANGFORD CD (COLIN) LT COIL (RETD) 500061 (AGED 68).

Enlisted as a soldier on 29 Apr 76, commissioned 11 Dec 76 and retired in 2009. Photo below shows, being towed out of Simpson Bks at end of tour as OC 187 Coy



MARTELL TERENCE THOMAS (EX W02) 23591632 (AGED 83)

Served in TA until 4 Apr 75

CORDY JOHN (EX CPL) 24041676 (AGED 74)

Served 1969-1991

CLARK ANDY (EX PTE) 24523697 (AGED 66)

Served 1973 - 1981

FIELD DAVID (EX PTE) 23961594 18 MAY 21 (AGED 77)

Served 1964 - 1972

CROWHURST THOMAS (EX PTE) 23744914 (AGED 82)

Served 1960-1963

DIXON RICHARD HOWIE (EX LCPL) 7 MAY 21 (AGED 82)

Served 1957 – 1959

CROSSLAND JOHN PAUL (EX PTE) 13 NOV 21 (AGED 80)

Served 1980 – 1988

MARSDEN PAUL (EX PTE) 21 NOV 21 (AGED 64)

Served 1981 – 1984

IBBOTSON FRANK (EX CPL) 20 OCT 21 (AGED 91)

Served 1952 - 1974



DC Hanks



E F Joslin

RICHARDS STEVEN (EX CPL) 28 NOV 21 (AGED 67)

Served 1971 – 1983



SAITALA SIRI (EX PTE) 16 AUG 21

Served in 206 Sqn

FIELD JACK EATON (EX SGT) 25 AUG 21 22675478 (AGED 89)

Served 1952 – 1980 as regular and then TA

CLARK HAMLET MANOLD (EX PTE) 8 NOV 21 (AGED 85)

Served 1958 – 1961, he attended this year's reunion.

WORTHINGTON RONALD JOHN (EX PTE) 14882345 21 FEB 21 (AGED 95)

Served 1944 - 1945reu

MOODY WILLIAM MARK (EX CPL) 17 AUG 21 24745954 (AGED 54)

Served Jun 85 – Oct 97

The following message was received from Mark's daughter "Dear Norman and the Royal Pioneer Corps Association, thank you for helping us give our dad an amazing send off, we really appreciate everything you have done. From Danielle, Shanna, Paige, Dana and Tia)



RICHARDS STEVEN (EX CPL) 28 NOV 21 (AGED 67)

Served 1971 – 1983

CARPENTER PAUL (EX PTE) 8 SEP 21 24662610 (AGED 56)

Served Aug 83 – Oct 88



SETTERFIELD ROBERT (BOB) (EX CPL) 4 SEP 21 23529239.

Served from 1967 – 1977



HALL ARCHIBALD CHARLES ALBERT (ARCHIE) (EX CAPT) 173223 AND 13059349 17 JAN 21 (AGED 102)

Served 1 Aug 40 in 201 Coy then commissioned from the rank of Cpl and joined 71 Coy before posting to 1835 (East African) Coy



CARTER GEORGE ALBERT (EX CPL) 14398599 20 AUG 20 (AGED 96)

Served 17 Dec 42 to 13 May 47 in 813, 845 and 806 Coys (the latter Coy became part of 'T' Force)

O'CONNOR PHIL (EX WO1) 244715508 MAR 21.

Served as a clerk from 1979 – 2001)



Neil Robertshaw published the following on Facebook.

It is with deep sadness that I have to report the passing of Phil O'Connor. For the last 21 years, Phil has lived and worked in Sierra Leone, building a Security and Logistics company of international repute. He never ever forgot his Pioneer routes and was eminently qualified to own and manage a company that has employed thousands of guards across the country. There wasn't an excuse used by a guard that he'd either not used himself, or heard from a young soldier staggering on.

Most of us will remember him from one or more of his clerical appointments. His last being as WO1 Staff Assistant to the Commander IMATT here in SL. After his first tour in 2000, he was asked by the new Commander, if he would please stay for another year. He agreed and was instrumental in a top to bottom reorganising of the Armed Forces Personnel Centre. The majority of those in the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) who are now promoted on merit, owe that to Phil.

He was of course a stalwart of the RPC football team in the 1980s and like many of us, took up golf once he hung up his boots. He was a better footballer. As a life long Liverpool fan, I'm glad he got to gloat again after 30 years and boy did he.

I worked for Phil here in SL between 2012 - 2017 am beyond gutted that I won't be able to again. He was a master of details, knew every figure related to his business and so many have learnt so much from him, myself included.

Please raise a glass to this ex Pioneer, gone too early, gone to soon but will not be forgotten

Chris Willetts added the following:

Some of my fondest memories of serving in 70 Coy are associated with Scouse O'Connor, he used to get me off guard duty to go on the piss, not the every day Company clerk, I recall him and Dave Chambers, both full screws at the time, informing me I was wanted by the OC, making so as I was in trouble. Shitting bricks, I marched in threw one up and came out holding my first tape. Scouse was waiting with Dave laughing there tits off with a jersey heavy wool with a stripe sewn on. Never without a smile, hated exercise and had no idea which end of a rifle was which. He knew his strengths and I know he helped all that knew or worked with

him. If I said I did not have a tear in my eye as I write this I would be telling lies, he has been in my thoughts over the years as many of you are. I know he had a good life as he was just that type of guy, so positive all the time, drunk on others but always happy with it. A sad day knowing this, I feel his loss and I know he will be sorely missed. At least he saw his beloved Liverpool win the Championship again Scouse, good bye my friend and Rest in Peace.

ROKODRAVA EPARAMA (CPL) 25141360 23 MAR 21

Still serving with 1 Regt RLC



Lt Col Billy Dilkes wrote the following on Facebook: It is my deepest and heart felt sadness that I inform you about the loss of our beloved brother Cpl Roko Rokodrava. Roko was a true warrior with the heart of a lion. I have served with some legends but this tough, loyal, kind and honest man is amongst the greats.

He lived for Josie and the success of his Family; his love of God; and the love of his Regiment. This hugely proud Fijian soldier leaves a gaping hole in our lives and was taken far too soon. Our love, respect and ability to keep a watchful eye over your beautiful Family will now be our goal. Our sincerest condolences and support to your precious loved ones Roko. Our love and prayers go out to Josie, Setaita, Poli and Junior during this devastating time.

1 Regiment RLC posted the following: It is with great sorrow that we report the death of Corporal Eparama Rokodrava. Known to all as Roko, he died suddenly on the 23 March 2021. A loyal and irreplaceable member of 1 Regiment RLC, Pioneer and Fijian communities, his passing is felt with profound sadness. Our thoughts are with his Wife, Josivini, and his three children Setaita, Arieta and Eparama.

Born in Fiji, Roko moved to the UK in 2001 with the sole purpose of joining the British Army. He began his phase 1 training at Pirbright in October 2001 before passing out into 23 Pioneer Regiment as an assault pioneer. His commanding presence, strength of character and natural leadership was quickly identified and rewarded with promotion to junior non-commissioned officer. He subsequently deployed to Afghanistan on Operation HERRICK 6 in a Force Protection Role, followed by an assignment to the Northern Ireland Support Battalion as Provost Corporal.

In 2011, Roko's natural mentoring and coaching approach enabled many young recruits to make the transition from civilian to soldier, setting the condition for the future junior leaders of today's Army. Employed as a Section Commander, in the Army Training Regiment, Winchester, Roko's infectious personality, humility and loyalty undoubtedly set many a young soldier up

for success; he was the epitome of the British Army's Values and Standards. The Army needs more Rokos.

Returning to St David's Barracks in 2013 as 23 Pioneer Regiment disbanded, Roko posted to 1 Regiment RLC, and played a crucial role in the Quartermaster Department enabling the Unit to move from Germany to Bicester in 2015. He has been the backbone of the Regiment ever since; filling various roles, each one given his full, undivided and professional attention. No one could ask for a more loyal, humble and dedicated soldier.

Most recently he has been a valued member of 2 Close Support Squadron where, notably, he deployed on Operation RESCRIPT, the British Army's contribution to the UK's response to the COVID pandemic. As a Driver in support of the North West Ambulance Service, Roko's kind and compassionate leadership provided invaluable support to the nation in time of greatest need.

A passionate rugby player, Roko spent his early years playing at Unit, Corps and Army level before making the transition to the Veterans team. More recently, he held the roles of assistant manager and kit manager. He was also the 1 Regiment RLC coach, such was his love for the great game.

A Tower within the Fijian community, Roko was the Lead Pastor for the Assemblies of God in Great Britain. A figure head of his culture within the Regiment and wider community, he was unreservedly generous with his time, guidance, encouragement and faith. A great leader in all respects.

Roko had the rare natural ability to inspire and command respect from everyone who had the privilege to have him in their lives, not just through his physical presence and infectious humour but through his unrivalled work ethic, natural compassionate leadership and his unwaveringly positive attitude. A friend, mentor and leader to so many, his loss to his family, the Regiment, the Pioneers as well as the wider Bicester and Fijian communities is immeasurable.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and loved ones at this difficult time.





Picture: SSgt Stevie Weatherall at Rokos funeral

**MCPHILLIPS JM (PADDY) (EX CPL) 3 AUG 21
24136403 (AGED 73)**

Served 69 – 92

Paddy joined the Army in 1969 and passed out of training with Kabrit Section on 23 January 1970 – photo attached, he is 2nd from right on rear row.

He was then posted to 206 Coy RPC at Long Marston and while there was detached to Hong Kong where he helped to build a bridge at Tung Chung

He was then posted to BAOR with 28 Sig Regt (Northag).

He then returned to 206 Coy where he won the 800 yards in the CEP Sports Day in 1975 and was promoted to LCpl

He then was promoted Cpl and posted to 3 Inf Bde in 1978.

In 1979 he was posted to 518 Coy RPC at Bicester and was sent on detachment to Belize, whilst there he managed to visit Mexico. In 1980 he was sent on detachment to set up the Aldershot Army Display, this was opened by HRH Prince Phillip.

Still serving with 518, his next detachment in 1981 was a return to Northern Ireland this time to Castle Dillon – photo attached showing him talking to the DAPL, Brig NT Ridings. His next detachment was to BATUS Canada.

In 1981 he participated in Ex Waterleap and wrote the following report for 'The Royal Pioneer'

Ex Waterleap 81 by Cpl McPhillips

In June myself and 13 happy Pioneers left Bicester enroute for Canada. Thinking it would only take 6 hours by VC10 we had a shock when we arrived at RAF Lyneham to see on the tarmac a big Hercules waiting to transport us. Those who have travelled in a Hercules will know what we went through. Having travelled almost 24 hours going

through different time zones, you can imagine that by the time we reached our destination we looked like space travellers and felt punch drunk from the ordeal. Luckily we were given the next day off to recover.

This gave us an excuse to check out the beer and the area that we were to call home for the next four months. Thinking that we might have trouble understanding our Canadian cousins the OC said we could bring our one and only Yank in the Coy, Pte Blundell. We now know what hand slack/ wait out/and fags mean!

Our task was to help 50 Fd Sqn (Const) RE to construct three projects for the Canadian Forces – To build a Small Arms moving target Range within the training area; to build a 5.2 km of road with a parallel tank track and finally to build a NATO Standard Obstacle Course. The work was hard and the days long. Those who have worked with RE before will know what I men, but everyone enjoyed it.

On the R&R front the most popular places were Prince Edward Island, a tourist spot off the east coast of Canada, and Mactaquac Park, a sports and leisure camping site about fifteen miles from the base. Ptes Butler, Wilkinson, Forshaw and How tried their hand at camping, fishing, canoeing and swimming and by all accounts had a good time.

In the sporting side LCpl Staples helped out the Sqn Rugby team, while the rest of us wait for the BFTs to come round again!

In the evenings most of us spent their off duty time movie watching and roller skating. You may well wonder where we drank? Would you believe the Pioneer Club? Yes, we found a club named after us where we spent many happy hours drinking and dancing.

In 1982 he participated in the New York

marathon and wrote the following report for 'The Royal Pioneer'

New York Marathon – Cpl McPhillips

On my return from Canada I found to my surprise an invitation to take part in the New York Marathon. I gladly accepted and spent the next few weeks training and many hours negotiating with the man with the money, Capt Hardy, and the man with the power, Maj Powell. It was finally agreed that 518 Coy would sponsor me for the trip.

I set off for the USA with suitcase and passport in hand on 21 October to the city that never sleeps, well not whilst I was there. After booking into a hotel near Broadway I went to see a show on Broadway starring Peter (Colombo) Falk then an early night ready for the race in the morning.

It was an early start at 0530 next morning and after a light breakfast I travelled across New York to Staten Island the start point of the marathon where I was given a sticky bun and hot tea and booked in at the reception centre. To my surprise there were some 16,000 other runners trying to do the same thing. I tried to locate Lt Johnson my fellow globe trotter who travelled from the outback jungles of Belize but could not find such a small person in such a large crowd. Putting this small problem to the back of my mind I set off on the longest 26 miles of my life. By now I was beginning to feel cold but standing amongst 16,000 people just before the start it seemed to warm up a bit. Off we went! There were people in wheel chairs, old ladies (some older than my granny), a man with only one leg. It was a pleasure to run alongside so many determined and proud people of all type, race and colour.

On such a long run as this you reach a point where you feel you cannot go any



■ Paddy McPhillips, 2nd from right back row

further. I reached this point after about 12 miles. It was as if I had hit a brick wall. I stopped and looked around me. My legs were like lumps of lead. I wasn't going any further until an old lady came up to me, gave me a drink and told me to get going again. So there I was on my way again, with only 14 miles to go, only 14, not so far is it? The crowd, all two and a half million of them, were fantastic. I owe a lot to them in helping me finish the run. The only thought in my mind was to keep running finish the run, and finish I did in five and a half hours.

Once across the finish line I was wrapped in a foil blanket received my medal and was given a drink. I felt very tired and yet very pleased. Two days to relax and do some sightseeing and the flight back home and 518 Coy. I would like to thank all those who sponsored me. The proceeds will go towards the Year of the Disabled appeal and a local home in Bicester for disabled children

In 1983 he was posted to 522 Coy RPC and in 1985 to 187 (Tancred) Coy RPC where he arrived just in time to organise the Christmas Party. Whilst in 187 Coy he participated in the London Marathon and wrote the following report for 'The Royal Pioneer'

The London Marathon 1985 by Cpl J McPhillips

Marathon time again and like thousands of other hopeful runners all over the country I sent off my application hoping to run in the 'Big One', the London Marathon. I have run in other marathons, The New York in 1981 for the Save the Children Fund, the Belfast for local charities and the Brum Run in 1983. But the marathon I wanted to run in was the London to help raise money for the Imperial Cancer Research Fund. Well to cut a long story short, Dec 11 was to be D Day and as I checked the mail there it was, my application had been accepted. Sgt Banks had been rejected, such foresight on their part. I told everyone who would be in 187 that I was going to run the marathon and finish it in good time. Needless to say, there were some who did not believe me, but I was determined to prove them wrong. My training took place around the sleepy country lanes and roads of Tidworth, and of course on Salisbury Plain. In the early days the local community treated my road training with deep suspicion but as time went by they got used to seeing me pounding along the road, they must have realised that running was for only fools and horses. Those of you who have every done full or half marathons will know what I mean. During the first two weeks of my running I increased my mileage from two and a half to six miles a day and not surprisingly my unsuspecting muscles began to complain fiercely. I had been terribly overweight but the pounds melted away soon enough. I began to feel fitter that I could ever remember. The day came when I strapped Mars bars to my feet and set off but the mars bars didn't work. It took 107 minutes to run and the rest of the weekend to recover. A few weeks later I was attempting 15 miles at a much faster pace and encountering my first and only experience in my training so far of running into the 'wall'. I arrived back late having

walked the last three miles. The climax to my build-up was to complete my one and only dry marathon. I did the run on the last Saturday in March. It took me four and a quarter hours I was shattered but convinced I could do the full distance in about four hours. Finally, two weeks rest then the day before the big one itself.

I took part in the Hyde Park breakfast run over seven and a half miles, just a little josh to keep the muscles loose.

Well, the Big Day Sunday April 21 finally arrived. For the first time I realised that I was taking part in a mass event, a shared experience, what a relief: perhaps the crowd wouldn't notice me chugging along with this lot. As I lined up, I looked around at the others and thought 'my goodness', lots of them are even older than I am. The younger hares were eager to start and once the Greenwich Observatory cannon fired, we tortoises never saw them again. At the back we had time to sup up the atmosphere – the marvellous crowds, the TV cameras and gradually we speeded up as the race strung out before us. When an operator shouted 'Just look at that one, he'll never make it.' I had an awful feeling that she meant me. At any rate the taunt served to break through the euphoria of the moment and I realised I was running too fast. Cautiously I fell in with a couple of runners who were using a stop watch. We kept a good six minute mile for the next 10 miles. By the 15 mile point I was running well and thought I might just get in by the four hour time. Then as I approached Tower Bridge, at round 18 miles, I hit 'the wall'. I felt like I had just been hit by Marvin Hagler, I was down to a stumble and had pains in my stomach and a bad cramp in my legs. At that point I was about to give up. Plenty of other were also paying the price for going too fast too soon. The crowd, understanding our crisis, were shouting words of comfort, willing us on. As the pain took its toll, in those few marathon miles, I could hear my number echoing around the Mall. I lifted my head up and headed towards Buckingham Palace. I was now walking with about one and a half miles to go to the finish line, and I could hear this familiar voice. I knew there was someone out there who cared for me, but who? Then I saw my OC, Major Hunting, for one awful moment I thought I heard it the RSM, Uncle Tom Cobbley and all; that spurred me on again. If I had heard my number T332 once I had heard it 500 times or more. The spectators who had cheered on the leading runners had stayed on to cheer me and the other runners home. Half a mile to go and I could just see Big Ben. It appeared to have given up any attempt to keep accurate time, surely it wasn't 20 minutes slow! The crowds were still cheering and screaming words of encouragement as I crossed Westminster Bridge. I do not remember much more but they made every inch of that never ending 26 miles 385 yards more than worthwhile. I had made it after all and inside the four hours. Quite why at 37 I should want to run a marathon is something that I can only describe along the lines of it being a good idea at the time or was it for the Free Mars Bar? Well I was very pleased with myself. I had completed the marathon in three hours 45 minutes, my best time in any marathon and at the back of my mind was the

thought never again, well not until next time. I would like to thank all of those who assisted me in any way, I hope to raise £500 for the Imperial Cancer Research Funds. Once again many thanks.

Still with 187 Coy his next detachment was to the Falkland's from March to August 1986 after which he was posted to RPC Training Centre at Northampton. Whilst there he helped to raise money for the Armenian Earthquake Disaster. Here he worked in the QMs department and in early 1991 was about to be discharged. After discharge he remained in Simpson Barracks working as a security patrolman.

He then worked as a porter in Northampton General Hospital and then re-located to Blackpool where he had a similar position in Blackpool Hospital. ■



■ Paddy McPhillips with Paddy Haddock



■ Paddy McPhillips with DAPL at Castle Dillon



And finally...

The Wipers Times, some Pioneer trainers, a tweet from Police Scotland and 'Bollocks'...

Report: Norman Brown / Paul Brown
Pictures: Norman Brown / Paul Brown

2013 the BBC broadcast a dramatization of the story of The Wipers Times (edit note: a great film, watch it!)

THE British Army sense of humour played a major part in maintaining the morale of both troops and civilians during World War I.

In 1916 some British officers in Ypres discovered an intact printing press in the ruins of a bombed out building. They decided to use the press to create a satirical newspaper to entertain the soldiers and to raise their spirits. The Wipers Times was named after Tommy slang for Ypres. The paper consisted of poems, reflections, wry in-jokes and lampoons of the military situation. In



'Are You A Victim Of Optimism?' appeared in The Wipers Times in July 1916 in response to the Battle of the Somme, where 19,240 British men died in the first day of fighting. It is a typical example of the magazine's gallows humour.

Under its initial title The Wipers Times and Salient News, the first issue was published on 12 February 1916, with a circulation of one hundred copies.[1] It was followed by another 22 issues, mostly consisting of 12 pages each

For the average soldier on the Western Front, very little happened on a day-to-day basis. Even when soldiers were at the front line, they watched and waited. Boredom was a major problem. But the prospect of action gave soldiers plenty of opportunity to feel not just boredom, but fear. Both could be relieved by humour. And The Wipers Times was partly a product of soldiers' need to tackle both the boredom and the fear.

When are soldiers most afraid? Undoubtedly, there is a very special type of fear which takes hold in moments of battle. But those who have written about their own experiences recognise that in such times, "fear" becomes part of a complicated set of feelings. Those include selflessness, determination and exhilaration, driven of course partly by adrenalin, while the effects of military training also play their part.

But what of fear outside battle? What happened when soldiers sat in dank trenches, under constant risk of being obliterated by unheralded shells or sniper fire? Driven by portrayals such as Blackadder Goes Forth, people today often have very inaccurate views of what the daily life of a British soldier in the World War I was like. Particularly, there is a tendency to imagine that soldiers lived all their days in dugouts in trenches.

In fact, even frontline infantry battalions would not spend the majority of their time in trenches, let alone in the firing line. Far more common for the infantry was a spell of



■ Lest We Forget Cartoon

Picture: I Rice

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
- Collectors Corner
- And much more!





Can you spot the mouse?



about a week each month in trenches (though it was sometimes much longer), with perhaps only half of the waking hours spent in the firing line.

Yet despite such times in the trenches being a minority of soldiers' time at war, they were probably the most fearful – and rationally so. With little to do other than guard and watch, soldiers had time to think, and worry. Insidious fears had time to creep in.

Unsurprisingly, gallows humour was a coping mechanism. One approach is set out in the Staniforth Letters. Despite being a product of Charterhouse School, and an Oxford undergraduate at the war's outbreak, JHM "Max" Staniforth enlisted as a private so that he could find out what soldiering was like. He chose the Connaught Rangers due to historic family connections with the regiment, but within a few months had been made an officer in the 7th battalion of the Leinsters.

Staniforth wrote exhaustive letters home to his parents, not quite every day, but usually a few times a week. That alone points to a common coping mechanism in the trenches – writing home.

In September 1916, Staniforth found himself on the Somme. Writing on September 12, shortly after his battalion had been engaged in the successful operations at Guillemont and Ginchy, he gave an insight into coping, in a witty postscript to a letter:

The only way to be here is to be philosophical. We have evolved a philosophy accordingly. What do you think of it?

If you are a soldier, you are either: (1) at home or (2) at the Front.

If (1), you needn't worry.

If (2), you are either (1) out of the danger zone or (2) in it.

If (1), you needn't worry.

If (2), you are either (1) not hit, or (2) hit.

If (1), you needn't worry.

If (2) you are either (1) trivial or (2) dangerous.

If (1), you needn't worry.

If (2), you either (1) live or (2) die.

If you live, you needn't worry: and – If you die, YOU CAN'T WORRY!!

So why worry?

Of course, as with much else which soldiers wrote to loved ones, some of this was intended to calm nerves at home. If fear was insidious in trenches when soldiers knew that they might come under fire, they at least knew precisely when they were not in danger in their spells out of trenches (the majority of their time). But for many of those at home, with no knowledge of battalion movements, fear could be ever present as they sat wondering.

Fatalism and gallows humour could

be consoling for soldiers. "We're here because we're here because we're here because we're here" ran the song.

Many soldiers knew that there was little they could do, not only about their general orders and location, but about what might happen specifically to them. That did not, of course, stop many having superstitions about what rituals and behaviour might help – which is another story entirely.

Aside from coping with fear, humour was also present in Staniforth's letters as a way of making light of the arduous work which many soldiers undertook away from the front. Despite the fact that the 7th Leinsters would gain a reputation as very effective raiders of enemy trenches, and to some extent had an "elite" (in fighting terms) reputation within their division – the 16th (Irish), they did their fair share of slogging.

In early 1916, Staniforth wrote about how he and a working party had dug latrines while in billets. He said: "All I have done to-day to make the world a better and a nobler place is to take out a party in the rain and build a princely row of latrines in Madame's orchard." After a lengthy description of the work involved, he ended with a ditty:

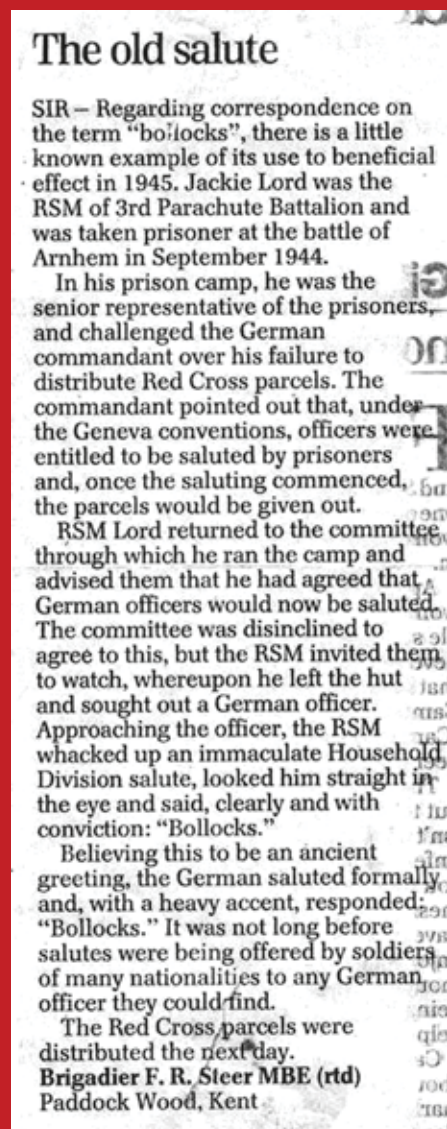
A hard world. Hand me the office harp:-

"What did you do in the Great War, Dad?"

"I dug latrines – for others, my lad."

It was toilet humour, literally, rather than in the usual sense. But just as in the *The Wipers Times*, it was crucial in maintaining morale.

ONLY a Pioneer can wear a pair of trainers such as these below. These ones were modelled by the Steve Bone. His feet look better than his face :)





LABOR OMNIA VINCIT