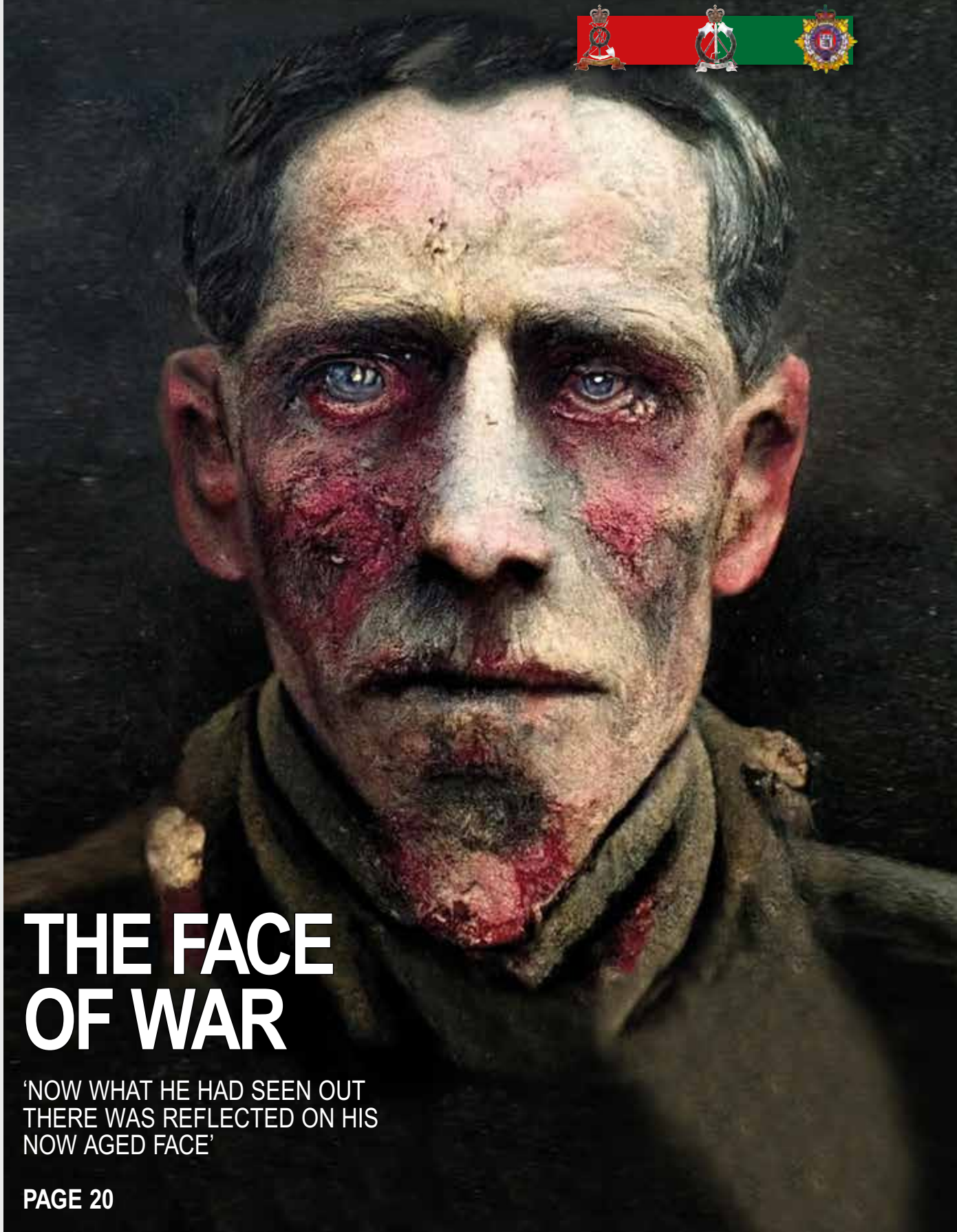


THE PIONEER



THE FACE OF WAR

'NOW WHAT HE HAD SEEN OUT THERE WAS REFLECTED ON HIS NOW AGED FACE'

PAGE 20



Front Cover

The Face of War
Picture: Kaine Caulfield



Back Cover

Sherringham Jolly 2023
Picture: Paul Brown

EDITORIAL

IT DOESN'T seem like that long ago that many of us shared a fantastic weekend at Bicester at the reunion weekend and AGM. Thanks again to Billy Dilkes for the hard yards in getting it up and running all so smoothly.

Thanks too, to Norman who deserves another special mention after all he has done for us collectively over the years. I'm pleased that he will remain on our Pioneer Council and offer much needed advice and guidance to myself as I do my best to lead our wonderful Association.

On reflection I wish to highlight 3 important points that are occupying my time and thoughts.

First, a note of recognition to all of you who organise, participate in and enjoy the variety of events we put on throughout the year. You only have to read magazines such as this to recognise just how much activity there is going on month in, month out. That doesn't happen on its own and a special thanks to all those involved.

Second, just like the Army, our Association is a Team activity. I have the privilege of representing your interests with the RLC charity and I recognise some of the difficulties that some of our membership face. The work of the benevolence committee is particularly

noteworthy but I sometimes worry that there are people out there suffering in silence. Please don't. We are genuinely blessed with an amazing team and fortunately we are relatively well off financially. I would ask that we look after our own in a way that we did whilst serving. If you, or anyone you know, is facing difficulties in whatever form please do let Billy know who can get appropriate help and advice.

Lastly, I continue to work on your behalf on what we might term the future. Inevitably the long term future is eventual convergence with the RLC Association.

Whilst we have such strong support at events and whilst we still have Pioneers in active service that day is a long way off. Ably supported by Billy I continue to make appropriate plans to ensure a smooth transition for when that time comes.

That I have your full support as your President is tremendously humbling and makes my job remarkably easy. So thank you and for now please continue to support your friends and wider Association.

I hope life finds you well and all the very best.

Brigadier David Clouston MBE

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STOP PRESS

■ Have you a story to tell? If so, send it in and we will publish it in this newsletter!

STOP PRESS

■ Let's have over 120 marchers at the Cenotaph in 2024! See you there!

STOP PRESS

■ Do we have your email address, if not please send it in to thepioneerhq@gmail.com



HOPE you and your Families are all well and life continues to deliver more positives than negatives. It's been another tough and busy period with many successful functions, reunions and meetings taking place.

2024 is almost upon us as we approach the 75th Pioneer Reunion plus it will be 10 years since the British Army removed the Pioneer trade from its orbat drawing a close to a wealth of Pioneer Military history.

It is always sad to hear the names of ex Pioneers who have sadly passed during the last 12 months; we should never forget them and may they all RIP. It is pleasing to report 50+ new members to the Association since our last newsletter with numbers gradually increasing. There are still many retired or Pioneers that transferred to other cap badges who aren't currently members, so please spread the word – membership is FREE and I'll work hard to contact them and encourage them to join.

Functions continue to be delivered and you can read about them in this issue.

We were allocated 110 ticket this year for the Cenotaph Parade and we filled 97 of these places with within 6 weeks of notification. If you wish to attend and march in 2024, can you give details to me by mid August 2024.

The Pioneer branches around the UK continue to organise events with the 39/93 Club who held a meet at Fareham in March 23. Further details of the Club can be obtained by Mr Les Rowley.

Norman cleared his desk at the end of May 23 and I officially took over the reins on the 1st June 23. We both represented the Pioneers at RLC 30 in Winchester with me marching for the very 1st time in a veteran contingent with my bowler hat carrying a black umbrella. How time has flown, it certainly doesn't feel like 30 years.

Finally, During my HOTO with Norman I attended many meetings with the HQ RLC, most of which laboured on a potential merger of the forming Corps into a singular RLC Association. Thankfully ALL are now agreed to remain 'as we are' for the time being until our own association numbers decrease (below 500) whereby the decision will be made to merge.

From a RPCA perspective we now need to push hard in recruiting the younger element of the Pioneers and slightly move away from the 3 different individual cap badge mentality and concentrate more on the Pioneer trade/history.

Thank you for your support and continue to use me as your Pioneer signpost.

Lt Col Billy Dilkes MBE (Retd)



Can you spot the mouse?



The winner of "Find the Cuneo Mouse" was Kim and Tony Lunn.

A prize will be on its way to Kim and Tony. It was of course on the gun in front of Norman on Page 111!

We had two correct answers this time, well done to Kim and Tony Lunn and Sue Thomas for spotting him!

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

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 2024.

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

Good luck.





■ FOLLOWING on from the Government's earlier announcement to make veteran cards available digitally, here are the latest key points:

The launch date for the service will be announced later this year

Veterans will be able to apply online for the card this year

A paper-based application will be made available for those veterans who are unable to apply online

£3 million has been injected to enable roll-out to those veterans who left service before 2018

50,000 cards will be produced a month including at an MOD printing facility at HMS Sultan in Gosport

Since December 2018, the MOD has been automatically issuing all service leavers with a physical veterans' card as part of their service leavers pack. When the service opens up later this year, veterans, including all those who left service before 2018, will be able to apply for a new ID card.

Lt Gen Sir Nicholas Pope, Chair of Cobseo, the Confederation of Service Charities said:

Veterans who need timely help, either from the state or from the charity sector, are often frustrated by delays in confirming their status. Veterans' ID cards provide a significant step forward in speeding up this process and we look forward to supporting their delivery to the entire veteran community.

Veteran cards provide ex-service men and women with a tangible connection to the important contributions they have made to the defence of our nation.

We are honouring our commitment to getting ID cards into the hands of veterans by the end of the year so that they can more easily access support.

The veterans I met today are excited about the benefits on offer – benefits which will only continue to grow for them over the coming years as civilians.

■ THE FORCES Employment Charity stands by ex-Forces personnel through a range of programmes and practical support.

Supporting anyone who has served at least one day in His Majesty's Regular Armed Forces, or Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations. Support is delivered by experienced advisors, many of whom also served. The Forces Employment Charity advisors are committed to helping veterans succeed through their working lives.

The Forces Employment Charity programmes provide a range of practical tools and advice to help veterans use their military skills to stand out from the crowd.

The support provided includes:

- Advice on career choices
- Researching the job market
- Job matching
- Advice on training
- Recommendations for courses and education
- Support for writing a CV
- Advice on interview techniques
- Expert industry knowledge and updates
- Events and employment fairs

For more information visit The Forces Employment Charity.

<https://www.forcesemployment.org.uk/who-we-help/veterans/>

Dedication service

One of the hardest fought battles of WW2, Monte Cassino is to be commemorated at an Edinburgh kirk



■ Memorial bench and dedication, Edinburgh

Pictures: Supplied

Monte Cassino, is to be permanently commemorated at an Edinburgh kirk with the installation of a memorial bench recognising the sacrifice of those lost there and elsewhere in the Italian Campaign.

It also marks the 70 year old link between the battle and Blackhall St Columba's Parish Church in the north west of the city.

This dates back to 1952 when the then minister, Rev RW Mathewson, brought the "Cross of Monte Cassino" to Blackhall St Columba's.

The cross, which is of a simple construction, was made for Mr Mathewson by a member of the Pioneer Corps while he was serving at Monte Cassino as a military chaplain. The cross has been in the sanctuary and part of the worship of Blackhall St Columba's every since.

Mr Mathewson, who served as a chaplain with the 2nd Battalion of the Scots Guards in Italy and Palestine, wrote later, "When I first saw it, I was disappointed; the crossbar seemed too long and out of proportion. Then I realised that this was the only kind of cross the Pioneers were accustomed to make, one to set over the grave of a soldier, the crossbar had to be long enough to accommodate his name, rank and number and unit. So, I left it as it was, a perfect symbol of their comprehensive love of God in Christ for the individual."

This connection was rekindled when the Monte Cassino Society first became aware of the cross's existence following an article in Life and Work magazine about the refurbishment of the sanctuary at Blackhall St Columba's.

The current minister, Rev Fergus Cook, contacted the society's secretary, Lesley Teasdale, and discovered that the society

was unable to meet for its usual Service Of Remembrance owing to the pandemic lockdown. This led to Mr Cook offering to conduct a Service of Remembrance which could be live-streamed, allowing its members to mark the capture of Monte Cassino as they normally would each May.

2023 was the third year that Blackhall St Columba's has held a special Service of Remembrance and to mark the occasion the Monte Cassino Society generously donated a memorial bench to be placed by the Blackhall War Memorial in the grounds of the church overlooking the busy Queensferry Road.

The four-month battle of Monte Cassino was one of the most bitter of the Italian campaign as a multinational Allied force, including troops from Britain, India, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, the USA, Poland, France and the Kingdom of Italy, sought to gain control of the strategically vital mountain and its Sixth Century Abbey on the road to Rome.

Monte Cassino finally fell on 18th May 1944, but at a cost of an estimated 55,000 casualties. The German defenders are believed to have lost 20,000 dead or wounded during the battle, with a similar number of Italian civilians killed during the battle or in the air raids which destroyed the abbey and nearby town of Cassino. The town and Abbey have since been rebuilt.

The Service of Remembrance, which included the dedication of the bench, reflected the international make-up of the Allied army at Monte Cassino.

Those attending included the Canadian Consul, the New Zealand Consul Scotland, the Consul General of the Republic of Poland and the Indian Consul General, who all laid wreaths.



■ RLC 30th Anniversary, HRH The Princess Royal, their Colonel-in-Chief, Winchester

Pictures: Cpl Anil Gurung, The Royal Logistic Corps

RLC 30th anniversary

500 personnel from across the Royal Logistic Corps (RLC) marched through Winchester having recently been granted the freedom of the city

THE Royal Logistic Corps was formed on 5th April 1993 with the amalgamation of the RCT, RAOC, RPC, ACC and Postal Branch RE. The RLC formally recognised its relocation to Winchester Garrison and mark its 30th anniversary on Thurs 1st June 2023.

A series of civic engagement events took place comprising a high-profile parade through Winchester, marking the granting of the freedom of the City to The RLC and this culminated in a Service of Thanksgiving in Winchester Cathedral.

This was followed by VIP reception and a Regimental Lunch. At Worthy Down Camp food and refreshments were available including an all ranks BBQ and curry lunch for on duty personnel. A community open day then commenced at 1500hrs followed by a concert aimed at raising the profile of the Army and The RLC in Winchester Garrison and to build and maintain strong relations with the local community as the enduring regimental home of The RLC.

All Pioneers were very disappointed when the RPC was amalgamated into the RLC and again in 2014 when the Pioneer trade was discontinued and 23 Pioneer Regt RLC was disbanded. However, this is not the only RLC Regt to be disbanded since 1993, the following is a list of Regiments on 5 April

1993, the ones shown in red have since been disbanded, units shown in green were formed after 5 Apr 1993.

- 1 General Support Regt RLC – now 1 Regt RLC based at Bicester
- 2 Close Support Regt RLC
- 3 Close Support Regt RLC – now 3 Regt RLC based at Abingdon
- 4 General Support Regt RLC – now 4 Regt RLC based at Abingdon
- 5 Territorial Army Trg Regt RLC
- 6 Support Regt RLC – now 6 Regt RLC based at Dishforth
- 7 Transport Regt RLC – now 7 Regt RLC based at Cottesmore
- 8 Artillery Support Regt RLC
- 9 Support Regt RLC – now 9 Regt RLC based at Hullavington
- 10 Transport Regt RLC – now 10 Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regt RLC
- 11 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Regt RLC – now 11 EID & Search Regt RLC based at Didcot
- 12 Supply Regt RLC
- 14 Supply Regt RLC
- 15 (Western) Supply Regt RLC
- 16 (Eastern) Supply Regt RLC
- 17 Port and Maritime Regt RLC based at Marchwood
- 18 (Scotland) Supply Regt RLC
- 19 (Southern) Supply Regt RLC
- 21 Logistic Support Regt RLC

23 Pioneer Regt RLC

24 Regt RLC

27 Transport Regt RLC – now 27 Regt RLC

29 Regt RLC based at South Cerney

85 Postal and Courier Regt RLC (Volunteers)

86 Postal and Courier Regt RLC (Volunteers)

87 Postal and Courier Regt RLC (Volunteers)

88 (Scottish) Postal and Courier Regt RLC

(Volunteers)

89 Postal and Courier Regt RLC (Volunteers)

150 (Yorkshire) Transport Regt RLC (Volunteers) – now 150 Regt RLC(V) based at Hull

151 (Greater London) Transport Regt RLC (V) –

now 151 Regt RLC (V) based at Croydon

152 (Ulster) Ambulance Regt RLC (V) – now 152 Regt RLC(V) based at Belfast

Scottish Transport Regt RLC (V) – now 154 Regt RLC (V) based at Dunfermline

156 (North West) Transport Regt RLC (V) – now

156 Regt RLC (V) based at Liverpool

157 (Wales and Midlands) Transport Regt RLC (V)

– now 157 Regt RLC (V) based at Cardiff

158 Regt RLC (V) based at Peterborough

159 Regt RLC (V) based at Coventry

162 Movement Control Regt RLC (V) – now 162

Regt RLC (V) based at Nottingham

British Movement Control and Liaison Staff (V)

165 Port and Maritime Regt RLC (V), Plymouth

167 Catering Support Regt RLC, Grantham

168 Pioneer Regiment RLC formed on 1 Apr 95 – disbanded in 2012



■ THE HIGH profile campaign by Forces Pension Society's campaign for veterans' unclaimed pensions is gathering pace with government, other organisations and veterans. Did you know?

Between June 2020 and May 2022, over 4,000 preserved Armed Forces pensions went unclaimed.

The pension is not paid automatically. Veterans must apply to Veterans UK using AFPS Form 8 or call 0800 085 3600 for information.

Anyone serving after April 1975 now aged 60 or over could have an Armed Forces pension if they served for two years or more.

Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS) Annual Report (July 2023) shows the number of unclaimed deferred pension benefits has grown still further in 2022/3, reaching more than 17,100.

Forces Pension Society CEO, Maj Gen Neil Marshall shares:

These unclaimed pensions, in many cases, represent quite substantial sums of money. And the situation has not improved, with the number of unclaimed pensions rising.

We applaud the engagement of the Office for Veterans' Affairs and we also urge anyone who may know a Veteran who has not yet claimed a pension to visit the Veterans' Gateway website without delay.

For our part, the Society will maintain its focus on this issue until we see more of these pensions in the hands of those who earned them.

■ MORE THAN £8.5 million of funding has been announced, by the government, to ensure that no veteran sleeps rough this Christmas. And that veteran homelessness is ended in 2023.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Johnny Mercer, has been working with the veteran housing charity sector, ahead of the funding.

And this has helped to establish a temporary referral scheme in England, Wales and Scotland for the Christmas period.

If you live in Northern Ireland find information for the Housing Executive and for emergencies.

The recent funding has also enabled the launch of a new referral scheme: Op FORTITUDE.

This will enable veterans at risk of homelessness to access supported housing and wrap-around specialist care in health, housing and education.

There will be a single central point for local authorities and charities. This will help to identify those in need and to refer them to a network of support.

Lee Buss-Blair, the Director of Operations for The Riverside Group, and Member of the Veterans Advisory Board said:

This funding will make a significant difference to the lives of vulnerable veterans.

Not only will it support the Government's commitment to end veteran rough sleeping, but it will also provide organisations the resources to support veterans into work.

Veterans have so much to offer employers and communities, and thanks to this funding, providers will be far better placed to support them to realise their potential.

Veterans can access the support via this dedicated charity helpline number: 01748 833797.

Pioneer killed by the IRA, 1973

This article by SEFF/PA Wire details a Pioneer soldier killed by IRA 50 years ago, his family 'miss him every day'



■ Lance Corporal Harry Gillespie who was shot by the Provisional IRA in 1972

Picture: SEFF/PA Wire

A REMEMBRANCE service for Corporal Bryan Criddle and Lance Corporal Harry Gillespie will be held at the Clogher branch of the Royal British Legion.

The South East Fermanagh Foundation (SEFF) victims and survivors group said that Cpl Criddle died 50 years ago, four days after he was injured in a Provisional IRA bombing in Clogher.

He was married and had three children.

He joined the Army in the Pioneer Corps as a dog handler before transferring to the Royal Army Veterinary Corps.

Members of his family have travelled from England to attend the service.

Speaking to the PA news agency, his widow Julia Wilson explained she met her husband when she joined up as a kennel maid on an Army dog course in 1969.

They were married in 1970 and had their daughter Sarah in June of that year.

"I was actually offered a posting to Germany and he said 'over my dead body!' so he insisted we got married."

Ms Wilson was not allowed to continue working as a kennel maid as a married woman, but when her husband was sent to Northern Ireland, she and her daughter accompanied him to Ballykelly, Co Londonderry, in November 1971.

They remained there for a few months before moving to Omagh, Co Tyrone, where

the couple welcomed twins.

Cpl Criddle worked with a German Shepherd named Jason and was flown to various points along the border to search for ammunition, arms and explosives.

"Their primary duty was to go out with patrols and any suspicious activity, he would send the dog in to sniff out explosives, arms, that sort of thing and then either alert the bomb disposal or soldiers he was working with."

He was described as a man with "little time to have hobbies" but he enjoyed socialising.

SEFF said his family, his job and his dog "were the main things in his life".

Ms Wilson said he was "on call literally 24 hours a day".

"Because Bryan had a dog, he was literally a week away and a week at home. Even when he was home, he was out on a daily basis."

In July 1973, Cpl Criddle and Jason were called out to a suspicious scene.

Ms Wilson said: "He was sent out with patrol to the Clogher area.

"There had been an anonymous phone call saying there were milk churns in a field.

"He was flown out there, he put the dog in and Jason had actually signified there were explosives in there.

"He shouted to the patrol to stand back. He went in to check the milk churns and it



■ Undated handout photo issued by the South East Fermanagh Foundation (SEFF) victims and survivors group of Corporal Bryan Criddle and helicopter pilot Sergeant Stan Richie with army dog Jason in Northern Ireland
Picture: SEFF/PA Wire

was set off by a remote control from across the border.

"The dog was thrown 30 feet. It took a while to get the dog back.

"It was a lieutenant in the tank regiment who administered first aid (to Cpl Criddle) until the helicopter could come and take into Musgrave military hospital.

"He was there from the Wednesday to the Friday but had a brain haemorrhage, so they moved him to Royal Victoria in Belfast where unfortunately, on the Sunday, he passed away."

His daughter Sarah had just turned three, while his twins Gary and Glenn were nine months old.

Ms Wilson and Sarah Criddle visited the site of the attack to lay flowers on Saturday.

"We both found it very hard and very draining, but we're glad we went."

Ms Wilson, who had previously brought her grandchildren to the site where Cpl Criddle was injured, said she felt her daughter needed closure.

"The idea was to show the grandchildren the reality of what happened to their grandfather."

Ms Wilson said: "You know, he died helping the people of the province and although we still miss him every day 50 years on, we're still very proud of what he achieved."

Ms Criddle said: "The kids have not got to meet their grandfather.

"I think it hit me very hard today, because of the proximity and the close personal nature of what happened."

Ms Criddle, who served in the RAF, added: "For us as a family, and everybody else who has been affected by things like this, it's the remembering of it.

"And it's the fact that the children need

to be taught about it just like they are taught about World War One and World War Two and all the things that have happened.

"I brought my children up to know, and go to Remembrance Day and to appreciate what people do sacrifice for them so they can be free."

Ms Wilson paid tribute to the teamwork of her husband's companion Jason.

"Without the dog, he wouldn't have achieved half as much – he was 50% of the team."

Sgt Criddle's grandson is "following on to his grandfather's footsteps" by joining the Army, Ms Wilson said.

"So, we're proud of him as well."

SEFF director Kenny Donaldson said: "The Criddle family are valued members of SEFF and Bryan's sacrifice is justly remembered and honoured."

He said Sgt Criddle's role had been about protecting and preserving life.

"How different he was from those with murder in their hearts and who stole away his life and the lives of so many others".

Mr Donaldson said it is important to "never forget the contribution of members of the security forces".

"Because of their efforts, Northern Ireland avoided spiralling into all-out civil war."

The service also remembered Ulster Defence Regiment CGC Lance Corporal Harry Gillespie from Aughnacloy.

Mr Donaldson said he was shot by the Provisional IRA while in a four-man mobile patrol at Killyliss on Dungannon-Ballygawley Road on May 20 1972.

His 50th anniversary service was delayed to this year due to Covid-19.



■ Cpl Criddle's daughter Sarah Criddle (left) and his widow Julia Wilson laying flowers at the scene where he was fatally injured in Clogher in 1973.
Picture: SEFF/PA Wire



■ WITH 170 members in 230 locations around the UK, the Association of Service Drop-In Centres (ASDIC) supports the rapidly growing network of small organisations supporting veterans and their families in the community across the UK.

These organisations can vary, from the highly evolved which are able to provide clinical support, to the activity-based organisations ideally suited as a social prescribing solution, to the small Drop-Ins and Breakfast Clubs.

ASDIC brings cohesion to this network providing guidance, support, and establishment of best practice. Sustainability of the Centres is also a longer-term benefit of ASDIC's work.

ASDIC also delivers the ground-breaking 'VetCheck' service in partnership with Veterans UK (MoD), enabling ASDIC to verify service for our members within 48 hours. The ASDIC network frequently provides the entry point to the support provided by the senior stakeholders and statutory services from across the veteran welfare landscape.

Sacha Moravek from the ACDIS said:

What starts with a cuppa and simple camaraderie can often develop into bringing a veteran together with the support they may not have realised they needed or were entitled to, providing a vital gateway to those who may be wary of authority when seeking support.

This is vital, especially for those dependent on our centres for support. Our member organisations are frequently dealing with suicide prevention, or issues around drug and alcohol abuse, and the loss or collapse of this lifeline can trigger crisis or worse for an individual.

Find out more at www.asdic.org.uk.

The Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Clubs (AFVBC) is now the single largest veterans organisation in the UK, and membership growing weekly.

With over 400 clubs nationally and 15 overseas, the AFVBC seeks to end social isolation for veterans.

The clubs bring people with a connection to the UK Armed Forces together and offers a chance to reminisce, share stories and interact with a community that is missed by most when leaving the Armed Forces.

The AFVBC is also conducting five pilot programmes in HM prisons across the UK, building a Armed Forces community within HM prisons. These pilot programmes help with social interaction, rehabilitation and a support structure for veterans who are currently within the criminal justice system.

Lindsay Beadnall from the AFVBC, said:

"The AFVBC acts as a beacon of hope and a landmark for those who are at HMP Stocken.

It gives them a community, purpose, a chance to learn new skills. And somewhere to head to when they leave HMP Stocken. Our young veterans are gaining awards and are developing their skills for employment on their release. It gives most a second chance."

■ TALKING OF Breakfast Clubs in the above article, did you know the Northampton Branch of the Royal Pioneer Corps Association have one!

It is held at The Poppy Field Farm Restaurant in Duston, Northampton on the 1st Saturday of every month.

It is open to all veterans, not just Pioneers. See you there!

Benevolence and the RLC family

The following article appeared in the programme for the RLC 30 Celebrations and we thought it would be worth publishing in this newsletter.



■ Cap badge of the Royal Logistic Corps

Picture: Royal Logistic Corps

AS we mark with honour the first 30 years of the Royal Logistic Corps it is right to reflect on the RLC family, those who may find themselves in need and how we can provide a 'hand up'.

The RPC Association has had representation on the RLC Benevolence Committee since 2005 when the RLC took over responsibility for benevolence for ex Pioneers

"The RLC family are those who serve, both Regular and Reserve, our veterans from the RLC and Forming Corps and all their families. I am honoured to have led our Corps in uniform, but my humbling duty now is to chair the RLC Benevolence Committee and take care of the family.

The need is significant. Every year we help around a 1,000 people and we spend close to £1 million. About half of that incredible sum comes from the Day's Pay Scheme (DPS) – where most serving officers and soldiers generously give up one day's pay a year. The rest comes from our investments.

Let me give you a flavour of where that money goes:

Paying grants where serving soldiers die off duty or who are medically discharged from the Service.

Grant to Commonwealth soldiers called home for compassionate reasons and to help them with expenses.

Putting food in the fridge, paying utility bills and phone bills for veterans and soldiers struggling to make ends meet.

Assisting veterans with Care Home Fees, mobility aids, white goods and carpets.

Alcohol rehabilitation for serving and veterans.

Helping a family when their house burned down uninsured.

Purchasing a specialist bike to aid the recovery of a soldier with C4 spinal injury.

House refurbishment to facilitate access from somebody who had become injured on operations.

Funding counselling for those affected by trauma,

With the current cost of living crisis we have dug deeper, given COs funds to target unit welfare needs, provided a holiday respite scheme for soldiers families who otherwise wouldn't get a break and helped refurbish some welfare flats in London.

For veterans we have engaged with the Veterans Charity to act as our agents to fix immediate needs for any of our struggling veterans. <https://www.veteranscharity.org.uk>

If you are serving, please ensure you are a member of the DPS and, if your mate is in need, signpost them to the Welfare Officer – don't let them be too proud to ask. If you are a veteran and you are in need or see a mate in need then connect with us through the RHQ or the Veterans Charity or through SSAFA or the RBL. Brig C Murray"



■ The temporary T-shirt exhibition at the Royal Logistic Corps Museum

Pictures: Simon Walmsley,

Tour T-shirt Exhibition

The RLC Tour T-Shirt temporary exhibition at the RLC Museum is a huge success. They intend to run the display into 2024 so you have plenty of time to come and visit!

THE RLC turned 30 years old in 2023. Throughout its 30 years, it has constantly had soldiers deployed on operational tours or on exercises overseas.

The museum intends to capture this story and these many deployments using "tour t-shirts".

Today, no operational tour or exercise would be considered complete, without the design and distribution of a tour t-shirt. Squadrons or Regiments normally hold competitions to seek the best design, with the command team making the final choice.

These t-shirts capture the time, location, unit name, activity and spirit of the soldiers deployed and are a unique record of the corps history.

The RLC Museum has over 90 T-Shirts on display in its new temporary exhibition and it has been a huge success and those who have not yet visited and taken a look are missing a trick. They intend to run the display into 2024, so you have plenty of time to come and visit.

The introduction of the new Combat Soldier 95 uniform saw t-shirts being issued to every British soldier for the first time, for use in temperate as well as hot climates.

These t-shirts were designed to form an essential base layer, providing both thermal

insulation and sweat wicking and were based upon the operational hot-weather t-shirt variant. Squadron t-shirts with a personalised motif, quickly began to appear and often replaced the issue version.

Today, no operational tour or exercise would be considered complete, without the design and distribution of a tour t-shirt. or even small teams to produce their own t-shirts. These t-shirts have become ever more elaborate over time, with stitched and embroidered designs replacing the earlier printed versions.

Some motifs are rather rude, tongue-in-cheek or include novelty figures or cartoon, whereas others are more informative rather than humorous.

T-shirts have included illustrations of vehicles, equipment's or flags, or perhaps the country where they are deployed.

The Royal Pioneer Corps and the Pioneers of the RLC both produced large numbers of tour t-shirts, covering units, deployments and tours to places like Belize or Kenya.

The final Pioneer T-Shirt on display in the museum is from 2014 and marks the disbanding of 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC. Have you a t-shirt you can donate to the museum, if so please send it to: The Curator, RLC Museum, Worth Down, Winchester, Hants, SO21 2RG.





■ DID you know that identifying as a veteran with your GP will help speed up your access to services?

Recently, Veterans' Minister, Johnny Mercer and Health Secretary, Steve Barclay shared that they want veterans to declare their service with their local GP. That way you can quickly access specialist NHS England healthcare pathways and support from service charities.

These pathways include Op COURAGE and Op RESTORE which offer dedicated mental and physical health for Ex-Forces.

So far 740 referrals have already been made to Op RESTORE and many more could benefit from this multi-disciplinary service.

Op RESTORE supports veterans in England who have served in, or are leaving, the UK Armed Forces.

To find out more about the pathway, Ministers recently met with the team, plus veterans, at St Mary's Hospital in Paddington, North London.

The veterans had ongoing physical health injuries and related medical problems attributed to their time in the armed forces.

And it was clear that an understanding of military backgrounds helps multi-disciplinary teams to restore the physical health and wellbeing of veterans.

Maurillia, an Op RESTORE patient, shared: The service has made me aware that I matter, that I have a voice – no matter how small or how soft. To speak to a consultant who understands my injuries and hear someone else rather than myself say the same things in a different way, no matter how long it has taken. The support to me along this journey from Op RESTORE has been brilliant.

Importantly, from the autumn, Op RESTORE will be able to support veterans to access the Veteran Mobility Fund.

This fund will deliver quality support to veterans with physical disabilities. Grants will enable them to access mobility equipment that meets their needs and improves their quality of life.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Rt Hon. Johnny Mercer said: The reason I joined this government was to improve access to veterans' care, and I'm incredibly proud of the progress we've made over the last few years.

If you have been injured, mentally or physically, by your time in service, please contact your GP and identify yourself as a veteran so you can access the specialist treatment that's right for you.

It is important to register with a GP, rather than wait until you need treatment. Tell your GP that you've served in the UK Armed Forces: Ask for the term 'military veteran' to be recorded in your patient record in the GP computer system. This will help your GP to better understand any military related health conditions that you may have and ensure that you are referred, where appropriate, to dedicated health and wellbeing services for veterans.

Give your GP the paperwork that your military medical centre gave you, including any medical records: If you've recently left the forces, it is important to do this to help ensure your military health record transfers to your NHS health record. This will give your GP information on your health and ensure that any ongoing care and treatment is continued.

Chelsea outreach

At its most simple this programme is about a veteran who maybe lonely and isolated sharing a cup of tea, maybe a sticky bun and some banter with a Chelsea Pensioner.



■ Royal Hospital Chelsea Outreach programme

Picture: Royal Hospital Chelsea

ON his appointment as Governor of The Royal Hospital, General Sir Adrian Bradshaw, following up on the manifesto he declared in his application, set about establishing a Veterans Outreach programme aimed at leveraging the influence and reputation of the Royal Hospital Chelsea to provide more direct support to veterans, particularly the elderly, living beyond the perimeter of the Royal Hospital estate

The COVID pandemic thwarted our progress in delivering the programme as swiftly as we had wished but in September 2022 'RHC Veterans' Outreach' was launched.

Initially we are piloting 'Chelsea Outreach', which focuses on veterans in the Greater London area for whom travel to the Royal Hospital is relatively easy. We have run a series of themed events at the Royal Hospital, where veterans from all three Armed Services and the Merchant Navy are invited to enjoy comradeship, and shared memories, hospitality and some fun alongside the 'In Pensioner' residents of the Royal Hospital. The aim of these 'Gateway Events' is to meet veterans and establish our own network of those who may benefit from sharing the activities enjoyed by Chelsea Pensioners on a more regular basis and become in essence 'Out Pensioners'.

The programme relies heavily on the active involvement of In Pensioner volunteers connecting and engaging with veterans from outside. As evidenced by their enduring popularity, most Chelsea Pensioners are already experienced and skilled communicators with the members of public as part of their role, both formally and informally, as representatives of the wider veteran community during the many visits and events that they attend. At its most simple this programme is about a

veteran who is maybe lonely and isolated sharing a cup of tea, maybe a sticky bun and some banter with a Chelsea Pensioner.

As part of the programme, we are collaborating closely with NHS partners, in particular with local GP practices who are keen to make use of our programme as a social prescription alternative to medication or treatment.

We are also dependant on the veterans' networks already established by other service charities such as SSAFA, ABF, RN/RM Associations and especially Regimental Associations to spread word of our events. The RHC website is also now promoting the programme and publicising events.

We are supported in our programme by delivery partners including, among many others, Department of Work and Pensions, Op COURAGE, SSAFA, Samaritans, and BLESMA. Most of these partners attend our events and provide advice and assistance to veterans as required.

We plan for Chelsea Outreach to continue for the foreseeable future with monthly events, as well continued attendance by Chelsea Pensioners at countless other activities, including various veterans drop-ins, breakfast and lunch clubs and other more formal events.

In due course, and having developed our modus operandi we intend to extend this offer beyond London and, offer a 'Nationwide Outreach' element in partnership with local service charities and organisations in regions where there are large concentrations of military veterans.

May I ask you to spread the word among the veteran fraternity, particularly any who are London based and let them know they are very welcome to attend any of our events.

Events will be featured at www.chelsea-pensioners.co.uk/outreach



■ Our Chelsea Pensioner Roy Palmer with his girlfriend Sandra, Royal Hospital Chelsea

Pictures: Royal Hospital Chelsea

Hospitals first herald

Chelsea Pensioner Roy Palmer has become the Royal Hospital's first Herald. Roy, who was town crier for Mablethorpe in Lincolnshire before he became a Chelsea Pensioner

CHELSEA Pensioner Roy Palmer has become the Royal Hospital's first Herald. Roy, who was town crier for Mablethorpe in Lincolnshire before he became a Chelsea Pensioner, says he was keen to fulfil a similar role for his new home:

"I thought, 'What can I call myself?' We couldn't call it a town crier, because this isn't a town. But we are Royal and Royals have heralds, so that's what I chose."

Roy says he first became a town crier following a party he organised to celebrate the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton in the rest home where he and his wife were living. He applied for a council grant to cover the cost of entertainment and sent a video of the party, instead of receipts when he applied for the funding.

When they saw Roy in the Lord Mayor's costume he wore for the occasion it inspired them. The council decided that Mablethorpe should have its own town crier:

"I said, 'Well if you need one, give me a shout' and about six months later they invited me to be town crier for the carnival. Then they asked me to do it permanently."

Roy says the history of town criers in England goes back to the time of William the Conqueror, when many people were illiterate and printing was yet to be invented:

"He sent people out all over the country announcing that he was now King", Roy explains.

"In the old days they'd take night criers out of the local jail – if someone could read, they'd give them the job."

Today town criers still dress in old-fashioned costumes, complete with tricorne and bell. Roy's bell has an interesting history:

"It was used in London in 1942, just after the Blitz, by a fire warden. Then after the war it was used in a school.

It ended up belonging to the oldest lady in the rest home where I held the party and she gave it to me when I said I needed one as town crier."

As Mablethorpe's town crier, Roy announced weddings and other celebrations and here at the Royal Hospital he's attended events from birthday parties to Christmas fairs.

There are also town crier competitions up and down the country which provide opportunities to promote the local town – or in Roy's case, the Royal Hospital.

"In the morning you do a cry – or proclamation – about where you come from and in the afternoon you do one from a written script on a theme they set. It could be anything from the planet, to what the Romans did for us.

Cries always start with 'Oyez, oyez' [this derives from the French *ouïr* – to listen and means 'hear ye'] and finish with 'God Save the King'.

There are four judges in different places and you're judged on projection, clarity, content, dress – I've won twice on dress."

In his new role, Roy will wear his Scarlet and tricorne and will hold a scroll made from matching scarlet fabric, made by the Royal Hospital's tailor.

His girlfriend Sandra – who will accompany him as his 'consort', also in costume, has decorated it with a cross stitch badge. They hope they may win a 'best dressed' prize.

Roy says the competitions always draw a crowd and are a great way to learn about different communities. Although there's a prize for the winner, Roy is motivated by something bigger – promoting the Royal Hospital.

His cries will spread the word about becoming a Chelsea Pensioner and about the Royal Hospital's fascinating history, attracting potential visitors.

Roy shared a cry he has prepared for his first event, in Yeovil, later this month – written in rhyme, his personal trademark.

Ed note: We do not have space here to share Roy's Oyez Oyez cry, however you can read it on the And Finally pages!



■ **WIDOWS OF** serving personnel who forfeited their pensions, prior to 2015, could be eligible for a one-off payment of £87,500.

Previously, rules meant that bereaved spouses, civil partners and eligible partners forfeited their pensions if they remarried or cohabited before 2015.

The new joint initiative from the Ministry of Defence and the Treasury and is justified under a key principle of the Armed Forces Covenant. A key principle of the Covenant is that special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given so much, such as the injured and the bereaved.

The scheme and one-off payment are designed to support those whose spouses' death was attributable to service. And is part of the government's continued support for the armed forces, their families and veterans.

How to apply

The application window will open later this year. And all those who are eligible are strongly encouraged to come forward and apply.

The process will remain open for two years with support for applicants provided by the Veterans UK Call Centre.

Welfare support will be available through the Veterans Welfare Service for those who require emotional support during the process.

Minister for Defence People, Veterans and Service Families, Dr Andrew Murrison shared:

Our war widows have made a great sacrifice for our country and we will continue to support them in every way we can. This payment is a small but important step towards continuing to honour the commitment we have made to these brave people and we will continue to ensure they receive the recognition and support they deserve.

And Chief Secretary to the Treasury John Glen said:

The legacy of those who made the ultimate sacrifice for this country endures, and it's only right that we honour that service by doing right by their loved ones.

"This government will always stand behind our armed forces, their families and veterans and this payment is a token of our continued commitment to them.

■ ON THURSDAY 29th March 1984 at 0942 eight coaches carrying 230 Officers and soldiers of the Corps and 38 musicians of the Staff Band of the Corps of Royal Engineers, Chatham, pulled out of Simpson Barracks to take part in the Freedom Parade in Northampton.

The leader of the Borough Council, Councillor Cyril Benton said "This is a very special day both for Northampton and for The Royal Pioneer Corps." He recalled the history of the Corps since its formation in 1939 and described the Corps as the 'unsung Heroes' of the Army. Councillor Geoff Howes leader of the Labour Group briefly recalled the gallantry of Cpl Scully who was awarded the George Cross in 1941. Finally he said that he noted with great pleasure the Corps Motto - Labour Conquers all ! (or work conquers everything).

This part of Pioneer history that has not been seen for many years will soon be available to watch on our YouTube channel. We will make an announcement once it is available to view.

Armed Forces Day, June 2023

From Stirling to Bicester to Southampton, more than 100 events were held across the UK to celebrate this day



■ Armed Forces Day, Sherringham

Picture: Peter Wegg

NOW in its 15th year, Armed Forces Day, with parades, salutes, fayres and flypasts, is the finale of a week of events which celebrate the entire Armed Forces community.

It is an annual opportunity to thank service personnel, veterans, cadets and their families, while recognising the service and sacrifice made by the families of serving personnel.

This year's National Event was held in Falmouth, Cornwall where over 1,000 military personnel, veterans and cadets took part in a tri-service parade.

Around 100,000 visitors from all corners of the UK attended the National Event.

In Edinburgh, the Armed Forces Day event was hosted by Legion Scotland. A parade was led by The Band of the Royal Regiment of Scotland with over 400 Legionnaires following.

In Glasgow, all three Services were represented by regulars, reserves, veterans and cadets with The Royal Marines Band leading the parade.

Armed Forces Day was celebrated in Ayrshire with a wreath laying ceremony and a two-minute silence at the Cenotaph.

The day was also a celebration of the 225th Anniversary of the Ayrshire Yeomanry's formation.

Marchers and riders on horseback

paraded through the streets of the town supported by musicians from the Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry Pipes and Drums.

In Stirling, The Royal Regiment of Scotland exercised their Freedom of the City by stepping off from Stirling Castle and marching to the Stirling Smith Museum, with the regimental mascot, Corporal Cruachan IV, a black Shetland pony, also joining the parade.

In typical Northern Ireland fashion, the heavens opened during the Armed Forces Day event in Larne, held a week earlier on 17 June, but a fantastic day was still enjoyed by all.

James Cartlidge MP, Minister for Defence Procurement, attended the event which began with a tri-service military parade, led by the Band, Bugles, Pipes and Drums of the Royal Irish Regiment.

Irish wolfhound Seamus, the Irish Guards mascot, dazzling in his scarlet coat, put in a guest appearance.

The crowds in Larne watched 206 (Ulster) Battery, 105 Royal Artillery fire a 21 Royal Gun Salute for His Majesty The King's Birthday.

Thousands then flocked to a Military Village that included military displays, STEM activities, music workshops for potential buglers and drummers, and sports competitions.

Young people especially enjoyed getting



■ Armed Forces Day, Sherringham

Picture: Peter Wegg

hands on with a Gazelle helicopter, climbing into Army trucks, dressing up in helmets and camouflage kit and being put through their paces by instructors from the Royal Army Physical Training Corps.

The day in County Antrim concluded with a Beating Retreat by the Band, Bugles, Pipes and drums of the Royal Irish Regiment.

In Wales, Newport hosted the Wales National Armed Forces Day with The Royal Welsh Regimental Goat, Lance Corporal Shenkin IV, and Corporal Emrys Forlan Jones, the Regimental Welsh mountain pony from 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards, leading the parade.

A packed programme of activity also featured a Red Arrows flypast.

The Riverfront Theatre hosted an exhibition of artwork by Armed Forces children, while Newport Museum and Art Gallery displayed Home Front sketches as part of a World War One display.

Regular and Reserve units from across Wales were on hand to chat to visitors about their roles and recent deployments across the world.

The Band of the Prince of Wales, the Gwent and Powys Army Cadet Force Band and Cardiff Military Wives Choir entertained the crowds at Rodney Parade.

Presentations of Armed Forces in Wales awards also took place at the stadium. These awards were organised by 160th (Welsh) Brigade to recognise outstanding achievements over the last year.

The evening ended with a handover from Newport to Swansea, who will host next year's Wales National Armed Forces Day, and a final performance from The Regimental Band and Corps of Drums of the Royal Welsh, which included the 1812 Overture and the firing of guns by soldiers

from 104 Regiment Royal Artillery.

In England, hundreds of well-wishers lined the streets of Doncaster to watch the city's spectacular Armed Forces Day parade led by the Band of the Coldstream Guards who also played at the recent Coronation of His Majesty The King and Her Majesty The Queen.

Joining them on parade were members of 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, based in Windsor and made up of over 500 soldiers and officers. The battalion's primary role is light role infantry, capable of deploying anywhere in the world at short notice.

The Coldstream Guards were granted the Freedom of Entry in 2021. This ceremonial decree allows the regiment to march through Doncaster in full splendour, with bayonets fixed, drums beating, band playing and colours flying.

Armed Forces Day films have been broadcast at train stations around the UK this week, paying tribute to the military community.

His Majesty The King hailed the "immense and dedicated" contribution of UK service personnel.

In a message of support, His Majesty recognised "the selfless service and sacrifice" the Armed Forces make and thanked the wider Armed Forces community, including military families and veterans, for the role they play in allowing service personnel to fulfil their duties.

On Saturday, Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

"Armed Forces Day recognises the commitment and resilience demonstrated by our entire Armed Forces community every day of the year.

"I hope the entire nation will join me

today in paying tribute to this community and recognise all those who make so many sacrifices to uphold the freedoms and rights of the British people."

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said:

"From Estonia to the Indo-Pacific, as well as here at home, our Armed Forces personnel protect and defend our freedom every day of every year.

"Much of that service we do not see and often take for granted, but this year we have been privileged to watch thousands of our military on parade for the Coronation, in what was a showcase of our forces' phenomenal precision and professionalism.

"So I know I speak for the entire country on this Armed Forces Day, when I say thank you to every soldier, sailor and aviator, and their families, who form part of our brilliant Armed Forces."

The UK Armed Forces protect the UK and promote our interests around the world every day of the year.

On Armed Forces Day 2023, more than 14,000 soldiers, sailors, marines, and aviators will be based overseas and deployed around the world, serving on 33 operations in 28 countries.

Since last year's Armed Forces Day, UK military personnel have been at the forefront of international efforts to support Ukraine, supported the evacuation of British citizens from Sudan and led the nation in high-profile ceremonial roles at Queen Elizabeth II's funeral and His Majesty King Charles III's Coronation.

In Bicester we also had our annual Royal Pioneer Reunion on Armed Forces Day and had a stand at Pringle Field, Bicester.

Read more on our annual Pioneer Reunion Weekend on Armed Forces day further in this issue!



■ DURING THIS cost-of-living crisis, many people in the ex-Forces community are under financial pressure and not currently in work. For those with mental or physical health conditions, it can be even harder to see a way through.

But, Veterans, with health conditions who are worried about their finances, can get help from The Poppy Factory as they take steps towards employment.

The Poppy Factory offers one-to-one support for the ex-Forces community, with Employment Consultants based regionally across England and Wales.

As well as offering guidance on job searches, CVs, interviews and training, Employment Consultants can support with funding applications to cover training and equipment.

They can also help veterans complete financial and benefits assessments and guide them towards specialist support from other organisations.

Debbie Boughtflower, Director of Operations at The Poppy Factory, said, "every step forward is a step towards greater stability, improved health and wellbeing and a brighter financial future."

Four in every five of those supported by The Poppy Factory live with a mental health condition and one in two has a physical health issue.

But the charity is there; they help hundreds of veterans transform their lives by moving into new jobs each year and hundreds more to make significant progress towards employment, regardless of the challenges they face.

Great progress is already being seen. Regular check-ins with veterans showed that 64 per cent of those who used the employment service last year reported improved health and well-being, while 60 per cent said they had increased stability.

Tony Scott, a veteran of the RAF Regiment who was supported into employment as an HGV driver, shared,

I had a bit of a wobble during the process of being supported, and Christina, my Employment Consultant, tuned in to that very quickly and encouraged me to get the help I needed. I felt that I was being looked after.

To find out about The Poppy Factory's employment service or to register for support, visit www.poppyfactory.org/employment

■ THE NORTHAMPTON Branch of the Association meet on a regular basis and so far in 2023 have organised many trips.

To date we have organised a minibus and visited Duxford.

This was a cracking day and the weather was great!

As usual we are organising a bus down to the Cenotaph from Northampton and by the time you read this newsletter we would have been and in this edition will no doubt be many photographs!

We are also looking to re-kindling our Burns Night, which has always proved popular and are soon to have a similar function on Saturday 27 January 2023, the venue has still to be arranged.

If you are interested in joining us for any of the functions and activities please give Norman an email at normanbrown@myself.com and he will put you in touch with the President of the Branch, Mr Bob McGinley

Congratulations Billy Dilkes!

On 13 June 2023 Lt Col Billy Dilkes received his MBE (which had been awarded in the New Year Honours List) from His Majesty King Charles III



■ Billy pictured with his MBE and also with family, Buckingham Palace

Picture: Lt Col (Retd) Billy Dilkes

FIFTY-NINE Army personnel are recognised in the New Year Honours List 2023, announced in the London Gazette today, 30 December 2022 - the first state honours to be signed off by His Majesty King Charles.

One of those announced was Lt Col Billy Dilkes and on 13th June 2023 he received his MBE from His Majesty King Charles III.

It was also his last day in uniform after enlisting on 13 Jun 86 at the age of 17.

He would like to thank everyone he ever served with, the Army totally transformed who he is and what he has become.

Being awarded the MBE was the icing on the cake.

He served 18 years as a soldier and 19 years as an officer.

Well done Billy!

On Parade

Our In-pensioner Roy Palmer and Pioneer Josh Campbell on Horseguards Parade at this years Cenotaph Parade, London

THE PIONEER



Pictures: Paul Brown



■ **MANY CONGRATULATIONS** to the Forces Employment Charity which has just been awarded the Gold Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Award.

The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme encourages employers to support defence and inspire others to do the same. The scheme encompasses bronze, silver and gold awards and recognises companies for initiatives such as employing veterans, supporting personnel transitioning out of the Armed Forces into civilian life, and providing flexibility for reservists.

Forces Employment Charity, a Veterans' Gateway Referral Partner, continues to demonstrate its first class commitment to helping members of the military and their families.

At the Forces Employment Charity, many staff are members of the military community, both veterans and spouses:

Commitment to supporting Service leavers, veterans and their families includes:

- Attendance at all CTP job fairs.
- Attendance at, and promotion of, Armed Forces Day and Reserves Day.
- Improving our HR offer to Reservists and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers.
- Chairing the Veterans Employer Advisory Board.
- Chairing the COBSEO Employment Cluster and feeding findings to the MoD via the Office for Veterans Affairs
- Chairing the COBSEO Subcluster for spousal employment, working closely with all three Family Federations.

Alistair Halliday, the Forces Employment Charity's chief executive shared:

We are delighted to achieve ERS Gold status. This is a testament to the hard work of all our staff and recognises the charity's considerable achievements in supporting the Armed Forces community since 1885. We're fully committed to increasing the support we offer, ensuring veterans and their families receive the assistance they need to reach their full potential and feel successful and fulfilled in their civilian careers.

Dr Andrew Murrison, Minister for Defence People, Veterans and Service Families, said: "I would like to thank all the organisations that have been recognised in this year's awards. I'm delighted that we have seen so many organisations recognised with a gold award. Their continued support demonstrates the unique benefits and strengths that our Armed Forces community can bring to the workplace."

■ THE WOS' & SNCOS' Pioneer Reunion Club held a Ladies Dinner Night at the Littlebury Hotel, Bicester on Saturday 2 September 2023 when 26 sat down for an excellent meal. It was nice to see Maj and Mrs Chris Swift attend, their first attendance for many years.

Most arrived in mid-afternoon and enjoyed the nice sunny weather with a few drinks in the Hotel garden, others decided to splash out and visit Bicester Village.

Mr Pete Thomas, Chairman of the Club, thanked everyone for attending and hoped that they would enjoy the evening.

In the hotel that evening there was also a reunion dinner for HMS Bicester so Navy in one side and Army in the other – a bit like Twickenham every year!

It is hoped that next year the attendance is increased.

2024 - calling on ALL Pioneers!

| It's the 75th Anniversary next year. A great excuse to get everyone together. Enjoy and make memories!

CALLING on ALL Pioneers (past & present) to engage and support their Pioneer Association by joining today. It's so easy to join and it's FREE!

Billy's job is to make the association appealing for ALL ages; what have you got to lose. Contact him via the contact details on page 3 or email him on thepioneerhq@gmail.com

It will take a minute to register you and send out a welcome pack and remember, it's the 75th Reunion Anniversary next year.

A great excuse to get everyone together! Events are organised and managed throughout the year for you ALL to come together, enjoy and make memories.

Norman and Paul are currently going through a large Orbat list of members of 23 Pioneer Regt and identifying the names of those who are not members. Any non members will be contacted and reminded about our 75th Anniversary Reunion next year!

The Garrison Sergeant Major of London District has warned younger veterans to use their regimental associations or run the risk of losing them altogether.

Warrant Officer Class 1 Andrew 'Vern' Stokes, who earlier this year oversaw the delivery of the King's coronation, made the plea as some veterans told Forces News regimental associations were too formal, and that sometimes the older veteran community could be difficult to engage with.

The GSM issued his warning following a meeting of the Shropshire Branch of the Coldstream Guards Association – his own association – which he said recently faced a "make or break" situation due to a lack of participation in association activities.

"We've got to make it appealing," WO1 Stokes said.

He added: "Associations need to have a diaspora that crosses all ages and not just support elderly veterans."

"Whilst that is really important, that we maintain that and we still do that, we also have to have an edge that attracts younger members."

In 2021, the national census found that 1.85 million people in England and Wales were classed as veterans.

Fifty-three per cent were over 65, meaning almost half of all veterans are of working age. It's this group the GSM is calling on to get more involved with the regimental associations.

WO1 Stokes said: "I think the issue is volume. These associations were formed

about 100 years ago, shortly after the First World War. The Army was much much bigger and there wasn't distractions like social media.

"Now the issue is the Army's much smaller, so therefore we don't recruit as many people and we don't see as many service leavers as we saw before."

"So we don't have the same volume to sustain the numbers of the branches that we have for all of the regimental associations."

And, he stressed: "The branches need to modernise."

One regimental association that has attempted to do that is The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

Earlier this year, they secured funding from the Office for Veterans' Affairs to help engage their younger veteran cohort, after an internal, General-led, review found there were Fusiliers who had served in Iraq and Afghanistan that they were failing to engage sufficiently.

"We identified a problem," said Colonel James Denny, Regimental Secretary of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

He added: "There was a gap of an age group in the late 30s to 40s, people who had been to Iraq and Afghanistan, who had not re-engaged with the regiment for very good reasons once they had left the Army."

Asked if he agreed regimental associations were too formal, the GSM said yes, adding: "If we need to rub off a bit of the formality, that's fine. That's achievable."

But he appealed to those who have stepped away from the military following their Army service to not forget about the regimental family that will be "always there".

"If you don't think the branch of the association is for you, that's absolutely fine. Find your own space and find your own way of bedding into a community."

"But don't forget about it."

Mr Stokes added: "When the time is right and when you want to reconnect with people from your regiment, then go searching for the branches because they're always there. And they'll be there to help you."

"But the trouble is, if we don't use them, we will lose them."

"So, if you're 50-50 in any way, then go to your branches and support them. Because your support will maintain them for a long time."

We look forward to seeing ALL Pioneers at next year's 75th Anniversary. A warm welcome awaits!

PIONEERS



ALFRED
LENG

"WANTS
YOU"

JOIN YOUR ASSOCIATION!

GOD SAVE THE KING

Serving Pioneer Update

As the curtains begins to close on 2023, Stevie Soper reflects on another vastly busy, diverse, and successful year for those serving Pioneers that continue to proudly fly the red and green flag within the Royal Logistic Corps

2023 got off to a flying start with numerous promotions to celebrate; Sgt Pete Straughan was selected for promotion to SSgt at the end of 2022 and has since moved on to his new role as the Senior Instructor within 109 Sqn, 25 Training Regt at DST Leconfield. He now nurtures the future phase 2 trainees of the RLC. SSgt Deveroux Buckley was selected for promotion to WO2 and is now the Squadron Sergeant Major of the newly formed 12 Squadron within 9 Regiment RLC. WO2 Danny Ravenscroft moved internally from his SSM appointment to become the Regimental Training Warrant Officer in the ever busy 13 Air Assault Support Regiment RLC, in Colchester and remain on extreme high readiness for taskings worldwide. This means that WO2 Buckley is the only serving Pioneer SSM currently left in the entire British Army. With

him having a newly formed Squadron to steer, it allows the perfect opportunity to stamp his personality and the Pioneer ethos on those fortunate enough to be under his command.

Both WO2 Pete Poole and Rustey Emmanuelle were selected for promotion to not only WO1, but both were successful in securing the prestige role of Regimental Sergeant Major at 150 Regiment RLC in Hull and 158 Regiment RLC in Peterborough respectively. This is an amazing feat, becoming an RSM, (apparently less than 2% of those that join the Army make this appointment) it's even more of a challenge considering both are from a trade that was mothballed nearly ten years ago (in a few months' time). It's fantastic to see troops are still competing for and gaining the very top jobs in the Corps and is a testament to not only Pete

and Rustey, but also those that helped shape their/our careers and forge the path. Both are now fully embedded into their units and well on the way to guiding and developing the Army's leaders of the future. On a personal note, I've now departed from my role as RSM of 11 EOD & Search Regiment RLC and recently taken up my first commissioned appointment as the Senior Instructor within the QMs Division at Worthy Down.

Another achievement of note is that WO1 Russ Clarke has been successful in being selected for a Senior Soldier Continuity Post (SSCP) role. SSCP for those unaware, is rarely offered and after a fiercely competitive boarding process are given to exceptional soldiers that have the relevant skills and qualifications that the Army can't afford to lose due to staffing constraints at the end of their regular

Pictures: Stevie Soper



service, these are extremely hard to come by, so huge kudos to those successful applicants. Those individuals selected continue to serve for an initial 6 years under slightly different terms of service to those on regular contracts and WO1 Russ Clarke is one of an ever-growing number of Pioneers (3 currently) that have secured such roles and continue to serve.

On the Fitness front, not only is WO1 Clarke is still smashing out more Ironman competitions, he competed in the World Championships in Finland in August 23, apparently his last one... but we shall see. WO2 Danny Ravenscroft also dusted off his tabbing boots in between deploying to Sudan to assist with the evacuation of over 1200 UK citizens during the crisis there and was a key part of the Airborne trial team that deployed to Yuma, Arizona. The aim of this Exercise (Ex DELTA DROP) was for members of Air and Space Warfare Centre (ASWC) to test low level, static line, parachuting from the new A400 aircraft. Danny with the Officers and Soldiers of 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team (16X CBT) have been instrumental in futureproofing the parachuting capability for the whole of Defence. He also led a team from 13 Air Assault Support Regiment RLC up to Spear Bridge to remind everyone that after many years of Pioneer dominance on the Commando Speed March, the boys can still mix it with the best of them. Just missing

out on the overall trophy's, Danny's team came a very respectable 4th place. It's worthy of noting that Chantel Mason (PT Corps) still holds the record for fastest female on the course and 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC still sit in overall second place behind 2 Para as the unit with the most wins in the history of the competition (3).

As numbers continue to dwindle and our red & green footprint continues to get ever smaller in the field Army, it's astounding to think that we've still got representation across 8 different Regiments including some influential training establishments, which ensures that our legacy remains in this; the 30th anniversary of the formation of the Royal Logistic Corps (yes...Some of you are that old !!), we couldn't of been more front, and centre as a trade if we could have tried. After much persuasion we convinced the RLC Corps Sgt Maj that it was only befitting that HRH; The Princess Royal should be escorted on the RLC30 Freedom of Winchester parade that took place in June 23, by an honour guard made up of two ceremonial Pioneer Axemen. Both WO2 Emmanuelle and SSgt Payne did both the trade and Corps immensely proud, hopefully some of you may have been in attendance or seen some pictures from the hugely successful and historic event. A special mention needs to also go to SSgt Straughan who not only grew a glorious beard and acted as the reserve axeman for

the event but was also instrumental in behind-the-scenes preparation and drill practice leading up to the parade.

On our current trajectory it remains that SSgt John "Fluffy" Payne will be the last serving RLC Pioneer soldier when he leaves the service in early 2027. Fluffy who is currently the SQMS at Worthy Down Support Unit is currently halfway through a yearlong deployment to Pakistan in acting rank of WO2 as the RQMS for the British contingent in theatre and as ever in these turbulent times he, like many of the troops are being kept busy with many Pioneers and their units being aligned to numerous homeland MACA support tasks in various guises as well as facing ever evolving threats in East Europe and further afield.

January 2024 will see the Pioneer trade sadly dwindle more and will only have 8 Pioneers remaining in service (less those on SSCP contracts, commissioned or transferred elsewhere in the Army) To mark the passing of their service I'd like to take this opportunity on behalf of us all to bid farewell, thank you & wish good luck for the future to the following troops that have left or are about to leave since I last wrote to you in the 2022 edition of The Pioneer.

Lt Col Billy Dilkes MBE, WO2 (SSM) Mike Smith, WO2 Micky Hart, Cpl Sam "Jimmy" Riddell, SSgt Stevie Emeny, Cpl Jason Crowie, WO1 (RSM) Brian (Northy) Hinton. ■



■ Bri's dine out



■ Danny Raves. Top left in Arizona



■ What a great sight to see !



■ Russ Ironman



The face of War

It was the October 2015 issue that we first highlighted mental health on our front page and apart from our usual coverage in our news sections over the years, we decided it needed an update...



INSIDE this issue we visit the battlefields of World War 1 and witness the brutal destruction and total loss of life that this war bestowed on the lives of millions of people.

A lot of soldiers who come back from wars and conflicts have visible scars, like we have portrayed on our front cover this issue.

However, there are a lot of soldiers, veterans and family members who do not have any visible scars, but mental ones.

Mental health problems are common and can affect ANYONE. It is important to get help and support if you or someone you know has mental health problems.

Under the Armed Forces Covenant, you are entitled to priority treatment in the NHS for conditions linked to your military service.

There is an awful lot of help out there and one of the best that I have seen is called Operation Courage.

Operation Courage

Operation Courage is the Veteran's mental health and wellbeing service. If you or someone you know is struggling with their mental health or wellbeing, expert help is available whether you're due to leave the armed forces, have just left or left many years ago.

When you contact Op COURAGE, you'll speak to people who:

- Understand the armed forces and military life
- Are either from the armed forces community or highly experienced in working with serving personnel, reservists, veterans, and their families
- Will work with you to make sure you get the right type of specialist care, support, and treatment

You can contact the service yourself or ask your GP, a charity or someone else, such as a family member or friend, to do this for you. The service will arrange for you to have an assessment, to make sure you get the right care and support.

For more information
<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/armed-forces-community/mental-health/veterans-reservists/>

There are also various other Veteran Specific charities in the UK who can provide additional assistance such as:

Combat Stress

The UK's leading charity for veterans' mental health. They help former servicemen and women with mental health problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety and depression.

They provide specialist treatment and support for veterans from every service and conflict, focusing on those with complex mental health issues.

If you're currently serving or have served in the UK Armed Forces, you can call their 24-hour mental health helpline. The helpline is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year for veterans and their families. If you need support please call 0800 138 1619. Serving personnel and their families can call 0800 323 4444 and find out more on combatstress.org

Help for Heroes

Serving in the Armed Forces takes strength, but it takes a different kind of strength to live with life-changing injuries. Every course and activity we offer aims to empower veterans to look beyond illness and injury, regain their purpose and reach their potential. If you are living with anxiety and stress, are struggling financially, or just need a listening ear, they can help. Start your recovery journey today.
www.helpforheroes.org.uk/get-support/get-support-today

PTSD Resolution

Provides counselling for former armed forces, reservists & families. For free, immediate help call 0300 302 0551 or visit ptsdresolution.org

Phoenix Heroes

Support veterans dealing with PTSD. They work alongside local organisations and professionals and act as a support platform to place veterans and families on outdoor group activity projects. They now have a strong support structure to help our

homeless veterans too. They also offer training courses and seasonal employment opportunities across the spectrum of the event industry.

www.phoenixheroes.co.uk

SSAFA

Provides safe, secure accommodation and other essential support to 80 veterans at any one time from two houses, to help them make a successful transition to civilian life. For most veterans, the transition from the armed forces to civilian life is smooth but more often than not, those few who can't resettle easily face challenges such as homelessness, poverty, mental and physical health issues, addictions, broken families and unemployment.

Since 2013, Launchpad has supported over 500 veterans by supporting, developing and helping them to live independently.

www.veteranslaunchpad.org.uk

Togetherall

Together All is an online early intervention service for people in psychological distress. Togetherall can help with a wide range of mental health and wellbeing issues from anxiety, depression, stress and trauma, to relationship problems and lifestyle challenges.
www.togetherall.com

Horseback UK

Anyone who knows Taff Teague will know that he helps this charity and highly recommends them.

HorseBack UK is a charity set up to empower service personnel and veterans suffering from life-changing injuries and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

HorseBack UK inspires positive change, encourages confidence and self-esteem, and promotes recovery in an individual. Using horsemanship and outdoor activities, they deliver nationally accredited personal development and wellbeing programmes which offer our participants new coping strategies, life skills and the tools to build resilience. ■

OpCOURAGE

COMBAT STRESS
FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTHHELP for
HEROESFOR Resolution
Forces' Veterans' Mental Health
0300 302 0551Phoenix
HEROES
Veteran Community Support

ssafa

togetherall

HorseBackUK

*'He crawled back from 'no man's land' through mud and stench
 Back to where they all started from in that rat infested trench
 In the dark over decomposing bodies lying in deep shell holes
 Out there he had seen his pals cut down, god rest their souls
 Both ears were shattered and he could not hear any sound
 He had seen men torn apart on that deadly killing ground
 There was no gain he did not understand why he were there
 At seventeen years of age, he should be home it was not fair
 He came from a Cotswold farm along a range of green rolling hills
 The local squire said he was now old enough to learn soldiering skills
 He had marched with his friends to this far foreign unknown place
 Now what he had seen out there was reflected on his now aged face.'*

by John Sullivan



Sherringham Jolly 2023

The now annual Sherringham Pioneer Jolly took place in May and again we had a great turn out, sadly due to the Coronation and the Army vs Navy rugby game clashing, some of the regulars were sadly missed. However, we had some new veterans turn up!

THOSE attending had a thoroughly enjoyable time and all agreed that Peter (with a little help from his family and friends) worked exceptionally hard.

The weather was changeable, but when we needed good weather it behaved, thankfully for both the BBQ and the Parade. The Hiltons cooked a great breakfast and the Colcloughs provided a chilli meal, which both have now become regular events and are very welcome.

We slightly changed things this year by moving the BBQ, which once again was cooked by our own Civvi Street Catering Corps, thank you, to Thursday evening and had a sit down meal at the Red Hart on the Friday evening which went down. This may change again in 2024, with the BBQ Thursday and a fish and chip night at the

camp Friday.

The Parade seems to get bigger and better every year with 3 standards, the Pioneer one carried by Steve Kohut and our Trog friend Duncan carrying the RBL and the RAF standard attended too. We also have the town mayor and the local Police sent a representative and she turned a few heads.

The Jolly evening Saturday was a great success again at the Tyneside club, with a great band, buffet and a raffle which will pay for the 2024 buffet, so thanks to everyone for bringing a raffle prize.

I would like on behalf of my family and friends who help every year a massive thank you again for all who attend and support me, you have become more like a big family gathering and that makes my organisation of the event so much easier.

And so to 2024, it is the 10 year anniversary of the Sherringham Pioneer Jolly and I really hope you can all make it, there will be new T shirts, again sorted by the Colcloughs.

The Jolly begins on the 15th May 2024 with drinks around the camp fire and set up.

Thursday is BBQ and drinks Friday is fish and chip and drinks, Saturday is Parade morning and the Jolly buffet, band and raffle evening. Sunday, chilli and farewell for another year.

There will be other events to do, but I tend to let people enjoy their free time to enjoy the beauty of the North Norfolk coast and countryside.

If anyone is interested, I'm afraid we do have limited space, but please contact me, if interested, Peter Wegg (07900 890514)

Pictures: Background and other pages Paul Brown











The Pioneer Reunion

Once again the Royal Pioneer Corps Association Reunion was held at Bicester on the weekend of Armed Forces Day on 23rd June 2023. The weather was amazing!

THE decision was made early on in 2022, to build on previous successful reunion weekends and where possible encourage better numbers in attendance. We must ensure that we maximise every opportunity that allows an even busier programme during the weekend. We must encourage Pioneers to return next year if we are to continue as an association but also get the word out there to both young and old that is a well worth weekend to attend and support.

The Friday allows most Pioneers and their guests to arrive, settle and take the opportunity for a nostalgic tour around some of the old pubs in and around Bicester; some may have changed their name but most still look and feel the same as they did previously. Accommodation remains the biggest problem surrounding the Pioneer Weekend as we're constantly competing against those visiting Bicester Retail Village; that said, as Bicester Town itself continues to grow at speed, more and more accommodation opportunities present themselves. As an association we need to jump on every opportunity that allows us cheaper/more affordable accommodation for all events ran throughout the calendar year.

The AGM at 1800hrs took place in the Ex-Services Club. This is the main meeting that is required to take place per annum which allows us as an association to take stock of where we are currently and where we wish to go moving forward. Although a period of 12 months goes by quickly, we must inform our membership of any actions, updates, and any information over the previous period. Finally, it allows members in attendance to raise any points or concerns to the council.

We had the opportunity to welcome our new Pioneer Secretary, Lt Col (Retd) Billy Dilkes as he retires from Regular Service on the 10 Jul 23, after 37yrs. His achievements both as a soldier (18yrs) and as an Officer (19yrs) has been remarkable; he departs his Regular Service by being awarded an MBE off the 1st Kings New Years Honours List which he received on his last day in uniform by the Princess Royal at Buckingham Palace. Congratulations both on your Service and your new appointment.

We also had the opportunity to say a fond farewell to our outgoing Pioneer Secretary, Norman Brown after 20yrs outstanding service to the Pioneers. It's a well-known story that he was asked to cover the post for a period of 6mths. The Pioneer Family have been truly blessed to have had such a dedicated secretary who has gone way beyond what was expected in support of those that have both served and are still serving. We should also

mention the support from his beloved spouse Marlene who has had to endure copious amounts of functions, often sitting patiently whilst Norman organises each event to the end.

We should also make a special mention to his son Paul; he has been the silent backbone in most of what Norman has achieved. Paul and Norman have spent many a weekend organising 1000's of envelopes for either Newsletters or the Pioneer Magazines that go out to us year in, year out and its FREE of charge. Paul's input into the magazine continues to be remarkable. His resilience in providing both stories and photos, plus the ability to put it all together is something we all take for granted so a huge 'Thank You'.

In summary, this has been an outstanding Family effort and one we all appreciate. Norman although retires as the secretary, now resides as part of the Pioneer Association council so we can still look forward to his attendance at most

functions. His knowledge and wisdom relating to Pioneer issues and his continuous ability to avoid getting a round in continues on.

After the AGM, Billy Dilkes donated a number of Military statuettes and pictures for the annual auction. Bob Gillespie also provided a couple of sculptured artefacts and finally some bottles of Pioneer beers and spirits kindly donated by Pioneers vets in attendance. Our aim was raising as much money as possible which would allow us to purchase a Silver Working Pioneer for Norman Browns retirement gift. The RLC HQ had already contributed £250, with Brig David Clouston and Billy Dilkes both putting £50 in each. With a good starting point of raising the £1000 required it's fair to say, we weren't surprised by the generosity of those attending as we raised the remaining £650 required with ease. This again highlights the respect and feelings we all have for Norman and all his hard work over the last 20 years. Thank you to everyone



Pictures: Paul Brown



involved in the auction!

The Friday evening function had a solo artist playing a mix of genres with a hot and cold buffet provided. The numbers in attendance fluctuated throughout the evening with many Pioneers taking the opportunity to visit some other watering holes around Bicester before returning back to the Ex-Services Club.

Saturday had change to the annual programme in that the Memorial Service would take place in the St Edberg's Church. This is the main church within Bicester which plays host to most, if not all memorials held within Bicester. The Pioneer veterans formed up a short distance from the Church allowing them to march to St Edberg's.

They halted next to the WWI/WW2 Memorial and after a quick group photograph entered the Church. Rev Peter Wright headed up the service with an outstanding organist playing in the background. The acoustics within the Church made the 'Last Post' sound amazing and our gratitude to Phil the Bugler for travelling up from Epsom that morning.

The Pioneer veterans had time to reflect and remember those close friends and comrades who had sadly passed but used this opportunity to show their respect. Thank you to everyone in attendance.

The Bicester Garrison HQ and members of DEMS Trg Regt, 1 Regt RLC and 241 Signals Sqdn had set up several Military stands and competitions primarily aimed for Armed Forces Day but also in order to welcome the Pioneer Family back to Bicester. The local Town Council added some local stands with the Bicester Community demonstrating activities such as dance, martial-arts, and tug of war.

Our hope now is to build on the momentum of Pingle Fields for the set up there for 2024; we'd like to organise a Messtival type function that follows on from the activities already on display by bringing both Bicester Garrison Messes and the Pioneer Association together in celebrating the 75th Reunion.

Live Bands, Local Breweries, Food Halls and Fayre Ground entertainment is what the Pioneer Council is trying to deliver. We just require your support in attending the 2024 Pioneer Weekend.

Saturday evening finished off back in the Ex-Services Club with a Live Band, a disco, hot buffet, and the raffle. Attendance on the Saturday increased in numbers with a really nice atmosphere throughout; last orders being called at 0115hrs the Ex-Services would have been delighted with both the amount of alcohol consumed but also the way our Pioneer veterans continue to conduct themselves. Long may this continue!

In Summary, this was another good opportunity to meet up with old friends/comrades, have a few sociable beverages, pay our respects, and make more fond memories.

As already stated, accommodation remains our only sticking point, but Billy Dilkes is working hard to alleviate this by providing a 'discount code' for larger hotels, gaining a better rate on smaller hotels and utilising what the Garrison has available. He'll also be liaising with local Publicans to provide (where possible) a discount on certain beers throughout the 2024 Re-union.

Thank you for all those that continue to support the Pioneer Association, whether that be through attending or providing a contribution to the Pioneer Association Fund.

We will continue to attract more Pioneer members both young and old with the hope of maintaining the longevity of the Pioneer ethos for some time to come. ■











The very last Tommy was Harry Patch. For eighty years, Harry kept his thoughts to himself, never speaking to anyone about what had happened to him all those years before. He was one hundred years old before he started to talk about life and death in the maelstrom of war. In his words...

“It wasn’t worth it. No war is worth it. No war is worth the loss of a couple of lives let alone thousands. T’isn’t worth it. the First World War, if you boil it down, what was it? Nothing but a family row. That’s what caused it. T’isn’t worth it.”

WW1 BATTLEFIELD TOUR

Ten members of the WOs' & SNCOs' Pioneer Reunion Club attended a WW1 Battlefield Tour "All Quiet on the Western Front" from 22 – 25 September 2023.



FOR most attending this was their 4th tour, however their first WW1 tour. The pick-up point was Sixfields, Northampton where the luxury coach turned up 45 minutes late – not a good start.

The coach headed to Folkestone where we had to change from the luxurious coach to one that proved to be rather cramped and not so comfortable, this was our coach unfortunately until we returned to Folkestone. We arrived at Dover and quickly, after passport checks, were on the ferry and a few drinks to relax.

Our hotel was called Horizon Ath Lessines. This hotel was 90 minutes away from where we were going in the Somme, it was also 90 minutes away from Ypres. It was literally in some kind of industrial estate in the middle of nowhere, next to some lawnmower manufacturing plant! This location meant that we had to both eat and drink in the hotel. The first night's meal was not too bad however, things changed on the 3rd night. The service was terrible with some having to wait over 2 hours for their meal – this hotel is not recommended.

Billy Dilkes set a new record over the weekend – 3 days without sleep. How could he sleep with sharing a room with Bob Fox who it is believed holds the record for the loudest snoring.

The tour started with a visit to Tyne Cot Cemetery, the largest British war cemetery in the world where nearly 12,000

Commonwealth servicemen are buried or commemorated. We then went to Vancouver Corner where we examined the use of gas in the trenches and see the moving 'Brooding Soldier' Memorial to the Canadians who defended Ypres in 1915 and at Langemarck German Cemetery we saw how Germany commemorated her dead and look at the story of 'Fritz' on the other side of No Man's Land.

After lunch at Hooge, we visited the preserved trenches at Sanctuary Wood Trench Museum, some of the last original WW1 trenches still surviving in Flanders together with an amazing collection of artefacts and stereoscopic photos. We then travelled to the Messines Ridge to Ploegsteert to see the Ploegsteert Memorial to the Missing.

Our day ends in Ypres where, after a meal, we attended the moving Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate Memorial, held at 8pm each evening.

Here Mr Tom Appleyard accompanied by Mr Pete Thomas and Lt Col (Retd) Billy Dilkes laid a wreath on behalf of the fallen in the Labour Corps. It was obvious that Tom had never passed a drill course and that the other two had!

The following day was a visit to the Somme. The Battle of the Somme began on a summer's day in July 1916 and ended in a snowstorm four and a half months later. It was a battle of contrasts from the blackest day when 57,000 became casualties to the

first use of tanks and the change in approach to fighting on the Western Front.

Wherever you go there are multiple cemeteries. I have never seen so many in one area! In just the Somme area there are 371!

An absolutely crazy loss of life... not just multiple battalions wiped out but multiple divisions (a division is around 18000). It is absolutely unthinkable! Whole divisions completely gone!

We started our tour at Peronne where we visited the excellent Historial de la Grande Guerre museum which helps to put into context not just our Somme day, but the whole tour. We then see the Lochnagar Mine Crater at La Boisselle, the largest British mine crater surviving on the battlefields.

After lunch we saw the trenches in the Newfoundland Park and then had time to visit the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing and see the Museum here.

The Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme is a war memorial to 72,395 missing British and South African servicemen who died in the Battles of the Somme of the First World War between 1915 and 1918, with no known grave. It is near the village of Thiepval.

This is the largest of the Memorials to the Missing, and the last on the Western Front to be unveiled. Negotiations to purchase the site started in the late 1920s, and the memorial was unveiled by the Prince of

Pictures: Paul Brown



Wales (then also President of the Imperial War Graves Commission) on Monday the 1st of August, 1932.

The Memorial is a massive arched structure, with large laurel wreaths carved on top of the pillars and towards the top of the memorial.

At the time of the unveiling in 1932 there were 73,357 names commemorated here. Today there are 72,395 – the slight decrease represents the identification of bodies since then, resulting in soldiers no longer being ‘missing’. Some additional names have also been added and are listed on panels on the side near the cemetery.

On the panels of the arches are the names of those died but who have no known grave – ‘the Missing’. However, many of these soldiers may be buried in the Somme, but in a grave marked as ‘Known Unto God’.

The panels on the memorial are arranged by Regiment, then within each Regiment by Rank and within that alphabetically.

That concluded our tour and we returned to the hotel for a meal (meal described above) and a few beers followed by a good night’s sleep (apart from Billy!).

After breakfast we returned to Calais for our return trip and then Folkestone. On arrival at Northampton our numbers increased from 10 to 11.

Billy had managed to ‘capture’ an Aussie who had been on our tour and wanted a lift to Oxford. ■



*‘In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.
We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,
In Flanders fields’*

by John McCrae





The Ride to the Wall 2023

I have been wanting to visit the Ride to the Wall for many years, I saw the weather looked amazing for this years event and decided it was time I turned up. It was amazing!

FOR MANY years I have been wanting to go and visit The Ride to the Wall event which takes place every year at the National Arboretum in Staffordshire

This year I decided that if the weather looked good, that we would make the journey. It had been a busy week at work and I was kind of hoping that the weather would be rubbish, so I could stay in bed a bit longer :)

I set my alarm, woke up, checked the

forecast and my god, the weather looked amazing. Indeed it was!

The event itself was started in 2008 by Martin Nicholson of the Nene Valley Harley Davidson Owners Group members who organise a small ride to the National Memorial Arboretum's Remembrance Day event and formulate ideas for a stand-alone ride. Since then it has been growing and growing and in 2022 almost 10,000 attended!

It is a stand alone organisation free from

the constraints of affiliation to any specific outside governing body and is run entirely by volunteers. The only expenses paid are those incurred in the day to day running of the organisation.

Martin felt there was a need to remember specifically those lost since 1945 and, at the same time, allow youngsters a greater understanding. It has now become a life-long commitment!

It is a unique motorcycling event which gives motorcyclists an opportunity to gather

Article | Pictures: Paul Brown



together at a place of remembrance, to pay their respects to our serving and fallen service men and women and in doing so, raise funds solely for the purpose of perpetuating their memory and recognising the sacrifice made. It's core values are

- founded on the principles of Remembrance and Respect.
- To remember those that can no longer ride by our side.
- To give all motorcyclists an opportunity to pay their respects to the memory of the fallen and express our gratitude for their sacrifice.
- To show support for the Armed Forces currently serving both at home and abroad.
- To raise money for the upkeep of the venue that serves to perpetuate the memory of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

There are many other already well established organisations raising money for other charities, but as far as we are aware;

they are the only one raising money specifically for the National Memorial Arboretum.

It took about an hour and a half to get there with my satnav near the end of my journey taking me off along country lanes and singleish track roads. This proved to be very handy as effectively it missed out a huge amount of congestion and parking!

I believe it was a record turnout with riders travelling from across the UK and abroad, most of the riders arrived in convoy after departing from one of 11 designated start locations around the country.

As the bikes approached the Arboretum they were greeted by David Sheaf, a veteran of Northern Ireland, who every year braves the weather, standing to attention for five hours to salute every rider.

In its 16th year running, the "annual pilgrimage" has become an important part of people's calendar, with a military wives choir, army bands, performances, and a

flypast.

The Service of Remembrance commenced with a flypast of World War Two-era Spitfire fighter aircraft and concluded with a minute's silence, laying of wreaths and the national anthem performed by the British Army Band Colchester.

Since the first Ride to the Wall in 2008, participants have raised over £1.5million to support the National Memorial Arboretum.

We had a great time and bumped into a few Pioneers, whom you may recognise in the photos. I even got the organiser of RTTW Martin Nicholson to have his picture taken in front the Pioneer plot in the Logistic Corps grove, with some of the Pioneers who were in attendance.

On the way home it took a while to get out of the car park to say the least, however the shortcut I used to get to the wall proved equally effective to get out of the area pretty quickly! What a day!

The next RTTW is on 5 October 2024. ■



'They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:

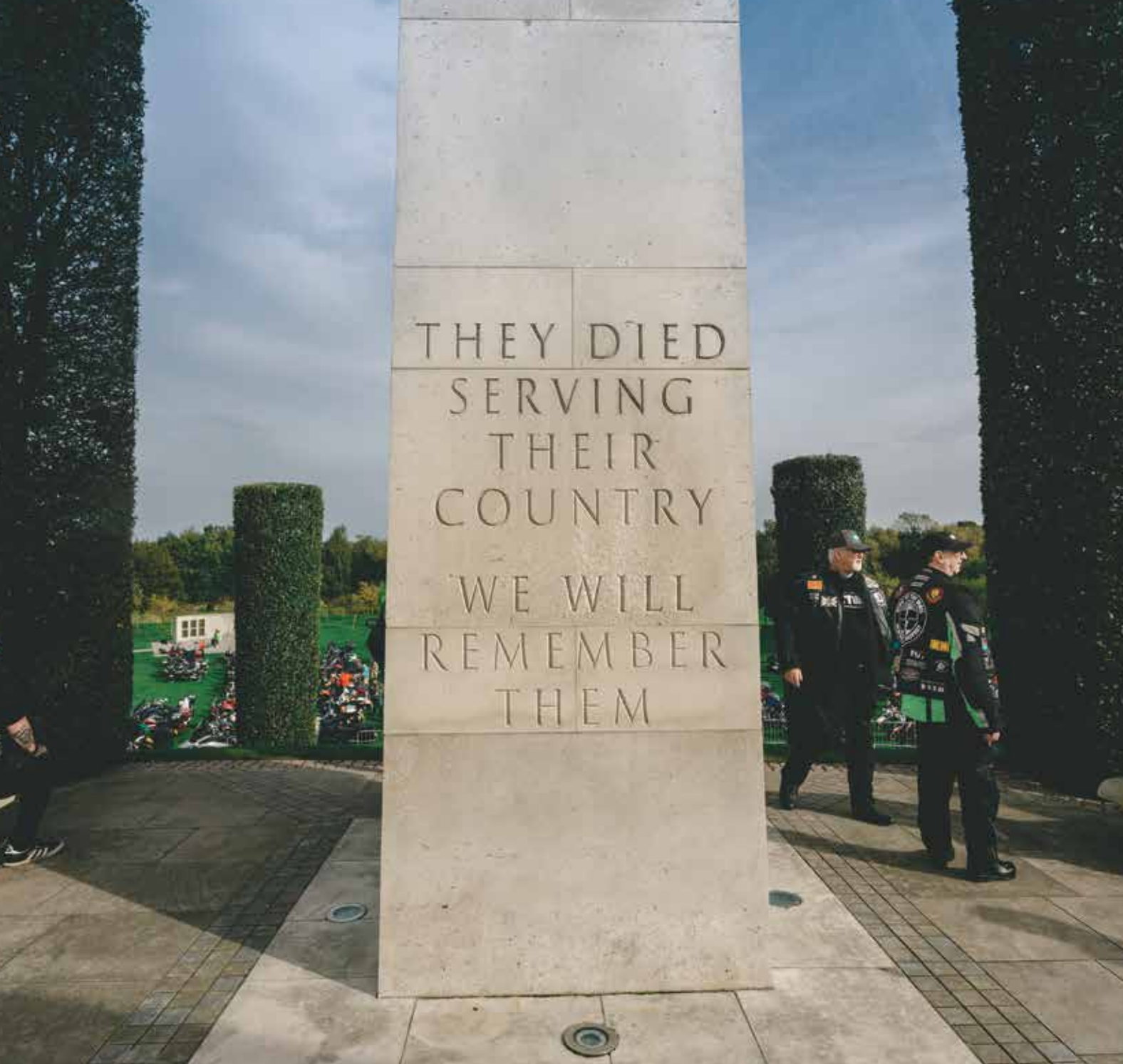
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning

We will remember them'









84th RPC Corps Birthday

The Northampton Branch celebrated the Corps' 84th birthday (17th Oct) by holding a small ceremony at the new memorial in Simpson Manor – the site of what was the RPC Training Centre. This was organised by Mr Tom Appleyard and Wootton Parish Council.

THE ceremony started by Tom welcoming everyone present and explained that it was intended to explain where the Pioneers originated from and paint a picture of the Corps.

Mr Norman Brown described the origins of the Corps which was the Labour Corps. This Corps was formed in 1917 to obtain more fluidity in utilising the services of men in Infantry Labour and Works Units.

Although the Corps was disbanded in 1919 during its short history it lost over 8,000 killed. A Special Order of the Day from Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig, Commander in Chief British Armies in France was read out. This order commended the Corps and brought distinction and credit on it.

Mr Appleyard then explain what the Royal Pioneer Corps which was formed on 17th October 1939 achieved in the Second World War where it was the largest Corps in the British Army. The Corps had an infantry role, helped in mine clearance, guarded basis and prisoners of war, laid prefabricated track on beaches, unloaded

ships, helped with both Mulberry Harbours and PLUTO (pipe-line under the ocean) which they continued for 250 miles in Europe. They also with the REs helped to construct airfields and bridging.

In November 1946, George VI in recognition of their performance during the war decreed that the Corps should have the distinction "Royal". The Corps had the honour of being granted the Freedom of both Northampton and Bicester and a large number of streets within Simpson Manor were named after Pioneers as well as the main square in Bicester Town.

The Corps lost over 14,000 soldiers killed in WW2 and these are remembered each year at the Cenotaph where Pioneers make one of the largest contingents marching.

Mr Brown then described the many countries that the Corps had served in post World War 2 until amalgamation into the RLC in 1993. These included Germany where the Corps at one time administered 39,000 locally engaged civilians, Palestine and Jordan, Korea, Cyprus (in both the troubles of 1963 and 1974), Kuwait, Aden, Libya, Malaya, Singapore and Brunei. In

Northern Ireland the Corps was committed from the early days of the troubles and at various time proved the Prisoner Guard Force at HMP Magilligan, the Maze and Crumblin Road. In 1982 Pioneers landed with 5 Brigade in the Falklands and were to witness the bombing of the ships Sir Galahad and Sir Tristian, they were also involved in the task to identify, exhume and inter at San Carlos and repatriate 64 dead back to the UK as the Army Graves Registration Team.

Finally in 1990 the Corps was heavily involved in Op Granby leading to the Gulf War. Two Pioneers Companies deployed to Saudi Arabia in support of 1 Armoured Division.

The Branch Standard bearer, Mr Kev Broome, then lowered the Branch Standard and 2 minutes silence was held.

Mr Steve Harrod then read out "Ode of Remembrance" after which Brig Charles Telfer laid a wreath at the memorial stone. Finally Mr Gerry Vick asked everyone to read with him the RPC Corps Collect.

17 then went to the nearby Toby Inn for a meal. ■

Pictures: Paul Brown





THE PIONEER



Officers Dinner Night

The 75th Past and Present Dinner was held on Friday 20th October 2023 at Bicester Garrison Officers' Mess, Ambrosden when 73 former Officers and their guests attended.

THE following is a copy of the Foreword of the menu. First, a very warm welcome to everyone in attendance this evening, and, as ever, our thoughts are with those who cannot be here. We remain united in spirit, if not in person. It's humbling to see so many Past and Present Pioneer Officers who continue to support this event.

At the time of writing there are 75 such attendees.

Even more impressive is what those attendees represent. We have everything from serving Pioneers, to serving officers

through to recently retired and some slightly longer in the tooth. However, we are all united by the Pioneer bond – a genuine family in its trusted sense. Since the exit of the Pioneer trade in late 2014, the longevity of this dinner was a concern but I'm delighted with the response and support. Thank you!

Secondly, welcome to our principal guest; Brig Chris Murray (firmer DRLC & Bicester Garrison Commander).

Thank you for your continued support from the RLC Association. Thank you also to Councillor Dan Sames for your support

amongst the local community and keeping the Pioneer legacy alive within Bicester town, it is genuinely appreciated.

Finally, a word of congratulations to some of our serving Pioneers who have fared favourably on recent Boards. As ever the track record of strong, professional soldiers resonates around the Corps, and it is no surprise to see our Pioneers recognised as such. More will follow on the night.

All the best, thank you again for your attendance and I look forward to catching up with you over the evening.

Billy Dilkes

Picture: Paul Brown



The Association Chairman, Brig David Clouston, although unable to attend sent the following message:

First, can I apologise for not being there in person. I think this is the first dinner I've missed since 2012. I'M genuinely gutted. I've always found these events to be a good chance to catch up with old friends and to hear your news first hand..

That we're still attracting such numbers is testimony to how active and vibrant a community we have.

That's despite being relatively low in numbers when compared with other associations.

We continue to punch well above our weight and that's without a 3-line whip in sight. Simply brilliant.

Looking back at what I spoke to you about last year it's perhaps worth an update on 2 areas.

First, those pioneers who still serve. We've had some remarkable successes not least of which our Head of Trade Stevie Soper gaining his commission.

I won't labour the rest of the detail; Billy will have given you some of it. But it would

be wrong of me not to acknowledge the brilliant job that those pioneers who remain are doing.

It's also encouraging to see that hard graft and professionalism being rightly rewarded with appropriate recognition.

Second, I spoke last year of work I'm personally engaged in on behalf of the whole Pioneer community.

It concerns eventual convergence of our (and all) association's with the Royal Logistic Corps.

The long-term demographic is inevitably a downward trend and it makes sense to start some early planning on this important topic.

I've held a consistent line ever since I left the Regiment that the convergence date was a "Not Before" the date that the last serving pioneer leaves service. Circa 2028. To go earlier would be a betrayal. And like with all "not before" times it could be considerably later.

My sense is it will be much later than this. It's largely conditions based and I've now had 2 x one to one dialogues with MGL on the issue.

Importantly he and the RHQ are supportive of our stance. While we maintain such enthusiasm, appetite for functions and activity overall we are in no rush to converge. We don't need to and no one is forcing us too. But some prudent anticipatory planning by Billy and I is a sensible step. I have everyone's interests at heart.

I know I have your trust and support and that makes my job as President remarkably easy. So thank you to each and every one of you.

My final thanks to Billy. Hard shoes to fill after Norman but he keeps us all straight. We'd be nowhere without the likes of them both.

Enjoy your evening and thank you...

David

After a wonderful meal prepared by RLC Chefs, Brig Murray made a marvellous (and often hilarious) speech, this was followed by In Pensioner Roy Palmer who read out a poem.

Ed Note: More photographs can be found on the Gallery pages. ■



Pioneer Fijian Festival

Every year since Oct 2014, immediately after the Pioneer Regiment disbanded, our Fijian community get together to celebrate, mourn, and pay tribute to their remarkable journey

EVERY year since Oct 2014, immediately after the Pioneer Regiment disbanded, our Fijian community get together to celebrate, mourn, and pay tribute to their remarkable journey that has brought them to the UK from the beautiful Fiji Islands. This year it was held on Saturday 26th August 2023.

In the late 90's, 23 Pioneer Regiment welcomed with open arms our first Fijian soldiers; they made an immediate impact to the Regiment both from a robust soldiering perspective but also on the rugby pitch.

As more Fijian soldiers and their families arrived, the Regiment grew stronger, and we started to identify not just within the RLC but the wider Army as a real close organisation that was now building a strong Regimental ethos that gave most Officers' and soldiers a sense of pride and real esprit de corps here in Bicester.

Fijian soldiers and their families really took on the mantle of being super proud of the Red & Green Pioneer ethos, the Fijian community have always been a huge part of Regiment life and were always involved in anything and everything when celebrating our fine history.

The local Bicester community have always been supportive of their Military families, so much so that many Fijian families have chosen Bicester as their long-term home.

This years Pioneer Fijian Festival took place in the old Ambrosden gymnasium, known as the 'Ginge Roberts Gym' with over 50 pioneer soldiers and their families attending, some of which had travelled afar to be there.

Cpl Frenchie Laqere and his wife Maria had worked tirelessly to provide entertainment, great food, and a fantastic family atmosphere.

On arrival, just before we were seated, Frenchie suddenly broke into song with the voice of an angel; this was quickly followed up with every Fijian (including children) joining in with the main verse... OMG – I would pay good money to go and listen to such a choir. Their harmonies were 1st class and ALL in perfect tone, I was blown away!

After a few messages of welcome and a speech from our 'Principal Guest', Lt Col Billy Dilkes, we sat together and had traditional Fijian food, again, this was amazing! We then had the good fortune of listening to some live music followed by traditional dances and entertainment, again

this was an absolute pleasure to witness. The light-hearted humour on display was fantastic to see with so much respect for each other.

Most Fijian Pioneers have settled in or around Bicester, Gloucester or Stoke with a few scattered further afield like Hull and Southampton, but when they come together you really appreciate how much respect they have for the Pioneer ethos, they genuinely feel fortunate that they've become part of this well-loved Pioneer machine and admired by so many.

On the Sunday, we gathered at St Mary's Churchyard to remember, celebrate, and pay our respects to every Fijian that now rests there. Another humbling experience filled with respect, a sense of pride and more outstanding vocal performances.

This weekend reminded me of how special this organisation can be. If it is supported, admired, and cherished by people that are prepared to go out their way and share great times/memories such as moments like this, then I see the Pioneer name continuing for many years to come.

Huge congratulations and a job well done to ALL our Fijian soldiers, and their beautiful Families. ■

Pictures: Billy Dilkes



Field of Remembrance

Once again numbers were curtailed at Westminster Abbey due to ongoing building work. 7 members attended and Kev Foster was selected to stand in front of the Pioneer Plot.

THIS year a total of 308 plots had been laid out in the names of military associations and other organisations, including new ones to represent the Single Service Widowed Associations and the RAF Benevolent Fund.

7 members attended and Kev Foster was selected to stand in front of the Pioneer Plot – unfortunately Her Majesty Queen Camilla failed to stop at our plot (Kev who had been briefed by Billy Dilkes on what to say was very disappointed).

Remembrance crosses and symbols are provided so that veterans and members of the public can plant a tribute in memory of fallen comrades and loved ones.

Following the service all 7 attended the Civil Service Club for lunch, a few beers and a chat

The Origins of the Field of Remembrance started when Major George Howson MC set out to establish an enterprise that employed disabled veterans from the First World War, he had modest expectations.

In May 1922, after receiving £2,000 from the British Legion to open a poppy-making factory, Howson wrote to his parents, "If the experiment is successful it will be the start of an industry to employ 150 men. I do not think it can be a great success, but it is worth trying."

Howson's modesty was misplaced. The Poppy Factory as a charitable enterprise was an immediate success. By 1931, the factory was making nearly 30 million poppies a year and a community of 320 men, women and children lived on its estate in Richmond-upon-Thames.

In 1928, the charity's founder, Major

George Howson MC, suggested using the ground of Westminster Abbey as a place where anyone could plant a poppy in memory of a loved one. In that year over 30,000 poppies were planted in the grass, to be replaced in later years by crosses and other tributes. Another Remembrance tradition had been established.

Alongside its hand-crafted production work, The Poppy Factory continues to organise and lay out the Field of Remembrance. This year, more than 35,000 tributes were carefully plotted and planted by a team of staff and volunteers.

The charity's support now reaches far beyond the factory into communities across England and Wales, each year supporting hundreds of ex-Forces job-seekers on their journey into all kinds of employment each year. ■

Background Picture: Paul Brown





Cenotaph Parade 2023

65 members of the Association formed up this year for the annual Cenotaph Parade at Whitehall, London

THE RPC Association were allocated 110 tickets for the 2023 Cenotaph, however only 95 members applied for a ticket. It is disappointing to report that only 65 actually attended on the day, we had been informed that a few had to drop out because of medical reasons (i.e. John Kear a regular attender for the past 30 years had recently undergone knee replacement surgery) and a few who thought it too risky because of the Palestine demonstrations in London during this period.

The RPC Contingent was led, once again, by the last Director of the Corps Brigadier Charles Telfer, who was followed by Lt Col Mike Tickner and Lt Col Billy Dilkes (who replaced his bowler hat with a maroon beret!). Our only In Pensioner, Roy Palmer, pushed Josh Campbell in his wheelchair, it was nice to see Josh again and we hope he returns in the future. Unfortunately this year we were unable to lay a wreath as one

of our members had left the wreath on the train – please remember next year Billy!

Surprisingly the contingent kept in step until we turned into Great George Street when the column in front of us and the column behind us were both shouting out conflicting step and the sound echoed between the tall buildings. We soon righted ourselves as we turned back into Horseguards.

The salute at the end of the march was taken by The Princess Royal.

At the end Brig Telfer gave a small speech and proposed three cheers for the Pioneers, Billy Dilkes then made a short speech thanking everyone for attending and hoping to see a larger turnout in 2024.

Following the parade most once again visited the Civil Service Club in Great Scotland Yard (only 200 yards from Whitehall) where we took over the garden and had a good chat and a beer (or two!). It was pleasing to see other members who

had been unable to march join us at the Club.

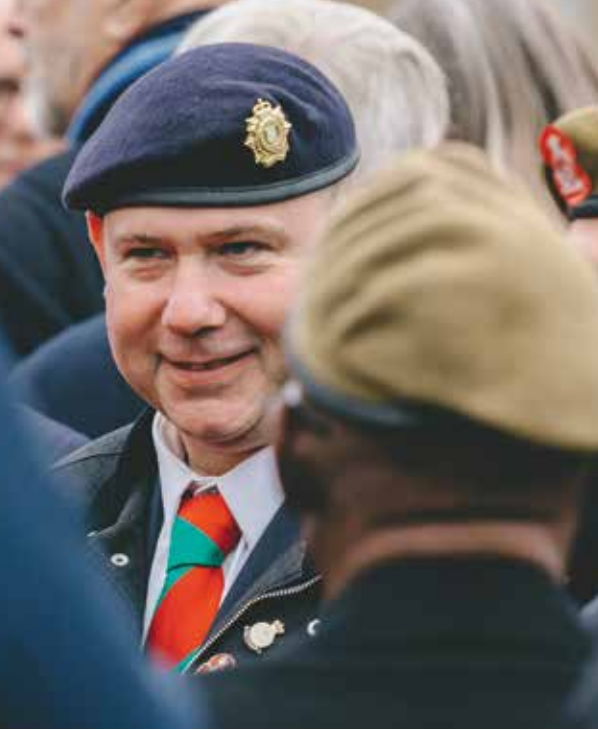
We will not know our ticket allocation for 2024 until July but we will start taking names from 1 Feb 24, and will allocate on a first come first served basis, however we hope to have a much larger contingent in 2024. If you would like to go on the list please submit the following information: full name, place and date of birth, full address (including postcode), dates served, service number and email address.

We have provisionally booked the restaurant in the Civil Service Club for a curry lunch (however the only time we can be accommodated is 1530 hrs), the cost will be £15 per head, with £5 of this subsidised by the Association, hence cost will be £10 per head – this must be paid in advance.

Also next year we will get a good mention on BBC, so if you want to be on TV and have a great day, see you there!

Pictures: Paul Brown













FUTURE EVENTS

2024

NORTHAMPTON BRANCH RPC ASSOCIATION – BURNS NIGHT – 27 JANUARY 2024

■ The Northampton Branch is to hold a Burns Night on 27 January 2024, the venue has still to be confirmed. All Association members are welcome to attend, further details can be obtained from Norman Brown (Branch Secretary) via email: normanbrown@myself.com.

The Branch hold quarterly meetings at the Conservative Club, Billing Road, Northampton, the next meeting is to be held at 1030 hrs on Saturday 13 January 2024.

The Branch hope to hold a variety of events in 2024, details will be published in the Branch Newsletters, if you would like to receive a copy of the Branch Newsletter please send your email address to: normanbrown@myself.com

39/93 CLUB – RED LION HOTEL, FAREHAM – 1ST/2ND MARCH 2024

■ The Club is to hold a meet at The Red Lion Hotel, Fareham, all Association members are welcome to attend.

Further details can be obtained from Mr Les Rowley (07955 237932).

75TH PIONEER REUNION WEEKEND – 21/23 JUNE 2024 – BICESTER

■ At the 2023 Annual General Meeting it was again decided to hold the Reunion at Bicester, The programme for the weekend has yet to be decided and will be published when finalised.

Personnel are to book their own accommodation for the weekend.

ARMY V NAVY RUGBY 2024 – 4 MAY 2024

■ The WOs' & SNCOs' Pioneer Reunion Club will, once again, be organising a coach to the A v N Rugby, the coach will depart from Northampton and pick-up at Bicester.

If you are interested in attending it would be appreciated if you could send your email to: normanbrown@myself.com

76TH PAST AND PRESENT OFFICERS' DINNER NIGHT – 18 OCTOBER 2024 – OFFICERS' MESS, AMBROSDEN

■ The dinner will be held at Bicester Garrison Officers' Mess, Ambrosden on Friday 18 October 2024.

If you wish to attend please email Lt Col (Retd) Billy Dilkes on: thepioneerhq@gmail.com

FIELD OF REMEMBRANCE – 7 NOVEMBER 2024 – WESTMINSTER ABBEY

■ We hope that building work will be completed at Westminster Abbey and we will have a full allocation of tickets.

If you wish to attend please let the Controller RPC Association know on thepioneerhq@gmail.com. A London Lunch will be held in the Civil Service Club, Great Scotland Yard, London afterwards.

CENOTAPH PARADE 10 NOVEMBER 2024

■ This is to be held on Sunday 10 November 2024, if you would like to march with 10,000 other veterans please supply the following details (these are required by the British Legion) to:

- Full name
- Place and date of birth
- Full address (including postcode)
- Service number and dates served
- Telephone number and email address

We are looking at 2024 as being a record turnout for us!

We are also having a Curry in the Civil Service Club for the first time ever. Tickets will be around £10. More info to follow.

We are also going to get a great mention on the BBC next year!

Please make the effort to attend for what looks to be a record attendance!

NORTHERN BRANCH

■ The Northern Branch holds various events throughout the year including a Christmas Function, Ride to the Wall and others.

To receive update from the Branch please contact Mr Darren Burton on darren-burton@hotmail.co.uk



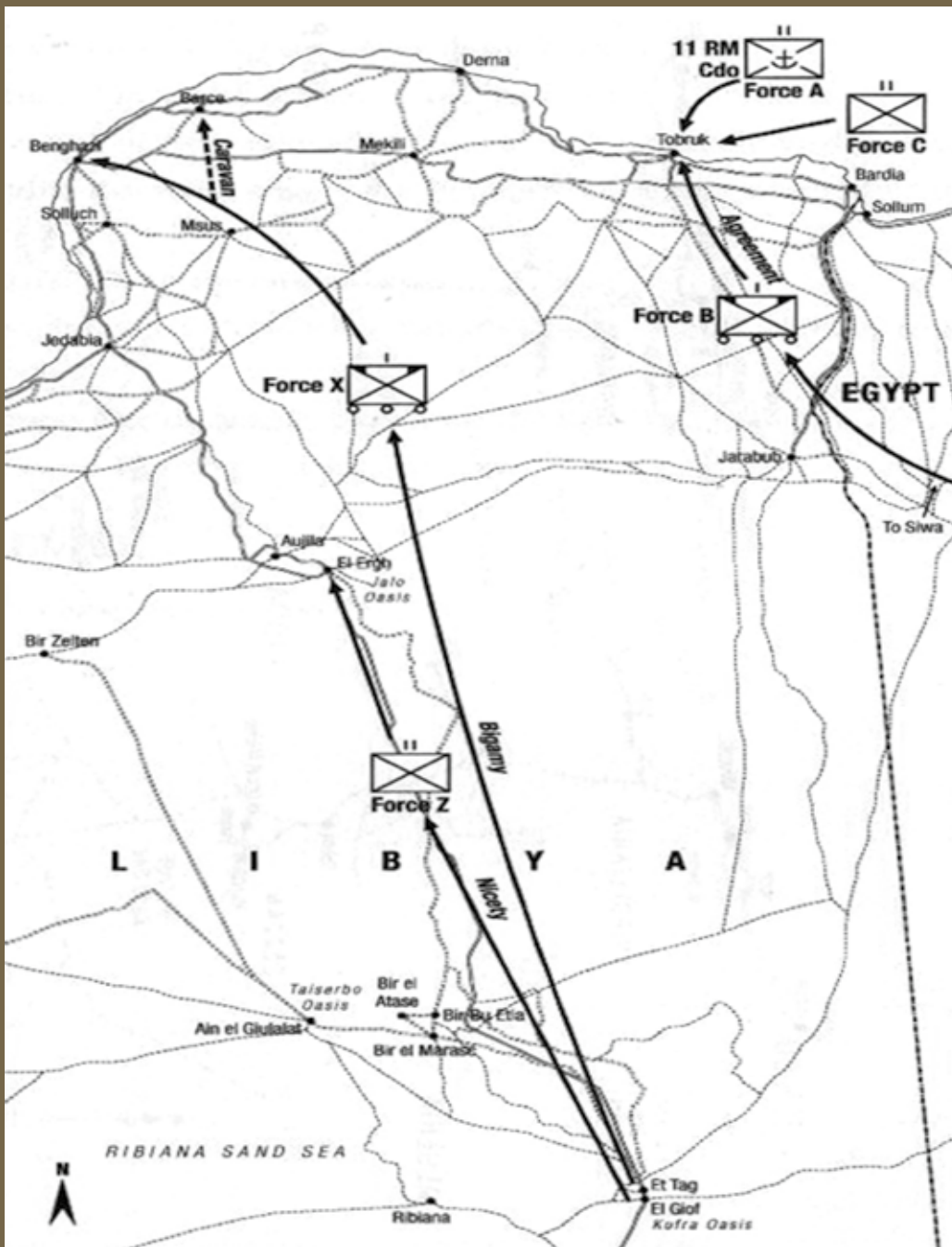
Picture: A heavily armed SAS/LRDG Jeep, armed with a .50inch Browning up front and a Vickers 'K' gun at the rear.



Picture: Close up of a Chevrolet showing its armament

LIONS OF JUDAH

THE JEWISH COMMANDOS' OF THE SPECIAL INTERROGATION GROUP



This article was first published in "The Bulletin of the Military Historical Society, May 1999" and permission to publish has been granted by its author Martin Sugerman).

The article is based on an interview with Maurice Tiefenburner which took place on 6 Jul 97. Cpl Tiefenrunner (Later his name was changed to Tiffen) was a Palestinian Pioneer who enlisted on 26 Dec 39, transferred to the Palestine Regiment on 18 Nov 42 and served until 26 Mar 46.

THE British Force in the Second World War spawned many effective and daring 'special' or unconventional units. Some were very well known, such as the Army Commandos, the SAS, and the LRDG. But among the most ambitious and mysterious were the Jewish Commandos of the SIG.

Charles Messenger describes how Col Terence Airey – who ran G(R) branch (formerly Military Intelligence Research at the War Office in London) wrote in March 1942 to part of the recently disbanded No 51 Middle East (Jewish) Commando – consisting of many German speaking Palestinians Jews – was to be formed into 'a "Special German Group' as a sub-unit of ME Commando with the cover name 'Special Interrogation Group', to be used for infiltration behind the German lines in the Western Desert, under 8th Army. The strength of the Special Group would be approximately that of a platoon. The letter continued "The personnel are fluent German linguists, mainly Palestinian (Jews) of German origin. Many of them have war experience with 51 Commando. It is essential they be provided with transport: a) one German Staff car, b) Two 15cwt Trucks." A second letter added "this issue (of transport) is of high operational importance."

The SIG were a sub-group of D Squadron 1st Special Service Regiment. Some were also recruited directly from the Palmach, the strike arm of the Jewish/Israeli underground army. Haganah and 'Etzel' (The Irgun) a semi-legal Jewish underground group. The SIG's true strength has never been known, though it was probably about 28 according to Tiffen. Other recruits came from Jews in the Free Czech Forces (about eight), the French Foreign Legion (two?) and German speaking French Jewish troops. Maurice Tiffen recalls their first training base as being at Geneifa near Suez. Having returned from Eritrea with the 51st Middle East Commando, Maurice and his comrades were visited by a British captain looking for German speakers, whom he knew he would find at Geneifa. In fact document WO 218/159 at the PRO contains part of the War Diary of the 51st Commando, and a cryptic entry by the CO for 17th March 1942 describes the arrival at Burgh el Arab "of a Captain Buck, to select German speaking personnel with a view to certain work".

The British Commanding Officer of SIG, who had served with the Punjabis, had once been wounded and captured by the Germans in North Africa at Gazala and escaped using an Afrika Korps uniform. Surprised by how easy it was – speaking German – to pass unmolested through Axis lines, he had the idea of the SIG. His name was Capt Herbert Cecil A Buck MC, 3/1 Punjabis & Scots Guards, an Oxford scholar who, like his Palestinian Jews, spoke fluent German. Authors to this day have been unable to agree on what SIG actually stood for. Peter Smith calls them the Special Identification Group – as does Eric Morris – but in his index Morris also refers to them as the "Special Intelligence Group". Whatever their true title, Ariyeh Shai aka Sheinik, a Jewish veteran of 51 Commando

and of SIG, was an early volunteer and described his training; "situated somewhere at the far end of an isolated group of desert encampments, we received no promises. Capt Buck had warned that lives would depend on our ability to wear our disguises faultlessly, to learn to perfection the slang prevalent among the soldiers of the Afrika Korps, and to drill in accordance with all the German methods. 'If your true identity is found out', said Buck, 'there is no hope for you'. Contacts with other British units were nil in order that they live, eat, drill, speak and behave like Germans.

At about this time, a young British officer, Reverend Isaac Levy, who was the senior Jewish Chaplain of the 8th Army, traveling west from Mersa on his duties, had been told that a somewhat unusual outfit was to be found in the vicinity of a vague map reference. Picking our way through a fairly clearly marked minefield, my driver and I ultimately discovered a special Commando unit undergoing intensive training. Except for the CO, all were Palestinians Jewish volunteers. I met the men in a shed which was crammed full of German uniforms and equipment. I learned to my intense surprise and profound admiration that this unit was destined to be taken behind enemy lines for special Commando operations and sabotage. All their activities were conducted in German, daily orders were published in that language and often in the dead of night a man would be suddenly awakened and he had to speak in German. None must be caught by surprise. These men knew the risks were they to fall into enemy hands, denied the status of POW, they would be shot out of hand. The most painfully distressing aspect of my encounter with these superbly brave men was the confidential information transmitted to me by several of them.

(In conversation with the author in 1999, Isaac Levy, now Honorary Chaplain to the Association of Jewish ex-Servicemen and Women, described how "the camp was even more off the beaten track than was the norm to be expected in the Western Desert; at first I thought that they were prisoners of war. On seeing my Jewish Chaplains badges, however, they spoke freely to me about their concerns.")

"They were convinced that one member of their group was untrustworthy, possibly a German who had been living in Palestine before the war and was a fifth columnist, and not Jewish. They wished me to notify the CO which I duly did, but he assured me their doubts were unfounded. It subsequently transpired that the men's suspicions were justified."

In fact, two 'real' Germans, Walter Essner (or Esser) and Herbert Brueckner had been conscripted from a POW camp to train SIG. Brueckner was big, brash and fair headed in his twenties, Essner quiet and good-natured in his 30s. They were former members of the French Foreign Legion before the war, professing to be German anti Nazis. They had been captured in November 1941 serving in the 361st Regiment of the Afrika Corps and recruited by the British 'Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre' (CSDIC) as 'double agents.' But they were not trusted by the Jewish members of SIG, who opposed the idea of the two actually going into action with them, but Buck insisted and the orders

were obeyed.

Each day the SIG were awakened by 'Kompagine anfster' (Company get up!) followed by twenty minutes strenuous PT and trained all hours of the day and night with German weapons, questioned suddenly in their German 'identities' and taken to the mess room goose-stepping and even learned German marching songs and who and when to salute! The strenuous training welded them into a team – handling explosives, desert navigation, unarmed combat – all skills required by a special raiding force. They were also all expert mechanics and drivers of German vehicles.

Some of their earlier exploits included using captured German vehicles and going behind German lines near Bardia and setting up road blocks. Dressed as German military police they stopped and questioned German transports gathering crucial intelligence. On other forays unspecified by author Gordon Landsborough they would carry out sabotage behind the German lines in German uniform or simply pull in at German camps, speak to troops and gather information. On one occasion, Tiffen even lined up to draw pay from a German field cashier; he explained how he was nervous but so caught up in his trained role as a German soldier, that he hardly had time to dwell on the damage of what he was doing! On other occasions he and other SIG mingled with German POWs to gather intelligence and learn how they behaved.

In June 1942 the SIG were given their first major task – to assist the founder of the SAS – the charismatic Major Stirling – to blow up German airfields on the coast, 100 miles west of Tobruk, at Derna and Martuba, which were threatening the Malta supply convoys (the Malta base being of supreme importance in the struggle to starve Rommel of the supplies he needed to defeat the Allies in North Africa). When Buck was approached by Stirling about the raid, he was absolutely delighted; it would allow him the chance to show what his Palestinian Jews could do. The SIG were to meet the SAS at Soiwa oasis, work out detailed plans and leave no later than the 8th June, to go in on the night of 13/14th June with fourteen men and an officer (Lt Jordan) of the Frere French Squadron, escorting them hidden in the back of two captured Afrika Korps trucks and a command car. Cowles, however, claims the SIG had four vehicles with Afrika Corps strip and insignia – a Knevwagen (a military version of the VW), one Opel, one German 3-ton lorry and a 'captured' British 30 cwt lorry; and 8 SIG men. Tiffen says 12 SIG men, four in each of the two lorries and the rest in the command car – five of whom had been in 51 Commando, and two others who were Free Czech Jews; whilst Morris and Tiffen claim they were posing as German guards openly escorting French POWs in captured Allied trucks!

Whatever the case, the raiders set out from Siwa after three days of checking supplies and weapons and gathering last minute intelligence from 8th Army HQ, escorted by the LRDG under Captain Guild on the 6th June (this patrol was to establish an RV and wait for the commandos after the raid, according to Cowles). After four days the SIG team changed into German uniform; Buck was a private driving the lead

vehicle and next to him were Esser and Brueckner as NCOs, and Ariyeh Shai was driver Cpl Schubert. Atop each truck was a SIG 'guard' posted German style as lookout. Each SIG man carried a Luger, machine gun, bayonet and grenades and – according to Cowles – the French were dressed in khaki overalls with blue forage caps, with grenades and a .45 automatic revolver each. Each lorry also concealed two ready mounted machine guns.

During that day, the British lorry broke down but was taken in tow by Buck's vehicle. Then Shai describes how 'we saw a roadblock with a red and white barrier and guard room, about 4 pm in the afternoon. A skinny Italian soldier wearily waved us down and demanded the password. Capt Buck was non-plussed for the moment. British intelligence had not supplied them with the password for June – only for May ('Fiume'). Buck or Brueckner flourished their forged orders in the sentry's face, stating that had been on a mission before the old password was changed, but failed to budge him. Then a major arrived, suggesting they go to the guardroom to discuss the matter over a glass of wine. Buck and Brueckner went, playing their role superbly, explaining they had to deliver the trucks from Agedabia to the Derna workshops. But the genial major would not relent as he had orders to let nobody through without the password. Buck looked at Brueckner and the German took the hint. "You are holding us up" roared Brueckner in German. "I'll report you to your superiors. Keep out of the way. Don't you see German soldiers are coming back from the desert?" Eventually they were allowed to pass through but the sources do not explain how an NCO got away with speaking to an Italian Major in that manner.

In the evening the convoy met another roadblock. A fat German Corporal waved them through, warning that 'British Commandos reach even out here' and advised them to park in the transit camp a little further on. So as not to arouse suspicion. Buck did as advised. At the camp they filled up with fuel, chatted with the German soldiers, bought some provisions at the local canteen and "Cpl Schubert" even stood in line to get some supper – "lentils and dumplings!" The French, in hiding, watched with amusement from slits in the truck canvass sides. Shortly afterwards the convoy left unnoticed and parked several miles down the road, overnight.

Next day (the 13th) the party carried out a reconnaissance of the airfield targets in the late afternoon, to be hit that night. Brueckner drove during this recon, taking Jordain and four other men. They saw one airfield with ME 110s and the other with Stukas. The two fields at Martuba were not investigated for fear of arousing suspicion. All returned safely by 5.30 pm.

The commandos were parked within five miles of the two Derna airfields at a point which would be the post-raid rendezvous. They were to split into two parties – one led by Buck and Esser in a truck with 3 SIG and five of the French to attack one of the Martuba airfields, and the other led by Jordain (the French CO) and Brueckner with the other nine of the French SAS and three other SIG including two named Hass and Gottlieb, to be taken in two parties to the two airfields at Derna. Swinson claims Buck

stayed at the rendezvous point to coordinate the operation. Tiffen says no, and that he himself was at the rendezvous with the command car and another SIG member, to act as liaison between the two groups. Whatever the truth, so far all had gone perfectly well. But before this they had had to get the proper password and so Brueckner and Esser had earlier in the day been sent to a nearby German post to ask – and got it! The challenge was 'Siesta' and the reply 'Eldorado.' Cowles, however, gives a different version. Buck typed a letter to be given to the fat German NCO they had met earlier, requesting the password. Two SIG – again Hass and Gottlieb – volunteered to deliver it. They took the Knevelwagen and found the German who quipped that he was not sure he even knew it, they all laughed merrily and went to look for an Italian guard who gave them the password by looking in an index book of some kind. They all then saluted each other and the SIG men left.

Buck with Esser took off to their target at Martuba with the first party. The other group left at 9 pm from a point 3 kms north of the Carmusa cross-roads to Derna, in another lorry, first to drop Jordain's group off, and then the second Derna group under Cpl Bourmont. But before this could be done, whilst passing through Derna itself, Brueckner stopped the truck near the cinema on the pretence that the engine was overheating and went to a nearby German guardroom or garage. Cowles claims the French could hear the film projector running. But, Landsbrough's source says that Brueckner exclaimed that "Something has fallen off the truck; I am going back for it." He then walked off into the night, one SIG man in the cab said "Brueckner is away a long time." The other replied "I am uneasy, I do not trust Brueckner. I think he might play traitor." Yet another source claims that Brueckner waited till they were 200 yards from the airfield before betraying the raiders.

Whatever the truth, the next that the French knew was that the truck was surrounded by Germans who ordered. "All Frenchmen out!" (Jordain says he heard the crunching of footsteps and when peering out to check what was happening, was dragged out of the truck by two Germans). But the commandos refused to give up without a fight and came out with guns blazing. They inflicted many casualties on the Germans, fighting defiantly until overwhelmed. In the melee, only the commander Lt Augustine Jordain escaped, as did Shai. Buck having succeeded in his raid, destroying twenty enemy planes, returned to the RV with the remainder of his party, receiving the news about the 2nd French group from Jordain, in shocked disbelief. All Jordain's Frenchmen had either been captured or killed. Jordain said he had seen two SIG men – one of them Hass (not identified) – hurtling grenades with reckless abandon at the enemy and then on the brink of capture they blew themselves up with the truck of grenades. Tiffen, however, who remembers clearly hearing the gunfire and explosions if both raids, also remembers Jordain returning with four survivors in the pitch dark, and not alone therefore. He also says that they learned afterwards that 2 SIG had been captured and then shot. Cowles writes that months afterwards Jordain learnt

that four of the French had been captured on the airfield and three more later on in the desert. Two others met up with the Martuba group but this RV had been betrayed as well. They fought off a German attack but were all eventually captured. So Jordain was the only French evader of the raid.

After waiting for any stragglers, the handful of survivors then made their getaway towards Siwa with the lorry, and abandoned the command car. They waited for stragglers for almost a week at Baltel Zalegh, but none came. At one point they fooled a German plane into holding its fire by laying out a swastika flag on the sand.

Much of the above description is supported by evidence given by two Luftwaffe ME 109 pilots – Lt Friederich Kormer (captured 5/7/42 at El Alamein) and Oberleutnant Ernst Klager (captured 3/7/42 also at El Alamein). In their interrogation, they claim "The Germans already knew that a group of English saboteurs would carry out a raid on German aerodromes in Cyrenaica dressed in German uniform, being organised by an English Colonel. As a result, a state of alarm had been ordered as from sundown on all aerodromes." Koerner continued "Brueckner got out (of the truck), saluted the (German) CO and stated that he was a German soldier acting as a German lorry driver containing a party of heavily armed English troops in German uniform with explosive charges to destroy aircraft. The CO was rather suspicious at first but the driver pressed him to organise as many men as possible with all speed and as heavily armed as possible to disarm the raiding party. The lorry was immediately surrounded and the occupants forced to get out. A few seconds after the last one had got out, there was an explosion inside the lorry and it was completely destroyed. A melee developed and it was believed that all the raiders had been shot. However, on the following morning a wounded man presented himself at Derna hospital saying he was a wounded German soldier needing treatment. For some reason the doctor became suspicious and on examination it turned out that he was not a German soldier but a Jew from Palestine (this is almost certainly one of the two Tiffen says was shot later by the Germans). Brueckner claimed to the Germans that he was a German POW who had been approached by the English to drive a German lorry for them behind the lines. He had at first refused but money had been offered which he again refused. However, the sum increased and he accepted as he felt it was the best way of getting back his freedom."

The Raid on Tobruk

An audacious raid on Tobruk in North Africa to lay waste from land and sea, the vital German Afrika Corps supply port, codenamed 'Operation Agreement', took place 13th/14th September 1942, involving elements of the RM, RN, RAF, SAS, SBS, LRDG and a six man Special Forces group of the SIG.

Taking part in 'Agreement' were Capt David Stirling's SAS again: Lt Col Vladimir Peniakoff of the Libyan Arab Force (Popski's Private Army – PPA) – born in Belgium of Russian parents; and Colonel John E 'Jock' Haselden (KIA on the raid) Egyptian born son of English and Greek parents who had guided into shore the abortive Special No

11 Commando raid to attempt to kill Rommel in November 1941 at Beda Littoria, operation 'Flipper' – where Col Geoffrey Keyes won a posthumous VC. Haselden was an Arabic linguist and wealthy cotton mill owner as well as a member of MI (Military Intelligence) Research, who had been back and forth behind enemy lines since the war began. With Haselden there had been members of the Palestinian Jewish 51st Commando on the raid, notably Cpl Drori (not found) who spoke both Arabic and German.

On the Tobruk raid, Haselden was Officer Commanding the Commando group Force B (codenamed Picture, the land based assault striking from the desert via Kurfa Oasis codenamed Daffodil). LRDG Patrol Y1 (led by Captain David Lloyd Owen) were only acting as guides from Kufra to the perimeter of Tobruk, with 83 Commando and a SIG team with eight three-ton Canadian Chevrolet trucks (in WO 20/79, the SIG were described as 'Special Detachment G(R)' in the Battle Plan). Afterwards, Y1 were to take part in another part of the raid. It was the Commandos and SIG who were actually to penetrate Tobruk itself by bluffing their way through the perimeter fence with the SIG posing as German guards, as they had done at Derna/ Martuba, and assault the coastal guns of Mersa Umm es Sciaus east of the harbour with the rest of Force B. The detachment of SIG were 'to play a special part in the proceedings' with Buck and Lt T C David Russell, Scots Guards, who was also fluent in German. Two other British Officers allegedly attached to the SIG were Capt H Bray (4th Indian Division) and Lt D Lanark, Scots Guards. However, in 1989 it emerged that Gordon Landsborough in his 1956 edition of 'Tobruk Commando,' had – due to War Office restrictions – used *nomme de guerre* for many of the Commandos. The true names were revealed in David List's 1989 introduction to the book. So Bray was in fact Buck, and Lanark was Russell. It also emerged that the Nazi traitor Bruckner was really called Brockmann.

Dressed in German uniform and speaking German the SIG even carried faked love letters to fictitious wives in Germany and authentic German weapons, pay books (Sold Buch), insignia, cigarettes and chocolates. The letters were written by a SIG man, using forged German stamps and frankings, and copied by ATS (women) for authenticity, in Cairo. The women then dressed as civilians and posed with the SIG in their German uniforms, and then a Berlin background was dubbed on. One Jewish SIG member, Weizmann, (possibly Pal1937, Pte Weizman, Isaac) actually called his 'girlfriend' Lizbeth Kunz, as this was the name of an actual well-known Nazi who lived in his street in Berlin before the war, this meant that if it came to it, he could claim (under interrogation if required) she was a real person. The SIG men were constantly tested on this detail in their documents – names, addresses, jobs; even German Army typewriters and stationary had been procured from British Intelligence for such use – but as Landsborough says "the Palestinians never failed, never protested."

The SIG were to play the role of German guards transporting three truck loads of British POWs to a camp at Tobruk. As Smith

says "this was high bluff and indeed required nerves of steel and much courage", which the SIG showed they had in plenty. Needless to say the Germans would have shot them out of hand as spies had their disguises been penetrated. In fact, following the earlier betrayal, the Germans already knew of SIGs existence. Buck suspected this and that is why he only took four of five SIG with him, as opposed to the dozen or so that may have been required. (Buck also planned to kidnap a particular German General as booty, who was supposed to be staying in the old YMCA in Tobruk). We must remember, however, the deep motivation of these men who had fled Nazi Germany as Jewish refugees, whose families had been or were being murdered in the Holocaust, and who were absolutely committed to the downfall of the Nazism.

(A poor and not very accurate Hollywood movie 'Tobruk', directed by Arthur Hiller and starring Rock Hudson, Nigel Green and George Peppard, made in 1966, portrayed the SIG role in this raid but tended to mix elements of their work on other raids too. It was filmed in Yuma, Arizona).

The small SIG team reached Kufra in RAF Bombay Transports where they met the LRDG and other Commandoes. There the SIG continued drilling in German uniform and using German commands as their British comrades looked on in amazement. They were Cpl Weizmann, and Privates Wilenski, Hillman (Pal/10716, Hillman, Leo), Berg and Steiner. A Naval Signal of 12th September 1943 – from C-in-C Mediterranean to DCOME stated that 'Buck and 6 ORs operating with Haselden may be wearing German uniform. Their recognition signal is 'red hankerchief'. They kept themselves to themselves because, despite the fact it was known that the traitor had been a Nazi, the SIG were looked upon with suspicion, following the betrayal of the French group the previous June. One LRDG veteran, Jock Fraser, told the author of Massacre at Tobruk, that "We all distrusted these guys though some were very brave men." (Again, the SIG names were not real, David List names them – Steiner was in fact really 10716 Pte Hillman (SAS Regt), Berg was Rohr, Weizmann was Opprower and Wilenski was H Goldstein. There was also a Pte Rosenzweig (possibly Pal 12478 Rosenzweig, Josef), but Tiffen does not remember his English alias.

(Weizmann/Opprower's father had been murdered by the Nazis and at 12 year old he had been sent by his family to Palestine, He volunteered for the British army on the outbreak of war in 1939, but when he was given only administrative work, he hitch-hiked to Egypt and volunteered for active service. Three times he was charged for breaking camp to get to the front line. Eventually the SIG recruited him).

On D minus 7 (6th September) the main body of Force B left Cairo for Tobruk, which was 300 miles behind the lines but a distance of 1800 miles by their roundabout route. Morris says the raiders left Kufra on 5th September, however, to travel the 800 miles to Tobruk – which seems much more likely and is in any case bore out by Lloyd-Owen's report, which says they left at 1730 hrs precisely on that day.

Gordon Landsborough describes how they travelled south to El Kharga (500 miles inland), then west to Kyfra (to meet the

SIG) and then north to Hatiet Etlā. Here, 90 miles from the target, they rested on the night of 10th September (Kennedy-Shaw however, does not even mention the SIG as raking part in the raid!). The plan was for them – at 2 am on the 14th – to call in Force C from seaward, if they had managed to silence the guns of Mersa Umm es Sciaus. (A Jewish officer and cartography expert, Capt Ken Lazarus, was in charge of SAS Squadron 2 with Stirling, the same night when they launched a diversionary attack on Benghazi).

The Commando convoy of lorries did not attract attention from the German and Italian patrols because so many allied vehicles had been captured by the Axis forces. On the trucks were the Africa Corps motif painted using captured stencils by Steiner/Hillman, and identification marks on the cab roofs to ward off prowling stukas. Also, across the bonnet was a wide white stripe, sign of 'Bentezeichen' or booty, which the Germans painted on captured allied vehicles, and the divisional sign ER 372, which intelligence had discovered was a real division stationed near Alamein. The vehicles carried 30 fake POWs each instead of the usual 40, because of the need to hide the arms and uniforms they contained. The SIG carried the requisite fake passes and ID documents. Landsborough, however, says that only four trucks were used with one SIG driver in each and Buck in the front dressed as a German officer. Then, about four miles out, just three trucks went in with the fourth disabled by removing the distributor cap (which was buried near the front left wheel), for use in escape later should it be needed. At the drop off point there was then an emotional parting with the LRDG as they cheered each other goodbye as they all knew many of the Commandos would be going to their death. It is interesting that Lloyd-Owen notes in his post-raid report that Haselden had NOT arranged a rendezvous with him in case of a land withdrawal, which proved to be a costly mistake.

On approaching the perimeter road across scrub-land they saw two German trucks coming towards them on the same course; but they simply sped up without pausing. Then a red German light spotter plane approached and circled twice just a few hundred feet above them, but it too passed on. On reaching the main metalled road to Tobruk they merged easily into the regular base traffic flow to the perimeter fence. They were merely waved through by Italian guards even though Buck leaned out to show his documents. The SIG men, playing their parts fully, responded as Germans do, insulting their Italian allies as 'schweinhunds' as they drove past. Inside they met a fast moving convoy coming in the opposite direction and the middle truck was struck a glancing blow by a German staff car carrying, according to Weizmann, a high ranking officer. Nobody stopped but the German convoy halted and angry voices were heard; eventually, after a tense moment, the Germans sped away. Further on they were accompanied for a while by two heavily armed motor cycle combinations and a solo, of German military police who were irritatingly inquisitive. The Commandos took the safety clips off their guns but there was no attempt to stop them and the motorcycles

turned off. They then came upon a rock face looming in the darkness, about 9 pm, and Haselden nodded casually towards it saying "That's the bomb-proof oil storage depot we must destroy later tonight."

All around were tended enemy camps and lines of German and Italian troops going about their duties as the three trucks sped on. But then a further hitch, Buck's Chevrolet halted and he and the SIG driver got out and walked out of sight. Clearly there was a problem – a fence had been built across the turn-off they were meant to take. Soon Buck and his driver returned – they had found a new track further on; the convoy continued. After 15 minutes, they were met with a harsh challenge in German; one of the Commando officers got out and walked into the darkness. Soon he returned with a German rifle, having silenced the enemy sentry. Another 500 meters and they stopped, de-bussed and put on full combat kit. Nearby were the few buildings they had expected – the administrative centre for the coastal defences they were to silence.

At 10.30 pm the RAF softening-up bombing raid began. On reaching their first objective, a small villa to be used as their HQ, Haselden and the 4 or 5 SIG, with Buck and Russell, burst in and drove off or killed the Italian platoon holding it. One was captured but was later killed 'trying to escape'. Knocking out various German machine gun posts, a wireless station and negotiation minefield, Force B began taking casualties, but at 2 am signalled Force C to land using the unfortunate codeword 'Nigger' (the alternative 'Cloud' was never used). However, under heavy fire and in darkness, only two of the 16 MTBs were able to land a handful of reinforcements.

Buck, Russell, Wilenski and Weizmann cleared several more positions alone whilst the Commandos dealt with several others. The SIG team then moved as planned, a little inland to guard against any counter attack from that direction and captured and held four ack-ack emplacements. Through the night they held these positions against sustained attacks by the Italians to recapture the guns. Eventually they rolled grenades into the barrels and destroyed them. But, as the enemy, now fully alerted and prepared, re-grouped, as the sun came up, they closed in on B Force, now outnumbered and short of ammunition after a fierce fire-fight. Weizmann and Wilenski were met by Berg who told them that Buck had ordered them to destroy all their German documents and uniforms, find British uniforms and destroy the lorries. Haselden, from his HQ in the captured villa, had ordered destruction of all coastal guns and then every man for himself. It was clear that the Tobruk raid had failed, reinforcements would not be coming from the seaward invasion as planned, and they had to move fast to save themselves. Berg moved off and Wilenski and Weizmann destroyed one 4 ton lorry with petrol and then moved to a cave, stripped off, burnt everything that would incriminate them, and then went naked, to find two uniforms which they had eventually to take from two dead Commandos.

Buck suddenly re-appeared with Russell; they had apparently been on some other SIG mission, perhaps to try and release the Allied POWs in Tobruk (part of the original

plan had 'Agreement' succeeded) or capture that general in the old YMCA? There was also talk of breaking into the enemy garrison's strong room and stealing German funds! To this day it is not known what the SIG had in mind.

Haselden ordered all the force remaining to re-embark on the last two trucks and try to break out (others made vainly for the sea but were driven inland and in small groups tried to head east back to Allied lines). Russell brought a truck up as Steiner appeared still in German uniform. Buck yelled to him to take it off even though he himself was still dressed as an Afrika Korps officer! As they made to get away, the ever calm and brave Haselden in the lead truck meanwhile decided to halt and cover the escape of those behind him. He led a forlorn charge singlehandedly against the encroaching Italian forces with Russell, Buck, Walter and Berg and Steiner following him. Berg was wounded and Haselden was killed. Steiner called his CO's name but there was no answer. In the melee and still half-light, Steiner grabbed Berg and dragged him away. Others, though, were forced to surrender because they had no food, water or ammunition and were carrying wounded comrades.

Only six of Haselden's group escaped, and then made a run for it to the Allied lines, including Lt Russell and (according to Landsbrough) Buck, Berg and Wilenski. Weizmann was with them but had been wounded later breaking into an Italian camp for food. After 17 days he was unable to go on and agreed to be left behind. Local Arabs handed him over to the Italians, who handed him to the Gestapo. He was tortured for five days but revealed nothing. At one point they made him dig his grave and stood him in front of a firing squad. However, an Afrika Korps Officer eventually had him released to a POW Camp. After many close calls and terrible hardships, the rest of the group reached Allied lines on 18th November. (Despite every effort by Lloyd-Owen, Naval Signals testify that he lost all contact with Force B early on in the raid and was unable to search for or rescue survivors the next day).

In another escape party led by Lt Tommy B Langton of the SBS (ex Irish Guards) was 19 year old Pte Steiner/Hillman; he had already lost his left boot in the fighting and also had a foot lacerated by barbed wire. Knowing he would be shot if caught he changed his name to Kennedy and was known as Ken by his comrades throughout his evasion adventure. It was known that the German knew his identity. He was in fact a short, broad Austrian Jew, son of a Viennese butcher. At the age of 16 he had been imprisoned for anti-Nazi activity and then escaped to Palestine where he joined the Pioneer Corps thinking they were a fighting unit. He service with them in France in 1940 and then joined the tough 51st Middle East Commandos and fought in Eritrea. After several weeks including being fed by friendly Arab villages -where Hillman in fact saved the group's lives several times by negotiation as interpreter in his excellent Arabic for food; he got himself a new pair of boots – Hillman and some of his party eventually reached Allied lines as well, on the 13th November, when Hillman ended up at No 1 South African Convalescent Depot.

The failure of this raid marked the end of SIG as a fighting force and the surviving members were transferred to the PC (Pioneer Corps). From here several joined No 2 Commando and fought with them till the war's end in the Balkans, Italy and the Adriatic. According to David List, Stierer/Hillman later joined the SAS as did Tiefenbrunner and others; Wilenski/Goldstein – who had fought on the Mersa Matruh and Fuka raids with L detachment LRDG – was captured after Operation Agreement but then later fought with Buck in the Far East SAS against the Japanese. Tragically Russell was murdered in Yugoslavia working for SOE in August 1943 and Buck was killed with the SAS in the Far East in 1945.

Smith's account of the Tobruk raid is inconsistent with Landsbrough's, who actually spoke with eye witness survivors. Smith used many PRO records but these, at the time are alleged to have been partial and contradictory. Ultimately, the readers must decide for themselves. What, however, is not in doubt is that the SIG were extremely brave men who willingly threw themselves into the devil's cauldron, and were often left to fight their own way out, They should all be remembered with pride as the Lions of Judah.

Maurice TIEFENBRUNNER

Was born on 18th December 1915 into an Orthodox Jewish family in Wiesbaden, Germany, as one of eight children. Maurice was something of an athlete and scholar and his father a devout and well-known teacher. On 28th October 1938, Jews of Polish origin, like Maurice's family, were deported by Nazi law to Poland. He was 22 years old.

A brother in Antwerp managed to obtain papers for Maurice to enter Belgium, which he achieved with hair-raising adventures via Warsaw, Pargue and Rotterdam. From Antwerp, he contacted Jewish agents of the Irgun, illegally transporting Jewish refugees into British Palestine (Israel). Via Paris and Marseilles he made it to a ship with a group of 20 others, and eventually set sail on the SS Parita with 950 Jewish refugees on a vessel meant to carry 250!

After 70 days instead of the intended 10, of wanderings, touching Rhodes, Smyrna and other ports, and begging food from passing liners (including 20 bottles of beer from one passing cruise ship), his group took over the ship from the Greek crew, hoisted the Israeli flag and then beached the vessel on the sea front of Tel-Aviv on 22nd August 1939. It was a Friday night and thousands of Tel-Avivans came out to greet them with food. Then they were promptly interned at Sarafand Army camp by the British! Two weeks later war broke out and Maurice was consequently made a 'legal' citizen as an amnesty was declared.

Allowed only to enlist in non-combatant units for political reasons by the British. Maurice (and thousands of other Palestinian Jews) joined the Pioneer Corps. He fought in and escaped from France via St Malo with hundreds of other Palestinian Jewish troops, in 1940, fighting with the BEF. Regrouped at Aldershot he joined the 51st Middle East Commando and fought in the battles in Gondar and Keren in Ethiopia/Eritrea where he was wounded trying to rescue a wounded comrade, promoted and

Mentioned in Despatches. Maurice was finally returned to Egypt with the 51st Commandos and then took part (in December 1941) on an early raid on Tobruk. They inflicted heavy casualties on the Italian garrison before withdrawing but were now down to one third strength. The 51st were thus disbanded at Geneifa, and this is where Buck recruited Maurice and other Jews into the SIG around March 1942.

After the SIG raid with the Free French in June 1942, Maurice took part in a few smaller raids and then was recruited with about fourteen other surviving SIG into the SAS under Stirling. He took part in one of the several Commando raids from Naval destroyers, with other Palestinian Jews, on Rommel's HQ in the summer of 1943 in the Derna area. Rommel was not at home but he remembers many German officers were killed and his force re-embarked with no casualties.

(Before the SIG raid on Derna, Maurice and five friends were ordered by Buck to accompany him to King Farouk's Royal Palace on a secret mission to 'persuade' HRH not to back the 'wrong side' in the war. This was successful).

In December 1942, Maurice, still with the SAS and now with five remaining members of the disbanded SIG following the large raid on Tobruk (Operation Agreement – in which he did not take part), went with Col David Stirling and Maj Oldfield on a 100 men raid behind Italian lines, with the aim also of destroying German targets on the way. Maurice was in a jeep at the rear of the convoy of 50 vehicles, and broke down. Seen by Italians, he and his driver (from Lancashire) were soon surrounded by armoured cars and after destroying any sensitive documents which may have

incriminated them, were captured of 18th December 1942. When the Italian army collapsed he was taken (as an important SAS prisoner) with eight others by Italian submarine to Bari. On the way they tried to overpower the crew but failed and were punished by being locked up. As the Allies advanced on the POW camp at Bari, he was moved to a POW Camp at Udine. His cover (prepared before the raid) was that his name was Tiffen, born in Montreal but taken to Palestine as a child!

Then Italy surrendered and the POWs were about to be liberated by the advancing Americans when the Germans appeared and shipped them off, in dreadful conditions, to Wolfensgarten in Austria. A group, including Maurice, tried to escape en route but were recaptured.

Then they were shipped to Thorn in east Germany. As the Russians advanced, the Germans forced marched them yet again for five days to Fallingbosten near Hanover where he met POWs from the famous 'Wooden Horse' escape from Stalag 7, and Palestinian Jewish friends he had known in 1939 – 40 who had been captured in Greece/Crete in 1941. He was finally liberated in May 1945 after 30 months as a POW.

When the Allies separated SS prisoners from Wehrmacht, the Germans retaliated and separated Jewish POWs from others for several weeks. Other than this Maurice says he suffered no discrimination as a POW of the Germans, though there are British POW eye-witness accounts of Palestinian Jewish troops who were murdered by Germans in Crete and Greece. (Letter from Edwin Horlington to the author 12 Nov 97, "I know of one case where twelve Jewish Pioneer Corps men were found with their

throats cut in a cave just SE of Kalamata." This was attested by the Chief Clerk to the Senior British Officer at Kalamara).

Back in Britain he was tracked down by Capt Buck who tried to persuade him to join the SAS fighting the Japanese. He declined! Maurice and his newly wed wife, Friedel, spent several evenings with Buck enjoying nights out in London. Some weeks later, Buck's sister telephoned Maurice with the sad news that the Captain had been killed in a plane crash whilst on a raid against the Japanese. Maurice would have been on that raid had he accepted Buck's invitation.

Demobbed, Maurice went to Israel and fought in the War of Independence throughout 1948.

At various time, Maurice has worn the insignia of the 51st Middle East Commando, SAS, and the 'neutral' overalls of the SIG – not to mention the Pioneer Corps and the Israeli Army. For many years after the war he lived in West London and Israel with his wife Friedel and large family but is – at the time of writing – living in his eighties happily in Jerusalem. He has the 1939-45 Star, Africa Star, France and Germany Star and War Medal. He was mentioned in Despatches for corsage in the battle of Keren in Ethiopia.

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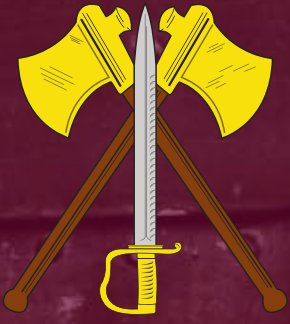
■ Picture: 51st Cdo GONDAR 1941, Maurice Tiefenbrunner second from left



■ Picture: 51st Cdo Egypt 1942, Tiefenbrunner, Cpl Drury, Goldstein, Rohr



■ Picture: SIG Tel-Aviv 1942, Free Czech soldiers Walterf Esser, Maurice Tiefenburger, Rosenzweig



Uncle Tom's Archive

Pioneer Tom Appleyard BEM has been about a bit... from rescuing the guns in WW2 and defeating the enemy to meeting our past Queen. Each issue we will feature some of Tom's photos from his own personal collection.



■ When the men of Easy Company of the US Army 101st Airborne (Band of Brothers) went up to Hitler's "Eagles Nest" in 1945 they discovered Uncle Tom (pictured with a moustache in centre) had single-handedly beat them to it. He even had some of Hitler's wine waiting for them! Picture: Uncle Toms Archive



■ When Just Stop Oil protesters saw Uncle Tom coming, they cleared off, together with everyone else! Picture: Uncle Toms Archive



■ Uncle Tom (second along) pictured with one of the guns he manned against the Germans. A plaque was laid in his honour. Picture: Uncle Toms Archive



■ When Uncle Tom (centre with moustache) single-handedly captured the IRA, they trained this lot to look to look after them! Picture: Uncle Toms Archive



■ When Uncle Tom (third along) single-handedly beat the whole Army, they renamed Bisley to 'Tom Bisley' in honour Picture: Uncle Toms Archive



■ Uncle Tom at the British Embassy, Bonn, receiving the Medal of Honour Picture: Uncle Toms Archive



■ Uncle Tom and wife Gloria, campaigning for the saving of the Bra! Picture: Uncle Toms Archive



■ Uncle Tom and his successful litter campaign. No litter anywhere ! Picture: Uncle Toms Archive



■ Toms wife Gloria, pictured next to a statue of her husband 'Tom' when he was the leader of the Knights of the round table Picture: Uncle Toms Archive



■ Toms Grandad was also a legend - he served in 4 regiments in both wars and he had 11 of the family serving at the sametime! Picture: Uncle Toms Archive

Memories of Dunkirk

by Arthur Frederick Sidney Henry Yendall
– 2053736 A Coy 6th Batt Kings Own
Royal Lancaster Regiment – transferred
to Pioneer Corps on 30 Oct 40 and served
in 809 (Smoke) Coy PC until 6 Nov 45.

Report: Arthur Frederick Sidney
Henry Yendall

MY MATE Reg Blundell and I arrived by lorry in Dunkirk at about 6 o'clock on May 30th. We made our way towards the beach to reach it we had to cross a bridge over the canal.

There were just a few troops about we made our way to the Mole. We met a Naval Petty officer at the beginning of the Mole he told us that the last boat had left it was a hospital ship, He advised us to go back to the Town and get our heads down until morning. The sky was full of black clouds of smoke from the oil tanks which had been hit and plenty of gunfire going on.

I said to Reg we will stay on the Beach as the Bridge may not be there in the morning we went into the dunes and got down into a ditch with a few small shrubs about 3ft tall I guess we thought we were safe there. When I awoke Reg was still asleep, I felt hungry so I went off to see what I could find. I went into the car park where all our lorries were and found a Quarter Masters lorry as had other troops already.

All I found was a large tin of Sardines, some hard biscuits and two boxes of chocolate and Nougat bars. Also, in the lorry lots of spare uniforms so I grabbed two pairs of trousers and two battle dress tops. You see we had been travelling for two days in wet clothes and it was not very comfortable.

I got back to Reg who was still sleeping but was soon awoken when the Stukas started to dive bomb us again with their whistling bombs which was all very, very frightening the sky was full of them. So

many aircraft they looked like tadpoles in a pond and I wondered how they managed to miss one another. One dropped a stick of bombs towards us as we lay side by side I grasped Reg's hand and said " This is It Reg " I don't know how long it was before I came to my senses , It might have been minutes or hours I looked behind the bushes where we lay there was a hole in the sand big enough to put a London bus in the sand certainly saved us.

After that we went and joined up with some more of our chaps, we were formed up into groups of 50 and given a number ours was L50. When your number was called you moved up the beach towards the Mole to embark. As you got to near the Mole you spread out holding hands until you reached the sea, this was to prevent anyone getting by your party.

Then the call came, "Next group" at this you went on to the mole where a Naval Petty Officer took charge. During our time waiting on the beach there was a lot of diving for cover as we were being bombed constantly on one occasion Reg and I found a bottle of Rum which had fallen out of an officer's pocket as he ran by us this was most welcome to us.

A couple of dispatch riders were dirt-tracking on the beach being cheered on by the waiting troops. At one point we were told to remove the bolts out of our Rifles and hide them in the sand only to be told a half hour later to find them as we may be needed for a rear-guard action.

Finally, we reached the Naval Officer on the Mole which was being shelled at this time, He was trying to time the shells, when he shouted run you ran, when he shouted stop you stopped. The mole had been hit

several times, at one point a builder's plank had been placed over a large hole about 8-10 foot across under normal conditions I wouldn't have crawled across it, but me and Reg ran like we had never ran before and didn't stop till we got to the end of the Mole.

Where a Destroyer was laid to taking on troops, I thought Reg was behind me as I followed the others down into the ship into a small cabin about 6ft by 6ft I think there was about 20 of us crammed in there. But oh, how safe I felt I looked round to see if I could see Reg but there was no sign of him but I was sure he was on the ship so didn't have to worry too much.

A while later a sailor appeared with a large meat dish full of beautiful baked potatoes which soon disappeared into a sea of hands followed by bread and butter we were well looked after by the Navy.

Looking round the cabin I saw a sailor with the name HMS Keith on his hat band I asked is this going to Dover?

Yes, he said you will be home in a couple of hours. I do not know how long it took, I didn't even know the time I was so happy to be on the way home, I never even thought about being sunk or anything like that, I knew I was safe.

When we arrived in Dover we went to the railway station where I started to look for Reg I found him on the station platform " I said to him where did you get to " " he said he stayed on deck and manned a Lewis gun with the sailors and brought down a German plane on the way back and had a grand time"

Then we boarded the train we had no idea where we were going ! We landed up at Bulford camp on Salisbury Plain. ■

The time of my life



We have, on a number of occasions, published details of the sinking of HMT Lancastria which took place on 17 June 1940 at St Nazaire. The following story was obtained from an edition of "The Coddon" dated May 1941 the magazine for COD Donnington

Report: The Coddon RPCA Archive

ZERO HOUR – deadline – call it what you will. Has there ever been one hour, one minute in your life when you had to make some decision which affected your whole future?

It may not have been so drastic a decision as SSgt Wright RAOC, made when, unknowingly, he chose between life and death. Read this story of the "Lancastria" – then write and tell the editor of the Big Moment which changed the course of your life.

A four o'clock I decided to live..

Years had brought me the school bell at four o'clock, or tea and cake, a sunny walk from wicket to pavilion, but never before the choice between living and dying. At four o'clock on 17th June 1940 I decided to live – and didn't know it.

On that day I was aboard the Lancastria. I had scrambled aboard from the tugboat which had carried myself and other members of the BEF from the docks at St Nazaire, and had found my way to the cabin which was to be my billet for the voyage back to England. It was a fair-sized cabin fitted with two bunks, and a mattress was on the floor. Two airmen had beaten me to the bunks, and I had to take the mattress. Still it was comfortable after nights in fields and on docksides!

The First Warning

A good breakfast refreshed me, and I went on deck to watch the loading. Our

ships was soon crowded with troops; they were even parked on the decks.

After a good wash I returned to my cabin and lay down. Within a few minutes I was asleep.

Suddenly there was a terrific explosion, the lights went out, and I was thrown forward into the darkness. Men were coughing and spluttering in the dust-filled atmosphere, and I scrambled to open a porthole to let in the fresh air. Broken glass was everywhere, and many soldiers were lying unconscious on the floor.

The liner was slipping over on to her side, and already I felt water around my ankles. It was time to get out, so I groped my way into a corridor towards a stairway, stumbling over huddled forms all the time. Hundreds were trying to climb to the decks, and the whole structure creaked alarmingly as the liner heeled further on to her side.

I pushed into the crowd and found myself being pushed up towards the deck. Here everything was confusion and noise. Guns were roaring, and high above the ship an enemy plane was circling. Lifeboats were being lowered, and hundreds were trying to scramble into them.

The majority sank on reaching the water, whilst others overturned halfway down the ship's side, throwing their human cargoes into the sea. I watched all this from the top deck of the liner, still steadily sliding under the waves.

I didn't know what to do. I couldn't swim, and I saw it would be folly getting into a lifeboat, but I didn't know whether or not my life-jacket would give me any

assistance if I jumped overboard.

Still, a decision had to be made. I saw the long arm of a boat davit stretching out over the water, and I walked out along this, high over the bobbing heads of those who had already taken the plunge. I put my hands under my chin to prevent the jacket socking me as I hit the water, closed my eyes, and jumped.

The water was not cold,. But a thick layer of oil on the surface covered me, and made things very uncomfortable. I found the life-jacket kept my head above the water and concentrated on keeping the oil out of my mouth.

In Half-an-Hour

Meantime the Lancastria had completely turned over on to her side, and she slipped under the water, leaving hundreds of men, who had cautiously remained on her in the hope that she would not go right under, in the same predicament as myself.

Within the short period of thirty minutes, the liner had padded from life to death. She was the grave of 2,500 British soldiers.

I didn't think of death during those two and a half hours I spent in the water, nor when my rescue boat appeared to pick me up, nor as I climbed the rusty ladder of the oil tanker which was to take me back to England, nor as the Japanese sailors scrubbed me to rid me of my oily coat.

But as I glanced at my battered, oil-filled wristlet watch, I realised that at four o'clock, the time at which it had stopped as I had jumped from the Lancastria, I had made a decision – to live! ■



Pioneers in Palestine

With the recent troubles in Israel/Gaza, I thought it would be appropriate to publish details of Pioneers in the area during November 1947 – March 1948

Report: Col Neville Reid MBE
RPCA Archive

ALL PIONEERS, wherever they are, and particularly those who have served here in the past will be glad of news of this torn and tattered land.

Last November, as everyone knows, the United Nations announced their decision to Partition Palestine and Britain agreed to hand over the Mandate on May 15th and be completely out by 1st August 1948. For 24 hours the Jews celebrated wildly and hysterically the first steps to a Jewish State, with the Arabs as silent and sullen spectators. The next three days the Arabs in protest countered with a national three day strike, and in many parts the country mobs ran riot, looting and burning. Steadily for the last five months the situation has deteriorated until now (March) Haganah (Jewish Defence Force) ably and often embarrassingly assisted by IZL and Stren Gang are openly fighting the so-called Arab Liberation Army. In the towns (Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa, Te-Aviv etc) nearly every street has a road block manned by the Security Forces, the Jews or Arabs. Spasmodic small arms and automatic fire continues night and day, punctuated now and again by the thud of mortar bombs and heavy explosions of houses going up. Whenever the opponents get too rough the British infantry as referees step in to see fair play. In the open country and on the main roads Arabs and Jews ambush each other. Single vehicles have been replaced by huge convoys of armoured busses and trucks ferrying from town to town with essential goods. The Army is more or less 'confined to Barracks' except for essential duty, when it emerges armed and alert in convoy or

with at least two vehicles. Since more and more arms and ammunition are wanted by the two opponents, we are all considered a steady source of supply. Many soldiers, including Pioneers have been killed or wounded when resisting armed hold-ups.

The evacuation of the Depots and Stores has been going on steadily with increasing momentum.

The Officers, British ORs, Mauritian, Seychellois, and Rodrigues of the Corps have been doing a magnificent job vital to the evacuation, in the usual way as an able Jack of all Trades.

In Haifa three British Companies have done stalwart work in Base Workshops and the Ordnance Depots, where many have learnt a trade. In addition a detachment came to Jerusalem and guarded the Syrian Orphanage (a large Barracks in one of the more violent parts of Jerusalem), to relieve the infantry. Now (March 15) the last British Company is disbanding and the few men left returning home for release.

Fourteen Mauritian, Seychelles and Rodrigue Companies under command of 83 and 84 Group (now with BTE) have been and are in constant demand by harried Services to crate and load, as guards and escorts, and every job the Pioneers can turn their adaptable hands to. They are doing a fine job.

Last, but not least, a word about the often forgotten Civil Labour Officers and NCOs. Civilian Labour has been and is vital to the evacuation. SPLCOs and PLCOs are going grey haired with the task of keeping frightened Jews and Arabs at work. Complete staffs of Arabs in Jewish areas and Jews in Arab areas have been changed at short notice. Convoys, bus routes, trains and escorts have been laid on, very often with a staff depleted by release etc.

Below is given a list of Pioneer Units that have served in this Command during the last five months.

DDPL HQ Palestine Col N J Ried MBE
DADPL (Military) Maj C J Hall
DADPL (Civil) Maj G V Dixon
S Captain Capt W E Clifford

SPLCO Haifa Maj A Mason
SPLCO Sarafand Maj R J P Davis
SPLCO Gaza Capt J H Robertson
Now closed

83 Group Lt Col R H Sturrock
Maj H F Henfrey
84 Group Lt Col J B Worton
Maj J C M Cayeux Now with BTE

2006 British Coy Maj L Simmonds
Disbanded
2007 British Coy Maj N Stewart
Disbanded
2008 British Coy Maj A W T Game
Disbanded

2039 (Rodrigue) Coy Maj C H Cokes
2041 (Mauritian) Coy Maj F E Arnold
2042 (Mauritian) Coy Maj R Norman MC
2043 (Mauritian) Coy Maj W H Stead
2044 (Rodrigue) Coy Maj A I Phillips
2045 Seychelles Coy Maj A W T Game
2046 (Mauritian) Coy Maj J W Goodlad
2047 (Mauritian) Coy Maj N Stewart Now
with BTE
2048 (Mauritian) Coy Maj T H Ellis Now
with BTE
2049 (Mauritian) Coy Maj J F Martin
2053 (Mauritian) Coy Maj A J MacDonald
2055 (Mauritian) Coy Maj B Howarth
2056 (Mauritian) Coy Maj R H I Philpin
2064 (Mauritian) Coy Maj G Williams Now
in Cyrenaica ■



Yorkshire's unsung holocaust hero

With life increasingly dangerous for Jews in Nazi Germany, tailor David Makofski set out to rescue as many as possible – and saved hundreds

Report: R Silverman
RPCA Archive

WE HAVE all heard the story of Nicholas Winton and others who helped many Jews escape from the harsh Nazi regime, especially the story of the Kindertransport.

Many will remember "That's Life" Special with Ester Ranza when Nicholas Winton was a guest and the remainder of the audience were the children and their families who he had saved.

At the top of Lands Lane in Leeds, a tailor called Derek Makofski sat in his office and poured over his ledger books. It was the late 1930s, and the Nazis dark shadow had fallen across Germany, and beyond. The world stood on the precipice of war. Yet for some, this Yorkshireman represented a narrow glimmer of hope.

Scrawled across his pages were the names and details of dozens of young Jewish men from mainland Europe. These men, like millions of others, were unsafe in their countries.

Although Hitler's final solution remained a few years off, anti-Semitism and state-sponsored persecution was increasing at an alarming rate, and many sought to escape. Makofski, a British Jew in his mid-40s, a father of three and a keen golfer, was a potential route to salvation.

During the 1930s he had become aware of the perils that threatened Jews on the continent. He was the son of Latvian refugees, fiercely proud to be British, and had fought for his country in the First World War.

It was his war injuries that led him to frequently visit the Czech spa town of Karlsbad (now Karlovy Vary) for treatment,

where he heard first hand about the treatment of Jews on the continent. In neighbouring Germany, Jews had been turned into outcasts via a series of measures including the boycott of Jewish-owned businesses and restrictions in education and employment.

He became chairman of the Leeds Jewish Refugees Committee and devised a rescue mission by establishing a trainee scheme. Under this programme, Jewish men below the age of 35 would be found positions as trainees by employers in and around Leeds. Certain conditions had to be met; that no English person could be found for the role, and that a deposit of £100 be paid (the equivalent of around £5,400 today; in some circumstances would suffice). The committee could then apply to the Home Office for a permit.

It is estimated that he saved over 200 lives under this scheme. Two of the young men he served were brothers Max and Clemence Kalischer. They both ended up in the Pioneer Corps.

13805807 Max Arthur Kalischer (DOB 2 Jun 14) enlisted at Douglas (Isle of Man) where he had been interned as an enemy alien and joined 6 Centre on 11 Jul 41 and then served in 220 Coy PC.

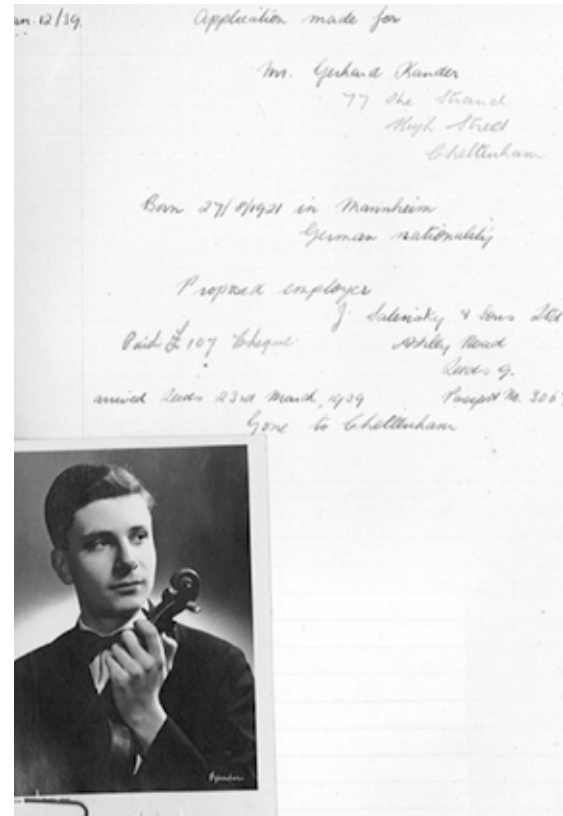
He later changed his service number and name to 13106764 Max Arthur Kingsley before transferring to the RASC on 17 Dec 43.

His brother 13805810 Clemence Kalischer (DOB 10 Feb 21) also enlisted at Douglas and joined 6 Centre on the same date as his brother, he also served in 220 Coy. He also changed his service number and name to Clement Roger Kingsley.

He stayed in the Pioneer Corps until September 1947 after spending a short period in the Interpreters Pool of 21 Army

Group from May 45 to Mar 47.

Ed note: initially all "Aliens" were given a service number prefixed "1380", it was realised that if captured that they could be easily identified (most were Jewish), it was decided therefore that they could, if they wished be given new service numbers and change of name. ■



Picture: Gerhard Kander, who Makofski brought to Leeds when he was 18

WW2 Pioneer Coys

The Pioneer Corps had over 600 UK Pioneer Companies in WW2 and they were scattered far and wide. Here is an example of one company - 70 Company and the tasks they did

Report: Norman Brown
RPCA Archive

THE PIONEER Corps had over 600 UK Pioneer Companies in WW2. These Companies were commanded by a Major and usually consisted of approx 10 Sections of 25 men each led by a Sergeant with a Lieutenant to every two sections.

Including the small headquarter element (cooks, clerks etc) the average strength was 288 men.

The following is a copy of the war diary of one of these Companies (70 Company), You will note that during their six years of existence they carried out the following tasks:

- Dock work – with cold storage ships
- Loading/Unloading RE and RAOC Stores
- Working on roads, hutting and in coal mines
- Working on railway construction
- Cable laying
- Hut erection
- Cleaning debris during Blitz London
- Salvaging safes during the Blitz
- Agricultural work
- Pipe-line work
- Defence Works
- Working on PLUTO – on Isle of Wright
- Pipe-laying in Europe (251 miles)
- Guarding and escorting POWs

23 Jan 40 Landed in FRANCE and proceeded to LE HAVRE (part of 8 Group)
Maj H R London MC – OC
Capt F J Brooker MM – 2IC
1 Feb 40 Working on docks at cold storage

ship
25 Feb 40 Loading and unloading RE and RAOC stores
2Lt W R Barwise – serving
19 Mar 40 Moved to QUIERY – working on roads, hutting and in coal mines
1 Apr 40 Working on roads in FONTAINE – ECOURT Area
24 Apr 40 Moved to CANTIN. Detachments at ROUVRAY, ARLEUX, ECOUST and GAVRELLE.
Lt Freestone – serving
CSM Joyce & CQMS Pharazyn – mentioned
No Diaries from May – November 1940 inclusive
1 Dec 40 Located CATTERICK – working with RASC and RAOC
Maj H R London – OC
Lt W A V Cole – serving
16 Dec 40 Lts H Ellison & T V Riley – serving
19 Dec 40 Lt Gunson – sos
23 Dec 40 Capt A M Williams – tos
2IC vice Tulloch
30 Dec 40 Moved to DARLINGTON
1 Jan 41 8 sections with RE at NESSFIELD and other Dumps
2 sections with Railway Construction Coy
Officers:-
Maj H R London – OC
Capt A M Williams – 2IC
Lts W A V Cole, H Ellison & T V Riley
13 Jan 41 2Lt W A Cowan – tos
13 Jan 41 HQ moved to PICKERING
17 Jan 41 Coy on hut erection
2Lt O L P Raynor – tos
27 Jan 41 Lt T W Huddle – tos

Lt H Ellison – sos
31 Jan 41 Lts W A V Cole & T V Riley – sos to 4 Coy
1 Feb 41 Moved to STEPNEY, LONDON – commenced clearing debris and salvaging safes from sites in the City of London
6 Feb 41 Pte Clayton killed and Pte Currie seriously injured by falling debris in bombed building
7 Feb 41 CLAYTON, Private, MENELL, 13034358, - casualty
7 Mar 41 Coy operational area – West boundary – Aldergate Street
North boundary – Jewin Street
South boundary – Falcon Street
21 Mar 41 HQ moved to CRAWLEY – coy on Agricultural work
5 sections moved to SALTDEAN
2 sections moved to BLETCHINGLEY
3 section moved to BOOKHAM
31 Mar 41 Officers:-
Maj H R London – OC
Capt A M Williams – 2IC
Lts Heigham, T W Huddle, Cowan & O L P Raynor
27 May 41 Lt Heigham - sos
30 May 41 Lt R A Cooke – tos
31 May 41 Still on agricultural work
Lt Lewis - serving
30 Jun 41 During the month 112 acres cleared of gorse, brambles and tree stumps. 2000 yards of river bank and bed cleared. Cleared hedging and ditching for 39 acres including 600 yards of ditches. 80 acres of hoed potatoes. 6500 yards of hedging maintained. 92 yards of pipe laid and 10 yards of road excavated for pipe laying.
Officers:-



Maj H R London – OC
 Capt A M Williams – 2IC
 Lt R A Cooke
 2Lts T W Huddle & O L P Raynor
 28 Aug 41 HQ moved to SALTDEAN
 – coy still on agricultural work all over
 Surrey and Sussex
 Capt A L Wesley – serving 2IC
 23 Sep 41 Moved to WORTHING.
 ½ coy pipe line STORRINGTON-
 WASHINGTON-ASHURST
 2 sections hutting at PETWORTH
 2 sections at WORTH PARK
 27 Dec 41 Capt G C Gorringe – tos
 2IC vice Wesley (sos to No 5 Centre)
 10 Jan 42 Moved to MAIDSTONE –
 defence works
 21 Mar 42 Maj N Thomas – tos OC
 vice London (sos ACI 422)
 1 May 42 Changed from 16 Group to 50
 Group
 1 Jun 42 Moved to CAMBERLEY (part of 79
 Group)
 4 sections at FARNBROUGH
 31 Jul 42 Working with RE and RASC
 Officers:-
 Maj N Thomas – OC
 Capt G C Gorringe – 2IC
 Lts R A Cooke & J Weathered
 2Lt D I McIntyre
 16 Sep 42 Capt F B Booker – tos
 2IC vice Gorringe (sos to 33 Group)
 2Lts W S Gore & G Grant – serving
 1 Dec 42 Mostly on hutting for DCRE
 31 Dec 42 Officers:-
 Maj N Thomas – OC
 Capt F B Booker – 2IC
 Lt R A Cooke
 2Lts A G C Fullinger, W S Gore & G Grant
 1 Feb 43 3 sections with DCRE SANDHURST
 5 sections at BRAMLEY on roads
 1 section at ARBORFIELD on hutting
 1 section at BORDON supporting RASC
 5 Feb 43 HQ & ½ coy – move to
 FOLKESTONE as part of 50 Group
 10 Feb 43 Remaining ½ coy –
 moves to FOLKSTONE
 26 Feb 43 Capt E R Colwell – tos
 2IC vice Booker (sos to 250 Coy)

Cable laying for the GPO
 22 Mar 43 Capt F B Booker –
 rejoins as 2IC vice Colwell
 30 Mar 43 Moved to MOLASH near
 CANTERBURY – miscellaneous duties
 10 Sep 43 Capt A Greening – tos
 2IC vice Booker
 21 Sep 43 Moved to CANTERBURY
 25 Sep 43 Capt A Greening – sos
 1 Oct 43 Capt D C W McConnell – tos 2IC
 21 Dec 43 Miscellaneous duties
 Officers:-
 Maj N Thomas – OC
 Capt D C W McConnell – 2IC
 Lts B G F Fairfax, G Grant & F Stewart
 2Lts C J Orchard & R C D Waymark
 28 Dec 43 Moved to BARHAM
 near CANTERBURY
 1 Feb 44 Moved to RYDE, Isle of Wight –
 working with CRE
 8 May 44 Moved to Concentration Area
 near LINGFIELD – training as part of 14
 Group
 11 Jun 44 Landed in NORMANDY
 and proceeded to ECSOURS – working with
 106 CRE Works
 23 Jun 44 Commenced pipe laying
 Officers:-
 Maj N Thomas – OC
 Capt D C W McConnell – 2IC
 Lts G Grant, F Stewart, C J Orchard & R C D
 Waymark
 1 Jul 44 Laying oil pipes at ESCURES
 3 Jul 44 Commenced pipe laying on
 BAYEUX bypass
 19 Jul 44 Laying 2nd and 3rd pipe lines to
 BLARY
 31 Jul 44 Laying pipes from JERUSALME to
 BRONAY. HQ at BLARY
 14 Aug 44 Moved to HAUT DE
 VERNON – laying pipes from BRUNAY to
 VERNON
 27 Aug 44 Moved to LA BRE
 CHENEUIERE
 8 Sep 44 Moved to THIBERVILLE
 3 Oct 44 Moved to SULLY
 27 Oct 44 Moved to DESURES
 2 Nov 44 Commenced laying 6" pipe from
 BOULOGNE to River SLACH?

28 Nov 44 Lt R C D Waymark – sos
 6 Dec 44 Moved to HERENTHOUT, Belgium
 15 Jan 45 Moved to AALST –
 laying pipes to EINDHOVEN
 19 Feb 45 Line completed and
 tested
 6 Mar 45 Moved to GEMERT
 10 Mar 45 Lt W E Hemmings – tos
 13 Apr 45 ½ coy under Lt C J
 Orchard commences laying pipes to the
 Rhine Crossing
 16 Apr 45 Moved to KELLEN
 22 Apr 45 Line over Rhine
 completed
 5 May 45 Moved to ETON, Holland
 23 May 45 Line from EMMERICH to
 BOCHOLT completed. The Coy has laid 251
 miles of single pipe line. The BBC
 announced the completion of the pipeline
 from England to Germany but made no
 mention of the Pioneers, stating the work
 had been done by RE and RASC. This Coy
 has worked on its own, with no REs
 employed. Men very upset at the omission
 to mention their work.
 Coy no longer under CRE and commence
 training.
 31 May 45 Letter from Lord
 Reading to 'The Times' mentioning the
 work of the Corps on the pipeline published
 in Cot Orders to cheer the men up.
 23 Jun 45 Maj N Thomas – sos
 release
 24 Jun 45 CURTIS, Private,
 LAWRENCE, 13074222, - casualty
 29 Jun 45 Moved to JABBEKE,
 Belgium – pipeline maintenance
 18 Jul 45 Maj H Francis – tos OC
 13 Aug 45 HQ moves to CASTLE
 TILLYGHEM and BRUGES
 23 Aug 45 Working on pipeline
 patrols and dismantling sections.
 28 Oct 45 Moved to
 ZANDVOORDE, OSTEND
 1 Nov 45 Coy now guarding and escorting
 PWs
 1 Dec 45 Maj H Francis – sos release
 18 Dec 45 Disbanded at
 ZANDVOORDE near OSTEND ■





Continuing the fight

| Three anarchists from Spain in the British Army, 1939-1945, from Norway to Trentham Park

Report: Norman Brown
RPCA Archive

BORN IN, 1909 in Alcorisa, Aragón, Manuel Espallargas Ferrer found out shortly before escaping to France that his wife and father had been shot in Spain by the Franco Regime.

A committed member of the anarcho-syndicalist Confederación Nacional de Trabajo (CNT), he had fought in several Spanish Civil War battles, including the bloody battle of Belchite, before cSéan F. Scullionrossing into France in 1939.

Manuel was one of some 1,200 Spaniards who volunteered to serve in the British army during the Second World War. Spaniards served in theatres from Norway to Central Africa and from the Atlantic to the Pacific, continuing the fight that, for many, had started with the Spanish Civil War in 1936. They served in units ranging from special forces and airborne troops to the Pioneer Corps and the Special Operations Executive (SOE).

By the end of the Second World War, many settled in Britain and integrated into British life, setting up a Spanish Ex-Servicemen's Association and continuing the fight in exile against Franco. This article tells the story of three of them, ardent anarchists who joined the British Army staying in Britain until the restoration of democracy in Spain after 1975.

Enlisting in the French Foreign Legion in 1939, Manuel fought in Norway against the German invasion of 1940. It is said that the performance of the Spanish legionnaires here (many of them anarchists) caused French officers to change their opinion of them. These were men who had fought at Madrid and Aragón in the Spanish Civil War and were used to the intensity of the conflict ahead. A witness to this was Captain Pierre-Olivier Lapie:

"The Spaniards saw on those tortuous tracks something similar to their own lands. They jumped from one side to the other like tigers and never seemed to tire out. If there were officers who were apprehensive about having these Republican Spaniards in the

Legion, believing they were communists, they were now proud and happy with their fighting spirit. An example was the case of a young Spaniard who attacked and captured a German machine gun position in Elvegaard."

This young man was the small and determined Manuel Espallargas Ferrer, who led a small team up the mountain fighting for some ten hours to take the German position. Over the course of those days, many Spaniards lost their lives in Norway.

Worrying news from France prompted the French to withdraw from Norway and land at Brest. Surprised by their new French officers' lack of fight, the Spaniards held a soldiers' commission, deciding they were willing to fight till the death. But by the 20th of June, the Spaniards were in England, where a rebellion against French command led many to join the British Army.

Foreign Legion troops were billeted at Trentham Park near Stoke-on-Trent and were visited by General Charles De Gaulle. (iv) During the visit, some 300 Spaniards carried out a silent sit-down protest for which they were imprisoned in Stafford Prison. Even before this, twenty-nine Spaniards were jailed for failing to muster. Francisco Balague, who later joined the British, would later say:

"General De Gaulle came to visit us. When the Spaniards found out [...] we passed around instructions to show our disdain for the French: we would throw down our weapons and sit down when the order was given to present arms. That is what we did. De Gaulle and the French and British officers who accompanied him stopped in their tracks, surprised by our attitude. The Military Police took us by lorry to Stafford Prison [...] a British officer arrived there and spoke perfect Spanish and we told him we were willing to join the British Army but not continue in the French Army."

From Stafford Prison, the Spanish legionnaires were directed to Avonmouth but opposed their embarkation at the railway station. The War History of The Royal Pioneer Corps 1939-1945 takes up the story:

"Arrangements had been made for their return to Spain, but since Spain was for obvious reasons the last country they wanted to go to the men had refused to embark at Avonmouth. Their French military officers thereupon contacted the French Military Mission in London for instructions and received orders that one in every three should be shot pour encourager les autres. At this stage the British authorities intervened, relieved the French officers of their command..."

The men formed the No.1 Spanish Company at Westward Ho! and were soon put to good use. With the fall of France, Britain was gearing up to sabotage the German war effort. It was feared that Germany might attack Gibraltar, and the Spaniards were one of the only sources of Iberian recruits.(viii) The company was hence visited in Plymouth on the 2nd of December 1940 by a Major Hugh Quennell, who was head of H Section of the Special Operations Executive (SOE), which covered the Iberian Peninsula. The first batch started their training immediately at various SOE training establishments. Reports on their progress were written by Kim Philby, later revealed as a spy for the USSR. Much of the planning for future potential operations involved Ian Fleming, who was to create the character of James Bond 007.

The SOE training lasted most of 1941 and 1942, and by 1943, some SCONCES were earmarked as being "[R]etained for future employment". Even though the SCONCES (the codename given by SOE), would never see action in the Iberian Peninsula, a few were used in France in 1944. Amongst them were now Sergeant Manuel Espallargas Ferrer(ix) and Private Esteban Molina, father of the actor Alfred Molina, who later talked about being deployed as a radio operator behind enemy lines.

North Africa

Agustín Roa Ventura, a tall energetic young man active in the Catalan Anarchist movement, would become one of over 500 Spaniards who joined the Pioneer Corps in North Africa in 1943. He was 27 years old.



■ Picture: Agustín Roa Ventura whilst serving in 361 (Alien) Pioneer Company

At the end of the Spanish Civil War, around 15,000 Republican refugees escaped to Northern Africa. This increased as Vichy France moved “undesirable” Spaniards to North Africa after the autumn of 1940. Several of these were used as slave labour on projects such as the Trans-Saharan Railway. One of the worst places was the Concentration Camp at Djelfa, where 386 Spaniards were confined by the middle of 1942. Late that year, the British and American secret services ran a joint project, ‘Massingham’, where both SOE and OSS recruited Spanish volunteers across Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco to carry out operations on behalf of the allies. In his memoirs, Agustín talks of many being whisked away in the night to later become instructors or even fighters behind German and Italian lines in Tunisia. Many of them were anarchists who worked with explosives and had been guerrillas in the Spanish Civil War. (xv)

Born in Almería in 1915 and an activist from an early age, Agustín moved with his family to Catalunya in the 1920s. In May 1937, he became Secretary of the Juventudes Libertarias (JJLL) in Barcelona, a youth anarchist group set up during the Second Republic. He ran a series of groups to improve relationships between the CNT, the FAI (Federación Anarquista Ibérica) and the JJLL. When Franco’s troops entered the city, he was forced into France and held in Saint Cyprien and Barcarès. Released to work, he remained active and was arrested in early 1942 and interned at Vernet d’Arriège before being sent to the dreaded Djelfa. At the camp were a multitude of Spanish revolutionaries and anarchists sent there by the French authorities. Here Agustín met Antonio Vargas Rivas; they would become lifelong friends.

Antonio was born in Adra, Almería, in 1917 and soon became a rebel and anarchist. He joined the CNT in the 1930s and was soon thrown into the turmoil of the Spanish Civil War. In 1939 he escaped on a fishing boat to Orán, leaving his family behind.

The Allied invasion of North Africa in November 1942 meant that those interned were freed. Agustín and Antonio soon enlisted in the British Army along with many other Spaniards into the newly formed 361 (Alien) Company of the Pioneer Corps at Boufarik, Algeria, in April 1943. By October 1944, 361, 362, 363 companies were sent

to Britain. Fifty or so members of 361 augmented the No.1 Spanish Company in the Ardennes soon after. (xvi) One of these was Antonio. Due to their support roles in Britain, many Spaniards were not de-mobilised until late 1946 or early 1947.

The War’s End, Continuing the Fight

The end of the Second World War brought much uncertainty to the Spaniards, who had ended up in Britain. While the 400 or so members of the No. 1 Spanish Company, SAS and 50 Middle East Commando were immediately allowed to stay in the United Kingdom, others were not so lucky. As representatives of the three Companies from North Africa, Agustín Roa Ventura and Antonio Vargas Rivas and a few others visited London shortly after the war to petition Labour MPs regarding their plight. By mid-1946, Spaniards recruited in North Africa, stationed in Britain, could stay in Britain. But what was evident was that many of these veterans felt that Britain had let them down by not going after Franco next. Those who stayed settled across the country, and many applied for naturalisation.



■ Pictures: Manuel Espallargas Ferrer and Antonio Vargas Rivas after the war

In London, a Spanish Ex-Servicemen’s Association was set up in 1960, which was involved in the organisation of protests and campaigns building awareness of the Franco regime in Britain. The two founders were Agustín and Antonio, who also remained active with the CNT in exile.

Both settled in London, as did Manuel Espallargas Ferrer. Agustín became involved in printing as a typographer with The Times and later The Sun. Antonio got a job in the famous Martínez Restaurant and remained there for the rest of his working life. For many years, Agustín remained the Secretary of the Commission for Relations for the CNT in Great Britain and worked heavily with the social democratic Union General de Trabajadores (UGT). He also became a trade unionist on various committees for the Trades Union of the Graphic Industry. Antonio also became a member of the CNT in exile and attended several meetings in Britain and France. The Spanish Ex-Servicemen’s Association soon launched a Bulletin, which was frequently published. The two also published and edited Spain out of Spain, Anarchist Bulletin for Updates & Information (España fuera de España, Boletín anarquista de orientación e información) aimed at immigrant Spanish workers. On the 10th of July 1960, the Spanish Ex-Servicemen’s Association was at the forefront of protests during the visit of the Francoist Minister Fernando María Castiella, which ended in a series of speeches in Trafalgar Square. Agustín gave one of them. Both continued to be militant against the Franco regime in exile until his

death in 1975 and published various articles and accounts. One of these was the award-winning Triunfo del Dolor, written by Agustín, which won the Premio Larra in the mid-1970s. He also wrote another book entitled Agony and Death of Francoism, A Memoir (Agonía y muerte del franquismo. Una memoria).



■ Picture: One of the many protests the Spanish Ex-Servicemen’s Association was involved with in the 1960s

Spanish Anarchists who served in the British Army between 1939 and 1946 went through a great deal. Most were born when Spain was a neutral country during the First World War and undergoing its industrial revolution. As young children, they lived under the Regime of General Primo de Rivera in the 1920s. In the early 1930s, they witnessed the establishment of the Second Spanish Republic and the military coup attempt and civil war that followed in 1936. They were, in 1939, forced to take refuge in France and be interned. On the outbreak of the Second World War, many fought on the losing side with the French and took their chances by joining the British Army to continue the fight against fascism until victory in 1945. They remained fighting against the evil of the Franco Regime in exile until his death in 1975, and many would return to their native country thereafter. ■



■ Pictures: Members of the Spanish Ex-Servicemen’s Association ready to set off along Whitehall in 1975. Antonio Rivas far right, and Agustín Ventura, 2nd from right. Note Luis Gabriel Portillo (father of Michael Portillo), 5th from right.



■ Pictures: Members of the Spanish Ex-Servicemen’s Association delivering a letter to 10 Downing Street in 1975. Agustín Ventura, far left, and Antonio Vargas Rivas, far right.



Thik Hai Sahib!

(OK Sir!)

A short story about Captain
(324215) Douglas
Francis Delroy

Report: Norman Brown
RPCA Archive

IMAGINE MY feelings when in 1944 after only a few months commissioned service I received orders to pack up my bags and proceed to Prestatyn for an overseas posting.

After leaving OCTU in July, I had enjoyed 7 days kit leave before joining my new unit, 158 Company at Earlswood Common, Redhill. This had been my first leave since the previous December, as owing to the preparation and execution of the Invasion of the Continent, there had been a ban on leave for some months past.

At OCTU I had hoped for a posting south near my home at Twickenham and to my sheer delight I found that by some stroke of luck the War Office has accomplished what I considered the impossible.

I had to laugh later (although not at the time) when, after leaving the parade at which our postings had been announced, I found a letter awaiting me in our Nissen; it bore a 'Preston' postmark and in it my wife told me that owing to the increasing 'fly bomb' menace, she had decided that it would be wise to take our small son out of the danger zone and they were staying 'up North' with friends of ours!

My time spent with 158 Coy proved very pleasant and gave me some really useful experience.

Major K G Chilman RA had just arrived to take over command and I found him to be a first rate OC.

In peace time he was a school master in York and had represented England many times in hockey.

If ever I was present at his Orderly Room I was often reminded of my school days over again and my appearances before the Head – not too frequent I am glad to say. Fortunately detention at school bore no resemblance to the Army's punishment.

During my stay with the Company there was never a permanent 2i/c and as a result I was able to learn much of these duties, a factor which helped me considerably when I later commanded my own unit.

At Prestatyn we were issued with Tropical Kit – a sure sign that we were going to Europe!

We had been recalled from Embarkation Leave and one cold dark December day found ourselves saying 'au revoir' (we hoped) to the last sight of the Scottish coast from the wrong end of a ship.

Our Ship was the SS BATORY – a Polish vessel – bound for Bombay.

The passengers consisted of some 600 civilians, men, women and children, missionaries, wives and families, wives-to-

be, business men and above all an ENSA party.

Apart from some ORs imported from another troop ship in the convoy to help with the meal service and the fatigues, the rest of the personnel travelling were all military and, moreover, all officers.

There were two large drafts of Pioneer Corps officers (we had not the honour of 'Royal' then) and other drafts of all arms of the service, altogether between 450 – 500 bodies.

You can guess that being a humble 'one pipper' on that ship was worse than being an Acting Unpaid LCpl in the ranks.

However it proved to be a pleasant and uneventful trip and everyone mixed very well.

We were steaming through the Med on Christmas Day and leaving the Persian Gulf for the Red Sea on New Year's Day.

Considering the blackout restrictions, and the lack of materials aboard, the standard of entertainment was terrific.

Film shows were once a day, Urdu classes were held morning and afternoon for all those desirous of making an early start with the new language (later to prove invaluable when associated with Indian troops). A Pantomime with ENSA and the Army combined was a hit success and ran for two weeks, whist drives were organised and when the moon allowed there was dancing on the boat deck to the music of an improvised band. Boxing tournaments and 'Housey-Housey' were very popular and the ships library catered for all tastes.

On New Year's Eve a fancy dress dance was organised and the parade for prizes was the high spot of the evening.

It was surprising what magnificently formed girls some of HM Officers proved to be – I particularly remember a 'Dorothy Lamour' effort complete (if that is the correct description) with grass skirt and sun-tan!

Regular Boat Drill and ships' gun practice reminded us that we were not on a pleasure cruise, and watches at guns were shared by the competent officers, the rest being on a roster for a 24 hour provost duty.

The officer draft of Pioneer Corps officers from Buxton included many of my OCTU chums and also Major Chilman.

It later transpired that this draft was going out to take over Civil Labour Control Duties and Major Chilman kept in touch with me throughout until his return to UK on release.

On January 12th, 1945, we docked at Bombay and all the Pioneer Corps Officers were greeted by an IPC Major from GHQ (I) who, whilst welcoming us told us of the

work that lay before us and the difficulties we should have to overcome with regard to language, understanding, race and religion.

We had, of course, been wearing our khaki drill for quite a time by now and felt more at home in it than at first when the sight of our own knees and those of the others has caused no little amusement!

We were not amused, however, when we had to march through the streets of Bombay next morning en route to the Station. The great snag was the order that pith helmets would be worn! If you have ever seen the Army issue pith helmets (Dr Livingstone, I presume, type) you will appreciate our feelings.

We knew we were rookies to the East, but we did not want to advertise it!

Our first impressions through the busy thoroughfares of Bombay were varied. The unusual garbs of the natives, the pools of red-stained beateel-nut on the pavements, constantly expectorated by the jostling populace, the bullock drawn carts, the Western appearance of parts of the city and some of the population, the open motor taxis careering along at breakneck speed and seemingly intent on maiming the hundreds of erring pedestrians in the streets, the persevering 'shoe shine' boys and the equally menacing beggars, without limbs, with half limbs, with all limbs, but certainly without a wash and above all the smell!

So this was India and the mystic East!

At the station we picked our way over recumbent forms sprawled all over the place, some sleeping, some eating, women feeding bundles in rags from withered breasts, discussion groups – politics or horse racing we knew not – and eventually reached our platform where we entrained. (Not a very elegant train and we were warned to keep a guard on our baggage!) However during our wait for the train to start we were amused by an acrobatic stone breaker and a snake charmer who performed by the side of the railway lines and we found it all rather 'new.'

At Kalyan we lived in a Transit Camp for some days before our postings came through.

I found it a rather expensive period as one night the room I shared with a fellow officer, Capt D V Taylor, was entered, and whilst we were sleeping under our mosquito nets our suitcases and contents vanished.

Nine of us were posted to 36 Group IPC where new recruits were trained and companies came for a refresher course, refit and what you have!

This entailed a journey to Jhansi in the Central plains and meant spending nearly

24 hours in the train. There was not a dining car so we had to arrange with the train guard to telegraph ahead at the recognised stops and then leaving one chap to look after the baggage we all dashed to the refreshment room where a meal, European style, was awaiting us. The first finished would hurry back to relieve the sentry who had to gulp his meal with an ear cocked for the trains departure.

At Jhansi we soon entered into the spirit of the work in hand and were split over the various companies to learn all we could of the work of a Company Commander.

A typical day would consist of PT at 7 am (this included a road run, exercises and games), breakfast, parade and drill, Urdu lessons and lunch. Another Urdu lesson and work with the company concluded our programme.

Sport came to the fore after tea and we joined in with the Indian troops at hockey and played them at football.

A late dinner in the mess, usually followed by a game of cards, bridge or solo, and then back to our tents and bed.

We were miles away from the town of Jhansi and went in on average once a week either to the Officers Club or the Cinema.

The more venturesome types often spent a night shooting and after such exploits the mess was well supplied with fresh meat for some days – wild pig and blue boar were especial favourites.

When the Indian recruits arrived at the Group they came direct from Jalna the central Pioneer Depot in India.

They had only seen up to six weeks service and had scarcely any kit or equipment.

We has a colossal job on hand, recording, kitting and equipping, training and generally making every endeavour to change these newcomers from ignorant natives into reasonable, self-respecting, disciplined Pioneers.

Once they got the hang of things they could be sure of regular meals, proper clothing, a roof and a bed (of sorts) and a guaranteed income.

The pay of an Indian Pioneer on enrolment was in the neighbourhood of £1 14s 6d a month.

No marriage allowances were paid and the Pioneer had to allow a portion of his month's pay if he so wished. This was sent to his home by money order direct from the Pay Office at Jalna.

The Pioneer received slight increases in pay after each year of service for the first three years, and if he was in a 'Field Area' he received Batta (a form of Field Allowance), about 7/6 a month extra.

Should his unit go overseas – out of India – he received Expatriation Allowance which is equivalent to about 11/- a month.

The great majority of these rates of pay, slight though they may seem to us, represented a sum which they could never had hoped to earn as a civilian. It offered them great chance of saving a little capital and to achieve their ultimate ambition to purchase a little land for themselves.

After their release from the Army they would return to their village and go to work on this little plot which would have to yield sufficient to support them and their families for the rest of their days.

It is not my intention to describe the pitiful method of agriculture employed on

these small holdings but it really represented all that is primitive.

During my 3 months at Jhansi I found I was picking up the language fairly easily.

Our 'Munshi' or teacher, was a nice old boy with a grand sense of humour and when he asked a question always ended with 'Isn't it?'

By talking with him (in English this time of course) we learned much of the problems that beset the Indians: the barrier of religion, the pernicious cast system, the day to day existence of the masses living from hand to mouth, the child marriages, all these subjects and many others were probed and found our Munshi a very capable lecturer even if a little biased.

I managed to spend a weekend at Agra with Capt Stone and we toured round the city visiting all the famous buildings and monuments and watching the monkeys in the streets. The Taj Mahal was simply overawing and I had never seen such workmanship in my life before.

Soon after this visit I was posted to SEAC and set out by train across India to Calcutta and from there by train again to Chittagong in East Bengal.

As the train rolled across the vast continent the change from dry brown earth to the green pastures was very noticeable.

At Chittagong 1 reported to 6 Group IPC whose HQ was on the edge of an Airfield at Payenga. Lt Col D G Waugh was commanding and he made me very welcome.

He had at that time some 10,000 bodies under his command, consisting of Indian Pioneer Corps Companies and State labour Units.

All this labour was fully engaged on the Airfield, building a gigantic new concrete runway, laying temporary runways, turning bays and drains, making roads, crushing stones (by machinery) boiling tar and the hundred and one other tasks that go with a great building project.

From this Air-Strip heavily loaded freight planes took off to fly to our forward troops in Burma where supplies were dropped by parachute.

During the great push the tonnage lifted broke all records and a plane left Patenga every five minutes during daylight hours.

Every ton of supplies carried in those planes was loaded by Indian Pioneers and the stores included covert requirement of a modern army that could be transported in whole or in sections by airplane.

6 Group had a great reputation with the REs and the RASC and I understand the Lt Col Waugh was later awarded the OBE and many of his officers and ORs were 'mentioned.'

After two months with Group HQ during which time I helped with the administration I was called by Col Waugh and told to take over one of his companies with the A/Rank of Captain.

I was very proud and knuckled down to my new duties with a resolve to do my best for the chaps under my command to the best of my ability.

I found them to be a grand lot and from then on, until I relinquished my command I had nothing but happy times with them.

They mostly came from Orissa – the province next to Bengal and spoke their own particular language. Fortunately most of them understood Urdu and my Subedar

was a very educated Punjabi and spoke perfect English.

I set out to win their respect without having to rely on powers of punishment and although I soon found that I had little 'crime' to worry about.

The composition of and Indian Pioneer Coy is briefly as follows

1	Officer (British or Indian) OC with Rank of Capt
1	Subedar 2i/c (equivalent to WO1)
4	Jemedars i/c platoons (equivalent to WO2)
9	Havildars (equal to Sgt)
8	Naiks (equal to Cpl)
19	Lance Naiks (equal to LCpl)
16	Sepoys
321	ORs (combatants)
36	Followers (non combatants)
415	Total

Followers

1	Taylor
1	Bootmaker
4	Barbers
8	Sweepers
4	Dhobi (washermen)
8	Cooks (Indian style)
1	Cook (British style)
1	Carpenter
8	Water Carriers

Of the 9 havildars:- 2 are havildar clerks, 1 pay havildar, 1 Coy havildar-major and 1 Coy Quartermaster-havildar.

Of these personnel only the havildar clerks could with certainty be relied upon to speak, read and write English and even then it may prove rather quaint.

All the orders, letters, returns and the rest of the amazing amount of literature and forms needed to run a small unit were in English which meant much translation of relevant information to read out to the company when paraded for nightly roll call.

A few weeks after assuming my command we moved down to Chittagong to work on the docks and to prepare for the invasion of Malaya which of course at that time was 'top secret.'

Up to that time the unit only had thirteen rifles on charge for use by the Sepoys on guard duties, but now the unit attained full combatant status and all except the followers, who had enrolled as non-combatants, became the proud possessor of a Mk IV.

It was easy task to instruct nearly 400 troops into the mysteries of the rifle from stripping and cleaning to the final passing out firing course on the range and time was limited as we were due to sail in a few weeks ready to land on the beaches soon after D Day.

I had one or two fairly competent NCOs who had taken weapon courses but it would have been an impossible job without the assistance of Major Espley RASC, who commanded an Air Supply Company also waiting to move off on the invasion.

He lent me 8 British NCOs for the instruction. These chaps although they were ignorant of the language apart from the usual BORs lingo, immediately set to and did a grand job.

Despite the language difficulty they took my men through their paces – mainly using signs and demonstrations with not a few

unprintable words as a necessary help at times – and at the end of the month the whole company had been to the ranges and fired a passing out course.

My fellows though it was grand and, their chests swelled appreciably, they enjoyed the bayonet fighting, they were anxious to do guards and the whole turnout of the unit improved immediately without any urging from me.

After the dropping of the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima the Japs packed in and instead of going in on an assault of the Morib beaches we found ourselves steaming into the harbour of Singapore and walking down a gangway. The BORs have an axe to grind about travelling conditions on troopships, but the poor IOR must have an even worse time.

The troops were packed like sardines in the hold between the decks with little or no air, washing facilities were non-existent apart from one tap which was more often 'off' than 'on' and meals had to be cooked on open fires lit in specially constructed fireplaces on the deck. Their movement was confined to the rear of the ship where they were herded together in the perpetual smokey atmosphere and their only source of comfort was to sit on the deck using the kapok life belts as pillows.

Add to this the fact the 99 per cent of them had never seen the ocean before let alone travelled on a ship with the result that sea sickness was almost universal and when an Indian is ill I know of no more pitiful individual.

However, once on land they recovered their usual cheery outlook and soon cleaned themselves up.

I had changed all their money from Rupees into Malayan Dollars – not that there was much to change – and in view of the exorbitant prices ruling on the island I issued a warning against unnecessary spending and imposed a semi-official system of saving.

An IOR's pay book is all-in-one i.e. Pt 1 and Pt II combined, plus a separate booklet which is inserted and which acts in place of an AFH 1157 for recording kit, clothing and weapons issued to him (this is a bad system as these booklets are being continually lost). It was a very tedious process to obtain a statement of an individual's credit as the Pay Service was deplorable.

Much therefore depended on having a good Pay Havildar and also on the OC ensuring that the casualties were entered in the pay books at the time of submission rather than await the 3-4 month's delay before Part II Orders were received.

At Singapore I had 1 platoon working at Changi on the NE tip of the island in preparation for the eventual arrival of HQ ALFSEA from Kandy. Whilst the rest of the Company were working for Ordnance opening up a new MT Stores depot for 223 BOD.

The work was at first dirty and arduous as we had to clear old Jap stores from the modern factory we were to use, but once the initial stages and difficulties were overcome things ran smoothly and the depot was organized and stocked up with the thousands of tons of equipment arriving by ship from India and the UK.

We worked under Major Dersch who was the ordnance officer in charge of this depot and he had nothing but praise for the men.

In fact we used to supply the guard for his depot as he preferred them to his own men and when Maj-Gen Dempsey, the then C-in-C, came on a visit we were congratulated on our smart turnout.

Later when HQ ALFSEA arrived, our friend the Director of Labour, Brigadier Blanchard, was able to follow his desire and visit his troops more often.

He came to the unit on two occasions and the troops were greatly encouraged by his interest and praise.

His last visit was on the eve of his return to the UK and he addressed the unit through an interpreter telling them just how much the success of the Burma Campaign had depended on their efforts and how proud he was to be associated with them.

When he drove off after having been cheered and bedecked with garlands in the usual Indian style my Jemedar turned to me and said 'Sahib, it is a pleasure to serve under such men and we need friends like him!' How true!

At 21 Group HQ that day there was a big parade followed by sports and tea.

All officers were present at the dinner in the Group Mess to bid the DL full salaams and later there was a 'tamasha' (Indian Concert Party) contributed by all the companies in the Group, with varying idioms and dances and their own peculiar brand of humour.

The Indians dress up to make very presentable dancing girls, complete with false breasts and plenty of powder!

Earlier in the day at the big parade the DL had been presented with a silver tray, suitably inscribed, as a memento from the officers of the HQ and units of 21 Group.

I hope he always recalls happy memories whenever he looks at that tray in his home.

Christmas Day 1945, was for me a black day although it held every promise until lunch time. The ADPL Singapore District had visited Coy HQ and wished the paraded platoons a 'Happy Christmas!'

Just as he was leaving the unit the sky clouded over and the daily storm broke only this time more violent than usual. During the rainy season it rained regularly for at least an hour each day to the accompaniment of thunder and lightning.

Down fell the rain, flooding the ground within a few minutes. The troops had dispersed to their billets when a wet and bedraggled figure appeared running through the sepoy lines. It was the Sepoy driver of my Bedford 3 ton lorry and he was in a state of near collapse.

I had sent him over to Changi in the morning to fetch some of the troops from No 4 Platoon who were taking part in the Christmas Day sports arranged by Group HQ.

He had not felt too well on arrival at Changi and had refused any food. On the return journey with the truck full of troops he had a 'black out' and had driven the vehicle off the road into a deep ditch.

The injured men were receiving first aid from some Japanese POW medical orderlies and in the meantime he had 'hitch hiked' some ten miles back to camp to report to me.

We immediately set to, collecting stretchers and blankets and piled these into the 15 cwt plus some willing helpers.

Telling the 15 cwt driver to follow me I took the shivering Sepoy with my Subedar

and one Jemedar in my Jeep and off we dashed through the tropical down pour.

By the time we arrived at the scene of the accident the rain had ceased and the sun was once again scorching down.

I found that six men were seriously injured and needed hospital attention whilst the others were badly shaken and 'white' with shock.

The Japs had made a good job of the first aid treatment and after some delay I was able to get an ambulance to rush the badly injured off to hospital.

As it was Christmas Day I had a difficult time arranging for a REME breakdown lorry to get the truck on to the road and into workshops for attention and also in getting the CMP not to take any great interest.

Pending the arrival of the breakdown truck I posted an armed sentry on the vehicle to guard against looting by the Malays from the nearby village (otherwise the wheels, battery and tools would most certainly have gone).

I eventually returned to the unit at 7pm and I have never felt less like eating a Christmas Dinner.

The miracle of it all was the fact that ten yards further from the ditch along a narrow winding road the bank became a drop of 60ft.

Indian drivers were terribly erratic and had little road sense, particularly in traffic.

Their main idea was to keep a foot on the accelerator and overtake all the vehicles in front of them irrespective of the nature of the road or the oncoming traffic.

I found it a terrifying experience to sit beside an Indian driver and I always made a point of driving myself in whatever vehicle I travelled (not favoured by the authorities)

During February I had to go into hospital for 3 weeks suffering from Tropical Impetigo and I decided it was time I moved out of the humid climate.

There was little hope of going to Japan or to Batavia so I volunteered for the Middle East where there was a reported shortage of Pioneer Corps Officers.

During my stay in hospital Debendra, my bearer, came to see me as often as possible. He felt sure that the hospital staff could not be looking after me as well as he would, if given the opportunity.

Debendra, in common with most of my troops was only twenty years old, and could neither read nor write.

I taught him to print his name and number and after much perseverance and he was very proud when he 'signed' the Acquaintance Roll for his pay instead of making his thumb impression. (Thumb impressions on 4 copies of an Acquaintance Roll of nearly 400 illiterates took some time to complete).

His wife, a girl of 15 years of age, unfortunately died whilst he was in Singapore, although it was almost a month after her death that he received the news from his home.

When the Company knew I was leaving there were some very touching scenes and a constant procession of Jawans at my office all begging me to stay.

I knew I would feel the wrench but at the same time I had to move for my health's sake.

I had presented the Company with a flag in IPC colours as a Christmas present and this flag fluttered for the white-washed flag

pole near my office. It was lowered at 'Retreat' every evening with all due ceremony.

At the formal presentation I made a speech, which I prepared in English and which my clerk had written in Urdu. In it I had thanked the Company for their loyalty and congratulated them on their excellent work and high standard of 'turn out' and discipline.

I placed emphasis on the spirit of comradeship that existed between us despite our different colours and creeds and expressed the hope that this would be remembered when they returned to their own homes as civilians.

I am of the firm impression that the personnel of all Indian Units commanded by British Officers can carry nothing but good thoughts of the fair treatment they received and I would like to think that this will be of assistance to the moulding of the future India and the relationship with Great Britain

now that control is finally handed over to the Indians themselves.

Just before my departure, my bearer presented me with a multi-coloured pullover in strips of all the most vivid colours and assured me he had knitted the whole thing himself.

Right up to the last moment he hoped that I would take him along and eventually bring him home with me to England.

Had it been possible or fair to bring him, I could never have wished a more honest, loyal or industrious servant although what my wife and small son would have said I daren't think.

In May 1946, I left Singapore with regret, my pockets full of photographs of the men and my bag containing a bottle of whisky given to me by a tearful Jemadar (nice though this)!

After a three week trip in a Liberty ship I disembarked at Suez and spent a few weeks in transit at the PC Depot at

Quassassin.

In July I flew across to Greece to take up the extra regimental appointment of Camp Commandant to HQ 212 Area in Athens.

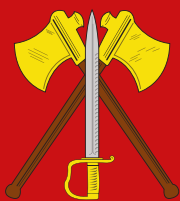
Although work was easier with British troops who could read and write I was sure I could never recapture the fine spirit that existed with my Indian Pioneers.

Eventually my 'demob' group number came round and I travelled home by Medloc in November to be greeted by one of the worst winters in living memory and become one of the great thong already 'relegated to the unemployed list.'

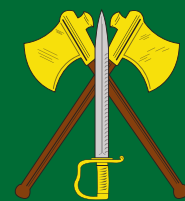
Looking back now from the comfort of my own home, I would not have missed the experience with the IPC for anything.

The Indian Pioneers were grand chaps and their exploits and achievements have yet to fully appreciated.

They did marvellous work under most difficult circumstances and it was a privilege to have been associated with them. ■



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To get a full list of items for sale and prices please email Billy at thepioneerhq@gmail.com

Everything from Cufflinks, Ties, Blazer Badges, Buttons, Plaques, Dickie Bows, Benny Hats, Flags, Pioneer Tops, Pioneer Books, Fighting Pioneer Canvas print and more!



Rough Jottings

by

Ex WO2 Pete COLLINS



Report: WO2 Pete Collins
RPCA Archive

BEFORE Royal Pioneer Corps, there are a lot but I will only recount one story whilst I was serving in the Parachute Regiment in Northern Ireland.

Whilst serving with 1st Battalion the Parachute Regiment in Northern Ireland I was used as the Company Commanders Radio Operator. The Company Commander was Maj R J Crane MBE (Black Jack) a very strange person to command a rifle company with a QM Commission. He joined the Army underage but managed to stay in eventually rising to Col. During internment we were on foot on the open ground going into Ballymurphy. We had a Troop of Artillery in APCs under command. A Second Lt drove up in his APC and said to Maj Crane "do you realise you are under fire" Maj Crane replied "Yes and it is the same as it was in Arnhem, Korea, Suez and Aden", what a put down. I don't know when Maj Crane did join but the look on the 2nd Lts face was brilliant.

Deep Sea Dump

The first pioneering task that I went on was a deep-sea dump. It was hard work but there was plenty of off time. One of the Ptes on the dump was a clerk Les Jones, he was a wind-up scouse merchant. We decided it would be a good idea to shackle him to the H on the helipad. The Captain saw what we were doing and when it was completed switched on the spray system soaking him.

Promoted To Sergeant

After transferring to The Royal Pioneer Corps, I worked for WOII Les Paramore as his clerk. I then convinced him I should go to the Gibraltar Detachment. On return I was on leave and due to return to work the next day. It was a hot day, I went for a haircut in Bicester wearing a GIB Tee Shirt, Shorts and Flip Flops, whilst I was in the chair the Provost Sgt Tom Fowle came into the Barbers and told me the RSM WO1

Evans wanted to see me straight away. As soon my haircut was finished, I reported to the RSM who said the Col wanted me. The RSM marched me in, have you ever tried to march at the double in Flip Flops it was a disaster. The Col looked strangely at me and said Cpl Collins you are improperly dressed. I tried to say I was sorry, but I was on leave he then realised the comedy of the situation and handed me 3 stripes and told me I was to be the new Provost Sergeant. When I took over the Guard Room, I had the privilege to meet LCPL Alan Whisker for the first time.

The Administrative Inspection

23 Group Royal Pioneer Corps was due to have an Administrative Inspection by the Garrison Commander. Everything was ready, the areas were cleaned the paths were swept. The Quarter Guard was waiting in the Guard Room, LCpl Chris Wintour was on the front gate and a spotter was on the roof of the Guard Room. The time was approaching for the Garrison Commander's arrival. The spotter shouted his car is coming, it has stopped, Chris is checking, the car is turning round and driving away. LCpl Wintour used the wire phone and told us that the Garrison Adjutant (Maj RTD Minchington) had forgotten his I D Card, so he sent them away to get it.

About 15 minutes later the car reappeared and access was gained. As they approached the Guard Room the Quarter Guard turned out and was inspected. The Quarter Guard ran back into the Guard Room and the guard was counted in and the door slammed, straight in the face of the Garrison Commander who had decided to come into the Guard Room to congratulate the Quarter Guard. After the Garrison Commander left the Guard Room to meet the Group Commander.

It was a filthy day pouring with rain so I as Provost Sgt was to lead the inspecting team around camp and I was wearing an issue mac with a portable radio in the pocket. I heard the inspecting team tell the group commander that they were to go to 518 Coy offices first and when they left

518 Coy, they would call a fire alarm in the cookhouse. I radioed the guard room and told them. The Shift Commander, I think at the time, it was Cpl Geordie Richardson, dispatched the provost staff with the fire barrow who waited behind the Cookhouse and called the Army Fire Service who waited at the back gate. He also alerted the cookhouse. As soon as the alarm was raised both sprang into action. The Garrison Commander was amazed at the speed of action. Every one else paraded on the square with no problems.

After leaving the square I heard the Garrison Commander say that he was to set the alarm off in the Director of Supply and Computer Services Tape Store. Again, the guard was told and had two Regimental Policemen dispatched to the Tape Store, with pick helms (The Old 23 Group Offices and Later Normans Shop) as soon as the alarm sounded the Garrison Commander was arrested.

That was the end of the end of the inspection, the team went to the officer's mess for lunch and 23 Group had a good report.

Maj J Atkins

There were 2 events that happened involving Maj Atkins when I was Provost Sgt.

1. We were having an Adjutants inspection by Capt. Monkley, Maj Atkins came into the Guard Room and called me out of the large cell leaving Capt. Monkley in the cell. Maj Atkins slammed the cell door shut put the key in his pocket and left camp for about 2 hours leaving Capt. Monkley locked in the cell.

2. A well known officer had a Lotus Europa and had a habit of driving under the front gate barrier, it just fitted. Maj Atkins over a weekend had the barrier lowered and the Lotus Europa would not fit, with disastrous results.

Picking up for Rugby

This I only found about this (I could name the soldier if wanted) recently on Facebook. One Saturday I went to collect one of the

soldiers to play rugby for Bicester. I knocked on his bunk door and a voice shouted I will be about 20 minutes; I went to my office to wait for him. I found out recently that he had a girl in his bunk and had to sneak her out of the block.

70 and 144 Coy Training at Bulford

There are a lot of tails to talk about the training at Bulford but most of them remain untold, but I will recount 6. Number 6 you might not want to use.

1. Collecting ammunition. Two 16 tonne lorries were borrowed from the pool to collect ammunition for the live firing week with arrangements made for the ammunition to be stored at Fargo in the School of Artillery. The ammunition included small arms 9 mm and 7.62, grenades, 2 inch mortar and anti-tanks 66mm and 84mm. I had indented for unit collection from CAD Kineton. Bob McGinlay driving one truck and me driving the other with escorts set off for Kineton. On arrival there we were told that the small arms was available at Kineton the other had to come from Longtown in Cumbria on the Scottish Border. As Bob was due for training the next day off I set, arriving at Longtown just in time to be loaded. They were aware of the cockup and had all the ammunition ready to be loaded straight away the hardest part was getting them to fuel up the lorry. So we set off for Bulford fully loaded including ammunition that should not be carried on the same vehicle. We arrived back in Bulford at 0630hrs just in time for the first ammunition to be needed for that days training.

2. The 16 tonne vehicles came into there own a couple of days later. The booked transport did not turn up at 0800hrs in the morning. The first I knew about this when I saw two 16 tonners one being driven by Bob McKinglay the other by Lt/Capt (Not sure what rank he was at the time) Andy Shaw with umpteen soldiers sitting on the bed disappearing to the training area.

3. We ran a joint Officers Sergeants Mess at Bulford. The game to be played was winker, the winker was drawn, and he had to kill all other players by winking at them, the person winked at had to die physically and audibly, until all players had died. The winker was a light infantry SSGT I believe Mick Cheprekite and the last person to die was one of the Company Commanders. As Mick was light infantry he did not go on muster parade. As the Company Commanders came on parade Mick came on at the double and winked at him. The company Commander died on the square.

4. Coming back to Bicester one weekend Tom Appleyard was travelling with me, on the A34 we caught up with a small Volvo, Tom said slow down I want a good look at that car, I pulled up alongside, Tom then shouted speed up speed up I looked left at the car to see the driver Brigadier Ridings waving at us.

5. Duke of Gloucester's Visit. Part of the demonstration for the Duke of Gloucester's visit was a tank stalk. Instead of using a land rover going clank clank I am a tank I arranged for a tank from the Cavalry Regiment in Tidworth. (Queens Royal Irish Hussars) This came on the rehearsal On the day of the visit where the

Duke was to dismount from his car there was an Irish Registered car. Sgt Cliff Budd of the Wiltshire Special Branch (a friend of my Fathers) did a check and found it was registered on the Shankhill Bomb disposal and every one arrives the car was going to be blown when a very worried QRIH Sgt appeared saying I came down in my car to save travelling in the tank. Panic over.

6. We had to set up a toilet tent for the Duke to wash his hand before and after the meal plus a porta potty. After the duke had left the two Sergeant Majors rushed to the tent to bottle the royal turd.

Night Time Fire Practice

As Provost Sgt I had responsibility for fire prevention on Graven Hill. It was decided to hold a fire practice at night, as most fires in barracks seem to occur at night. The alarm was set off about 2200hrs, the only problem was that more women came out of the blocks than male soldiers. There were no females billeted in Graven Hill at the time.

The Snowman

After a heavy snow fall at Bicester, I came into work on the Monday Morning to find a Snowman next to 518 Coy Sign. It had a corps beret, a broom handle as a pace stick, a WO11 badge of rank and two very shiny toe caps for boots (Searching for Photograph

Drill Course

Several tales from the all-arms drill wing at Pirbright.

1. I was given a show parade for my plug-in alarm clock showing the wrong time. how do you show that correct time on the square. I cut out a piece of paper showing 12:31. Sgt Jackomovitch said the time is still wrong, my answer was on this course the time is always "one two three one."

2. During the course Sgt Jackomovitch was always moaning about the shape of my forage cap. Whilst duty student he removed my forage cap from my head and jumped on it. The admin Sgt came out of the offices with a Grenadier Guards Guardsman's forage cap on a cushion, my size, Pioneer Cap Badge and Pioneer Buttons for me. That cap saw the rest of my service.

3. On the course with us was a Cavalry WO1 (Either Blues and Royals or Household Cavalry) who had not done foot drill for a long time and was going to a Boys Unit as RSM. He was picked up for the brass horse on his service dress being dirty and told to Show Clean Horse. He appeared on show parade with a real live horse.

4. At breakfast one morning Sgt Jackomovitch was sitting there with his forage cap on. A Signals Sgt asked him to pass the Tomato Sauce and was ignored. Later the Signals Sgt was told that it was a Coldstream Tradition that if he had his hat on at breakfast it meant that he did want to be spoken to. Next morning they again were sitting next to each other, the Signals Sgt picked up his best boots and slammed them into Sgt Jackomovitch's breakfast. The Signals Sgt said "It is a Tradition in the Signals if I put my best boots in your breakfast it means pass the Tomato Sauce.

5. There were two RMP's on the course who were living in a camper van.

The RSM got to hear of this and inspected the camper van.

BEFORE AND AFTER ROYAL PIONEER CORPS

LCpl / Maj Teague

518 coy Muster Parade with a strange happening most of the company were in Bicester. I slipped going down the slope, they all laughed, LCpl Teague the loudest. Whenever I meet Maj Teague now he introduces me as his first Sergeant Major and then tells the story.

Anvil

As most SNCOs of my era will know there were two waiters in the Sgts Mess at Northampton called Smith, Known as Black Smith and White Smith. Black Smith was posted to 518 Coy. The OC called me in and said I was to stop everyone calling him Black Smith. I called Smith in and told him he was not to answer to Back Smith. I then told all the SNCOs at tea and toast in the mess that he was not to be called Black Smith. When I returned Smith was waiting outside my office. He said why don't you get people to call me Anvil as Black Smiths use Anvils. Roll the clock forward 5 or 6 years I was in the transport café just south of the M40 when this man came in and sat at my table and said "Don't you recognise me, I am Anvil.

AFTER ROYAL PIONEER CORPS. YOU MEET PIONEERS EVERYWHERE

Steve Beacham and I at Haverford West This story was completely wrong and is similar to the Norman Wisdom film when he was dressed Royal Pioneer Corps.

Steve Beacham, who was ex Grenadier Guards and at the time a SSGT in the Royal Logistic Corps TA. He later became TA RSM at Grantham and then was granted a Special Regular Commission serving in Bosnia and as Families Officer at South Cerney. We started driving for Wavin Plastics on the same day.

We were on a night out at Haverford West and it was approaching Remembrance Day. All of a sudden, a squad appeared on the car park practising marching, halting and eyes left and right, the squad were not bad but to Sgt Drilling they were rubbish giving words of command on the wrong foot etc. Steve and I looked at each other laughed, and proceeded to take the squad away from the Sgt. We gave them a good session including saluting to the front and breaking into slow and quick time. The Sgt eventually starting to come towards us so we jumped into my cab, switched the tele on and played dumb. I know that we should not have done it but it was funny.

Driver CPC

Running a Driver CPC in Worcestershire one of the candidates came up to me at tea break time and said "Do you know you have a double. When I was a young soldier in 521 COY RPC the Sergeant Major of 518 COY RPC, looked just like you." My answer "Sorry it was me."

Running a driver CPC in Northampton saying I had been in the Army a candidate said, "My next-door neighbour Tom Appleyard was in the Army". I told him to call him Uncle Tom. When I told this story to Tom Appleyard his answer was now I

know why he started to call me that.
Cudgie Smilie and Stirling Services
Four of us drivers from Wavin Plastics
having a night out in Stirling Services when
in walks Cudgie Smillie.

Keyline Milton Keynes

Whilst waiting to be unloaded at Keyline
Milton Keynes along came a forklift driver
an ex Lcpl from 518 Coy. I was always
unloaded quickly at that delivery point.

Johnson 409

At George Bences in Cheltenham, they
always gave us a cup of coffee when we
arrived and another when we were
completing the paperwork. The man on the
desk shouted "Make the driver a Coffee"
no reply came. He then shouted, "Don't
you ask the driver how he takes it" The
answer came back "No I don't I have made
it for him for Fxxxxg ages" Seconds later
Johnson 409 appeared with a coffee. He
was 518 Coy runner.

Neil McKenzie

I had collected a full load of plastic
manhole shafts (I could lift a pallet of 20
shafts off the lorry myself) was going to the
outskirts of Coventry, I left the M1 onto the
M45, at the roundabout at the end of the
M45 there is a DVSA / VOSA vehicle check
point. I was waved in by the policeman on
traffic duty, one ex Sgt Neil McKenzie RPC.

We quickly spoke to each other and I was
called forward to be weighed and
inspected. The inspector could not believe
that I was fully loaded with the weight
registered. I was then allowed to go to the
quarantine area to speak to Neil. All the
other drivers wanted to know what was on
with my vehicle, my answer "the policeman
is an old friend of mine"

Simon Fairholm

One night there were about nine drivers
from Wavin Plastics having a night out in
Chievely Services, a regular meeting place
for us, we were all sitting around one table
laughing and joking. At the same time, the
police securing the building of the Newbury
Bypass were being fed in Chievely Services.
Suddenly, my shoulder was gripped
forcefully by a rather large policeman who
said "Pete Collins" I have been looking for
you, then "Don't you recognise me, I am
Simon Fairholm" He was an ex 518 Coy
soldier who left to join the police.

Rugby

There are lots of stories to tell but not for
publication.

Dougie Durrant

Playing for Bicester Rugby Club versus
Northampton Old Scouts suddenly my
opposing prop started to punch me for no
reason at all. Dougie Durrant like a flash

came from No 8 and picked up the
offending prop shouting "You don't hit my
Sergeant Major", the prop did not know
what to do.

Paddy Pollock

Paddy Pollock was a Northern Irish LCpl
storeman in the RAOC who played for
Bicester Garrison and Bicester Rugby Club
as hooker. He also had a eye tattooed on
each cheek of his arse.

The line out calls for the garrison team
related to rank not just military but civilian
(fire service, ambulance etc) as well. They
also changed on a call. At this stage in the
match Pte to Cpl was a short ball,
Commissioned a middle ball and senior
Rank a long ball. The call was Sergeant
Major which was a long ball. Paddy
immediately threw the ball to me at the
front of the line out. At the next break in
play, he was asked why his answer "he is a
Sergeant Major"

Roll the clock forward several years I am
now on the lorries and having a night out
in Bicester, I was walking along the
pedestrian precinct to get a Chinese take
away when this long grey haired Irishman
grabbed me saying "Pete Collins I am
looking for you", I was worried as I did not
recognise him, he dropped his trousers, in
the middle of the pedestrian precinct, I saw
the eyes and very relieved said "You are
Paddy Pollock" ■



The fallen of Afghanistan

Artist Kev Wills spent six years in the Royal Logistic Corps and has painted three Pioneers
that you will recognise. He has painted hundreds of fallen Afghanistan soldiers.

Report: Kev Wills
www.kevwills.co.uk

KEV WILLS, was born in Bromsgrove
and spent six years in the Royal
Logistic Corps serving in Abingdon
and doing two tours of Bosnia
and two years in 39 Infantry
Brigade in Northern Ireland.

Kev has I have had exhibitions in
Redditch and Australia, Brick Lane gallery,
Bondi Beach Australia and also Astwood
Bank galleries, Redditch.

His recent HRH Prince Phillip portrait
was a feature cover for the pathfinder
international forces magazine.

He paints in his spare time and is open
for commission.

You can his work on Facebook and
instagram under 'Wills Art World' and you
can also visit his website at www.kevwills.co.uk



Picture: Cpl A Roberts
Corporal Andrew Steven Roberts was killed
in Afghanistan on Friday 4th May 2012



Pte R Silibaravi
Private Ratu Silibaravi was killed in
Afghanistatn on Friday 4th May 2012

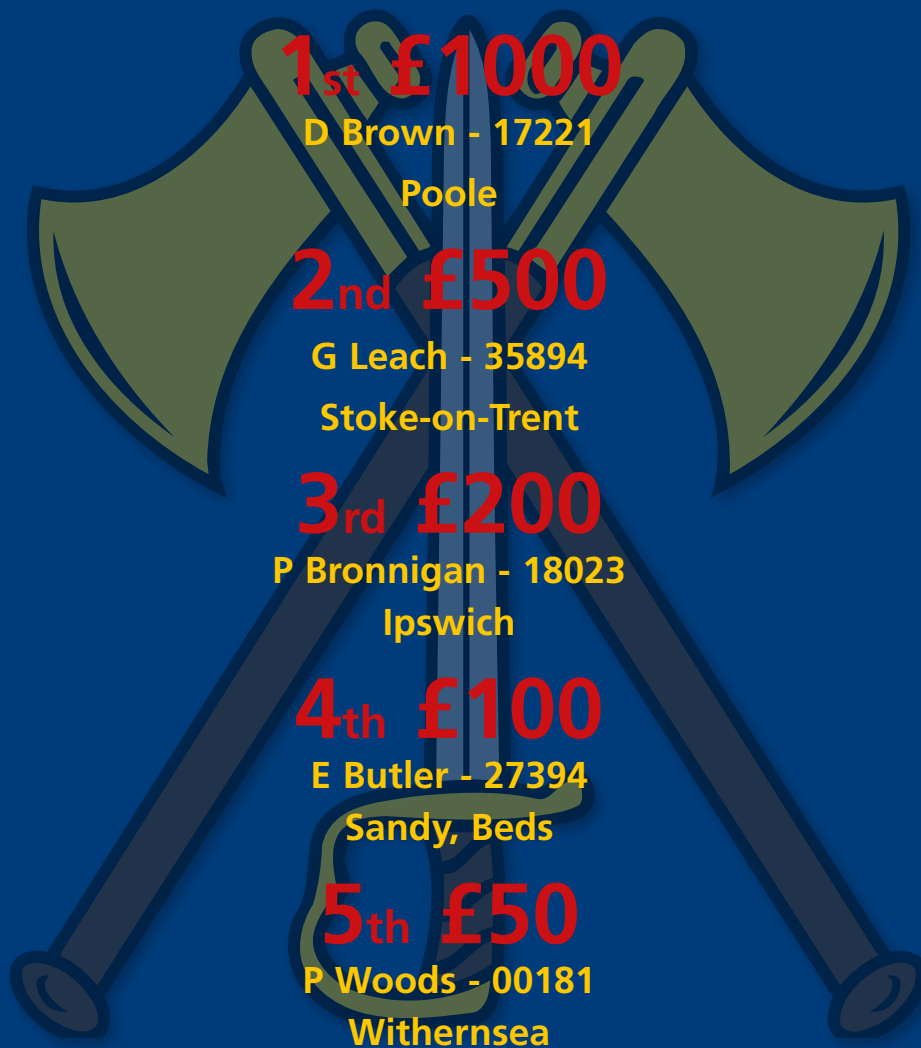


WO2 C Wood
WO2 Charles Wood died in Afghanistan on
Tuesday 28th December 2010



Congratulations...

Thank you to members for purchasing Pioneer Derby Draw Tickets. The Association made a profit of £2500, this helps the Association to carry out its work. The results are...



1st £1000

D Brown - 17221

Poole

2nd £500

G Leach - 35894

Stoke-on-Trent

3rd £200

P Bronnigan - 18023

Ipswich

4th £100

E Butler - 27394

Sandy, Beds

5th £50

P Woods - 00181

Withernsea

Once again with this issue you will find

Christmas Draw Tickets

As usual tickets for the Christmas Draw are enclosed (unless you have already indicated that you are unable to sell them). Please make cheques made payable to "RPC Association", however, we appreciate that a large number of people no longer use cheque books, payment can be made by either paypal, account is: royalpioneercorps@gmail.com or by bank transfer, details are: RPC Association, Account No: 01206610, Sort Code: 30-90-77.

Please indicate on counterfoil how payment has been made.

We have extended the draw until **27th January 2024** due to the newsletter coming back from the printers.



■ Adrian Hughes



■ Andy Moore and Irish contingent



■ Bob Barfield at Wootton Church



■ Pete Collins, Dave Long and an RLC Veteran at Chippenham



■ Al Batch



■ Booted/ Suited with Mr Fox, Plymouth Ho



■ Craig Morgan me and my eldest



■ Danny Armstrong and grandson



■ Daren Nicols



■ Dave Whitford



■ David Fender



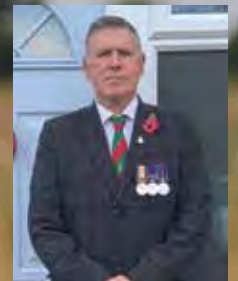
■ David Kerr, collecting at Asda, Bury



■ David Neil Temple



■ Fitzroy Lindsay



■ Gary Howe



■ George Bodiam High Wycombe



■ Glen Rosser



■ Graham Hindmarsh with Sophie Raworth



■ Graham McLane



■ John Bennett. Wootton Memorial



■ John Kerr, attended Cenotaph for 30 yrs!



■ Keith Burrows



■ Kev Gramson



■ Kev Hilton and fellow Pioneers!



■ Josh Campbell, "Billy Dilkes here a picture so you know what to bring next year"



■ Jonny Dau



■ Laurent Larsson



■ Lee Bateman at Lincoln Cathedral

REMEMBRANCE DAY PIONEER GALLERY



■ George Whitson



■ Malc Earl ready for Remembrance



■ Mark Cox



■ Mark O'Hare



■ Mark Lines



■ Footage from BBC at the Cenotaph. Next year we are having a curry and are applying for 150 tickets! Maximum attendance for next year please everyone, including those on this page!



■ Ricky Sturgess at work



■ Rob Hislop and fellow Pioneers!



■ Roy Selstrom



■ Rael Cartwright



■ Russ Iron Man



■ Shaun Studzinski



■ Shane Ranson and Peter Mansfield



■ Shaun Gregory with Help for Heroes



■ Steve and Joy Waddomgton



■ Steve Ibbotson

remembrance



■ Steve Kohut



■ Taff Evans at Poolsbrook Club



■ Taff Powell



■ Tommy Hull and Chris Gilbert



■ Ladies Dinner Night 2023, Bicester

Picture: Tom Appleyard



■ Ladies Dinner Night 2023, Bicester

Picture: Tom Appleyard



■ Members of Northampton Branch at Veterans Breakfast

Picture: Supplied



■ Army vs Navy 13th May 23

Picture: Supplied



■ Billy marching as a Veteran, holding a bowler hat!

Picture: Supplied



■ Breakfast Club, Poppyfields Pub, Northampton

Picture: Supplied



■ Reuben Lynch at Declaration Ceremony of the High Sheriff for West Midlands in Birmingham

Picture: Supplied



■ Tom Appleyard presenting Manager Toby with photo taken at Memorial unveiling
Picture: Tom Appleyard



■ Famous Pioneer Steve Mitchell at the famous Pioneer
Picture: Supplied



■ Field of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey Gardens
Picture: Supplied



■ Kev Foster at Field of Remembrance
Picture: Supplied



■ Paul Monaghan meets his old boss Simon Walmsley at Westminster
Picture: Supplied



■ WO2 Scotty Copland laying a wreath at the grave of Cpl Ginge Roberts, Acklam Cty, Middlesbrough on behalf of 282 MC Sqn RLC
Picture: Supplied



■ Taff, Tom Appleyard, Billy Dilkes, Menin Gate
Picture: Paul Brown



■ Officers Dinner Night

Picture: Kev Jessop



■ Officers Dinner Night

Picture: Kev Jessop



■ Officers Dinner Night

Picture: Kev Jessop



■ Officers Dinner Night

Picture: Kev Jessop



■ Officers Dinner Night

Picture: Kev Jessop



■ Officers Dinner Night

Picture: Kev Jessop



■ Officers Dinner Night

Picture: Kev Jessop



■ Officers Dinner Night

Picture: Kev Jessop



■ Ferry en-route to France for WW1 Battlefield Tour Picture: Paul Brown



■ Uncle Tom and his long suffering wife Gloria, Northampton Branch Dinner, 4th November 2023 Picture: Bob McGinley



■ Taff with his long suffering wife and Norman, Northampton Branch Dinner, 4th November 2023 Picture: Bob McGinley



■ Bob McGinley sporting a landing pad beret, with 2 other Pioneers from Northampton Branch, Tony Cursons and Lee Holloway Picture: Paul Brown



■ Middlesbrough Remembers - Garden of Remembrance, Westminster Picture: Paul Brown



■ Fijian Pioneers meet after the Cenotaph March - London Picture: Paul Brown



■ These two meet up every year after the Cenotaph Parade, one looks very familiar! Picture: Paul Brown

Then & Now



A new gallery, 'Then and Now'. We meant to publish this last issue but ran out of space, hence it is, 'Then and last year (or so!)



■ Alan Spearman



■ Anthony Tuplin



■ Chris Martin



■ Chris Martin and Perry Moore



■ Chris Sparrow



■ Dale Eaton



■ Danny Armstrong



■ Danny Daintith



■ Dave Berry



■ Dave Fender



■ Dave Moulds



■ Garth Lancaster



■ Gary Howe



■ Graeme Russell



■ Howie Man



■ Jed Bourne



■ Jim Reeves

PIONEER THEN & NOW GALLERY



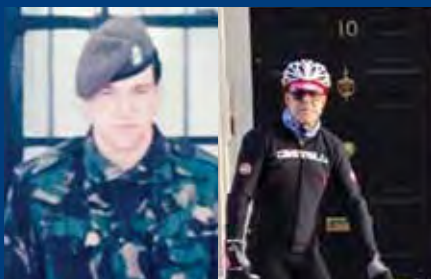
■ John Carrick



■ John Greenwood



■ John Paterson



■ Kenneth Mod



■ Kev Young



■ Kevin Kittle



■ Malcom Conley



■ Mark Cox



■ Mark Stanley



■ Martin Finnerty



■ Martin Thomas



■ Michael Riseborough



■ X



■ Mike Davies



■ Nigel Smith



■ Norman Brown



■ Martin Thomas, Ricky McCracken and Adrian Huges



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



Report: Paul Brown
Pictures: RPCA Archives



HAVE been going through some photographs in the Archive and for this edition have chosen a bit of a mixed bag of different photographs from years gone by.

At the top we have a picture, titled, 'Coronation Contingent 1953'. A picture that I don't recall seeing before.

Over the page we have a Press Photo of the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps in France. reverse of postcard states

"The Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps in primarily to "make the wheels go round". Jobs are many and varied. Here is a group of men loading a railway truck "Somewhere in France".

Below that we have a photograph, titled, 'Preparing for 2-1 Course Bicester 1979'.

Also above is the front cover of a recruiting pamphlet for the Royal Pioneer Corps. I am after that cloth badge on the beret if anyone would like to donate/sell me one to complete my collection ;)

Over the pages are a selection of more Recruiting pamphlets, for which we have given a full set to the RLC Museum.

Many of you may remember joining up and looking through one!
Until next time. ■



Digging through the archives...

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



The Royal Pioneer Corps

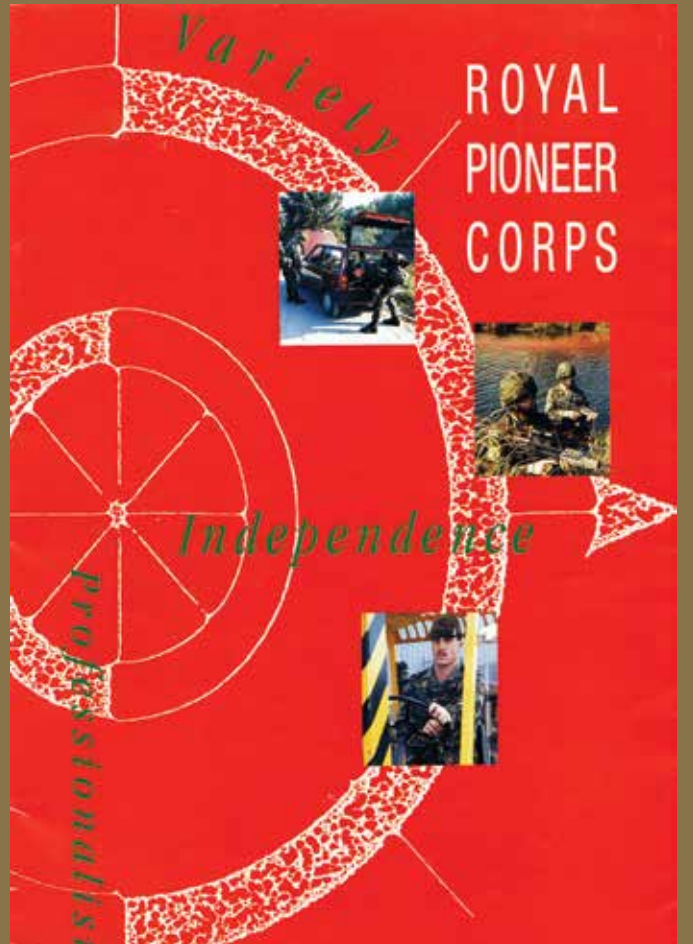


RPC

ROYAL PIONEER CORPS



THE ROYAL PIONEER CORPS



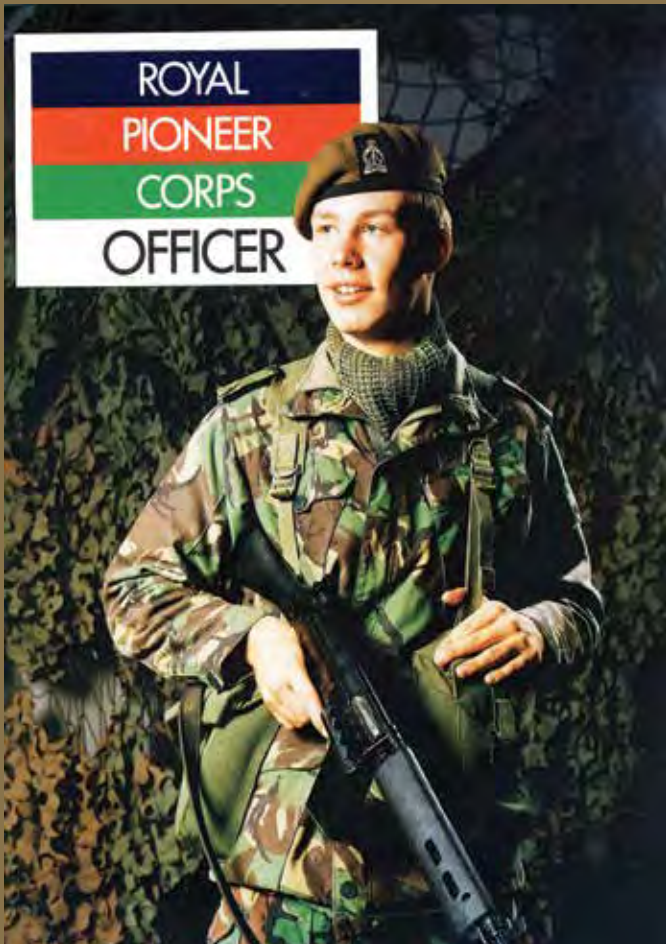
Royal Pioneer Corps



Royal Pioneer Corps



ROYAL
PIONEER
CORPS
OFFICER



PIONEER OFFICER





Collectors Corner

Welcome to our Collectors Corner pages, this time I discuss the Post War era of the Pioneers. Also we feature some of your Pioneer finds that you have unearthed on your travels !

Report: Paul Brown
Pictures: Paul Brown

WELCOME back to my Collectors Corner pages. This is normally one of the last pages that I put together for the newsletter, but alas I am waiting for Billy to send in write ups etc for this newsletter, hence we'll see where I get to!

Firstly, a big thanks to Douglas Miller for sending in so many pictures of what he has found on his travels since my last update.

I really don't know how his Mrs puts up with him, at the time of writing this he informs me that he is currently decorating his spare room (probably in red and green!), housing his vast and growing collection.

So let's start on one of the items that Douglas has sent in, a job lot of lanyards!



I did not have the heart to tell Douglas that these are not Pioneer lanyards! Don't worry Douglas I have also made the same mistake at a military fair when I bought a job lot of the same lanyards!

Douglas did however identify that a Pioneer lanyard is post war. More on your lanyards in a moment Douglas, let's have a bit of lanyard history!

The word lanyard originates from the French word "lanierie," meaning thong or strap. They were initially used by French soldiers and pirates in the 16th century to keep weapons at an easily accessible place while they climbed their ships' rigging or when in combat.

Lanyards then were a far cry from the fancy lanyards we wear today; they were usually just simple straps of rope or cord

lying around the ship, which pirates used to tie around their pistols, whistles, or swords.

During WWII, soldiers also used lanyards to keep their pistols attached to their uniforms. Over time, lanyards were designed to have attachment points that made it easier for users to switch weapons. In addition to modifying the design of the cord itself, tools like hooks were added to the straps, making them more functional and compatible with various tools and weapons.

Until the 1950s lanyards were only an officially authorised dress embellishment for officers although some regiments paid for them and wore them unofficially anyway. As part of the postwar tidy-up of embellishments it was agreed that any embellishment which was approved by the War Office Dress Committee established in 1946 would be supplied by Ordnance as an official issue and the issue of lanyards was extended more widely.

Most coloured lanyards both cord and plaited were introduced throughout the 1950s, although some had been worn prior to official approval.

The first list of authorised lanyards was published as an Army Council Instruction in 1953, No 205.. Details of it were published in *The Formation Sign*; the *Journal of the Military Heraldry Society* in April 2001.

I came across the below example on the internet, advertising for sale a 'WW2 Era British Army issue Pioneer Corps lanyard in Green & Maroon'.



You can see that the lanyard pictured above looks identical to the bunch of lanyards that Douglas picked up, alas the website selling said lanyard is inaccurate.

It is not a Pioneer Corps lanyard and it is not from the WW2 era. More on whom they lanyards belong to in a while!

Some individual units had different coloured lanyards. Sitting at Kew is a former War Office file WO32/3359 which covers the 1949 Parachute Regiment Dress regulations - this records the following lanyards as authorised for the regiment's battalions;

- 1 Para – Dark red lanyard – left shoulder BD
- 2 Para – Dark blue lanyard – left shoulder BD

- 3 Para – Buff lanyard – left shoulder BD
- 10 Para – Dark red and blue lanyard – left shoulder BD
- 11 Para – Yellow and red lanyard – left shoulder BD
- 12 Para – Light blue lanyard – left shoulder BD
- 13 Para – Black lanyard – left shoulder BD
- 14 Para – Yellow and black lanyard – left shoulder BD
- 15 Para – Hunting Stuart patch behind cap badge
- 16 Para – Green, red and white lanyard - left shoulder BD
- 17 Para – Green lanyard – left shoulder BD but only officers, WOs and NCOs down to Sgt – all others are all ranks
- 18 Para – Dark red and green lanyard – left shoulder BD
- 1 (Gds) Ind para Coy – Bde of Gds flash behind cap badge

As you can see a lot of differently coloured lanyards for the same unit!

Another Army Council Instruction (ACI) No. 584 of 14th October 1953 deals with lanyards as provided for troops both of the Regular Army as well as the Territorial Army.

This ACI lists new lanyards that were being introduced to replace those being worn prior to October 1953.

The introduction of this ACI states:

1. Approval is given for the issuing of lanyards of the patterns shown in the Appendix to this ACI (*1) at public expense to other ranks as shown in column 4 (*2) of that Appendix. Issues will be made to Territorial Army personnel as for equivalent ranks of Regular Army personnel of the same corps or regiment, except where listed separately in the Appendix.

2. The scale (of issue) will be one (lanyard) per entitled other rank.

3. The new patterns (*3) will replace the present pattern lanyard (CC 0540) where this is in issue.

4. Stocks of lanyards (CC 0540) will be returned to the nearest ordnance depot when new pattern lanyards are received.

5. Demands will be submitted through the normal channels.

6. Formal introduction into the Service giving correct designations will be announced by a List of Change.

7. Clothing Regulations will be amended in due course.

There is no indication of an actual pattern for any of the lanyards listed in the Appendix to this ACI, other than the Catalogue number, which I believe also refers to the sealed pattern.

Also there is no indication as to what the new patterns of lanyards looked like.

In this ACI there are 2 mentions of units that have a red and green lanyard. These



are:

- 'Red and Green' - Royal Pioneer Corps
- 'Dark Red & Green' - 18th Bn The Parachute Regiment
- 'Cerise/Lincoln Green'. Devonshire Rgt

Red/Green	CC 1461 Royal Pioneer Corps	All other ranks
Dark Red & Green	** 18th Bn, The Parachute Regiment (T.A.)	All other ranks
Cerise/Lincoln Green	CC 1485 The Devonshire Regiment	WOs, S. Sgt. & Sgt. only

In the more recent issues of the British Army publication "Catalogue of Ordnance Stores and Ammunition, (COSA) Section CB, Armlets, Badges, Buttons, Chevrons, Titles and Lanyards".

Current lanyards are listed with their NATO stock number (NSN), the colour of the Regimental Lanyard and details as to who wears what particular colour plus a description of the lanyard and its 'fittings'.

However, this sort of information only applies to more recent lanyards. Those lanyards worn before 1950's or thereabouts were never recorded officially as they were not provided at Government expense and as long as they were not too un-military, lanyards worn by troops were the responsibility and expense of the unit.

Colours, or rather colouring of these lanyards is the next most important aspect. The colour or colours employed with a lanyard sets it apart as being for wear by 'X' regiment, or 'Y' battalion, or 'Z' squadron.

The colour code system used for lanyards by the British Army as shown in COSAs is something of a mystery, for example:

Inside the Clothing Regulations Pamphlet No 15 Aug 1966 - Badges Chevrons Titles Embellishments & Headdress - Table 56 Regimental Lanyards the Royal Pioneer Corps is listed as 'Red/Green'

Red/Green	Royal Pioneer Corps
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Material Regulations Vol 3 Pamphlet 15 1977, table number 24 it states RPC 'Red and Green'.

RPC	Red and green
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In the 1997 COSA, page 74 it gives five different lanyards worn by men and >

BRITISH MILITARY LANYARDS

BRITISH MILITARY LANYARDS by B. L. Davis.
Hopefully, the first in an irregular series of articles.

The first obvious step in undertaking a study of lanyards is to establish a recognised system of identifying the various patterns of lanyards.

To this end I have made some drawings of items in my own collection. However, I am sure that these do not represent all the known patterns. There are probably others, and by 'others' I do not mean slight variations on established patterns, but rather lanyards produced in a configuration so as to be deliberately different to all other patterns. Lanyards used to attach pistols or revolvers are outside the scope of this study.

Fig 1 is the very common pattern of lanyard of the type used by the Royal Artillery and quite a number of other units. It has a long plaited section, a small button loop at one end and a strand of twisted cord forming a long loop at the other end.

Fig 2 is a single length of twisted cord with button loops and fixed knots at both ends. This pattern of lanyard lends itself to having two or more coloured strands forming the twisted cord.

Fig 3 is somewhat unusual in that the two colours (of green and yellow) are woven into the actual tubular strand that forms the basis of this lanyard. Also the lanyard has a 'central' section that has been plaited. Again one end has a button loop, the other a much larger loop with a moveable knot.

Fig 4 is a fairly common pattern having a smooth tubular braid with button loops and fixed knots at both ends. This pattern of lanyard is frequently worn by officers and can be found as either of thick tubular braid or as a thin version. Lanyards of this pattern only come in a single colour.

Fig 5 represents another form of lanyard, of the quality that was common during the Second World War. A single length of narrow, twisted cording, in one or more colours, with Turks Head knots at either end, one end having a loop used as a 'slip-knot', the other end having a small metal sprung clip and ring.

"The Formation Sign" No.197, page 18

Pioneer Finds...



■ Douglas picked up this unusual chair which has incorporated a Royal Pioneer Corps uniform, complete with medals and stable belt.



■ Douglas picked up this lovely brass fuse cap shell. Not sure if it is WW1 Labour Corps Trench Art or WW2 era. Need to see bottom of the shell...



officers of various units all of whom wear blue lanyards. The blue of these lanyards is listed as:

Blue No 1; Blue No 2; Blue (dark) No 3; Blue No 5 (dark and light blue) and Blue No 14. A similar classification of colour variations is applied to greens, whites, reds, blacks and yellows.

The method or wear is important, whether a lanyard is worn on (around) the left or right shoulder and how it is attached to the uniform.

Material Regulations Vol 3 Pamphlet 15 1977, table number 24 it states RPC 'Red and Green'.

In the Army Dress Regulations 2017 - Part 9 section 7 Annex D 3 it states 3 BW, 'Red and Green'. This is the Black Watch.

77	7 BW	Red and green.	Sgt and above, left shoulder
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There are few Regiments that have not seen in the various Army Regulations but do know that they share very similar lanyards to the Royal Pioneer Corps.

Let's now look at these lanyards and finally shine some light onto Douglas's recent bulk buy of lanyards.

The Pioneer lanyard pictured below looks like a Pioneer lanyard, alas it is the lanyard of The Devonshire and Dorset Regiment.



The above is Cerise and Lincoln Green and for Sergeants and above. Army NSN 8465-99-975-7430.

The next picture below is a lanyard of The Yorkshire Regiment. A lot different shades of red and green. It actually looks like a bungee!



The above is Dark Green with Red and Black flecks. The Yorkshire Regiment 4 Yorks. Double cord with three turk's heads and nickel clip. Pattern D01141 and Army NSN 8465-99-391-2139.

The Yorkshire Regiment has over 330 years of history and are the product of a merger of three great Yorkshire Regiments; The Prince of Wales's Own, The Green Howards and The Duke of Wellington's, all with an incredible history of achievement, including 38 Victoria Crosses!

The picture below is a lanyard of the 7th Royal Tank Regiment. Douglas this is what I believe to belong to the batch that you have bought.



The above is 1950s and is dark red and green. In 1959, the 7th RTR was amalgamated with 4th RTR. The regiment lives on as G Squadron, 1st Royal Tank Regiment (1RTR).

The colours are identical and the yellow braided red section I have circled in yellow above, matches what you have bought below.



The above is also what various websites wrongly state as being Pioneer Corps.

Pictured below is a French WWII Army Fourragere lanyard, green and red with a 22k Gold tip.

So the French had a Red and Green lanyard and The Royal Artillery have a white lanyard! Better leave it there!



The next lanyard below is a bit of a mystery. This lanyard belongs in a large collection from a lanyard collector.



He is unsure and thinks it is The Women's Royal Army Corps.

I am certain that it is not the WRAC. It is similar to a Pioneer lanyard, but is not a Pioneer lanyard that I have seen!

It is similar to The Kenya Regiment, but does not have a black strand. The above at present is a bit of an anomaly.

The Pioneer lanyard...



■ So, here we have The Royal Pioneer Corps lanyard in all its glory. An absolutely lovely example with its original label still attached and dated September 1956. This is Pattern No 17213, Catalogue No 1461, sealed 08/09/56 NSN 8465-99-428-7152. Notice what distinguishes it from any other red and green lanyard and that is the green knot (the Devonshire and Dorsets and the 7th Royal Tank Regiment had red knots).



Pioneer Finds...



■ An absolutely stunning collection of Pioneer Forage Caps, dating from WW2 and also Post War. Thank you Douglas, I need to add a few more to my collection!



WW2 Beach Groups

On my travels around the various archives out there, I discovered something about some D-Day Pioneers that I was unaware of!

Report: Paul Brown
Pictures: Paul Brown

THE role of a Beach Group in WW2, was needed to allow the organised and efficient passage of follow on forces from the initial amphibious assault. The US equivalent is called a Beach Battalion.

- The Beach Group functions consisted of
- Arrange and control the movement of all personnel and vehicles from the landing craft to inland assembly areas.
 - Move stores from ships' holds and craft to dumps in the beach maintenance areas.
 - Develop and organise the beaches and beach maintenance area in regard to defence, movement and administration, including the evacuation of all casualties and recovery of vehicles.
 - Provide the beach signal organisation
 - The removal to the UK of casualties, prisoners of war and salvaged equipment
 - The creation of dumps to hold petrol, ammunition and rations that were being landed.
 - Assembly areas for the arriving personnel and their vehicles.

For this, a tri-service formation was created around an infantry battalion, added to this were smaller units from the Royal Engineers, Royal Army Medical Corps, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Royal Army Ordnance Corps, Pioneer Corps, Royal Army Service Corps and the Corps of Military Police.

The Navy provided Royal Naval Beach Commandos and a signal unit, and the Royal Air Force provided for beach anti-aircraft defence.

The complement of a Beach group or brick was up to 3,000 men.

The Pioneer Beach Group companies were called on to perform many duties; construction of roads, air-fields and stores, mine clearance, collection and evacuation of wounded, collection and burial of the dead, transport, guarding POWs and, where necessary, fight.

When I was reading about the Beach Groups on D-Day, I was unaware that the Beach Group personnel distinguished themselves from others by wearing a white stripe and other associated markings on their helmets. You can see these markings when you turn over the next page.

When the battalion converted to a Beach Group Battalion the steel helmet had a white painted band around it.

This white stripe is seen in the picture above.

I happened to pick up an authentic fairly early WW2 British Helmet from a Car Boot sale for a bargain price of £15, hence I will convert it for my WW2 Pioneer Uniform to

a Pioneer whom belonged to one of the Pioneer Beach Groups.

Regimental Orders Part One of 1940 stipulates that, 'The battalion colours will be painted on all steel helmets.

Companies will purchase the necessary paint and send receipted bills to P.R.I. for repayment.

The colours will be worn on the side of the helmet and consist of a band of Black 1 1/2" long by 1/2" deep surmounting a band of Scarlet of the same dimensions. The lower edge of the colour band will be 3/4" above the brim of the helmet.'

Section 266 states that 'Camouflage nets will be worn on steel helmets at all times after White band has been painted on helmet.'

Composition, deployment and duties of a Beach Group

Here are some extracts from the Regimental War Chronicles of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry Vol 3 1942-1944 (pages 93-100).

It mentions Beach Groups and also Pioneers. It will not be too dissimilar to what the Pioneers had.

1. TASKS

(i) To land men, vehicles and stores over open beaches in the early stages of a seaborne invasion of enemy territory before the capture or construction of sufficient ports.

(ii) To protect the beaches from enemy counter-attack by land, sea or air.

2. PARENT FORMATION

Beach sub-area, comprising beach sub-area headquarters, beach sub-area troops and two beach groups.

3. APPROXIMATE CAPABILITY OF BEACH SUB-AREA

To land two divisions in the first forty-eight hours and maintain them.

Thereafter to land men and vehicles as shipping allowed and up to 4,000 tons of stores per day.

4. COMMAND

Commanding Officer of Infantry Battalion with a normal battalion staff and an increment of military landing officer (Major), assistant military landing officers (two Captains), Staff Captain, camouflage officer (Captain), R.A.S.C. officer (Captain), B.O.W.O. (warrant Officer class II), clerk, R.A.S.C.(Corporal), and armourer (Serjeant).

5. INCREMENT OF STORES

Stores divided into a general pool to be used at group commander's discretion and an increment of unit stores.

6. TRANSPORT

As a very limited quantity of transport could be landed in the early stages a general issue of handcarts (airborne) was made to enable essential stores of the group to be landed from craft.

7. DRESS AND PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

As the deployment drill for the group necessitated all men being self-supporting for forty-eight hours from the time of landing, each man landed with normal fighting order, but with a blanket and a set of denim overalls wrapped in a groundsheet tied round his haversack, and carried two twenty-four-hour ration packs, a tommy cooker, a tin of refills, a box of sterilising tablets, and a lifebelt (known as "Mae West").

8. MARKS OF RECOGNITION

Flash. Red anchor on pale-blue background, worn on sleeve of battledress and on all vehicles.

Helmet.—White band painted around steel helmet midway between crown and rim.



Pictured above is an authentic formation badge as worn by Beach Group Pioneers. It is well worn and the pale blue background has faded over the years.

This insignia was worn as a shoulder patch on the sleeves of battle dress and was also seen painted on vehicles.

9. WATERPROOFING

As most beach groups had to be landed from craft into deep water and some were due to continue working in the sea after landing, all vehicles, stores and equipment had to be waterproofed.

Stores were packed in waterproof covers and wireless sets in rubber bags. Vital parts of motor transport were treated and petrol tanks sealed. This waterproofing had to be stripped soon after landing.

10. SIGNALS

Ship to Shore.—The responsibility of Royal Navy signallers by wireless and/or



lamp.

Shore Signals.—Established and maintained by beach sub-area signals and signal platoon of the infantry battalion, first by wireless, later by line.

11. DUTIES OF BEACH GROUP

It was the duty of a beach group to mark the limits of the beach immediately the assault troops had landed;

Construct exits and entrances from and to the beach suitable for use by troops, wheeled vehicles and tracked vehicles; signal to craft indicating suitable landing places;

Provide transit areas for troops and vehicles;

Mark traffic circuits and control all movement within its area;

Rescue "drowned" vehicles (both tracked and wheeled) and repair them;

Establish dumps for ammunition, Ordnance stores, petrol, supplies, sapper stores, unaccompanied G1098 stores, and man them;

Provide beach and field dressing stations, the latter to be capable of undertaking surgical operations and blood transfusions;

Unload all stores from ships to dukw or craft and then to lorry;

Provide transport (dukw or lorry) to move stores to dumps;

Provide cranes for unloading from craft to lorry at water's edge and from dukw or lorry at dumps;

Lift mines and undertake engineering work in its area, such as improving roads, laying beach roadway and bridging obstacles;

Co-operate with the Royal Navy and arrange suitable berthing times for incoming shipping;

Re-equip men who had lost equipment during passage; and be prepared at all times to mop up enemy resistance or resist counterattack.

12. DEPLOYMENT DRILL

First parties to land were detachments of Royal Navy commando and beach companies, which marked beaches with beach limit signs and chose suitable places for exits from beaches; Sappers (field company and mechanical equipment section) then bulldozed exits and, helped by pioneers, laid a beach roadway (Somerfield track) to the nearest main lateral road;

Field dressing stations established beach dressing stations for early treatment of wounded;

Beach recovery section began operations in pulling out of the sea any vehicles drowned and removing them to a Drowned Vehicle Park (D.V.P.) for treatment;

Beach companies established headquarters overlooking the beach; Provost erected traffic signs;

Advanced parties landed and assembled at predetermined position;

A reconnaissance group, consisting of the group commander, military landing officer, commanders of field company and provost company, and intelligence officer, were carrying out a reconnaissance of the whole area;

On completion of reconnaissance the group commander informed the 0 group whether the plan (known as first key plan) made before embarkation, from maps and

air photographs, for deployment of the group was suitable - if not, he announced alterations;

Advanced parties then left to reconnoitre areas for which they were responsible, calling forward main bodies and transport which had landed and waited in transit areas;

Those employed on the beach (such as beach companies, beach recovery section, and Royal Navy commando) moved straight to areas allotted on first key plan, and did not pass through transit areas;

Main bodies then developed areas, and began work for which they were responsible;

Transport of general transport company moved to beach transport park in rear of the beaches, but maintained a "cushion" of transport near an entrance to the beach;

A DUKW control post was established near the main entrance to the beach with the responsibility of calling forward transport as required at sea, and checking loaded transport en route for dumps;

Area of the dumps was known as beach maintenance area (B.M.A.);

Dumps were manned by technical staff (RE, RAOC or RASC, as the case might be) and labour was provided by infantry and pioneers (normal allotment of labour was:

Ammunition and ordnance, one rifle company;

Supplies, carrier platoon;

Unaccompanied G1098 equipment, mortar platoon;

Petrol and R.E. stores, pioneers;

Reserve working company, one rifle company;

Balance of labour required by sappers and dumps, pioneers;

Beach companies, two rifle companies);

Stores were unloaded by gangs of the docks operating company, RE, from ship to dukw or craft, DUKW direct to dump, or craft to beach; Stores were transhipped from craft to lorry, unloaded at dump and stacked by dump parties, the empty transport then returning to beach transport park;

Incoming transport from fighting troops was routed to dumps, where the dump parties loaded it with the stores required.

13. CONTROL OF GROUP

The main difficulties were likely to arise from the dispersal of the group into small craft loads, necessitated by the danger of loading any considerable portion of one unit in a craft liable to be sunk, with the consequent loss of control through the disruption of the normal chain of command; from the fact that parties, once so dispersed, were unable to feed themselves except from rations carried on the man; from the dependence of the group for its successful deployment on the assaulting troops carrying their first objectives; from the difficulty in allotting slender labour resources economically when the arrival of stores was interrupted by uncertain arrival of ships and unpredictable demands by forward troops; from the dependence of the whole organisation on fine weather (loading from ship to dukw became dangerous and often impossible in any seaway); from the probability of the beaches being shelled and bombarded from the air; and from the necessity for unloading by night as well as by day.

14. AMMUNITION

As a result of experience gained in exercises it became apparent that forward troops might run short of ammunition before the ammunition dump was established and stocked.

To meet this danger it was decided, in 1944, to land 800 tons of ammunition early and to stack it in a number of small dumps at the rear of the beaches. These dumps were known as sector stores dumps and were to be consumed before drawing began on the main ammunition dump.

15. DEFENCE

The immediate area of the beaches, and all dumps and installations were organised as defended localities.

Anti-tank defence was provided by the 6-pounder guns of the infantry battalion, anti-aircraft guns in alternative role and Plat mortars.

Air defence was provided by a specially constituted anti-aircraft regiment landed with assault and supporting troops.

This composite regiment was equipped with 3.7-inch Bofors and triple Oerlikon guns, and was in support but not under command of the group. All Brens of the infantry battalion were also to be available for anti-aircraft defence.

16. MILITARY LANDING OFFICER

The duties of the military landing officer and staff were to advise the group commander on all questions of movement of men, vehicles and stores; to prepare staff tables for embarkation of the group; and to maintain statistics of all quantities of stores landed.

The duties of the Royal Navy commando were to mark and erect beach limit signs, to signal suitable landing places to incoming craft, and to mark wrecked craft; the Royal Navy signals were to provide communication from shore to ship;

The field company, RE, were to construct beach exits and entrances, to improve roads, to provide all engineering work required in the Beach Maintenance Area, to dispose of bombs, and to provide water-supply points;

The mechanical equipment section, RE, were to bulldoze entrances and exits from the beach, and provide and operate cranes;

The stores section, RE, were to control RE stores dump;

The docks operating company, RE, were to unload ships;

The RAMC were to establish two beach dressing stations, two field dressing stations with surgical facilities and blood transfusion, to collect wounded, and to



supervise hygiene in the group area.

Within the infantry battalion, duties were:

HQ Company, signal platoon to provide land signals by wireless and line, and pioneer platoon to clear mines from group headquarters area and to construct office pits.

S Company: anti-tank platoon to defend group area; mortar platoon to establish and work in unaccompanied G1098 dump, and carrier platoons to provide labour in supplies camp.

Rifle companies: to organise beaches, provide labour to unload craft and working parties in ammunition and Ordnance dump, and to help in handling transport, to be prepared to mop up enemy pockets of resistance, and to defend beachhead if required.

Ordnance beach detachment, RAOC: to establish ammunition and Ordnance dumps and operate them.

General transport company, RASC: to provide, operate and maintain dukws.

Detailed issue depot, RASC: to establish and operate supply dumps and postal services.

Petrol depot, RASC: to establish and operate petrol depot.

Beach recovery section, REME: to beach and repair drowned vehicles (both tracked and wheeled).

Two Pioneer Companies, Pioneer Corps: to provide labour and help beach companies to unload craft.

Provost company, Corps of Military Police: to sign routes and mark by lamp at night, to control traffic, to maintain discipline, and to control transit areas both for men and vehicles.

RAF beach section: to supervise unloading and issue of RAF stores.

18. CO-ORDINATING CONFERENCE

A co-ordinating conference was held daily to decide method of discharge of each ship berthing, detailed allotment of ferry craft to ships, allotment of labour to beaches and

dumps, allotment of dukws and lorries to beaches, and allotment of cranes.

So, lets have a bit of a closer look at the Pioneer Corps Beach Groups. Did you know that in total there were 23 Pioneer Corps Beach Units, split into various Beach Groups.

5 Beach Group

No 5 beach group supported the 3rd Infantry Division on Sword, Queen beaches. It consisted of the Royal Navy, Beach Commando Unit and Beach Signals.

It also consisted of 11 units from RAMC, 2 units from RAOC, 1 unit from REME, 6 units from RASC, 5 units from the Royal Engineers, 1 unit from Military Police, 1 unit from the RAF and last but certainly not least 6 Pioneer Companies!

These are Pioneer Units, 53rd, 102nd, 129th, 267th, 292nd, 303rd.

6 Beach Group

No 6 was the reserve for Sword. No 6 Beach Group, consisted of the Royal Navy, Beach Commando Unit and Beach Signals.

It also consisted of 1 infantry unit, 5 units from RAMC, 1 unit from RAOC, 1 unit from REME, 3 units from RASC, 3 units from the Royal Engineers, 1 unit from Military Police, 1 unit from RAF and 2 Pioneer Companies.

These are Pioneer Units 85th and 149th.

7 Beach Group

No 7 Beach Group supported the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division landed on Mike in the Juno landing area.

It consisted of Royal Navy Commando Units. It also consisted of 8 units from RAMC, 3 units from RAOC, 1 unit from REME, 3 units from RASC, 4 units from Royal Engineers, 1 unit from Military Police, 1 RAF unit and 4 Pioneer Corps Companies.

These are Pioneer Units, 190th, 225th, 243rd, 293rd.

8 Beach Group

No 8 Beach Group, Landed on Nan, in the Juno Landing area and consisted of 1 Royal Navy Commando unit, 1 RN Signal section, 1 unit of infantry, 3 RAMC units, 1 RAOC unit, 1 REME unit, 4 RASC units, 5 Royal Engineers units, 1 Military Police unit, 1 RAF unit and 3 Pioneer Companies.

These are Pioneer units, 115th, 144th, 170th Pioneer.

9 Beach Group

No 9 Beach Group, supported the 50th Northumbrian Infantry Division landing on the King sector of the Gold landing area, it consisted of 3 Beach Commando Units, 1 Royal Navy signals section, 1 infantry unit, 2 Royal Artillery units, 9 RAMC units, 2 RAOC units, 1 REME unit, 3 RASC units, 7 Royal Engineers Units, 1 Military Police unit 2 RAF units and 3

Pioneer Companies.

These are Pioneer units 75th, 208th, 209th.

10 Beach Group

No 10 Beach Group, landed on the Jig beaches, within the Gold sector. It consisted of 1 Royal Navy Commando unit, 1 Beach Signal unit, 1 infantry unit, 1 Royal Artillery unit, 7 RAMC units, 1 REME unit, 4 RASC units, 5 Royal Engineers units, 1 Military Police Unit, 2 RAF units and 5 Pioneer Corps units.

These are Pioneer units 73rd, 112th, 120th, 173rd, 243rd.

I do not have the space here to publish and go into detail of exactly what all of these 23 Pioneer Units within the above Beach Groups got up to, however we are looking at putting together in a future publication all of them and their corresponding War Diary entries for the period. Something I believe has never been done before.

Let's just say they got upto a huge list of tasks!

They assisted with mine clearance, layed flexible causeways, cleared beach obstacles, making roadways off the beaches, formed beach dumps of ammunition/petrol/ordnance stores/RASC supplies, operating Rhinio ferries, evacuation of casualties, stretcher bearing duties, working long hours in field dressing stations, collecting and burying the dead from craft and beaches and the list goes on and on and on!

Many seemed to have charmed lives.

They penetrated everywhere and in the first 72 hours the men had little to no sleep.

However, I will leave you with an account of two particular Pioneers. Seven men were awarded a George Medal, two were Pioneers!

On 8 June, a German fighter plane dropped a bomb on the petrol and ammunition depot on Sword, with the ensuing fire threatening to destroy large quantities of supplies. Men of 5 and 6 Beach Groups worked to save the supplies; seven of whom were awarded the George Medal.

These Pioneers are Sgt H Grant and Pte A Catley.

Citation of Sgt H Grant 13018581, 53 Company and Citation of Pte A Catley 4808333, 53 Company

A petrol dump in Normandy was hit by a bomb on 8th June 1944, and a very large fire broke out, which spread rapidly to a nearby ammunition dump containing a quantity of 105 mm high explosive shell and anti-tank mines.

These two soldiers, with utter contempt for danger, set a splendid example by working for an hour and a half to salvage such stores as could be saved, in spite of exploding ammunition and blazing fragments exploding all round them.

Largely as a result of their courageous conduct and devotion to duty the whole of the Ordnance stores were saved together with nearly one third of the ammunition.

George Medal
London Gazette
10 Nov 44
page 5133. ■



■ Helmet marking for the Beach Groups which are listed in the Beach Organisations and Maintenance Combined Operations Pamphlet.



Pioneer Finds...



■ I managed to pick up a full set of 12 lovely tin Pioneer figures from World War 1, titled 'English 1914-18 steel helmet Pioneers, in action'. Not something I have seen come up before and I reckon Douglas must of been on holiday at the time ;)



Crossed rifle and pick history

Let's look at the history of the crossed rifle and pick collar insignia worn by WW1 Pioneer Battalions. Did you know that the design relates to Pioneers of the British Indian Army who pre-dated the WW1 Pioneer Battalions

Report: Paul Brown
Pictures: Paul Brown

THE design of the Crossed Rifle and Pick Collar Insignia that was worn by WW1 Pioneer Battalions is related to the Pioneers of the British Indian Army who preceded the WW1 Pioneer Battalions and were their inspiration.

These Indian units with British officers (there were also Indian officers in an intermediate level below them) were unusual in that they were trained as infantry as well as in labouring tasks that would assist a field force operating in country with little infrastructure, to manoeuvre.

It did so by clearing roadways, or creating them where necessary, assisting engineers during bridge and railway construction, and any other semi-skilled labouring tasks that helped an army operate in the field.

The principal requirement was that in addition to these labouring tasks, the pioneer units could and would bolster the combatant strength of mobile columns by also acting as infantry whenever necessary. Their role was very successful and they became firm favourites of Field Marshal Lord Roberts ("Bobs"), at the time the military CinC in India as a General, who firmly supported their utility.

In 1915 it was decided that such units, on a ratio of one per division would be useful in the Army's of France and Flanders as the trench stalemate set in to both assist with existing entrenchments, but more importantly create new ones swiftly by reversing captured stretches of the enemy lines and defending them in the face of the inevitable and famous German counterattacks, thus allowing the infantry brigades to exploit forwards.

This role was particularly expected to form a part of the July 1916 Somme Battles.

Eventually the battalion's became involved in forward road maintenance and even narrow gauge railways.

These were similar to some roles carried out by the Labour Corps who generally operated further back.

The insignia adopted by the Indian Army pioneer units had utilised the important digging implements in addition to the more famous crossed axes (the latter of

Napoleonic origin) and when a means of identification for WW1 pioneer battalions was considered it was settled upon that a crossed pick and rifle collar insignia would be adopted with the rifle representing the infantry skills and the pick the semi-skilled labour.

From the outset it was envisaged that these battalions would exploit those regions of Britain with large communities of miners (especially), road, canal and railway gangers, foresters and any other labouring trades that required upper body strength. These areas became the focus of recruiting efforts but within the bounds of the local regimental area.

Ergo, for just one example, the several pioneer battalions raised by the Durham Light Infantry from pit areas. Similar units were raised in British Dominions, including New Zealand, which formed some discrete pioneer battalions from very fine Maori soldiers.

During the transition of 23 Group Royal Pioneers to become 23 Regiment Royal Logistic Corps in 1994, the new Regiment was to function under a similar remit and so initially the crossed rifle and pick, with numerals 23 beneath, was chosen as the new regiment's crest, whilst it's soldiers continued to undergo phase 1 infantry training.

It remained so for a few years until full infantry training was abolished (as too costly) and the crest was replaced by an arrangement of crossed axes with a central pioneer hanger (short sword with toothed edge) that had been a central feature of the second pattern (and recent) cap badge of the erstwhile Royal Pioneers.

The birth of the Indian Pioneer Corps is entwined with the historic struggle for the independence of India. The origin of the Pioneer Corps dates back to 1758 in Madras, where the first pioneer companies were formed under the Madras Presidency Army. By the time WW1 broke out, there were as many as twelve Pioneer regiments consisting of one battalion each of Pioneer in the Indian Army.

In his comprehensive book "The Military Engineer in India" Lieut.-Colonel E.W.C. Sandes, D.S.O., M.C., RE provides the following short history of the Indian Pioneers:

"There have been Pioneers in the Indian Army from the middle of the eighteenth

century almost to the present day (1933), first as Engineer troops who were mostly converted into Sappers and Miners, and then as infantry with some engineering training. In the British Army they appeared before the reign of Henry VIII and in the early part of the sixteenth century were a properly organized Corps; but they were absorbed by the Engineers in later times and did not reappear as units of that army until a Pioneer battalion was raised during the Great War of 1914-18 for every British division of infantry. After the war it was decided that these British battalions should be amalgamated with the R.E. field companies, but the process was not applied to the Pioneer battalions of the Indian Army because their high traditions seemed to justify their continued existence. In 1923 there were four Corps of Indian Pioneers-the Madras, Bombay, Sikh and Hazara Pioneers-the first three totaling 12 battalions and the last being an independent battalion; before 1932, however, amalgamations had reduced the total to six battalions and the Hazara battalion. It was soon apparent that, under modern conditions, Pioneers could hardly be both fully trained infantry and expert engineers, and that by reason of their organization and training they were better fitted to be engineers than infantry. Up to 1914 they were most useful as roadmakers in expeditions across the administrative border on the N.W. Frontier; but as such expeditions are now rare, and the regular garrisons stationed across the border are provided with permanent roads built by civil contract, Pioneers are no longer needed for road work. It is desirable also that the engineer troops of any division should be homogeneous. These facts, coupled with serious financial stringency, caused the Government of India to make the important decision in 1932 that Pioneers should be abolished from the Indian Army and that a part of the financial saving so effected should be applied towards an increase in the strength of the three Corps of Sappers and Miners."

Sandes mentions the existence of 13 battalions in the Corps of Indian Pioneers, but the medal collector should not be misled by this number.

As a result of renumbering, renaming, reorganization and amalgamation one can find medals named to many more than 13



battalions.

A collector and researcher of medals, medal lists and catalogs has come up with a total of 39 different ways of naming Pioneer Battalions, and this is most certainly not all inclusive.

The following is the result of research took by a collector.

1st Sikh Pioneers, 4th Hazara Pioneers, 1/31st Sikh Pioneers, 64th Pioneers, 1/1st Madras Pioneers, 1/4th Hazara Pioneers, 32nd Sikh Pioneers, 81st Pioneers, 2nd Sikh Pioneers, 10th Bombay Pioneers, 34th Sikh Pioneers, 1/81st Pioneers, 2nd Bombay Pioneers, 1/12th Pioneers, 3/34th Sikh Pioneers, 2/81st Pioneers, 1/2nd Madras Pioneers, 2/12th Pioneers, 34th Punjab Pioneers, 106th Hazara Pioneers, 3rd Sikh Pioneers, 2/12th Pioneers, 34th Punjab Pioneers, 106th Hazara Pioneers, 3rd Sikh Pioneers, 21st Sikh Pioneers, 2/34th Pioneers, 107th Pioneers, 1/3rd Sikh Pioneers, 21st Madras Pioneers, 48th Pioneers, 1/107th Pioneers, 1/3rd Sikh Pioneers, 21st Madras Pioneers, 48th Pioneers, 1/107th Pioneers, 2/3rd Sikh Pioneers, 23rd Sikh Pioneers, 61st KGO Pioneers, 121st Pioneers, 3/3rd Sikh Pioneers, 2/23rd Sikh Pioneers, 1/61st Pioneers, 128th Pioneers, 4th Bombay Pioneers, 28th Bombay Infantry (Pnrs), 2/61st Pioneers, Marine Battalion.

The Pioneer Corps were once the third largest troop in the Indian Army and had a strength of 26 Pioneer Companies till 1999.

Today there are 21 Pioneer Units under various commands. The Pioneer Corps Training Centre (PCTC) is currently located in Bangalore.

Now lets have a look at some of the Cap Badges and insignia of the Pioneers of the Indian Army. I'm not going to go into the full history of the Indian Pioneers as I do not have much space, I'm only going to show you some of the related Pioneer insignia and detail the Pioneer units.

1st Madras Pioneers

- 1st Battalion (raised in 1758) earlier known as 61st King George's Own Pioneers
- 2nd Battalion (raised in 1759) earlier known as 64th Pioneers (The Elephant)
- 10th Battalion (Training) raised in 1786 as 81st Pioneers



2nd Bombay Pioneers

- 1st Battalion (raised in 1788) earlier known as 107th Pioneers
- 2nd Battalion (raised in 1838) earlier known as 12th Pioneers (Khelat-i-Ghilzai)
- 3rd Battalion (raised in 1846) earlier known as 128th Pioneers
- 4th Battalion (raised in 1901) earlier known as 48th Pioneers
- 10th Battalion (Marine) (Training) raised in 1777 as 121st Pioneers



3rd Sikh Pioneers

- 1st Battalion (raised in 1857) earlier known as 23rd
- 2nd Battalion (raised in 1857) earlier known as 32nd Sikh Pioneers
- 3rd Battalion (raised in 1887) earlier known as 34th Royal Sikh Pioneers
- 10th Battalion (Training) raised in 1917 as 2/23rd Sikh Pioneers



4th Hazara Pioneers

- 1st Battalion (raised in 1904) earlier known as 106th Hazara Pioneers



Next, we have the up to date cap badge of the Indian Pioneer Corps.



Also, on my travels I have across this badge of the Hyderabad Pioneers, which is a Pioneer unit within an infantry regiment of the British Indian Army. It was formed at the time of reforms of the Indian Army after WW1. They saw service during WW2 and in 1948 it was known as the Kumaon Regiment. ■



RLC / RAOC Rumour



Is the 'mark of shame' rumour about the Royal Logistic Corps and the Royal Army Ordnance Corps true? Did a case of mistaken delivery end up becoming a feature on two of the British Army's cap badges? But is there a mistake on one of the original badges that is still there today? Many believe there is.

Report: Alex Candlin / Paul Brown
Pictures: Paul Brown

I CAME across this article and thought that you would enjoy reading it. The cap badge for the Royal Logistic Corps (RLC) shows the five regiments that were merged together to create the 'Loggies' we know today.

But is there a mistake on one of the original badges that is still there today? Many believe there is.

The regiment was formed in 1993 by the union of the Royal Engineers Postal and Courier Service, the Royal Corps of Transport, the Royal Pioneer Corps, the Army Catering Corps, and the Royal Army Ordnance Corps (RAOC).

On the RLC's cap badge, there is the Royal Engineers' laurel and garter band, the Indian star from the Royal Corps of Transport, the crossed axes courtesy of the Royal Pioneer Corps and the motto 'We Sustain' from the Army Catering Corps.

But it is the shield with three cannons and three balls from the RAOC that has caused debate.

Anyone with a keen eye might have spotted that the cannon balls are too big for the cannons below, leading to the theory that the regiment delivered the wrong ammunition at some point in history.

In turn, this has led to some suggesting that it is an eternal mark of incompetence depicted on their badge.

But is this true? The Royal Logistic Corps Museum, located in Worthy Down, has confirmed it is a myth.

The museum said: "The story of the 'Mark of Shame', as its sometimes called, dates back to the Crimea War where, supposedly, because of the failure by the Board of Ordnance to supply the correct ammunition they and all their successors must carry the symbol of three cannons with oversized cannonballs as a permanent reminder of that failure.

"The three cannons and the cannonballs were used by the Board of Ordnance for centuries before the Crimea War. One of the oldest objects in the RLC Museum's collection to show the motif is a piece of a lead water tank dated 1719.

"On 16 May 1823, the College of Arms used the motif as the central design for the Coat of Arms for the Board of Ordnance.

"The shield from the Coat of Arms is what was used for the Army Ordnance Corps (AOC) and Army Ordnance Department (AOD) cap badges, as well as forming part of the RAOC and RLC cap badges, while the motto underneath Sua Tele Tonanti would become the AOC, AOD and RAOC's motto.

"As for why the cannonballs are too big to fit into the cannon, the reason is due to the practicality of the design rather than censure.

"If the cannonballs were the correct size, they would be impossible to see on any object that wasn't massive in size."

Since the coronation of King Charles III, all cap badges were engraved with the King's cypher, however, the design of the Royal Logistic Corps cap badge will still have three cannon and balls in its cap badge design. ■



■ The coat of arms showing the three cannons and balls kept at the RLC Museum

Picture: RLC Museum

Pioneer Finds...



■ Many of you may remember this sign of 206 Squadron. Douglas picked up this large metal sign. I wondered what happened to it :)



■ Douglas picked up this lovely large Aluminium badge. It does appear that this may have come from the guardroom at Simpson Barracks



Regimental Cap Badges

I thought you may be interested to see what the Kings Crown Cypher looks like now on the current Regimental Cap Badges of the British Army



Bleuet de France

When I was visiting the WW1 battlefields quite a few people were wearing a blue badge I had not seen before. It is called the Bleuet de France.

Report: Paul Brown
Pictures: Claude Truong-Ngoc

In France, the bleuet de France is the national symbol of memory for, and solidarity with, veterans, victims of war, widows, and orphans, similar to the Commonwealth remembrance poppy. The sale of "bleuet de France" badges on 11 November and 8 May is used to finance charitable works for those causes. In the language of flowers, the cornflower symbolizes delicacy and timidity, and indicates that a message has a pure, innocent, or delicate intention. The cornflower – like the poppy – continued to grow in land devastated by the thousands of shells which were launched daily by the entrenched armies of the Western Front. These flowers were often the only visible evidence of life, and the only sign of color in the mud of the

trenches. On 15 September 1920, Louis Fontenaille, the president of Mutilés de France, proposed making the bleuet the eternal symbol of those who died for France.



In 1928, after French President Gaston Doumergue gave his patronage to the bleuet, sales gradually spread countrywide. By 11th November 1934, 128,000 flowers were sold. From 1935, the French government officialized the sale of bleuets on Remembrance Day. In 1957, a second commemorative day was denoted for 8 May, VE day, the anniversary of the surrender of Nazi Germany in the Second World War. You can get smaller pin badges of the Bleuet online. ■



AGM Minutes

The 74th Annual General Meeting of the Royal Pioneer Corps Association held at The Ex Services Club, Bicester on Friday 23rd June 2023 at 1800 hours

President: Colonel D Clouston MBE
Secretary: Lt Colonel B Dilkes MBE
Members Present: 78

ITEM 1. MINUTES OF 74th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1. The Secretary opened the meeting at 1800hrs by welcoming all present and reading the following: Apologies: Col (Retd) R McDonald, Maj (Retd) S Woodward, Kenny Sampson, Stuart Stevens, Alex Cardow and Mr P Collins.

2. The Secretary requested the full attention of those attending by playing a video which recognises those 34 Pioneer members who have sadly passed away since the 73rd AGM, this was followed by a short period of applause.

3. The minutes of the 73rd AGM which had been circulated with the December 2022 Pioneer Newsletter were accepted as a true record, there were no matters arising.

4. Matters Arising:
Pioneer Memorial - This will be re-established from St David's Bks to Worthy Down by Sep 23.
The Pioneer Book - This is ongoing and should be complete by Dec 23.

UPDATE OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

5. The following members will remain on the council: Lt Col (Retd) John Starling, Capt (Retd) Kev Jessop and Mr Norman Brown reducing the overall numbers from 12 to 5.

Previous council members have all agreed to step down but remain prepared to assist where required to the above council. A vote of thanks for all their hard work and support throughout was recognised by those in attendance.

HEAD OF TRADE REPORT

6. Capt Steve Soper delivered a short trade update on what current serving Pioneers have been up to since last year's AGM:

As 2022 ended there was some great news on the promotion front, Sgt Pete Straughan selected for promotion to SSgt and has since moved on to being one of the Snr instructors at 109 Sqn, 25 Training Regiment RLC at DST Leconfield. We also secured 2 more promotions to Regimental Sergeant Major which is an amazing feat, let alone from a trade mothballed nearly ten years ago so; a huge congratulations must go to both Pete Poole who is soon to be RSM 150 Regt RLC in Hull and to Rustey

Emmanuelle who takes up the reigns as senior soldier in 158 Regiment RLC.

A late addition to the WO2 board earlier this year saw Deveroux Buckley become an additional selection for a Squadron Sergeant Major appointment and he's just taken up post in 9 Regiment RLC. Yours truly also spent the late summer of 2022 at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst on the new AOSB (Army Officer Selection Board) and found out at the tail end of the year that my academic (or lack of) efforts had been successful so, will be departing my role as RSM 11 EOD & Search Regiment imminently to take up post on the "dark side" in Worthy Down.

On the Fitness front, not only is WO1 Russ Clarke still smashing out more Ironman competitions than days in office but WO2 (SSM) Danny Ravenscroft dusted off his tabbing boots and took a team from 13 Air Assault Support Regiment up to Spean Bridge to remind everyone that after many years of complete Pioneer dominance on the Commando Speed March, the boys can still mix it with the best of them. Just missing out on the overall trophy's, Danny's team came a very respectable 4th place. Its worthy of noting that Chantel Mason still holds the record for fastest female and 23 Pioneer Regiment still sit in second place behind 2 Para as the unit with the most wins in the history of the competition (3). As for deployments John "Fluffy" Payne who is currently the SQMS at Worthy Down support unit is about to embark on a year-long deployment to Pakistan in acting rank as the RQMS for the British contingent and as ever in these modern times many of the troops and their units are aligned to homeland MACA support in various guises.

As numbers continue to dwindle and our red and green footprint starts to get smaller having representation across 9 Regiments ensures the legacy remains and in this; the 30th anniversary of the formation of the Royal Logistic Corps we couldn't be more front and centre had we tried. After much persuasion I managed to convince the RLC Corps Sgt Maj that it only befitting that HRH; The Princess Royal should be escorted on the RLC30 Freedom of Winchester Parade by an honour guard made up of two ceremonial Axemen. As I say numbers are dwindling the trade now only has 11 Pioneers remaining in service with 3 of them leaving us at the end of their service in the coming months. By the years end we will have said farewell & good luck to the future to the following troops since the last AGM in 2022:
SSgt Louis Thomas
WO2 (SSM) Graham Fisher

WO2 Frank Gerrard
WO2 (SSM) Mike Smith
WO2 Micky Heart
Cpl Sam "Jimmy" Riddell
And about to leave us in the coming few months:
SSgt Stevie Emeny
Cpl Jason Crowie
WO1 (RSM) Brian (Northy) Hinton

On current trajectory it remains that SSgt John "Fluffy" Payne will be the last serving RLC Pioneer when he leaves the service in April 2027.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

7. The Secretary gave the following updates:

RLC Benevolence 22/23 update.
RLC30.

Negative activity on certain social media sites controlled by the association.

The future vision of the 'Pioneer' in relation to expanding the membership.

The secretary finished by recording a huge vote of 'Thanks' for 20yrs loyal service to the RPCA from Mr Norman Brown. A more detail farewell speech would be covered in AOB.

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

8. It is always sad to hear the names of ex Pioneers who have sadly passed since we met 12mths ago. We should never forget and may those 34 members RIP. On a brighter note, it is pleasing to report 26 new members have joined the Association since our last AGM. There are still many ex-Pioneers who are not members so please continue to spread the word; membership is free, and Billy will work hard to contact these individuals with encouragement to join.

The Association has had another busy year, both Officers and the WOs & SNCOs held successful Dinner Nights last October and November. We also witnessed over 200 personnel attending the unveiling of a new memorial to the Pioneers on the site of what was the Guardroom, Simpson Barracks, Northampton. This was followed by lunch in the nearby Toby Inn in Northampton.

In November, 8 members attended the Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey, numbers were again curtailed because of building work at the Abbey, this was followed by a lunch in the Civil Service Club in Whitehall.

We had 87 veterans march with the Pioneer contingent at the Cenotaph where both the BBC and Sky portrayed the Pioneers in a good light. The contingent was led by Brig Charles Telfer; most retired

to the Civil Service Club afterwards where the Pioneers, once again, took over the garden.

We have been allocated 110 tickets this year for the Cenotaph Parade and have already received 65 applications to attend. If you wish to attend and march, can you give details to either Billy or Norman.

The 39/93 Club held a meet at Fareham in March and are planning to repeat this next year, further details of the Club can be obtained by Mr Les Rowley who is here this weekend.

Norman finally cleared his desk at the end of May and Billy officially took the reins on the 1st June. Both Norman and Billy represented the Pioneers at RLC 30 in Winchester with Billy marching for the 1st time in the veteran contingent with his bowler hat carrying his black umbrella. Over 500 RLC officers, soldiers and veterans marched through the centre of Winchester before the Princess Royal, having been granted the Freedom of the City. How time has flown, it certainly doesn't feel like

30yrs.

A week last Tuesday (13th June) Billy attended his investiture at Buckingham Palace to receive his MBE from the Princess Royal which had been awarded in the 1st Kings New Year's Honours List.

Finally, I continue to remain committed and justifiably proud to be the President of the Pioneer Association.

9. Next AGM (Fri 21st Jun 24 at 1800hrs) with the Pioneer Reunion Weekend (Fri 21 – Sun 23 Jun 24)

10. Lt Col Dilkes also gave an update on the Pioneer Memorial and details of a new app which should be available early next year which would keep members connected and hopefully encourage younger ex Pioneers to join – there would be a one of charge of £1 per person.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11. Tom Appleyard Mentioned the possibility

of a 'Thank You' letter to Northampton Council for their assistance with the Pioneer Memorial in Wooton, Northampton. (Action)

Taff Teague Mentioned the future of the Pioneer (RPCA) relies very much on recruiting the younger Pioneer veterans and we should work together in order to make this happen. (Action)

Billy Dilkes Delivered a speech in recognition of the great work Norman Brown had completed for the good and benefit of all Pioneers and their Families over the last 20yrs. His wife Marlene and son Paul had both been instrumental in supporting Norman and the Pioneers were looking at raising £750 towards the £250 already granted from HQRLC to purchase a silver 'Working Pioneer' as a token of our appreciation.

12. Meeting closed at 1910hrs

Lt Colonel B Dilkes MBE Secretary

More Pioneer Finds...

we should rename this section to Douglas's finds!



■ Douglas picked up this Royal Pioneer Corps Cross Country Medal from 11 Jan 1956!



■ Douglas picked up this Royal Pioneer Corps Tug of War Medal from 263 Company, 1953



■ Douglas picked up this Army Careers Booklet from 1969, entitled 'This is the Army'



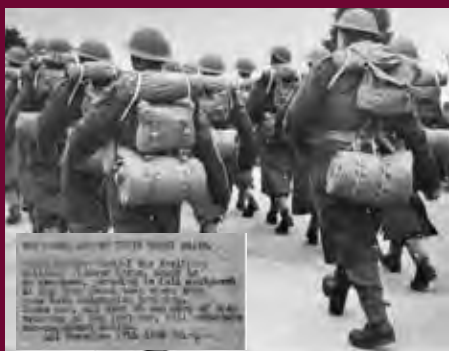
■ Douglas picked up this lovely Royal Pioneer Goblet from the Freedom Parade of Northampton, 29th March 1984.



■ Douglas picked up this large Pioneer badge that belonged to Pioneers in the Seychelles.



■ Douglas picked up this Pioneer uniform, belonging to 256675 Captain R P Knighton of 103 Coy



■ Douglas picked up this press photo of the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps, dated 1939.



■ Douglas picked up this recruiting booklet for the African Pioneers, dated 1942, called 'A Spear for Freedom'. Ta for lending it to us!



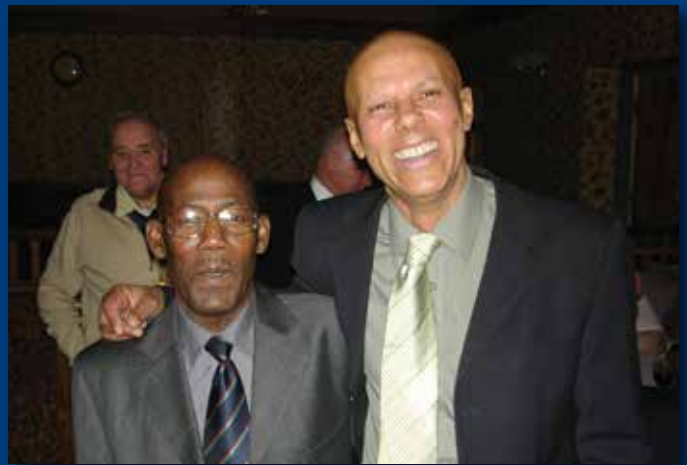
■ BEM presentations to Wo2 Fielding, Cpl Carr and LCpl Sellstrom
Picture: RPCA Archive



■ DAPL presents the GOCs Commendation to WO1 Edwards
Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Gibraltar Barracks 64-66 Lt Baird & Sgt Downes
Picture: RPCA Archive



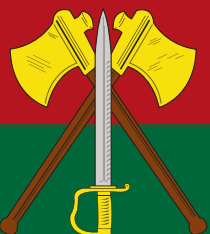
■ Northampton Branch Christmas Party 24 Jan 09 (We had to include a photo of Dusty!)
Picture: RPCA Archive



■ RPC Association Trustees following lunch in the Tower of London with HRH Duke of Gloucester
Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Cpl Robert Collard
Picture: RPCA Archive



Blast from the Past

This time a wide assortment of photographs from throughout the years!



■ Socialising Airport camp Engr Bar. Lto R Yank Blundell, Richie Hodge, Gary English, Dave Reid Picture: RPCA Archive



■ 63rd Offrs Past & Present Dinner 27 Nov 09
Picture: RPCA Archive



■ WOs & Sgts Mess Graven Hill Station, Bicester, Regimental Dinner 18 Apr 86
Picture: RPCA Archive



■ 2Lt Dunlop
Picture: RPCA Archive



■ WO1 PN Thomas and Duke of Gloucester at Church of Holy Schepulcre
Picture: RPCA Archive



■ SSgt R Teague receives his LS&GC
Picture: RPCA Archive



■ RCZ SAA Meeting 4 Sep 90 – Overall Team Winners Pte Redfern, Cpl Gibson (Coach), Pte O'Loughlin Pte Maddox, LCpl Griffiths
Picture: RPCA Archive

Cenotaph Golf Tournament

IT WAS great to see some new faces at this years Cenotaph Parade, in particular Josh Campbell, Joe Carver and Crew to name a few.

I recorded the march with a customised GoPro this year and as soon as I have got this newsletter out of the way, I will get it edited and combined with photographs etc and get it uploaded for all to see.

Talking of the March thanks go out to Kev Broome and whoever the other person was for keeping the front contingent in step and dealing with a lot of step changes! Also ta for Kev for organising the collection for the driver! I think Kev has been to every event this year!

The weather and the recent protests may have put some people off from marching this year, however the turnout on the Parade was reasonable and I noticed that a lot more people turned up at the Civil Service Club that never marched.

A few pointers to make, who ever picks up the wooden Parade Marker Identifier also needs to pickup the armband and tag to wear as it helps the BBC etc identify who are marching.

Also may be an idea to have 2 wreaths just in case someone forgets one ;)

Getting onto Horse-guards Parade was very easy this year and it would be great to see a record turnout next year! At least a 120 on parade!

For the first time ever I understand that plans are afoot to book the first floor of the Club for a Pioneer Curry at around 1530 when the upstairs is empty by then.

Paul Brown

Brilliant day

NORMAN and Billy, Just a short email to thank you for organising yesterday's contingent.

Yet again a brilliant day made possible by all your work in the background. Thank you Yours

Mike Tickner

Fantastic info

Hi, Thank you for the information we didn't know his date of birth so that's fantastic information.

Every little helps to put the jigsaw pieces back together thanks again.

Lisa Hardy

A GROUP of ex Pioneers have an annual golf tournament at Forest Pines Golf Course, Scunthorpe.

This year Jon O'Brien won the Stapleford Match played on the Friday and on the Saturday Jon together with Dave Mitchell were the stroke play winners.

Michael Banks was the overall loser over both days – keep practising Michael!

If you would like to meet up and play in future tournaments please contact David Moulds on Facebook or email: arkwoodle@hotmail.co.uk

David Moulds

Everest basecamp

I AM a blind pioneer veteran, who served with the Regiment from 1999 to 2005. I recently joined the Royal Pioneer Corp Association page on Facebook and have been accepted.

I'm trying to reach other Pioneers to notify them of a challenge I'm undertaking

with other wounded veterans. I am to trek to Everest Basecamp to raise money to change, wounded veterans lives. I would appreciate it if I would be allowed to post this content in the group.

Thank you for your time.

Scott Wall

I won't forget

THOUGHT I might share this. I wrote it on what would have been his 100th birthday. It was meant for family and friends at home and was well received on facebook, even from people I did not know.

However I believe that it sums up what people actually went through not just while they served, contributed towards the freedom we have today which is why I have shared in on here.

A few of the friends I served with in the Corps met my dad and I believe that they would agree that he was just an ordinary bloke but will know deep down that he, and his generation, along with his fathers generation were much more than that.

I am sure many of you will have similar Parents and relatives. Amazing people.

I WON'T FORGET ANY OF THEM. 'JUST MY DAD

Born 100 years ago today - 14 June 1920.

Joined up before conscription in WW2 and went to Europe with the Expeditionary Force.

Came back from Dunkirk.

Had a spell in Iceland as part of the defence force against a possible German invasion and support for North Atlantic Convoys.

Went back again on the D Day landings.

In the meantime his Father Ernie Dobson, who had received a Military Medal in WW1 and who was probably too old for WW2 but volunteered, had been taken prisoner of war on Crete and spent the rest of the war in a POW camp.

Some time after the return to Europe Dad was billeted in a building which turned out to have been a TB hospital and eventually caught the disease.

Was Casevaced back to UK and ended

up in the TB Sanitorium in Wolsingham nursed by my to be Aunty Ivy who took him, along with a friend, home to my Grandmother and Grand fathers house for tea where he met my mam Amy.

Got married by special license in 1947 because the Doctors thought he didn't have long to live.

Had a son, me in 1948 and shortly after had to have a lung out as a result of the TB.

This operation involved the removal of some ribs then the removal of the lung, with a Local Anesthetic, so he was awake for the whole operation. It was thought that he would probably have 2 years to live after the op.

Had a daughter, Anne, in 1950 but had to deal with her dying in a motorcycle accident when she was 17.

Gave a home to his sister in law, Aunty Ann who was Downes Syndrome, when my maternal grandfather died.

Had another son, John, who also served with the Light Infantry.

Gradually built his strength up with the help of my mam over the years and got a job on Durham District Services bus company and later with Mullards at Belmont.

He passed away when I was 50 beating the doctors estimate by 48 years.

No he wasn't just my dad he was an amazing man as were most of his age who went through similar difficulties. I am certain that if he was alive now he would be astounded that some selfish people in the current difficult period cannot just sacrifice a little freedom and comfort for the sake of others.

GEORGE DOBSON 14 June 1920 to 13 December 1996.'

Alan Dobson

Duxford Visit 2023



■ Duxford Trip, 2023

JUST A quick write up from our Duxford Trip earlier this year.

12 members of the RPC Association (Northampton) Branch climbed aboard a mini-bus to the Imperial War Museum Duxford. The first stop was on the A45 to put some air in a tyre, was this because Sammy was sitting at the back?

The aerodrome at Duxford was built during the First World War and was one of the earliest Royal Air Force stations. During 1917 the Royal Flying Corps expanded and Duxford was one of many new airfields established to train RFC aircrew.

After the war ended, unlike many similar airfields in a slimmed-down RAF, it was kept open: first as a training school and then, from 1924, a fighter station, a role it was to carry out with distinction for 37 years.

By 1938 the reputation of RAF Duxford's No.19 Squadron was such that it became the first RAF squadron to re-equip with the new Supermarine Spitfire, and the first Spitfire was flown into RAF Duxford in August 1938.

During WW2 Pioneers were involved in both extending the airfield and also guarding it.

Duxford is Europe's largest air museum with over 300 aircraft and objects on display. You can get up close to amongst others Spitfires and Hurricanes, you can see a portion of the original Wright Brothers plane, walk through Concord, feel dwarfed by the size of a B-52 and stand in awe of Europe's only SR-71 Blackbird - the fastest jet ever built.

You will also see live conservation in action and watch restored aircraft take to the skies from the historic airfield.

All members who attended agreed it was well worth the visit but also very tiring – it is recommended to arrive early as there is so much to see.

Norman Brown

Mauritius Pioneers

HI NORMAN, Bob McGinley and I (together with our wives) recently visited Mauritius on holiday, whilst there we decided to visit a World War 2 cemetery to find the graves of Mauritian Pioneers.



The cemetery is in a town called Phoenix which is south of the capital Port Louis and is not an easy place to find.

Some 27,000 Mauritians were enrolled and served in the Royal Pioneer Corps during WW2 and the post-war period mainly in Egypt.

A small section of the cemetery is assigned to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and we must report that they keep the graves of the fallen in an immaculate condition.

Seven Mauritian Pioneers are buried here along with a number of other military graves, there is also a number of ex-pats

Name down for next year

EVERYDAY I go into work I see this picture on the wall, It will give me a very proud memory that us Pioneers wearing are poppies formed up on the Horse Guards Parade before proudly marching off to pay our respect and thoughts to all who have paid the ultimate sacrifice, injuries and families who have suffered.



Amazing day we paid our respect and thoughts but also great banter, laughs and comradeship. I will definitely be putting my name down for next year.

Hopefully I will see even more Pioneers (friends) in the future attending the Cenotaph.

Kev Foster

with military service with civilian headstones but the Regiment/Corps they served with inscribed proudly on their headstones.



If anyone visits Mauritius we highly recommend that they pay a visit.

Pete Thomas

Thank you

HI NORMAN, Thank you for coming back to me with this information and so quickly-very impressive!

I really appreciate the amount of detail you have been able to provide as well – rather more helpful than that received from the RMP. I will certainly make a donation to the RPC Association. This may be easier if you can send me bank details please as doing everything online these days I can't remember the last time I saw my cheque-book! Kind regards

Eric Webb

Great event

HELLO Billy/Norman I would firstly like to thank you both for a great event on Sunday lots of new faces joining the march.

Billy great to see you again after so many years and congratulations on taking over the Corps Sec job.

Can I book in for next year's parade myself and Dave Savage, Thanks again Kind Regards

Robbie (Michael Robinson)

Thank you Escaped from camp

HI NORMAN, Whilst it is sad to see the back of you, LOL I like others will miss your expertise help and dedication to the Corps both as a member for 22 years.

And as an association mover, you transformed the Corp Mag to bring into the 21 century, you organised and executed countless successful Corps weekend, with the association draw and shop you raised thousands of pounds over the years and ensured you received attendance tickets using whatever method for the remembrance parade, raising the number to over 100 veterans marching in the London Remembrance day parade.

I could go embarrassing you but would run out of paper and light.

It's now time for you stand down and take a well-deserved rest.

Once again thank you for your time and dedication to the cause.

Tom and Gloria Appleyard

Pioneer Online Shop

WE ARE in the process of organising the Pioneer Shop online.

In the meantime if you want to place an order, email myself at email address thepioneerhq@gmail.com and I will get you a price including postage and get it shipped out to you.

The items we have currently are :-

Cuff links	£8
Buttons	£1
Plaques	£24
Ties	£18
Blazer Badges	£10
Dickie Bows	£5
Benny Hats	£10
Flags	£30
Pioneer Tops	£15
Pioneer History Book	£6
Canvas Print	£30
of the Fighting Pioneer	

Prices above do not include postage and packing. They are also very good quality and much better than a lot of the inferior rubbish you see on the likes of Ebay and suchlike and any profit stays within the Association.

Get your orders in and I will do my best to get these to you as soon as possible. I cannot promise a Christmas delivery due to print timescales of this newsletter.

We will be listing more items shortly and will publicise on the Pioneer Facebook channel.

Billy Dilkes

MY WIFES father, Salvador Hernandez 13809792, now deceased was a Spanish Republican who was imprisoned in the Djelfa Vichy labour camp in North Africa.

He escaped from the camp and we understand he joined the Pioneer Corps possibly in Oran in 1942/3 until 1946. I believe there was a Spanish company in the Corps, perhaps he was a member of that? I very much hope you may be able to help us to find out more about him.

Ed Note: He was a member of 338 (Alien) Company Pioneer Corps. We have his full name as Salvador Siemenez Hernandez and have his date of birth recorded as 10 Jul 18. He enlisted at Biy Farik in N Africa on 29 Apr 43. The following is a copy of the war diary of that unit: 1 Apr 43 Under Allied Force HQ authority, the Coy was ordered to be formed from 169 refugees from COLOMB-BECHAR, KENADSA and BIDON Concentration Camps. Arrived by train at BOU FARIK Station and proceeded by march route to FERNE SOUK ALI, KOLEA, where formation was to take place. About 95% had, since the fall of France in 1940 been in various internment camps in Algeria and Morocco. Many had served in the Foreign Legion. The majority were either German or Austrian with a sprinkling of Czechoslovaks, Hungarians, Egyptians, Portuguese and Spanish. Here is the section of the relevant War Diary...

Maj L H Fairtlough – OC
Capt L B Frost – 2IC
Lts J P Cushion & W Williams
CSM K G Crowle & CQMS A S Starkey
23 Apr 43 Moved to MAISON CARREE
13 May 43 Maj W M Robson – tos OC
vice Fairtlough (sos 212 Coy)
16 May 43 HQ moved to ALGIERS
1 Jun 43 Located HUSSEIN DEY –
working at BSD, DID, Petrol Depot and with

REME

19 Oct 43 Maj J A Howell – tos OC vice Robson (sos 5 Coy)

Capt A J Godfery – tos 2IC vice Frost (sos 5 Coy)

Lts W Brown & W Williams – serving
21 Oct 43 Capt J P Gardner – tos 2IC

31 Dec 43 Officers:-

Maj J A Howell – OC

Capt J P Gardner – 2IC

Lts J S Tannahill, N C Goodman & F B Lanchester

2Lt A G Gilbert

14 Feb 44 Maj J S Ogden – tos OC vice Howell

3 Jul 44 Capt W R Pratt – tos 2IC

5 Sep 44 Maj J G Craster – tos OC vice Ogden (sos 362 Coy)

Capt B Cheesman – tos 2IC

14 Sep 44 Moved to TARANTO by sea

20 Sep 44 Left BARLETTA for NAPLES

22 Sep 44 Arrived NAPLES

25 Sep 44 Moved to CASERTA – camp construction

4 sections at CASORIA, 3 sections at PONTECAGNANO

1 Dec 44 Repairing palace at CASERTA, hutting, checking at CASORIA, supervising Italian labour at PONTECAGNANO

31 Dec 44 Officers:-

Maj J G Craster – OC

Capt B Cheesman – 2IC

Lts G J Gill, D Logan, Mackenzie & W H Haines

1 Mar 45 Coy Band returned following a 5 month tour of 5th and 8th Armies

6 Mar 45 CIRIBILLI, Private, PIERRE, BNA/13301959, - attd. 557 Base Ordnance Depot, RAOC, casualty

14 Apr 45 Capt B Cheesman – sos Adjnt 110 Group

21 Apr 45 Capt Pringle – tos 2IC

30 Jun 46 Last Diary entry

Located CASERTA

Maj J G Craster – OC

Name Supplied

Anyone remember national service?

HI I, served in the corps from May 1957/59 starting out at Hoseley Hall in Gresford before moving to Hightown in Wrexham for a while then going to Kineton in Warwickshire at the time of a train crash with a troop lorry which killed a number of servicemen and was a member of the firing party at he local church where they were buried.

After that I was posted to Burniston Barracks in Scarborough and was in the detail which were transported to clear munitions on Fylingdales moor.

The army vehicles parked near the Saltersgate Inn which has now been demolished. I was in the party that was involved in the terrible accident which killed

two and injured several others whilst clearing mortar shells.

Apparently one of my detail had inadvertently knocked a mortar shell against a stone which detonated with catastrophic consequences.

A helicopter scrambled from RAF Leeming arrived to transport the dead and injured. Thankfully although only yards away I was not hurt and have survived to the grand old age of 83 but I reflect on my national service days with nostalgia.

They were on the whole an experience which I have never regretted.

I often wonder if others from that time are still going?

Bernard Cooke

Enjoy Polishing!



■ Presented by the RPCA Norman Brown BEM on his retirement in May 2023 Picture: Norman Brown

I WOULD like to thank the President and members of the Royal Pioneer Corps Association for the gift on my retirement, I am sure that my wife will enjoy polishing it!

The Working Pioneers inscription says "Presented by the RPC Association to Norman Brown BEM on his retirement in May 2023 after 20 years as Controller".

Don't worry, you will still be seeing me at the various functions, such as the Cenotaph and the Reunion Weekend and

such like.

I hope you all give Billy the support that you gave me during my 20 years as Controller.

With the 75th Reunion Anniversary year next year I would like to see a record number attend both the Reunion and in particular the Cenotaph Parade in London. Please make every effort to attend.

Have a great Christmas and New Year!
Norman Brown

THE PIONEER

■ JUST RECEIVED the magazine – what a magnificent edition – well done to you and Paul et al. Hope to see you soon.
Yours aye
Dick McDonald

■ BRILLIANT WEEKEND a big well done to all those who organised it. Slightly marred by the fact that I lost my new glasses
Jed Bourne

■ HAD A great weekend at Bicester met up with some old friends looking forward to the next God willing.
Keep safe
Fred Grundy

■ I WOULD like to say a big thank you for you and your team for a fantastic Pioneer Mag, excellent as always. But most of all I would like to wish you, on behalf of all our Pioneer Brothers, a very happy retirement and a big thank you for all your hard work over the years. Please enjoy it and you will be greatly missed.
Taff Byron Phillips

■ THANK YOU for another great Pioneer weekend, I wish you all the very best for your future adventures, thank also for everything you have done for the Pioneer corps and the many years you have spent organising the Pioneer weekend.
Tony (Simm) from Denmark

■ MANY THANKS for the Pioneer, superbly presented and informative as always. Although I was sorry to read that you are retiring, my congratulations on the brilliant job you have done over the past years and very best wishes for a happy and healthy retirement.
David Morgan

■ BIG THANK YOU to the RPC Association for the joining of the Corps weekend activities with the Armed Forces Day which took place in Bicester, it worked for me, also to Bicester Town Council for a fantastic visionary Forces Day enjoyed by the whole family.
Tom Appleyard



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:
pioneerhq@gmail.com



Artificial Intel

I WAS, playing about with artificial intelligence apps that are available and thought that would see how good they are.

I asked ChatGPT to tell me how many Pioneer Corps Companies landed on D-Day?

It replied with a fairly lengthy sentence, stating 'the Pioneer Corps did not

participate in the D-Day landings'!

What a load of twaddle! It did however mention that the 'contributions of the Pioneer Corps during the aftermath of D-Day were essential to the success of the overall campaign!'

Interesting to see how A.I. progresses.
Paul Brown

Authority to wear the RLC badge

I JUST thought I would leave the info below for your perusal, review.

It is little known that I and a WO2 from the RAOC, "Gary Hawker" were given authority to wear the RLC badge in the latter weeks of March 1993, (24th March).

This was to allow the 2 new Squadron Sergeant Majors to commence the Start of the 96 and 97 Sqn RLC, at The Army training Regiment, Pirbright, Gary Hawker ROAC, WO2 SSM 96 Sqn, me heading 97 Sqn.

A couple of other things to note:

I was the last Pioneer to be awarded the Hickman trust in Feb 93.

I was also the 1st to be the RLC SSM at Pirbright. I was the last Pioneer to be awarded an MBE, in the Queens Birthday Honours list. I lead the 1st RLC team to compete in the Guards Depot World Championship Pace Sticking Team in Sept 1993 the team came 3rd beating many teams of Guards, REME, Artillery, among others. The team consisted of another former Pioneer.

Sgt Mark Stanley

Service Records

THE PIONEER Axes have now gone on display in the RLC Museum, they were previously in the RLC RHQ Building.

They are sitting just above "Dougie Durrant", so he can keep an eye on them. The NI Op Banner showcase seemed a good place to display them and there was some convenient empty wall space.

They can still be used for annual reunion parades etc.

I cleaned them on Saturday and anyone saying they need more cleaning is welcome to come down with some brasso...

I still need to produce a label to tell visitors what they are and what they represent.

Simon Walmsley

Records

Hi, thank you very much for your prompt response and the information you provided.

I did not know Ernst's dates of service or his service number so this is useful by itself. I have now applied for his service records as you suggested using the information you provided.

Adrian Short

Inviting Pioneers to join the Club

RPC ASSOCIATION Northampton Branch Update Hi Guy's

The decision has been taken and confirmed; the Branch quarterly meetings will be held at the Northampton Conservative Club, Billing Road.

Debbie and Stewart have expressed their joy and delight in welcoming back us "Pioneers"; in recognition they further extend their gratitude by inviting Pioneers to join the club's membership, now over 400 strong.

Having visited the club last Friday, both Debbie and I have agreed to the following exclusive dates and times for the next three quarterly meetings:

Meeting to be held in private; with light refreshments, tea/coffee, and bacon rolls.

10:30 Saturday 28th Oct

10:30 Saturday 13th Jan

10:30 Saturday 20th Apr

For just reason, I asked why, past Pioneer Branch Membership, became unfavourable with the Club's membership.

Upon reflection and known facts, it was agreed time had passed on, without further clash we Pioneers are all welcomed back with open arms; Debbie sends a special mention to Sammy, Kelvin, and Lee, she's looking forward to seeing you guys once again.

The Branch will pay for the morning's refreshments, this requires number attending; to that end could I ask please for attendance confirmation.

Additionally, if there's anyone not listed on the distribution list, please pass on this notice.

The door is open to all!!!!

Bob McGinley

My Granddad's grave in Gent

THIS is my granddads grave in Gent Belgium.

I only learned of him a few years ago on the death of my grandma, I know he served in 56 company during the war and at the time of his death, is any way to learn how died?

Any help or advice would be greatly appreciated.

Terry Hibbert

Ed Note: Unfortunately the war diary for 50 Coy only shows the following "8 Jun 45 WEIR, Private, CHARLES THOMAS, 13062826, - casualty"



Youngest there!

HI EVERYONE just saw this on YouTube <https://tinyurl.com/evctzccce> and it's so true when I went to the reunions I was the youngest there everyone was royal pioneer corps and very early 23 Pioneer Regt (sgts and above from 1990s)

There were no soldiers who served between 2008-2014 (I'm not talking about Sgts upwards I'm talking about the more junior soldiers myself included) when I left with others due to redundancy in 2014 there was a lot of talk to join the association go to the reunions but that didn't happen.

Please share the video link to other

Pioneers young and old (in this case the young who were RLC) and next time years reunion get a younger group of ex Pioneers back in Bicester aswell.

Paul Mills

Ed Note: We are hoping to address this next year at the 75th Anniversary Reunion and Norman and Paul are working on finding and contacting many Pioneers whom over the years have fallen through the cracks. We are also getting the word out nice and early and getting next years Reunion Weekend planned into your diary! Look forward to seeing you there!

Best boys club!

I BET, you are looking at this picture and asking yourself, who is this individual wearing a Tudor style uniform, well my name is Colin Coull and I am a former Scots Guards Regimental Sgt Major before being commissioned into the Royal Pioneer Corps and then into the RLC on amalgamation and here I am now, a Divisional Sgt Major (DSM) in the Kings Bodyguard of the Yeoman of the Guard.

Some of you may well be asking, what is the Kings Bodyguard, I certainly did when I was serving and knew nothing about them until after I had left the Army. I will now try my best to tell you about the Bodyguard.

The Kings Bodyguard was formed in 1485 by King Henry VII and is not only the oldest Royal Body Guard, but it is also the oldest military corps now existing in this or any other country and has an absolutely unbroken history for over 500 years, for even during the brief period of the Commonwealth it continued to serve with King Charles during his enforced absence abroad, and at the Restoration accompanied him on his return to England, took its historic place in his triumphal entry into London, and stood around him at his immediate Coronation.

Though the actual warrant of Institution has never been found, we know within a few days the date of the Bodyguards creation, it is contained in a warrant, still existing in the record Office, dated 18th September 1485 which mentions the Yeoman of the Kings Guard so it is certain, therefore, that Henry VII created the Bodyguard between the 22nd of August and the 18 September 1485 (there are only five earlier Warrants in the whole of the records of Henry VII's reign)

The Bodyguard still proudly serves the Monarch to this day albeit in a ceremonial role rather than a fighting force or Bodyguard which it used to be.

I joined the Bodyguard in 2000 and was promoted to Divisional Sgt Major in October 2020. I believe I am the only former member of Royal Pioneer Corps to have served in the Bodyguard.

To become a member of the Bodyguard, and there is a waiting list, candidates for appointment must be WO's or SNCO's who have completed at least 22 years pensionable service, be in possession of the Long Service and Good Conduct medal and be of Exemplary character. A candidate cannot join whilst serving in the Regulars but may do so whilst serving in the TA. Former LE Officers are now able to join the Bodyguard.

Applications, which may be made at any time after completion of 20 years' service, this is strongly advised as there is a waiting list, are to be forwarded to the MOD by the individuals Commanding Officer. Applications may be made after

an individual has left the service, but it is easier to apply whilst serving.

On joining, a Tudor style uniform is issued free, but monk shoes must be provided at the yeoman's expense.

Yeoman are required to attend for duty at St James's Palace about six to eight times a year. There is no restriction on place of residence. Limited substance allowances and rail fares are provided (you pay up front and claim back from the palace).

The Bodyguard attend various duties such as Opening of Parliament, Garden parties, Diplomatic parties and many more that we don't have space here to list!

A Yeoman serves until they are seventy years old and are eligible for the Royal Victorian Medal (RVM). A stipend of £100.00 per year is paid to each Yeoman so a Yeoman will not get rich.

There are several social events per year, the Roger Monk Dinner, a Ladies Weekend, Christmas lunch as well as other social functions.

Being a member of the Kings Bodyguard of the Yeoman of the Guard is a great honour as you get to directly serve the Monarch plus apart from the Sgts Mess, it is the best old boys drinking club I have ever been in.

Colin Coull



■ Colin Coull, Kings Bodyguard of the Yeoman of the Guard
Picture: Colin Coull

THE PIONEER

■ **ONE YEAR** I might actually attend a reunion
Glyn Bailey

■ **LOOKING** forward to another great reunion!
Karen Armstrong

■ **LOOKS** like I am missing a great weekend, keep up the good work!
Nigel Smilie

■ **HI**, Many thanks for your response to Private Francis Owen Gallagher. I appreciate the trouble you went to and the information provided
Yvonne Moyle

■ **THAT'S ME** home in Alford, Aberdeenshire. Once again a fantastic Reunion in Bicester, catching up with people that I haven't seen for years. A big thank you to Norman Brown and team for organising the event. It was pure class. Thank you to my shell scrape mates Jan Olesen and Andy Hendry for Fridays accommodation. Great spooning. Seen you all Next Year.
Taff Teague

■ **JUST** got home from the reunion. Had a great time catching up with old friends and met some new ones. Head hurts a lot and not with a hangover but so worth it. Thanks to everyone at the association for a fantastic time. Even my son gave stoppy a return message haha. And to the pioneer who sold me the picture from the auction thank you very much it was extremely kind of you and the kids love it thanks
Jan Olesen

■ **WHO IS** responsible for the RPC Shop these days?
Lee Steward
Ed Note: Billy Dilkes!

■ **HI EVERYONE**, Just to let you all know I was on TV on Friday on Bargain loving Brits in the Sun. My stage name is Andy the Entertainer if you haven't seen it you can see on catch up, Channel 5, Episode 10, Series 20 with my song called Benidorm playing. I am also on 2 more shows next year!
Andy Conyers



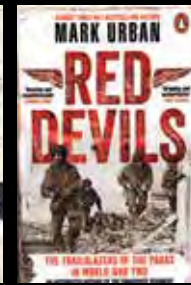
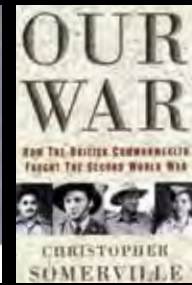
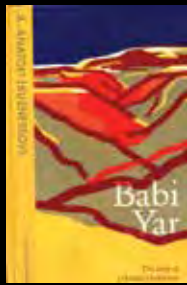
Write in or email us...

The Royal Pioneer Corps Association

c/o BGSU
St George's Barracks
ARNCOTT
Bicester OX25 1PP



or email us at:
thepioneerhq@gmail.com



Fishers of men

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

OVER over 3,000 members of the RPC served in Northern Ireland during Op Banner, most will have heard of "14 Company" and some will also have worked with them. The Force Research Unit was so secret that the rest of the Army was unaware of its existence. This is the only book that will reveal of what went on. Fishers of Men is the true account of secret operations in Northern Ireland carried out by the British Army's most clandestine unit. It tells the unique story, through Rob

Lewis's own extraordinary experiences, of an essential instrument in the fight against terrorism, that of covert intelligence gathering. The men and women who work in this field are a special breed who undertake hazardous risks with unflinching tenacity and professionalism – the price of intelligence is high, and the need for secrecy must be preserved even at the expense of personal relationships. The sheer determination and single-mindedness required to achieve selection to this secret world is graphically described, as well as how, against seemingly impossible odds, the operators of the FRU managed to persuade terrorists and their close associates

to turn informer. The methods the unit used to target, recruit and handle their contacts, how they protected their informants, and the terrifying life their agents led are all told by an agent handler, using many of his cases to illustrate the sharpness, intelligence and sense of humour – essential to the job. It fills a gap in the available information about the secret was against terrorism in Northern Ireland. It is a gap that has so far remained largely unexplored – until Rob Lewis's informative and explosive book.

FISHERS OF MEN
AUTHOR: BOB LEWIS
ISBN: 978-1-78606-469-1

Largest massacre in holocaust

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

IT was 1941 when the German army rolled into Kyiv. The author was just twelve years old. This book is formed from his journals in which he documented what follows. Within ten days of arriving in Kyiv, the Nazis had begun their campaign of murdering every Jew, and many others, in the city. Babi Yar (Babyn Rar in Ukrainian) was the place where the executions took place. It was one of the largest massacres in the history of the Holocaust. Anatoli could hear the machine guns from his house. This gripping book is the story of Ukraine's Nazi occupation, told by one ordinary brave child. His clear, compelling voice, his honesty and his determination to survive guide us through the horrors of that time. Babi Yar has the compulsion and narration of fiction but everything recounted in this book is true.

BABI YAR
AUTHOR: A ANATOLI (KIZNETSOV)
ISBN: 978-1-784-87839-9

Fled to fight

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

OPERATION Market Garden, the largest Allied airborne operation of the Second World War, began on 17 September 1944. The British 1st Airborne Division was deployed to Arnhem. This division included twenty-one Jewish Germans and Austrian. They had grown up in Nazi Germany, but managed to escape to Britain in the 30's. These men had to leave almost all their family and possessions behind. In Britain, their attempts to build a new life were rudely interrupted by the German invasion of Europe. Distrust of German and Austrian refugees grew among the British population and in June 1940 the British government decided to intern them. To secure their release from internment camps, a large number enlisted in the British Army. *Ed note: until 1942 they were only entitled to join the Pioneer Corps) and eventually joined the airborne forces with which they fought at Arnhem. In this book the extraordinary history of these Jewish men is told through personal stories.*

JEWISH REFUGEES OF 1ST AIRBORNE DIVISION
AUTHOR: JORY BRENTJENS
ISBN: 9 789462 585935

Swansea Blitz

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

THIS book tells the story of Stephen Piper, born at the beginning of the twentieth century in Swansea, South Wales. It details his life in his own words growing up in a poor family, his life in the Merchant Navy during and after WW1 and life during the Depression in Swansea. It relates what it was like in the Home Guard during the Swansea Blitz and of his time in the Pioneer Corps when he became an officer *Ed Note: spending most of his service in Salvage Units.* Lastly, it tells of his life after the Second World War in Germany and coming back to Wales when he was nearly sixty. *Ed Note: We received the following letter: Dear Norman Brown, Please find enclosed my grandfather Steve Piper's autobiography in thanks for your help in researching his records. Whilst it deals with all his life, there is quite a lot of detail of his time during WW2 which interest you. If you know of anyone else it may be of interest the book is available on Amazon, Helen Polden*

A SWANSEA MAN REMEMBERS
AUTHOR: HELEN POLDEN
ISBN: 978-0-9572459-0-7

WW2 Commonwealth

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

OUR War is a fascinating and very human study of the service of men and women of the British Commonwealth in the Second World War. Those six years of high adventure and terrible suffering left an indelible mark on every individual who took part. They also lit the touch paper for the final disintegration of the old British Empire.

Few who saw the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the end of the Second World War will ever forget the emotional sight of proud and tearful veterans from all parts of the Commonwealth who paraded through London in August 1995.

This is their story: an epic that embraces comedy and tragedy, pride and degradation,

close comradeship and stark racial prejudice, devotion to the benign Mother Country and a burning desire to see the back of her.

The story of the British Commonwealth in the Second World War, in all its variety of race, creed and culture, has never before been brought together. Many of the veterans whom the author interviewed has never before spoken of their war experiences, even to their closest loved ones.

Our War remains their one and only testimony. And what emerges from it is the extraordinary bravery and endurance shown by ordinary men and women.

This is their faithful memoir, in their own words, to subsequent generations, to their own children and grandchildren.

It is their tribute to the five million Commonwealth citizens who left home to

fight with the Allies, and to the 170,000 who died or went missing. At the same time, it is a memorial to the British Empire, for good or ill.

Ed note: all this book was first published in 1998 it still makes fascinating reading, the Pioneer Corps gets several mentions. For those who served in the 60's and 70's will remember Colonel Etienne Marot who served with the Kings African Rifles in World War 2 before transferring to the Royal Pioneer Corps, he describes in detail service in Aden in the 60's – the worst posting in his career according to him.

OUR WAR – HOW THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH FOUGHT THE SECOND WORLD WAR

**AUTHOR: CHRISTOPHER SOMERVILLE
ISBN: 0-297-81668-3**

Red Devils Calais Defence

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

IMPRESSED by the performance of Germany's paratroops in the first two years of the Second World War, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill called for the formation of a British equivalent. By the end of 1941, No 2 Commando had been retrained as paratroops.

The first volunteers underwent training designed to encourage a spirit of self-discipline, self-reliance and aggressiveness. Emphasis was given to physical fitness, field craft and skill at arms.

The new unit went through several name changes, ending up as 1st Parachute Battalion in September 1941. Along with three newly-formed battalions of volunteers from other regiments, this made up the 1st Parachute Brigade.

The success of 2nd Battalion in a raid on a coastal radar station at Bruneval in northern France led to further expansion.

Several infantry battalions converted to airborne infantry and the existing parachute battalions gathered into a new Parachute Regiment in August 1942.

This new regiment was placed

under the authority of the Army Air Corps, alongside the existing Glider Pilot Regiment. Before the end of the year, 1st Parachute Brigade had been in action in French Morocco and Algeria during Operation Torch.

Two of the converted infantry battalions were grouped with the existing 4th Parachute Battalion to form a 2nd Parachute Brigade. This fought in Sicily (1943), Italy (1943-44), southern France (1944) and Greece (1944-45).

By June 1944, there were five parachute brigades consisting of 17 battalions. They fought in most of the major theatres of the war with 1st Airborne Division, 6th Airborne Division and the independent 2nd Parachute Brigade.

Five parachute battalions landed prior to D-Day (1944) to destroy bridges and gun batteries. They helped cut off German reinforcements from the Normandy beachheads. Six battalions fought at Arnhem during Operation Market Garden (1944).

Parachute battalions also saw action in the Battle of the Bulge (1945) and the Rhine Crossings (1945).

**RED DEVILS
AUTHOR: MARK URBAN
ISBN: 978-0-241-99522-8**

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied

TED Taylor, 1st Battalion, The Rifle Brigade was sent to France in May 1940 as part of Calais Force, initially sent to

open up supply lines on the retreating BEF, they soon found themselves defending Calais.

Outnumbered by at least three to one they held out for 4 days until they ran out of ammo and were forced to surrender.

For the next five years Ted found himself part of the huge slave labour force in Poland under the administration of Stalag XXA and Stalag XXB. Life in the POW Camps bore little resemblance to the cheerful films of the 1850's with casual brutality never far from the surface. As 1945 began and the war entered the final bloody phase, the POW's dared to believe that at last they might be going home. But fate had one more cruel trick to play.

As the Russians approached the terrified Germans evacuated the camps and, in temperatures below -25c, began marching the malnourished, poorly-clothed POW's back across Europe. The infamous 'death marches' to freedom across the frozen, chaotic, war ravaged landscapes of Eastern Europe had begun.

**SURVIVING THE NAZI ONSLAUGHT –
CAROLE MCENTREE-TAYLOR
ISBN: 178383106-1**



The Last Post

Since the last newsletter it is with great sadness to report the following deaths

MOORE ROBERT 24064433 22 NOV 22 EX LCPL (AGED 78)
Served 1966 – 1990

TODD CA (CARL) 24522289 6 JAN 23 EX PTE (AGED 61)
Served 1979-1986

LINFORD PETER ALFRED 23746583 15 DEC 22 EX CPL (AGED 80)
Served 1960 – 1963

CLISSOLD JOSEPH (JOE) 24607262 6 JAN 23 EX PTE (AGED 61)
Served 1980 – 1996

ENGLISH GD (GARY) 24763757 9 JAN 23 EX PTE (AGED 54)
Served 1986 – 1992



O'BYRNE JOSEPH MICHAEL 22924744 15 NOV 22 EX PTE (AGED 87)
Served 1953-1954 in 71 Coy RPC



SCOTT GRAHAM JOHN 23661996 2 NOV 22 EX WO2 (AGED 85)
Served as a Clerk from 1961 – 1983

OLDHAM ALFRED 22934635 1 JUL 22 EX SGT (AGED 77)
Served 1953 – 1962

PARSONS FREDERICK DONALD 22945244 JULY 22 EX PTE (AGED 86)
Served 1953 – 1955

COOPER JOHN 19166798 17 DEC 22 EX LCPL (AGED 93)
Served 1947 – 1949

BRUNGER PM (PATRICK) 24488170 31 DEC 22 EX PTE (AGED 60)
Served 1978 – 1984

LAWREY RAYMOND 24348122 11 FEB 23 EX PTE (AGED 68)
Served 1974 – 1979

BANKS LESLIE GEORGE BEM 23231233 4 AUG 23 EX WO2 (AGED 86)
Served 1955 – 1977



MATTHEWS PETER GEORGE 23920757 22 AUG 23 EX SSGT (AGED 89)
Served 1962 – 1984



EVANS TP (TONY) 24417523 7 NOV 23 EX LCPL (AGED 68)
Served 1976 - 1989

PLUMMER ALAN 23109626 25 AUG 23 EX CAPT (AGED 86)
Served 1957 - 1979

TURNER DEREK CHARLES 22467240 30 NOV 22 EX LCPL (AGED 90)
Served 1953 – 1956 (Was Standard Bearer for London Branch)

MILLINGTON JOHN 23996592 21 OCT 23 EX CPL (AGED 76)
Served 1965 – 1975

MULLANEY CLIFF (23496390) 10 NOV 23 EX SSGT (AGED 85)
Served 1958 - 1960

FOY ROBERT WILLIAM (DICK) 24101082 14 APR 23 EX WO2 (AGED 76)
Served 1966 – 1988 (Was RQMS at RPC Trg



Centre for many years)



HULL MICHAEL WILLIAM CHARLES (MICKY) (IN PENSIONER) 23545771 EX LCPL 21 APR 23
Served from 1958-1961 and 1966-1977. Became an In Pensioner in 2006 and attended all Reunions and Dinners until 2019.



Picture: A Pioneer Soldier in Northern Ireland on duty

BROOME KENNETH COLONEL 12 APR 23 (AGED 94) 23036054 (AS A NATIONAL SERVICEMAN) AND LATER 439702 AS A TA OFFICER.

Served from 1954 until 1983. Was OC of both 34 and 68 Coys RPC(V) and appointed Honorary Colonel in 1981. Throughout his service and when retired he was a regular attender at the Past and Present Officers Dinners.



BENTLEY MICHAEL KEVIN 24175397 29 NOV 22) EX PTE (AGED 69)
Served 1970 – 1976

MERRITT ROBERT 24046501 (AGED 74) EX LCPL
Served 1972 – 1978

HILL NIGEL SPENCER 24687776 20 JUN 22 EX PTE (AGED 57)
Served 1984 – 1990

SIMISKER JOHN 23412177 5 SEP 22 (EX CPL) (AGED 84)
Served 1959 – 1962

WINTERBURN JOHN ROBERT 23341611 12 OCT 23 (EX CPL) AGED 85)
Served 1956 – 1958)

HOOKEYWAY GARY P (JOE) 24694799 17 SEP 23 (EX CPL)

Lt Col Billy Dilkes writes: I'm saddened to inform you of the passing of Gary (Joe) Hookway.

A proper Leicester lad who served throughout the 80's/90's and remained one of the best goalkeepers I ever played alongside representing both the RPC and 23 Pioneer Regt on a regular basis. A devoted husband, father, and grandfather, who was always the loudest and the nicest fellow you could wish to meet.

Our sincere condolences to Sue, Family and close friends. RIP Joe, you'll be missed by your Pioneer brothers...



ASHBY COLIN 24520818 9 FEB 23 EX PTE (AGED 61)
Served 1979 – 1990

COOMBES VICTOR 24584444 5 MAY 23 EX PTE (AGED 61)

Served 1980 – 1987



GOUGH RICHARD WILLIAM 24075609 18 JUN 23 EX PTE (AGED 75)

GOUGH Richard William 24075609 18 Jun 23 Ex Pte (Aged 75)

EVANS COLIN DUDLEY 23696614 11 JUL 23 EX SGT (AGED 81)

Served 1968 - 1991

O'CONNELL PJ (PATRICK) 447121 25 JAN 23 EX LT COL OBERT (AGED 92)

He enlisted in 1952 and was given service number 22439961 after serving 4 year and 96 days (1 year and 12 days as a WO2) he was granted a Short Service Commission on 24 Mar 56 and was posted to 523 Coy.

He was posted to 405 Coy in Apr 57. In 1959 he was posted to BAOR and in Dec 59 promoted Capt and posted to HQ 13 Group before being posted to 5 PCLU Hannover. In Sep 62 he was posted to 1202 PCLU in Singapore and then in 1964 posted to 23 Group.

In Jun 66 he was posted to the Pioneer School, RPC Trg Centre and in July 55 promoted Maj. In Aig 59 he was posted as OC 522 Coy.

The following are extracts from the Corps Magazine issue numbers 101-103:

"The wind howled through 3 Sub-Depot. The rain beat down on the weary patrolman and his dog Midnight. The wind died. The air grew suddenly chill. Through the silence was heard the slow regular movement of some approaching creature. Could it be the Headless Horseman? The dog's hackles rose and he pressed

closer to his handler as a fearsome apparition glided out of the night.

"Hhhhalt, Whhhhoos gggoes there?"

"Major O'Connell, OC 522 Company"

The fears of the onlooker were fully justified as the OC was dressed in golf shoes, fisherman's oilskin trousers, parka and the very latest in New Bond Street flat 'ats.

Major O'Connell, who was accompanying Pte Brian Comrie and his guard dog Troy on one of his three hour routine patrols, was finding out what the midnight stag is like. He found out one thing. No matter what you wear; in Kineton you get wet."

"At the Annual Christmas Football Match the problem was the OC didn't seem to know the rules. Instead of the normal strip he wore a witch's costume and he kept diving into puddles and rolling on the ground. To cap it all he actually tried to kick the ball. Such audacious and villainous cheating could not be tolerated and we had no option but to handcuff him to the referee, Miss Lesley Sweetman, to keep him out of trouble."

"The Company were due to attend Leek Training Centre for a weekend. Electric fire, tape recorder, shooting stick, hats peculiar and particular, binoculars, overcoat, duffle coat, waterproof coat, mac suitcases one, two, three – that was the OC ready to go. We wonder what would be loaded for a full week."

In Aug 70 he returned to 5 PCLU as OC and in Sep 73 remaining in BAOR he was posted to HQ BAOR as DADPL(1).

He was promoted to LT Col and appointed Comdt RPC Trg Centre before being posted back to BAOR in Sep 77 as CO 45 Group. He then returned to HQ BAOR in May 80 as ADPL(M) before being posted to Berlin in Jan 83 as SO1 Lab Resource HQ Berlin Inf Bde/CO 14 (Indep) PCLU.

On retirement in Apr 85 he came AO CVHQ at the RPC Trg Centre, however he left in Apr 86 to take up a post with the Health Service. He was appointed Honorary Colonel Royal Pioneer Volunteers in Jul 88.

He always took a keen interest in the RPC Association and during his time in BAOR was Chairman of the BAOR Branch, he was also a Council Member of the Association from 1994 until 2008





And finally...

Report: Norman Brown / Paul Brown
Pictures: Norman Brown / Paul Brown

I'M SURE that there will be many veterans reading this that are currently missing military life? If so, I have put together some top tips to put the military back into your life! have the paperboy, or postman give you a haircut every 2 weeks, whether you need one or not.

1. Wait until it rains, then when the wife's done all the washing and ironing, throw it out the bedroom window onto the street in front of your neighbours, and yell at her, "not fucking good enough you mong, do it again!"

2. On pay day weekend, try your hardest to blow the lot, making sure you haven't paid any bills, then every weekend persuade a different mate to lend you £100. Pay them back next pay day though, making sure your entire wage has gone again, then repeat..

3. Sleep fully clothed, with muddy boots on. For added effect, sleep with a broom in the bed if you don't have an air rifle.

4. When the wife's asleep shine a torch in her eyes and wake her up. Then say, "sorry mate, wrong basha, " before turning the torch off.

5. When it's really cold, fill a tiny bowl with freezing water, strip to the waist and go into the garden, and have

a shave in the dark, don't use a mirror though.

6. At 05:00 wake the wife & kids up, by sneaking into their room. Put the lights on, and bang 2 dustbin lids together whilst shouting, "hands off cocks, hands on socks," at the top of your voice.

7. Limit meal times to 3 minutes. Just as everyone is enjoying their food, shout, "time's up, fall in outside." Finish your meal before joining them outside, and run them up and down the street, until they puke.

8. Practice how to get a single cigarette out of the packet, without taking the pack out of your pocket.

9. Check the oil, coolant, battery in your car every single day, then leave the engine running for an hour whilst you smoke and talk bollocks to the neighbour.

10. Ask the wife if she minds you going out on Friday. If she yes, go out anyway with your younger, single work mates. Ask the bar man to fill a pint glass with a mixture of every spirit he has. Down it in one, then stagger outside and pick a fight with a guy who's minding his own business.

If you don't get arrested, walk 5 miles home, (or steal a bike) strip off, climb into bed with the wife, then piss up her back before passing out. If she says anything, tell her you were on shark watch for the lads, it must have been her.

11. Stick a soft porn magazine behind the cistern in the bathroom in case any visitors would like to read whilst having a crap. ■



■ "Okay, last night you did the dishes... today, you're folding the laundry, what weekend is The Pioneer Reunion Weekend?" Picture: Brian

WE mentioned earlier that we would publish the great poem of our Chelsea Pensioner, Roy Palmer in this section. Here it is!

Oyez, oyez, oyez,
The Royal Hospital Chelsea
A place to be seen,
Sitting in 66 acres on lawns so green.
1681 Charles the Second employed
Christopher Wren
To build our Hospital, for ex-Army men

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?



Completed it once in 1692,
 For infirm soldiers before saying
 adieu.
 330 years it has here stood
 Surrounded by London with its own
 wood,
 A Chelsea Pensioner – a title well
 known –
 If 65 or over, you could call it home
 Ladies may come, having done their
 time,
 First made welcome in 2009
 So visit me in London, I can show you
 round,
 It's time well spent and will you
 astound!
 God save the King. ■

FOR CENTURIES, the British military has existed to defend the kingdom from threats. From the Spanish Armada to the armies of Napoleon and the Nazi Luftwaffe, the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines serve the crown and protect the realm. Today, the military works to stop terrorist threats abroad so they cannot cause destruction at home. Let's look at some interesting facts about the British Military.

In 2005, the Ministry of Defence issued soldiers special antimicrobial underwear that can be worn up to three months at a time without needing a change.

According to the Ministry of Defence, it costs £30,000 to train a soldier. The selection process costs £7,000, while Basic Training and the Combat Infantry Course cost £23,000.

During World War II, many POW escapes from Nazi prison camps were the result of playing Monopoly. The Red Cross sent special Monopoly boxes marked with a red dot on the Free Parking space to let prisoners know. In the game box, the Red Cross hid German marks amongst the monopoly money, a compass in the dog counter, a metal file in the board itself, and silk maps of the prison inside hollow hotel pieces.

During WW1 a British soldier had to be 19 years old to serve overseas but many lied about their age. About 250,000 under-age boys served. The youngest was discovered to be just 12.

Junior officers in the army, especially those from a privileged background, are sometimes known as Ruperts by the other ranks. This nickname is believed to have been derived from the children's comic book character Rupert Bear who epitomises traditional public school values. ■

LAST but not least a reminder that the 75th Pioneer Reunion weekend is next June! The Pioneer in the cartoon is already getting ready!

See you in Bicester over the weekend of 21st to 23rd June 2024! ■



■ In Some museum, in France you may find a beret on display belonging to the legendary Pioneer, 'Uncle Tom' Picture: Paul Brown



■ You can't make this up! Not only does Glen buy a mug with the wrong badge on but they spell 'FOREVER' wrong. Don't be a mug by from the Association! Picture: Glen Lath





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