

The
Regimental Association
of
The Queen's Own Buffs (PWRR)



THE JOURNAL

Number 12

Spring 2006



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**45th ANNIVERSARY OF
THE QUEEN'S OWN BUFFS
(THE ROYAL KENT REGIMENT)**



The late Lt. Colonel R. H. Dendy

The first Commanding Officer

of

The Queen's Own Buffs

The Royal Kent Regiment

EDITOR'S PAGE

This year is much less busy than 2005 with the many 60th anniversary celebrations that we then enjoyed, nonetheless there still seems to be a lot going on. On July 29th there will be a band concert by the Kohima Band at Leros Barracks, see the Notice Board for full details, August, of course, sees the annual Canterbury Reunion followed by the Tower of London Service of Remembrance and then the Maidstone Reunion which this year will be very special indeed as it marks the 250th anniversary of the formation of the 50th Foot. When you add these Association events to the Branch activities, we can look forward to yet another active year.

Editing The Journal is a great pleasure and privilege but the downside is the need to publish so many obituaries and notifications of the passing of members. This issue is no different and it is with great sadness that we see so many of our contemporaries with whom we had the privilege of serving passing into history, but not from our memories.

It is also the 45th anniversary of the amalgamation of The Buffs and The Queen's Own to form The Queen's Own Buffs. Drum Major Windsor Clark MBE was the Drum Major of The Queen's Own Buffs throughout the short time, some 5 years, of the regiment's existence. No regiment has had a smarter, more talented and respected Drum Major, and it is only right that his photo should appear on the front cover to mark the 45th anniversary and also, sadly, his passing.

Time has not allowed for a new design for the Regimental Association Christmas Card so the design will be the same as last year, the Warrior's Chapel. That design will, I feel, be pretty apt as the 80th anniversary of the first Turning of the Page was held on the 14th June 2006. An order form is enclosed and the price will be the same as last year. It has also been suggested that a series of Notelets be produced. These cards, without the Christmas greeting, can be used for a variety of purposes, 'Birthdays', 'Thank You' letters, 'In Sympathy' cards, 'Get Well Soon' or just for normal letters. Obviously before we can commit to a print run we need to know roughly how many are going to be needed, so, if they are of interest please complete the order form and send it in. For both orders your cheque needs to be made payable to The Queen's Own Buffs General Account. Both Christmas

Cards and Notelets will be printed in September and despatched in early October.

You will see in the minutes of the Regimental Association Annual General Meeting that The Journal is now secure financially for the foreseeable future with the award of an annual 'standby facility' of £1,000. This takes the pressure off having to secure late subscription payments to ensure The Journal's continuance. However it is still important to keep up to date with your subscriptions. It is hoped that in the next few months we will be able to offer a Direct Debit/Standing Order facility to subscribers which will eradicate the need for knotted handkerchiefs!!

You will see in this issue the start of a series of articles describing the history, short though it was, of the Queen's Own Buffs. A very large album of photos and press cuttings covering the entire life of the regiment was discovered at RHQ with plenty of photos etc. A great find as it has always been difficult to obtain such information. If seeing these articles, which will be spread over the next 4/5 issues, jogs the memory and you can find any photos, cuttings etc in support then let's have them.

Also found, at the same time, were three hand diaries written by Signaller F. H. Hawkins. 2/4 Royal West Kent's, which was originally a composite battalion made up of Buffs and West Kent's each wearing their own cap badge. The diaries were written between 1914 and 1918 and cover the Gallipoli Landings, Mesopotamia and the advance on Damascus. They are quite unique and of great historical interest and value. They are gradually being typed up and the first episode will appear in the next issue in December.

My contact details are: 54 South Eastern Road, Ramsgate, Kent CT11 9QE. Telephone 01843 580914, but please only during the day, by email on thejournal@peter-white.go-plus.net . If you are on Skype then my contact address is peterw81863.

Looking forward to seeing you at one or both of the reunions this year, if you can possibly make it please do so, every member counts.

God Bless

The Editor

BRANCH NEWS

RAMSGATE BRANCH

**SECRETARY: M. F. Milham. 185 Bradstow Way
Broadstairs, Kent. CT10 1AX**

**MEETING PLACE: The Royal British Legion Club
Allenby House, 14/16 Cliff Street, Ramsgate.**

MEETINGS: 3rd Friday in the month, 19.45 hrs

We open these notes by welcoming Jim Peall back to the branch, sufficiently recovered from his stroke to once again fill the chair as our Branch President. However, on the night of our March meeting we received the sad news that Jim's wife, Bridget, had passed away. Unfortunately that is not the end of the bad news, the branch has also lost Maurice Mann and my old Platoon Sergeant Stan Matthews. Our sincere condolences are sent to all those who were near and dear to all of them. We welcome a new member, Mike Harris, Mike served with QOB and 2 Queens. it was also nice to see Paddy Wakerall back with us.

At our November branch meeting Major Peter White presented Ernie Ovenden with his Certificate of War Service, then the chairman presented him with another Certificate and a glass tankard to commemorate his 50 years as a branch member and to thank him for his service to the branch. Ernie thanked them both for the presentations and said how surprised he was to get them, but also how pleased he was with them.

In November our dinner & dance was once again a real success, we had to stop selling tickets as we had filled the function room. The Canterbury members who attended should be congratulated on their sartorial elegance. Staying with Canterbury we once again really enjoyed the carol concert put on by them and are looking forward to the next invite.

With all the events of 2005 and the 60 years after WW2 now a fond memory it's back to a normal year and all that means. The plans are in full flow for all of our usual events, with some of them fully booked up many months in advance. The social side of things has already started with our annual darts match against the Ladies Guild. Congratulations are in order to both sides, the men for winning the darts match and the ladies for providing an excellent buffet. However that appears to

be the end of our darts success unless we can beat Canterbury in the return leg of our match with them.

With regards to my Turning the Page and the coincidence of my uncle's name appearing each first time in the month when I turned the page, December was different, the book was already open with his name showing. Major Peter White turned up to turn the page on a special day to him, Thursday 2nd February 2006. Expecting to be on his own with just the two members of the Cathedral staff present, but word had got out, I gather he was quite touched by those who turned up to support him, well done gentlemen.

We look forward to meeting many of you at the various events during 2006 and wish you all good health for this year.

MF

COLCHESTER BRANCH

**SECRETARY: G. Arnot, 30 Cairns Road,
Colchester, Essex, CO2 8UZ**

**MEETING PLACE: 3rd Sunday in the month.
Please contact the Secretary for venue.**

Here we are into yet another year so although it is a little on the late side may we wish all readers a happy new year.

Once again at our recent AGM our Committee was elected back into office en-bloc, whatever we are doing it must be right for our members. Our sick list remains much the same with John Rolfe and Pearl Mitchison still remaining on our long term sick list and now joining them are Brian Mitchison, Ray Giles, Bob Peterson and Michael Baxter and still doing well after their operations are Graham Arnot and 'Scouse' Sturgeon.

This year's Christmas Dinner was not so well attended as in the past but those who did attend had a good evening. This was followed by the Valentine's Dance which once again brought in much needed funds for the Branch so our thanks must go to our entertainments officer, Brian Mitchison, for his hard work throughout the year. Now it is on to the Albuhera Dinner which this year is to be held

at a different venue to try and bring down the cost, this will be followed by a trip to Southend and of course the two Reunions.

We must congratulate Mary Arnot (wife of Graham) on receiving the Long Service Medal after 25 years working for the MOD which she received last May at the Garrison Sgt's Mess Colchester the photograph shows Mary receiving her Medal from Colonel Tony Barton who himself hails from Canterbury, the citation from Central Chancery of the Order of Knighthood reads;

"I am commanded to forward the Imperial Service Medal which Her Majesty The Queen has been graciously pleased to award to you in recognition of the meritorious services you have rendered".



We have told her that she must be on Parade with Medal gleaming at the Reunions from now on.

GA

CANTERBURY BRANCH

**Secretary: Mr H G B Delo, 38 Reculver Avenue,
Minnis Bay, Birchington CT7 9NU**

Tel: 01843 842357

**Meeting Place: The Chaucer Club, Chaucer Hill, off
Military Road, Canterbury.**

Meeting: Last Thursday of the month at 20.00hrs.

Since the last issue of the journal we have lost 3 members of the branch, Harry Bennett (ex Buffs) who was for many years the Standard Bearer for the Royal

British Legion, Chartham; Stanley Ray, (ex Royal Sussex) and Windsor Clark who many of you would have known as the Drum Major of the band of the RWK's, the Queen's Own Buffs and 2nd Queen's. Despite the distance, Windsor's funeral was well attended with Branch members and Colin Smith, our Standard Bearer.

Windsor's brother Ted, passed away two years ago, what a talented pair they were. They will be sadly missed.

Over the Armistice weekend Poppy wreaths were laid at the Buffs war memorial in the Dane John gardens, Canterbury, in the Warriors chapel at the Cathedral after the Turning of the Page ceremony and on Armistice Sunday at the War memorial in the Butter Market, Canterbury. After the Cathedral service 70 persons attended the Canterbury Golf club for a hot carvery lunch, this annual event has become very popular with members and we have already booked the same venue for 2006.

On the following Saturday the Ramsgate Branch extended an invitation to our members and their wives to attend their Annual Dinner at the "San Clu" Hotel, Ramsgate. It was an excellent dinner and a very enjoyable evening was had by all who attended. Thank you Ramsgate for inviting us and we hope to be invited next year if you will have us, I promise we won't play up. The Canterbury and Ramsgate Branches now have a very good working relationship and we join together for social events and functions, we are finding that this is working very well. At our last meeting of 2005, at the closure of the meeting our Branch ladies organised and laid on a large buffet to which they invited all members to join them. The Chairman Harry Crooks thanked the ladies for all their work and efforts during 2005 especially for that particular buffet which was quite superb.

Our Carol Service in December was again well organised by Mr George Croxford BEM. and was very well attended, with many association members attending from as far away as London. We were pleased to welcome them.

It was decided to hold a Christmas dinner and social this year instead of just the usual social, this was held at the Canterbury Golf club and proved to be very popular with 74 persons attending. As the evening was so successful it was decided to hold the dinner again in 2006.

January 2006, a very quiet month with no activities just a breathing space to get over the festivities of the old year and to build up strength for the busy months ahead.

In February the Branch held its Annual General Meeting and the Chairman said he was pleased to welcome Major Dennis Bradley BEM our Association Regimental Secretary to the meeting. All committee members were returned to office unopposed, the only change being the post of Social Secretary, Bernard Miles has taken over from Tom Glasgow who has retired due to ill health. The Chairman thanked Tom for his services to the Branch.

Stan Wooldridge organised a trip to the Royal Albert Hall, for a musical festival by the band of the Royal Marines. What an excellent performance and one that should not be missed next year if you get the opportunity to attend. The cost of the coach was paid for by the ladies of the Branch who had raised the money by holding a coffee morning with a Ploughman's lunch, also a large Raffle, Bric a Brac stall and a Cake stall as well as raising other monies throughout the year. Well done ladies and many thanks from us all.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr and Mrs Bendt Arndt, our friends from the Denmark Branch, who were in Canterbury on holiday. Bendt 'Turned the Page' at the Warriors Chapel in the Cathedral on Friday 31st March and Maurice Samson took along the Denmark Branch Standard, members of the Branch attending to give Bendt their support.

The March meeting was very short as we were entertaining the Ramsgate Branch for the first leg of the inter Branch Darts match which we won by 2 legs to 1. Once again our ladies organised and prepared a large buffet following the match. The second leg was played at Ramsgate following their May meeting which we lost 2 to 1. It was decided to play a third match at Canterbury in September to decide who wins the trophy.

The Chairman and Secretary attended the Association Annual General Meeting at Sittingbourne. Well done Sittingbourne, once again excellent organisation, keep it up for 2007. Unfortunately once again we were knocked out in the first match. Well done to the winners. We will win the trophy one day. It was decided at our meeting in April to make our annual visit to Ypres this year on Saturday 29th July which will give the ladies an opportunity to do some shopping and

spend our money. John Bishop is once again organising it for us so things will go with a swing.

On Saturday 6th May we were invited by Ramsgate Branch to join them for their Annual Albuhera supper dance which was an excellent evening, I was unable to attend but my spies tell me that it was an evening with good organisation, good company and good food. "Well done Ramsgate and thanks" The following Saturday we held our Annual Dinner at the Canterbury Golf Club which was attended by 35 members along with their wives. Our guests this year were Colonel Crispin Champion (Association President) and Major Peter White MM. (Vice Chairman East Kent), regrettable their wives could not attend due to previous engagements. Our Chairman invited Colonel Champion to say a few words which he did and his talk was very interesting, lively and humorous, perhaps Colonel, you will be able to repeat your story about the cat on another suitable occasion as it went down very well with the company present. Music for singing and dancing after dinner was provided by Ken Burrows who has served us well for many years.

(Editor's Note: At the Canterbury Branch Albuhera Dinner a special presentation was made to Henry Delo in the form of a Certificate to recognise Henry's quite unique contribution to not just Canterbury Branch but the entire Association. The Certificate was presented to Henry, who for once had no idea what was going to happen, by the Association President, Colonel Crispin Champion, see picture below.)



On Saturday 3rd June we again teamed up with the Ramsgate Branch to make a trip to London to watch the rehearsal of Trooping the Colour (Major General's Review) in preparation for the Queen's Birthday parade. Although it is good to watch on the TV it is not the same as seeing it live, you do feel the tremendous atmosphere and sense of occasion. To everyone's pleasure and delight I was the only one of the party to be fully searched and would you believe it the machine

started bleeping. This was caused by my silver pen on the inside breast pocket of my blazer.

Well friends, this is all for now as there are another few months ahead of us and plenty to do, so we wish you the very best of health and hope to meet you all at the Canterbury reunion.

HD

SITTINGBOURNE BRANCH

SECRETARY: Mr A Chesson, 16 Cedar Close, Sittingbourne, ME10 4TV

MEETING PLACE: The Ypres Tavern, West Street, Sittingbourne

MEETING: 1st Tuesday in the month at 19.30 hours.

As new Chairman & an ex regular in The Buffs I should have known better than to volunteer again, anyway I am now also "Scribe" for the Branch., Ernie White having at last decided to lay down his quill pen, paper and typewriter after many years of great service to the Branch, although he is still a regular attender at our meetings.

Meetings have been fairly well attended and numbers maintained. A new member has joined us, Mick Reeves, known as "Ginger" during his service with The Buffs, although perhaps "Snowy" might be more appropriate now, We extend a warm welcome to him.

Sadly, we have lost another of our members, Reg Whittington, who died in February, Reg had been a member of the Association for some time and had served as a Member of Kent Ambulance for some forty years. A large contingent from our Association, the R.A.F. Association and British Legion attended the funeral, it was especially poignant for me as I had known Reg and his daughter for many years. Our thoughts are with his widow and family.

The Annual Dinner and Dance was, as usual, a great success, thanks again to our Social Secretary, Paul Fleming and his wife, Jenny, both of whom work so hard behind the scenes. The food was good, the company great and the music fantastic. One of the highlights was when Ernie White was called forward to be thanked for all his work over the years, he was given

a big ovation and presented with enough of a certain type of alcohol to last him for more than a few weeks. He was lost for words!

The Annual General Meeting and Darts Tournament was held in the usual venue on 22nd April and was well attended, and, YES! we have been promised sufficient chairs for all attending the Canterbury Reunion!! The Darts Tournament followed the meeting and I am very pleased that Sittingbourne Branch carried away the Trophy, well done to our Team, led by Mike Matson. The Buffet Dance was as successful as ever, again thanks to Paul & Jenny; the Chicken and Chips Supper was excellent, and a very good time was had by all.

A fairly large contingent attended Leros Barracks on 3rd May for the talk on service with the PWRR in Iraq, a most interesting evening which was well and truly rounded off when yours truly won second prize in the raffle - a magnificent Regimental Side Drum from the 1st Battalion, The Queen's.

Finally, members of the Branch attended Tonge Memorial Park, Sittingbourne on 18th June for a Service of Dedication of a tree planted in memory of the members of the Royal Air Force who gave their lives in the service of our country. The service was conducted by our own Padre, the Reverend Bernard Foulger. It was a sweltering hot day but we made it through without mishap.

The Service was followed by a Fly Past by a Hurricane of the Memorial Flight, and the pilot really did put on a good show. Many members of the Public attended; I wonder, was it because the Hurricane, Spitfire and Lancaster were expected? Perhaps I am being a little cynical as all those attending seemed to take part in the service and hymn singing with great gusto.

Best Wishes to all members of our Association from Sittingbourne Branch.

LADIES GUILD (RAMSGATE)

SECRETARY: Mrs Molly Webster, 11 Turnden Gardens, Cliftonville, CT9 3HB.

MEETING PLACE: The Royal British Legion Club, Allenby House, 14/16 Cliff Street, Ramsgate.

MEETING: 4th Friday in the month(except Oct & Dec), at 19.45 hrs

Over the past year we have endeavoured to vary our meetings and we have enjoyed socials, competition, a Quiz, Bingo, the Christmas Fayre and a darts match with the men's branch.

In July we look forward to our evening drive followed by a meal as a treat to ourselves.

Our member, Mrs Beryl Scott, was on mayoral duties when our Guild enjoyed a tour of the Guildhall in Sandwich. On the social front, Mrs Pat Wass attended a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace representing the Royal British Legion Village at Aylesford.

We look forward to seeing many of our old friends at the re-unions this year. In the meantime take care.

MW

LONDON (BUFFS) BRANCH

SECRETARY: Leroy Gittings, 4 Prospect Cottages, Wandsworth, London. SW18 1NW.

Tel No. 0208 870 7290

MEETING PLACE: Ives Lounge, The Royal Hospital Chelsea.

MEETING: 3rd Saturday in the month at 19.00 hrs.

BROMLEY BRANCH

SECRETARY: B L Bartlett, 185 Park Crescent, Erith, Kent DA8 3EB.

MEETING PLACE: Bromley United Services Club, 33 London Road, Bromley.

MEETING: Last Saturday in the month at 20.00 hrs.

MEDWAY BRANCH

SECRETARY: Marilyn Devonshire, 136 Brompton Lane, Strood, Kent ME2 3BA

MEETING PLACE: The R.A.F.A. Club, Riverside, Chatham, Kent

MEETING: 1st Wednesday in the month at 20.00 hrs.

MAIDSTONE BRANCH

SECRETARY: Mrs. D Hall-Richardson, 31 Bychurch Place, Waterloo Street, Maidstone, Kent ME15 7UQ

MEETING PLACE: The Eagle, Upper Stone Street, Maidstone.

MEETING: Third Tuesday in the month at 19.30 hrs.

HYTHE & FOLKESTONE BRANCH

SECRETARY: Mr. S C Macintyre, Quarry Lane Cottage, Hythe, Kent CT21 5HE. Tel: 01303 266778

MEETING PLACE: The Royal British Legion Hall, St. Leonards Road, Hythe

MEETING: Second Thursday in the month at 7.30pm.

SANDWICH BRANCH

SECRETARY: Mr. D G Hogben, 75 Burch Avenue, Sandwich, Kent CT13 0AN. Tel: 01304 612920

MEETING PLACE: The R.A.F.A Windsock Club, The Market, Sandwich

MEETING: 2nd Wednesday in the month (except August, at 19.30 hrs.

DENMARK BRANCH

SECRETARY: Andrew Breining, Kildehojen 15, DK 4690 Haslev, Denmark.

MEETINGS: Contact the Secretary for details.

**THE MINUTES OF THE 37th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE
REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION OF THE QUEEN'S OWN BUFFS(PWRR)
HELD AT SITTINGBOURNE ON SATURDAY 22nd APRIL 2006**

PRESENT

Colonel C G Champion	President
Colonel P Bishop OBE DL	Sittingbourne Branch President
Lieutenant Colonel P P Critchley	Chairman - West Kent
Major D Bradley BEM	Association Secretary
Major P A Gwilliam	Chairman East Kent
Mr G Arnot	Colchester Secretary
Major J R Barrell OBE TD LLB	Vice Chairman West Kent
Mr J Ferneyhough	Ramsgate Chairman
Mr P Fleming	Sittingbourne Social Secretary
Mr H Delo	Secretary - Canterbury Branch
Mr H Crooks	Chairman - Canterbury Branch
Mr J A Jarrett	Sittingbourne Branch
Mr G Dunk	Sittingbourne Chairman
Mr J Earl	Sittingbourne Branch
Mr J Nankervis	Chairman - Maidstone Branch
Mr B D Foulger	Sittingbourne, Padre
Mr H C J King	Ramsgate Treasurer
Mr D G Hogden	Sandwich Secretary
Mr A Moss	Sandwich
Mr A Chesson	Secretary - Sittingbourne Branch
Mrs J Allen	Secretary 62 Club
Mr W Woolven	Vice Chairman 62 Club
Mr J Burr	Chairman - Colchester Branch
Mr B Mitchison	Treasurer - Colchester Branch
Mr M F Milham	Ramsgate Secretary
Mr L Gittens	London Secretary
Mr W A Pledger	Sittingbourne - Life Member

APOLOGIES

Mrs D G Hall-Richardson	Secretary - Maidstone Branch
Major P White MM	Vice Chairman - East Kent
Mr S Mackintyre	Folkestone & Hythe Secretary
Mr B Bartlett	Hon Vice Chairman
Mr J H Read	Sittingbourne Branch
Mr W J Pinder	London Branch

There were others in attendance; however, their names were unable to be deciphered.

1. WELCOME BY THE PRESIDENT

- a. Colonel C G Champion welcomed all members to the AGM and thanked the Sittingbourne Branch for once again agreeing to host the event.
- b. A period of silence was then observed in memory of all members who had died during the year. Reverend Bernard Foulger then said prayers. Colonel Champion spoke on the following subjects:
 - (i) Attendance at the AGM by all branch representatives, this being a pre requisite of the Associations Charitable status.
 - (ii) Colonel Champion to join PWRR Trustees as Buffs Representative.
 - (iii) 250th Anniversary of QORWK Regiment - Maidstone Reunion.
 - (iv) Cocktail Party 6th September 2006 Maidstone Museum. 3 Guests per branch to include the Branch Chairman and Secretary, along with their wives/partners.
 - (v) National Veterans Day - 27th June annually. Association not organising anything as we have two reunions per year, band concerts, cocktail party, Tower of London and the Canterbury Carol Concert. Branches also have a full calendar, which includes dinners.
 - (vi) Canterbury Reunion Parade It was proposed by the President and Seconded by Mr H Delo that all standards are paraded 'en block' at the front of the parade at the Canterbury Reunion. This change is for one year only (a trial) and will be reviewed at the AGM 2007. The Secretary to communicate this change to all branches.
Carried unanimously.
 - (vii) The President requested that a 'vote of thanks' be recorded to the Association Secretary for his work on behalf of the Association during 2005.

2. MINUTES OF THE 36TH MEETING HELD ON 12TH MARCH 2005

The minutes of the 36th meeting having been previously circulated were confirmed as a true record.

Proposed by J Ferneyhough

Seconded by T Chesson.

Carried unanimously.

3. ANNUAL INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF ACCOUNTS

The meeting resolved to approve the following accounts, the Secretary having given an overview of the benevolent account now administered by PWRR and the Association account.

- a. Regimental Association Fund.

Proposed by G Dunk

Seconded by J Burr

Carried unanimously with a vote of thanks to Miss Pam Howie, RHQ Finance Secretary and Major D Bradley, Association Secretary.

4. BENEVOLENCE REVIEW

Copies of the summary of benevolence were distributed outlining how funds had been spent. Letters of appreciation have been sent to the Army Benevolent Fund, SSAFA and the Royal British Legion.

Proposed by H Crooks
Seconded by D G Hogben

Carried unanimously with a vote of thanks to Major J Rogerson, RHQ Benevolent Secretary and Major D Bradley, Association Secretary.

5. ANNUAL GRANTS 2006

a.	Benevolence fund to General Fund	=	£10,000.00
b.	Canterbury Cathedral	=	£75.00
c.	All Saints Church - Maidstone	=	£75.00
d.	Kohima Band	=	£75.00
e.	Purchase of chairs (Canterbury Reunion)	=	£1000.00
f.	Association band concert charge (Association to pay ED charges).	=	£6.00 per head
g.	Canterbury Cricket Club	=	£300.00

Proposed by H E J King
Seconded by J Nankervis

Carried unanimously.

6. CANTERBURY REUNION 2006

Major Bradley outlined the arrangements for 2006, which included the purchase of approximately 250 white plastic chairs. He also stated that a guest preacher was not yet confirmed and that more afternoon entertainment was still to be booked.

7. MAIDSTONE REUNION 2006

The President explained that the reunion would be the focus feature of the celebrations for the 250th Anniversary of the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment. Major Bradley then gave the detail that included a free lunch for all. The Kohima Band to play in the church and hopefully the Lord Lieutenant of Kent in attendance.

8. ASSOCIATION BAND CONCERT

Major Bradley informed the meeting that there was to be an Association Band Concert in Leros Barracks, Canterbury on Sunday 23rd July 2006.

9. 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF TURNING THE PAGE

A special 'page turning' ceremony is to take place in Canterbury Cathedral on the 14th June 2006.

10. WEALD OF KENT BRANCH

- a. The President informed the meeting that a new branch was to be formed entitled the Weald of Kent Branch. Major Bradley explained that a letter had been sent to those association members on our

database who live a commutable distance from Tonbridge where it is planned for the branch to meet. This had produced 33 (thirty three) potential members. It was further explained that Major Patrick Gwilliam would become the Branch Treasurer and Lt Colonel Philip Critchley the Secretary, with the President as a member.

- b. It is anticipated that the meeting venue would be the Tonbridge Royal British Legion which is located very near Tonbridge Railway Station. Once the venue is confirmed a letter will be sent to all interested persons informing them of the date for the inaugural meeting.
- c. It was proposed that a grant of £500.00 be donated to the branch from the Association Benevolence Fund as a 'start up' grant.

Proposed by H Delo

Seconded by W Woolven

Carried unanimously

11. ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

Due to the absence of Major Peter White MM, the Journal Editor, due to ill health, the Secretary briefed the meeting on journal finances, subscribers and the current mailing list. It was proposed by the President and seconded by Mr H Crooks that £1000.00 be transferred to the Journal Account from the Benevolent Fund on an annual basis should the fund require it. This will assist in maintaining the subscriptions at their current level and ensure the future of The Journal.

Proposed by Colonel C G Champion

Seconded by Mr H Crooks

Carried unanimously with a vote of thanks to Major Peter White for all his efforts with The Journal and best wishes for a speedy recovery to full health.

A résumé of The Journal brief is shown is at Annex E.

12. SALE OF ASSOCIATION CHRISTMAS CARDS 2006

- a. The Christmas cards offered for sale this year will be of the same design as 2005.
- b. In addition to Christmas cards, notelets for all round use will be produced in packs of 12.

13. ASSOCIATION WEBB SITE

This continues to be very well supported and is updated on a regular basis. It has proved to be an excellent source of information and communication for the Association.

14. MAJOR EVENTS 2006

- a. 14th June - 80th Anniversary Turning the Page
- b. 23rd July - Kohima Band Concert Leros Barracks
- c. 6th August - Canterbury Reunion
- d. 6th September - Cocktail Party, Maidstone Museum
- e. 17th September - Maidstone Reunion
- f. 9th November - Festival of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey

15. **ITEMS SUBMITTED FOR DISCUSSION BY BRANCHES**

a. Sittingbourne Branch.

Question: A statement from the Management Committee on the position of chairs and what they can expect in the way of seating at the Canterbury Reunion this year.
Association

Association Secretary Reply

£1000.00 allocated for expenditure on chairs, 250 chairs ordered from Tesco, we are currently awaiting confirmation of our order.

b. Sittingbourne Branch.

Question. The Branch asked for acceptance and we hope assistance to introduce a l a p e l badge for members who may so wish, indicating the association, individuals name and branch i.e. city or town, with the aim of people becoming better acquainted when they first meet.

Association Secretary - Reply:

The Committee of Management are happy with the proposal. Sittingbourne Branch to administer and finance project.

c. Ramsgate Branch

Question. The RHQ of the Association are requested to locate the whereabouts of the 'Inter Association Shooting Cup'. In the event of it being found Ramsgate Branch retain it, having won it most times.

Association Secretary - Reply

Enquiries have been made but unfortunately the Cup has not been found.

16. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

a. Mr Leroy Gittens spoke about the lottery grant situation with particular emphasis on the diversity allocation.

b. Mrs Jackie Allen, Secretary of the 62 Club, presented a cheque to the President for £100.00 in respect of a donation by the 62 Club to the Maidstone Reunion.

17. **DATE AND VENUE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2007**

The next meeting will be held on Saturday 14th April 2007 at Sittingbourne Paper Club.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 1805 hours

250th ANNIVERSARY

50th Regiment of Foot raised 7th January 1756



A Royal Warrant dated January 7th, 1756, authorised Colonel James Abercrombie to raise men, from any part of Great Britain, to serve in a new Regiment of Foot, the 52nd. In December of that same year the 50th and 51st regiments were disbanded, whereupon the 52nd was renumbered as the 50th.

The Regiment served in the following campaigns: - The Seven Years War from 1756 to 1763 taking part in actions at Corbach, Warburg and Wilhelmstahl. In 1778 as Marines they took part in the indecisive naval battle of Ushant. In 1782 the regiments of the British army became associated with counties and the 50th was ordered to assume the designation "The 50th or West Kent Regiment." In 1794 the Regiment was part of the expedition, serving under Nelson, which drove the French from the island of Corsica. This was followed in 1801 when the 50th landed at Aboukir Bay, Egypt in the face of strong French opposition. Having been part of the army that defeated Napoleon in the hard fought battle near Alexandria it marched on to Cairo and Napoleon's Legions were driven from Egypt. The 50th were subsequently authorised to bear the word EGYPT on its colours in honour of this campaign.

In 1807 the 50th joined the expedition which was sent to Copenhagen to prevent the French from seizing the Danish Fleet. In 1808 the Peninsular War started as a result of the French invading Spain and Portugal and the Regiment was part of the army of Sir Arthur Wellesley (later the Duke of Wellington) that landed in Portugal in August of that year and moved on VIMERA.

Part of the army under Sir John Moore then marched north-eastwards to menace the French supply lines. Napoleon swiftly turned a large army against him and Moore was forced to retire to the coast at CORUNNA. During a battle fought on January 16th 1809 the 50th re-took the village of ELVINA with a spirited bayonet charge. Sir John Moore witnessed this success and

cried, "Well done, 50th! Well done my Majors!" The majors were Napier (later General Sir Charles James Napier) and Stanhope. One of Major Stanhope's epaulettes is in the Regimental Museum in Maidstone. Thereafter it was the custom of the officers of 1st Battalion to drink to the memory of "The Corunna Majors" on the anniversary of the battle.

The Regiment subsequently took part in the battles at ALMARAZ, VITTORIA and for the passes of the PYRENEES and at the forcing of the passage across the River NIVE where the 50th forded the river breast high in a rapid current under very heavy musket fire. After the war, PENINSULA was awarded as a Battle Honour covering all of those actions for which special honours had not been granted. It was during the Peninsular War that the nickname "The Dirty Half Hundred" was given to The 50th. According to tradition the reason for it was that the dye came off their black cuffs when the troops wiped the perspiration from their faces. "Not a good-looking Regiment, but devilish steady," said Sir Arthur Wellesley in 1808. In January 1831 the Regiment assumed the title "The 50th or Queen's Own Regiment" in honour of Queen Adelaide, wife of William IV.

There followed service in India and the Gwalior Campaign of 1843, the Sutlej Campaign 1845 to 1846, the Crimea War between 1854 and 1856 and New Zealand from 1863 to 1866. Subsequent to a tour in Australia between 1867 and 1869 the Regiment sailed for service at home where it remained until it became the 1st Battalion The Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment). In 1824 Major General Sir James Lyon was informed that a new regiment, numbered the 97th was to be "placed upon the establishment of the Army from March 25th, 1824, inclusive." The Regiment assembled at Winchester.

In September 1826 the King approved the title The 97th or Earl of Ulster's Regiment. In the following month the Regiment was given permission to bear the motto "Quo fas et gloria ducunt". Owing to their sky-blue facings to their uniforms they also earned the nickname "The Celestials".

The 97th saw service in Ceylon, Corfu, Halifax, Nova Scotia and for a short time in Greece. In

November 1854 the 97th landed at Balaclava and took part in the Crimea War where it served alongside the 50th with great distinction. During a Russian sally from Sevastopol on March 22nd, 1855, seventy men under Captain Hedley Vicars repulsed a force although out-numbered by at least ten to one. In August of that same year a party from the 97th re-took, with severe loss, a sap from the Russians. During this fight Sergeant Coleman remained in the open, exposed to the enemy's rifle fire until all around him had been killed or wounded. Finally he carried back an officer who had been mortally wounded. For this action Sergeant John Coleman was awarded the Victoria Cross which is in the Regimental Museum. On September 8th the 97th took part in the assault on the Grand Redan. Captain Lumley was one of the first to enter the redoubt where he engaged three Russian gunners. He shot two with his pistol but was then stunned by a missile. He recovered, drew his sword to urge his men on when he was wounded. He was awarded the Victoria Cross. The 97th held the Redan despite the fact that of the 360 who had taken part in

the assault, 11 officers and 201 men had become casualties.

After the Crimea War the Regiment sailed to India in 1857 and was part of the Field Force which relieved the Residency in Lucknow. After a spell in England of four years the 97th was stationed in Ireland from 1871 to 1873, the West Indies from 1873 to 1877 and in 1880 arrived in Gibraltar from where it was immediately ordered to South Africa where the Boer settlers in the Transvaal had invaded Natal.

On July 1st 1871 the 50th Foot and 97th Foot became the 1st and 2nd Battalions, and the West Kent Light Infantry Militia became the 3rd and 4th Battalions of The Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment). With The 50th came the Lion and Crown badge and the royal blue facings on the uniform and the 97th brought with them the motto "Quo fas et gloria ducunt". With the Militia came the cap badge the White Horse and Invicta of Kent.

THE QUEEN'S OWN BUFFS

The Royal Kent Regiment

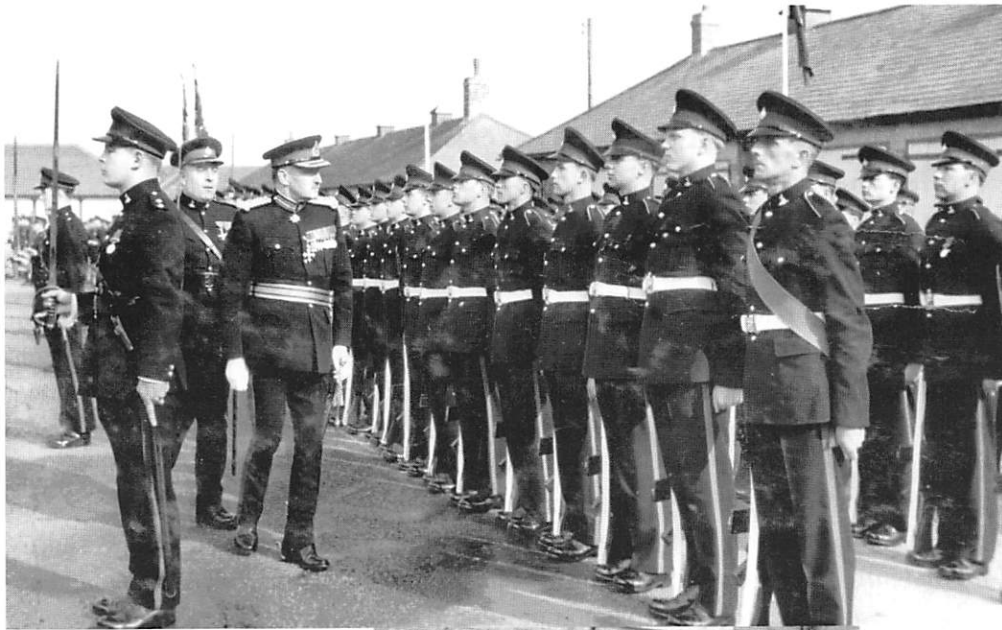
On the 1st March 1961 a guard from each of the forebear regiments, The Buffs, The Royal East Kent Regiment and The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment marched onto the parade ground at Shorncliffe escorting their colours for the last time. A short time later the guards marched off as one and a new regiment, The Queen's Own Buffs, The Royal Kent Regiment was born.

On June 23rd 1962 the new regiment received their own colours from the Colonel in Chief, King Frederik of Denmark.

The following photographs are published to mark the 45 anniversary of the formation of The Queen's Own Buffs., The Royal Kent Regiment



**Major General R. W. Craddock C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O.
inspects the Buffs guard**



**Major General
D. B. E. Talbot
C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O.,
M.C. inspects the
Queen's Own Royal
West Kent Guard**

**The Generals taking the
salute as the new
regiment marches off**



**The March
Past**

HOW WE WON WORLD WAR 11

OR

“IF ONLY HITLER HAD KNOWN”

by the late Major Geoffrey Cox MC

Centuripe was later written up in a War Office Training pamphlet, as a classic example of how a night attack should be conducted. To me, in my first action, it seemed a pretty good shambles, which came out alright in the end. However The Division earned praise indeed, General de Guingand, 8 Army Chief of Staff had watched the battle and in his book recorded, *“it appeared too much to ask any troops to undertake yet this fine division climbed the heights. It was an imposing sight and will forever spell valour in the records of the 78th.”* Montgomery was quoted as saying, *“it was a wonderful feat of arms and I doubt if any other division in my army could have carried out this operation successfully.”* General Alexander said, *“the storming of Centuripe was a particularly fine feat”,* whilst Reuter’s correspondent said, *“It was worse than Longstop.”*

5 Buffs took up a position on the outskirts of Centuripe and in my platoon area was the grave of a German paratrooper, which had been dug very shallowly as one of his boots was sticking out. His name was Ernst something and we nicknamed the poor fellow “Dead Ernest”. One of the other companies discovered a wine store in the town, so wisely the company commander put a two man guard on it. Some time later we noticed that there was a steady stream of unit watercarts entering the town and we could not think why as a water point had not yet been established. Too late we realised they had come to fill up with “our” wine. We rushed to the store where we found the guards legless and the precious liquid gone. However we had the last laugh as all those water carts which had filled up with wine produced water with a sour taste for weeks to come.

36 Brigade’s next objective was the road junction town of Adrano. We went forward to make a recce from a house in The Irish Brigade area and our first sight of our objective was most depressing. Adrano was situated on the top of a massive escarpment, which in itself would be a difficult obstacle to overcome. As we were looking at the town, a shell suddenly arrived almost on top off us, so we hastily withdrew. On the night of 6 - 7 August a tremendous

concentration was laid down on the objective, supported by bombers and in we went. Fortunately for us the enemy had evacuated the town and we entered unopposed. I shall never forget the sad sight that met us, for the streets were littered with dead civilians. When the Germans had pulled out, the Italians had streamed out into the open to welcome the Allies, not suspecting the mighty barrage that would shortly arrive. We spent a few days in the town resting and my platoon position was adjoining the road which lead to the cemetery and daily there were processions of people going down to bury their dead.

It was in Adrano that Gerald decided that he was tired of eating out of mess tins when we came out of the line. Accordingly four of us Gerald, L/Cpl Brown his driver, Pte Pick his batman and myself set off in his jeep to tour the town in search of some suitable crockery. Eventually we found a house which was tightly bolted and barred and which for the sake of our consciences we decided must have been the house of a prominent Fascist. Having gained entry Gerald said there was to be no looting but that we would select six soup plates, six dinner plates, six dessert plates and six side plates, which we did and these were passed to Pte Pick with strict instructions that these were to be very carefully packed so that they would not be broken. To discover what happened to our crockery you will have to read on. When we were leaving the house, we saw a typewriter and as the one we had in Company HQ at the time was very inefficient, we “borrowed” that too.

On the evening of 8 August 1943, we moved forward eight miles to Bronte (Admiral Lord Nelson, was also Duke of Bronte and the family still owned land in the vicinity), which had been captured by 11 Bde. Our task was to advance up the road from Bronte to Randazzo. Bronte was a difficult town to find our way through in the dark for the German paratroops had defended it stubbornly and in doing so had blown up the bridges and culverts and sown many mines and booby- traps. Whilst halted, in a long line, CSM Kennedy of B Company went into a shop doorway to light a cigarette and was considerably frightened

when two enemy soldiers emerged from the dark and gave themselves up. C Company was the advance company with my platoon leading, with one section up commanded by L/Cpl Payne, Platoon HQ next and the remaining two sections behind. On either side of the road were stone walls, four to five feet tall and after about a mile from Bronte, an enemy machine gun opened fire, hitting L/cpl Payne in the stomach. I reorganised the platoon, a section over each wall and pushed on. Suddenly there was an enormous flash and explosion and stones and dirt showered down on us. Without thinking we turned and ran back down the road straight into the Company Commander who said *"Where the bloody hell do you think you are going?"* I told him I thought Mount Etna, which was just to our right, had erupted. What had happened in fact was that the enemy after opening fire on us had waited for a few minutes and then detonated a huge land mine, judging that we would be walking over it. As it happened we were on the edge. Gerald then passed the other two platoons through us and they took up a defensive position on a small hillock covering the road, with my platoon in reserve. Having checked the company positions Gerald was returning to his HQ when the enemy artillery put down a stonk. With a leap he jumped into his slit-trench and landed plonk on top of his batman Pte "G", known as "Nellie", whose only comment was "Oh Major Proctor, how lovely!" Nellie was one of a number of soldiers in the Battalion, who were either practising homosexuals or had tendencies in that direction. Most of them were good soldiers, exceptionally clean in their turnout, often thoroughly reliable and very brave. They seemed to delight in being batmen or when we were out of the line serving as mess waiters, when they would indulge in wearing make up. I met one in London after the war at a divisional re-union, "Lucy" by name and when I asked him what he was doing he replied *"Oh Major Cox I am so happy. I am landlord of The Empress of India down in the dock area and so meet lots of lovely sailor boys"*.

Here we experienced for the first time the German multi-barrelled mortar, the nebelwerfer, which with it's ghastly whine was very unnerving. We thought an enemy counter attack was inevitable and so we fixed bayonets in anticipation. Fortunately it did not materialise. One of the worst things however was the great activity of enemy snipers and both the acting CO. Major Guy Oliver and the 10, Capt Victor Ahnett were wounded. Nothing is more demoralising than persistent and accurate sniper fire and everyone was

very edgy. The troops were most vociferous about what they would do to a sniper if they could catch one. There was a well near the company position and a soldier went with an old biscuit tin and a length of signal cable to draw up some water. Foolishly he had not taken his rifle with him and having filled the tin he was returning when a German paratrooper appeared. He dropped the water, raised his hands above his head, just as the German did the same thing and so both men were facing one another in the act of surrender, much to the merriment of the on-lookers. The German was about sixteen or seventeen years old and looked tired, hungry and thoroughly dejected. The bitterness and anger of the troops evaporated and soon they were offering him chocolate and cigarettes accompanied by such phrases as *"Poor little sod, he looks a miserable bastard"* etc, etc.

A and B Company then moved forward on the right of the road to the slopes of Mt Rivoglio, whilst D Company gained a foothold on Mt Macerone on the east of the road. The latter, in their exposed position, could only be supplied by mules at night. By the time the ammunition and rations arrived, the soldiers of D Company were tired and hungry so you can imagine how they felt on opening one of the compo boxes when they found six soup plates, six dinner plates, six dessert plates and six side plates. Their language was unprintable and we never saw our "recently borrowed crockery" again. On 11 August patrols of 2 Lancashire Fusiliers and 56 Recce Regiment contacted the US 9 Division, just short of Randazzo and the Sicilian campaign was over a few days later.

It was now that the news that Gerald had been awarded an MC came through. He had been recommended for it on three occasions but to date the only recognition of his bravery had been the award of a Mention-in-Despatches. Determined that he would receive a fitting decoration, the CO had written up the latest citation particularly carefully. For some reason or other I received a copy of the citation so I went along to congratulate Gerald, who was being shaved at the time. I told him he had been awarded an MC to which he replied *"Pull the other leg, it's got bells on it"*, so I read out the citation. His only reply was *"By God old boy, I wish I had been there!"*

The Battalion moved to Patti, a pleasant little seaside town on the northern coast of the island for rest and re-training. In one of the old churches was a magnificent organ and L/Cpl Heffer, who was an

organ scholar at Cambridge, came to see Gerald to see if he could get permission for him to play it. Gerald approached the priest in charge who was hesitant at first to allow Heffer to play but once he had heard him play he agreed readily for him to come whenever he wanted.

Whilst in Patti, a young Italian orphan, about thirteen years old, whose parents had both been killed during the fighting, attached himself to the Battalion. He was fitted out with battledress and worked in the 'B' Echelon under the supervision of the Quartermaster. He was a bright and cheerful lad, who quickly became popular and soon he was known to everyone as "Charlie". Charlie stayed with Battalion during the long trek through Italy up into Austria and was with it until disbandment nearly three years later in August 1946. Before he left to return to his native Italy, there was a whip round for him and as a result he was given quite a large sum of money, especially for a youth. I have often wondered what happened to him as no one has heard from him since. Did he ever reach Sicily, was he robbed, did his money and good knowledge of English help him make a good start in life? How I would like to know.

Leave was granted to many members of the Battalion and I hitch-hiked a plane lift back to Tunis and then on to Castel Benito in Libya with the object of seeing my brother Fred, who was serving with 1 Buffs. On arrival there I found he had been posted to 6 Queens so I returned to Tunis to spend the rest of my leave. This I did not enjoy and I felt wretched and was constantly being sick. On my arrival back in the Battalion I met the doctor in the mess, who took one look at me and told me I had jaundice. This complaint was very prevalent at the time but only seemed to affect officers, WOs and sergeants. No real reason was established for this but amongst the theories put forward were that as these groups fed in messes, the illness was passed on by using communal crockery and cutlery.

Another reason was worry and a third that officers and WOs/Sergeants received a spirit issue, which the soldiers did not. I was admitted to the field hospital, then backloaded to Catania where I boarded a hospital ship. As we walked up the gangway we were given packets of C to C cigarettes by the Red Cross; the brand name was in fact Cape to Cairo but they were called by the soldiers "Camel to Consumer". I was now feeling much better and so I was allowed up on

deck and it was beautiful steaming through the Med with lights full on and with red crosses prominently displayed. During the night we passed a convoy of blackened out ships gliding silently by; they were part of the invasion fleet for Salerno. On arrival at Philippeville in North Africa we were transferred to a Base Hospital, which was commanded by a charming man, Colonel Scott, who had been our unit MO in my pre-war territorial days in Ashford, Kent. He was extremely kind to me and invited me to the RAMC Officers' mess on several occasions. One sad job I was given during my short stay was to pay out men in the Psychiatric ward and I remember thinking at the time that probably none of these patients would have been in this sorry condition but for the bloody war. On my discharge I was sent back to the IRTD in Taranto, Italy.

78 Division was in Italy and moving up from Taranto along the Adriatic coast. Fed up with being stuck in the IRTD and not knowing when the next draft would be sent up to the Division, I boarded a train at Taranto bound for Ban, where I heard the Divisional Rear Echelon was. I remember this train journey for one incident. In the compartment with me was another officer from the IRTD and an attractive Italian girl. After an hour or so with the heat in the compartment and the rhythm of the wheels I fell asleep and when I woke up I saw my fellow officer and the girl hard on the job. With great tact I pretended to be asleep until they had finished. 8 Army Rear HQ was in Ban and the whole place was very civilised with hotels, restaurants and shops open. Soon I spotted a 78 Divisional vehicle with the famous yellow battleaxe on a black background and I arranged with the driver to give me a lift to the divisional area. The Battalion was in Termoli and we travelled up the coastal road to Barletta and thence through the larger town of Foggia with its great complex of airfields, now thick with Allied aircraft.

On the night of 2nd/3rd October, the Commandos had made a surprise landing at Termoli and caught a train load of German troops who were just about to pull out of the station, their weapons, equipment etc neatly stacked on the luggage racks or under the seats. 36 Brigade were follow up troops, having been transported by landing craft from Barletta. Quickly 5 Buffs established themselves on the high ground North of the River Biferno, with 6 RWK on their left. On 5th October the Germans consisting of 64th and 79th Panzer Grenadiers (Part of the 16th Panzer

Division) attacked with tanks. Six Mark IV tanks supported by a company of 79th Panzer Grenadiers attacked the forward positions of the 6 RWK who withdrew, leaving our left flank exposed. 14 Platoon of C Company was overrun and the remainder of the Battalion withdrew from the high ground to a position behind a railway line embankment running parallel to but in front of the Biferno river. The situation was extremely tense and control was all the more difficult; wireless communication was very limited as no spare batteries for the sets had been loaded on the landing craft. Fortunately at the most critical moment a Bailey bridge was completed over the flooded Biferno and thirty Shermans of 4 Armoured Brigade arrived, strongly supported by the RAF and the enemy were driven back. It was during this engagement that Cpl Wyatt showed great gallantry in taking on the enemy armour with his PIAT, which I have recounted earlier. In another brave action the CO (Lt Col McKechnie) and the adjutant (Capt Hugh Collins) manned one of the Battalion 6 pdr anti tank guns, when the crew had been knocked out. Unfortunately neither knew how to operate the gun so they were unable to fire it. As a result when the battle was over and we were resting, the CO made every officer fire the 6 pdr anti tank so they would know what to do if the need arose in the future.

When we withdrew from the high ground, the money belonging to C Company Imprest account was left behind. Why this money was up in the front line I do not know but when we re-occupied the position the money had gone. I remember we discounted the suggestion that the enemy had taken it and suspicion fell on a particular private soldier although nothing was ever proven. For months after correspondence between the Company and the Regimental Paymaster went on concerning the loss and in the end, I believe, the amount was written off.

During the whole of this engagement the Brigade was subjected to very well-directed artillery and mortar fire, especially on those holding the town. The reason for this very accurate bombardment was discovered, when movement was seen at the top of Termoli church tower and an enemy observation post was winkled out.

After Termoli the enemy withdrew northwards to a position overlooking the River Trigno and for a short time the Battalion occupied ground to the west of the town including the village of Cuglionesi, which had

been captured by Y Company. Shortly after it's capture Colonel McKechnie went forward one night to visit them and having missed his way encountered an enemy sentry. Not wishing to be taken prisoner he turned and ran but after a few yards he fell flat on his face. Expecting to be shot or captured, as he lay temporarily winded on the ground, he heard much to his relief the sound of the enemy soldier running swiftly away in the opposite direction.

Holding Guglionesi with Y Company was the Pioneer Platoon. Here they "liberated" a small pig but decided it needed fattening before consumption, so to establish their claim, they painted on his skin "Reserved for Pioneers 57". It ran about for a day or two and then suddenly disappeared. The Argylls had knocked it off but returned the skin to the pioneers!

It was about this time that one day I was lying on the ground, dozing, when a formation of American Airforce Flying Fortresses appeared flying overhead. I was wondering who they were going to bomb when I saw the bomb bay doors open and sticks of bombs came hurtling down towards us. Never have men leapt into their slit trenches so quickly but sadly some were not quick enough and we suffered some casualties. As always happened on such occasions, our feelings towards our allies were bitter.

Before we left the Termoli area I was made OC Support Company I and one of my platoon commanders was John Prestige, who commanded the 3" Mortars. John, never the smartest of officers, was ticked off by the adjutant, Hugh Collins, for being scruffily turned out and ordered to report to Bn HQ properly dressed. I happened to see him on his way to report and there had been a miraculous change in his appearance. His shirt and shorts were spotless and well ironed and he was turned out impeccably. No one could understand this sudden transformation until David Harcourt (MG Platoon) said "Who has whipped my clean shirt?" and someone else discovered his shorts were missing and so on. John had nipped sharply round his colleagues clothing but succeeded in satisfying the adjutant.

At the end of October we moved northwards towards the River Trigno and what I remember mostly was the awful weather with incessant rain and mud everywhere, which hampered movement greatly. Shortly after crossing the Trigno, the Battalion was involved in a sharp engagement with the enemy (the

same Panzer Division who had opposed us at Termoli) in the area of San Salvo and sadly Bill Fewson (OC B Company) was killed and Colonel McKectinie badly wounded. Max Monk, the 21C (attached from The Middlesex Regiment) now assumed command and I became acting adjutant. On the right of The Battalion at this time was the 5th Battalion Northamptonshire Regiment of 11 Brigade, commanded by Lieut Colonel John Connolly of The Buffs.

Italy is one succession of rivers and mountain ranges and no sooner had we crossed the Trigno than we were confronted with the more formidable River Sangro, which was greatly swollen by the heavy rain. Three things particularly stand out in my memory relating to this period. The first was the death of our popular and very sound Brigadier "Swiftly" Howlett, who was killed whilst visiting forward positions with the CO of 138 Field Regt, Lt Col Clive Usher. Ironically his appointment to command a division came through on the same day. He was always well up with the leading troops and on a number of occasions I was embarrassed hearing the soldiers shouting out telling him to remove himself and his red hat before he brought down enemy fire. He lies buried in the very beautiful cemetery located near to the mouth of The Sangro, which I visited in May 1984.

The second incident was, when I came across some Gurkha soldiers who were laughing uproariously. When I asked what the joke was, one who spoke some English explained that they had been out on patrol and came across three Germans asleep in a slit trench, they cut off the heads of the two outside men but left the chap in the middle as he would have a terrible shock when he awoke!

The third episode concerned our brigade C of E Padre, who was living with our battalion. He was a north country man, not very popular, having no sense of humour and being particularly upset if he heard anyone swearing. One afternoon the CO contacted me on the radio and said he wanted the padre to come up to Advance HQ, which was across the Sangro, as two soldiers had been killed and he wanted them to be properly buried. I got hold of the padre and told him and he was not at all happy about going forward, asking if the bodies could not be brought back. I told him they could not, that I would provide him with an escort and that he was to go forward; with much grumbling he went. When he arrived at Tac HQ he said to the CO "*Well, where are they then?*" Max

replied, "*Who do you mean?*" whereupon the padre said "*The two soldiers I have 'coom' up to bury*", to which Max replied "*We haven't dug the graves yet*". At this the padre shouted "*It's no use me 'cooming' up here if you haven't dug bloody graves!*" As soon as he could the CO arranged for him to be posted and he was sent back to the rear echelon where I believe he became chaplain to a base hospital and was awarded an MBE at some later stage for his outstanding work!

At the beginning of December 1943, 78 Division moved back to the Campobasso area for a rest and the 5th Battalion occupied the little mountain town of Busso. Here for the first time since landing in Italy we were all housed in proper buildings but the village was filthy. Fearing that unless something was done about it an epidemic might break out, the CO told me to arrange a meeting to be attended by the Mayor, the interpreter, the 21C (Aubrey Gibbon, an Argyll) and the RSM to discuss ways and means of cleaning the place up. Max told the Mayor that each morning the RSM would inspect the town at 8 am and anyone found with "dirt" in front of his house would be fined five hundred lire. The Mayor was dumbfounded, never had such a thing happened before. Next morning the RSM carried out his task and the first person to be fined was the Mayor. He protested his innocence and declared that his enemy had perpetrated the foul deed. The money we levied was spent on buying fresh vegetables and eggs to supplement the mens' messing but the system did not work and we found that the persons we had fined were usually related to the people we bought from so the money returned to the offenders. Consequently a second meeting was called and the Mayor was told that in future the money would be burnt. His Worship was appalled and said that even the Germans had not behaved in such a manner. Even this failed, so a third conference was held and this time the Pioneer officer was present. Max explained that the Pioneer Platoon would build an eight seater bucket latrine in the town square for the sole use of the townsfolk. This was the perfect solution. Each day there was an orderly queue for the facility and a steady hum of conversation could be heard as the occupants discussed matters and gossip, whilst performing their daily duties. This was town planning at it's best and mayors came from far and wide to view this phenomenon. The Mayor was delighted and declared what great benefactors we were to the town and when we departed, tears were shed copiously. After the war, many of the Busso inhabitants came over to England to work in the

brickfields in the Bedford area. When I returned to Campobasso in May 1984, I together with my wife and Jack Simmons, I was looking in a perfume shop window trying to work out the prices when a young couple came out to see if they could help. The youth introduced his sister and both spoke with a marked cockney accent. I asked them if they knew England whereupon they said that they had been brought up in Bedford where their parents lived. The children had returned to Italy about a year before and were living with their uncle and aunt in Busso. I asked them if Busso possessed a public loo, to which they replied proudly "*Probably the best in Italy*".

Shortly after moving into the area, It snowed heavily blocking the road to Campobasso and we had to dig ourselves out. This proved an enjoyable task as we were able to work stripped to the waist in warm Italian sunlight. Christmas was celebrated traditionally with turkey, plum pudding and mince pies, together with a NAAFI issue of whisky and beer, in addition to the local vino. Everyone was able to relax completely and in Campobasso there was an ENSA theatre, three cinemas, clubs for officers and NCOs and canteens for the soldiers.

During this time a team of psychiatrists visited the Division to look into the general mental state and morale of it's members, many of whom had been engaged in almost continuous action since the landings in North Africa in early November 1942. One of the specialists came to the 5th Battalion and was taken to B Company, commanded by Cecil Bremner. Cecil and his officers, with the connivance of our popular MO Paul Burden, decided to play a trick on the visitor and when he arrived escorted by Paul, all the officers were seated on the floor pretending to be fishing. When introduced to Bremner, Cecil asked the psychiatrist to be quiet as they were on the point of making a catch. So convincing was his play acting that later when talking to the CO, the psychiatrist suggested that Bremner should be rested, as he was suffering from acute mental exhaustion. Cecil was killed later, a few weeks before the war ended.

Alas all good things have to come to an end and in the second week of January 1944 we moved out of Busso to a very mountainous area overlooking the upper Sangro.

Due to the deep snow and severe wintery conditions, activity was confined to holding a number of company positions and patrolling. Living conditions were stark, the majority occupying slit trenches and bivouacs whilst the lucky ones found ruined or primitive buildings. The enemy were living in similar conditions but had the advantage of holding the high ground, with a commanding view over the entire Sangro valley.

Hugh Collins, the adjutant, who had been wounded in the Termoli area, returned just before we left Busso so I went back to C Company as 2ic. One of the jobs of 2ic was to take up the hot meals, replacement ammunition, mail etc after dark to the forward positions. In mountainous country, very often in extremely poor weather conditions, these were carried forward by mules operated by either Indian or Italian supply companies. Without them we could not have maintained our positions. One evening I was talking on the field telephone to my company commander, Stormy Fairweather, when the door opened and in came a shortish officer, whom I took to be an Argyll as he was wearing a bonnet. I told him I would not be a minute and to pour himself out a whisky, whilst I finished discussing the composition of the mule train with the company commander. Eventually we finished talking and I turned to my visitor and asked him what he wanted. To my acute embarrassment I discovered that it was Brigadier R K Arbuthnott, Commanding 11 Brigade. Being in the Black Watch he always wore a bonnet with the familiar red hackle. He was a charming man and a very able commander, who was beloved by all who served under him. In October 1944 he took over command of 78 Division, at a time when they were very tired after almost three years of hard and continuous fighting and it was his leadership that enabled them to finish the Italian campaign on such a high note.

Early in 1944, the Allied plan was to launch a major offensive on the 5 Army front against the Gustav Line, advance up the Liri valley (Highway 6) and capture Rome. At the same time there was to be an Allied landing at Anzio on the Mediterranean coast, south of Rome and sixty miles behind the Gustav Line. This force was to strike NE to cut Highway 6 and thereby trap the greater part of the German forces defending Cassino and the Gustav Line. 78 Division was relieved by the 3 Carpathian Division of the Polish I Corps and on 6 February 1944, 5 Buffs started to move westwards to a concentration area in the

neighbourhood of Capua, approximately 20 miles north of Naples. On the way over we were snowed up for a couple of nights in a very pleasant little town, where we found a comfortable billet in an Italian professor's house and we were able to supplement our rations with spaghetti, omelettes and good local wine.

On our arrival in the concentration area we learnt that 78 Division had been transferred from XIII Corps and was now part of the newly formed New Zealand Corps commanded by Lt General Fryburg VC, consisting of 2 New Zealand Division, 4 Indian Division and Combat Command B of 1 US Armoured Division. The plan was for 2 New Zealand Division and 4 Indian Division to capture Cassino town and the Benedictine monastery and as soon as Combat Command B had broken out on to Highway 6, 78 Division was to cross the river Rapido and advance up the Liri Valley to Rome.

We moved up to Mignano, approximately eight miles south of Cassino and the weather was appalling with torrential rain bucketing down for hours on end with the result that we had to pitch our bivouacs in flooded fields. The attack had to be postponed until the weather improved and the time was spent in training and sports. The latter included a rucker match against 6 RWK. Whilst at Mignano I, along with other officers, went forward to an OP on Monte Trocchio to have a look at our objective and we were warned to stick very closely to the taped paths as the enemy had strewn the feature with anti personnel mines. Sadly Maj Gen Kippenberger, acting GOC 2NZ Division, trod on one and had both his feet blown off but lived in spite of these terrible wounds.

From Monte Trocchio we had a splendid view of the town of Cassino, with behind it the Benedictine monastery and the whole overlooked by the massive Monte Cairo. Already the town was largely a mass of ruins, having been subjected for weeks to intense artillery bombardment. During this time in Mignano I was sent on a liaison mission to 5 Northhamptons who were holding an exposed position on the banks of the River Rapido, overlooking the heavily fortified village of S Angelo. I cannot remember the reason for my visit but I was delighted to meet John Connolly (The Buffs) again, who commanded them. He was adjutant of The Depot, Canterbury when I joined in June 1940 and I was assistant adjutant to him for a number of weeks until he was posted to 10 Buffs in Devon and succeeded by Captain Harry Jackson. John was in fine

fettle and made me most welcome. He commanded 5 Northhamptons with tremendous dash and was held in great respect by all ranks, eventually winning a DSO before having to relinquish command due to ill health. Later he recovered and took command of a battalion of Beds and Herts in Burma, where he won a bar to his DSO.

On the 15th March 1944 the postponed attack on the enemy stronghold of Cassino was launched. It was preceded by a massive Allied air attack, which started at about 8 am and went on for three hours. Altogether over a thousand aircraft of all types took part and it was the first time that massed aircraft were used to saturate a comparatively small target, in support of the ground forces. As we sat in our battalion area in Mignarto we saw wave after wave of Fortresses and Liberators fly over in formations of eighteen or thirty six and listened to the continuous roar of explosions. We thought that no one could possibly survive such an onslaught and that when it was all over we would advance against little or no opposition. Not all the planes found their targets however and amongst places bombarded in error was the 8th Army HQ at Venafro, several miles to the rear. At midday an enormous barrage went down, behind which 2NZ Division and 4 Indian Division advanced striking respectively for the town and the monastery. Alas both failed to secure their objectives due to a number of reasons. Firstly the massive air bombing had reduced the town to almost impenetrable rubble, secondly torrential rain had turned the ground into a quagmire and thirdly the German 1st Para Division offered fanatical resistance from very deep bunkers and well prepared positions.

The attack was abandoned on the 23rd of March and 78 Division reverted back to XIII Corps and during the next six weeks 36 Brigade occupied a position running from the area of the railway station on the left to the castle on the right, with 5 Buffs holding a front of approximately one thousand yards SE of Cassino town. The whole area was completely overlooked by enemy positions on Monte Cassino and we were subjected constantly to very heavy and accurate artillery and mortar fire. Movement by day was severely restricted and was only possible through our own artillery firing thousands of smoke rounds into the enemy positions to hamper their visibility. Added to this were smoke generating machines, which belched forth smoke and kept the whole area wreathed in a filthy haze. Although every artillery piece was

pounding the enemy positions it was decided that our 3 in mortars, which were sited in my company area, should join in the fun. Within minutes of firing the first bomb the enemy retaliated fiercely and we were deluged with shells, knocking out some of the mortars. One shell landed almost on the parapet of my slit trench covering me in earth and stones and I can still remember the acrid smell of cordite.

I was now commanding S Company and we occupied a position in the area of the station, with D Company under Freddie Kite (a Cameron Highlander) to the north of us and C Company under Stormy Fairweather on our left. Sadly Freddie and his CSM were killed there and both now lie buried in the Commonwealth Cemetery in Cassino. My company HQ was located in one of the inspection pits in the engine sheds and full use was made of derelict locomotives as LMG posts. On the left of the company position was a collection of small mounds, known as "The Hummocks" which were occupied by a platoon and all platoons were linked to me by field telephone as wireless transmission could not be relied on. The telephone lines were constantly being cut by the enemy artillery and mortar fire and the company signallers did a wonderful job in continually going out and repairing them. We were so close to the enemy positions that they could hear the slightest movement we made, on the rubble, and immediately we were mortared. So near were we that you could hear the "pop" of the mortars as they fired. For his sterling work here in helping to maintain communications, Private Reed was awarded the MM. Great gallantry was also shown by one of my platoon commanders Jack Simmons (DCLI) who dug out several members of his platoon when they were heavily mortared and later rescued a New Zealander, who was lying severely wounded amongst the rubble in the town. Later his exploits appeared in banner headlines in "The Crusader", the 8th Army Sunday newspaper. I remember saying to him when I read the cutting "*Jack I have put you in for an MC but on the strength of that report it looks as if you will get the VC!*" Eventually he was awarded a Mention in Despatches. However there was a happy sequel at the Remembrance Service in Canterbury Cathedral in September 1984, when one of his former platoon soldiers came up to him, not having seen him since the end of the war, and thanked him for saving his life. Incidentally Jack was the only officer of 5 Buffs, who took part in the original landings in North Africa to serve right through with the battalion to the

final disbandment of the battalion in Austria in 1946, being wounded twice.

We were relieved by a company of the 26th NZ Battalion and to my horror, on the night of our relief, I could hear them approaching when they were still a long way off. This, I was sure, would bring down every type of fire from the enemy but strangely enough there was no reaction at all. Never did we hurry away from a position as quickly as we did that night and the enemy did not fire a single shot. The reason for our peaceful departure became obvious twenty four hours later when the Germans put in a fierce attack on the station area, driving the New Zealanders out. However the Kiwis counter-attacked and regained the position. The Germans had used the lull to bring up fresh troops for the impending attack and so sure were they of success that their follow up troops came in complete with blankets tied round them obviously intending to hold the area for some time.

After a brief rest back in Mignano, the battalion moved into the line again to take over from the Argylls. This time B Company took it's turn in occupying The Castle. The Castle was perched on a rock 300ft. above the town, right under the Monastery which towered above and the Germans occupied positions within a hundred yards of it, enabling them to make frequent sudden attacks. The only approach to the position was up a slippery, precipitous, craggy path where at one point it was necessary to haul oneself up by a wet rope due to the constant rain. The night I led my Company up to take over from C Company, as I moved stealthily along I had the feeling that I was going in the wrong direction and heading for the enemy lines. This had happened to a previous relieving force some nights before and several had been taken prisoner. I halted and whispered to the man behind me to pass it down the line to turn back and go in the opposite direction. This we did and eventually arrived at The Castle. It was pitch black and not being good at seeing in the dark I remember Stormy Fairweather holding my hand as he guided me round the positions. The Castle consisted of a substantial tower, most of which was intact and a courtyard facing Monastery Hill and the whole was surrounded by a five feet thick wall, ten feet high. There were cellars, one at the base of the tower which afforded protection from shelling. Company HQ was in a sangar adjoining one of the walls and the roof was constructed of sandbags, empty ammunition boxes, tins of bully beef

all supported by struts, which were largely rifles. This proved to be an effective covering as we discovered one day when a rifle grenade landed on top causing a loud bang and filling my right ear with dirt but otherwise causing no damage. One had a terrible feeling of claustrophobia and the enemy could approach right up to the position without being seen. Our principal defence was a very extensive system of artillery and mortar DF tasks, which could be called down at a moment's notice. One unpleasant thing the enemy did was to fire at the battlements to dislodge some of the massive stones, which would come crashing down onto our positions. There was only room for two platoons plus company HQ at a time and companies were relieved every forty eight hours.

Amazingly we had a hot meal every night which was carried up by a succession of Indian porters, who braved the hazardous journey continually harassed by enemy fire of all descriptions.

We left Cassino in mid April, exhausted and mud stained and went back to a rest area near Capua, some thirty odd miles behind the lines. I thought that I had never seen such a beautiful spot, everywhere a luscious green, brightly decorated with Italian spring wild flowers of many colours like Jacob's coat - and peace, sun shining and birds singing.

to be continued.....

REFLECTIONS

'First Impressions'

by Michael Clinch

It was a miserably cold day in early 1957 when I arrived as a new recruit at the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Depot at Maidstone. I reported to the guardroom, clutching a small grip, and was met by the Provost Corporal who was very tough looking and very Irish. While he struggled to fill in my details in his book the guardroom door opened and in swept what I later learned was the Orderly Officer.

The new arrival was a magnificent creature dressed in "Blues", highly polished leather and swishing a silver topped cane. I was cast aside and left to stand in the corner.

"I want to inspect the prisoners", said the officer

"Sir!" shouted the Corporal and then, - "Come on you lot, get fell in out here".

Four miserable looking men tumbled through the door at the back of the room and stood in line. Their denims didn't fit very well and had Brasso stains on them.

The subaltern disappeared into the area at the back of the guardroom and then reappeared a minute or two later and with a bored look on his face as he turned to inspect the prisoners.

"Speak up when the officer talks to you" ordered the NCO.

Each man in turn jumped to attention, shouted out his number, name and the offence for which he had been sentenced. They were asked if they had any complaints and as nobody said anything the officer thanked the Corporal and swept out. The prisoners were sent back to their cells and the NCO returned to me.

This episode made a great impression. So, when some months later, I returned to the Depot as a new young officer, en route to join the 1st Battalion in Cyprus, and was made Orderly Officer I remembered it vividly.

There was one duty I knew exactly how to perform. In my new "Blues" with my new Sam Browne belt shining I marched into the guardroom. Swishing my new silver cane and affecting the same bored expression I had seen the other officer I acknowledged the NCO's salute.

"I want to inspect the prisoners." I said to the Provost Corporal.

"We ain't got none, Sir" he replied. My bubble burst so I beat a hasty retreat.

The Orderly officer, I had seen in the guardroom on my very first day in the Army, was none other than our Association President, Crispin Champion, who was then the Depot Subaltern.

AN INCIDENT IN BRITISH GUIANA

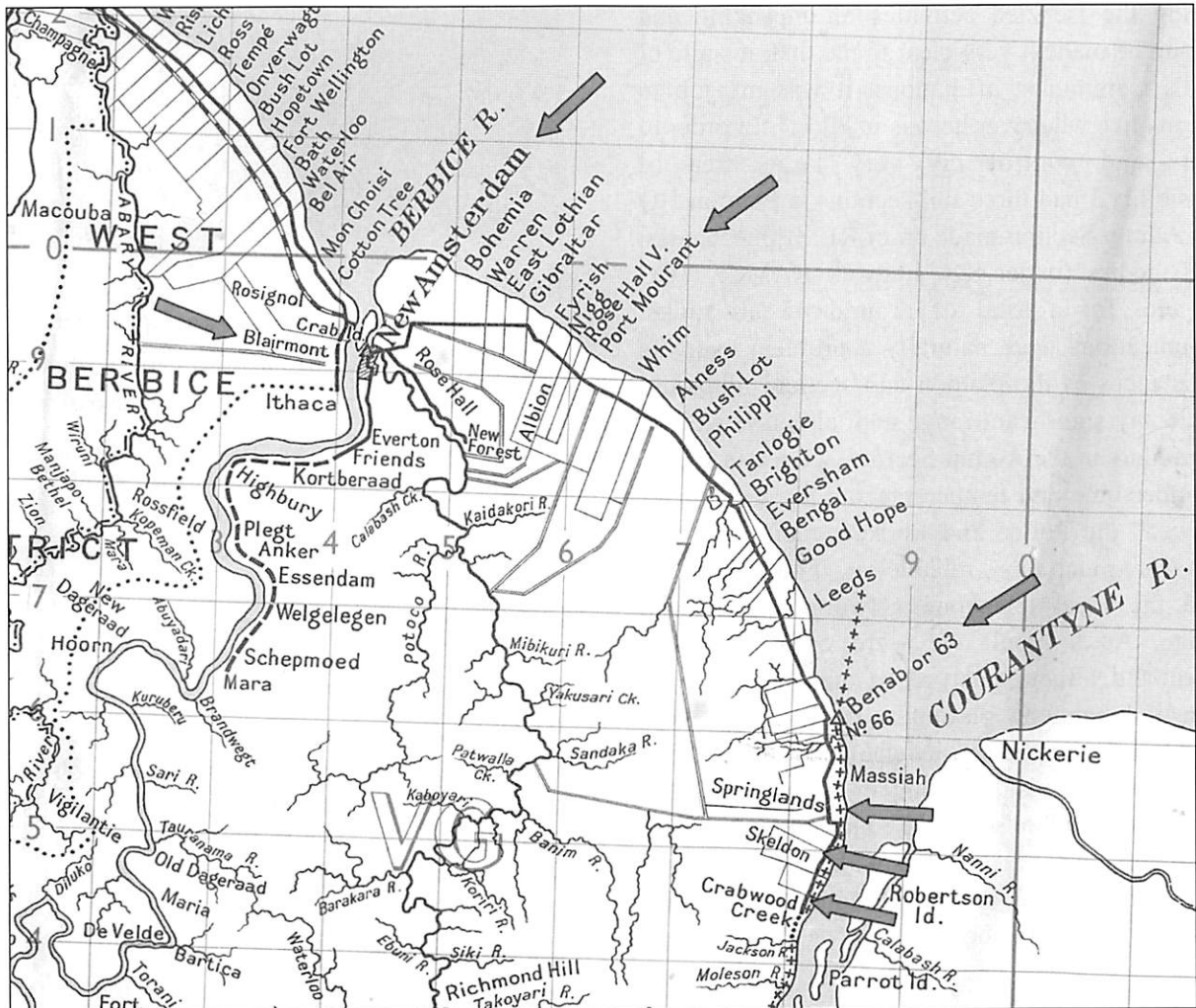
By Lt-Col (Ret'd) Richard D. B. Talbot C.D.

It has always “vexed me” (a typical BG phrase) that for some reason the British Government determined that the actions of The Queen’s Own Buffs in British Guiana (aka BG - but now known as Guyana) did not deserve to be recognised with a General Service Medal (GSM). Also, something else that has nagged at me in the more than 40 years since BG, is how valid is the use of psychological interrogation which Senator John McCain’s recent comments on interrogation techniques in Iraq have resurrected. I’ll let you draw your own conclusions on both issues.

In May 1964 (only 2 years after the Cuban Missile Crisis and 3 years before Che Guevara was captured and killed) I was a brash 22 year old Lieutenant commanding 2 Platoon of The Queen’s Own Buffs, The Royal Kent Regiment in Port Maurant, responsible for nearly 50 miles of BG coast, between Blairmont (west of the Berbice River opposite New Amsterdam) to Crabwood Creek (west of the

Courantyne River and south of Skeldon). In other words we were on the extreme “right flank” of the Battalion since the Courantyne River was the border between BG and Surinam.

Our base camp was located in the centre of Port Maurant (aka “Port”) in the unused Bookers Sugar Estate staff housing compound. Our nearest regimental support was the balance of A Company at La Bonne Intention Estate (LBI), approximately 50 miles beyond the 15 minute ferry ride across the Berbice River. Bn. HQ was a further 10 miles away in the “fleshpots” of Georgetown. However, the distances were actually much further than they seemed as the roads were in such poor repair that the locals described them as “holes held together by tarmac”. As a result we felt very lonely, especially when the rest of the Battalion became fully stretched as the other areas of BG almost immediately exploded into rioting, murder and interracial fighting. We knew



we could expect little or no support if the same happened in our area!

In my initial briefing I was advised that this area was the most dangerous region in BG (three Europeans had been shot at just before my arrival and one of them had been killed). It was also potentially the most explosive since Port Mourant was the home town of the pro-Communist Prime Minister Cheddi Jagan. Moreover, the entire region was dominated by his People's Progressive Party (PPP) and, in particular, his militant youth wing the Progressive Youth Organisation (PYO). Indeed the PYO were an increasing concern as, almost immediately after the Governor's declaration of the State of Emergency, I received local reports of the PYO numbers in Port Mourant being supplemented by 25 PYOs from other parts of BG and that one had been seen wearing some sort of military uniform (then illegal under the Emergency Regulations).

On the day after we arrived, with everything still in chaos, the C.O. (then Lt-Col "Blick" Waring) suddenly appeared in his inimitable style at the airstrip at 0715 hrs for a snap inspection! After surveying the frenzied activities of unpacking and setting-up he made it very clear to me that, in spite of Cheddi's Communist affiliations, it was my job to keep him alive whenever he was in "Port". In order to do this and control my very large area of responsibility I had three full sections, a Platoon HQ and an Admin Section made up of REME mechanics, RAMC medics (under Sgt. Ludwell RAMC), ACC cooks etc. for a total of around 45 all ranks. Communications were naturally a problem over the long distances as the platoon and section radios did not have any significant range and, although we had Bn Signallers in the Admin Section, we found the 62 Set cumbersome and temperamental. As a result we "borrowed" the Police and Bookers radio networks (which were much more reliable) or, if all else failed, utilised the local telephone network using coded language. As a result we were essentially self sufficient and, although part of A Company, classified as "an independent platoon". In fact we were eventually regarded as so "independent" that on one of his disciplinary visits A Company CSM Ted Parker nicknamed us "Talbot's Rebels". The name stuck and one of the planters presented us with a black platoon flag with a red skull & crossbones and a red "Talbot's Rebels" emblazoned upon it!

After assessing the situation I decided that the only way we could maintain control over our 50 mile sector was to be highly mobile, conduct snap road blocks and patrol aggressively on foot by night and by day, not only all along the full length of the single coast road that linked New Amsterdam (on the Berbice) with Skeldon (on the Courantyne), but also in and around the smaller villages in the "back country". Unfortunately our issue of a single Land Rover Mark



II and a single 3 tonner (both prone to regular breakdowns in spite of the efforts of my REME team) was not conducive to such a plan! Fortunately we were almost immediately offered the use of additional modern vehicles by the eight major sugar estates in my sector and, eventually, I was also given "de facto" command of the five police stations and B Company (New Amsterdam) of the British Guiana Volunteer Defence Force (BGVDF) which all came with their own vehicles. We also set-up a network of local vigilante committees (which later became part of the Home Guard). Thus, by utilising integrated Regimental, Police and BGVDF patrols and working with local vigilantes, we were able to obtain good quality intelligence and give the impression of having a much larger force than we actually had. In fact, on one occasion, Cheddi Jagan said to me "Whenever I hear a chicken squawk at night and I look out my bedroom window I see a British soldier!". However it turned out that Cheddi was not really that appreciative

of my efforts on his behalf since, in late June, his supporters placed a large landmine under our regular turn-off point to Port Mourant. Fortunately for us the 3 tonner had broken down yet again and the dawn patrol (normally led by me in the Land Rover) was delayed with the result that the first sugar workers' truck was hit instead!

On the first of July 1964 I left the Admin Section to guard our base and Cpl Sutton to conduct the local Port Mourant patrols with his section while my newly promoted platoon sergeant, Sgt. Pete Guillaume (whose father had been my father's platoon sergeant with the Queen's Own in India), took two sections in the 3 tonner to set-up a series of snap roadblocks along the coast road to the Courantyne, 30 miles away. Meanwhile, I went on ahead in the Land Rover with my driver Pte. McGrath, my batman/bodyguard Pte. Burke and two plain clothes police detectives to try and gather information from our Vigilante Committees for the platoon to follow-up on. On our way down two vigilantes led us to a Hindu priest's house where we found a large cache of military style tunics in an upstairs room. The priest turned out to be none other than Pandit Tiwari (also known as "Churkiman"), the PYO leader in the Courantyne. However, since he insisted the tunics were "just old clothes donated for the poor", the police felt we couldn't charge him (or they didn't want to).

Eventually both parties met up, as agreed, for a quick swim on 63 Beach, BG's only sandy beach, before continuing eastwards to the end of the road beyond Crabwood Creek and then back to the Skeldon Sugar Estate for dinner. There we waited until well after dark (around 10 PM) before heading to the Springlands Police Station to pick-up the local Police Inspector "Sonny" Krival and his team of uniformed police and plain clothes detectives, to conduct local snap roadblocks before heading home to "Port". However there was only time for two or three roadblocks as I was concerned about being away from our base camp for too long and, in any event, we needed to get back in time for another "spit & polish" visit, this time by the new CO, Lt-Col Bill MacDonald, the next afternoon.

We had just set-up our first roadblock, around the first "blind" corner from Springlands Police Station, when a car came screaming round the corner straight into it. L/Cpl Gittins and his section were stunned to find it contained twelve male occupants. He promptly forced

them out at gunpoint and searched them while the balance of his section searched the car. The car was "clean" but Gittins noticed that all the men were wet from the waist down so he separated them and called me over. I asked each one individually what they had been doing and they all replied they had been out searching for a lost cow in the paddy fields but when I asked what colour the cow was they could not agree. Since they were all wet but none of them was muddy, my first reaction was that they might have been setting-up a landmine under one of the small bridges over the numerous canals on our route back to "Port" and that we were now cut-off from a safe return to our base, so I ordered Gittins to conduct a detailed search of each one. It was then that he discovered that not only were they all wet from the waist down but they all had sand in their turn-ups and, as we all knew, there was only one sandy beach in BG!

We promptly marched all of them under escort into the Police Station where I questioned them further but they all denied vehemently that they had been anywhere near 63 Beach. I then discussed this with my ex-Malaya, ex-Cyprus and ex-Kenya NCOs and Police Inspector "Sonny" and their unanimous advice was to "beat the shit out of them"! However my still shiny Sandhurst sensibilities didn't include this as a viable option, so "Sonny" and I decided on utilising a more psychological approach with each suspect isolated outside the Police Station face down in the dark with a rifle in his back while "Sonny" and I implemented a one-on-one "good cop - bad cop" interrogation routine in his small office and his detectives checked the police records for information on each man.

By midnight we were getting nowhere. The detectives reported that the five older men were all well known PPP members, the six younger ones were suspected PYO members but they had no record of the twelfth, who was in his late teens. "Sonny" then said that he remembered something about the family of this teenager and that his father and older brother had recently been killed in a car crash leaving him and his mother as the sole survivors of the family. As a result we decided to let the others cool their heels in the mud under the bloodthirsty eyes of the platoon, while "Sonny" and I concentrated on this suspect. Firstly "Sonny" made him stand in front of his desk while he ranted and raved at him for half an hour and then "Sonny" would storm out and I'd come in. I'd apologise for "Sonny's" behaviour, let him sit-down,

give him a cigarette and then ask him such things as how his mother was coping without her husband and his brother, and what on earth she was going to do if he suddenly disappeared tonight to the Detention Centre at Rupanuni (way up in the interior near the Brazilian border), and she never heard what had happened to him.

Eventually, after two or three rounds of this, he broke down in tears and told me what seemed at first to be a totally unbelievable story. He said he was a new recruit in the Guyana Liberation Army (The GLA - of which I had never heard). The others were longer term members of the Courantyne GLA Cell. They had all been on 63 Beach for a training session with roughly thirty other GLA members. Tunics were provided and physical training was conducted including running through the waves. Then, after an "all clear" signal had been given, a uniformed Cuban Training Cadre came in by boat. They brought rifles and automatic weapons and the GLA were then given weapons training. The session ended with a communist lecture by a Cuban Commissar. The Cubans then took back the weapons and left again by boat. The GLA took off their tunics, handed them in and headed home.



I then called "Sonny" in and told the suspect to repeat his story. Initially "Sonny" didn't believe him (he hadn't heard of the GLA either), but when I reminded him of the recent reported arrival of PYO members from throughout BG, the cache of uniforms we had found that day and the recent landmine it all started to sound possible. However "Sonny" was very reluctant to contact his superiors in case we were being made fools of, so I suggested that we call in each of the six younger members of the group separately and, again using "good cop/bad cop", claim that the senior members of their cell had now told us the truth and

confront them with what we now knew. By 3AM all six had independently corroborated the story and, upon specific probing, there was also no evidence of any mines being laid on the road to "Port" which was a relief.

"Sonny" now agreed to contact Senior Superintendent Felix Austin in New Amsterdam. I then called my Company Commander, Major Harold Gatehouse, and requested helicopters to take the twelve prisoners to the Detention Centre in Rupanuni. Leaving one section to guard the police guarding the prisoners, Sgt Guillaume and the other section secured the landing ground and, as dawn broke, we could hear the choppers swooping in bringing Special Branch (SB) officers and Military Intelligence Officers (MIOs) from New Amsterdam and Georgetown. "Sonny" and I briefed them and then, having made "Sonny" promise to tell the boy's mother as much as he could and to tell her not to worry, we returned very cautiously along the coast road back to "Port". Just before 63 Beach we dismounted and proceeded tactically along it on foot with safety catches off but there was no sign whatsoever of any of the GLA's activities of the previous night. That was when my doubts about being "fed-a-line" by the prisoners first started especially when I never heard anything back on our arrests. However I did learn that our actions must have upset someone in the PPP as, shortly afterwards, I was advised I'd appeared high on a PPP/PYO hit-list and I had to be posted back to UK for my own safety!

In the 40 years since then I heard nothing else about the GLA and this has worried me ever since, especially after Senator McCain's recent negative comments on the usefulness of psychological interrogation techniques and how they can backfire. How far should you go when the safety of your troops is at risk? Had we gone too far and as a result been "conned" by suspects just telling us what we wanted to hear (as happened later to me in Borneo!)? I did mention my concerns to Gregory Blaxland ten years later when he was writing the Queen's Own Buffs history and he promised to check it out. I never heard back from him but he did include the incident in his history (page 59) which gave L/Cpl Gittins some well deserved recognition. However he softened the reference to the GLA with some rather obtuse wording:

“The (GLA) claim was admitted, but not pressed with any defiance, when its twelve members were arrested”.



So my concern whether I had “been had” continued up until this Christmas (2005) when, after hearing another TV interview with Senator McCain, I “Googled” “Guyana Liberation Army” and located a recently released 65 page U.S. Department of State classified document entitled “Foreign Relations, 1964-1968, Volume XXXII - Guyana” which summarises some partially de-classified U.S. Government documents covering the period we were in BG (see www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/johnsonlb/xxxii/44659.htm). There on page 49 I found:-

“Committee approval was grounded in the belief that as Prime Minister Jagan would be an instrument of Communist influence in Latin America. The [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] paper embodying the proposal noted that during Jagan’s years (1961-4) as head of the government, some 50 PPP youth trained in Cuba in guerrilla warfare, a “Guyana Liberation Army” was organized and equipped largely with Cuban weapons, and \$3,000,000 of Soviet bloc funds entered Guyana for the support of the PPP.”

Now what I would like to know is whether this information came from our initial interrogations in

Springlands and/or the subsequent interrogations at Rupanuni or whether it was known before I was posted to Port Mourant? If the latter, then serious questions must be asked about the endangerment of my troops. Remember Che Guevara was still at large somewhere in South America. What if, during one of our patrols or R&R breaks on 63 Beach, one of my sections had run into the 50 GLA members supported by a Cuban regular force training cadre? Perhaps someone can shed some light on this?

Anyhow, although lengthy, the entire Department of State document is fascinating reading. I think everyone not in BG thought we were just involved in some minor colonial matter in a far-flung corner of the dissolving Empire, but when you read that the regiment’s military operations were subject to regular discussion and praise at the highest level of the US and British Governments (including meetings between the British Prime Minister and the U.S. President!) it puts a very different perspective on our role. It also reinforces my initial concern. If the Queen’s Own Buffs actions in BG were so important why was a GSM never issued?

EVERY DAY A BONUS

by Ken Clarke

(Continuing Ken’s fascinating account of his service in the QORWK’s with his arrival in Bombay. The Editor)

Bombay was another completely new experience with grand ornate buildings just a stone’s throw from run down shanty town shacks. There were wealthy people, women in beautifully coloured silk saris and men wearing bejeweled turbans and expensive clothes driving past in large open topped cars with uniformed chauffeurs or in horse drawn carriages. Alongside them were hoards of ragged children and beggars, many with deformed arms and legs who held out grubby hands and cried out ‘Buckshees Sahib, Buckshees Sahib’ as we passed by on our way to the railway sidings.

Many of the men and women wore red spots on their foreheads which I later learned was a Puja mark worn by Hindus. Most of the men and women chewed

betelnut and constantly spat out the red juice from the nut, a not very attractive habit nor a very hygienic one we thought.

The smell of rotting rubbish and horse and cow manure which littered the streets was very noticeable and mingled with the odour from sacks of spices piled up along the quayside. Apart from officials and those in some sort of uniform the majority of the Indian people were barefooted. Men and women carried every imaginable item on their heads, water pots, huge bundles of washing, large tin boxes, suitcases, even a piano with three or four men underneath it, jogging along in step. Cows wandered about seemingly unattended and literally hundreds of small horse-drawn carriages plied for hire. Carts with solid wooden wheels creaked and groaned along pulled by pairs of boney underfed bullocks. Overhead flocks of large crows circled and even larger kitehawks screeched and dived down to scoop up anything that looked remotely like food. The heat, dust, smell and flies all combined to make a not too favourable impression of the country in which we had just arrived.

Many of the Indian men carried black umbrellas to shield them from the fierce heat of the sun whilst the women were protected by the folds of their saris. The British were very noticeable in their pith helmets or topees and either white or khaki drill clothing.

When we reached the railway siding a long troop train stood waiting with the words 'Great Indian Peninsula Railway' painted on the side. The carriages were divided into compartments, each accommodating six men. A rack that formed the back of the seats could be raised to make a centre bunk and a further bunk could be lowered at the top enabling six men to sleep at night, converting back to an ordinary carriage during the day. A narrow table also slotted into place in the middle of the compartment for use by the occupants at meal times.

Before we had time to take off our equipment and settle into the carriage the track alongside the train was besieged by dozens of vendors, all called 'wallahs' of one kind or another, char wallahs selling tea and buns, fruit wallahs with baskets of bananas, oranges, peanuts or monkey nuts and strange fruits such as mangoes, pomegranate and custard apples which we had never seen before. Wallahs were selling bottles of lemonade and other drinks; biscuits,

chocolate, English cigarettes were all being offered in exchange for the new coins which we now had in our pockets, pies, pice, annas, rupees, some of unusual shape and some with holes in the middle. We quickly learnt that sixteen annas made a rupee which was equal to about one shilling and sixpence and that one anna was roughly equal to one penny. We had been issued with booklets giving us information about India, various do's and don'ts and useful phrases in Hindustani which we immediately began to try out on the vendors lining the railway track.

The train was pulled by an ancient looking steam engine which had a large cow catcher on the front and with animals wandering about seemingly at will the latter was no doubt very necessary. Eventually the train began to move and we found out that our journey to Secunderabad, some 500 miles to the south, would take about three days. We passed other trains that were full to overflowing with people clinging to the outside of carriages and others sprawled on the top with their bundles of bedding and pots and pans and we speculated as to how many of them would safely complete their journey. Whether or not they had to pay for the doubtful privilege of clinging precariously to the roof of a swaying railway carriage I never found out, and this proved to be the normal mode of travel for many Indians. Our train rattled on during the night and we settled down on the bunks for our first night in India, Pongo as it was called in army slang.

Daylight arrives early in India and before we knew it a huge red sun was rising above the horizon and giving us our first view of the countryside. Much of it was dry and boulder strewn with patches of scrub and cactus and occasional clumps of palm trees. We crossed long bridges over dried up river beds baked hard by the sun and criss-crossed with large cracks and travelled on across the wide scorching plains. The train was on a single track and we wondered what would happen when another train came from the opposite direction. We found out when we came to a spur line onto which the train ran and came to a halt, waiting for an hour or even two until the expected train from the other direction appeared. When it had passed we rejoined the main line and once more went on our way. Taking advantage of these breaks in the journey we clambered down beside the track to stretch our legs while the cooks collected water from the engine and brewed up dixies of tea. As in Bombay the various wallahs would appear out of nowhere and were soon doing a roaring trade.

Continuing our journey the ancient engine puffed and strained and when it came to a gradient we would often jump down on to the track and walk alongside the carriages until we came to a level stretch when we would climb back on board as the engine picked up speed. I enjoyed sitting on the steps with the door open, looking at the ever-changing scenery, so different from the countryside we had left behind in England.

Much of the time we passed through open country coming across small villages of mud walled huts roofed with palm leaves and cow dung where everyone would stop what they were doing to watch the passing trains. We passed through and sometimes stopped at a number of largish towns, Kirkee, where the British army maintained a large arsenal, Sholapur, Hotgi, Wadi Junction. At some of these towns where the train stopped the cooks would prepare a meal for us on the platform. Railway stations seemed to be a focal point for people to gather as they were always teeming with jostling shouting people, some selling their wares, some waiting for a train and others waiting for relatives to arrive. Many people slept on the platforms and no one seemed to take any notice.

Secunderabad

On the third day of our journey across Southern India we entered the Deccan State, generally known as the Burning Deccan, and eventually arrived at our destination, the town of Secunderabad. We were met at the station by the Battalion band and after piling our baggage on small two wheeled army carts pulled by mules we formed up behind the band and set off for the cantonment of Trimulgherry. We marched for about two miles along dusty roads winding between rock strewn countryside dotted with cacti and stunted trees. Villagers stood and watched silently as we marched past their ramshackle huts, stirring up the dust~ but the barefooted children and scraggy barking dogs ran alongside the column of sweating newcomers to their country.

As we approached the barracks the band struck up the regimental march of 'A Hundred Pipers', an unusual tune for a Kentish infantry regiment, but one that made us pull back our shoulders, swing our arms and feel pride in our regiment. The first building we came to was the guard room and the guard turned out to salute us as we marched by. Many men of the battalion lined the road to welcome us, some of them

calling out to friends they had known when they too had served with the 2nd Battalion in England. When the draft was dismissed we collected our baggage from the A.T. carts which followed along behind the column and were shown to our quarters.

Gough Barracks, named after General Sir Hubert Gough, a famous general of earlier days, consisted of large bungalows well spaced out on one side of a dirt road with the orderly room, library and married quarters on the other. Deep ditches ran down either side of the road to take away flood water during the monsoon periods. The bungalow which housed the boys was at the far end of the barracks and our party of six newcomers joined about fifteen others already serving with the 1st Battalion.

Having been allocated a bed space our next stop was once again the Quartermaster's stores where we were issued with items peculiar to the soldier serving in India. A mosquito net, a durri which was a blue mat used to lay over the bed irons with the biscuits, or mattresses, placed on top. The durri was also used to wrap around the bedding roll when moving. The pith helmets which we were issued with in Aldershot were exchanged for heavier cork Wolsey helmets and then there were khaki drill shirts, shorts, brown leather belts and hose tops -footless long socks which were worn under the puttees and turned over at the top. Another item was the bed plate, a small brass plate with the regiment's name and crest on it which we had to have stamped with our name and regimental number. We had been issued with a bed plate on joining the 2nd Battalion but each battalion had its own pattern. The bed plate was hung up in a prominent position when the bed was made up for inspection in the morning and if a soldier was absent for any reason it was reversed showing the word 'Duty' stamped on the back.

Like all the bungalows in Gough Barracks, the boys' quarters consisted of a high roofed room with a stone flagged floor and a row of alternate windows and doors down each side. The doors opened on each side to a veranda edged with stone balustrades and wide stone steps leading down to the ground. On one side was a small garden containing a number of large trees and dozens of red clay chattie pots planted with tropical plants. Up in the roof space was a wooden framework held together with wires and ropes to which were attached the punkahs, lengths of heavy curtain, hanging over each bed space.

A large electric motor stood on a platform in a central area which separated the two rooms of the block and this drove the punkah frame backwards and forwards creating a cool draught over each bed. In earlier days, in barracks where no electricity existed, a punkah-wallah was employed to sit up on the platform and pull the punkah backwards and forwards with a rope tied to his foot. At night the punkahs stopped and mosquito nets were hung from the framework and tucked in under the bed biscuits.

Boy soldiers were fairly strictly regulated with reveille at 6 a.m., in bed at 9.30 p.m. and lights out at 10.15 p.m. Our pay now became two rupees a week instead of the three shillings we had received in England. At least a lot of the chores we had had to carry out then were now undertaken by Indian boot boys. These 'boys' often had long white beards and we paid them eight annas a week for their services which might not seem very much but the boot boys worked for possibly twenty men, bringing their earnings to ten rupees a week, a lot more than we received.

Most of the Indians spoke Urdu which was a mixture of Hindi and Persian, plus words from a number of other languages. Those who were employed in the barracks almost all spoke or understood a certain amount of English.

Our day started with what was known as gunfire, a mug of tea and a biscuit which we collected from the cookhouse. As soon as reveille was sounded by the duty bugler the cooks would shout 'gunfire up' and there would be a dash for the cookhouse. The name stemmed, I understand, from the First World War when the Germans had a nasty habit of opening up with their guns at dawn just when the British troops were collecting their breakfast. After gunfire and a wash came the usual period of P.T., often a cross country run and then back for breakfast.

A few days after our arrival we were interviewed by the Battalion bandmaster, Mr. Butt, who, when I told him that I had been considered to be a potential horn player whilst with the 2nd Battalion, decided that I looked more like a possible woodwind player and duly issued me with a Bb clarinet. So started a love affair with the clarinet which was to have a profound influence on my life.

As the youngest member of the regiment at that time, and probably the youngest British soldier in India, it

was decided that for the record a photograph would be taken of myself and the oldest serving soldier in India, Private Nobby Esplin who was also serving in the 1st Battalion, Royal West Kent Regiment. Nobby Esplin had served abroad, mostly in India, since 1904 and was a typical old sweat and very superstitious. Some malicious person told him that I was cross-eyed, which was supposed to bring bad luck, and he flatly refused to have his photograph taken with me. I was also called Nobby as most Clarkes were, but the photograph of the two Nobbies never materialised.



Young Ken

Gradually life as a soldier in India took on a fairly regular pattern. We got used to having tiffin in the middle of the day instead of dinner, the main meal being served at 5 o'clock after the heat of the sun had begun to subside. In the afternoon it was an accepted rule 'in bed or out of barracks' which about 90% of soldiers obeyed. As far as some of us boys were concerned the battalion plunge bath or exploration of the locality was a much more interesting activity, despite a temperature of around 100 degrees. Mornings were taken up with band practice, except

Thursdays which was traditionally a rest day for troops in India. This, we understood, had been instigated by Queen Victoria at the time of the Delhi Durbar in 1897 which celebrated the 60th year of her reign.

The opportunity was taken on Thursdays to de-bug our iron bedsteads and they would be taken out and left in the scorching sun and a burning rag would be applied to all the joints and crevices to get rid of any pests. Boys did not normally carry arms and were not issued with rifles, bayonets or other weapons, but on Thursdays we were able to go to the rifle range and fire small bore rifles. These were the normal army issue Lee Enfield rifles but adapted for firing .22 ammunition. I enjoyed our visits to the range and looked forward to Thursday mornings. We were also permitted to wear 'loose order' on rest days which meant that we did not have to dress in regulation uniform but could wear drill slacks, casual white shirts and canvas shoes or sandals.

The cheapest way to obtain a white shirt was to draw a sheet from the stores, which of course had to be paid for out of our pay stoppages, and take it to the regimental tailor, or dirzi. By the next day he would have produced a made to measure white shirt. The dirzi sat on the floor and turned the handle of his sewing machine with his toe, but produced some well made garments.

Amongst the various wallahs who traded around the barracks were the cycle wallahs. They bicycled round the area, riding one and steering two others, one with their right hand and another with the left calling out 'cycle wallah, cycle wallah'. We could hire a cycle from them for 8 annas a day, about nine pence, and would use it to ride into the town of Secunderabad, usually to visit the cinema. When we returned in the evening the cycles would be left outside the bungalow and the cycle wallah would come round early next morning to collect them up.

An alternative means of travel was the gharri, a horse drawn cab. In the evening a line of gharris would wait for customers on the outskirts of the barracks. These could carry four people and the gharri wallah charged us about four annas each.

Between Trimulgherry and Secunderabad was the Secunderabad Club with a modern swimming bath which we were allowed to use on some mornings instead of our normal P.T. parade. It was very popular

with the troops. Another regular activity in the battalion was hockey, in which it excelled, being one of the strongest army sides in India. We were given coaching in the game and played matches in the cool of the evening on the rock hard 'mutti' pitches. This was another activity which I came to enjoy and one which has remained with me all my life.

Gradually we became acclimatised to the heat of the Deccan plain and our faces, arms and knees changed from white to brown although most bodies remained white as it was asking for trouble to venture outside into the sun without a shirt.

The Dhobi wallah was another familiar sight in the barracks. He was the man who did the washing and would collect our dirty clothes which he bundled into a large sheet carried on his back and tied round his forehead. He gave everyone a dhobi mark which was marked in indelible ink on all our clothes for identification purposes. Every mark was different, mine being ->. The washing would be taken to the dhobi ghats where there was a small pool and each item would first be dipped into the water then swung over the head and beaten on the sun scorched rocks before being laid out on flat rocks to dry. For a small extra payment we could get our clean washing returned the same day and the man responsible for this service was known as the Flying Dhobi.

Then there was the indispensable char wallah, as much a part of the British army in India as the soldier himself. Wherever the army went so too did the char wallah. When we marched twenty or more miles out to a camp site there, as if by magic, would appear the char wallah with his urn of strong tea and metal box full of assorted cakes, known as wads. Char and wads were usually had on tick, called katab, and paid for at the end of the week after pay day. We had to sign our names in the char wallah's book and a glimpse at this was interesting as it appeared we had men named Charlie Chaplin, Tom Nix, King Kong, Shirley Temple and a host of other well known and fictional characters. However, the char wallah knew who they were and in fact had his own name for everyone and called me baby face. I was after all only fifteen and hadn't yet begun to shave. The band's char wallah, Abdul, was a Pathan from the hills of Northern India and was well liked by all of us.

On the subject of shaving there was another surprise in store for the unsuspecting soldier recently arrived

from England in the form of the nappi wallah, or barber. He would arrive at about five o'clock in the morning, before daylight, and proceed from bed to bed shaving everyone in turn with a large cut throat razor. He carried a small water container which looked something like a miner's lamp with smouldering charcoal in the bottom section which he swung backwards and forwards to create a draught, livening up the embers which heated the water. He would untuck the mosquito net, lather your face and proceed to give you a shave and it was a somewhat daunting experience on the first occasion to be suddenly woken up at crack of dawn to find a turbaned Indian bending over you holding an open razor at your throat. After a while many men didn't even wake up and came to find that they had been shaved. We younger boys had politely to tell the nappi not to bother with us for a year or two as a quick shave about once a month was all we needed to get rid of our bumfluff and it wasn't worth paying his bill at the end of the week.

Band practice was held in the band room from 9 a.m. until midday but as most new boys were only learners we practised separately, usually in the wash room. On Sundays the band and drums would lead the battalion parade to the Garrison Church about two miles from Gough Barracks where the services were taken by the local padre, a rather fat man known somewhat irreverently as Pregnant Percy. Those of us who were not proficient enough to play with the band were given the job of loading a mule cart with music stands, folders of music, the bandmaster's rostrum etc. and escorting the cart to church in advance of the parade. We then had to set up the stands and music ready for the band to play during the service. We were also required to sing in the choir and after the service packed everything up again and escorted the mule cart back to barracks.

When the battalion paraded for church on the barrack square rifles and side arms were carried and each man would be issued with a clip of five rounds of .303 ammunition which would be loaded into the magazine. On return to barracks the command would be given to unload and the rounds would be ejected onto the ground. A fatigue party would then walk round the ranks with metal washing bowls and pick up the rounds. Every single round had to be accounted for and the parade was not allowed to dismiss until this had been done. On occasions there would be a

panic when a round was missing and a frantic search was made to locate it.

Prior to 1857 British troops in India had not taken arms to church but on Sunday, 10th May 1857, a column of unarmed soldiers were ambushed in Meerut whilst parading to church and without the means to defend themselves. This signalled the start of the Indian Mutiny and resulted in arms always being carried in future years.

After a few weeks exposed to the burning Deccan sun I suffered from a heat rash but after a couple of weeks applying cream prescribed by the M.O. it cleared up and I began to get acclimatised to the Southern Indian heat.

The Nilgiri Mountains

During the hottest months of the year from April onwards when the temperatures rose above 100° detachments from regiments were sent to hill stations where the climate was more temperate, averaging about 60°. The hill station used by Madras Command, which included the Secunderabad Garrison, was Wellington, a military cantonment situated 8000 feet up in the Nilgiri Mountains.

The men from the local regiments took it in turns to have a spell at a hill station but would be lucky to get more than one visit in four years. It was however customary for the boys, married families and men recovering from illness to join the detachment for a three month period. Towards the end of June we packed our bedding rolls and kit bags and set off on the three day train journey to Mysore Province and the Nilgiri or Blue Mountains (nila meaning blue and gin meaning hill). As we approached the Nilginis the flat scrubby countryside changed and the Mysore jungle took over as the mountains came into view. We reached the foothills at the small market town of Mettupalaiyam and transferred from the main line to a small narrow guage railway. The box-like carriages of the Nilgiri Mountain Railway were open sided with hard wooden seats and we squeezed into them with our equipment and bed rolls and hoped that the rest of our journey would not take too long. With one engine pulling and another at the rear pushing we set off and travelled for about five miles between rows of tall palm trees to Kallar where we actually began to climb upwards.

Once we began the ascent cog wheels under the engine engaged with a rack rail in the centre of the track which helped to haul the train up the steep inclines which reach a gradient in places of 1 in 2 feet. In case of emergency the train was also fitted with four independent sets of brakes. As we climbed higher up the hills the views became more and more spectacular and we could look down on to the plains below between gaps in the hills and see the sun still scorching down while the atmosphere became noticeably cooler the higher up we travelled.

We crossed many high bridges and viaducts linking one hill with another and could often look straight down for about a hundred and fifty feet where the carriages overhung the edge of the bridge. We passed large tea plantations with English names such as Runnymede and Glendale and saw women picking the leaves and dropping them into baskets strapped to their backs. There were also large areas of eucalyptus trees and many spectacular waterfalls where the water dropped down from hundreds of feet above us.

At one point the engineers who built the railway had been unable to tunnel through the rock and had cut out a narrow ledge just wide enough for the track, leaving a massive rock overhang above the line which was naturally known as the overhanging rock. Legend had it that the original engineer building the track had reached this point and could not find a way to continue so had committed suicide by leaping off the edge of the track. It was a long way down at that point. We stopped at a number of other small stations on the way up such as Adderley, Hillgrove and Coonor where the gradient was not so steep and the rack line was discontinued.

Wellington

After a journey of about 25 miles we arrived at Wellington where we were met by lorries from the Indian Army Service Corps and having loaded up our kit set off marching to the barracks about two miles away. The road, like the railway, wound backwards and forwards around the hills and there were wonderful views to be seen. Looking up in one direction was the high peak of Dodabetta, over 9,000 feet, the highest point in the Nilgiri Mountains and further round a waterfall cascaded down from the point which we discovered later was called Lamb's Rock.

As we marched up a steep incline to the barracks the pointed top of Sugar Loaf Hill came into view towering above the two storey building.

The barracks, which were built in the shape of a rectangle, was occupied by a battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry and one of the large blocks was allocated for the use of the detachment from Trimulgherry. The boys were accommodated in a large ground floor room which opened out on to a veranda and looked on to the central parade ground. In addition to boys from the West Kent Regiment there were boys from the Suffolk Regiment, the 17/21st Lancers and the Royal Artillery who were also up from Trimulgherry.



Wellington Barracks

The Hill Sanitorium Detachment, or Hilisan as it was known, operated as a completely separate unit with its own Commanding Officer and administration. During the day when the men were on parade, drilling or carrying out weapon training, the boys practised their band instruments. After breakfast we would march out to a suitable spot on the hillside, cud-side as we called it, to disperse amongst the trees and shrubs, set up our music stands and practise our scales. We usually had only one junior NCO in charge of about 30 boys and as we were spread over a large area it was impossible for him to supervise everyone, consequently not a great deal of serious practice was done. One of our pastimes was to practise semaphore. We made flags with a stick and a handkerchief and sent messages across a gully to a pal on the other side. On some days we had to attend school to study for our Army Second Class Certificate of Education which covered English, Maths, Map Reading and Army and Empire. I sat and passed the examination in September 1933.

When off duty we usually made our way to the Soldiers' Home about half a mile away from the barracks. Here we could get the usual char and wads or bottles of lemonade and there was a well-stocked reading room although most of the magazines were many months out of date. There was also a billiard room where we could play for about four annas a game (about 2p) and a cinema which was even more basic than the one in Aldershot, a corrugated iron building with a dirt floor and rows of forms. The programme changed every week and so we kept fairly well up to date with all the film stars of the day although the film would often break down two or three times during a performance and there would be a lot of ribald comments bandied about while the Indian projectionist tried to piece it together.

The troops paraded to the local St. Marks Church on Sunday mornings although the boys had to go to the Sunday evening service.

There was a small bazaar adjacent to the barracks which housed a tailor's shop, a photographer and a tattooist amongst others in wooden single storey buildings. The barrack square in the centre of the buildings became a hockey pitch in the evenings after the day's parades were over and we took any opportunity to make up a side to play against other company teams.

Thursdays as usual were free days and we often got a party together, drew a day's rations and set off to walk in the hills. A favourite hike was down the Ghat road to Wellington village, then on down to Coonor about six miles away and make for the rock strewn river which meandered round the gullies and hills to the junction of the Coonor and Katari rivers. We would follow the river for some way until the jungle took over then clamber up to meet the railway track which we could follow, walking on the sleepers down to the large tea plantation at Glendale. Here we could get back down on to the rocks for a bathe in a clear pool where a waterfall dropped down from about 30 feet. With plenty of dry wood about we would soon have a fire going to fry our steaks and chips and make a large dixie of tea.

After a few hours relaxing in the pool and sunbathing it was time to pack up our haversacks and head back up the road to Wellington. Sometimes we would stop in Coonor, a small market town where we could wander around the bazaars, or in Sims Park which was

a pleasant spot similar to an English park. On other occasions we would stick to the road and walk down perhaps fifteen or so miles until we came to one of the small mountain railway stations to catch a train back up. On one occasion four of us hiked from the main barracks at Wellington down to the station at Mettupalaiyam where the mountain railway met the main line, a distance of 25 miles. We travelled back up on the train with sore feet.

There were two large hills overlooking the barracks, one called Sugar Loaf Hill which was covered with short scrubby bushes and which we often climbed and the other, a bit higher, known as One Tree Hill. Although it was covered with eucalyptus trees this hill had a large tree dominating the top and was a landmark for miles around. Access was by a main road winding round the hillside towards a small army camp called Hastings Barracks which housed a company of men on detachment from Madras.

From here the road went on up a steep incline, becoming just a track which got steeper as it reached the summit. A marvellous view once you got up there, One Tree Hill was marked on all the army maps and was a well known reference point. There was hell to pay one morning when it was discovered that the top had been cut off the tree by some pranksters leaving a very naked looking hill top. I don't know if the culprits were ever found.

Sometimes we would get a bus up to Ootycamund, the capital town of the Nilgiris, some eight or nine miles on up the mountain. Ooty, with its temperate climate, was an attractive town where many rich Indians and retired British officers and government officials had settled and was known by many as SnootyOoty. The summer residence of the Governor of Madras Province was also there surrounded by lovely gardens and lawns and there was also a racecourse where regular meetings were held.

On the outskirts of Ooty lived a group of Aboriginal tribesmen known as the Toda's who were the original settlers in this part of the Nilgiri Mountains but are now almost extinct. They wore distinctive flowing white and pink robes and lived in grass covered huts with only a low entrance through which they had to crawl. They herded buffalo and cultivated potatoes and continued their ancient way of life. Their women are reported to have up to four husbands each and the tribe are thought to be one of the lost Tribes of Israel.

Ootacamund derives its name from the Tōda term othakamanthu, meaning Village of huts. In complete contrast it was at the Officers' Club in Ooty that the game of billiards is reputed to have been invented.

Our three months break up in the Nilgiris soon came to an end and we rolled up our dhurries, packed our kit and caught the mountain railway back down to the plains. After the pleasant climate of Wellington we had to acclimatise ourselves once again to the heat of the Deccan.

Back to the Deccan Plain

A new Bandmaster, formerly of the Seaforth Highlanders, arrived to take over the Band and he began to take a lot more interest in training the boys who would, of course, become his band of the future. Under Bandmaster McKenna's influence I started to take my clarinet playing much more seriously and instead of being a chore it became much more enjoyable. We had a very good and quite large band at that time of about forty players and a dozen boys learning to play instruments.

In the autumn the Battalion marched out of barracks for its annual camp and field training at a desolate area called Ghatkesar. This was about 18 miles from Trimulgherry and for most of the way it was along dusty unmade tracks. We were allowed a ten minute break every hour and just a quick swig from our water bottles as we sat by the side of the track and eased the straps of our equipment which had begun to bite into our shoulders. After a couple of hours the water in our bottles became quite warm and with the amount of chlorine added it tasted really foul. It took about six hours to reach the camp by which time the sun was high in the sky, scorching our backs and making the brass buckles and fittings on our equipment too hot to touch. The tents and marquees had already been erected by an advance party and it was a great relief to throw off our equipment, kick off our boots and stretch out in the shade. There to greet us were the char wallahs with their urns of tea and tin boxes of wads. They had been transported out to the camp site by the Regimental contractor in an ancient lorry. The contractor, or Mister as he was known by everyone in the regiment, ran the battalion canteens and sub-contracted to the various company char wallahs. It is recorded that Khan Bahadur Jan Mohammed had been connected with the regiment since 1911 when he

served in the canteen of the 2nd Battalion in Peshawar, later becoming the regiment's contractor.

When the men were out on exercises or schemes the boys were found jobs around the camp, cleaning, helping in the cookhouse etc. The band took on their role as stretcher bearers during this period although on some evenings they gave concerts in the camp despite having themselves been out all day.

We were very glad to return to the comparative comfort of Gough Barracks and to get a proper bath again. In November 1933 the Viceroy of India, Lord Willingdon, visited the area and there was much spit and polish for a big parade at which he took the salute. As Christmas drew near a group of the boys were given the task of decorating the company dining hall. There was an annual competition between the five companies of the battalion and keen rivalry to produce the best decorated dining room. We were attached to Headquarters, known as Headquarters Wing, and this consisted of the Band, the Corps of Drums, Signal Section, Pioneer Section and Intelligence Section. The other companies were known as A, B, C and D (Machine Gun) Company, each with four platoons numbered from 1 to 16.

The room chosen for our Christmas dinner was not the usual H.Q. dining room but a vacant barrack room which was in fact the other half of the block in which the boys were housed. Starting about two weeks before Christmas we acquired rolls of coloured paper, cotton wool, silver paper and a quantity of other bits and pieces which we thought would be useful for the job. By the time Christmas arrived there was not a square inch of ceiling visible. Hundreds of coloured paper chains were hung from the punka frames and painted Christmas scenes decorated the walls. Potted plants and coloured lights gave a festive appearance and matting was found to cover the normally bare flagged stone floor. There were clean white sheets on the scrubbed trestle tables and on Christmas Day a panel of judges consisting of the Colonel and other officers rewarded our efforts by awarding H.Q. Wing the First Prize.

After church parade Christmas dinner was a grand affair with the men being waited on by the Warrant Officers and Sergeants. Bottles of beer and cigars were provided and the rule about boys not drinking or smoking was overlooked. I tried smoking my first

cigar but very soon regretted it and parted with most of my Christmas dinner. You live and learn.

January 1st was known throughout the army in India as Proclamation Day when all troops in the area paraded and proclaimed their allegiance to the King. There was a huge open area in Secunderabad called the Miadan where all the big parades were held. Hundreds of men from the various infantry regiments, British and Indian cavalry units and Royal Artillery batteries formed up and carried out a spectacular march past. The parade concluded with the firing of a Feu de Joie when all the infantrymen formed into two long lines and each man fired a blank round in quick succession, starting at one end of the front rank, travelling along to the far end then back along the rear rank. It was quite an impressive end to the proceedings.

At Gough Barracks there was an area called the Casino which was used for roller skating, boxing matches, concerts etc. Dances were held occasionally but there was a great shortage of females and so it was mainly the married men and their wives who attended these. I boxed occasionally but later became more interested in hockey and swimming. Some of the concerts were quite entertaining with small groups putting on sketches and often taking a rise out of some of the officers or putting their own words to one of the current shows that were running at home. We had quite a good dance band from amongst our band, members and their jazz concerts were always very popular. The leading light was tenor sax player Gooey Kettleband whose jazz choruses were certain to get everyone clapping and tapping their feet. They were always in demand to play at the Officers' Messes and Clubs that we lesser mortals never normally visited.

The Regimental Band played at the Officers' Mess on Thursday nights, which was their guest night, although at that stage in 1934 I was still not proficient enough to be part of the playing- out band but I was allowed to play my clarinet in the marching band to make up the number and get some experience.

From the veranda of our bungalow we could see a large white castellated building with a tower surrounded by a high wall. This was the Indian equivalent of the glasshouse, the Trimulgherry Military Prison. Whereas the glasshouse in Aldershot was a forbidding looking building, the Trimulgherry

nick was quite imposing and was, in fact, located in All Saints Road. It was held in awe by most British soldiers and those who served a sentence, there invariably vowed that they would never return. As our barracks were close to the prison discharged prisoners, whatever their regiment, were usually attached to our Headquarters until such time as they could be returned to their own units. Consequently, we heard many stories of the treatment 'over the wall'.

Prisoners were escorted by their own regimental police to the gate of the prison where the NCO's of the prison staff took over. They would be wearing full equipment and pack and carrying kit bag and bedding roll. As an introduction and to let it be known what was in store the staff sergeant would shout 'double mark time', 'pick your feet up', 'put down your kit', 'pick it up again, 'put it down', pick it up' and this would be kept up for twenty minutes. The gate then opened and the sweating prisoner would double into the prison. Everything was done at the double and the least show of dissent brought about extra punishment. Prisoners had their heads shaved and were put in a cell with a wooden board for a bed, very severe punishment for what was often only a minor offence. Released prisoners were very noticeable when they suddenly appeared amongst us with shaven heads and usually wearing badges of another regiment.

One of our boys, Charlie 'Pam' Pamment, was unfortunate enough to serve eight days there on one occasion. We had a basket ball pitch alongside the bungalow and one evening during a game the ball went some distance away. An Indian youth was passing and someone shouted to him to throw the ball back but instead he picked it up and kicked it further away. Pamment ran after him and gave him a clip round the ear, nothing very serious, but the Indian reported it and as a result Pam collected an eight day sentence.

The battalion owned a regimental bus which was painted in regimental colours, light and dark blue, and was used to take sports teams to venues and for outings and trips. These were arranged for the boys from time to time and one of the favourite places to visit was the ruined Golconda Fort and ancient tombs about five miles from Hyderabad. Golconda, whose name was derived from 'golla' meaning shepherd and 'Konda' meaning hill, was once the capital of Hyderabad. State and famous for its diamond

industry. The priceless Kohinoor diamond in the British crown originated here. The tombs are those of the kings who ruled the Deccan in the 16th Century. Golconda Fort had been a massive granite stronghold within a sixteen mile perimeter which took 62 years to build and many of the bastions and walls were still preserved. Lying around on the ground were the barrels and parts of huge ornamental bronze cannon which to-day would be worth large sums of money but at that time few people seemed particularly interested in them.

We regularly took food with us to picnic and explore this interesting area. The officer in charge of boys at that time was Lieut. Sinclair-Brooke who was known as Rajah in the regiment and he was responsible for organising these outings for us and often provided an extra treat in the form of some special rations.

In April 1934 we were on our way once again for another three months' break up in the Nilgiris. On the second day of our journey I was suddenly taken ill on the train with a fever and a temperature of 104. By the morning I was no better and the train was stopped and it was debated whether or not to take me off. I stayed on the train however and on arrival in Wellington was taken to the military hospital. It was not malaria but a less serious illness commonly called sandfly fever and after about a week I was discharged and joined the rest of the detachment.

Having been there before we quickly adapted to the routine of life in the hills and found new places to

explore on our days off. This year we had boys with us from two different regiments which had been posted to Trimulgherry - the North Staffords and the King's Dragoon Guards. A number of these were keen hockey players so we had no difficulty in getting a team together whenever we could get the use of the pitch. One Thursday morning a team from the Somersets had arranged a match but were let down by their opposition and asked us to play them instead. We were just getting out on to the pitch when one of our senior NCO's, who was acting as detachment sergeant major, appeared and asked who had given us permission to play. We explained that we had no other duties so had agreed to give the Somersets a game.

'Well you can just go back to your rooms and change' he ordered 'and in future you ask my permission'. Despite our objections he refused to let the game go ahead at which I lost my temper and called him a b... fat spoilsport.

Before I knew it I was under arrest and being escorted to the guard room where I was locked in a cell with a military policeman on duty in the passage outside. The only furnishing was a solid wooden bed but I was allowed later to go under escort to collect a couple of blankets and my toilet gear. I spent a very uncomfortable day and night just laying on my wooden bed wondering what was in store for me. As it happened, the next morning a big parade was being held and while everyone else was busy with spit and polish and marching about on the parade ground I was just relaxing in my cell. In the afternoon I was taken

under escort to the Company office where I came before the detachment commander, an officer from the North Staffordshire Regiment, and charged with insubordination and swearing at a senior NCO. I stated my case but guessed it wouldn't hold much water and was given eight days confined to barracks, jankers as it is known in the army.

to be continued.....



A picnic party

NOTICE BOARD

NEW MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION

Mr. E. J. Twycross	5th Bn. QORWK	39-44
Mr. P. G. Johnson	1st. Bn. QORWK	52-54
Mr. M. J. Harris	QOB's & 2nd Queen's	64-72
Mr. B. P. Crocker	QOB's & 2nd Queen's	64-67
Mr. M. E. Reeves	1st Bn The Buffs	54-57
Mr. C. S. Cook	1st Bn The Buffs	56-58
Mr. R. E. Lockwood	1st Bn QORWK	50-57
Mr. T. B. Mansfield	Buffs & RWK	45-53
Mr. E. Chappell	6th Bn QORWK	43-45

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

March 23rd 2006, the 90th birthday of Mr. J R Wayne who was conscripted into 10th Bn The Buffs in June 1940 and served for three years with the regiment before being attached to the Hampshires. He was discharged in the rank of Sergeant in July 1946.

Many Happy Returns of the Day

FLASHBACK TELEVISION LTD

11 BOWLING GREEN LANE,
TEL: 020 7490 8996 FAX: 020 7490 5610

18th May 2006

Dear Sirs,

I hope you don't mind me writing to you out of the blue like this, but I wondered if you may be able to help me find people I'm after for a couple of television history documentaries.

The programmes are part of a series for The History Channel in the US and will be shown here on Sky's History Channel and possibly on Channel 4. In the first programme we will tell the story of the Battle of Monte Cassino using a combination of aerial photographs taken at the time and veterans' testimony. The second programme will use the same techniques to tell the story of the Tunisian Campaign. from Operation Torch to the surrender of German forces in May 1943.

Spring 2006

FLASHBACK has a long history of making World War Two programmes which have been shown throughout the world. Our long-running series BATTLE STATIONS for example, has been shown in the US and here in Britain and has won numerous awards.

For the current programme, we would love to hear from men and women who served during the Battle of Monte Cassino or in the Tunisian Campaign. I am hoping that some of your members will not mind getting in touch to tell us about their experiences.

I am very keen to hear from as many people as possible in the course of my research and would be ever so grateful if they would call me or write to me, Clair Titley, at the address above, or email me at clairtitley@flashbacktvco.uk.

Many thanks in anticipation of your kind assistance.

Yours sincerely,
Clair Titley.

BAND CONCERT

by

THE KOHIMA BAND

at

**LEROS BARRACKS, STURRY ROAD,
CANTERBURY**

Sunday 23rd July at 1.30 pm

Tickets at £6 each, which includes curry or lasagne lunch, can be obtained from:

Henry Delo

**38 Reculver Avenue, Minnis Bay, Birchington
CT7 9NU.**

Tel: 01843 842357.

LONDON BUFFS SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE

Sunday 3rd September 2006

Please contact

Betty Correa on 0208 655 3040
or Leroy Gittens on 0208 870 72900
for full details of parade timings
and lunch arrangements.

PHOTO GALLERY



The above photo is of the 3" Mortar Pln, 1 Buffs taken at Fanling Cross Roads, Hong Kong in 1949. The photo includes: Sgt Doug Ellis, Boxall, Puttock, Charlie Cock, Ron Proud, Mike Kay (with cig in front, Mitch Mitchell, Can anyone name some of the others please?



Barry Thomas (Tomo) inspecting a burnt out vehicle in Buxton, British Guyana. This picture was published in the local BG paper. The very next day the CO, Lt. Col. 'Blick' Waring, ordered Tomo to get his hair cut!!!

PHOTO GALLERY



Harry Crooks, second from left, en route to Kenya. Can anyone name the remainder please?
If so let the editor know.



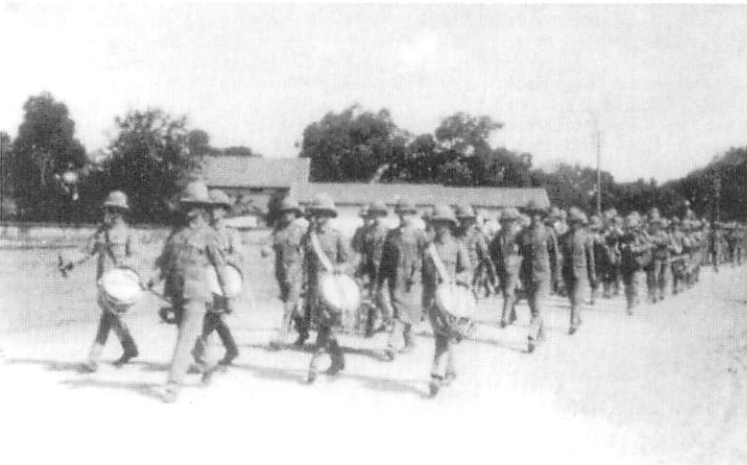
Mrs Pat Tennant, seen here on the 80th anniversary of the 'Turning of the Page' with her beautiful flower arrangement in regimental colours. Pat has been a 'Flower Arranger' for the chapel for over 25 years and is now responsible for organising the rota of 10 ladies who provide the flower arrangements each week.

Pat our sincere thanks to you all.

Pictured left

1/5th Bn The Buffs making their ceremonial entry into Baghdad

photo courtesy of Major R T P Williams



A Buff 'Down Under'
Lionel Dombert on parade



Which one is Henry Delo?

PHOTO GALLERY



The picture of the memorial pictured left was sent in by Peter Boon with the following letter.

“I visited the cemetery at St. John’s Church, Meerut, India last month as part of a tour of the north east of the country.

I enclose a photograph of the memorial in the cemetery to the men and families of the 1st Bn. The Buffs who died in a cholera epidemic in 1867 whilst the Bn. was stationed there.

My great-grandfather, who was serving with the Buffs at the time, survived the epidemic. The memorial has suffered the ravages of time and, sadly, vandalism.

The inscription reads:

To The Memory
of
the undermentioned Officers, NCO’s, Men, Women
and children
of the
1st Battn The Buffs
who died during the cholera epidemic
in the autumn of 1867

Lieut A Jackson
Ast. Surgeon Gage HMLF (Attached)

Clr Sergeants	3
Sergeants	3
Corporals	6
Drummers	4
Privates	10
Women	16
Children	43

All Ranks of the Regiment have
united in erecting this Cross.

You will note that the memorial records the number of dead as 87, whereas the Historical Rcrds of The Buffs states on page 514 that 188 people died.

Yours sincerely

Peter Boon

(Peter, I am indebted to you for sending in the photographs and letter. The discrepancy in the numbers who died may bear some further investigation. Many thanks -The Editor.



PHOTO GALLERY



CORPS OF DRUMS
1st Battalion The Buffs, Aden 1958

Back Row: Dmr. ?, Dmr. Hogan, Dmr. Twyman, Dmr. Craven, Dmr. Peal, Dmr. Rowe, Cpl Ward
Middle Row: Dmr. Horley, Dmr. Jarvis, Dmr. Burt, Dmr. Danton, Dmr. Swan, Dmr. Holman, Dmr. Lemare, Dmr. Cox.
Front Row: Dmr. Dwyer, L/Cpl. Supple, L/Cpl. Jones, Lt. Col. E. L. C. Edmann MC (CO) Drum Major Simmons, Capt. C. West (Adj),
Dmr. Irvin, Dmr. Dudman, Dmr. Smith.

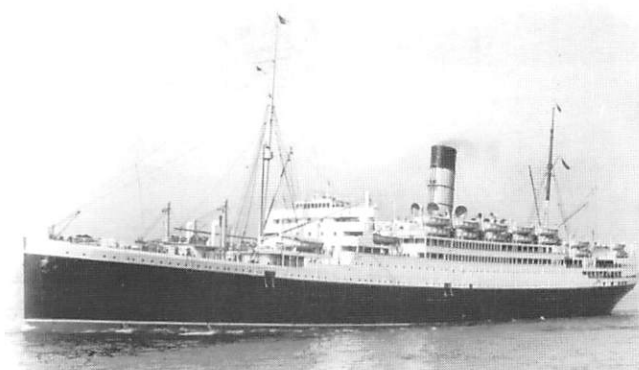


Cyril Langdon writes: - Probably the last group photo taken within 5th Bn. QORWK's. It is Support Company taken at Casemate Barracks, Gibraltar on 14th Dec 1946. Two weeks after this picture was taken at midnight on New Year's Eve, a number of us left Gibraltar aboard the troopship Georgic to join the 1st Bn in the Canal Zone. The remainder of the Battalion returned to the UK where the 5th Battalion was disbanded. *(Many thanks Cyril for the picture and details. The Editor).*

A BATTALION AT WAR

THE STORY IN PHOTOGRAPHS OF 2ND BATTALION THE BUFFS AT WAR

PART 2. NORTH AFRICA 1940-43



SS Laconia

SS Laconia, home of the 2nd Battalion and 132 Brigade for 2 months leaving Liverpool on May 30th 1942 arriving Port Tewfik, Egypt on July 26th.

She was later torpedoed and sunk by U156(Lt. Hartensen) 550 miles from Las Palmas. Homeward bound she had a crew of 463, 256 British Troops, 80 women & children with 1,800 Italian POW's on board. Survivors were rescued by the attacker and also U507 (Lt. Schacht) and U506 (Lt. Wurdemann) who were sent by Admiral Doenitz to assist. Casualties were very heavy.



Pictured above is the Port of Tewfik.

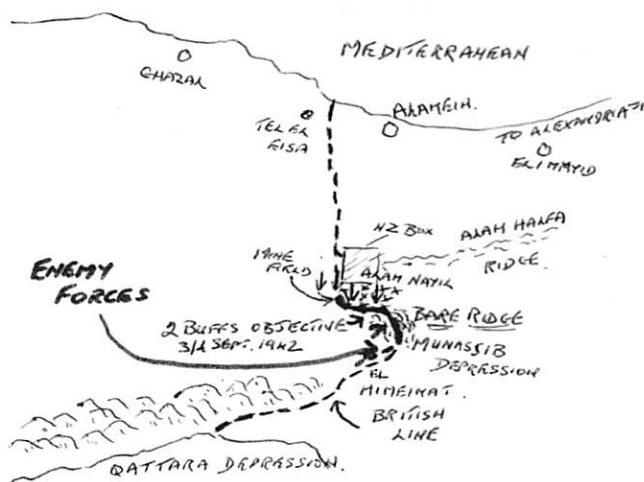
Below: The Battalion disembarking into lighters



Above: Gen Freyburgh (Div Commander), Brig. Robertson (Comd 132 Brigade) & Lt. Colonel Nicholson (CO 2nd Buffs) discuss final plans prior to the battle at 'Bare Ridge'.



A Buff platoon commander passes on the 'Good News' and below a sketch plan of the battle during which 12 Buffs were killed 53 wounded and 44 reported missing. Awards 1 MM and 2 MID's.

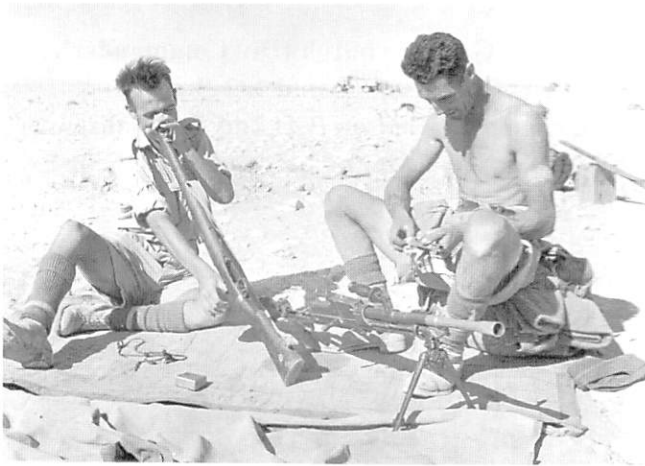




The Intelligence Section Sgt Wilkins-(KIA Burma)- Cpl Davies, Lt. Greenfield, Pte's Maylum, Daniels & Low.



The Attack



Above: Cleaning weapons prior to the battle.



The Battalion MO, Capt. Shragovitch, with Pte. Callaghan attend one of the casualties.



'A' Platoon of 'C' Company moving into position. The figure on the extreme right with binoculars is Cpl. 'Johnny' Hurst.



The El Alamein War Cemetery. Situated 65 miles west of Alexandria and 1 mile from the sea.

ROLL OF HONOUR

**Members of 2nd Battalion The Buffs Killed In Action.
Western Desert Sept/Dec. 1942 who are buried in the El Alamein cemetery**

Pte. W. F. Allen	Pte. G. B. Austin	L/Cpl H. L. Braund
Major P. H. Buckwell	Pte: A. B. Carter	Pte. E E . Crane
Pte. J. W. DeCock	Pte. G. W. Dewey	Pte. F. C. Ffello
Pte. J. W. Gillman	Pte. R. Hodges	L/Cpl. W. R. Holman
L/Cpl. V. M. Huntley	2/Lieutenant H. D.Hurry.	Pte H. Kearn .
L/Cpl. C. W. Lammin	Pte. T. Law.	Pte. T. MacJannett
Pte. F. H. Martin	L/Cpl. A. J. Middleton	Pte. O'Casey
Sgt. A. E. Parish MM	Pte. A. A. Smith	Pte. R. Stephens
Pte. A. A. Summer	Pte. A. E. Thomas .	Pte. H. A. Tuck .
	L/Cpl. R. C. Wraight	

THOSE WITH NO KNOWN GRAVE

L/Sgt. J. R. Brown	Pte. H. T. Burn	L/Sgt. H. G. Button
Pte. R. F. Coultham	Pte. H. C. Dolton	2/Lieutenant W. J.Gray
Pte. E. J. Higginson	Pte. W. Lumsden	Cpl. A. G. Pointer
Pte. S. J. Robinson	L/Cpl. E. H. Scutt	Pte. C. G. Sedgwick

**44th (Home Counties) Division Memorial. Situated south east of El Alamein on the Alam Halfa Ridge,
constructed of oil drums and shell cases set on a concrete plinth.**

Commemorating men of the Division Killed in Action in the Western Desert 1942/43



**2nd Buffs, 4th & 5th Queen's Own Royal West Kent's(132 Infantry Brigade), 1/5th, 1/6th & 1/7th Queens
(131 Infantry Brigade), 2nd, 4th and 5th Battalions the Royal Sussex Regiment(133 Infantry Brigade)
and supporting Divisional troops.**

LAST POST

LT. COL. FRANCIS DE REIMER MORGAN MC:

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL FRANCIS MORGAN died on 30th October 2005, aged 84. He was awarded the MC at the Battle of Cloppenburg, south-west of



Bremen in 1945. Morgan, then a major, was attached to the 7th Battalion the Hampshire Regiment. He was in command of the leading company and was ordered to secure a bridgehead across a stream which ran through the centre of the town.

On the outskirts of Cloppenburg, Morgan's company quickly overcame an enemy post covering the main road and pushed on to the stream. There the leading platoon was held up by machine-gun, bazooka and small arms fire from German positions on the far bank. It was essential to clear the houses covering the main crossing-point without delay so that the sappers could throw a Bailey bridge over the stream and that the advance could continue.

Francis Morgan carried out a quick reconnaissance under shell fire and made a new plan. The Germans were so close that he was unable to call down mortar or artillery fire, but he launched one of his platoons across the stream under cover of smoke and supported their attack with every company weapon that he could bring to bear. This stratagem worked well. The enemy troops near the crossing were forced to fall back and a third platoon was ordered to clear the houses on the opposite bank and along the main axis of advance. Morgan was awarded an immediate MC. The citation stated that his determination to reach his company's objective, his coolness in action and complete disregard of enemy fire were an inspiration to all.

Francis de Reimer Morgan, the son of Major-General Harold Morgan. DSO, was born in Oxford on March 30 1921 and educated at Harrow before going to Sandhurst and attending the shortened wartime course. He was commissioned into The Buffs, his father's regiment, and spent the first phase of the war with anti-aircraft batteries on the Kent coast.

He landed in Normandy with the 7th Hampshire's on D-Day+6 and took part in the bitter fighting around Caen before the breakout and the hard slog across north-west Europe. After the end of the war, he served on the Gold Coast with the Royal West Africa Frontier Force before rejoining the 1st Battalion the Buffs in Hong Kong and subsequently Khartoum. After returning to England, in 1957, he commanded the regimental depot at Canterbury before serving as second-in-command of the 1st Battalion the Buffs in Aden and BAOR.

A spell at the MoD was followed by promotion to lieutenant-colonel in 1962 and a posting to Gibraltar in command of a battalion of the Middlesex Regiment.

One Sunday, shortly before church parade, a driver arrived at Morgan's house to collect him and an admiral in the Indian Navy who was staying there. On opening the door, he was astonished to find the two senior officers upside down in full dress with medals dangling. They were having a competition to see who could stand on his head the longest.

After a staff appointment at the MoD, Morgan was delighted to move to the QMG HQ Wales, at Brecon, the town he had chosen for his later years. He retired from the Army in 1971, but stayed on in the Military Secretary's Department for the next 14 years as a Retired Officer finally retiring in 1986. He hunted for some years, tended his kitchen garden and was a useful shot in his day. He was a churchwarden for many years and was a familiar figure at point-to-points, local shows and helping with events at the pony club.

He married, in 1951, Elined Raikes, the daughter of Major-General Sir Geoffrey Raikes; she survives him with two daughters. A son predeceased him.

At the funeral the eulogy was given by Rear Admiral I. Raikes KCB DSC . In conclusion he said:

"For many years Francis was Church Warden at his church and treasurer of the group. He took part in many activities in the countryside. He was known by many from all walks of life as Colonel Francis. An ace scorer for the Pony Club he never got the scores wrong whilst making sure than no score was too low.

He was a friend and a wonderful example to all. His natural charm, powers of persuasion and organising ability shone through. He had a lovely sense of humour, a twinkle in his eye and a happy chuckle. Children loved him and he loved them. I never heard him raise his voice in anger.

He was a fine officer and a true gentleman."

BARBARA ANNE TALBOT

(Mrs. B. A. Talbot, widow of the late Major General D. E. B. Talbot CB., CBE., DSO., MC., passed away on Tuesday 22nd September 2005 aged 88 years.)

At the funeral the following was read by The Reverend David Roper, Rector of Barham at The Church of St. John the Baptist, Barham, Kent.

"Barbara was born at Bekesbourne, Kent, not far from Barham, 88 years ago on January 4th 1917. She was the only daughter of the Reverend Richard Bevan Pyper, the Rector of Bekesbourne and his wife Elizabeth (née Mellis-Smith). She was the third of four children.

Her life covered four distinct periods: twenty two years growing up in the villages of a Kentish landscape, where she enjoyed an idyllic childhood; twenty five years as a soldier's wife, living in New Zealand, Malaya and Germany amongst other postings, playing the part of the gracious hostess supremely well and chairing countless committees, while somehow managing to raise her five children; thirty years at Oast Court, the family home she had always craved - perhaps the happiest years of her life; and finally, after suffering a stroke, nearly ten years in the tender care of the nurses and staff of Barham House - her home away from home.

Many of you will only remember Barbara as the wife of General Dennis, but within the regimented confines of an army officer's household and afterwards when Dennis had retired, she also lived a life of her own, possessing as she did a remarkable range of interests and special qualities that endeared her to everyone who met her.

She had an affinity with nature and loved gardening and was the Secretary of the Barham Horticultural Society for many years. She had a lasting love of the arts, especially music and a sense of humour that

remained with her to the end, her risqué verses charming her grandchildren as much as they did her own children a generation earlier.

Her home was a delight for a grandchild to visit with favourite meals specially prepared, little gifts waiting beside the bed at night and at one time or another a menagerie of cats and dogs, donkeys and guinea pigs, hamsters and rabbits, mice and parrots to marvel at and play with.

She was a good sports woman. She sailed, rowed, played tennis and badminton, swam, was a competent ice skater - and cheated shamelessly at family croquet and racing demon. She was a skillful exponent of climbing a rope "the sailor's way" and of tree climbing and she celebrated her 50th birthday by scaling a beech tree at Oast Court. She was a keen cyclist, an ardent picnicker, an intrepid camper and a life long enthusiast of clearing out rooms, attics and cupboards, of making bonfires and roasting potatoes in their embers.

She was a super cook who made gargantuan family meals for her own brood as well as their offspring and any vague friends who happened to drop by. And with the help of her faithful Kenwood mixer, she became a master at using left-overs and turning them into the most unusual concoctions. Her five children, long term depositories of her unique recipes, are living proof of the nutritional value of her culinary skills.

She seldom raised her voice in anger - yet one knew when a line had been crossed. She loved poetry and reading aloud and she wrote marvellous letters to her children when they were away at boarding school. In later life when she suffered from depression, she wrote a few pages about her formative years as a kind of comforting therapy. These offer some insight to the sort of person she was. They also provide us with glimpses of a life and time in this part of the world that is gone for ever. Would that she had written more."

Ann, Barbara's eldest daughter, will now share with us four extracts from her writing.

"I was living with my parents at Pluckley, where my Father had been Rector for 15 years, so all we children grew up there. I knew absolutely nothing about the army. The only contact I had had was during the nine months I spent in India when I was 18. My Mother's sister, Aunt Jess, and her husband Theo Tasker invited

me out and I had the most wonderful time. Uncle Theo was Police and Revenue Member in the Nizam of Hyderabad's Government so they moved in very high circles, entertaining and being entertained by the Princes and their families in the last days of their glory. Not only did I have this wonderful experience but with the Army stationed in neighbouring Secunderabad there was never a dull moment! I rode, sailed, swam and danced with a succession of young officers and had tremendous fun and endless, light-hearted love affairs. I did, in fact meet Dennis at the very first dance I went to in Secunderabad, but though I liked him immensely he was then a Captain and Adjutant of his battalion. (1st Bn. The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment)) so I thought him far above my level! It was not until his Bn returned to Shorncliffe one year later that we met up again, by which time he was a rather hardened bachelor and it took me another two years to land my fish which I hooked while in "the fishing fleet"! Even then he nearly escaped me as when the war started he felt it was wrong for him to marry whilst he was in danger of being killed. I, of course, saw it otherwise and insisted that I would rather be his widow than never to be married to him - anyway, I won!"

"I was 22 when we were married on September 23rd 1939, Dennis' birthday - not very clever of us as it was the day petrol rationing was introduced, so car travel was made difficult, and also it was the day the 1st Bn of Dennis' regiment sailed with the B.E.F. for France. Even so we had a splendid wedding with Dennis and Pat Molony, his best man, in scarlet full dress uniform and I in white satin, with my greatest friend Joan Veysey as bridesmaid. It must have been the very last full dress wedding as full dress and swords were not worn as soon as the war started, so we were "out of order" at the very beginning of our military life together. I always thought it rather strange that swords should be abolished just when they might have been useful! However, we had an archway of them held over us by brother officers as we left the church and I remember how they rattled together with the laughter around us. My father, of course, married us and I was given away by my brother Michael. The next time I walked that path, two weeks later, was behind Michael's coffin".

"As "D" Day approached in June 1944, we rented a house in Biddenden where my parents also lived at "The Willows". Dennis had been posted as 2 i/c 5th Dorsets, with Aubrey Coad as his commanding

Officer. They were stationed in Hastings, all leave cancelled as they awaited their orders to embark for France. Richard was nearly three and Rupert one and I had a very nice Barnardo trained nanny to help me look after them. This left me free to travel down to Hastings whenever possible. I went by bus, all through the Kentish lanes, then thick with troops, tanks and military vehicles of every shape and size lying up in every wood and spinney waiting for the invasion. Overhead the sky was full of our planes. Sometimes we counted as many as four hundred roaring towards their targets in France. They were very exciting days, as we all knew the invasion was near, but also very anxious as we could not tell what the future held for us. We lived with the possibility of death and separation never far from our minds, and the trips down to Hastings were very precious and each parting heart-rending".

"My love of tree climbing lasted a long time and was a wonderful form of exercise and relaxation. After V.E. day, when Dennis was commanding the 2nd Bn of the Queen's Own and was camped at Broome Park, Barham, in readiness to go and fight the Japs, I and our two children, Richard and Rupert had been kindly lent a house so we could be near Dennis for a few weeks. As the C.O.'s wife, I was asked to give away the prizes at some sporting event in the Bn. The strain of trying to play my part correctly and with dignity was so great that as soon as I got back to the house, I hurriedly changed into a pair of slacks and rushed up the biggest tree I could find. After that I felt "normal" again, but I think Dennis' soldiers would have been rather surprised!"

Barbara's strong Christian faith, inculcated when a child, through her mother and father, stood her in good stead during the last few years of her life when she was confined to a wheel chair after her stroke and her eye sight had failed. But in the end, she was ready to go and she prayed for her own release. 'I have said my goodbyes" she recently remarked "and I don't understand why I am still here". When she did go, surrounded by her family and those wonderful carers at Barham House, it was the day before Dennis' birthday and their wedding anniversary.

Barbara, Mum, Grandma, Granny or Mrs T, to use the many names she went by, was a rare lady with old fashioned values and strong moral principles. She was infinitely patient, generous, thoughtful, fair, fun-loving and kind. In turn, her children and grand

children, her daughters-in-law and her son-in-law - between whom she drew no distinction - loved her dearly and they and her many friends will miss her forever.

DRUM MAJOR WINDSOR CHARLES BAKER CLARK, MBE 1922 - 2006

(Windsor's son, Bryn, writes:)

Windsor Clark was born on the 30th December 1922 in the Welsh mining town of Cwm, Ebbw Vale, South



Wales. He was the second eldest son to Edward and Eva. When he reached the age of 14 he started work in the mines with his father.

This was not in pits as they have today, but when horses were used, and a candle was fixed to your cap for lighting.

Dad often talked about the times with Grandad, or Grancha, as we called him, when they had to crawl about 300 yards in a two foot six seam to reach the coal face before having to cut the coal by hand with a pick, and shovel it onto a corrugated sheet. Once this was done Dad would fasten a chain around his waste, which was called a Tugger, and he would drag the coal back, 300 yards with Grancha pushing from behind. He always said "the Germans did him a favour when war was declared, as the Tugger was scrapped for quicker methods to heighten productivity" as this, was close to slavery.

When he was nineteen he was promoted to Fire Man within the pit, which was the person who was in charge of safety on their shift and the person who carried out all the shot firing with dynamite. He was also responsible for all the Colliers, Olliers, (these were the horse drivers), the horses as well as any maintenance teams that were on that particular shift. This was quite an achievement as the youngest person who was to hold this position at the time, was a minimum age of 21.

Whilst working in the mines he married Grace who also worked for the mine in administration and they both decided when Dad was made redundant when his pit

closed, that he would leave the mining industry to join the army.

It was quite a hard time for Dad, as before finishing his basic training, he was sent with the army to attend the dock strikes in Liverpool and Dad had to cross picket lines and do things that he would never have thought he could ever have done, but this is what makes a good soldier.

After this he enlisted with the QORWK Regiment into its Regimental Band as a coronet player, bumping up to his elder brother Ted who was the solo coronet player in the band. Dad often said (in his words) that Ted was a bugger - he would never show him any favouritism. Any mistakes and he would get a swift kick to the shin. Even on the parade square my uncle Ted would show no tolerance and have him doubling at his every whim. But Dad realised, this was for his own good, as Uncle Ted wanted Dad to get on, on his own.

Within a year Dad was promoted to L/Cpl, and soon realised that further promotion within the band would take years, as you had to wait for higher ranks to leave before promotions were given. So he left the Band and joined a rifle company within the Battalion. Within the next two years he reached the rank of Sgt. in a rifle platoon.

In Dad's words, "What happened next was the best thing that ever happened to him". Due to having previous musical knowledge and being a platoon Sgt, in a rifle platoon, he was honoured with the appointment as Drum Major of the Regiment's Corps of Drums. This position he held, until the Regiment was amalgamated with The Buffs to become the Queens Own Buffs in which he held the position of Drum Major throughout the Regiment's entire life.

Even though Uncle Ted was a senior rank to Dad, on the parade square the Drum Major was senior overall. Dad had no inhibitions, and at the first opportunity ordered "Clark get your legs up" The sentence would be longer if all the swear words were added.

During this period, Dad and Grace were blessed with their son David. But due to the pressures of army life, Grace and Dad eventually parted and went their own separate ways.

Dad was sent on several operational tours of duty, including Cyprus, Borneo, Malaya and British Guiana. Whilst in the later, he was awarded the MBE. On his

citation, it reads. "For Personal Gallantry". He was on patrol with his platoon, when they came across this village. On passing this house (a shack to us) he looked inside and saw two elderly people inside where someone had thrown a firebomb into their room. He acted quickly, and ran into the room, picked up the bomb, and ran back outside and tossed it into the nearby canal. As soon as it hit the water the bomb exploded.

This is what the citation say's, but Dad has always said that it was awarded for the work that the whole Corps of Drums carried out while in British Guiana. To the very last man.

During this period Dad was stationed at Shorncliff where he met Dorothy. They eventually married and a year later I was born and 23 months after, they were blessed with my little sister Della-May.

On the amalgamation of the Home Counties Regiments to form the newly formed Queen's Regiment, Dad was honoured to become the first Drum Major of the 2nd Bn. Things have to move on, and after leaving his battalion he was posted to Howe Barracks, Canterbury to train junior soldiers at the Queen's Regimental Headquarters. Soon after, he was sent on the advance party to an RAF station near a small Cambridgeshire village. The station was called RAF Bassingbourne. which was then to be named 'Depot of The Queen's Division'. His primary roll was to train junior soldiers from the whole of the Queen's Division. This included The Queen's Regiment, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers and The Royal Anglian Regiment. In this position, he was the first of many Senior Drum Majors of the Queen's Division. In total he was a Drum Major for 19 years, which made him at the time, the senior Drum Major of the British Army.

On leaving the army, he remained at Bassingbourne Barracks and was able to retain married quarters with his position with the MOD as an Estate Warden with the Civil Service. His job was to look after the day-to-day problems with the married quarters on the barracks, and the various family affairs of the married soldiers and their dependents.

Here he stayed until he retired at the age of 65. We moved from the barracks just before Dad retired and uplifted every thing to the village of Melbourn just south of Royston.

Even when we lived at Bassingbourne Barracks, Dad had always enjoyed his gardening. He was so proud of the barracks, when he came first in the Commanding Officers annual garden competition, even though he was one of the judges !!! say no more...

Up until Dad passed away, he was a very energetic man who loved his garden. He remained young at heart and was always trying out new things, I remember the time when he purchased a laptop computer. He would spend hours trying to gain access to the Internet a challenge which I'm afraid he never really mastered. As from the old saying "Never try to teach an old dog new tricks".

While Dad was in hospital in the past few weeks before he passed away. My son Terry and I cleared out his greenhouse so that it would be easier for Mum to keep. We dare not tell Dad at the time and I bet he is looking down on Terry now and saying "I'll be buggered".

Since I was a young lad and up until recently, Dad and I would get together over a pint and the conversation would always get onto the same subject. THE CORPS OF DRUMS. Throughout Dad's whole life, the army WAS his life. He breathed it, he sweated it and he lived for it.

Within the Regiment the Clark brothers were infamous. There was a time I recollect when they started to fight in the Sgt's Mess and the RSM tried to part them. Both turned to the RSM and fronted up to him and told him this is family business and it was nothing to do with him. (or words to that effect). And the RSM walked away. Very wise man.

Since my Uncle Ted passed away a few years back, Dad was never the same. It was as if he had lost his right arm. He was very proud of his brother and his musical achievements, especially when he too, was honoured with the MBE.

Although they were very proud Welsh men and humbled by their origins. They were true Men of Kent. The Regiment and Colours are justifiably proud to have had such men in their midst.

See you both on the Counter March

God Bless.

Bryn Clark
Drum Major
3rd Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment.

RONALD VICTOR CHARLES HEALEY MM

(Ron's brother, Arthur, writes)

Ron passed away On 21st April 2006. Born in India 1925, the third of eight children Ron loved and was proud of his mother Kathleen and of his father



William who was Drum Major in the Queens Own Royal West Kent Regiment for many years.

Born into military life, the Royal Marines and the Army played a big role in Ron's life. He was

always modest of his achievements and commendations, playing down his part and reluctant to boast.

He joined the Royal Marines in November 1942 and for his first tour of duty, after training, he was posted to the HMS Belona, serving on two convoys to Russia. On D-Day he was with the Belona when it provided Naval gunfire support to the American sector. Sometime after that action he was deployed to the Mediterranean and the West Indies before being discharged from the Royal Marines in July 1946. After a period as a civilian. Ron enlisted in the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment in March 1951. He was quickly posted to Malaya where he joined the 1st Battalion of his Regiment and three of his brothers, Timothy, George, and Arthur, all of whom were serving in the Regiment.

He served three years in Malaya, with obvious distinction, being awarded the Military Medal as a result of his actions during an ambush by Communist Terrorists in a rubber plantation. Ron was also Mentioned in Despatches during his service in Malaya. Ron also served with the Battalion in Egypt 1956, and in Cyprus from 1956 to 1959 during the EOKA troubles there. After a short period of time as a Provost Sergeant at Canterbury Ron was finally discharged from the army in 1962.

Ron was a good marksman and won many trophies for his skill, he had several hobbies and later in life proved that he inherited some of his mothers great skill as an artist, drawing and painting seascapes.

Ron did not suffer fools and he could on occasion be obstinate and outspoken, but in reality he was generous and good-humoured and loved the company of his family and friends.

At his funeral, among the many mourners attending, it was a particular pleasure to see Major Upton, Ron's Company Commander during his Malayan years.

Ron's entire devotion and compassion towards his wife Pearl, in her last years showed us what a kind hearted and unselfish husband he really was. They were married for over fifty years. Ron leaves his four children, eight grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

Ronald Healey, a man of depth and courage, of principle and honour, a family man, admired by his comrades, loved by his family, and missed by us all.

AH

(Editor's note: The citation for the award of the Military Medal to Sgt. R. Healey, which appeared in the London Gazette of 25th June 1954, reads:)

THE MILITARY MEDAL

22550438 Sergeant R. V. C. HEALEY

"Sgt Healey arrived with the Battalion in Malaya nearly three years ago. He has taken part in numerous patrols and ambushes and has at least two bandits to his personal credit.

On October 4 1951, Sgt Healey, then a Lance Corporal in command of his section, contacted three terrorists in the Kerling area and killed one personally, one other being wounded.

In January 1952, with eight men of his platoon, he was in an ambush position on the Leonardo Estate when 12 terrorists came towards him in two parties from different directions. During the confused action which resulted, he so controlled the battle and inspired the men under his command that three terrorists were killed and another three seriously wounded. He himself killed one terrorist.

In March 1952, he was in command of his platoon on patrol when he came upon an occupied bandit camp on the Waterfall Estate. Attacking instantly, his platoon killed one bandit and wounded two others.

In February 1953, he was in command of a small party from his platoon when it contacted and killed one terrorist.

Sgt Healey has invariably displayed qualities of determination and resource of the highest order. His courage and leadership have been an inspiration to his platoon and company over a very long period”.



Ron, pictured here with his mother, wife and son, outside Buckingham Palace on the day of his investiture.

GEORGE R. GORDON BEM DCM

George Gordon passed away on 18th October 2005.



Having joined the QORWK in 1944, he found that he enjoyed the army way of life so much that he stayed in until his retirement in 1980.

During this time he also served with the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment, the Queen's Own Buffs and 2nd Queen's. George's career

took him to many places around the world including Malaya, Singapore, Germany, Egypt, Cyprus, West - Indies and Northern Ireland.

After a very active military career George settled in Werl, Germany, and continued to work for the British Army as Estates Warden and looked after the families of serving soldiers from various regiments.

During his long and distinguished career, George was also awarded the BEM and was mentioned in dispatches.

Even after his "retirement" he remained in Werl and worked tirelessly with the Army at the British Mohnesee Sailing Club. Several times every year George would drive "home" to his beloved Norfolk where he spent many happy times either on his boat, at his bungalow or in the pub!

George's funeral took place in Germany attended by dozens of his friends. A memorial service was later held in Norfolk attended by numerous friends from Norfolk and Kent. and Army colleagues from around the UK. The last post was played and wreaths from George's Regiments were laid after his ashes had been scattered at his final resting place.

A larger than life character, George will leave a huge gap in the lives of all who knew him.

(Editor's note: In 1954 George was decorated with The Distinguished Conduct Medal: The citation in the London Gazette on 25th June 1954 reads:-)

THE DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL

22539314 Sergeant G R GORDON

Sgt. Gordon arrived with the Battalion in Malaya nearly three years ago and has taken part in operations the whole time. He has personally killed at least two terrorists and has been in ambushes and other actions that have accounted for 11 terrorist eliminations.

In February 1952, on the Leonardo Estate, the patrol which he was commanding was attacked by terrorists, who were armed with light machine guns. He organised a counter attack and rapidly put the enemy to flight, only darkness and heavy rain impeding pursuit.

The same month he was commanding his section in an ambush on Behrang Estate, when two terrorists entered the ambush. Both were killed by the section's fire, personally directed by him.

In April 1953 he commanded a group in an ambush on the Waverley Estate. Two terrorists, both branch committee members, entered the ambush and both were killed, one by him personally.

In July 1953 he commanded a section of the Assault Pioneer Platoon in an ambush on the Kerling Kechil river track. One terrorist, a branch committee member with a considerable reputation in the neighbourhood, approached the ambush position alone, but sensing the presence of Security Forces, started to draw a grenade from his belt. Before he could pull out the pin, Sgt. Gordon shot him dead.

In September 1953 he was a member of a specially picked night ambush party which killed two Communist couriers as they were running along a track in the Serendah Forest. In three days the same operational party, in which he commanded a group, accounted for a total of six terrorists.

In nearly three years of continuous operations he has acquired a reputation for fearlessness, resource and aggression that has spread through the whole of North Selangor. He has been an automatic choice for any special operational party which has been formed. His enthusiasm, leadership and drive over a very long period have been outstanding.

JAMES CHARLES JACKSON

James Jackson, an ex Buff, passed away on 14th December 2005. His daughter, Kim, writes:

James was a much loved husband, father and grandfather and was happily married to Connie for 55 years. He served in the Second World War and underwent training in Scotland where he developed an affinity with Scotland and Scottish people. He saw action in North Africa and took part in the invasions of Sicily and Italy. This period of his life had a profound effect on him as he saw some of his friends killed in action but it also provided him with some friendships which he cherished throughout his life.

The most noticeable quality about James was his generous spirit, he would gain genuine pleasure from helping others and going out of his way to do this. He gained a reputation of being the one to call on to get something fixed and he would always take on the task no matter how long it took or how difficult it proved. He was modest in the extreme and shunned all limelight or recognition. He was known by many as 'Gentleman Jim' a truly kind and loving man. This aspect of his personality was evident to the end, when being so very ill in hospital he managed to thank the

nursing staff who cared for him by mouthing the words 'thank you'.

He loved his family dearly and was extremely proud of his two daughters who together with his wife Connie were the focus of his life. He is remembered as a fun loving, caring father. He was always supportive, encouraging and patient. There for us in times of crisis.

His other passion in life was football, he had been an avid Chelsea supporter all of his life, it was only in the last two years that this interest waned.

He was an affable, easy going and sociable man who enjoyed maintaining a wide network of friends and contacts. He was very loyal to friends he had known over many years.

In later life he suffered from a series of health problems which necessitated many hospital visits and stays and this time required great mental and physical courage from him.

His family and friends feel very privileged to have had a man with so many worthy qualities in their lives.

CHARLES SEYMOUR (CHARLIE) WATTS

3.1.1914 - 12.3.2006

Born in Dover, the 2nd son of 3 children to Arthur and Edith who had married in 1907.



Charlie Watts Turning the Page on Wednesday 2nd June 2004

His father lost a leg in the Great War at the battle of Paschendale and sadly his mother died in 1928 of cancer, when he was 14.

He joined the army, 2nd Battalion of the Royal East Kent Regiment (The Buffs) at the age of 15 as a boy soldier on 1st March 1929 and went into the band where he was taught to play the cornet, and most of the other brass instruments, a passion that continued his whole life.

He went to India in October 1929 with The Buffs to Barailly. Whilst in India Charlie gained a reputation for being a very useful boxer at welter-weight and in 1933 won the Kiebel Shield. In 1934 he helped HQ Coy win the coveted Harris Shield. He stayed in India until 1933 when he went, with the battalion, to Burma because of the Burma rebellion and the Chinese coming over the border to raid the diamond and ruby mines. He came back to England in February 1936 having been away for 7 years.

In August 1936, the Buffs were sent to Palestine as part of a force to control the Arab uprising. Before departing for Palestine in 1936, he was given some hazelnuts by a friend in Kent who asked him to plant them in the Garden of Gethsemane. As a true Buff he rose to the challenge, and when there, a friend caused a diversion with the monks of the Belgian Monastery, who were the keepers of the garden, so that he could plant them under an Olive tree in the garden.

He came home again January 1937 and was then posted to Borden in Surrey. He remained in Surrey until September 1939 when war was declared when his unit was sent to Pembroke Dock in Wales to protect the docks and prepare for embarkation to France, by now he was a Sergeant. Soon after he sailed with The Buffs for France and his regiment was ordered to the Belgium/French border where they protected the Escaut canal and held the front line while the British troops were evacuated to Dunkirk. (His daughter Mary and grandson Kym took Charles back to this spot in 2001 when Charles showed them a church tower that he had blown up (now re-built again) and detailed the area around the canal where he fought).

Charles was injured by mortar fire blowing him from his motorbike. Despite being heavily outgunned and outnumbered the unit continued to fight until they were eventually overrun and captured by a German Division in May 1940. They were marched from the Belgium border to Luxembourg where they were loaded onto cattle trucks and taken to Berlin without stopping for food or water. On disembarkation in Berlin, Charles tried to help others with water but was accused of taking additional water and was hit across the back of the neck with a rifle butt (breaking it although not realising it). He was in severe pain for the remaining 5 years of his captivity.

He was taken to Thorn on the Polish-Russian border as a POW where he was allocated to a German farmer to work. He learnt a great deal about farming and farm animals a love that he always kept. He was later sent to a sugar beet factory, which he managed to sabotage totally with a cigarette and some hessian sacks covered in sugar. He escaped in the firebox of a steam train and managed to get to Strasbourg in Germany. He was of course arrested and handed over to the Gestapo who broke the fingers in his right hand in response to his defiance of their questioning.

He was finally repatriated in 1945 after marching 1500 miles to Western Germany from Poland during the severe winter of 1944/45. He returned to Shorncliffe in Kent, finding out that his father had died during the war but his brother was safe. He applied to join the Royal Artillery, to be with his brother Fred, and he was transferred to Tenby in Wales so that they could be together.

He was sent to Ty Crois (Wales) to the experimental rocket station, where he remained until 1954 when he retired from the army. He was trained to be an engineer in civilian life, building engines and tugboat engines and generators for use around the world.

He met Ilene (who was a widow with 4 young children) in 1964 and took on the role of husband and father, against the wishes of his friends who thought that the role of taking on the 5 women would be too much. However he never faltered in his love and support of his new family, he was kind, loving, generous and supportive to all 5 of them and they all adored him. He has seen them all grow up and marry and is equally adored by his sons in law, his 5 grandsons and his 3 great grand children.

ALFRED JOSEPH (JOE) REVEL

Joe's Grandson, Simon, writes:-

Grandad was born on 3rd April 1918, to the sound of air raid sirens, while his mother was sheltering under the kitchen table at their house, in Coombe Valley Road, Dover. A few days before he died he told my Dad, Roger, that he had a wonderful childhood growing up in that house-exploring all of the surrounding countryside, out hunting with his older brother Charlie and his beloved ferrets, or just walking the dog. Joe always had a strong affinity for

the countryside that stemmed from those childhood days.

Those that lived in Dover during the first part of the 20th century had a front row seat for some of the most significant events taking place in the world at that time. The onset of the 2nd World War was to play an important part in Granddad's life.

He had just met Muriel when he was called up on 15th January 1940, they were married on 15th January 1941. Joe was drafted into 5th Battalion The Buffs and later took part in Operation Torch, the Allied invasion on North Africa. Granddad remembered that operation vividly and he recalled that it was night time when they landed on 18th November 1942. The sea that night had been choppy, so much so that men struggled to even get into their landing craft. Then followed a rough short but rough trip-the men dreaded what was awaiting them and Granddad told me that he had a strong sense that he was about to die.

Luckily for him. although he did not know it at the time, he still had many years yet to live. When they landed they were greeted not by the Germans, that meeting followed later, but by locals who were overjoyed to see their liberators landing.

Granddad's nickname was 'Lucky' as he always seemed to know where the next shell was going to land, or sense where the next roadside ambush was going to be. Part of this he attributed to a strong 6th sense but some also to the experience he built along the way, he was always a quick learner. Undoubtedly he did have his fair share of luck and he needed plenty of that to get through the next few months. Not only were the Battalion up against battle hardened German troops they were also subjected to an awful winter of almost continuous heavy rain which made resupply even more difficult leading to even more hardships.

After the Allied victory in North Africa and whilst they were waiting for the next stage Granddad had the misfortune, while swimming, of stepping on a poisonous spiny-backed fish which caused his foot to swell very badly. Unfortunately his injury was not deemed serious enough for him to be sent home so he had to suffer the indignity of taking part in the Sicily landings sitting on a flatbed truck with only one boot on. He went on to take part in the invasion of Italy finishing up at the end of the war in Austria.

Granddad was a clever and skilled man, he had an encyclopedic knowledge of gardening. Apart from growing vegetables and fruit he also became skilled in the cultivation of Bonsai trees. He was an accomplished carpenter building all of his own furniture which maybe wasn't always such an advantage to Nan as everything was built to fit meaning that she could not change any of the furniture around, ever. Granddad was also passionate about reading and local history.

When Nan, Gandad's beloved Muriel died, he maintained the house in Coombe Road as the warm heart of the family. Any of us knew we could always go up there, day or night, the door would be open and you would enjoy a warm and loving welcome. Granddad would always have something interesting to talk about. It is going to be so difficult to drive through Dover now and resist the urge to take that left turn into Coombe Valley Road.

With the passing of Granddad we have lost a much loved and respected father, grandfather, great grandfather and a friend. How we will miss him.

SR

MR. RONALD (Dixie) DEANE

Dixie Deane, who served in The Buffs, The RWK's, REME and MPSC passed away earlier this year after a long and courageous battle against motor neurone disease.



Dixie pictured here with his wife Mary

We have been informed of the deaths of the following:

Mr. JOHN LEAVENS

John was a member of 11 Platoon 1RWK in Malaya. He lived in France and his funeral took place there, his ashes will be returned to Bexley at a later date.

Mr. G. H. TAYLOR

Ex Buffs.

Mr. JOHN COLLINS

Passed away on 8th July 2005.

MAJOR DAVID MONTGOMERY

Who passed away on 16th December 2005.

Mr. D (TAFFY) LEWIS

141 Regt RAC (The Buffs)

Mr. P (PAT) MERNAGH

141 Regt RAC (The Buffs).

Mr. CYRIL SMITH

141 Regt RAC (The Buffs).

Mr. FRED NEWMAN

141 Regt RAC (The Buffs).

Mr. ALBERT (BERT) TESTER

Ex QORWK.

Mr. THOMAS L. OSBOURNE

Who served in the QORWK's from 1955-1960.

Mr. WILLIAM ROWAN

Ex QORWK.

Mr. MICHAEL BEDNELL

Who served in The Buffs from 1948 to 1952 passed away on 12th January 2006 aged 77 years.

Mr. STANLEY (Stan) MATTHEWS

Ex Buffs.

Mr. MAURICE MANN

Ex Buffs.

MAJOR P R BUTLIN

who passed away on 22nd December 2004.

Mr. W. G. MASCALL

Who passed away in December 2002.

CAPTAIN ERIC MCFARLAND

1st Bn QORWK Regt. Passed away on November 27th 2005.

Mr. I. B. GAMMIDGE.

Mr. J D K SHORT

Passed away on 10th September 2005. Mr Short served with the Queen's Own during the second World War and a Kohima Veteran.

Mr J A COLLINS

Passed away 8th July 2005. John was an ex member of Queen's Own and a member of the 62 Club.

MAJOR H.H.D. WOODMAN

Passed away in the summer of 2005.

Mr. J C JACKSON

Jim Passed away 14th Dec aged 85.

Mr. STAN ETHERIDGE

Ex QORWK.

TURNING THE PAGE

**31st March 2006
Mr. Bendt Ole Arndt
(Denmark Branch)**



**7th April 2006
Mr. George Anderson**



**5th April 2006:
141 Regt RAC (The Buffs)**



Geoff Kirk



**John Brough, Fred Blackley, Geoff Kirk,
Charlie Hewitt and Bill Harrison on parade at
the Warrior's Chapel with their new standard..**

80th ANNIVERSARY OF THE TURNING THE PAGE CEREMONY

The Turning of The Page ceremony was instituted in 1926. Since that year, at 11.00am each day a page in the Book of Life is turned in which are inscribed the names of Buffs who have given their lives for their country, 6,500 from the First World War alone. Initially the privilege of carrying out this task fell upon a recruit selected daily for good conduct and special attention to duty. The first of these "Stick Orderlies", as they became known, was Private J. H. Stone who on 14th June 1926, in the presence of the Dean, the Very Reverend G. K. A. Bell, and the Depot Commander, Major I V. R. Jackson, initiated a ritual which is still carried on to this day, but now the honour falls on a member of our Regimental Association.

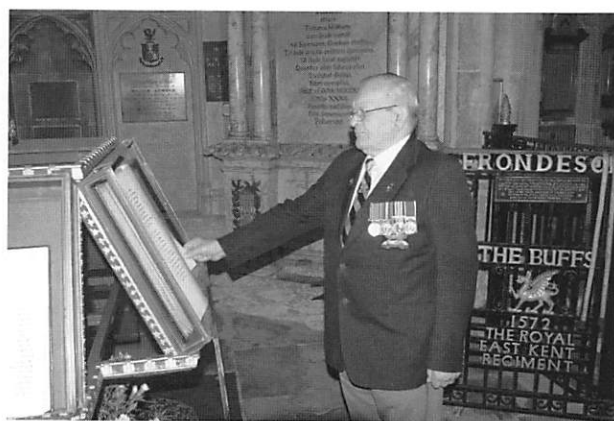
In November 1940, a 16 year old boy soldier. Sidney Pullman of The Buffs, earned the praise of the regiment for his courage and bearing during an air

attack on Canterbury Cathedral. On that wartime morning, young Sidney was Stick Orderly of the day and it was his duty to turn the page. Having marched through the streets of Canterbury, as was the tradition, Sidney stood in front of the Book of Life ready to "turn the page" at 11.00 am. At that very moment, German aircraft attacked Canterbury and a bomb shattered the Buffs memorial window, covering Sidney with glass splinters. He was unmoved and continued to carry out his duty calmly and with great reverence, demonstrating courage and resolve way beyond his years. When George VI visited Canterbury in 1946, Sidney Pullman was chosen to "Turn the Page" in front of his King, in recognition of his heroism six years previously.

On June 14th 2006, to mark the 80th anniversary of the ceremony, Sidney once again Turned the Page.



Pte. Sidney Pullman, at the Turning of the Page ceremony in 1946, saluting HM King George IV



Sidney Turning the Page on June 14th 2006



The Standards dipped in Salute



Sgt. R. Guild - Kohima Band PWRR, Viscount De Lisle MBE DL Vice Lord Lieutenant of Kent., Colonel Champion, the Lord Mayor, The Reverend Clare Edwards, Vice Dean and Sidney Pullman.

FROM THE WEB SITE

ARTHUR WILLIAM TAYLOR

Name: Darren Hammock
Email: sandyhammock@hotmail.com

Can anyone help? I am looking for details of my Grandfather, Arthur William Taylor. He was in The Buffs during World War 2 as a L/Cpl. He lived in Gravesend, Kent until he died in 1966. If you can help please ring 01795 583199.

EAW

JOHN WILLIAM HARRINGTON AND THOMAS AUGUSTS BOWER

Name: Rosemary Bower
Email: rosebower47@yahoo.co.uk

Can anyone help me. I am trying to find out when my great uncle John William Harrington joined the Royal West Kent Regiment. He served in the Royal Navy about 1903 for a number of years then at some stage joined the Regiment. I have photographic evidence of him in naval uniform and in army uniform and the cap badge is that of the RWK's. Both he and my father, Thomas Bower, used to go to the Regimental Association meetings, I believe at Rochester in the 1960's. My Dad was also in the regiment in 1939 and was captured in 1940 and was liberated by the US Army 7th army at Memmingen May 1945. I would be grateful for any help.

JOHN BORROW, Italy 1944

Name: Bob Richards, Truro, Cornwall.
Email: bobr.stkilda@btopenworld.com

I am carrying out some family history research on a member of the 1st Battalion, Queens Own Royal West Kent Regiment who was killed in action on 3rd July 1944 near Arrazo, Italy. His name was Private John Borrow, service number 5385346. He is buried in the Foiano Della Chiana War Cemetery. I have the Officer's Diaries covering events on the days before and after the engagement, written by Commanding officer Lt Col H.P. Braithwaite but I would love to hear from any Veterans of that campaign who can add

a little to those official documents, or from anyone who has any further information about the engagement or personnel involved.

JACK (JOHN) COLLISON

Name: Jo Dale
Email: dave_jo_dale@yahoo.co.uk

Help, I am new to this family tree stuff. My Grand dad served with the 1st Battalion East Kent Regiment in WWII, I have his Military No 6285262, I know he was a private and rumour has it he became a RSM. Can someone help me as to where I can start looking for details of his service/history. Also think he might of had his uncle serving same regiment but earlier Freddrick Collison. Any help much appreciated.

MY RECORD

From: Malcolm Jarvis
Email: redcoat@frontiernet.net

Can anyone help? I am trying to put together my life for my grandkids but my military is proving hard. I was in the Buffs (TA) Assault Pioneers, in 1963/64 area the drill hall was in Herne Bay, Sgt Wally Thundow is the only name I can remember, and we did manoeuvres in Norfolk. Thank you if anyone can help.

WILLIS BARNESLEY

Name: Alan Barnesley
Email: alanbarnesley@hotmail.com

Message: My father Willis Barnesley served in WW2 in the Buffs. I know little of his service history as, whilst he was alive, he would speak little of his experiences. I am keen to find out as much as possible about his movements and experiences as possible. He died 26th February 1992 aged 79 and the anniversary of his death has rekindled my interest. I only know he was captured and was in Stalag XX B. His POW number was PTE 8345 his army service number was 4743991, his Soldiers Release Book shows Unit as ATT 24 ASD RAOC, The Buffs REGT.

I would welcome any information.

FAMILY HISTORY

Name: Tony Drew
Email: tdre2186@bigpond.net.au

My grandfather's sister Eliza Drew married Sgt. William Wicks of the 3rd Regt. of Foot on 18.4.1846 in Chilton Foliat, Wiltshire - anyway of finding out who he was, where he came from, etc. I appreciate that it is 150 years ago so I am only clutching at straws.

Regards
Tony Drew
(Canberra A.C.T. Australia)

REPLY FROM

Matthew Fortune

I know through my own ancestors that Wiltshire census returns and C of E parish records are very well kept. You should be able to find links to the 1841 census and get some basic info.

The great thing about soldiers of this period is that a lot of their records still exist in the national archives. My gt, gt grandfather served in the Royal Artillery 1860 - 1880 and I have acquired incredibly detailed information about him ranging from the size of his chest to a few anti - social diseases he picked up in India.

DANIEL JAMES HANSON

Name: Tony Fletcher
Email: tmfletcher@talk21.com

I've just discovered this web site whilst trying to find out about the regiments that my grandad, Daniel James Hanson, served with during WW2. Sadly Dan passed away in December 2005 so I thought I'd take the opportunity to post a message on here to that effect in case anyone remembers him. He served in The Buffs and was a member of a Churchill Crocodile crew.

I'm currently trying to put together as much as I can about his service days and so if anybody has some information about The Buff's Crocodiles I'd be pleased to hear from them. I'm also interested in the

beginnings of the Playboys as I have a couple of bits of Grandad's memorabilia relating to them.

Regards, Tony Fletcher

OLD COMRADES, C COMPANY, 1ST BN. QORWK REGT. 1945 - 1947

Name: Peter Elston
Email: petels333@wmconnect.com

I was a member of C Coy. my number was 14091091. I am looking for any other members. Specially Pte. Reg. Hickey, 14091110, who was in Support Company, we joined together. I last saw him when we left the ship when the battalion came home in 1947 and have not seen him since.

OLD COMRADES, C COMPANY, 1ST BATT. QORWK REGT. 1945 - 1947

Name: C. Clarke
Email: tara62craig@yahoo.co.uk

Please can you help I am trying to find anyone who knew my father Alfred Clarke. He served around 1943-1948. I know very little about his military life and none of his old mates, he was in two regiments during and after the war, QORWK and DCLI. His nickname was Nobby and he was wounded in his leg during the fighting in Europe. He was from east end of London.

That's all I know.

SOLDIER IN WW1

Name: Ken Pimperton
Email: ken@brierybank.wanadoo.co.uk

I am researching the service history of my father 24551 Pte Bertie Harold Pimperton who landed with 10th Buffs at Marseilles from Palestine in May 1918. We could not find his service record but I have a group photo possibly 1919. Is it possible to publish this via the Forum?

REPLY from Mick Mills

I presume you've already seen his entry in the medal roll for the BWM / VM which shows his service was with the 10th Battalion only. He would have been a conscript with such a high number

The 10th Battalion were brought back PDQ after the German offensive in Spring of 1918. I don't think the forum has the capability of displaying images but I would be very grateful if you could send me a copy on mick@mills901.fsnet.co.uk

LOOKING FOR WEST KENT REGIMENT RESCUERS!

Name: David Whitehouse
Email: dsjwhitehouse@tiscali.co.uk

I am the researching an incident during WWII involving the 97th (Kent Yeomanry) Field Regiment RA and an anti-tank crew apparently from the QORWK. The gunners were apparently rescued from capture during the retreat to El Alamein in the Western Desert during 1942. Is there anyone out there that can help me with this?

JASPER DAVID SMITH, (THE BUFFS) WW2

Name: Simon Burchett
Date Posted: Jan 22, 06 - 2:16 PM

I have this brief account of my late grandfather JASPER DAVID SMITH serving in WWII in the Royal East Kent Regiment (The Buffs), joining on 15/12/39 at Military Road, Canterbury. He lived at Nelson Street, Faversham, Kent.

HIS ACCOUNT

After joining (15/12/39), 4 months training followed.

Then joined 5th Battalion, then from Canterbury by train to Southampton, boarded Boat for Le Havre. Camp at Fleury Sur Andelle, after training taken to Belgian border in 3 ton trucks, over run by Germans. Approximately 2 weeks made contact with British Officer, returned to England from Cherbourg, landed Southampton, by train to Newcastle by lorry to camp at Wark. Battalion reformed moved to Malvern, after further training moved to Tenby in South Wales for more training in the mountains. Went to Hospital - Pembroke Dock (Bronchitis) returned to Canterbury.

Then joined 2nd Battalion outside Maidstone, moved to Surrey, then Liverpool, boarded SS Laconia, called at Freetown, West Africa for refuelling, stopped at Capetown few days allowed ashore, waited off

Durban for other half of convoy. Arrived Port Tufic taken into Desert El Alamein, back to Cairo, up to Haifa. Guard at British Consulate Baghdad, onto guard oil fields at Kermanshah, went to Beirut to run leave camp, onto Tehran to guard Churchill at Conference with Stalin and Roosevelt. Onto Basra, sailed to Bombay. Train to Bangalore. Train to Assam, fly into Burma. Wounded at Myitson, taken by plane to Hospital at Chittagong. Return to Battalion at Calcutta, board boat Empress of Canada at Bombay. Home through Suez and Mediterranean, land at Liverpool. Train to Herne Bay, then to Shornecliffe, sent to Dover Castle, then to Guildford for Demob.

.....ACCOUNT END

My late Grandfather wrote that this all took 61/2years, but there are no exact dates apart from the date he joined the Regiment.

I would love to hear from anyone who served with him/his Regiment or has similar knowledge /documentation of any of the above, as I am trying to trace my family history for documentation in a family tree.

Many, many, thanks in advance.
Simon Burchett

PTE ALBERT EDWARD MOODY & PTE FRED STUPPLES. THE BUFFS POW'S WW2

Name: Peter Bamford
Email: anniebamford@btinternet.com

I am seeking any info and hopefully photos of two past members of The Buffs who were taken prisoner in WW2. The first is 782081 Pte Albert Edward Moody born 1909 he joined The Buffs in 1929. He served in Burma 1930-32 and was called up again in 1939. He was taken prisoner at Dunkirk on 25/05/1940 and remained as a POW until May 1945. The other man I am interested in is 6285457 Pte Fred Stupples who served with The Buffs in Palestine before WW2 and was taken prisoner I believe again at Dunkirk in 1940. If any one remembers either of these men and can give me any info no matter how small or even if someone has a photo of either man I would love to hear from them.

SILK EMBROIDERY

From: Darcy Wallin
Email: wallin.dh@forces.gc.ca

I have a silk embroidered picture and require information on it, as I can't paste it to this message. It has the British flag on one half with the Royal West Kent 97 in the middle and on the other side it has 23 battle honours noted. I believe this came over with my Great Grandfather General Nixon who was at Mesopotamia during the first world war, if you want further info and would like to see a picture please Email me.

"FROM KENT TO KOHIMA"

From: Mrs I.J. Robinson
Email: ian.winterflood@lineone.net

My brother, Major A.T. Tillott, was co-author of the book "From Kent to Kohima", being the history of the 4th Batt. Royal West Kents with E. Stanley Clarke, published in 1951 by Gale and Polden of Aldershot. I am trying to obtain a copy of this book for his daughter. Does anyone know the whereabouts of a copy of the book?

Many thanks,

Joyce Robinson (née Tillott)

REPLY FROM Pete Fretter

Date Posted: Nov 26, 05 - 10:57 PM

Message: Try here

<http://books.stonebooks.com/cgi-bin/foxweb.exe/forthcoming/sendwant>

Good luck

Pete

WW1

Name: Chris Beard
Email: ccbeard24@aol.com

Inspired by the Channel 4 series 'Not Forgotten', I am attempting to find out any further information regarding my grandfather Private George Fredrick Beard, killed in action in August 1917.

Can someone point me in the right direction - I have never done anything like this before.

REPLY FROM: Mick Mills

Chris

If you live near London I would recommend that you carry out the research yourself because it will be very rewarding. The reason I say London is because the focal point for information is the National Archives at Kew.

I can give you some pointers to start you off and answer any questions that you may have. Firstly, there is a cdrom called 'Soldiers Died in the Great War'. The cost of this is prohibitive if you are just looking for one man. The info from this disc is that G/13073 Private George Frederick Beard was killed in action on 4/2/1917 whilst serving with the 8th Battalion of the Buffs. He was born in Camberwell, enlisted in Wallington and resided in Mitcham.

I can give you lots more info but it'll be more rewarding if you research the details yourself.

REPLY FROM Chris Beard

Email: ccbeard24@aol.com

Mick - that's fantastic, thanks very much. I actually live in Yorkshire so I will take some time off in the New Year and come down to Kew (my parents still live in Mitcham). I actually have the cutting from the local paper that reports my grandfather's death, and has a picture of him. I can scan it and, if you let me have your E mail address, I will send it on.

SEARCHING FOR INFO ON 3 MEN

Name: Pat Barnes
Email: barnsey@netspace.net.au

In an attempt to find out more about my G-Gfather Capt. AMC Hollist of the 8th, I've just about run out of road.

The next plan is to find out about some men who wrote to his widow.

Harry G Stead (At least 2 on the medal cards listed as cyclists & both Lt.s - probably the same man)

1564 Price Pte. A Coy. (Over 8000 Prices on the cards!!)

Guy Warden - Possibly of Lewisham Rd NW5 around
April 1918

WRITE TO REPLY 

If you know anything, I'd love to hear about it.

Regards

Pat Barnes

46 The Knole, Eltham,
London
SE9 3DR.

P.S. One last stab in the dark - a letter with an illegible signature from Golfer's Club, Whitehall Court. SW dated 15/3/16 stating that the author has sold his house in Elsworthy Road, can always be found through his club (therefore an officer I presume - but probably not of A Coy.) & that he was about to attend a medical board the week the letter was written.

REPLY FROM: Mick Mills

I can't find any Harry Steads in the rolls for officers or other ranks in the Buffs. For your interest, the reason that there are 2 cards is that one of them is for the award of Mentions in Despatches, Meritorious Service Medals and Territorial Force Efficiency Medals. He may have been a friend of Hollist's or perhaps he was attached to the Buffs at command level.

There were 4 Price's that I can positively identify with the 8th Battalion in 1915. The first is G1607 AW Price but he was killed at Loos on 26th Sept 1915.

The second is G1920 Walter Price who was killed on 22nd Aug 1916.

The third is G1849 FG Price who survived the war and left as a WO2 in 1919.

The fourth is probably your man. He was G1564 Harry Price. He transferred to the Labour Corps at some stage and survived the war, being demobilised in June 1919.

I think the last man is Major Guy Warden who arrived in France with the 8th Battalion in command of A Company. He was wounded in France (presumably at Loos because there was only one officer who came away unscathed and it wasn't Warden). He survived the war, ending up as a Major.

I hope this helps

Mick Mills

Dear Editor,

I am an assistant curator and archivist of the Kent and Sharpshooters Yeomanry Museum Trust and am conducting some research on behalf of one of our veterans, Mr Elliss, who served as a gunner in 97th (Kent Yeomanry) Field Regiment RA. He wants to try and trace a 6-pdr crew who rescued him from almost certain capture in the western desert in 1942 during the withdrawal to El Alamein.

Due to his fading memory, he is very vague about dates, places and units however he says that he thinks the crew were from the 2/5 or 5/2 West Kent Regiment and also mentions Box 18.

From my research to date I have established that although the West Kents did have two battalions in Egypt neither were designated 2/5 or 5/2 and both did not arrive in theatre until late July 1942. However the Kent Yeomanry did hold a position at Deir el Shein on 1st July 1942 in support of the 18th Indian Infantry Brigade which included the 2/5th Essex Regiment. I have traced a couple of veterans of this unit who tell me that they had no 6-pounders.

I can find no reference to 'Box 18' in the research material I have looked at, but I have spoken to other veterans of the 97th Fd Regt who confirm that they too were at Box 18. However they did not recognise the name Deir el Shein. Given that the 18th Indian Bde held that position, I am convinced that Deir el Shein and Box 18 are one of the same.

Further research reveals that also at Deir el Shein was the anti-tank company of the 1st Bn The Buffs with sixteen 6-pounders under Major P G CLARKE. So it is likely that it was a 1 Buffs crew who rescued him.

Mr Elliss tells me that he has was picked up and sat at the back by the gunshield. As they made good their escape, they were being overtaken by an enemy motorcycle and sidecar. Apparently one of the crew members put a round in the gun breech and fired, scoring a direct hit.

I would appreciate if you could put something in your journal that might trigger someone's memory. I appreciate your help in this matter.

Yours sincerely

David Whitehouse
KSY Museum Trust

13 Littlewood Lane
Buxted, East Sussex
TN22 4LW
01825 733991

Dear Editor,

Thank you for sending me the latest Journal, which contains the obituary of my husband Colonel Neale Gordon-Wilson. There is also a photograph of Neale on page 42 taken in 1941 when he was a 2nd Lieutenant in the 2nd Battalion, but I need your readers' help with this, because I am Neale's second wife. (we were both previously widowed) and so did not know him in those far off days, and consequently I am unable to recognise him when he was only 21.

He was in his 70's when we were married, and so his appearance had altered somewhat in the intervening years! I think he is second from the left, second row, but I need confirmation.

Also, I would be very pleased if any of your readers have any memories of serving with Neale, because I am afraid he had rather lost touch with his former colleagues after he left the Service, and I would be interested to learn more about his early Army life, as he did not talk about it a great deal, He was much more forthcoming about his later Service life, probably because it was a more recent memory.

Any information would be most gratefully received.

Yours sincerely,

Ruby Gordon-Wilson

T P. Mitchell
148 Hayhurst Road
Luton, Bedfordshire
LU4 0DB

Tel: 01582 653667

Dear Sir,

I was looking at the Queen's Own Buffs Regimental Association website as my family has connections with the Buffs. I came across a page where you had visited Doullens cemetery in June 2003 with some old soldiers of the Buffs, specifically from the 5th Battalion. There were four soldiers there with you who took part in the actual events of 1 940, these being Bill Pledger, Bert Jones, Jim Peall, and Horace Cook.

Now my great uncle, one John (Jack) Bernard Jordan was in the 5th Battalion of the Buffs, but was captured on the outskirts of Dunkirk and was marched all the way to Poland where he spend five years in POW camps, three in Stalag 20B. I was therefore wondering whether it would be at all possible to get in contact with these old soldiers to see whether they may have known my great uncle.

I only met my great uncle once and was probably only six or so at the time. He then drifted out of everybody's lives and (as I only know now) became homeless in London. like a lot of old soldiers. He was eventually scooped up and went to live in Margate in residence with other like minded people. The shock was that he only died in 1998 which we never knew. He appeared to have a good life there, so that was some comfort but it would he nice to have the chance of finding any memories of him, however slim that may now be.

Incidentally his brother, my grandfather, was in the Buffs as well, the 1st Battalion joining in 1930. He went to Burma and I have recently

read a piece in the book 'Strategic Command' about the life of the Australian Chief of Staff Sir John Wilton, about the regiment's time on the Sino Burmese Border Commission of 1935 6. I remember my grandfather telling me that towards the end of the operation he became ill so they sent him back on his own to Maymio on a Mule, and that he had to ford the rivers Mekong and Saiween to get back. He also was part of the North Africa campaign as well.

Anyway I apologise for this unsolicited intrusion, and do I hope I haven't taken up too much of your time in my missive.

Yours faithfully

Timothy Mitchell

1 The Cooperage
Lenten Street
Alton, Hants
GU34 1HB

Dear Sir,

When I was a little girl and young woman I attended the ceremony of remembrance at St. Michael's Chapel (The Warrior's Chapel), Canterbury many times. (It was in those days carried out by uniformed men whose smartness and sincerity were totally faultless). My main reason for doing so was that I knew that the book contained my uncle's name and my beloved grandma would dearly have loved to see it. But it was never turned over to that special page in my presence, so I was unable to fulfil that wish for her.

Time passed, she died, and I moved away feeling that it would be something I would never do. I was therefore very happy when my son arranged for me to visit the cathedral and for the book to be opened at that relevant page and for my son to allowed to take a photograph of the entry.

I tell you this only to allow you to understand what it meant to me to be offered the gesture made to me by you and your colleagues on when you extended to me the supreme honour

of Turning the Page myself. I cannot describe the gratitude I feel for your thoughtfulness, courtesy and kindness.

I would like to say the ceremony is still carried out with the same smartness and respect that I remember from 60 years ago, and with the same reverence.

Thank you all so very very much for all your kindness shown to me. I will never forget it. I have kept my promise to my late grandma.

Yours very sincerely

Betty Motte

'Langham'
Mill Way, Holywell
Huntingdon, Cambs
PE27 4TF
Tel: 01480 469639

Dear Editor,

I am writing to see if anyone knew my late father, CSM A. W. Dighton. He joined The Buffs in 1920's and served in India before the last war. I was born in 1937 when he was at Canterbury. I know that he served in Malaya between 1947 and 1950. He was demobbed in 1950. I have met several people in the Association who knew him, RSM White, CSM George Chapham, Fred Turmaine and ORQMS Kennard .

I would very much like to hear from anyone who knew him. I joined the Buffs in 1956 and served in Wuppertal and Aden coming out in 1959. I would also like to hear from anyone who was in the regiment at that time.

Yours sincerely

Digger Dighton

REGIMENTAL REUNIONS

CANTERBURY REUNION

The Canterbury Service of Remembrance and Reunion will be held on Sunday 6th August 2006.

The day starts with "Fall In" at 12 noon at Christchurch College, Longport, followed by an inspection by the Association President. The parade then marches to Canterbury Cathedral led by the Kohima Band and Corps of Drums. This will be followed by a formal service in the Cathedral starting at 1pm, including the Act of Remembrance together with the laying of wreaths at The Warrior's Chapel. After the service there will be a march past and parade through Canterbury and after the parade has returned to Longport and fallen out members and their families make their way to Leros Barracks for a buffet lunch and an afternoon of entertainment.

Following on from the success of the arrangements last year the following will apply:

The Official Guest party will be served lunch in the Officers Mess.

There will be two serving points in the dining hall.

There will be three bars

With nearly 300 extra chairs available there should be no shortage of seating.

A Tannoy Loudspeaker system will be in place to allow for efficient communications:

The Invicta Band will play during and just after lunch. The afternoon's entertainment will conclude with the customary Beating of Retreat by The Kohima Band and Corps of Drums.

Self Service Buffet Menu:

Curry or Lasagne followed by Gateaux

Lunch Tickets cost £5.00

To order lunch tickets please complete the proforma enclosed and send with a **stamped addressed envelope** to the Secretary of Canterbury Branch, Henry Delo, 38 Reculver Avenue, Minnis Bay, Kent CT7 9NN.

SECURITY:

All members attending the reunion and lunch at Leros Barracks will need to carry their Association

Membership card or some other form of identification.

MAIDSTONE REUNION

This year the Maidstone Reunion and the celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the formation of the 50th of Foot, will take place on Sunday 17th September and will commence in Gardens at 10.30hrs, with "Fall In" and inspection followed by the laying of wreaths at the War Memorial.

The parade will then move off to All Saint's Church, led by the Kohima Band. There will be a formal service and Act of Remembrance and the pages of the three Books of Remembrance will be turned. After the service members and their families will make their way to Kent Hall.

During the afternoon a band concert by The Kohima Band will take place. There will be no Standard Bearers Competition this year.

The Buffet will consist of:

Choice of 3 cold meats:	Roast Beef
	Honey Roast Ham
	Roast Turkey
	Chicken drumsticks
	Quiche Selection

Choice of 3 salads:	Coleslaw
	Waldorf Salad
	Mixed Rice Salad
	Potato Salad
	Mixed Salad

Assorted snacks:	Sausage Rolls
	Mini Samosas
	Spring Rolls
	French Bread &
	Butter

There will be no charge for the buffet lunch for members and one guest.

To order lunch tickets, please complete the enclosed proforma and send with a **stamped addressed envelope** to the Re-union Secretary, Mrs Jacky Allen, 38 Sermon Drive, Swanley, Kent BR8 7HS.



14th June 2006, Warrior's Chapel
80th Anniversary of the Turning of The Page Ceremony
Sidney Pullman turning the page