



The Die-Hards

NEWSLETTER

No. 102

Autumn 2009



***The Band of the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment
playing on the Southern steps of St. Paul's Cathedral,
prior to the Annual Albuhera Service of Remembrance***

President : Colonel R.M. Cain, OBE, DL
Honorary Vice President : Brigadier B A M Pielow JP
Chairman : Major C.L. Lawrence, MC
Vice Chairman : Capt M.J.S. Doran, TD, LL.B.
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Forecast of Events 2009

4th November 7th Bn Middlesex Officer's Club Dinner
 5th November Garden of Remembrance Westminster Abbey
 Service commences 10.50hrs
 7th November Mx Ceremony of Remembrance Middlesex
 Guildhall
 10.30hrs Service 10.50hrs
 8th November Remembrance Sunday
 8th November 7th Bn Mx Remembrance Service Assemble
 10.00hrs
 At Parish Church St Mary & St George Hornsey

2010

6th March Queen's Regiment Reunion
 Victory Services Club Seymour Street London
 15th May Association Albuhera Service of Remembrance
 Regimental Chapel St Paul's Cathedral London
 Seated 10.50hrs Service 11.00hrs
 15th May Association AGM and Annual Reunion
 Union Jack Club Sandell Street London
 8th July Officer's Club Luncheon
 Army & Navy Club

Officers' Club Dinner

The Officers' Club held their final dinner at the Army and Navy Club on Friday the 15th of May 2009. The principal guest was Maj Gen Sir Evelyn Webb-Carter, Controller of the Army Benevolent Fund.

Regimental guests: Lady Webb- Carter, Mrs Fran Castle, Mrs Jean Clayden and Mrs Andy Hutchings.

Members and private guests: Brig Brian Marciandi, Col & Mrs Rex Cain, Lt Col & Mrs Mike Deakin, Lt Col & Mrs Rodger Gancz, Maj & Mrs Bob Bartlett, Maj & Mrs Dennis Bradley, Sir John & Lady Birch, Rt Rev Mgr Ralph Brown, Maj & Mrs Brian Finch, Maj John Hamill, Maj & Mrs Chris Lawrence, Maj David Margand, Maj & Mrs Ron Morris, Maj & Mrs Barry Reed, Capt Ken Beale, Capt & Mrs Mike Doran, Capt & Mrs John Pollock, Lt Jeremy Syers, Mr Howard Clayden, and Mr William Metcalf.

Apologies and regrets were received from the following:-

Col John Moore, Maj Tony McManus, Maj Patrick Wollocombe, Capt Dan Cattell, Rev Patrick Tuft, Lt Simon Hurst, Lt Peter Ottino, Lady Rosamund Willoughby, Mrs Christina Battye, Mrs Sue Carter, Mrs Ann Cotton, Mrs Moira Jeffcoat, Mrs Barbara Norton, and Mrs Ann Pitman.

Col Rex Cain welcomed the guests and in his address he said how grateful the Regiment were for the advice and financial support so generously given by the Army Benevolent Fund to our welfare cases. He went on to say that due to a falling attendance, due largely to the advancing years of the Officers' Club members it was time to replace the annual dinner with a luncheon in the hope that that this would be a more practical and convenient function to attend. Arrangements have therefore been made to hold a luncheon here on Thursday the 8th of July 2010 and he looked forward to seeing us all there.

PWRR

A comprehensive record of PWRR's activities can be obtained by becoming a subscriber to the annual issue of the Journal of the Regiment which is issued in December. A special concession allows members to take advantage of an introductory offer of £5.00 in the first year and £10.00 per annum thereafter. In addition it also reports on the activities of the OCA's of the former Regiments. You will find it to be money well spent.

To subscribe write to the Editor, the Journal of The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment, Howe Barracks, Canterbury, Kent CT1 1JY.

Albuhera Day 16th May 2009

Some years and days, like a lovely woman or a fine bottle of wine are singled out for a special remembrance and Albuhera Day 2009 will surely be one of those and will be talked about for a long time to come. Members arriving for the service in St Paul's Cathedral were pleasantly surprised to see the band of the PWRR playing on the cathedral's southern side steps, causing a slowing of the tour buses with their rendering of the Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves, and passers by stopping to appreciate the music, before the band entered the cathedral to accompany the hymns during the service.

The Annual Service of Remembrance held in the Regimental Chapel St Paul's Cathedral.

The morning service opened with the band of The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment playing the regimental slow march "Caledonian" which

heralded the entrance of the choir and the ministers. Then followed an Introit sung by the choir before the congregation sang the well known hymn "Guide Me O thou Great Redeemer". In the absence of The Reverend Prebendary Tuft the prayers were led by the Cathedral Chaplain The Reverend Claire Robson, the first reading Micab Ch.6 verses 6-8 was read by Major C L Lawrence MC after which the choir sang Psalm 121, the second reading by Colonel R Cain OBE DL was from Romans Ch.8 verses 35, 37-39 which was followed the hymn "Who would true Valour see" the original version of which appeared in the second part of The Pilgrims Progress 1684 which was written by John Bunyan. The address was given by The Reverend R J Hall MBE Chaplain, H M Tower of London who had just returned from a visit to the USA. The Regimental Collects of the Middlesex Regiment and the PWRR were followed by the turning of a page of The Book of Remembrance by our Chelsea In Pensioner George Higgins and a wreath laying, after which the Chaplain in an act of remembrance read out the names of our comrades who have died in the last year. The Last Post and Reveille preceded music for meditation which was "All in the April Evening" the closing hymn was "Now thank we all our God", The Canon in Residence gave The Blessing and the National Anthem was sung with great ardour. The service closed with the band playing the Regimental quick march "Sir Manly Power/ Paddy's Resource" which visitors to the cathedral seemed to enjoy some taking a seat to listen. The service becomes more popular each year and prior to the service commencing more seating had to be provided.

Music before and after the service was played by The Band of The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment – WO1 Bandmaster I Harding, we thank them for their presence which adds so much to the occasion, and keeps alive the spirit of the Regiment.

The Choir was directed by Simon Johnson, Assistant Director of Music, and the organ was played by Tim Harper, Sub Organist.

Annual General Meeting held at the Union Jack Club Sandell Street, London SE1 8UJ on Saturday 16th May 2009 at 1.00p.m.

Present Capt. K Beale, Major D Bradley, Secretary, Colonel R Cain, Capt. M J Doran, Major D Harwood, Major W G Crumley, Major C L Lawrence, Chairman, Capt. D Margan, Major R E B Morris, Major R G T Thornton, Messrs I Aldridge, G Barton, E Bedford, A Broadbent, A Brown, A Burford,

P F Dyer, D Falke, B K Finch, M Flynn, F K Laden, E F Green, J P Hamil, J Hawkins, D V Howard, P B Howells, M Hutchins, J Innes, A Jennings, D King, G Large, D T Lester, P Long, P Mulvaney, J B Potts, T Price, J Raby, D Reber, M Smith, S Smith, J Stannard, P Steward, P Tate, T N Taylor, M Turton, M J Ward, J Yates, G Young. 1 signature was illegible, 2 late comers did not sign the register.

Major C Lawrence Chairman welcomed members to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Major S J Henshaw, Colonel J Moore, R Best, A Richardson, R Stone.

Benevolence - Major D Bradley Secretary reported as follows;

During the Period - 01/01/08 - 31/12/08

During the period a total of 32 cases were investigated and 28 individual grants-in-aid were approved. In the majority of cases the grants were for household expenses, debts and rent arrears. The Association helped provide 3 further Electrically Powered Vehicles (EPVs), 4 Orthopaedic chairs/beds and contributed to 4 Disabled Home Adaptations.

We administered 2 ABF Annuities and the ABF generously contributed £60.00 per month per case.

The Charity paid out £7125 as individual-grants-in-aid and the ABF provided a further £2540 in General Grants. Of the 4 cases not receiving a grant, local Councils/Charities or other Regimental Associations assisted 2 after we had contacted them. 2 cases were not receiving such allowances as Attendance, Mobility, Pensions Credit or Rent Rebate. The ABF total grants in support were £3,318 (Inc Annuities).

The Trustees would again like to pay tribute to the Army Benevolent Fund who is always helpful with prompt action and advice. SSAFA, Forces Help Society and The Royal British Legion investigate the majority of our cases and we are particularly grateful to their caseworkers for all their assistance. During the year we have also assisted members who are cared for by the Ex Services Mental Welfare Society, War Pensions Agency, BLESMA, Not Forgotten Society, Combat Stress and The Veteran's Aid Centres.

Finance The secretary reported that during the financial year 1st January to 31st December the Middlesex Benevolent Fund has received a total income of £33599 of which £24260 is dividend payments from our investments. Other income equals:

£2358 Reunion income.

£3488 Donations.

£1560 was received and then paid out for our ABF Annuities.

£1933 Miscellaneous income.

Our expenditure for the year totalled £33597 of which £7925 has been on 28 cases of benevolence. Our reunion expenditure totalled £6661 therefore the fund subsidised the dinner by £4303. Other expenditure equals:

£2175 on Service of Remembrance.

£3325 on Grants and donations.

£5290 on printing for the newsletter and orders of services etcetera.

£200 Royal Yeomanry Band.

£3456 Thank you function.

£3005 other expenditure which includes travel/ office expenses and audit fee.

Therefore our net income over expenditure for this financial year has been £2.

Our investments at the beginning of the year stood at £705,187 and at the end of the year £605,146 a market decrease in value of £100,041 an approximate decrease of 14.18% on the year.

The overall total value of the Middlesex Regiment Funds is £638,610.

The fund continues to be healthy and whilst our investments have decreased we can, still ensure all objects of this charity are met and that all benevolence cases can be covered as and when necessary. It is also wise to remember that our investments are long term and should eventually start to grow once the recession comes to an end and I can assure you that we are well placed to do so.

The figures from the attached schedule have been consolidated into the PWRR Benevolent Fund and form part of the audited accounts.

General notices The secretary drew attention to future events which are scheduled to take place and in particular to Armed Forces Day 27th June at the Historic Dockyard Chatham and circulated application forms for tickets. Attention was also drawn to the various Freedom Parades being made in the South East of England.

Questions No questions had been submitted in writing to the Secretary prior to the meeting.

Any other business No matters were raised other than a vote of thanks was recorded to the Executive Committee for their efforts during the year.

Proposed by M Hutchins
Seconded by A Burford
Carried unanimously

The meeting closed at 13.35 hrs

The Annual Reunion

The numbers attending the reunion continue to increase year on year and this year despite the recession members were at the Union Jack Club in large numbers in accordance with last years pledge "to be back again this year God willing." Once the business of the AGM had been dealt with members retired to the bar for a pre lunch drink where old friends were found and reunited before moving to the dining room where 189 members sat down to an excellent meal comprising of Potted Salmon with Dill & Salmon Mayonnaise, Roast Rack of English Lamb, Strawberry Shortcake, Coffee and Petit Fours, cooked and served to the usual high standard of the Club.

Once dinner had been completed Colonel Rex Cain gave a short address to the members and then presented Alex Brown with a certificate in recognition for his work as secretary of the Enfield Branch. Members then adjourned to the bar to continue reminiscing, which is what old soldiers do, before time demanded that the party come to a conclusion as some people had a long homeward journey.

The Regimental Association sent loyal greetings to HM The Queen and received an appropriate reply.

The Association would like to thank the following for their assistance during the Annual Service and at the Union Jack Club, Flying Tigers Free Fall Team PWRR. B Coy (Queen's Regiment) The London Regiment who maintain the Traditions and Spirit of the Middlesex Regiment, The Cadets from S/East District.



A montage of Regimental Reunion

A New Regimental War Memorial

THE STORY OF THE STONE

It began when I was flying back from Korea on my return visit there in 2008, there were three things that stuck in my mind, the first was the absence of a total British Memorial, the second was the lack of knowledge of 27 Brigade and the third that the only other memorial was to the Gloucesters. I recalled when walking through Pusan cemetery that I saw there, a simple head stone to mark the Norwegian involvement, a grey stone about three foot high it was then, I thought why not a similar one for the Regiment. Soon after my return I contacted the Korean club chairman, Doug Francis and told him of my idea and asked for his approval to proceed. Once given I

contacted Brigadier Matt O'Hanlon, (Defence Military Attache) in Korea and told him of my thoughts, at once he agreed and so it began; soon after he came back with a costing of £700.00. In September 2008 at the Korean Club's annual meeting, I was asked to report on the proposed memorial and requested possible donations, after a brief discussion a very generous donation was made by the Regimental Association and another from the Hounslow Branch and once the wording on the memorial was agreed approval to proceed was given.

Over the ensuing months e-mails flew backwards and forwards from me to Brigadier O'Hanlon. In one e-mail he advised me that Chairman Chi OBE (the person responsible for all memorials in Korea) had taken a keen interest in our memorial and would be seeking sponsors. In July I was asked to send a copy of our cap badge and in September I was informed that a tablet of black Korean marble weighing several tonnes had been ordered and inscribed and would be in place by November. I chose Kapyong to be the location because that was where the Regiment fought its last battle in Korea. I was due to attend the unveiling but due to poor health I had to pull out at the last minute but thankfully Edgar Green who was also in contact with the concept deputized for me and he did an excellent job and the Regimental Memorial now stands proud for all time.

B Yerby

The Unveiling of the Memorial

There were six members of The Middlesex Regiment DCO Korean Club who were on the revisit to Korea for the unveiling of the memorial to our comrades which lost their lives whilst serving with the regiment. The memorial was instigated by Bob Yerby and Edgar Green of the Korean Club and with a big donation from the Regimental Association and another from the Hounslow Branch and further donations from sponsors in Seoul the memorial was planned and within a few weeks it was all settled and the site at Kapyong the place of the last involvement of the regiment was agreed. The inscription was agreed at the AGM last September.

There were five of us making the trip from Heathrow on April 14th being George Ayes, Stan Rogers, Robin Yarwood, Jim Beverley and Edgar Green, when we reached Incheon we were joined by Harry Spicer who had travelled from Sydney via Hong Kong to be with us.

At the Unveiling of the memorial which was carried out by the British Ambassador Martin Uden. A wreath was laid by Harry Spicer, he being the senior Middlesex man on parade, I Edgar Green thought it was appropriate for him to do so. It was, as Harry Spicer said, a very special day for him and also for all members of the Korean Club.

The speech by Brigadier Matt O'Hanlon was a good account of The Middlesex Regiment's time in Korea and at long last they know that we and 27th Brigade did serve in Korea.

Our thanks go out to Brigadier Matt O'Hanlon, Chairman Chi OBE and the Mayor and Citizens of Kapyong. The citizens of Kapyong have said that they will maintain the upkeep and surround of the memorial. We have also got to thank all of our members who sent in donations towards buying the presentation gifts to those mentioned in this paragraph.

E Green

Enfield Branch Visit to Belgium

Following last years visit to Ypres which was organised by the West Kent's, 8 of our members expressed a desire to revisit the Belgian town and explore the area in greater depth. Alf Burford who had been unable to accompany us on our last trip was particularly keen to go in order to find the last resting place of his Dad's brother, the Uncle that Alf had never known.

We started making plans way back in October 08 and immediately ran into trouble. Ypres was hosting a major car rally over the period we had chosen and every hotel room in the town and surrounding area was fully booked, Undaunted we widened our search and eventually found a 4 star hotel with plenty of rooms in the small town of Menin which is sited about twelve miles from Ypres and is divided, one half being Belgian and the other half French.

Our next hurdle was transport. The local coach company could supply a small coach for around £3,000 (no chance). After some discussion it was decided that Peter Ford and myself would make the journey in our own vehicles carrying three passengers each, the cost £12.00 per head.

At 0900 on the morning of Thursday 18th June I picked up Charlie Bysouth and Joe Shore at a pre arranged location in East London and after a quick detour to Grays to pick up Ray Brown it was off to Thurrock Services where we were to rendezvous with Peter who was travelling from Enfield with his

wife Val and Alf and Mary Burford. We had been waiting approximately 15 minutes when Peter phoned to say "sorry old chap, we missed the slip road and I'm now on the Queen Elizabeth Bridge". We eventually met up at the Euro Terminal and after coffee and a bite to eat managed to get aboard an early train. Our vehicle was directed on to the lower level whilst Peter who was directly behind us was directed into the upper section. The 25 minute journey to Calais passed quickly. Joe was in great form and serenaded us. After disembarking from the train we pulled into a lay-by just outside the terminal to wait for the others and made several attempts to phone them without success. We were just about to leave when Peter's wife Val rang to say the top deck had exited first and after waiting in a garage further down the road they had pressed on and were now some 6 or 7 miles ahead. We set the satellite navigation system and set off in hot pursuit. The "sat nav" guided us unerringly to Menin and into a one way street where it announced "you have reached your destination". We had in fact over shot the concealed entrance to our hotel by about 35 yards, no problem, I'll just nip round the block. A quarter of a mile up the road go left said the "sat nav", we did, left at the bottom of the road it said and we were confronted by a huge concrete barrier across the road that looked like part of the Siegfried Line. Back to the one way road and a further quarter mile, go left now said the pleasant female voice, we turned left. After 200 yards turn left. More debris from the Siegfried Line and another U turn, we continued on up the one way street and after 80 yards turn left the voice said, after 80 yards the road sign said turn right, we turned right, another half mile turn right, we turned right again and drove down a nice wide road until we reached a school where the children were coming out and we waited for a crowd to cross and hidden from sight beyond them was a major road works and a sign saying road closed. By now I am perspiring freely and completely lost. We start to drive back "turn around when possible" said the voice determined to guide us into a deep ditch of the road works. We take a side road, go left then go right urges the voice. There are also instructions from the back seat "shut her up" says Charlie, Joe wants to throttle the lady with the pleasant voice. Eventually we find a car workshop and ask a lad of about 17 "do you speak English?" "Yes a little" he replies in perfect English. Ray shows him the address of our hotel. "They have blocked off a number of roads and rerouted others recently" said the lad "and it's making things difficult". He's not kidding! After a few minutes he drew up a map on a piece of card and wished us luck. We thanked him and set off again. We drove out of town across a railway and a river and after a couple of miles through a maze of streets until we reached our destination. The "sat nav" had been turned off to prevent it from serious harm and we owed a debt of thanks to

the young Belgian lad. We were astonished to have reached the hotel before Peter and rang him to gloat. They have reached Menin but were lost and driving around in the French part of town. Alf Burford had just asked for directions from a French woman who informed him "zee otel you are leeking for is over zear" waving a hand vaguely in the direction of Germany "about 100 kilometres" (they really need to get over Crecy, Agincourt and Waterloo). Twenty minutes later Peter has also reached the Ambassador Hotel.

After unpacking and a quick shower Ray and I scrounged a map from the hotel staff who kindly pencilled in a circular route up the one way street and back to the hotel about 2 miles. We took the car and drove round to familiarise ourselves with the area while Alf is out on foot patrol to recce the local eating establishments.

On Friday we agreed that owing to the car rally, Ypres will be an extremely busy place on Saturday and decide we will go today. Unsure what the parking situation is we elect to go by train from the nearby railway station. It's only four stops and costs 4 euros 16 cents. The carriages are comfortable and the journey takes about twelve minutes. Our fellow passengers are very friendly and mostly speak good English. We say goodbye as we alight at Ypres finding the place full of activity the square is full of marquees and top rally cars from all over the world. The side roads are also full of brightly painted rally cars. Drivers and co drivers chat with their mechanics and knowledgeable youngsters clamour around the ace drivers seeking autographs. One or two nubile young ladies drape themselves decoratively over the bonnets of various cars for photo shoots. Joe wishes he was younger and had a good supply of Viagra. Charlie worries about his mate's health and warns him that even thinking about it could cause sudden death. The pair of them want to petrol bomb the Sultan Hotel. We visit the Menin Gate and other places of interest before stopping for a light lunch and visiting the wonderful pastry shop opposite the Nova Hotel. The cakes are out of this world and unable to find a seat anywhere we stand outside the premises and consume our purchases. Alf Burford was declared the champion cake muncher after totally destroying three quarters of a family size fruit slice. We spend a few more pleasant hours there before catching our train back to Menin in the early evening. We dine at the small restaurant close to our hotel. The staff are obliging and the food excellent. We return to the hotel about 2200hrs and sit in the bar sipping coffee or beers. In our absence a group of British soldiers under training from Purbright have booked into the hotel, they are on a tour of WWI and

WWII battlefields. They are commanded by a TAVR captain and a loud, line shooting regular NCO. The lads seem a decent bunch and keep themselves to themselves. The NCO spotting our regimental badges tries unsuccessfully to impress us and in the wee small hours makes himself a thorough nuisance drunkenly running up and down the hallways shouting until after a complaint from Alf, the hotel security removed him.



*Charlie Bysouth, Ray Brown, Joe Shore
with their favourite Barmaid whilst in Menin*

On Saturday we all visited the local market in the morning, buy one or two gifts and raid yet another pastry shop. After lunch we set off to the New British Cemetery at Harlebeke some 13 miles away from our hotel. The cemetery is one of the smaller ones dotted everywhere in the area. We wander up and down the rows of headstones, stopping now and then at the resting place of a Diehard. We discover the grave of Alf Burford's uncle, a soldier of the Rifle Brigade who died aged just 21. It was quite a emotional moment that touched us all. Alf placed a small cross on the spot and we left him to spend a few moments alone. That night after dining in Alf's restaurant we spent a pleasant couple of hours in the hotel bar before bedding down.

The next morning we awoke to find the army lads had departed early taking our breakfast with them. Ham, eggs, cheese and bread, not a scrap of food remained and the hotel staff were already out scouring the town for fresh supplies as the shops opened. Breakfast was a bit later than usual but we couldn't complain, fifty years ago we would have cleaned the place out too. In the afternoon we paid a visit to Tyne Cott and later that evening had dinner in a beautifully decorated Chinese restaurant. It was a first time experience for Joe and Charlie who had never sampled Chinese cuisine before. We spent the latter part of the evening in the hotel bar drinking with some of the hotel staff who had been wonderful throughout our stay. The hotel laid on a special breakfast next morning before we reluctantly said goodbye and departed for home. We undoubtedly will return.

A Brown

Odd Jottings

Captain Ken Beale MBE has written to say that "Prior to the Regimental Reunion, Drum Major Percy Howells and I visited the Royal Hospital, Chelsea. On arrival we were met by Sergeant George Higgins who gave us a conducted tour. We were impressed by the magnificence of the buildings and excellent facilities afforded to the In Pensioners. When the ensuite bedrooms become available it will be Utopia. The Photograph of Percy Howells, George Higgins and myself was taken in the magnificent dining room. Unfortunately our other In Pensioner, Joe Chester was unable to join us.



*Percy Howell, George Higgins, Ken Beale
in the magnificent dining hall,
Royal Hospital Chelsea*

This year 2009, sees the disbandment of the Normandy Veterans Association and their decision is taken after what is the last official ceremonies held in France. As most of those who fought in the Normandy

Campaign are over eighty years old, it is ironic that in the time which has elapsed since that momentous campaign in 1944, very few of the regiments which took part like so many of the participants have passed into the pages of history. Perhaps we should remember the members of those regiments and their stories which will never fade away, L.Binyon was right when he wrote his poem for the fallen "we will remember them".



*J Raby, R Mullen, G Young
at the ANZAC Service, Harefield*

In accordance with the long held tradition of Hounslow Branch they attended the ANZAC Day Service at St Mary the Virgin Church Harefield on 25th April and as it was a Saturday there was a large attendance both in the church and in the Australian War Cemetery afterwards where the children from the local school placed flowers on each of the graves.

Roy Hedges has written from Norfolk to say how much he

enjoys the newsletter, which is the only source of information about the regiment He points out "that it should be no surprise that up here all old soldiers were in the Royal Norfolks".

One hundred years ago Major Montgomery West (8th Bn Middlesex Regiment TA) wrote to Feltham District Council stating that on 19th June H.M. The King had signified his intention to present Colours to each of the Territorial Regiments which had attained 75% of their standard strength. £60.00 would be required to provide Colours for the 8th Battalion and an appeal was being circulated to each of the chairmen of the Urban District Councils asking them to contribute £10.00. The chairman said the subscriptions towards the appeal would be voluntary and left to the generosity of the councillors.

Seven members of Hounslow Branch attended the Queens Royal Surrey Association Service held on the 7th June at Guildford Cathedral in the

presence of Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, after the service they enjoyed a buffet lunch and reacquainted themselves with old friends.

Members of the Executive Committee again attended Founders Day at the Royal Hospital Chelsea. Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra visited the In Pensioners and staff in the Infirmary prior to the parade. Her Royal Highness then inspected the four companies of the In Pensioners who then marched past reforming opposite the saluting base. Princess Alexandra then addressed the parade. The Governor after responding then called for three cheers for "Our Pious Founder" Charles II followed by three cheers for H.M. The Queen and finally three cheers for Princess Alexandra. A piper, Major (Ret'd) L.M. Ingram, then led Her Royal Highness through the parade to the Octagon. Music was played by the Band of the Grenadier Guards and the fanfares by trumpeters of the Welsh Guards. After the parade In Pensioners from the forbear Regiments joined the Executive Committee members in the beer tent.

Roy Bishop has written to say that he is keeping well and continues to travel. He has been to Normandy and Belgium and whilst there he visited the graves of Private Baker and Cpl Crowhurst DCM who were killed in action and buried in a civilian cemetery.

In October Roy will be representing the Regiment at the 65th Anniversary of the liberation of Tilburg in the Netherlands, the last time that Roy was there was for the 55th Anniversary when he was 80. Now 90, he points out that time marches on.

When PWRR paraded in Worthing the local newspaper gave an explanation of the various mergers which took place to form the regiment but failed to mention the Middlesex Regiment, Roy wrote to the paper and put the record straight.

On Tuesday 12th May, B (Queen's Company) London Regiment celebrated Albuhera Day by hosting "The Silent Toast Ceremony" at Edgware at which approximately 100 persons were present including former members of the Middlesex Regiment and The Queen's Regiment. Major Dennis Bradley represented Regimental Headquarters the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment. Afterwards an enjoyable curry supper was provided.

Of the dozen or so members of the Enfield branch that made the journey to Canterbury to welcome our troops home from Iraq and Afghanistan, only

Unveiling Memorial Kapyong



*Brigadier Matt O'Hanlon
assisting Ambassador Martin
Uden to Unveil the Memorial*



*Secretary Edgar Green
presenting Ambassador
Martin Uden with a
Regimental Plaque*



*Stan Rogers, Harry Spicer,
Jim Beverly, Robin Yarwood,
George Ayres and
Edgar Green*



*Secretary Edgar Green,
presenting Chairman Chi OBE
with a Gift and a Regimental
Plaque*



*Ambassador Martin Uden
looking at the inscription on
the Memorial*

*Secretary Edgar Green
presenting Ambassador Park,
the Curator of the UN
Museum with a
Regimental Plaque*



three were able to participate in the short march through streets lined with cheering crowds and waving flags and onto the green just inside the city wall where the parade formed up on three sides for a drum head service. There were speeches from several of the dignitaries present including the mayor and senior officers. Unfortunately there was no PA system set up and for all but a few of those on parade and the hundreds watching the words were carried away by the wind unheard. A number of the soldiers on parade were presented with medals, and although the watching throng were unable to hear the citations when read out, those present knew that they had been won by young men displaying great courage under the most difficult circumstances and applauded loudly to show their appreciation. After the parade had been dismissed the veterans were invited to a large marquee where food and liquid refreshment were provided and a pleasant hour spent renewing acquaintances and chatting with the Buffs and West Kent's, many of whom have become our good friends since we were allowed to join them for their turning of the pages ceremony and lunch on our yearly visit to place a wreath at the grave of Colonel Inglis. A wonderful day spent in good company which ended all too soon.

Obituaries

Captain H S Abbott (Harold) died recently and that is all we know. He was a TA officer who served with the 2/7th Battalion throughout World War Two.

William Blake was a pre war regular soldier who served in the 1st Battalion and fought in the Battle for Hong Kong and was a Far East Prisoner of War. He died on the 19th of May 2009 aged 89. His funeral took place at Hither Green Crematorium on Wednesday the 10th of June 2009.

Patrick Thomas Broderick (Tom) born 30th June 1924 died 7th April 2009. Tom served with C Coy 1 MX from 1942 and was with the Battalion from Normandy to Lubeck. In July 1945, Tom was a member of a draft sent to 2 MX, who were being prepared to take part in the invasion of Japan. With peace being signed in August 1945 the Battalion were posted to Palestine in November 1945 with a short break on the way in Egypt (to get their knees brown). Tom stayed with the Battalion in Palestine, apart from a time in Egypt, until his demob in 1947. He was popular with a strong sense of humour. He regularly attended the reunion. He was a Diehard who will be missed by those who had the good fortune to know him.

JW

A Henderson 4273256 passed away on 4th July 2008. He joined 1st Bn Royal Northumberland Fusiliers on 2nd September 1939 served in France 1939-1940 was evacuated via St Malmo in 1940. He landed in Normandy in 1944. When his regiment was disbanded he joined 1/7th Bn Middlesex Regiment in September 1944 and served with 12 platoon, "C" Company until he was demobbed in March 1946.

GH

Bandmaster F A Jackson Bill was born in 1921 in Burma. He was christened Frederick Arthur but his mother called him Billy very early on and the name stuck. His father was a Lt Col in the Royal Engineers attached to the Indian Army.

Bill showed his musical bent at an early age and at 14 he became a band boy in the Ox and Bucks L I. He worked his way through the ranks, attended Kneller Hall and became Bandmaster to IMx, joining them in Hong Kong in mid 1950. He made an immediate impact on the band, both militarily and musically and raised it to the high standard which was greatly appreciated at the very many guest nights, band concerts, retreats and other musical events at which they performed for both military and civilian audiences. At one officers' mess guest night in Hameln the principal guest was General von Thoma who had been one of Rommel's generals in the Western Desert. The generals' delight was unbounded when the band struck up his regimental march, the music for which bill had acquired from the local fire brigade.

Bill's instrument was the oboe at which he excelled, and in 1961 he left the army and took up a post as music teacher at Giggleswick School where the teaching of wind and brass was non-existent. After some years he left and became a peripatetic teacher of woodwind for Bedfordshire Education Authority schools; he also played 1st oboe in the Bedfordshire Symphony Orchestra, one of the best amateur orchestras in the country.

Bill was a gentleman - he was also an ace hockey player (the two don't often go together!). In his later years his great love after Grace (to whom he was married for 65 very happy years) and his two children was racing. With his son he owned a succession of horses but his favourite was Albuhera which raced in regimental colours.

Bill died on 25th July aged 88. His funeral was held at the Woodland Crematorium, Scarborough on Monday 3rd August 2009.

CL

WOII J C Martin MM 22309954 John died on 24th February 2009 aged 76. He enlisted in March 1950 and underwent basic training with the Royal Fusiliers at the Tower of London, after which he was transferred to 1st Battalion Queens Own Royal West Kent Regiment serving in Malaya. Here he distinguished himself as an acting Lance Corporal by earning the Military Medal in an ambush and skirmish with communist guerrillas. Unfortunately he was wounded and repatriated back to the UK, later gaining promotion to corporal and training recruits at Maidstone and Canterbury. John transferred as a sergeant to 1st Battalion the Middlesex Regiment in Austria in 1955 and served with them in Cyprus, Aqaba, Germany, Gibraltar and Northern Ireland. His final posting before retiring from the army in 1971 as Warrant Officer Class 2, was as an instructor in assault pioneering with a Royal Engineers unit in Gillingham Kent.

As a civilian he entered the security industry working in London, but it was not long before he suffered a severe stroke which meant he could no longer work. He got great pleasure however from being with his family and looking after his garden. The funeral held on 9th March at Medway Crematorium was attended by his family and friends, Mick and Ann Elston represented the Regiment. John is survived by his wife Brenda and Daughters Ann, Helen and Kay.

ME

G W Mills passed away on 9th September 2008 aged 85. George served with 2/7th Battalion from 1943 to 1947 he saw active service in Italy from Anzio to Rome and to Florence after which he served in Palestine. George migrated to Australia in 1972 his funeral service was held in Brisbane on 12th September 2008. His wife Joan has written to say that although George was afflicted by dementia towards the end of his life he relished receipt of the latest copy of the Die Hards. George leaves his wife two children and one grandchild.

Kenneth Gordon Mortimer died on the 26th of July 2009. He served with the Royal Artillery during his National Service from the 16th of October 1952 to the 15th of October 1954. His Army Number was 22730829.

After demob he joined the TA Company at Edgware and stayed with them for about 12 years. He left in the rank of C/Sgt. He was a strong supporter of the Royal British Legion and was the Chanel Islands Standard Bearer for some years. His funeral was held in Guernsey on Tuesday the 4th of August 2009.

T Roberts passed away July 2009. Tom was a regular soldier serving in 2nd Battalion. After Dunkirk he transferred to 1/7th Bn and became Lt Col Stevenson's driver during the North African and Sicilian Campaigns. When the battalion returned to the UK in November 1943 he drove Lt Col Mann in Normandy but later changed to a Machine Gun crew ending the war near Bremerhaven. After demob Tom always attended both Battalion and Regimental reunions also many with 51st Highland Division and he travelled to Lille France for the Michael Trotobas services, for Tom had served with Michael pre war. The cremation was held at Garston the Regiment was represented by Sgt. Geff Howard MM who took a poppy wreath which was laid on the Union Standard covering the coffin. The Queens Regiment was represented by Trevor Pidgeon. Tom was a true Die Hard.

GH

Captain J M Robertson who served with the 1st Bn, firstly as a Cpl in Cyprus, was then commissioned via Mons OCS and rejoined the Bn in Hameln as a subaltern died during February 2009. His TA career included time spent with the 7th Bn and with the 5th and 10th Battalions of the Queen's Regt. That is all the information we currently have.

Les Strong died on the 23rd August 2009 aged 89. Les was with the 2/7th Battalion throughout World War Two and was with the battalion at all their major battles in Italy including Anzio. His funeral was held on Friday 4th September 2009 at St Nicholas Church, Canvey Island, followed by an internment at St Catherine's Church, the church where he was married many years ago. As a matter of interest his twin brother also served with him in the 2/7th in Italy.

Major M P Whitlock TD who served with the 2/8th Battalion during World War Two died on the 1st of May 2009 aged 92. Peter is survived by Molly, his wife of 63 years, and his five children.

Visit to Minden

As many of you will know 2009 marked the 250th anniversary the Battle of Minden and the Princes of Wales's Royal Regiment celebrated the occasion in both the United Kingdom and Germany. Regimental Headquarters organised a trip to Germany to give members of the forbear Regiments an opportunity to take part in the Minden Day celebrations and also to meet, at first hand the 1st Battalion which had recently returned from operations.

THE BATTLE OF MINDEN

1st AUGUST 1759

THE SEVEN YEAR'S WAR

THE PRINCESS OF WALES'S ROYAL REGIMENT (QUEEN'S AND ROYAL HAMPSHIRE'S)

In this war, Britain, Prussia and Portugal were aligned against France, Austria, Russia, Sweden and Poland, and victory, due mainly to the indomitable British Infantry, decided the growth and future of the British Empire. It was described at the time as the First World War, battles had been fought as far as Quebec and Calcutta, and one of the most famous was Minden, in Germany.

Following a victory at Bergen in April 1759, the French army of 60,000 troops under Marshal Due Louis de Contades advanced northwards towards Hannover. To block this, the Prussian general, Marshal Ferdinand Duke of Brunswick, with an army of 45,000 which included six British infantry regiments later known as The Royal Welsh Fusiliers, Hampshire's, Suffolks, KOSB, KOYLI and Lancashire Fusiliers - resolved to hold Minden, astride the road to Hannover and protecting the bridge across the river Weser.

On 1 August as the French approached, Ferdinand took the offensive. The two brigades of British infantry, with the Hampshire's in the first of the two lines, were given the misleading-order-; 'Advance with drums beating in proper time'. The term 'proper time' was interpreted as the rate of advance, whereas in fact Ferdinand meant 'in due course, when the order is given'.

The two infantry brigades advanced at once, and although met by the

crossfire of 60 French guns, went on, ignoring heavy casualties. They were then charged by twelve squadrons of French cavalry, but, waiting until the range was reduced to ten yards, they opened fire with such devastating effect that the ground was strewn with men and horses. Their advance continued. A second cavalry attack was driven off by one volley and a third met the same fate. The French were driven from the field in total confusion.

The battle of Minden is one of many outstanding examples of British courage, determination, discipline and coolness. The six regiments achieved what had hitherto been regarded as impossible: the total destruction of three lines of charging cavalry by two lines of infantry advancing across open ground.

Roses grew in profusion on the battlefield, and the advancing British picked them and put them in their caps - a custom maintained by The Royal Hampshire's and now The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment on 1 August each year.

Six members of the Association took up the invitation namely J Raby, A Richardson, R Stone, Maj. R Thornton, M Turton, M Ward all of whom joined the coach departing from the Union Jack Club at 03.30hrs for the long haul to Paderborn, the coach stopped at junction 11 on the M20 to collect the remainder of the party who were members of other associations of the former regiments now embodied into PWRR.

On arrival in Germany the party was met by Colonel M Ball and Major A J Martin, allocation of accommodation in the International NATO Officers' Mess was carried out with the minimum of fuss. That evening, Thursday, the officers in the party were invited to a dinner night in the Officers' Mess in the presence of the Colonel of the Regiment. The remainder were invited to drinks and an evening meal in the WO/Sgt's Mess where on arrival they were met and greeted by the RSM and PMC, they were entertained handsomely and during the evening they were shown a video and given an account of the battalions involvement in operations Herrick and Telic, a display by young soldiers of the weapons used by today's infantry soldier, the party then strolled down to the vehicle park to view the tracked vehicles, got caught in a heavy shower and had a photograph taken.

Friday morning we returned to Baker Barracks and were entertained in the officers' mess to coffee and presented with our Minden Roses, after which we strolled down to the parade ground to watch the Minden Band lead the

Battalion's march on to the parade and attended the Service of Thanksgiving and Remembrance and the presentation of OP Herrick and OP Telic Medals and the presentation of a Minden Rose to each man on parade. We then retired to the WO/Sgt's mess for coffee and biscuits before joining the battalion at their families day which included a fine barbeque lunch, live music and various events but the bouncy castle was a no go area.

We returned to our accommodation in Normandy Barracks Sennelager with a free evening and a large party gathered on the patio to drink and swing the lamp.

Saturday 1st of August was Minden Day so after an early breakfast we departed by coach for Minden where events scheduled were a parade, Minden in 1759, a ceremonial act in the main square at which the colours of both 1st and 2nd battalions PWRR were on parade, there was a festive walk to the market place then a march and walk to the River Weser and scenes of the Battle of Minden. However as it promised to be a long day we departed at 16.00hrs had an evening meal and went down to Paderborn for the evening.

As we were departing from Normandy Barracks at 0845hrs it meant an early reveille so that all kit could be loaded onto the coach to ensure that we made our connection for our train at Calais. The general consensus of opinion on the journey across Europe on the homeward leg was that it had been a very enjoyable week-end and that 1st Battalion PWRR had been wonderful hosts and we were much impressed by their bearing both on and off parade.

Useful Information

Heroes Return 2 Second World War veterans across the country can sign up for a new multi-million pound commemorative funding scheme that will provide Lottery support for anniversary trips to the places where they saw action. The Big Lottery Fund has announced the opening of its funding initiative, Heroes Return 2 pledging funding for veterans, spouses, widows and carers wishing to mark overseas anniversaries throughout 2009 and 2010

Further Information

Big Lottery Fund Press Office 020 7211 1888

Out of hours contact 0786 500 572

Heroes Return 2 Helpline 0845 00 00 121

Public Enquires Line 08454 102030

Textphone 0542 6021 659

Full Details of the Big Lottery Fund programmes and grant awards are available on the website: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

London Free Oyster Card

Boris Johnson has implemented a scheme that allows veterans to travel in London on all forms of transport for free. It does not matter where you live as long as you are in receipt of a military pension.

Enquiries to:- Transport for London Palestra 197 Blackfriars Rd London SE1 8NJ

Veterans UK Website

The Veterans UK website (www.veterans-uk.info) is your one stop shop to find out about the help available to you. It is run by the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (which is an agency of the Ministry of Defence), and includes information on

The War Pension and Armed Forces Pension schemes

How to access your Service records .

Compensation.

Who can apply for a veteran's lapel badge.

Medals.

Welfare support, including the Veterans Welfare Service.

Advice on veterans services.

Links to the Ex-Service charities and organisations in your area.

Military Dads wanted for BBC TV series on Fatherhood

The BBC is making a new TV series, looking at the way fatherhood has changed during the course of the last century. We want to talk to veterans of the Navy, Army, or RAF who were, or were about to become, dads when they fought in the Second World War.

Although as a dad in the forces you had a duty to King and Country, it must have been incredibly difficult to leave your sons and daughters, or your pregnant wife behind when you went off to train and fight. How did you cope with that moment, knowing that you might never see your family again? And what was it like seeing them when you came home on leave?

And while you were away, whether at home or abroad, were you able to contact your family? Did the thought that you were fighting for their freedom keep you going, or did you have to try to forget all about them?

For those taken prisoner in the early part of the war, it must have been particularly hard -whether you were held in Germany or the Far East. Were you able to communicate with your family? And what happened when you were released?

For all dads in the military, homecoming must have been a joyous occasion. What was it like to see your family again? Did your children remember you? Was it hard to settle back into family life? Or were you one of those who faced the agony of receiving a 'Dear John' letter before the war ended?

We'd also love to hear from the children whose dad went off to fight - so if you're in your sixties or seventies now, perhaps that's a memory you have? Whatever your story, please write to Pete Vance or Hazel Fearnley, Testimony Films, 12 Great George Street, Bristol, BS1 5RS; email pete.vance@testimonyfilms.com or **Telephone 0117 9258589**.

Regimental Museum

The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment
and Queen's Regiment Dover Castle
Dover Kent CT16 1HU

1st June 2009

Dear Friends

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new chairman of the Friends of the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment and Queen's Regimental Museum. I took over in December last year and hope to continue the excellent work of my predecessor Lt Col Mike Martin. Lt Col Mike did a great job increasing our membership and raising money to help

the museum and I would like to thank him for all he has done. Lt Col Mike is still a Friend and I very much hope we will retain the benefit of his broad experience and great character.

I was commissioned into PWRR in August 1993 and served until September 2008 when I was medically discharged having been wounded in Iraq 4 years earlier. I am very proud to say that the young men whom I had the privilege to serve lived up to the greatest traditions of bravery and selflessness demonstrated by their forbears. This is one of the reasons why I am so happy to help our museum; to remember the hard work and sacrifice of all our regiments, past and present.

The need to remember and preserve our heritage is essential to ensure that the actions of the regiments are not forgotten and why the friends of the Museum have such an important role to play. The Museum needs our help, in the form of volunteer support and the funds we raise, and I hope to increase this over the coming years through the provision of more functions and an increased membership.

Of course I can not do this without your help and in particular I would ask you to encourage your friends, family and colleagues to join the Friends. Membership is free and you are welcome to bring them along to functions to show them what we do. I would also like to hear of any ideas you may have for different functions. We are lucky enough to have access to some great locations and people so let us know what you would like to do and we will endeavour to organise it. As part of this we are planning a Christmas drinks party at the Castle in early December and will be sending out more details shortly.

Major (Retd) David Bradley, Chairman

Calling Korean Veterans

Andrew Salmon who resides in Seoul is writing a book about 27th brigade called "The Year of The Tiger" and he is anxious to speak to members of the Regiment who can help him on any of the following matters or incidents.

Anyone who worked with the Korean Police and Major Roly Gwynn at the Naktong.

Anyone who was in Chris Lawrence's platoon when the platoon took the first hill over the Naktong.

Anyone who took part in the actions in which T34s were KO'ed on the advance North.

Anyone in D Company who fought in the rear guard at Kunu-ri when the Chinese attacked through the pass and were driven off at (apparently) hand to hand range.

Andrew Salmon can be contacted through Edgar Green secretary Korean Club

News from the Iberian Peninsular

Celia Denney has written to say that this year the PWRR Cup has been won by Carmen Blanco Escobar for her prowess in English. In the absence of any Die-Hards, for the second year running, the trophy was again presented by Bryan Hazard ex Buffs. It is interesting to note that since the trophy was presented to La Albuera in 2005 by the PWRR to foster the English language in the local School it has been won by girls, except on one occasion when a boy excelled in the subject of English. The original trophy,



Albuera 2009 Winner of PWRR Trophy, Carmen Blanco Escobar with Bryan Hazard who presented the cup

a very large cup, is kept in the local museum and the winners receive a small trophy and a certificate in recognition of their accomplishments.

Members of the Association who made that memorable journey for the Albuera Tour in May 2004, for the burial of the Colours, will no doubt recall their visit to Elvas and the dilapidated building to the right of the entry gate to the cemetery which is the subject of the following article.

The Chapel of St. John, Elvas, Portugal

Perched on a hilltop overlooking the plain towards the Spanish frontier and Badajoz, is the Portuguese fortified town of Elvas, crowned by its 13th century Castle. Within the bastion nearest to the Castle lies the British Cemetery, dating from the Peninsular War when it was opened to receive the body of General Daniel Hoghton, killed at the Battle of Albuera on 16th May 1811.

Under the command of General Hoghton fought the 57th, whose heroic stand earned them the battle honour ALBUHERA and the nickname, coined by Col. Inglis, "The Diehards". To this day, a faithful contingent of Middlesex makes a yearly pilgrimage to lay a wreath in memory of their gallant regiment. Indeed, the very smallness of the Cemetery contrasts with the enormity of its significance. The annual ceremony organised by the Friends of the British Cemetery, attended by English, Portuguese and Spanish civil, military and ecclesiastical authorities, illustrates just how much can be represented by so few: in the whole of Spain and Portugal, of the 40,000 Allied soldiers who fought and fell in the Peninsular War, only three are marked with a grave, and those three lie in Elvas.

Nestling within the same bastion as the Cemetery is a Chapel of much earlier date, contemporary with the Castle, and marking the spot where the Knights Hospitallers, later and more commonly known as the Knights of Malta, broke through the Moorish defences making definitive the recapture of Elvas for Christendom.

Since entrance to the Cemetery passes inevitably by the ruined Chapel, its derelict state gave rise to much criticism until the Association Friends of the British Cemetery came to an agreement with the Church whereby the Association acquired the responsibility for restoration, and then the use, of the Chapel of St. John.

The project envisaged is three-fold:-

- the architectural restoration of the earliest Christian chapel in Elvas;
- its reconsecration for religious services and as a place for quiet prayer and remembrance;
- the creation of a small Museum in the lateral passage for the exhibition of relevant Peninsular War memorabilia.

To date, the roof has been entirely replaced and the walls made weatherproof, thanks to funds raised from donations and also from events such as an annual Bazaar, a Raffle and a reception at the Tower of London. The Friends now tackle Stage II, the interior. It is the intention of the Order of Malta to sponsor the main altar. How fitting it would be if a Regiment were to sponsor one of the side altars, in immortal memory of those fallen on a foreign field.

It is the aim of the Association to see the work completed in time to celebrate the reconsecration on the feast of the patron saint, John the Baptist, 24th June 2010. This challenge has been accepted by the building company, which is confident of being able to finish the work so long as the Association can produce the funds.

To see the challenge converted into a reality, the Friends are working tirelessly at fundraising and rely on the support of all well-wishers.

For further information, please consult:- www.british-cemetery-elvas.org or contact Major Nick Hallidie, 10 Ballingdon Street, Sudbury CO10 2BT Suffolk

Service in Afghanistan. Part 1.

Captain James Swanston (On loan from B (Queen's) Company London Regiment)

Five years ago when I was in Iraq, I wrote a journal that I emailed to many friends and family every couple of weeks. Leaving the military, I submitted the compilation of emails to the Vogel Award (Australia's most prestigious short story competition) for which I got myself on the long list. Bolstered by that, and I guess an underlying desire to keep people posted on what is happening, I thought I should start another series of writings, chronicling my time in Afghanistan.

By all accounts, Afghanistan is a beautiful, picturesque, mountainous, inhospitable, colourful and dangerous land that time forgot. A place that sat at the crossroads of civilisations, a veritable five ways intersection between east and west for millennia, and then in the last few hundred years, a place that has been squeezed between empires, emerging not really as a single nation state, but a tenuous arrangement between warring clans and

factions sitting in the geographic confines of a colonial map. Beneath this broad description lies a country however in deep despair, contributing the majority of the world's heroin, where many men debate whether women should be valued more or less than livestock and with any real notion of human development a far off aspiration that will take decades to see. And into the power vacuum of the 1990s, we add the Taliban, whose ideology is more appropriate for the dark ages rather than anything that sits comfortably with global views on common values.

Into this curious mix came a US led coalition hot on the heels of Al Qaeda in 2001 and a very successful military operation followed. This was then replaced by a lack of focus (i.e. Iraq) and an all too typical failure to appreciate the 'long war' that may last for decades in places like Afghanistan - a lesson often demonstrated, but never really learnt.

This war, as with all others, has elicited a range of views - whether we should be there, whether there are enough helicopters among others. Frustration with the casualty toll has caused some, including a number of soldiers, to question the mission in its entirety. To my mind, there are two somewhat separate debates out there - one about whether the mission has value and one about what I would term the duty of care that a government has to its service men and women. I guess my own views on these issues will be a central theme of what I write over the next six months, but from the outset, I see that being in Afghanistan is absolutely the right thing for the international community to be doing even if the mission 'parameters' are a bit flawed.

So in September 2009 (ie. this coming week), I deploy to a place near Lashkar Gar in Helmand Province with the 1st Battalion, First or Grenadier Regiment of Foot Guards, more commonly known as the Grenadier Guards. The Regiment has served the Crown with pride ever since 1656 when it was formed in Europe to protect King Charles II whilst in exile. In its 353 year history, it has never surrendered, retreated or broken the thin red line in battle, so there is a very proud tradition, ready for the next chapter to be written hailing our time in what is deemed the toughest Area of Operations in Helmand Province. We replace the Welsh Guards who have had a hard tour, losing three officers and a number of men, as well as a large, unreported number of wounded. The enemy we face is smart, brutal and in many cases is beyond negotiation and sees death as something to be warmly embraced.

I go as the Second In Command of The Inkerman Company which retains the traditions of the 3rd Battalion of our Regiment, and we are nicknamed The Ribs as we were the predecessors of the Royal Marines over 300 years ago. It should be a tough and demanding job, but one that I hope will be immensely rewarding.

The majority of August was spent on leave - perhaps a slightly hedonistic few weeks. Spending time with family and friends was a wonderful thing to do, particularly the surprise visit to mum and dad in Australia. While I don't really plan on dying in the next six months, it is nice to know that if the worst happens, I have been able to enjoy some last experiences with many of those I care about.

I have also been preparing for my tour in Afghanistan by reading a number of books and articles. Chief among these has been Stephen Tanner's book entitled Afghanistan which presents an excellent concise history of the country. Perhaps two quotes are worth highlighting - and while these refer to the first Anglo-Afghan War back in the early 1840s, they are still highly relevant now.

"The problem was similar to the one faced by America in Vietnam, in that once having, created an artificial state outside its natural element, albeit with all the best intentions, the devil's choice soon became whether to support it in perpetuity or to abandon it with more dire consequences than would have come before."

"But the British government held sway only as far as the range of British bullets, and immediately after a British regiment had passed, native sovereignty closed in over the ground they had trod."

And so, I have now come to the end of training and preparation, and will be in Afghanistan on the 9th of September. I spent my last week of training down at Lydd on the south coast of Kent doing lessons on various aspects of the upcoming deployment, such as rules of engagement, culture, environmental health, dealing with IEDs and the all important hearts and minds. The week finishes with a dinner for all the officers in the battle group, a church service and a couple of pictures of me in uniform just in case.

The last few months have been intensive - the training, trying to ensure the business will run properly and also I guess the emotions that go with being

deployed to the front line of a war zone. Fortunately, this isn't my first time in a war zone and as with all the previous deployments I have been on, I am fully supportive of being there. Yet, at the same time, I also appreciate a sense of futility as I contemplate a part of the world that has been incredibly harsh on any invading forces for the last 2,500 years...

There are certainly things for me to be nervous about, not least of which are the numbers of infantry officers that have been killed or wounded over the last few months. But as soldiers, we have to accept that we are there to sometimes go into harm's way and deal with unpalatable things, determined enemy, casualties, cold showers and the like.

Further Despatches will appear in due course.

REGIMENTAL GOODS

The following are held in stock and prices are available on request to the Regimental Shop, RHQ PWRR Howe Barracks Canterbury Kent CT1 1JY. Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to PWRR Funded Charities Account No 10486785 Telephone No 01227 818058.

Blazer Badges

Ice Buckets miniature side drum with Regimental Emblazon

Ties (Old pattern maroon and gold)

Ties (New pattern with maroon and gold thin stripes)

Ties Officers Club (Silk)

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Old Comrades lapel badges

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- Small Print

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