



# *The Die-Hards*

NEWSLETTER

No. 78

December 1997

Price £1



*Presentation of Colours to The 1st Bn The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment*

7 November

Ceremony of Remembrance, Middlesex Guildhall, (Opposite Westminster Abbey) assembled at 1030am.



## Presentation of Colours to the 1st Bn The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment.

The 1st Bn of the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment were presented with new Colours by Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II of Denmark, the Regiment's Colonel in Chief, at Howe Barracks, Canterbury on Monday the 30 June 1997.

Although, for the time of year, it was a cold day threatening to rain, 75 members of the Regimental Association braved the elements and were present to witness a parade of faultless drill. Due to operational commitments the Battalion only had three weeks to prepare and they must be congratulated in achieving such a high standard.

The Programme of music included the marches of the forebear regiments and it was particularly pleasing when the Minden Band trooped in Quick Time to the marches of the Middlesex Regiment, Sir Manley Power and Paddy's Resource.

After the parade some 900 old comrades, together with members of the Regiment adjourned to their respective marquees for drinks and lunch. Lunch over Her Majesty Queen Margrethe visited the old comrades and Brigadier Tony Pielow was able to introduce Messrs Alf Burford, Tony Lofts, Charlie Smith, Mike Ward and Syd Wells to Her Majesty.

Despite the low cloud cover The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment Parachute Display Team, "The Tigers" made a drop during the afternoon and as ever were right on target.

The day ended with a musical display by the Minden Band of the Queen's Division.

*President* : Brig B.A.M. Pielow, JP  
*Chairman* : Major C.L. Lawrence, MC  
*Vice Chairman* : Capt M.J.S. Doran, TD, LL.B.  
*Secretary* : Major R.E. Morris, MBE,  
 38 Traps Lane, New Malden,  
 Surrey KT3 4SA.  
*Editors* : Major A.E.F. Waldron, MBE and  
 Major R.E.B. Morris, MBE.

## Forecast of Events 1998

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| 2 March    | Middlesex Officers' Club Committee Meeting at 2pm followed by the Executive Committee Meeting at 2.30pm, TAVRA Conference Room Duke of York's Headquarters, Chelsea. |
| 25 April   | 1/7th Bn Old Comrades Association Lunch, TA Drill Hall, Hornsey.   |
| 8 May      | Middlesex Officers' Club Annual Dinner - Army and Navy Club, 36 Pall Mall, London SW1.   |
| 9 May      | Albuhera Annual Service of Remembrance, Regimental Chapel, St Paul's Cathedral at 3pm.   |
| 9 May      | Annual Reunion at the Victory Services Club, Marble Arch, London W2 commencing at 6.30pm. AGM at 7.15pm.   |
| 15 May     | Annual Albuhera Lunch at the National Army Museum.   |
| 4 June     | 9th Bn Officers' Club Annual Lunch, The Royal Overseas League, Park Place, London SW1.   |
| 10 June    | Finance Sub Committee Meeting at 6pm at Cooper Lancaster Brewers, 81 Aldwych, London WC2.  |
| 5 November | Garden of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey, 1030am for 11am, planting of crosses in the Regimental Plot.   |
| 5 November | 7th Bn Officers' Club Dinner, Officers' Mess, The London Regiment, St John's Hill, London SW11.  |
| 7 November | Ceremony of Remembrance, Middlesex Guildhall, (Opposite Westminster Abbey) assemble at 1030am.   |



- 8 November National Remembrance Day Parade at the Cenotaph, Whitehall. Form up Horse Guards by 10am. (Entry by ticket only obtainable from the Secretary).
- 8 November 7th Bn Remembrance Service, Parish Church of St Mary and St George, Hornsey, London N8. Assembling at 10.30am.
- 8 November Annual Remembrance Service, Inglis Barracks, Mill Hill assembling at the Barracks at 10am.

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am taking this opportunity to wish you all good health, a Happy and Merry Christmas together with a Prosperous New Year. I look forward to seeing a lot more of you around next year.

### BENEVOLENCE

For the year ended 31 December 1997, the sum of £13,838 was granted to members of the Regiment in the form of benevolent grants. The Army Benevolent Fund contributed £9,044.

### DONATIONS

Donations made during the period June to November 1997 :

Friends of St Paul's Cathedral	£25
2/7th Bn Luncheon	£100
Plaque for 1/7th Bn for a ceremony in Holland to commemorate 51st Highland Div	£17.50
Major W.R. Mills (1/7th MMG)	£75
Ward E1 Royal Star & Garter Home inscribed plaque	£22.50
Plaque 100th birthday of B. Hatcher	£27.50
Contribution towards a plaque for Far Eastern Campaign veterans Group	£50
Not Forgotten Assn	£25
Officers' Club donation to King Edward VII Hospital	£100

The following Bequests & Donations were received:

Estate of late WO2 A.W.G. Cooper	£1000
Alexandra Loyal Orange Lodge	£25
J.M. Robins (Mrs)	£50
2/7th Bn Luncheon via A.W.J. Brown	£40
D. Johns (marathon runner - this time in Newcastle)	£50
A.W.J. Brown	£50
LT-COL R.F. Fendick	£25

plus many more bequests and donations under £25.

ALL MEMBERS ARE REMINDED THAT ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE ON 1 JANUARY.

Officers £5.00 Other ranks £3.50

### VISIT TO THE NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM

Mrs Pam Chattey, accompanied by Majors Frank Waldron and Ron Morris, was invited to have lunch at the National Army Museum on Tuesday 7 October 1997 by the Director, Mr Ian Robertson. Pam had very carefully gone through the various papers and artifacts left by her husband, Colonel Tom Chattey, and she felt that they should be offered to the Museum for safe-keeping. Ron Morris contacted Major Peter Bateman of the Museum Staff with her offer and he came back to say that the Director would be delighted to accept the items and would we all lunch with him prior to handing anything over. We gather that the Museum Staff have told Pam Chattey how pleased they are with the material and that it will all be catalogued and placed with the Middlesex Regiment artifacts they already hold.

### THE PRINCESS OF WALES'S ROYAL REGIMENT

The 9 September 1997 (Salerno Day) was the 5th Anniversary of the Formation of the Regiment. This is a small step forward in the life of a Regiment but the happiness of this anniversary was tinged with extreme sadness by the tragic death of Diana Princess of Wales, the Regiment's former Colonel in Chief. The National outpouring of grief was also reflected within the Regiment. Outside all Barracks flowers and touching notes were left in memory. It seemed that the notice boards were something tangible to relate to for passing on that grief. The Regiment was represented at the funeral at Westminster Abbey by the Colonel of the Regiment and Lady Julia Denison-Smith and the Regimental Secretary. Six ushers were provided in the Abbey (2 x Officers, 4 x SNCOs) and 2 wives from the Kindergarten School at Howe Barracks walked in the cortege behind the gun carriage. Perhaps the biggest compliment to the Regiment was that Lord Spencer asked personally for the Regiment to carry the



coffin at the private ceremony at Althorp House. This was carried out by 2 PWRR (2 x Officers, RSM and 10 SNCOs/ORs). No publicity was allowed for this. The Princess was always enormously supportive during the Regiment's formative years and she always took a particular interest. The Regiment owe her a real debt of gratitude for all her support, encouragement and practical help during her time as Colonel in Chief.

The 4 Battalions have been busy. In the last notes it mentioned that the 1st Bn had been stood up and then down for Zaire. They were stood up again and two strong Companies and Bn HQ deployed to Gabon and the Congo ready to evacuate whites from Zaire. They deployed with troops from USA, France and Belgium. They were not required but their deployment provided great comfort for the whites. It also provided excellent training for those that did deploy.

As soon as the Battalion returned it was preparation for the Presentation of Colours by the Colonel in Chief (Queen Margrethe II of Denmark). This took place at Howe Barracks Canterbury on the 30th June 1997. The rain just held off and a crowd of 3000+ enjoyed the whole day. The 1st Bn then exercised the Freedom of Eastbourne on the 4th July with a polished performance and finally Laid Up the Colours of 1st Bn The Queen's Regiment at Guildford Cathedral on 12th September 1997 and 1st Bn The Royal Hampshire Regiment at Winchester Cathedral on 13th September. In between all this ceremonial tactical training was taking place and now Northern Ireland training for deployment in November 1997.

The Second Battalion arrived in Tidworth in early September. The Battalion has just completed a testing two years as a resident battalion in Northern Ireland. Although based in Omagh the Battalion had a 'patch' that extended from the Sperrin Mountains in the North of County Tyrone to the very southernmost tip of the Fermanagh border. The CO had up to eight companies under command, including Royal Irish and Regular reinforcements, to cope with the biggest area of responsibility of any regular battalion in the Province. The Battalion had a highly successful tour. Despite intense terrorist activity the IRA failed to mount a single successful attack against the Battalion despite evidence of several serious attempts. They came away with a fine reputation for achievements on operations, the sports field and as the Northern Ireland Skill At Arms Champions.

The Battalion looks forward to a busy and rewarding programme as they re-role for their new position as a Saxon Battalion in 1 Mechanised Brigade. Highlights of the coming year include an exercise in Kenya, numerous Regimental sporting, social and ceremonial events and a return to Northern Ireland as the Belfast Reinforcement Battalion next autumn.

The Commanding Officer is Lieutenant Colonel Richard Dennis (38) who took command of the Battalion in April after a tour as an instructor at the Staff College Camberley.

The 5th Battalion and the 6/7th Battalion have also been following hectic training programmes.

The 5th Battalion completed an interesting Defensive Exercise on the Battle Group Trainer now based at Warminster. This is a man versus computer Exercise but in a real battle environment. Success at the Divisional Skill at Arms Meeting qualified the team for Bisley. Weekend Cadres and Field Training Exercises at Stanford improve the combat effectiveness of the Battalion and as these notes are written the Battalion is off to Annual Camp at Stanford Training Area (Main Camp was in Belgium earlier this year).

The 6/7th Bn has been training hard leading up to a shared Annual Camp with the 5th Bn. They did well at the Divisional Skill at Arms winning many cups. They sent members to join HMS Southampton on her return journey from Crete. A memorable trip (along with members of all the Battalions). The Battalion had to sponsor and run an Exercise called "Executive Stretch". This is subjecting civilian middle management to demanding military tasks in an effort to improve their fitness and decision making process. Adventure Training has been carried out in Snowdonia and good sailing in the South of England.

Both Battalions are still providing volunteers to serve in Bosnia, Falklands and Northern Ireland - a welcome support for the hard pressed Regular Battalions/Units.

In summing up the Regiment is in fine form.

#### **PRESENTATION OF COLOURS TO THE LONDON REGIMENT - 25 JULY 1997**

We had a fine turn out of Diehards and their wives when more than eighty members of the Regimental Association attended the Presentation of Colours to the London Regiment at the Duke of York's Headquarters on Friday the 25 July 1997. The Colours were presented by His Royal Highness The Duke of York, CVO, ADC. In his address he praised the London Regiment for their excellent drill and bearing and he mentioned that members of the Londons had undertaken tours in support of the Regular Army in Northern Ireland, Bosnia and the Falklands and he said how much the Regular Army had come to rely on the Reserve Forces to fill the gaps in their order of battle. The Commanding Officer in his reply said how much the Regiment owed to the traditions and customs of its Forebear Regiments and he was particularly pleased to see so many old comrades and their families present. There were four Guards on parade, one from each cap badge within the Regiment. A (London Scottish) Company, B (The Queen's Regiment) Company, C (City of London Fusiliers) Company and D (London Irish Rifles) Company.

At the conclusion of the formal parade and when the London Regiment had marched off the Old Comrades formed up for their own March Past and it was particularly pleasing to see so many Diehard Ties featured. The march past was led on this occasion by Mr Alf Burford.



An excellent packed lunch was served with a commemorative bottle of beer specially brewed and presented for the occasion by Young's Brewery, Wandsworth. The children were able to enjoy the varied side shows laid on by the Regiment. All in all a memorable and well organised day.

It was Brigadier Tony's last parade as Honorary Colonel to B (The Queen's Regiment) Company. He hands over shortly to Colonel Mike Ball our last Middlesex Commissioned Officer and so a very appropriate replacement. Brigadier Tony first wore uniform in 1943 as a member of the 5th (Cadet) Battalion of the Regiment and so had worn the Middlesex Cap Badge for 54 years!

Sir Manley Power and Paddy's Resource were played during the Troop.

### **FIELD OF REMEMBRANCE 1997**

Crosses were again planted at the Field of Remembrance on Thursday the 6 November 1997. Major Ron Morris ably assisted by Mr and Mrs Doug Walsh planted a cross for each Battalion in the Regimental Plot. They then proceeded to the Far East Prisoners of War Association Plot where a large badged cross was planted in memory of those members of the Regiment who spent three and a half years as Far East Prisoners of War.

The Field of Remembrance was formally opened by HM The Queen Mother at 1130 am. HRH The Duke of York who was also present visited each plot in turn speaking to many of the veterans standing in front of their Regimental Plots.

Others attending from the Regiment were Roy Mephram (8th Bn) who makes the journey up from Sussex every year and Fred Thomas (1/7th Bn) from New Malden.

### **ANNUAL SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE AT THE MIDDLESEX GUILDHALL SATURDAY 8 NOVEMBER 1997.**

The numbers attending this very moving short service increase year by year. In his opening remarks Brigadier Tony Pielow said how pleased he was to see so many people present. He particularly thanked the members of the Enfield and Hounslow Branches for their loyal support and attendance at the various Regimental Functions. They are always there.

The Service was conducted by the Reverend Prebendary Patrick Tuft, Honorary Chaplain to the Middlesex Regimental Association and Vicar of St Nicholas Church, Chiswick. The lesson taken from St Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 5 vv 1 - 14 was read by Brigadier Tony Pielow who also gave the Exhortation and laid a poppy wreath in memory of all Diehards who have made the supreme sacrifice.

A glass of sherry provided by the Association and light refreshments provided by Betty Morris were enjoyed by all before leaving for home.

### **HONG KONG P.O.W. ASSOCIATION REUNION 7th to 14th November 1997 by Colonel Anthony Hewill, MBE, MC**

The Hong Kong Prisoners of War Association Ceremony at the City Hall Shrine of Remembrance on Tuesday 11th December 1997 was undoubtedly the outstanding event of the Association's Reunion. The quiet dignity with which the Ceremony was conducted pertained the purpose of that particular day, the 11th of November, Remembrance Day.

As the bugle sounded Last Post the small group of aged former prisoners and internees and previous members of the Royal Hong Kong Regiment stood rigidly to attention, recalling those that had fallen. After the Reveille each person present laid a rose in turn individually on the Shrine.

Arthur Gome MBE, the Chairman of the Hong Kong P.O.W. Association, and his wife Alice Gomes had supplied the roses, a brilliant thought for the laying of a rose personally was unique to most of those present and a true way of expressing grief.

Another Die-Hard, Sergeant George Tann, who had flown from Melbourne, joined Elizabeth and me. It was good to have another man of the 1st Battalion with me, our numbers have shrunk deplorably, George was accompanied by his grandson, an admirable young man who took the picture of us.

With members of the Association we visited Stanley Staff Quarters where internees lived, and then to a Ceremony at Stanley Cemetery, where we paid respect to Colonel Newnham's grave. After another Ceremony at Sai Wan Cemetery, a photograph was taken of George Tann and me, and we walked the graves together, sickened at the dreadful loss of brave young men and saddened by the terrible casualties the 1st Battalion suffered.

At a lunch in the YMCA, at which I gave a talk, dating back to Hong Kong sixty years ago when that splendid 1st Battalion arrived in the Colony, and also about my very recent return to China retracing my escape route, which journey took seven weeks in 1942 and 3 days in a car in November 1997. I praised Arthur Gomes for the wonderful work he does as Chairman of the Association and for his great newsletters, and Mrs Gomes for all she does for the Association.

The Reunion was an exceptionally happy and friendly occasion, the members relating many of their interesting experiences not only of the war but of life in Hong Kong before it. Our few remaining former prisoners will remember Volunteers like Bill Macfarlane and Malcolm Swan, who praised the Middlesex Regiment prisoners for



their excellent discipline and behaviour during those long hard years of imprisonment.



*George Tann (Ginger), Tony and Liz  
at Hong Kong Remembrance Day Service 11th November 1997*

#### **CENOTAPH MUSTER, WHITEHALL**

On a very wet and windy day thirty three members of the Association together with three members of the Royal Hong Kong Regimental Association paraded on Horse Guards for the annual service and march past the Cenotaph in Whitehall on Remembrance Sunday the 9 November 1997. Others not marching were invited to watch the service and parade on TV in the Headquarters Club at the Duke of York's Headquarters.

Lunch was laid on at the Headquarters Club by the City and London Branch (Queen's) of the PWRR Association. The Regimental Headquarters at Canterbury made a generous subsidy to reduce the cost of the meal to those attending.

All the Forebear Regiments of the PWRR were represented on the Parade and at the Lunch afterwards. Both events are well worthwhile attending.

#### **REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 1997 - 7TH BN MEMORIAL CHAPEL**

On Sunday 9 November 1997, 7th Battalion Old Comrades and Members of the Queen's Association of the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment (Middlesex Branch)

joined B (Queen's Regiment) Company the London Regiment for the Annual Remembrance Service in the Parish Church of St Mary with St George in Hornsey and were welcomed by the Rector, The Reverend Geoffrey Seabrook.

Following the Act of Remembrance, wreaths were laid before the altar of the Memorial Chapel on behalf of the 7th Middlesex Officers' Club, the Middlesex Branch of the Queen's Association of the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment and B (Queen's Regiment) Company of the London Regiment.

The detachment from B Company and the Old Comrades marched back to Hornsey TA Centre and the Salute was taken by Lieutenant Colonel Gunnell accompanied by Lieutenant Colonel Simpson and Major Ayling.

#### **9TH BATTALION THE MIDDLESEX REGIMENT (D.C.O.) T.A. OFFICERS ANNUAL REUNION LUNCH**

The twelfth annual luncheon took place on Tuesday 13 May 1997 at the Royal Overseas League, St. James's Place, SW1. Lt.Colonel Drabble was in the Chair and the guests were Major A.E.F. Waldron MBE and Major R.E.B. Morris MBE.

The lunch was attended by ten officers, namely:

D.A. Bond, D.E. Dowlen, J.R. Doyle, A.G.B. Drabble, D.H.S. Herriot, P.W.S. Hodge, E.C. Howkins, A.M.H. Jones, D.V. Littlejohn, J.K.E. Slack.

Lt. Colonel Drabble proposed the Loyal Toast. David Dowlen toasted 'Absent Friends', mentioning in particular Colonel D.B. Gray who had died in October 1996 and had chaired the lunches for many years. His final appearance had been in 1996 at the age of 91. Tom Barton, John Hesketh, Derek Hiddleston and Gerry Wynne had also died during the last year. R.I.P.

David Dowlen, Lunch Secretary, read the text of Her Majesty's reply to loyal greetings sent to her on behalf of the Officers of the 9th Battalion. John Doyle had received messages from the following officers who were unable to attend but conveyed their best wishes for a successful celebration:

Peter Cundy, Harry Hansen, Ralph Hughes, Tony Hunt, Doc MacGregor, Cliff Sanderson, James Talbot, David Tomlins, Bob Wheatley, Robin Willoughby.

Excellent virtuals with good wine ensured an enjoyable lunch. The date for next year's lunch will be confirmed by letter as soon as possible. (Since booked for Thursday 4th June 1998.)

Although 'seats in the anteroom' indicated less agile limbs, conversation and news of individual activities belied any suggestion that the ageing process was a cause for concern. This group of Diehards are, indeed, dying hard. Here's to 1998!

J.R.D.



## VISIT TO THIEPVAL

On 25 September 1997, Dennis Reber and Bob Clarke went on a pilgrimage to the Somme and visited Thiepval and lay a wreath to the memory of his grandfather Pte John Eagleton 6th Royal Berkshires killed on the first day of the Somme - no known grave. The weather was perfect - no wind 70 degrees.

We started at High Wood Longuval and the photo shows Dennis between the graves of Pte A.C. Daybell and Pte W.G. Tyrell killed on 16.6.16. We carried on to the South African memorial at Delville Wood, this must be the finest in Europe - breathtaking. We then visited Thiepval memorial and Dennis laid the wreath at the base of the pier containing his grandfathers name. The last visit was to Newfoundland Park and Beaumont Hamel. I was surprised how small the battle area was. The day ended at Arras with a good drink and a chat with the locals, very friendly for Frenchmen. It really was a perfect day and very inspiring.

RAC



*Denis Reber at High Wood Cemetery, Longuval, Somme 25.9.97.  
Flanked by graves of Pte. A.C. Daybell, Pte. W.G. Tyrell.  
Middlesex Regiment K.I.A. 16.9.16*

## 2/7TH BATTALION LUNCHEON

The 2/7th Battalion Old Comrades Luncheon Club held a very successful luncheon at the Victory Services Club, Marble Arch on Thursday the 2 October 1997. Major Peter Goulding was in the Chair with 98 members and friends attending. Guests from the Association included Brigadier Tony Pielow, Majors Chris Lawrence, Frank Waldron and Ron Morris. Mr Fred Phillips is to be congratulated in reforming the 2/7th Old Comrades Association as a Luncheon Club. He intends to make the Luncheon an annual event as long as the demand continues. Alf Burford, ex 1MX and 1 QUEENS'S together with Topper Brown, ex 2/7 MX assisted Fred Phillips in the organisation of the 1997 Lunch.

## THE ENFIELD SHOW

The Middlesex Regimental Association (Enfield Branch) were represented at the Enfield Show which is an annual event held in Enfield Town Park. This year it took place on Saturday and Sunday the 20/21st of September. With the assistance of the Defence Postal and Courier Unit, Inglis Barracks, Mill Hill, who kindly supplied, transported and erected a Command Post in the Park, the Branch were able to mount a display of Middlesex Regimental artifacts that normally reside in the Albuhera Room of the Royal British Legion Enfield. The display attracted much interest from the public and several Diehards who served in World War Two, in Korea and as National Servicemen in Cyprus expressed an interest in regaining contact with the Regiment by joining the Regimental Association. To help defray the costs and to fund the future running of the Albuhera Room a darts competition was organised over the two days of the show. The highest scores winning a ladies or a gents watch.

## DEDICATION OF A MEMORIAL PLAQUE - MR A.D. SCUDAMORE OBE.

Some 30 members of the Regimental Association joined the congregation at the morning service in St Nicholas' Church, Chiswick, London W4 on Sunday the 12 of October 1997. The Vicar, the Reverend Prebendary Patrick Tuft welcomed us all to the Church and he said how pleased he was that the connection with the Church and the Regiment continues. He reminded the congregation that there were several memorials to the Regiment in the Church and that the Colours of the 2/10th and 3/10th Battalions were laid up there. After the morning service a short service was held to dedicate a plaque in memory of Mr A.D. Scudamore (Scudy) who was the last President of the Association. For many years (into his 98th year) Scudy organised the attendance of the Association members and their friends at the Annual Church Service on Remembrance Sunday and at the Annual Reunion which was held, in the later years, at the Victory Services Club.

Brigadier Tony Pielow, who led the Association Party, said a few words in praise of Scudy reminding us all that as a 17 year old he was present at the Battle of Gallipoli



and that in later years he returned there to escort Lady Thatcher when, as Prime Minister, she attended a Commemorative Ceremony.

The plaque has been installed within the Cabinet that holds the 2/10th Battalion Roll of Honour. The inscription reads:-

"In memory of Arthur Douglas Scudamore OBE 1896 - 1994  
Last President of the Old Comrades Association 2/10th  
Battalion The Middlesex Regiment "1978 - 1994"

Mr Scudamore's daughters Anne and Mary Scudamore were present as was a representative from the Gallipoli Association.

#### **1/7TH MX RETURN TO CUVERVILLE 16/20 JULY 1997.**

At the invitation of the current Mayor J. Jamet of Cuverville a 1/7th Middlesex Party of 5, Major A Carter, Sgt J Hayward MM, Cpl D Daly, Pte W Jones, and a Mr N Barber (nephew of Sgt Hayward and the driver of the vehicle) revisited this small Normandy Town, a village in 1944, in which the British Airborne dropped followed closely by 153 Brigade accompanied by C Coy 1/7 MX (under the later Major M F Pearson MC) who have been credited with the eviction of the finally remaining German occupying force on the 18th July 1944 to whom the French have dedicated a Monument in our Regiment's honour.



The sad ending of the story is that two 1/7th Soldiers were killed in the final action

whilst scaling a wall in a small French farmyard in pursuit of the enemy. The French Farmer and his wife, now both deceased, buried the bodies where they fell, Sgt H.W.S. Luxton and we believe his carrier driver Pte M. Philbin. Successful efforts were made in 1994, on the 50th Anniversary, for Mrs Luxton plus her daughter and son, born some 4 months after Sgt Luxton's death, to attend from Australia, a Civic Reception in Cuverville and they visited both graves now in the Ranville Military Cemetery. At the request of the present Mayor of Cuverville the 1/7th OCA have made inquiries and have located the descendants of Pte Philbin. It is hoped that the family will be represented on a future occasion in Cuverville.

#### **VISIT TO ALBUHERA BY THE HOUNSLOW BRANCH - 1997**

The Albuhera party this year consisted of George Lewis, John Raby, Alan Richardson and Geoff Stunt. We took the first flight of the day out of Heathrow on Wednesday and landed at Lisbon (Portugal) where we picked up our hire car and made our way across Portugal using the new motorway (which reaches half way across). As we did not stop en route we made our way to the bar Nuevo in La Albuera where the owner Pedro welcomed us as 'old friends' and we partook a couple of drinks to quench our thirst before going to our lodgings. Maria and her husband welcomed us as friends and relations that they had not seen for some time. We know the continentals are very friendly but we are still not used to kissing a man especially with a day's growth of beard.

As the main festival did not take place until Friday, on Thursday morning we drove into Badajoz for some sight seeing. We then returned to the village and reported into the Town Hall to let them know that we had arrived. The Mayor was very pleased to see us and gave us a very warm welcome plus the bad news that there was no British Military Attache present this year, and therefore he requested that we become the official British representatives for the day.

Thursday (15 May) is the village festival, and the villagers all go out into the country for a picnic. This year we were persuaded to join them. It appears all the villagers go and have their own barbecue and we were made very welcome as we joined Juliano and all her relations and in-laws - there were about 20 people in this small group. In addition there was a group playing for dancing and also a bar where we entertained the village Treasurer and party.

Friday morning did not start off well as it had rained heavily during the night and although not raining the clouds were very threatening. Consequently the first part of the ceremony, which is an open air church service was called off and those who wanted to could attend at the church. However as part of the official party we were taken to the Town Hall where we met 16 Military Officials from Germany, Poland and Portugal.

The weather remained dry and the ceremonies which include the Army Unit stationed at Badajoz commenced. George Lewis as the British representative took his part in



raising the Union Flag, laying the wreath and making a speech in English which was translated into Spanish by a young lady for the benefit of the villagers.

After the ceremonies and the march past of the troops, the large official party retired to the Museum where Captain Mendoza with the help of a 'lay out' of the Battle scene explained how it happened, although this was all in Spanish we were able to follow most of the explanation, particularly about the Diehards. We were then taken by coach a couple of miles outside the village where on the top of a small hill they have erected a new memorial plus an explanation of the Battle. The hill overlooks the village and gives a very good idea of the events. Unfortunately it then started to rain and we quickly returned to the coach (I am sure the driver was not happy as he would have to clear all the mud from the coach later). The coach returned us to the village where we joined the official lunch together with some of the locals, Official Guests and many Officers from the Spanish Army. In the early evening we laid our wreath on the Ridge in a very quiet ceremony.

On the Saturday we were invited to Badajoz by Captain Mendoza for a sight seeing tour, however when we turned up the party had grown to about 30 people. Fortunately this included a few people who could speak English. Captain Mendoza then took us on a tour of part of the city including the Castle which lasted about 2.1/2 hours. He then took pity on everyone and we adjourned to a local inn for some refreshments. We understand that there is a Society "Friends of Badajoz" which is trying to ensure that the historical landmarks are kept and are maintained in good order. We were made Honorary Members of the Society.

We returned to the village where we retired to a local cafe to watch Chelsea win the Cup Final. George Lewis and John Raby were challenged by the owner and friend to a game of darts and we were able to show them why it is a British sport. After the match we went to a local hall where we watched some of the children practising Spanish dancing for a display that took place at midnight in the local square. The villagers had also been practising for a play to enact the Battle and many of the villagers had asked us to make sure we would be there. This was to be held in the bull ring as there were over a hundred actors taking part. Unfortunately due to the bad weather this was postponed to the following Saturday which precluded us from attending as we were scheduled to return to the U.K. on Sunday 18 May.

We left the village at 0600 on Sunday (it was still dark) to drive back to catch the 1000 flight from Lisbon. Despite torrential rain on the way out and an hours delay on the flight, we arrived back in the UK with wonderful memories and determined to go again next year.

J.R.

### THE ARMY BENEVOLENT FUND

The Army Benevolent Fund is the Army's Central Charity which works with Regimental and Corps Associations to provide help to Regular and Territorial Army soldiers,

ex-soldiers and their families, when they are in real need.

**Financial Help** is given to individuals through their Regimental or Corps Associations, supplemented where necessary by grants from the Fund.

**Practical Help** is provided through the financial support given by the Fund, on behalf of all Regiments and Corps, to those national charitable organisations which provide for the special needs of soldiers and their families.

In the year which ended on 31st March 1997 the Army Benevolent Fund gave:

**£2.7 Million** to individuals through Regimental & Corps Associations

**2.1 Million** to over seventy charitable organisations providing a service of direct benefit to a significant number of soldiers, ex-soldiers and their dependents

The Trustees of The Royal Loamshire Regimental Association are grateful to the Army Benevolent Fund for the ready response we receive to all requests passed to the Fund. The Fund deserves support and Serving and Retired members of the Association might like to know that the ABF is looking for younger members to join or support their voluntary fundraising committees. These operate in every County of England and Wales and in Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and Cyprus. Anyone, of any rank, who is interested in helping the Fund in any way, but particularly by joining with others in organising events with a wide appeal, should contact: The Army Benevolent Fund, 41 Queen's Gate, London SW7 5HR, who will put them in touch with their local ABF Regional Organiser; those still serving should make the offer through their current Unit Headquarters.

### HRH THE DUKE AND THE AUTUMN 1872 MANOEUVRES

Some nine years before HM Queen Victoria appointed her soldier cousin Field Marshall HRH The Duke of Cambridge as our first Colonel-in-Chief, he lodged in Salisbury during his visit as C-in-C to the 1872 Autumn Manoeuvres. His 'B and B' during this time (I assume he ate with the troops during the day and perhaps with his Staff for dinner in the evening), was at Mompesson House in The Close at Salisbury - now a National Trust Property. The house is well worth a visit, not only because it is widely regarded as a 'beau ideal' of early 18th century domestic architecture, but for Diehards it contains an especially interesting bit of history in the Green Room upstairs.

Here one can see the original of the letter written by the Duke at the close of play of the manoeuvres to Miss Barbara Townsend, his hostess at Mompesson House, and who continued to live there for 67 years until 1939. The Field Marshal's letter can still stand as a fine example of the perfect 'bread and butter' thank you letter. His stay at Mompesson House would certainly have been markedly more congenial and comfortable than a tent on the Plain - even a Field-Marshal's tent. I quote:



Dear Miss Townsend,

I cannot allow all remembrance of the agreeable stay I made at Salisbury during this year's manoeuvres to pass entirely away, without requesting you and your two sisters to accept from me a small reminder of my stay at your charming house. It is but a trifle, but it may bring to your recollection in days to come, that you showed me hospitality, for which I shall ever feel grateful, and remain dear Miss Townsend,

Yours very sincerely,

George

The "small reminder" and "trifle" is an exquisite small military helmet-inkpot, worth I imagine some thousands of pounds today, and quite a few even in 1872. Even for those of us who are interested, but not necessarily expert at early 18th century domestic architecture and furniture, it is worth a visit just to admire this non run-of-the-mill inkpot.

I am grateful to the National Trust's Property Manager at Mompesson House, Mrs Karen Rudd, for permitting me to copy the letter, and I hope I may persuade her to let me have a photocopy of the original for our archives.

BAMP

#### DATA PROTECTION ACT

The Association is obliged under the provisions of the Data Protection Act to inform you that its records are now computerised and consists of details of members names and addresses, date of the last subscription payment and the Battalion the member served in. This information will not be used for any commercial purpose.

Any member who objects to his details being so recorded should notify the Secretary in writing.

#### PERSONAL JOTTINGS

Bob Yerby writes to tell me that on 21 July 1997 he had the honour of presenting a large framed print of 'Steady the Drums and Fifes' together with a Regimental Plaque to the Colchester Branch of the B.K.V.A. This is Bob's local branch and the gift was accepted by RSM Huxley the Mess President. I well remember being stationed at Hyderabad Barracks in 1934.

\*\*\*\*\*

WO2 Tony Gibbs is in hospital undergoing a number of tests to try and find what is wrong with his internal parts. We all wish him well and a speedy recovery.

\*\*\*\*\*

Jacko Jaques (6200175), now 85 is in a Nursing Home and is being well cared for by the staff. He sent me a photograph of himself and his grandson. Jacko was a very well known regimental character.

\*\*\*\*\*

Our very best wishes to Mrs Doris Heather, widow of Charlie Heather a 1st Bn athlete.

\*\*\*\*\*

Taffy Shore (6201889) still at Cromer writes to say that he keeps in touch with Denny Norris and Major Alan Carter pays him a visit.

\*\*\*\*\*

Major Tony and Pauline McManus have both retired and moved out of London to their address in Bedfordshire.

\*\*\*\*\*

Mrs Rhoda Hale still resides at Albuhera Close and is keeping well.

\*\*\*\*\*

Had a surprise present from former Sgt Tom Marshall from Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland. It was a large bottle of Bushmills Malt Whiskey aged 10 years. He told me to offer everyone that called a tot on him. Now I am never in!!

\*\*\*\*\*

Tom Roberts, 1/7th Bn tells me that he is going to Lille in November to attend the 'Trotabus' memorial day.

\*\*\*\*\*

A letter has been received from Miss Margaret Tohill, 17 Kilbury Drive, Worcester WR5 2NE, who is a part time research student, asking if any member of the BEF, 1940, 2nd, 1/7th and 1/8th Bn of the Middlesex Regiment can help. She is particularly interested in the advance to and defence of the River Dyle and the withdrawal to the River Escaut. If you are willing to help please write to Margaret at the above address.

\*\*\*\*\*



Just had a call from Charlie Bellchambers, New South Wales, Australia, to tell me that he is having medical troubles. Charlie was a Boy soldier with the 1st Bn in Hong Kong and was the Bn bugler. He keeps in close touch by sending a 'tape' rather than a letter.

\*\*\*\*\*

Eddie Johnson, 7th Bn, phoned from St Just, Cornwall, to wish all his friends in the Regiment a very happy Christmas.

\*\*\*\*\*

I have received visits from Margaret Hofman and husband. Margaret is the daughter of the late Bill Hickman, 2nd Bn.

\*\*\*\*\*

Ray Ashton and Len Bennett, together with wives called in to see if I was still alive. I was glad to be able to tell them I was in the pink.

\*\*\*\*\*

John Herbert, a Korean veteran, is a regular caller when on his cycling routine.

\*\*\*\*\*

Diehard Bill Billett, who survived the blood bath of the First World War battle of the Somme and celebrated his 101st birthday has died in a Christchurch rest home. Born in Wimborne, Bill lied about his age to join the Middlesex Regiment, nicknamed Diehards, when war was declared in 1914.

\*\*\*\*\*

Major Chris and Kay Lawrence left their 'wheels' for a few days whilst on a visit to the War Graves.

\*\*\*\*\*

Lieut A E Allchorne, who attended the Middlesex Guildhall Service on the 8 of November 1997, took the opportunity to bring with him a magnificently carved badge of the Middlesex Regiment. The badge is unusual in that it is carved from a single block of wood. It was passed to Lieut Allchorne by his neighbour who sadly is now in a nursing home and so can no longer look after it. A relative of hers carved it in about 1920. Lieut Allchorne asked that it be donated to the Albuhera Room Enfield for display there. The Enfield Branch Secretary, Mr Charlie Smith, said they will be

pleased to accept it and so the Secretary Major Ron Morris will hand over to them when he next visits in December.

\*\*\*\*\*

Tony White of the 1/7th Battalion rang the Secretary to apologise for not being at the Middlesex Guildhall for the Service held on the 8 of May. Sad to say he has had yet another slight stroke, caught in good time he is back home from hospital and he is making progress. We wish him a speedy recovery.

\*\*\*\*\*

A Party to celebrate the hundredth birthday of William (Bill) Hatcher was held at St Mary's Residential Home in Bexley on the afternoon of Sunday the 26 of October 1997. The Mayor of the London Borough of Bexley, Cllr Rita Sams was present and said a few words in praise of Bill. In return he sang an old music hall song!

Bill was a pre war TA Soldier with the 8th Battalion. He went to France in 1914. He said "I was wounded twice, once in the head and once in the foot and I was waiting for the one in the middle but fortunately it never arrived!"

The Regiment was represented by Ron and Betty Morris, Tony and Pat Lofts and Bob Gilbertson. A Middlesex Regimental Plaque suitably inscribed was presented to Bill by Ron Morris on behalf of all the members of the Association. There were around seventy five family and friends present at this very pleasant occasion.

\*\*\*\*\*

Major Ron Morris visits me every three weeks to check me over to make sure all is under control and every time he comes I get a Betty special cake. Thank you my dear, every time I take a bite I think of you. I have only got 6 teeth left!

\*\*\*\*\*

The following have joined the Regimental Association:

19103327 Pte J.W. Bebbington. Served C Company 1st Bn 1946-49.

\*\*\*\*\*

6206998 Cpl F.W. Bird. Served 2/7th Bn 1939-45.

\*\*\*\*\*

23365090 Private A. Brown. Served B Company 1st Bn 1957-59.



\*\*\*\*\*  
6216289 Private H.J. Hunt. Served 7th and 8th Bns, A & B Coys.

\*\*\*\*\*  
6853878 Private W. Harris. Served KRRC 1941-43, 2/7th Bn 1943-46 & RASC 1946

\*\*\*\*\*  
6206669 Private K.W. Johnston. Served 2/7th Bn 1939-46, B, C and HQ Coys.

\*\*\*\*\*  
14582687 Private R. Lavender. Served 4th Cheshires 1943, 1st & 2nd Bns Mx  
1944-47

\*\*\*\*\*  
6969436 Private R. Simmons. Served 2/7th Bn 1939-46.

\*\*\*\*\*  
6206426 CSgt J.W. Snelson. Served 2/7th Bn 1939-45.

\*\*\*\*\*  
6206241 Private W.D. Smith. Served D Coy 2/7th Bn 1939.

\*\*\*\*\*  
6210129 Cpl R.W. Stevens. Served 2/7th Bn 1939-46, C Company.

\*\*\*\*\*  
6210106 Private C. Talbot. Served C Coy 2/7th Bn 1939-46.

\*\*\*\*\*  
23486641 Private D. Whyman. Served A & HQ Coy 1st Bn 1956-59.

\*\*\*\*\*  
6207000 Sgt P.A. Yates. Served C Coy 2/7th Bn 1939-46.

## OBITUARIES

It is with deepest regret we announce the following have died:-

AYSCOUGH - On 26 July 1997, Mrs Kathleen Ayscough, aged 91 years, widow of Major E.S.M. Ayscough, who died on 9 January 1976. She was the sister of Colonel A.G. Hewitt, MBE, MC. Major Frank Waldron represented Colonel Tony Hewitt at the funeral.

BACON - On 4 July 1997, Cpl Keith Bacon (7947150), MM, aged 73 years who served with the 8th Bn from early 1943 to late 1945.

He was born on 30 September 1923, and was educated at Caterham School in Surrey. In 1942 he joined the Royal Tank Regiment at Bovington and was trained as a fitter, servicing tanks and other tracked vehicles. In 1943 he was posted to our 8th Bn who were then part of the 43rd Wessex Division in Kent, and joined the Signal Platoon, commanded by Captain Ian Brotherton, as a LCpl Fitter. He landed at Ouistreham on 23 June 1944, and during June, July and early August was involved in the heavy fighting around Caen, Mont Pincett and "Hill 112". The M.M.G. and 4.2 Mortar platoons were distributed along the 43rd Division's front, and consequently the Signal Platoon had the task of communicating over the whole Divisional forward areas. Keith Bacon spent much of his time travelling around the front line with the Signal Officer, by day and night, maintaining the vehicles and charging plants while the Signal Officer dealt with wireless problems. Ian Brotherton has vivid memories of his Jeep breaking down near Maltot on a road under German observation, and helping Keith take off, clean and replace the carburettor, by moonlight, assisted only by the light of flares being dropped by a Junkers JU88 bomber.

The Regimental History notes On 4 January 1945 the Division moved again coming back under command of XXX Corps and taking over its old Geilankirchen front. Conditions in the line were severe from the extreme cold, but extra clothing and heated dug-outs reduced the hardship to a minimum. White camouflage suits were also issued because of the snow. On 7 January Lance Corporal K. Bacon, commonly known as "Maxy", was awarded the Military Medal for his gallantry when in charge of a weasel, the small continuous-tracked type of carrier used over the snow covered mud. For days he brought up the supplies to B company over miles of slush fully exposed to enemy view and fire. After VE day the Battalion was based at Luchow near the Elbe, and shortly before it was wound up Keith was posted to Palestine. After the war he married Jean and settled in Lymington, where for many years he ran his own business servicing marine engines. Sadly, Jean pre-deceased him. His son Tim, daughter Julia and his grandchildren, as well as many sailing and other friends will greatly miss him.

Ian Brotherton



BRADSHAW - On 8 June 1997, Cpl (S/Sgt) George Douglas Bradshaw (6209670), aged 79 years.

He served with the 1/7th Bn from 15 July 1939 to 4 May 1944, when he was severely wounded and evacuated to the UK. He was medically discharged and awarded a disability pension. His widow understands he was wounded during the Sicily landings and his platoon officer was killed. Can anyone add to this statement?

BROWN - On 29 September 1997, Private George Brown (6213462), aged 77 years. He joined the 1st Bn on 13 June 1940 and was posted to C Company. He was taken P.O.W. on 25 December 1941. He survived the sinking of the Lisbon Maru in October 1942 and his POW days were spent in Osaka Camp. He returned to the UK in October 1945 and was discharged on 12 December 1945.

BULL - On 4 June 1997, Mrs Kathleen Bull, widow of Private A. Bull. She resided at 67 Albuhera Close and was one of the original members to move in during 1950. Her husband died in 1973. The funeral was well attended by members of Albuhera Close.

BYATT - On 10 October 1997, Cpl Edwin Basil Byatt (14415488), aged 72 years. Known as Eddie he served with B Company, 8th Bn from 23rd December 1942 to 1946. He was posted to the 2nd Bn and served with C Company in Palestine and was finally discharged on 24 July 1947.

FINCH - On 5 July 1997, Mrs Sylvia Finch, aged 92 years, widow of ORQMS A.E. Finch, MBE, who died in 1977. Sylvia was a great character and kept in close contact with the Regiment up to a few months ago.

GOLDSTRAW - On 16 July 1997, Private Frank Goldstraw. He served with the 9th Bn. No other details available.

GWYNNE - On 10 May 1997, Sgt Kenneth Gwynne (6205572), aged 79 years. He served with the 1/7th Bn with the BEF returning to UK after Dunkirk. Service in the Middle East and Italy followed. He was a regular attendee at the Hornsey annual dinner.

HALL - On 18 September 1997, Mrs Margaret Hall, wife of Lt-Col Peter Hall, OBE, TD.

KAYE - On 7 June 1997, Sgt Robert Charles Kaye (6212513), aged 79 years. He served with the 1/7th Bn from 15 March 1940 to 29 April 1946 and was Mentioned in Despatches. A first class Signal Sgt with a permanent smile. He was employed by W.H. Smith as a retail manager for 44 years.

LANE - On 13 October 1997, Private Harry A. Lane (1247 and 365265), aged 101 years.

Harry Archie Lane was one of seven children having been born at Wood Green

and then moving to Willesden. He attended Leopold School and then Kilburn Grammar School.

He joined the 9th Bn in 1913 serving with that Bn in Dinapore, India and Afghanistan. A memorial to the 1/9th Bn in Dinapore shows that 74 All Ranks of the 1/9th Bn gave their lives in 1914. Continuing his studies on demob in 1920 he became an Actuary in 1928 rising to the position of Chief Actuary and later became a Director of the Pearl Assurance Company in 1956 retiring in 1966. During his life he travelled the world both for pleasure and business, the last of which was a cruise to the Fjords of Norway last June. He celebrated his 101st birthday by going out to lunch, one week later he met with an accident which resulted in his death.

Major Ron Morris MBE attended the funeral and represented the Regiment.

MARKHAM - On 23 May 1997 Mrs Ethel Marion Markham, aged 81 years.

Ethel Markham was a great character and was the widow of 6197647 CSgt George Markham, who died on 19 October 1963 aged 55 years.

MARSHALL - On 31 March 1997, Wing Commander J.R. Marshall.

He served with the 2nd Bn from April 1943 to May 1944, as a Lieut. and later with HQ 1 Corps from June 1944 to September 1948. He was a member of the Regimental Officers' Club.

PHELPS - On 25 June 1997, Sgt Tom Phelps (6207381), aged 87 years.

He was a member of the 2/7th Bn from 1939-46, serving with the Bn in Egypt, Italy, Syria and Palestine.

The funeral was attended by former Sgt Jim Skipp and Fred Phillips.

PINNEY - On 8 July 1997, Mrs Mary Pinney, aged 76 years, widow of the late Cpl F.W. Pinney (6849049), D Company 2nd Bn.

PILFOLD - On 22 June 1997 Private Albert Pilfold (6208222), aged 80 years.

He served from 15 November 1939 to 10 September 1946. He joined the 1st Bn during 1940 and was posted to 13 Platoon D Company. He was taken Prisoner of War on 25 December 1941 and spent the whole of his POW days in Shamshuipo Camp, Hong Kong.

POOLE - On 26 June 1997, LCpl Albert (Tookie San) Poole (6202357), aged 79 years.

He served from 1935 to 1946 with the 1st Bn. He was taken P.O.W. on 25 December 1941. He spent the whole of his POW days in Sham Shui Po Camp, Hong Kong. Tookie and family occupied a regimental home at Albuhera Close, Enfield.

The funeral took place at Enfield Crematorium and the Enfield Branch OCA Standard together with the Royal British Legion Standard paraded. The occupants of Albuhera Close attended together with many friends from the Royal British Legion. Major R.E.B. Morris attended and represented the



Regimental Association. His widow, Sylvia, very kindly provided refreshments at the Royal British Legion Club.

**SODEN** - On 20 September 1997, CSgt (A/WO2), Edwin John Soden (6200167), aged 85 years.

John Soden enlisted on 21 July 1931 and on completion of his recruit training was posted to the 2nd Bn. During October 1935 he was a member of the "Save Egypt" draft. In February 1936 the emergency ended and the majority of the draft returned to UK and rejoined the 2nd Bn, a few to the 1st Bn. In October 1938 he was posted to the 1st Bn in Hong Kong. He was taken POW on 25 December 1941. He survived the sinking of the Lisbon Maru and ended in the POW Camp at Osaka. He arrived back in the UK during October 1945 and joined the 1st Bn in BAOR in July 1946. On 2 August 1949 he claimed a free discharge after 18 years and 13 days service. He then took up a Clerk's appointment at the Duke of Yorks HQ, Chelsea, and remained for 10 years. This was followed by employment with the Camping Club of Great Britain as a resident Warden.

During the 1980s Mr and Mrs Soden very kindly cared for Lt-Gen Sir Brian and Lady Horrocks by visiting for weekly periods. Sadly he suffered a serious stroke during 1996 which left him with impaired speech and paralysis and he had to be placed in a Nursing Home at Great Bentley, Nr Colchester. Our thanks to Bandsman Reg Smith who visited John in hospital and kept the Regimental Association informed.

**WRIGHT** - On 4 October 1997, Private Robert James Wright (816754), aged 81 years.

He enlisted into the Royal Artillery as a Boy Soldier, on 27 November 1931, serving until 2 April 1932. He re-enlisted on 6 May 1938 into the East Surrey Regiment and served with that unit in Tientsin, China. On 8 June 1939 he transferred to the Middlesex Regiment in Hong Kong. He was taken POW on Christmas Day 1941 by the Japanese. He survived the sinking of the Lisbon Maru in October 1942 and was held in Osaka Camp. He was evacuated to the UK in 1945 via Canada. He was Clerk to B Company. We last met at the Albuhera Day function in May 1995. He wrote the book 'I was a Hell Camp Prisoner', published in 1963. I have a copy.

Mr Fred Phillips, 2/7th Bn reports that the following two members of the 2/7th Bn have died - Alf Barlow and Frank Vandercruysen.

#### **REGIMENTAL HOUSING AT ALBUHERA CLOSE, ENFIELD, MIDDLESEX.**

Shortly after the end of WW2 land at Enfield, on the edge of the "Green Belt" in NW London was donated to the Middlesex Regiment (DCO) by a TA Officer of the Regiment on which a number of houses and flats were built by The Memorial Committee of the Regimental Association with funds subscribed by members of the Regiment and by the people and the County of Middlesex in order to provide homes for soldiers who had served with the Regiment.

Until January 1997 these homes - 16 semi-detached houses and 8 flats were managed by the Housing Sub-Committee of the Middlesex Regimental Association and were let at low rents to ex members of the Regiment who were registered on the Association's Waiting List.

It has always been the intention of the Middlesex Regimental Association, as demands from former Diehards lessened, to offer a place on the waiting list, with a view to eventual tenancy of these houses and flats, to soldiers who had served in the Queen's Regiment or its former Regiments or the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment.

In January 1997 all these homes were given to Haig Homes, a Services Housing Authority, whose patron is HM The Queen, which has similar sites throughout the UK, and which has agreed to give priority on its Enfield Waiting List to applicants put up by the Middlesex Regiment.

All these houses and flats are currently occupied by former Diehards and their families. The Regimental Association now invites any member of one of our Forebear Regiments who wishes to be considered as a tenant at Albuhera Close to notify either the RHQ PWRR or the Secretary of the Middlesex Regimental Association (Major Ron Morris, 38 Traps Lane, New Malden, Surrey, KT3 4SA).

#### **FORTY YEARS ON - A N.S. SUBALTERN REMEMBERS.**

Aqaba in Jordan in the mid-Fifties: a tented British Army camp, a street of the little single-storey shops whose owners followed the Army wherever it went - tailors, shoemakers and a Chinese laundry - and a small Arab town of white mud huts and narrow winding alleys. Then there was the port, where battered dust-whitened freighters would take on their cargoes of Jordan's only export - phosphates.

Twenty years later King Hussein, that doughty graduate of Sandhurst and survivor of attempted coups and Middle East politics, was to try to turn Aqaba into the tourist resort that its hot sun, clear warm waters and romantic desert setting were made for. One day I shall go back there to see how his dream developed - if at all!

Close Order drill on our parade ground - a Company of a hundred sweating men moving as one, the smack of hands against rifles and the crash of nail-studded boots in unison, marching, turning, marching, halting, marching again - "Bags of Swank, lads" from the Sergeant-Major.

Afternoons off (in the Tropics in those days the British Army seldom worked after lunch until Guard-mounting at sunset), when we would go to the beach to swim in the limpid waters of the Gulf of Aqaba, looking at the pink coral through our snorkel masks. Some of us learned to sail there in little folding canvas dinghies, lazing on our backs



with a book and steering with one foot, an occasional eye on the invisible border between Jordan and the enemy, Israel - cross that line inadvertently and out would come an Israeli patrol boat to tow you into the Israeli port of Eilat. From there you would be flown to Cyprus and then not allowed back into Jordan.

As our battalion was at the time engaged in Internal Security duties there, exchanging Lotus-eating for rioting Cypriots, roadblocks and ambush-laying was not an appealing prospect.

And then there was the desert training, beset by sun, sand, flies and sweat.

For a few nights we camped under the stars in the Wadi Rum, bordered by deep-red sandstone cliffs and close to a Beau Geste fort garrisoned by Arab Legionnaires - sadly they didn't invite us in for the thick, black coffee and sweetmeats that we heroic defenders of their country felt were our due. A social gaffe that Lawrence would certainly not have been happy with, for it was here that he met and recruited the Bedouin chieftain whose nomad warriors were to be the hard-core of his desert army.

Marching again! Platoon commanders and sergeants covering twice the distance, up and down the line, encouraging, bullying and swearing (just occasionally, you understand!) - anything to keep them moving. Then the sound of an explosion and the ranks split apart into sections moving to cover, shouts and whistle blasts to indicate the type and direction of attack - a few minutes of brisk, sweating effort and the objective is (hopefully) declared taken. And then it started all over again!!

Sometimes we exercised with the 10th Hussars, whose Centurion tanks and Ferret scout car battery as well, but they tended to keep to themselves. The sight of a troop of tanks bearing down on us at speed was awesome indeed, knowing as we did that our light antitank rockets were as likely to bounce off their thick frontal armour as they were to penetrate it - and knowing also that the Israelis across the way had Centurions, just like these.

Riding in the turret hatch, alongside the tank commander, I would watch him swaying gracefully as his armoured steed bucketed across the ditches and dunes - while I bounced first off the steel rim in front of me and then off the one behind me. Very hard on the ribs - I almost preferred marching, but perhaps not quite!

I remember white saltflats stretching into the far distance, sometimes apparently ending in a blue lake - sadly only a mirage! And seeing the rock which Moses reputedly struck to find water for his thirsting flock. A miracle or simply amateur geology? Either way, it worked!

From Aqaba into the timeless sand-dunes of Saudi Arabia ran the railway line that Lawrence and his Arabs dynamited time after time to disrupt the flow of Turkish war material - hitting and running, but sometimes staying to kill and plunder. And then he and his Bedouins took Aqaba!

But most vivid of all my memories of the Jordanian desert is the lost city of Petra - that capital of the ancient Nabateans, the tribe that flourished centuries before Christ and which disappeared, apparently without trace.

This incredible city is approached through a narrow winding trail, between high cliffs and - at every turn - you pass giant boulders hollowed-out to form pillboxes, each with its own arrow-slit. One bowman in each could blood any hostile raiding band, buying time for the city's defenders! We rode down its twists and turns on horseback - I walked stiffly for days afterwards, bowlegged from the skinned thighs that came from riding in shorts, rather than the slacks which those who had listened to the briefing more attentively wore!

Emerging at last from that menacing pass into the sunlight, you see what must be one of the most impressive sights of the ancient world - the Treasury Building. Cut into the living rock, as are all the buildings and dwellings of Petra, it towers in front of you with its pillars, steps and shadowed entrance. It is easy to imagine a group of robed merchants emerging, blinking in the fierce desert sun and discussing the latest camel train to arrive or perhaps the price of tin!

Since I was there, more of Petra has been unearthed, yet as far as I know we are still no nearer understanding how or why this ancient civilisation - for any people who could create this "Rose-red city half as old as Time" were indeed highly civilised - disappeared so suddenly and so completely that it was to be nearly 1000 years before their city was rediscovered, almost by accident.

What else sticks in my memory after 40 years to remind me of my days as a young subaltern in a regiment whose proud history went back to before the Peninsular War and Wellington's "scum of the earth"?

From time to time we had grenade practice, throwing live grenades from a slit trench at a target 25 yards away, and from time to time one wouldn't go off. Somehow I never quite got used to leaving the safety of the trench and crawling up to a "dud" whose firing pin might simply have stuck halfway down on a bit of grease! Carrying a small slab of guncotton and its detonator was uncomfortable enough but then one had to crimp the detonator to its wire by hand, or rather with one's teeth, but not too hard because the detonator could have gone off, doing irreparable damage to one's fillings - and the jaw around them. Back to the trench, connect the wire to the clockwork and then, just like in the movies, down with the handle and up with the grenade!

Once on the firing range it was Sten gun practice. Now the Sten is a lovely little sub-machine gun - stamped out by the thousand in the Second War, dropped to Resistance groups by the ton, it was still in service. Drop it in a river, plaster it with mud or sand and generally mistreat it - it would hardly ever let you down. It was practically "private soldier-proof" - the ultimate accolade!

But occasionally it would jam - and that day one did. My sergeant and I were



standing behind the firing line when one of my newer men turned round with his Sten still at his shoulder and said "It's jammed, sir!". As Sergeant Nicholson and I looked up at him from our prone positions, he realised what he had done and why we and his mates on one side of him had hit the deck. He pointed the Sten to the sky, apologised crimson-faced - and then it went off, all by itself! Training can be jolly dangerous sometimes!

The glorious feeling of that first pint of orange-and-soda, going down after a week spent exercising in the desert with only warm water from our canteens to wash down the sand and dust - and later, showered, changed and fed, sitting on the Mess verandah, watching the granite cliffs of the Wadi Araba turn purple in the setting sun.

That Wadi is itself the Northern end of the Great Rift Valley which runs down through East Africa. Across its two miles of flat sand you can see the Israeli port of Eilat. And what a contrast to Arab Aqaba it was! Under the same baking sun, on the same inhospitable sand and with the same lack of water, the Israelis had created a thriving town, with green, crop-bearing fields, brick houses, concrete office blocks, a modern airport and a busy harbour. Oil storage tanks gleamed in the blazing sunlight.

However, just two miles away and under the same pitiless sun, Aqaba sadly reflected Arabia at its least impressive - white mud walls, a phosphate trade that was intermittent at best, and us!

To our sunbaked Western eyes the difference between the two peoples could not have been more graphically illustrated - faced with the same environmental problems, the frontier spirit and inventiveness of the Israelis created a successful living and working habitat.

Admittedly Jordan was never blessed by oil and is a poor country but we are not talking about resources - rather about the human spirit and the will not just to survive but to grow and develop. On that basis Israel wins hands down - or at least that was how our eyes saw it at the time. The last forty years have not really altered that perceived reality to any great extent.

But at least tourists can now cross that line with impunity!

And cross it they do, for the fragile peace treaty that now exists between Israel and Jordan allows them to go back and forth - to the point where nowadays so many visitors from "the other side" want to see Petra that the Jordanians have had to impose a heavy entrance fee to try to keep the numbers under control - and there are now two luxury hotels in Petra. One feels that the ancient merchants would have approved!

But one summer's day in 1956, when I had been there for about six months, it all changed - and not for the better!! Our mixed-arms garrison, known as 'O' Force for some obscure military reason, was there under our defence treaty with Jordan to protect their southern flank and only access to the sea from the Israelis, with whom

they had been at daggers drawn since 1948. (That, you will recall, was when Israel came into existence, the British Mandate in Palestine expired and every Arab neighbour of the new, badly-armed state declared war on it - and lost!).

Anyway, on that day in 1956, we were paraded to hear that we and the French (who had then but recently been beaten in Indo-China and who were just starting to convince themselves that the FLN in Algeria were an Arab version of the Communist Viet Minh - wrongly, of course, but with the same ultimately-ignominious results!) were landing troops in Egypt to "secure" the Suez Canal, recently nationalised by Col. Nasser. At the same time Israeli paras and armoured columns were driving into Egypt from the East. Collusion!!

This "slight" shift in our geographical stance did not go down well with our hosts and their neighbours, the Saudis! Jordan immediately and unsurprisingly abrogated the defence treaty, the crenellated walls of the Arab Legion fort were lined with soldiers in their red and white head dresses and the Saudis moved heavy machine-guns up to the border only 600 yards away - there are no prizes for guessing which way they were pointed! And we hadn't done anything!

As if all that wasn't enough for our sandhappy infantrymen, Hussars and Gunners, we were then ordered to "stand to" every morning half an hour before dawn, which in the Jordanian summer broke very early indeed. Slit-trenches in the pre-dawn chill are not welcoming places and we were not used to that side of soldiering. Still, as the old sweats put it unsympathetically: "if you can't take a joke, you shouldn't have joined!"

That lasted for about two weeks and then we were given two months to close down our garrison and our training presence in Amman. At the same time the British commander of the Arab Legion, Glubb "Pasha" - an Arabist to his fingertips - was abruptly fired by Hussein personally.

So, equipment, stores and technical personnel were airlifted out in a steady stream of R.A.F. transports, one of which sadly crashed, killing its crew and passengers. A ship arrived to load the scout-cars, tanks, transport vehicles and anti-aircraft guns, while we packed up our own kit and light equipment - and practised for what the garrison commander had decreed would be a grand Farewell Parade.

And how we drilled, polished our brasses and bulled our boots! The garrison band practised, timings were studied and flag-lowering rehearsed until every detail was perfect.

The cargo ship sailed away and a day or so later in came our troopship, the S.S. Nevassa (years later she became an educational cruise ship and my daughter sailed from Venice to Egypt in her on a school trip - it's a small world!). We all embarked, settled ourselves in cabins or on crowded messdecks and the next day prepared to lower the Union Jack on yet another outpost.

Cometh the day, cometh the men! Ashore again we formed up in our parade formation



- the infantry platoons of 'C' Company of the Middlesex Regiment, the cavalymen of the 10th Hussars squadron and the gunners of the Light Ack-Ack Battery, Royal Artillery. Service Dress hats, Sam Brownes and swords; dark blue berets, scrubbed web belts and rifle slings; sparkling brasses everywhere - and you could have seen your face in those boots! Freshly-starched and sharply-creased khaki-drill shirts and shorts - we looked the way every other army in the world would dearly love to look, but somehow never does. Bags of swank and lots of bull does it every time!

Drawn up on parade, officers in front of their sergeants and behind them the silent ranks, dressed from the left, rifle butts by right heels. A shouted command and the rigid lines slam to attention. The "Slope Arms" - two hundred move as one. The crash of the "Present" - our band breaks into the "General Salute", the bayonet-tipped rifles flash into the vertical as right heels slam into the ground behind the left. Our swords dip crisply and smoothly - the infantry's straight ahead and those of the cavalry elegantly to the half-right, traditionally avoiding their invisible horses' flanks.

Our flag is lowered and that of Jordan hoisted in its place. No speeches, no thanks nor expressions of regret or sadness - only an exchange of salutes between commanders, an about-turn by ours and then it was time to march past with the Hussar and playing what Alec Guinness' Jock Sinclair was later to call "All the Tunes of Glory".

And how we marched! Heads high, free arms swinging up to the horizontal and boots crashing down with each regulation 30-inch pace - I still have a grainy, black-and-white snapshot of me and my Geordie sergeant, who had fought with our battalion in Korea and who was a tower of strength to me, marching proudly alongside our platoon. Marching off parade and out of Jordan for ever.

Down then to our embarkation point and out on lighters to our ship - and the band played on. "Colonel Bogey", they played while broad smiles spread across our faces at the immortal words - and the Arabs all thought we were smiling a fond farewell to them! If we were, it was a "soldiers' farewell"!

Off then into the wild blue yonder, or at least down the narrow Gulf of Aqaba to Aden - that major bunkering-port which was still where rumblings were even then beginning to be heard. These were later to erupt in the Crater district where "Mad Mitch" was to make his name at the head of his Argyles.

For three days we lay at anchor in Aden harbour - and it felt like three weeks! We had come from the dry desert heat of Aqaba to the sauna-bath that was Aden - and we sweated, oh how we sweated! The mahogany tans acquired through months of Jordanian sun became, to our eyes at least, the sickly yellow of jaundice - and the Indian Ocean, when we finally weighed anchor, was no help at all.

Bound for Mombasa in Kenya, to embark some Service families, we ploughed our stately furrow through the sea. I will never forget the storm we ran into on the way - it may not have been life-threatening but it was quite enough for us! Going below to see how the men were, it seemed to me that I held my breath for the entire time I was on their

messdeck - the combined smells of socks, sweat and seasickness were almost unbearable and I made my escape as soon as I decently could. But they had to stay there!

On that ship I learned a lesson I have never forgotten - don't play poker with people who have more money than you! I started that voyage with a lot of accumulated pay, for there was not much to spend it on in Aqaba - and I lost nearly all of it to the 10th Hussar subalterns, for most of whom Army pay was merely a small supplement to their private incomes. Ah well - experience is the name we give to our mistakes, or so they say!

The view that greeted us on the day we sighted Africa was one that I have never forgotten - the great green bluffs and forested slopes between which we sailed to reach Mombasa. You must remember that, other than the distant fields around Eilat, none of us had seen any greenery since leaving the U.K., Cyprus or wherever we had come from to join the garrison - it was a truly wonderful sight!

A few days there for us to wander around the markets - I still have fly whisk and the salad servers, their handles beautifully carved into African girls' heads, with "silver" wire rings around their elongated necks, that I bought from one laden stall - and then it was time to leave again.

Up through the Indian Ocean once more, bound for the Suez Canal - thankfully no storms this time! Transiting the canal I remember camels along the sides, their riders looking impassively at our ship as it glided between the banks. We didn't see many sunken blockships although a lot were apparently scuttled by the Egyptians - indeed we really knew very little about what had gone on during the Suez invasion.

But I do remember sitting on the verandah of the Garrison Officers' Mess in Aqaba, brand & Soda in hand, watching the gunflashes across the the Beersheba Mountains which lay between us and the Sinai Desert - it was eerily like watching that famous clip of the artillery barrage before El Alamein that we have all seen in so many war films. That was my "Suez".

I know now that the Suez adventure split the country from top to bottom, that the Press was savagely divided on the merits of the case, the rights and wrongs of our collusion with the French and the Israelis.

I later learnt, when I was demobbed and arrived home, that my father, a veteran Parliamentary journalist, stopped reading the "Manchester Guardian" because it ran an editorial advising National Servicemen to refuse to go into Suez - he had a son in the Army and that was incitement to mutiny! He never read that paper again.

Eventually we reached Cyprus and rejoined the battalion in Dhekelia, near Larnaca, the same tented camp that I had seen for a few brief days nine months before, fresh from Officer Cadet School and embarkation leave - the single bright star on each shoulder new and unworn, my knees white and my heart in my mouth! Now,



however, my knees were brown, my pips were rubbed a little smoother by my batmans' polishing and I felt a lot more confident, surer of myself and my platoon.

Like the stand-to's in Aqaba, however, Internal Security duties in Cyprus came as a bit of a shock to 'C' Company - night patrols, lying in ambush on little-used paths with faces blackened and "one up the the spout", day patrolling in our Land Rovers into Greek villages, checking identity cards and searching the men against the cafe walls. Calling in at the police stations, a favourite target of the EOKA terrorists and each a mini-fortress, sandbagged and wire-netted against grenades.

Xylatimbou, Xylaphagou and Ormidhia - a litany of village names that I remember to this day. The memory of entering a Turkish village and being greeted by the village headman and the local constable - offering us smiles, watermelon and cold rinks which we never refused!

The Turks were on our side - they had been oppressed by the Greek Cypriots for centuries and were as much at risk from the EOKA "freedom fighters" as were the British. They were only reliable and trustworthy civil servants and policemen - their Greek counterparts could not be trusted despite their oath of allegiance to the Crown. But, of course the Greeks could be murdered just like anyone else if they didn't cooperate! So perhaps we shouldn't blame them all.

At least that is how it was when 'Tiger' Harding was Governor and C-in-C and when our operations on that bloodsoaked island bore such fruit that EOKA at one point sued for a temporary ceasefire. But then he was replaced by Sir Hugh Foot and evenhandedness became the policy. So it was goodbye to the smiles, the watermelons and cold drinks, and hello to I.D. checks and searches for all - a sad day!

I remember the Servicemen and their wives being shot in the back in Nicosia's infamous Murder Mile and I particularly remember when gunmen shot three sergeants' wives in Limasso; (or it may have been Famagusta). GHQ immediately moved the sergeants' units out into the bush and in came "fresh" units to conduct the searches - they would be more neutral, you see. They weren't involved emotionally!

It didn't have much effect, however - all it meant was that, whenever those "uninvolved" troops found a cache of explosives, they detonated them in situ, whereas in normal circumstances they would have been carefully removed and blown up at a safe distance. Soldiers' solidarity - there were a lot of bangs in the old town that day!

Among our various responsibilities was the perimeter security of Pyla Detention Camp. Our platoons took it in turns to spend a fortnight there and our numbers finally came up. The camp housed EOKA suspects - prison officers ran things inside, while our job was to make sure no-one escaped.

Every night it fell to the camp Security Commander (an imposing title for a mere second lieutenant!) to inspect the perimeter wire. The route took him past the kennels

of the Army guard dogs- Alsations trained to attack and bring down their man. I knew, of course, that their area was totally secure and that they couldn't get out, but I still remember their low growls as I went by. They seemed to be discussing which part of my anatomy each of them was going to have for dinner! I always unbuttoned my pistol holster as I went past them and it was to be 30 years before I agreed to have an Alsation as a family pet - but how we all love her!

During our spell at Pyla we had a riot which the prison officers were unable to control, so it fell to us to restore order. This my men did with the British soldier's goodhumoured mixture of patience and tolerance of foreigners - assisted very considerably by the pickaxe handles which each man carried! I will never forget the sight of one of my quieter riflemen getting stuck in to a large Greek Cypriot and putting the boot in with a vengeance - his mates couldn't quite believe it either and they treated him with a lot more respect thereafter!

Speaking of riots, that was another fun job for the poor old PBI, as it always is wherever the Army is engaged in "Duties in aid of the civil Power" as the handbook has it (I still have my battered copy somewhere - responsibilities, duties, tactics, all laid down in black and white).

Anyway, we didn't have the visored crash helmets and clear plastic shields that you see so often today - just the ever present pickaxe handles, rifle butts and tin hats. No volleys fired over our heads either - some of the spectators, leaning out of their windows and encouraging the rioters, might get hurt! If it got really nasty, you identified the ringleaders and either a snatch squad grabbed them or, in extremis, you best marksmen were ordered to shoot them. Happily it very seldom came to that - but it did happen occasionally!

A favourite tactic of a riot mob was to put schoolgirls in the front line as a sort of "human shield". Those worked initially because, for all his faults, your average squaddy respects the fair sex and violence towards girls was, in the fifties at least, somewhat alien to him. But, once they had recovered from the shock of seeing a mate's face laid open by the fingernails of a member of that same "fair sex" screaming with rage and delight, it was amazing how quickly that respect evaporated! Not a pretty sight on either side - but it was their riot, not ours!!

The tedium of road blocks - a chicane of barriers, vehicles pulled over, papers checked, boots opened and, very occasionally, a find. Arms, explosives or perhaps a man on our Wanted List - it did happen!

One day EOKA bombed our camp. There were always locals going in and out delivering provisions, local workmen cycling up with bags of tools, and so on. They were obviously supposed to be checked and often searched but one day someone slipped up - it happens! Just as it happens today in Northern Ireland, for human fallibility and the practice of terrorism have not changed - only the technology.



A bomb in a cycle bag was leant up against a wall of the NAAFI, which it demolished. Luckily it went off after lunch and casualties were minimal - half an hour earlier and that canteen would have been packed! We never caught the men responsible, but the guards on the main gate caught one hell of a rocket!

But in that politically and military highly-charged atmosphere there were moments of civilisation - each week there would be a Dinner Night in the Mess. All officers not out on patrol or on other duties would assemble, immaculate in white "bum-freezer" monkey jackets with our shining brasses, white stiff-collared shirts, black bow ties and cummerbunds, and tight blue dress trousers with the red stripe of the infantry down each leg. Regimental silver weighing down the long table and gleaming in the candle light, quiet attentive Mess waiters, as immaculate as their officers in their white tunics and slacks.

Our Colonel at the head of the table with his officers ranged down from him in order of seniority; good food and wine - and conversation only slightly inhibited by traditional ban on "shop, politics and women" as topics for discussion. I ask you - what else did we all have in common?!

Then, from Colonel to youngest subaltern: "Mr. Vice - The Queen". "Gentlemen - The Queen!". And then those welcome words: "Gentlemen, you may smoke!" Collective sighs of relief all round - now we could relax. Two nights before I left Cyprus they "dined me out" at a Dinner Night - all my drinks were on the house, I fell into bed at 3 a.m. and was on roadblock duty with my replacement at 7 a.m.! What a way to finish my Active Service!

Still, by then I was proudly wearing the inch-long green and purple ribbon of my General Service Medal (Cyprus Clasp), my pips were worn smooth - and my replacement's knees were very white!

Before my departure on yet another troopship, via Malta and Gib to the U.K., I had had a long weekend of R and R at the Army Rest Centre at Kyrenia on the North Coast. They called it "Silver Sands" and we stayed at the Dome Hotel. Looking down on the sea was Coeur de Lion's castle which we climbed all over - impregnable, its battlements sneered down on the bare slopes that any besiegers would have had to climb under a hail of arrows, rocks and, when they were close, boiling oil!

A lovely part of a tragic island has been invaded and fought over for centuries - occupied by the Crusaders, the Turks long ago, the Germans, the British and now some of it by the Turks again. For one day, responding to the pleas of the Turkish minority who had lived under the Greek-Cypriot heel after Independence, Turkish paratroopers dropped from the skies and sealed off a third of the island - and the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus was born. It provides a safe haven for the Turkish inhabitants, whose families have of course been Cypriots for over five hundred years, but otherwise it is a sad orphan country, recognised by no one except Turkey.

And now there is a barrier fence marking the demarcation line between the two communities and young men still patrol to keep the peace. We have our two Sovereign bases, for the time being at least, and some of those young men on patrol are ours - so nothing really changes under the high bright Cyprus sun! But now they wear the light blue berets of the U.N., not our dark blue ones. "Plus ça change...!"

Now tourists sun themselves by swimming pools and walk the troodos mountains and the forests where once the silent Paras and Light Infantry watched and waited, hunting "General" Grivas and his EOKA lieutenants. Those days of blood and dust are gone now - but so are the smiling Turks with their watermelons and cold drinks for tired British soldiers. The British infantry regiments are axed, amalgamated or facing riots and bombers in Ulster, and the Turks are north of the Green Line - alone but safe!

One day I will go back to Kyrenia, to the silver-gold sands and Richard's fortress by the sea - perhaps en route to Aqaba again!

Well, a man can dream, can't he!!

To be continued.....

## **A RETURN JOURNEY INTO CHINA**

**3rd to 7th November 1997**

**by Colonel Anthony Hewitt, MBE MC**

Fifty - five years ago, February 1942, I broke out of a Japanese Prisoner of War Camp at Shamshuipo and escaped through Japanese occupied China to Free China. I have always wished to retrace that journey because, apart from some alarming episodes, it became a wonderful adventure.

I have often walked again the route along twenty-five miles of Hong Kongs New Territories to the Sham Chun River on the Border but I could go no further after China became a Republic and certainly not during the Cultural Revolution. However, entry into China has been much easier recently, and more so since Hong Kong returned to China.

Therefore, with my wife Elizabeth, and two young men, Ko Tim Keung and Jason Wordie, both authors and historians, we crossed the border in search of the adventure I found on my escape. In the huge new city of Shenzhen, a Special Economic Zone, we hired a Mazda with a cheerful former Peoples' Liberation Army soldier as driver and drove happily into Guangdong Province. Quickly, we discovered adventure in an attractive land of happy, laughing friendly people living in splendid scenic beauty like a Celestial Fairyland.



The sites where, as a starving fugitive, I had crossed the Sham Chun River in 1942 and met Communist Guerrillas at a 'willow pattern' bridge and pagodas have been swept away by roads and buildings, but as we sped along wide highway towards Weichow I could see in the far distance the hills where I stayed in a Red Army Camp and the rolling rugged country over which I marched for days to freedom.

Weichow (now Huizhou), an enormous industrial city on the great East River, was familiar with its Giant Pagoda and famous Three Eyes Bridge and friendly people who overwhelmed us with interest like laughing waitresses in an elite restaurant who, attracted by Ko Tim Keung's charming manners, ceased work to talk and be photographed by him while they fed us delightful Chinese food. Many people asked me, 'Why did you not come back before this?'

The soldier driver, his radio blaring Chinese dance music and Communist songs like those I heard 55 years ago, drove up the valley of the East River, on which I had sailed in a barge for eleven days, in country of tremendous agricultural development with everyone working, even the children after school, an inspiring sight.

At the large country town of Heyuan, curious as to what a Chinese hotel off the tourist run would look like, we asked warily for rooms at the Vin Fa Hotel. It was a modern hotel, with a large restaurant, spacious bedrooms and Western style bathrooms attached. In bicycle rickshaws we toured the town to the banks of the East river and a former missionaries house and compound which I recognised.

Proceeding northwards, we travelled on country roads beside acres and acres of terraced fields, watered by the East River. Wheat recently cut in the autumn harvest stood stacked with many other types of crops, sugar cane and citrus trees. The industry of the people was amazing, everyone working hard, but when we stopped they rushed to speak to us, attracted by Jason Wordie, a tall and handsome foreigner who understood their language. Inquisitive as ever, they wished to know 'Who & what are you?, How old?, Why here?, Where from? Very good Hong Kong belongs to China! etc...'

Wu Sui Kai, the soldier driver, drove carefully on the country road avoiding frequent herds of white ducks wandering across the road and another hazard of rice, seeds and nuts laid out painstakingly over half the road surface to dry. Jason bought bags of tangerines and pumaloes to quench our thirst caused by the cool dry climate under a deep blue sky and sunshine.

It grew cold as we ascended beautiful mountain ranges, whirling round hair-pin bends, with deep ravines beside us and rushing waterfalls. Remarkably, I recalled a stretch of the precipitous mountain road where I saw a line of gaunt shuffling coolies burdened with heavy loads. One of them collapsed from exhaustion and an armed soldier pushed him over the cliff edge with his rifle butt to the man's death. That happened under Chiang Kai-shek's rule.

At Linping, a large town where I once stayed a night, we ate lunch hurriedly at a way-side inn. We stopped to pay respect to the Guerrilla Monument, which I was glad to do in recognition for the help they gave me. Other stops were taken to photograph ancient walled villages guarded by fighting towers, and of many beautiful archaic mansions, those of rich Mandarin landlords before China became a Republic. At every stop people appeared out of nowhere to greet us. Ko Tim Keung spoke to them in Cantonese, but was not understood. He tried Mandarin which failed also, and then Hakka to which they replied volubly. Tim is a Hakka, so he was specially welcomed by these people.

Kukong, where I stayed in the Methodist Mission Hospital for five weeks recovering from wounds in 1942, has grown a few thousand times into a gigantic city called Shaoguan. We were quickly housed in excellent rooms in the Kukong Guest House run by the Government. Tim and Sui Kai, the driver, searched for the address of the Methodist Hospital, which had been taken over by the Republic in 1949 and later ransacked by Cultural Revolutionaries. However, Wu found out that a Peoples Hospital existed in Shaoguan.

Next morning, while waiting for our party to assemble, Wu, driver and field artillery soldier, a most likable man, started to teach me to salute PLA style, with the left hand, and to march the PLA way. I tried to teach him British Army drill, but neither of us succeeded, due to roars of laughter our antics created. Many Chinese gentlemen took a liking to my Australian Akubra hat, offering to buy it, but I would not part with it.

Wu Sui Kai drove us to the Yue Bei Peoples Hospital, Shaoguan. Using photographs in my book *Bridge with Three Men* I recognised a few walls and a bridge. A Hospital Doctor, wearing a European tweed jacket, riding a bicycle with a live chicken in the basket, said that this was a 800 bed Hospital built over the old Mission Hospital. Furthermore, a lady named Chan who had been a nurse in the Mission Hospital lived here.

Chan, a frail, highly intelligent little lady aged 72, confirmed that this was the site if the Mission Hospital which she joined after the fall of Hong Kong in 1942. She remembered me as a patient and the Matron whose name, she recollected, was a colour, "Green colour". Everyone laughed at that name, Chinese people never used colour names. She recalled Dr. Moore and Dr Gordon King and many more, but she had been forced to burn every thing about the Mission Hospital and foreigners to save her life during the Cultural Revolution. She related her story clearly to Tim as she sat demurely between Liz and me while photographs were taken.

Chan led us into the Hospital to the Director, Yang Ninda, who greeted us most warmly, had video, TV and still photographs taken, showed us photographs of the old Mission Hospital and, accompanied by five of his Doctors, gave us a superb lunch in a very smart restaurant. Their kindness, hospitality and spontaneous friendship was wonderful.

As we drove away across the North River I realised with emotion that I had at last achieved my aim of retracing my escape route as far as Kukong, which took me seven



weeks to cover as a fugitive and had now taken only three days in a motor van. I had still a long way to go across China to India, but from Kukong I travelled in trains and aircraft. Finding the Mission Hospital and meeting Chan, the nurse, were ultimate achievements for which I owe much to Ko Tim Keung's captivating personality and the way he explained my cause to all the people. It was delightful, also, that Chan remembered Constance Green, the attractive Matron, by her 'colour name of green'. I have told Constance's daughter, Barbara, who lives in Hong Kong.

Full of delicious Cantonese food and rice wine, we called on a beautiful and very old Buddhist Monastery which I had seen in 1942, when the Lao Yeh (Abbot) told me that the Legend was that if his camphor tree bloomed China would become great and united again. In fact, seven years later the trees did come to life and China was united as the Peoples' Republic. Now in 1997, I was determined to see how the Legend has flourished; the trees have grown into beautiful giants.

We entered Canton (now Guangzhou) at night and the gallant Wu Sui Kai deposited us at the excellent Victory Hotel on Shameem Island, much to Liz's delight. She had lived here in 1925 with her father, Colonel Hayley Bell, brother and Nanny and had been shot at by riotous mobs from the other side of the Bund - her baptism of fire.



*Colonel Tony Hewitt and Sgt George Tann*

In the morning Liz walked all over Shameem with Tim and Jason looking at the former Consulate's mansions and finding her old home. She crossed the Bund to enter the former Chinese Imperial Customs House where her father worked as the Commissioner, all kept in perfect condition and still used as a Customs House. Canton, clean and lovely in the Autumn sunshine welcomed Liz's return with typical Chinese warmth, the customary tradition to travellers.

Modern six or eight lane highways to Shenzhen ran through perpetual built up areas of big factories and high rise building estates for thousands of people which demonstrated the enormous economic development in Guangdong Province, brought about by Deng Xiaoping, who proclaimed "To get rich is glorious", an exhortation that has been followed strongly in South China.

At the Hong Kong Border I said goodbye sadly to my soldier mate, who said "Please come back again". And all four of us would like to return, our adventurous odyssey in the Celestial Kingdom had been made a success by the Chinese people, their inquisitiveness, their fun and laughter, their welcome to their land. As I said earlier, it developed into a celestial fairyland.

#### **THE ROYAL HOMES FOR OFFICERS' WIDOWS AND DAUGHTERS**

Queen Alexandra's Court has 75 self-contained flats for the widows and unmarried daughters of deceased officers of the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force. Vacancies occur periodically. The Royal Homes are Grade II listed buildings and set in delightful grounds. As a rule 60 is the lower and 75 is the upper age limit for entry. Applicants must be able to care for themselves and their flats. There is a resident Manager, an Assistant Manager and a visiting Nursing and Welfare Sister. For further information write to:

The Manager, Queen Alexandra's Court, St Mary's Road, Wimbledon SW19 7DE.



## REGIMENTAL GOODS

The following regimental goods are available to purchase. These can be obtained by writing to the Secretary, Major R.E.B. Morris, MBE, 38 Traps Lane, New Malden, Surrey KT3 4SA. Postage and packing is included in the price. Cheques or Postal Orders should be made payable to the Middlesex Regimental Association.

Blazer Badges	£ 7.00 each
Car Badges (good quality)	£10.00 each
Ice Buckets, miniature side drum with regimental emblazon	£23.00 each
Ties Regtl Old Pattern, Maroon & Old Gold	£ 5.50 each
Ties Regtl New Pattern	£ 4.00 each
Ties Officers' Club Silk	£12.50 each
Middlesex Regiment Cap Badges (improved quality)	£ 5.50 each
Middlesex Regiment Key Rings	£ 2.50 each
Old Comrades Lapel Badges, Old Pattern - The Diehards	£ 2.75 each
Wall Plaques, Middlesex Regiment	£17.50 each
Prints Drums and Fifes, unframed, large	£ 8.50 each
small	£ 4.50 each
Christmas Cards depicting:	
Steady the Drums and Fifes	.35 each
The Guardroom Scene	.35 each
Colonel Graham Egerton, 77th Foot Portsmouth 1854	.35 each

We are now in a position to supply the following - please allow 14 days for delivery:

Middlesex Regtl Blazer Button (Flat staybright with engraved Middlesex Badge)	
Sets of 6 large & 6 small	£22.00 set
Individual buttons large or small	£ 2.00 each
Middlesex Regimental Cuff Links	£ 7.50 per pair
Middlesex Regimental Cuff Links with tie grip	£10.50 set
Tie Grip only	£ 5.00 each
Middlesex Regiment Ladies Brooch	£ 4.75 each
Middlesex Tie Tack and Chain	£ 4.50 each

## MONTY'S HIGHLANDERS

### 51st (Highland) Division at War 1939 - 1945

Patrick Delaforce

*History of Monty's favourite division in France, the Middle East & NW Europe in WW2, with illustrations & maps.*

Publication date: October 1997 ISBN: 1-871085-40-3  
Specification: Hardback; 234 x 156mm; 192pp. c.40 illus. & 20 maps.  
Price: £18.95 (SPECIAL VETERANS' PRICE £13.50 INC. P&P - SIGNED COPY DIRECT FROM THE AUTHOR)

The 51st Highland Division was the most famous *infantry* division that fought with the British Army in WW2. Of them FM Montgomery spoke: "Of the many fine divisions that served under me in the Second World War, none were finer than the Highland Division. It was the only infantry division in the armies of the British Empire that accompanied me during the whole of the long march from Alamein to Berlin".

The reason is clear: after the 1940 disaster at St Valéry, the re-formed 51st were a superlative division, brilliantly inspired and led. The 'Highway Decorators' (after their famous HD cypher) fought with consummate success through North Africa and Tunisia and from Normandy into the heart of Germany. Blooded at Alamein - where they suffered over 2000 casualties - they pursued the Afrika Korps via Tripoli and Tunis fighting fierce battles at Homs, Medenine, Mareth line, Wadi Akarit and Enfidaville. They lost 1500 helping to liberate Sicily and there they were parted from their beloved 'Lang Tam', Maj Gen D.N. Wimberley, who had trained and led them so well for so long. Back to the UK for the second front, the Highlanders battled their way through Normandy bocage, break out to the Seine, triumphal re-occupation of St Valéry, taking of Le Havre, through Holland then the Ardennes and the Reichswald and were the first troops to cross the Rhine, fighting on to Bremen and Bremerhaven. In the eleven months fighting in NW Europe the Highlanders suffered more than 9000 casualties.

This is the eighth in Patrick Delaforce's now well-established and acclaimed series of WW2 divisional histories. High highly effective blend of historical narrative interwoven with personal experiences of participants bring the campaigns vividly to life.

## VETERANS' ORDER FORM

To order your copy of *Monty's Highlanders* at the special veterans' price of £13.50 including post & packing please fill in your name & address below and send the completed form with cheque or postal order to:

Patrick Delaforce, 2 Hamilton Road, Brighton BN1 5DL. Telephone: 01273 564372

Name & address -----

-----  
-----



# MONTY'S HIGHWINDERS

History of Monty's famous division in France, the Ardennes and NW Europe in 1944-45. With illustrations & maps. 128pp. £14.95. ISBN 0 951 085 40 3.

Publication date: October 1997  
 Paperback: 128pp. 234 x 158mm. ISBN 0 951 085 40 3.  
 Price: £14.95 (SPECIAL VETERANS PRICE £12.50 inc. P&P - PLEASE COPY DIRECT FROM THE AUTHOR)

The 31st Highland Division was the most famous British division that fought in the Second World War. It was the only British division to be awarded the battle honour 'The 31st Highland Division 1944-45' for its part in the Battle of the Bulge. It was also the only British division to be awarded the battle honour 'The 31st Highland Division 1944-45' for its part in the Battle of the Bulge.

The reason is clear: after the 1940 disaster at Dunkirk, the 31st Highland Division was the only British division to be awarded the battle honour 'The 31st Highland Division 1944-45' for its part in the Battle of the Bulge. It was also the only British division to be awarded the battle honour 'The 31st Highland Division 1944-45' for its part in the Battle of the Bulge.

This is the story of the 31st Highland Division's role in the Battle of the Bulge. It is a story of courage, sacrifice and heroism. It is a story that should be remembered and celebrated.

## VETERANS ORDER FORM

To order your copy of Monty's Highwinders at the special veterans price of £12.50 including post & packing please fill in your name & address below and send the completed form with cheque or postal order to:

Patrick Delaney, 2 Hamilton Road, Brighton BN1 5DL. Telephone 01273 584575

Name & address

D. Isom (Printers) Ltd., Stanley Road, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 5SJ

Tel: (01227) 363866 Fax: (01227) 740577