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Regimental Association Newsletter

Editorial

Once again many thanks for all contributions. Rigorous selection and pruning enables most to be used, but even so some delay in publishing is inevitable. This is of course a much healthier situation than having to write it all myself. So do not hold back!

Copy for the November issue should be sent to 50 Ashdene Road, Ashurst, Hants SO4 2DN by 30th September 1983.

President's Notes

When I was DAG BAOR the Americans took the decision to end conscription and as a result I had a number of discussions with the chief personnel officer of the United States forces in Germany about the consequences of setting up an all volunteer army. Of the many aspects we discussed the one which caught his imagination was our Regimental system.

He and his staff were intrigued to discover how this "old-fashioned" and apparently inflexible organisation had stood the test of time and after visiting several of our Regiments they were deeply impressed. While they hoped they might be able to follow our example in some way they kept on coming back to the problem that they lacked tradition.

What an elusive quality is tradition. So hard to gain and so difficult to use to good effect. Revered it can be a mill stone around the neck of an organisation, but given just the right amount of respect it can afford that indefinable touch of flair which others haven't got.

The Colours are an anachronism in a modern army if ever there was one, but try abolishing them! Yet how do you explain to an American officer the value of The Colours to an Infantry soldier of today? "Pristinae Virtutis Memor" – Remember your former valour – was one of the mottoes of The Queen's Royal Regiment. But why should our soldiers now serving in Northern Ireland and Germany be interested in, let alone inspired by, Battle Honours carried on The Colours commemorating actions before they were even born by men in Regiments which no longer exist?

I believe such traditions are of value only in so far as they have lessons for today. It was with this in mind that I thought how good it would be if those who were there could bring alive the battle honours won 40 years ago, as indeed some of our older members have been doing with their tales of the First World War in this newsletter. I was particularly pleased by the enthusiastic response of the Colonel of the Regiment and the Commanding Officers when I told them at a Regimental Committee Meeting of

our proposal to highlight the fortieth anniversary of Salerno. So I hope that the Salerno display in the museum and the stories which are told both in this issue of the Newsletter and at the reunion on 10th September will add a new dimension to Regimental tradition for those serving now in both our Regular and TA Battalions.

Comradeship is another vital ingredient in our Regimental system. While we are still serving most of us take this very much for granted, although when we are in a tight corner we really value being able to rely on our mates. But it is when we return to civilian life that we appreciate it is a quality quite unknown outside our own family and our own regiment. Why else do we have old comrades associations? Why else do we come back year after year to reunions to meet old friends? Who else can we talk to happily for hours about the times we had together 20, 30, 40, even 60 years ago? What other organisation cares what happens to us all those years after we have left it except our regiment? And the man who has done more than most to sustain our Regimental Association is Major John Reed who retires in June.

The Annual Regimental Service in Guildford Cathedral on Sunday 5th June will be the last event for which John Reed will be responsible. I hope we shall have a first class turn-out on that day to support him and to show our thanks for all his work since our two Regiments came together in 1959.

Regimental Association Cathedral Service 1983

The Annual Service will be held in Guildford Cathedral on Sunday 5 June 1983 commencing at 11.15 am. On this occasion the sermon will be preached by the Right Reverend Kenneth Evans MA, Bishop of Dorking.

The usual licensed bar will be in operation in the Cathedral Refectory Suite after the Service.

It is hoped that our Territorial Army and Cadet Battalions will support this occasion, particularly as 1983 is the 75th Anniversary of formation of the Territorial Army as well as the 40th Anniversary of landing at SALERNO by six Territorial Army battalions of the Regiment.

Dress: Lounge suit or uniform. Medals will be worn.

Benevolent Work of the Association – 1982

The number of cases in which grants were made was 121 and the total amount of money disbursed was £9,485.

In addition, the Association administered Army Benevolent Supplementary Allowance for 18 former members and widows totalling £2,038.

FORECAST OF REGIMENTAL AND QUEEN'S SURREYS ASSOCIATION EVENTS – 1983

Date	Place	Event	Detail
5 June	Guildford	Queen's Surreys Regimental Association Church Service	Guildford Cathedral 11.15 am
12 July	North Hants Golf Club	Queen's Surreys Golf Society Match v Royal Marines	Separately to Members
31 July	Bassingbourn, Herts	Queen's Regiment Grand Reunion	See separate insert
9 September	Clandon Park	Queen's Surreys Officers Club Ladies Salerno Luncheon	Separately to Members
10 September	Victory Club – London	Queen's Surreys Regimental Association Salerno 40th Anniversary Reunion	See separate insert. Replaces Annual Reunion normally held in November. Admission by ticket only.
24 September	Bassingbourn, Herts	Queen's Regiment Warrant Officers & Sergeants (Past & Present) Dinner	See separate notice in Newsletter
13 October	Richmond	Queen's Surreys Golf Society Autumn Meeting	Separately to Members
22 October	Clapham Junction	East Surrey Regiment Annual Reunion	From: Mr J.W. Bedford. See separate notice in Newsletter
13 November	Guildford, Kingston & Battersea	Remembrance Day Parades	Separately to Members

Bequest

The Queen's Royal Regiment Charitable Fund has received the sum of £10,407.91 from the estate of the late Mrs Elsie Christina DEAR in memory of her son, Captain Sydney George DEAR, who was killed in ITALY in 1943 whilst serving with the 1/5th Bn The Queen's Royal Regiment.

Museum Notes

Another busy winter has been completed, and Clandon Park and the Museum opened for this summer on 2nd April. The Working Party has effected more improvements and produced more interest, but the main effort has been directed to the Salerno 40th Anniversary display. Mrs Hill has devoted much energy to this and has sought out and coordinated an immense amount of information to produce something worthy of the occasion. Many memories have stirred and we are most grateful for all that has been done, and for the extra items and memoirs which will become part of the Museum's archives and will be preserved for the future.

The Museum Committee has already decided that for 1984 "Cassino-40 years On" will be featured, and elsewhere Mrs Hill has asked for the help of those of the 1st and 1/6th Battalions of the East Surrey Regiment who were there.

Sincere thanks to all those who have helped and remembered for the Salerno display.

J.W.S.

Regimental Museum Appeal

The Trustees of The Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment Museum thank the under-mentioned gentlemen for their generous donations which have been received since November 1982:

Mr. W. Geeves	Mr W.R. Turpin
Mr R.W. Moyle	Mr C.H. Brooks
Mr P.R. Alderman	Mr S.J. Wood
Mr S.J. Lewis-Wheatley	Maj Gen D.S. Gordon
	Maj L.E. Penn

The total amount received up to 28 March 1983 and since the Appeal was launched in May 1977 is £1384.55.

Cassino

It is proposed to mount a small exhibition in the Regimental Museum in 1984 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Battle of Cassino in which the 1st and 1/6th Battalions of The East Surrey Regiment took part.

The Museum Committee would be grateful for the loan of photographs, maps, or other items connected with the Cassino operations. War-time photographs of people would be appreciated, as it is hoped to produce a scrap book for the season.

Items should be brought or sent to The Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment Museum, Clandon Park, West Clandon, Surrey GU4 7RQ, either during the summer (not Mon or Fri) or before 1st November 1983.

From Here and There

Mr. T.R. Kienzle has recently attended a successful reunion of the "rats of Tobruk". Several ex Queensmen were there. He would be willing to organise a reunion of interested parties. His address is 8 Green Lane, Hounslow, Middx. TW4 6JF where enquiries should be sent.

Lt. Col. M.A. Lowry MBE, MC is to be congratulated on the award of MBE in the New Year Honours List. All friends and ex-colleagues will share his pleasure.

Pte Vincent Albert Sells G10343 – 10th Queen's – was wounded near St. Eloi on 16th May 1917. Although he died in 1931 his daughter Mrs. J. Wallington would like to hear from anybody who served with him. Her address is: 8 Holme Hill, Scarborough YO11 3LF.

L.C.A. Moxon writes "I would very much like to know whether a Soldier I first heard of in 1927/8 is still about, he was still around in 1961. He was almost a legend, but most legends have some basis in fact. The man was well known for being challenged by sentries, falling over guy ropes and for blundering about Barrack rooms in the dark. How was it he became so well known throughout the British Army? Did he ever exist? Did his fame, or

notoriety come about by an act of gallantry or through a Court Martial? Can any Reader throw any light on the problem? I refer, of course, to "???????? of the Warwicks". The only clue I can offer is he must have served subsequent to 1881, otherwise he would identify himself as "of the 6th".

I.A. Hardaker – lieutenant in 1st Battalion and Depot The East Surrey Regiment is reported as being a Canon and Rural Dean of Rochester.

News of the Associations

5th Queen's Old Members Association.

The Annual Reunion Dinner will take place on 7th May at The Sandfield Drill Hall, Guildford. We are hoping for a good attendance to mark the 40th anniversary of the Salerno Landing. As usual the association will welcome any Queens Royal Regt or Queens Regt. member who would care to join us for this function.

The Association will be at The Cathedral Service in June and look forward to meeting all our Old Comrades.

Twenty-five members attended the Armistice Service held at Holy Trinity Church, Guildford. During the service wreaths were laid by His Worship The Mayor of Guildford and Brigadier G.B. Curtis OBE MC. Following the service we joined the parade to the Memorial in The Castle Grounds, The Mayor and Councillors taking the salute in the High Street. Afterwards our contingent was joined by General Ling, Lt/Col F. Herd (Chairman) and Colonel Peasey for a social drink.

The Reunion Dinner of "C" Coy saw some forty odd members and guests attending at the Cricket Pavilion, Cranleigh in October. Mr. Les May, Chairman, welcomed The President, Lady Mullens and her son Michael, Colonel Hugh Merriman and Major Pat Jobson. The secretary, Mr. Reg. Hubbard, said in his speech that it was getting more difficult for some of the members to attend due either to age or illness, but he hoped the Dinner would continue for many more years to come. As a matter of interest, a chair that was presented to this section in memory of the late Captain Berdoe-Wilkinson who was killed in the Desert campaign, is now placed in the Queen's Chapel at Guildford Cathedral for safe keeping.

All particulars concerning The 5th Queens R. Regt Old Members Association can be received from the Secretary, Doug Mitchell, 3 Littlefield Way, Fairlands, Guildford, Surrey.

The Queen's (Bermondsey) Regimental Association

Since the last Newsletter we have held a very successful Christmas Social thanks largely to the assistance rendered by the Committee of the Deptford branch of the Royal British Legion.

A good turnout on Remembrance Sunday, followed by the usual service at the Parish Church. Then thanks to help from the Royal Marines Reserve (City of London), the present tenants of the Drill Hall, Jamaica Road the afternoon passed all too quickly.

Because of the 40th Anniversary of the Battle of Salerno the Reunion Dinner/Dance was held on the 26th February and 91 people sat down to dinner and enjoyed themselves.

We are now looking forward to receiving our Belgian friends in May, busy finalising arrangements and then it will be time for the Regimental Reunion at Bassingbourn.

Membership just about holding-up but looking for more people to coax into the Association.

The Queen's (Southwark) Regimental Association

A very happy reunion dinner was held in the Gascoigne Room at the Union Jack Club on Saturday 5 March 1983. 75 members attended with Lt Col W.D. Griffiths DSO, MC in the chair. Major General D.S. Gordon CB, CBE, DSO, gave an excellent speech and recalled some of the highlights of his most successful period of command. He said there were many anxious episodes particularly the final entry into Tunis in May 1943 when the 1/7 Bn The Queens Royal Regiment were the first infantry to secure vital points leading to the surrender. He mentioned that "C" Company lost wireless communication with Bn HQ, but little did he know at the time that everyone in "C" Coy was holding their breath as they crept around enemy positions to get to their objectives!

Major Ronnie Fairbairn TD and bar, a pre-war officer of the 1/7th Queens was the guest of honour. He was badly wounded, whilst leading his "D" company over the "January" minefield, when the 1/7th Queens opened the battle of Alamein (and the CO, 2 i/c, Adj and all Company Commanders were killed or wounded). He recalled how grateful he was to Cpl J. MacDonald MM, who was in charge of the stretcher bearer team, for attending his wounds and saving his life and was glad to have the opportunity of thanking him publicly. Ronnie spent over a year in hospital in Palestine but recovered and has borne his disability cheerfully. He has been a most capable Hon Treasurer of the Association for the past 15 years. Grateful thanks were given to Major John Tamplin our very hard working Hon Secretary for organising the dinner.

Veteran Company

1. The Cassino Day Reunion will be held on Saturday 7th May 1983 at 7.30 p.m. at the Orchard Room of the 221 Field Ambulance RAMC (V) Portsmouth Road, Kingston-Upon-Thames, Surrey. Entry to the building will be via The Surbiton Road Entrance. Ladies will be welcome.
2. Forthcoming events for 1983 are:-
Sunday 13th November 1983 – Remembrance Parades: Details
 - a. 10.30 a.m. outside Bentalls, Wood Street, Kingston-upon-Thames and afterwards at the Orchard Room Bar, The Training Centre, Portsmouth Road.
 - b. 10.45 a.m. outside Battersea Parish Church.

East Surrey Regiment Reunion

The Annual East Surrey Regiment Reunion will again be held at The Drill Hall, Clapham Junction, London SW (opposite Clapham Junction Main Line Station – British Rail). The date is Saturday 22 October 1983 and details including time and cost of tickets may be obtained from Mr J.W. Bedford, 5B Elm Grove, Wimbledon, London SW19 4HE (Telephone: 01-946 8573)

56th (London) Division Officers Reunion Dinner Club

This club exists to hold a dinner at the Army and Navy Club, Pall Mall, London on the last Friday in October each year for officers who served in the war-time division. The next dinner will be held on 28th October 1983, and new members will be warmly welcomed.

Application should be made to Major A.W.

Gadsdown, 23 Burghley Avenue, New Malden, Surrey KT 3 4SW.

The Queen's Regiment

All our regular battalions are now serving away from these shores: the 1st Bn are in Omagh and the 2nd in Londonderry, both on a 2-year 'Resident' tour. The 3rd Bn remains in Fallingbostel until late 1985.

Changes in Command now 'in the clear' are: 2nd Bn – Lt Col M.R.I. Constantine (in July 83); and 3rd Bn – Lt Col D.A. Beveridge MBE (in Feb 84). Lt-Col D.H.A. Shephard took over 5th (V) Bn in April.

The TA is being re-organised yet again and this is bound to affect our 5th and 6th/7th Bns; more of this later when we know the details.

The Colonel of the Regiment visited Denmark in April when he had an audience with HM Queen Margrethe.

In May, Col John Shipster retired as Regimental Secretary and we welcomed Col John Francis in his place; in the following month, Maj John Reed leaves us, too, on retirement, after 24 years as an RO. (The longest serving 're-tread' in the MOD!). As readers will know, Lt-Col Les Wilson is his successor.

The Grand Reunion of Past and Present will be on Sun 31 July and the WOs & Sgts Annual Dinner on Sat 24 Sept – both functions at Queen's Division Depot, Bassingbourn (Nr Royston).

The Glorious First of June Cricket Match against HMS Excellent is also taking place at Bassingbourn (Sat 4 June) since all our battalions are overseas.

Grand Reunion 1983

Bassingbourn Barracks, Bassingbourn

– Sunday 31 July

11.00: Gates Open.

12.00: Drumhead Service

(Old Comrades participating should arrive by 11.30).

followed by:-

Various Static Displays and Events

Band Concert (Queens Band TA)

Display of Silver and Pictures

V.C. Display

Sale of Regimentalia

12.30: Bars Open.

NAAFI Refreshments on Sale

Lunch Boxes available on Prepayment (details later)

16.30: Beating of Retreat by Queens Division Junior School of Music and Queens Division Junior Drummers

17.00: Dispersal

Bassingbourn is easy to reach from London by M11 (only 41 miles). There is also an excellent train service from London.

The Queen's Regiment

Warrant Officers and Sergeants Past and Present

Dinner 1983

1. The Third WOs and Sgts (Past and Present) Dinner will be held this year on Saturday 24 September 1983 at Depot The Queen's Division, Bassingbourn Barracks, Royston, Herts SG8 5LX. (Telephone: Bassingbourn (0763) 42271 Ext 300).

2. The dinner is open to all serving and retired WOs

and SNCOs of The Queen's Regiment and former Regiments of The Queen's Regiment.

3. Maximum seating capacity at the Depot is 250, and sleeping accommodation for up to 100 would be available. It is therefore advisable to book now through WOII M R ROWNEY at the address given in para 1. Any questions should also be addressed to Mr ROWNEY.

4. The cost of the dinner including wine will be £7.50, and tickets will be issued on receipt of payment, together with detail of timings. If seats are unavailable, money will be returned to the applicant immediately. Cheques should be made payable to "Central Bank Depot Queen's Division".

5. Dress will be lounge suit, and Members of former Regiments attending are earnestly encouraged to wear the regimental ties of their former regiments.

New Regimental Secretary For The Queen's Regiment

On 13 May 1983 Colonel John Francis relieves Colonel John Shipster as Regimental Secretary on the latter's retirement.

John Wilfred Francis is well-known to many of our Association Members, being a member himself. He started his Army career in 1953 when he was commissioned to The East Surrey Regiment and posted to the 1st Battalion of that Regiment in Egypt where he joined 'B' Company commanded by Major John Reed. He later served with 42 Commando, Royal Marines, and in 1st Bn The Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment. From 1962 – 1964 he was Adjutant of 4th Bn The Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment (TA) from whence he went to Staff College, and then to become DAAG and later AAG HQ Zambia Army. Returning to 1 Queen's Surreys just before that unit became 1 QUEENS, he later served on the staff of HQ Queen's Division, and was CO of 3 QUEENS from 1974 – 1977. After a tour in the Ministry of Defence as Assistant Military Secretary (MSI) he was posted as Defence Attaché in Jakarta and this was his last appointment before retiring from the Army in April 1983. He lives with his wife Penny in Canterbury. We wish him all success in his new appointment.

The Battle of Salerno: 9th-19th September 1943 A Platoon Commander's Memories

The Approach

I remember standing on the deck of a LCI when a sailor handed me out a fried bacon and egg sandwich from the galley. The night was very dark and very still and the future wholly unknown. I was a platoon commander in 2/6th Queen's, the follow-up battalion in one of the assault brigades closing up to the Salerno beaches.

I was alone with my thoughts while the men were getting what rest they could below decks. The earlier euphoria had been quickly dispelled when the Italian surrender broadcast throughout the invasion fleet in the evening had been followed up by German air attacks. So "they" were going to be there even if the Italians had quit.

Suddenly the naval bombardment began and apprehension gave way to exhilaration as I watched the gun flashes from the ships and the incredible spectacle of the rocket salvos being fired from the rocket landing craft.

Just as suddenly it all stopped and gazing ahead into the darkness I could soon see small arms tracer. The leading battalions must be ashore. Then marker lights of the Beach Group appeared and quietly, almost imperceptibly, our landing craft moved towards them.

The men were assembling on deck quietly carrying

out last minute checks on arms and equipment. "Do you think this looks about right, Charles?" shouted the captain of our neighbouring LCI through his megaphone. "Oh I reckon so", and with that reassuring reply from our skipper we lurched forward at speed. Last minute panic! We were about to be forced to leave what at that moment seemed to be the supreme safety and comfort of our landing craft and decanted on the beach.

But the Navy did us proud – a dry landing and I remember how important that seemed. But perhaps it meant more to me than most as I was landing in PT shoes as desert sores made boots too uncomfortable to wear. just to complete the picture of the rugged fighting soldier, I also had to carry my pistol in my left hand because my right hand was full of poison from desert sores. Little did the Germans know what they were up against!

The Advance

At first light we were in an assembly area beyond the beach. Foot-hills and beyond them mountain peaks appeared in the early morning light, looking down on the flat coastal strip immediately ahead of us giving excellent observation over the whole beach-head. But for the moment we had good cover among the vines and how odd it seemed after months living in the desert.

2/6th Queen's were to advance to secure the buildings on the left-hand side of Montecorveno Airfield while 2/5th worked their way forward on the other side of the airfield. I am sure none of us who were there will ever forget the remarkable spectacle of German aircrew running from the buildings to their aircraft and trying to take off as we all fired at them while we moved forward up the road. Excitement was running high especially when a troop of The Greys joined us and started shooting at the planes with the guns of their Shermans.

The fun was short-lived. How many times in the months ahead were relations to be strained between the infantry and tanks just as now when The Greys attracted the enemy's attentions? We were caught in the open astride the road as German artillery got the range of the tanks and one of them was brewed up by an 88.

Later in the day D Company was ordered to clear the airfield buildings and it was while my platoon was working through them that, to our horror, a Spitfire came in to land. As he came to a halt on the runway he got a direct hit from a German 88 on the far side of the airfield. The pilot jumped clear as the plane was set ablaze and we fired tracer in the air from our Brens to guide him. Miraculously he ran into my platoon area unharmed.

Then I found a little Fiat which I thought I might "liberate". As I fiddled with the knobs trying to see how to start it I accidentally switched on the head-lights and this piece of folly was greeted by a burst of Spandau fire from across the runway.

In the evening we moved forward again to the line of the railway and the lateral road from Eboli to Salerno. This was the final objective given to the battalion for the first day and we had made it. A penetration of nearly 3 miles with, so far as I can recall, the loss of only one wounded from my platoon. We felt well satisfied and were I am sure quite ignorant about the difficulties in which some of the less fortunate had found themselves.

Hill 210

On 11 September B and D Cosys were ordered to secure Hill 210, a commanding feature some 2 miles north of Battipaglia where there was still very heavy fighting. This move effectively turned the enemy's flank and put us in a salient occupying the only high ground so far captured and providing good observation over the battle area. It was therefore surprising that we gained this vital ground without opposition.

I still remember so much of our life on that hill which was to be our home for the next 8 days. Two of my sections were on the forward slope occupying sangars concealed by bushes, but with good fields of fire. The third section and my HQ were astride the ridge looking down to the other sections and with wonderful observation over the low ground below us.

Once it was known we were on this feature we got a good deal of attention from German artillery and understandably our own gunners soon set up OPs in my area which it seemed provided them with the only good observation in the entire bridge-head. But at least we got some good close-in DF tasks laid on in exchange for our hospitality including, I seem to remember, one on our own position just in case!

It must have been late afternoon on the second day up there, because we were preparing the evening meal, when heavy small arms fire started on the forward slope. I could hear the rapid fire of my forward sections interspersed with Spandau and Smeisser fire, then grenades exploding, and soon we could see Germans working their way around our flank and over the crest. It all happened so suddenly that the FOO parties only had time to pull back with their heavy radios just down the reverse slope where we organised a bit of quick all-round defence and held firm.

The situation was very confused and 40 years on my own memories are certainly confused. Not only had the Germans infiltrated our positions, but they had got around our left flank and were moving up the valley behind us. I recall gathering up some men – where they came from I've no idea – and together with the remainder of my own platoon we carried out a sweep over the crest and down the forward slope. What does remain vivid in my mind is the sight of men of my forward sections still in their sangars, dead, with their weapons in their hands and the German dead scattered about in front of them.

Major Peet commanding B Company on my right had counter-attacked also and we were firmly in possession of 210 once again.

As a platoon commander I don't think I had any thoughts of possible disaster, although probing attacks continued all around, until one day listening to the BBC news on one of the gunner radios we heard that the Royal Navy was standing by to evacuate the British forces from the bridgehead! That did shake us, but by this time I had a forward bombardment officer from the Royal Navy in my platoon area and morale was soon restored because I, a 2/Lt, was given the chance to shoot the guns of HMS Warspite at some enemy tanks we had spotted. The sound of 16 inch shells whooshing over and the terrific crump as they burst ahead of us was a marvellous thrill. "That'll teach the bastards!" Evacuation indeed.

As time went by the need for constant alertness coupled with increasing exhaustion became the most difficult battle facing the companies on 210. After stand-down and breakfast I can remember lying in the hot sun and the beautiful feeling of waking from deep sleep some hours later with sun hotter still shining down from a cloudless sky. By day it was observation with minimum numbers "on", as any movement on the forward slopes immediately brought down fire. But we had 50% manning all through the night with listening posts and standing patrols out, and my platoon sergeant and I spent all the hours of darkness walking around talking to the chaps on the forward slope to keep them awake.

Relief in the line

By 19 September we had won through and after 10 long days and nights relief was at hand from 131 Queen's Brigade.

A relief in the line is always reckoned to be one of the more difficult operations, but I don't remember anything difficult about this. As 1/6 Queen's took over from 2/6 Queen's all I can remember is: "Hello my old mate". "What's been keeping you then?". "Well if it's not old Dusty Miller". "Hello Pop - Good to see you Son", as brother met brother, father met son, and all the old muckers from Bermondsey got together on a hill in Italy 1000 miles from home after, what turned out to be, an historic battle which put the Regiment back on the mainland of Europe three years after they had left through Dunkirk.

G.B.C.

Salerno – A Battalion Commander's Memories – 169 Brigade

After the Germans surrendered at TUNIS, 2/6 QUEENS had the responsibility of guarding four large cages of prisoners and later moved back to TRIPOLI where we camped in the sand dunes a few miles outside the town and started training for our next operation. After a time I was given a set of aerial photographs for a landing in an area near the foot of ITALY codenamed "BUTTRESS", but shortly after, this was cancelled as SALERNO, codenamed "AVALANCHE" had finally been decided upon for the landing.

The plan was for a British Corps to land on the left and an American Corps on the right. In the British sector 46 Division was to carry out the assault on the left with 56 (London) Division to their right, with 169 (Queen's) Brigade landing between the rivers ASA and TUSCIANO and 167 Brigade on our right. 201 Independent Guards Brigade was to be the follow up formation of the Division as 168 Brigade had not yet rejoined us from the SICILY operations. 7 Armoured Division with 131 (Queen's) Brigade was in Corps Reserve.

Loading tables and their priorities had to be worked out according to the availability of ships; even then there had to be a rethink when one of the store ships blew up. A few days before we embarked we received a small issue of PIATs, the latest Infantry anti-tank weapon and this we quickly tried out to see how it worked and what happened. It seemed to be very effective, even occasionally on the firer from blow backs!

On 5th September the battalion boarded our SLCIs (HQ and 1 per coy.) which were really only intended for operations not exceeding 24 hours, whereas we were to be on board for 4/5 days. Conditions on board were very cramped with the small amount of deck space littered with kit, stores, equipment and men. I believe my HQ ship's aft hold had over 20 officers in it and inevitably there were problems of feeding with a small ship's galley and also sanitation. The Navy were, as always, most helpful and everyone cheerfully put up with the discomfort. To start with the weather was roughish and I am not quite sure why but my LCI bumped a ship in front and holed the store in our bows, which housed our vital commodity of tea and sugar. Again with the help of the Navy and a few signatures these commodities were made available to us from their stocks. The weather improved and the troops were then briefed on board each ship as to what the operation was all about. We reached SICILY on 7th September and lay off the beach for a few hours leaving during the afternoon for our last leg to SALERNO. There were a few ships about and our small group of five ships sailed steadily on, and on the 8th the number of ships assembling was continually increasing as they appeared on the horizon from various directions. I approached Father Scully who kindly held a Church Service for us. Later on a few enemy aircraft came over and livened up

proceedings by dropping bombs; no hits, and in return were given a hot reception from all ships although in most cases the aircraft were out of range of our weapons. I spent a certain amount of time on the bridge with the Captain, Sub-Lieut Stevens, who was in charge of our flotilla of five ships.

In the early evening the buzz suddenly went round that the Italians had surrendered and immediately a lot of cautious and inevitably optimistic discussion took place. We knew the Germans were defending and I cannot remember ever being told that there were any Italians about and I personally never saw any. I told everybody that we must stick to our plans and ignore any wishful thinking as the Germans had little alternative but to fight.

The assault battalions with 2/7 QUEENS on the left and 2/5 QUEENS on the right were due to land at 0330 hours on 9th September, and 2/6 QUEENS, the follow-up battalion, was due to touch down at 0430 hours. Most people tried to get a short nap and then after a hot meal we started to get ourselves organised to land and I went to the bridge and my impression was that it was quite a dark night. It was an extraordinary feeling; no lights, hardly any sound and yet there were many ships around gradually converging on the Bay. Some seven hundred ships and craft were involved in "AVALANCHE" and its support. We could see the ships either side of us and were anxious not to lose touch with ships on the flanks of our group.

As 0330 hours approached and whilst we were several miles out, all hell was let loose as the rocket ships fired their salvos to soften up the defences. On the far horizon we could see the continuous flashes and hear the rumble of the battle commencing, yet where we were it was unbelievably quiet and it was difficult to realise that in an hour's time we would be in the middle of all the hurly-burly ahead. Suddenly we spotted a small red light ahead and Sub-Lieut Stevens said this was the check point, and appeared to be a small launch type of naval craft. A voice by loud hailer asked for our serial numbers, which were given and the voice then informed us that the assault battalions were ashore; and all was well and wished us luck and we quietly departed into the dark on our run in.

The final hurdle was to hit our beach – "AMBER", roughly in the right place and we hoped the Beachmaster had got the lights up all right. There appeared to be a lot of activity and a number of lights marking out the beach area as we hit "AMBER" Beach safely about 0430 hours on the right of our sector. Two LCIs had beached some way to our left, so the troops had to make their way along the beach. I quickly disembarked without getting my feet wet but this was too good to last as some uncleared mines were set off, so we all hastily got into the sea and the few casualties were put back on the LCIs.

While the battalion was being marshalled I contacted the Beachmaster who gave me the form. At this early stage there appeared to be only one taped clear lane which seemed to have a lot of people sitting about in it awaiting orders and reminded me of people waiting to go through a turnstile! No-one seemed to be sure what they were doing and I was anxious to get the battalion off the beach, so I pushed through and could find no reason for the hold-up; collected the battalion and moved into our Assembly Area which was in a large tobacco field. While they were sorting themselves out I went forward to contact Colonel Whitfield of 2/5 QUEENS whom I was told was at a nearby bridge over the River TUSCIANO. So I plodded up the river, found him quickly and easily, and he gave me what information he had at this stage. He was moving up the right side of MONTE CORVINO airfield to his objective and I returned to the battalion which was ready to move off. Our objective was the left side of the airfield where the hangars were at the top end, and on up to cut the

main lateral road and rail from BATTIPAGLIA to SALERNO, and to do this we had first to move some way to our left in order to get on to our correct axis.

C Coy under Major Dallas led off, met and dealt with a strong enemy post in a house and pressed on, and as we moved up our axis road we were surprised to see Germans dashing out of buildings and starting up the odd aircraft, one or two of which got off, but I could not imagine why the Germans had not removed any serviceable machines much earlier. There was a battle going on in 2/5 QUEENS area on the right of the airfield and also obviously beyond them. About this time a troop of Scots Greys tanks joined us so we had some anti-tank protection. As they could see odd vehicles and tanks on the far side of the airfield moving about in the trees and bushes they were anxious to engage them, but hard as we tried we could not be sure whose they were even with glasses as we knew the situation was very confused in that area. This was unfortunate as we were having trouble from 88's and small arms from the far side of the airfield which were causing us casualties. Eventually an 88 brewed up one of the Greys' tanks and Signalman Daley, an Irish rugger international, who manned the battalion/brigade set, pulled out one of the crew and rescued his set despite exploding ammunition. By now our battalion anti-tank guns had caught up with us and went out to companies, but unfortunately we had lost Sgt Puckett, his crew and gun, when it sank leaving their ship. The enemy also had a dog-leg piece of our main axis road absolutely taped and shot up anything that moved on it regardless as to what it was. Ambulances, which they could not fail to see were hit and we could not evacuate some of the wounded. My Tactical Headquarters was now located in a large bomb crater on the left side of the road. Soon after midday we reached our objectives so I went to visit companies and took a runner and walked up a large concrete ditch alongside the road as the area was very open, when there was a loud bang and I turned round to find my runner had been hit by a lump of shrapnel. I patched him up and told him I would pick him up on my way back, but on my return I found he had gone back under his own steam. I saw Major Peet and his B Coy which had taken up positions around the farm and road junction at the far end of the airfield so cutting the main lateral road as a few German DRs, vehicles and tanks found to their cost when they met Sgt Murray and his anti-tank gun crew covering the road. A Coy on his left had reached its objective, a bridge on the lateral road over the River ASA.

It was extremely difficult to know what was happening, but we knew 2/5 QUEENS had had heavy fighting and casualties. 2/7 QUEENS had got into the hills on our left and 46 Division further to our left was having difficulty in places in clearing the beach area. The penetration by us and 2/7 QUEENS to a depth of two to three miles was important provided we did not get cut off as there was a considerable gap between us and our forces on our right. That night I pulled B Coy back into a tighter battalion area as they were rather out on a limb, and told them they had to re-occupy the road junction position early next morning, which they did. We had a quiet night except for mosquitos, and there were plenty of grapes and tomatoes to supplement the rations.

Next morning the main battle was taking place away on our right in the Tobacco Factory and BATTIPAGLIA areas. A cruiser, HMS Mauritius, was allocated to us to give fire support and we had a Naval Forward Observation Officer with us, but it was very difficult to see or find any suitable targets, so I gave him a harassing task of the line of communication road to the Tobacco Factory where 201 Guards Independent Brigade's objective was to complete the capture of the airfield, which they did and took up positions south of the lateral railway, and had a tough time

trying to clear the Tobacco Factory.

A Spitfire started circling with a view to landing on the airfield, which was by no means in our hands, so the signallers tried to warn off the pilot, but he came in from the northern end of the airfield, rolled to a halt, and as he was getting out, in no apparent hurry, the plane was hit by an 88 and became a ball of fire. Out of the inferno came a figure running like mad, and D Coy by the hangars on the right of the road got him in safely and unscratched. Apparently his arrester hook would not function, so after sharing our rations we passed him back. After the war I met a police officer at CRAWLEY with the Italy Star and it turned out he remembered this episode as he had been on the same carrier as this fellow, who was unfortunately killed a few days later. Shortly after the Spitfire, an American Mitchell bomber also landed despite efforts to warn him off, and the aircraft was blown up before it had stopped.

The afternoon of the 10th September looked tricky when the Intelligence Officer, Captain Taylor, suddenly drew my attention to some tanks right at the south end of the airfield way behind our area. We watched them carefully with glasses and found they were German tanks trying to get over the wadis to the beach. We had little serious fighting that day, so on the 11th September I moved B and D Coys on to a commanding feature, Pt. 210, some two miles beyond the lateral road and also C Coy and my Tactical Headquarters and bren-carriers up to the road junction area vacated by B Coy. There was still this very wide gap between our right and the Tobacco Factory area where heavy fighting was still going on and if the Germans had any reserves it could have been possible to push them through this gap. Division decided to close it by putting 210 Field Squadron RE to hold it with borrowed 17 pdr anti-tank guns but no move in this direction was made by the enemy.

B and D Coys set off for Pt. 210 and later I followed with Colonel Spencer, CO of our excellent 113 Field Regiment, and had a look round, allocated areas, had a short discussion about Defensive Fire tasks, and set off back. The mortars arrived soon after and the activity on this feature had not gone unnoticed by the enemy who heavily shelled the area, which caused some casualties in B Coy as it was not possible to dig in, so cover had to be obtained by building stone sangars. By now 113 Field Regiment had two OPs on the hill.

12th September in our sector was quiet but during the afternoon I noticed some smoke being used on Pt. 210, so I at once contacted both companies and warned them to watch out. Later I went back to see Colonel Spencer, whose gun lines had moved up quite close and as I arrived a battle started on Pt. 210. Colonel Spencer had just contacted my Tactical Headquarters and spoke to the Intelligence Officer, Captain Taylor, who confirmed what DF task was to be fired. Shortly after Major Pincombe came on the air and asked for it to be stopped and as I was at the gun lines this was done at once. I returned to my Tactical Headquarters post-haste to find some men returning from Pt. 210 and luckily one platoon arrived almost complete, so I spoke to B and D Coys and told them that I was sending up reinforcements and got hold of Lieut Ridings, a tough Yorkshireman, who commanded the Anti-Tank Platoon, and put him in command of this platoon and sent them back on carriers. The forward platoon of D Coy on the feature, commanded by 2/Lieut Curtis, stood firm, having suffered fairly heavy casualties and fought back hard although the enemy had penetrated the area. Major Peet, having already been wounded once and returned to the battalion, swiftly appreciated the situation, informed D Coy that he was going to counter-attack the position and marshalled his HQ personnel and any odd man he could find, and restored the situation, and

was again wounded. Major Peet and 2/Lieut Curtis were awarded Military Crosses. Pte Fido, a medical orderly, and Pte Bassett of B Coy, were awarded Military Medals. On walking the area next day, we decided it must have been a strong Fighting Patrol which had nearly had us off. They had cleverly worked a Spandau team, who were killed, to the rear of the position under cover of the afternoon smoke and obtained considerable surprise when they put in their attack on D Coy supported by artillery fire.

Next morning, 13th September, I decided that as the Germans had reacted to our move forward, to hold Pt. 210 in force, so moved A and C Coys on to the forward slope of some high ground to the rear of Pt. 210 itself. No digging in was possible and again cover had to be provided by building stone sangars, and no movement was allowed on the forward slope by day.

On 14th September Colonel Block of 2/7 QUEENS came and saw me as he wanted some fire support for an attack in the FAIANO area for one hour, and the excellent Cheshire Regiment Machine Gun Platoon provided this. Fighting was still taking place away to our right, so we discussed the possibility of suggesting a plan to Brigade for an attack by 2/6 QUEENS and 2/7 QUEENS across the enemy's line of communications to BATTIPAGLIA and the Tobacco Factory as it might well pay dividends when a box of our bombers came over, and to our horror, dropped their load of bombs on 2/7 QUEENS area at FAIANO. Colonel Block immediately dashed off to see what damage had been caused and luckily found the only casualty was a civilian who had suffered a heart attack.

From now on little action took place though away to our right quite heavy shelling and firing took place spasmodically. We patrolled by night from Pt. 210 hoping to blow up some enemy transport using the line of communication road but had no success.

On 19th September SALERNO ended when our Brigade was relieved by the Queen's Brigade of 7 Armoured Division with 1/6 QUEENS taking over from my battalion.

NOTE OF INTEREST

The approximate total casualties for the SALERNO operations for the period 9th – 16th September 1943 were:-

American: 3000
British: 5000
German: 3000

J.B.H.K.

"AVALANCHE" And After.

Prologue

Forty years is a long time in any man's life and memories can fade, as can friendships, unless nurtured.

In writing this article I was greatly encouraged by the many old friends I met at the 6th Queen's dinner on 26th February 1983.

Those present represented a wonderful cross-section of 1/6 Queens in 1943 and, together with those who were unable to attend but sent news of themselves, there were no fewer than four Company Commanders and two Company Sergeant-Majors who were at Salerno. A welcome message was also received from our much loved Chaplain of those days, the Reverend J.E. Devine, or Father Jack as he was known to all, now a Canon of the Roman Catholic Church and still very much in surplice.

There too, very much in person, was our evergreen Medical Officer of those days, Jimmy Pretsell, who

served with the Battalion from the Desert to the end of the war.

Tunis to the Clyde

During the final stages of the Battle of El Alamein 131 Inf Bde was detached from 44th Division to form the Lorried Infantry Brigade of 7th Armoured Division, with whom it fought throughout the remainder of the Desert Campaign, culminating in the capture of Tunis.

After Tunis, 7th Armoured Division moved back through Tripoli to Homs where 1/6 Queens bivouaced between the palm groves and the sea – to the east of the superb Roman amphitheatre Leptis Magna.

The months of June, July and August were busy with the emphasis on training for warfare in close hilly country and amphibious landings. There was opportunity, too, to enjoy the superb bathing from the limitless sandy beaches. Amongst the more pleasant memories of the summer of 1943 was a very happy visit to 2/5, 2/6 and 2/7 Queens in their camp in the sand dunes a few miles from Tripoli.

It was during this time that the Divisional Commander, Major-General Erskine, confirmed that the Brigade was now an integral part of 7th Armoured Division. With this news and the emphasis on training all ranks became increasingly aware that the victory in North Africa was only a beginning and that much hard work and hard fighting lay ahead. Our somewhat idyllic sojourn by the sea ended in early September with a move to a dust-blown and mosquito-ridden embarkation area near Tripoli while vehicles were waterproofed.

7th Armoured Division, the X Corps Reserve for Operation "Avalanche" was to land at Salerno in the wake of 46th and 56th Divisions which were to carry out the assault. General Erskine appreciated that the situation in the bridgehead might well be fairly sticky and decided that 131 Lorried Infantry Brigade Group consisting of 1/5 and 1/6 Queens, 5 Royal Tanks, 3RHA and a Troop RE should land ahead of 23 Armoured Brigade Group which included 1/7 Queens. Shortage of shipping and the long seven day turn-round between Tripoli and Salerno meant that the Allied build-up would necessarily be slow and it was not until 13 September that we left Tripoli – about a week after the Assault Divisions had sailed. By the time our leading rifle companies had landed on the morning of 17 September it was clear that 46th and 56th Divisions had been engaged in some heavy fighting, that the bridgehead was very thinly held and that the entire beachhead was crammed to overflowing with vehicles and equipment wedged in around the gun lines of the artillery of the two divisions and X Corps! Such a situation was possible only due to the measure of air superiority achieved by the Allied Air Forces.

Due to the loading of our transport and support weapons in follow-up ships, it took a while to collect the Battalion together – in fact, before Support Company had been completely mustered, 1/6 Queens was ordered to relieve 2/4 Hampshires to the west of Battipaglia by night; and two days later, on 19th September, the Battalion relieved 2/6 Queens, on their hard won objective – Hill 210!

On the following day, 1/7 Queens completed their disembarkation with 23 Armoured Brigade and preparatory moves started for the break-out into the Naples Plain by 7th Armoured Division through the Vietri Gap which was being cleared by 46th Division. However, due to the stubborn resistance of the 2nd Hermann Goering and 15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions, whom we had encountered in Africa, it was not until the afternoon of 27th September that it became clear that the moment was near. During that night, 7th Armoured Division, in the

absence of any area in which to concentrate, lined up at forty vehicles to the mile alongside 55 miles of interconnecting tracks and roadways.

The country immediately to the north-west was rough and mountainous and beyond this stretched out the Plain densely covered with orchards of thick foliage in which nestled a random pattern of villages. With the exception of Route 18, the main highway to Naples, the roads were few and narrow. 131 Brigade was therefore to lead 7th Armoured Division with, on its right, 169 Brigade leading 56th Division.

Starting at dawn on 28th September, 1/7 Queens Group advanced through the leading troops of 46th Division and quickly seized the dominating ground overlooking Nocera. Meantime, in the presence of the Brigade Commander, Brigadier L.G. Whistler of the Royal Sussex Regiment, I had enjoyed a grand-stand view from the flat roof of a cottage at the top of the pass. It was a lovely sunny morning and the fruit of a giant fig tree overhanging the cottage provided delicious and welcome refreshment.

As soon as 1/7 Queens were firmly established the Brigade Commander gave me the nod and 1/6 Queens Group which included a squadron of 5 Royal Tanks, "M" Battery 3 RHA, a Battery of 260 Anti-tank Regiment and RE Recce Party, advanced down the pass astride Route 18 with Scafati and its important bridge over the R. Sarno as our first objective.

For the first few miles opposition was slight and fragmented. "A" Company, the Advanced Guard, made good speed to the outskirts of Scafati, when it quickly became apparent that the town was strongly held. Major W.L. Johnson at once diverted one of his platoons through some side streets to the right of the main axis towards the river where they found an unguarded foot-bridge. The sudden and surprise arrival of British soldiers on the north side of the river so unnerved the Hermann Goering Panzer Grenadiers forming the bridge guard and demolition party on the main bridge that the hand already resting on the demolition switch failed to respond. The bridge was captured intact and the charges safely removed after the guard had been killed or taken prisoner.

The remainder of the day saw fierce fighting in the streets of Scafati as the Germans counter-attacked repeatedly in desperate efforts to recapture the bridge. Throughout these battles, "M" Battery under Major W.L.P. Fisher gave splendid and devastating support. All counter-attacks were repulsed and during the night patrols established the enemy was withdrawing.

Thereafter, throughout October and early November 1/6 Queens played its part in the advance northwards, across the Naples Plain-initially under the shadow of Mount Vesuvius whose red glow from the summit provided a useful navigation aid at night. Our axis was Ottaviano-Aversa - S. Maria La Fossa to the R. Volturno and then by San Andrea and Mondragone to the Massico feature overlooking the R. Garigliano.

After being relieved on the Massico feature, the Battalion concentrated at Mondragone when, on 5th November, we were given the dramatic news that 7th Armoured Division had been transferred to the "Imperial Strategic Reserve" and was to return to England to take part in the invasion of North-West Europe.

Accordingly, on 16th November, having handed over our vehicles, equipment and stores to the newly arrived 5th Canadian Armoured Division, we were driven south to the beautiful Sorrento Peninsular to billets in Vico Equense.

The next few weeks, which were filled with a variety of activities including an amphibious exercise designed to mislead the enemy in regard to the forthcoming landing at

Anzio, passed quickly and we embarked at Naples on 20th December for the long loop voyage into the Atlantic which took us to the Clyde on 7th January 1944.

Epilogue

Space does not permit a further account of our three months in Italy in 1943, neither does it allow much mention of individuals and their many feats of skill and gallantry. Instead I think it fitting to quote from Brigadier Whistler's diary of that time: "of course, the Brigade looks on itself as the elite infantry of the whole army. Their morale is fantastic and their saluting in the middle of battle a sight to be seen. It is by individuals who do it with a beaming smile on their faces".

The Battle of Salerno belonged more to others, particularly to 169 Infantry Brigade whose exploits there and in the many subsequent battles of the Italian Campaign have their unique place in the History of The Queen's Royal Regiment. In this regard, it was a very real privilege for me, having travelled by a route other than Monte Camino, Anzio and the Appenines, to arrive in North-East Italy in June 1945 and to find so many old friends from Salerno still serving in 169 Infantry Brigade, with Major-General J.Y. Whitfield, Commanding Officer of 2/5 Queens at Salerno as G O C 56th Division.

M.F.

Salerno Revisited

It's hard to realise that I
Once stepped, accoutre'd, on this beach,
And searched the sky, to guide my feet
Through surf and sand, to reach the rendezvous.
Night then was all a roar with flame
That glistened on the sweating face,
Then died again to hide the mind;
Was this indeed the place that knew such fear?
Dawn came and our sand weary eyes,
Soaked up the olive and the vine,
But some with sighs slid down to rest -
They did not taste the wine of later years.
They lie there still, those sleeping ones,
Guarding the ground in straightened rows;
As children run through ripening maize
Where life ran out, who knows what dreams are theirs.

September 1963.

O.H.S

Memories of 1940-after Dunkirk with 2/6th East Surreys

Our car rolled off a ferry at Calais and headed south on the N1 towards Abbeville with steadily improving weather. Our first objective was the village of Fressenville on the Eu-Abbeville road; the furthest north we got while going to join the BEF in May 1940, where we were stopped by the arrival of the Germans at Abbeville. The grand-stand view we then had of the Ju 87's bombing the town is now prevented by tree growth.

We then moved south to the River Bresle where we originally took up a defensive position overnight between Gamaches and Blangy; seeing it now at leisure in daylight, it was obvious why we pulled out at dawn. It reminded me of an anti-tank course I attended in November '39 when we were told a river 15Ft wide and perhaps 2Ft deep was an ideal tank obstacle, especially if trees were felled and pegged along the bank!

Having spent the night in Le Treport we left for Dieppe via Eu which brought vivid memories of a patrol where I found a solitary French officer who had made his

way south from Belgium, organising a tank barrier of vehicles across the square. He wanted me to stay as I had a Bren and a Boys A T rifle. As a matter of interest the patrol consisted of a 15 cwt. truck and six motor cyclists. We decided to give Dieppe a miss and came via Arques-la-Batailles to Beaumais where we had formed a strong point and I got a couple of grenades, the only weapons I had during the whole of our active service. My memory of it was looking down from the wooded slope of a valley to a large red brick farm. However, this time it was a small village on flat ground south of Dieppe without any trees of consequence near it. Perhaps I may be allowed some latitude for my memory after 40 years!

Our next stop was 1 Km further south at the chateau of Bois Robert where we had had our Bn HQ while the Dunkirk evacuation took place. We were received with great hospitality by the Legendre family for whom the unexpected visit also brought memories. The youngest son had been killed during an air raid when the chateau was damaged; as a twelve year old in 1940 he had developed a strong commercial talent, trading eggs for cigarettes with the troops, and later syphoning petrol and removing rear lights from German transport. An interesting comment on the Germans billeted on them was a very brief stay once they learned there was no piped water.

We moved on for a picnic near Lestanville where our column, withdrawing from Beaumais, had been shot up by tanks in 1940. Here our long march began on foot, in small parties to either St Valery or Veules les Roses. This time we were not so tired on arrival! The chalk pit at Veules where I found some members of the Bn, is still there although overgrown and with houses built in it. The west bank of St Valery inlet has hardly changed since 1940, it still being mainly a residential area; but the east side, the commercial and administrative centre, which I had last seen in flames, has been completely rebuilt, including the burning garage against which I had rested while waiting to embark. The house in which we took shelter after realising there was not going to be a second Dunkirk was untouched. There we had decided to split up into small parties and endeavour to break out; I was able to pin point the position I had reached when the cease fire sounded, now near the British and French War Graves Cemetery where I did not find any East Surrey headstones.

It was about 1600 Hrs when we left via the N29 to stay the night at Amiens, the route took us to the north of the positions the Bn had taken over from the Border Regt, some 25Km in length, from Aumale to Forges-les-Eaux with HQ at Grattenoix, as a flank guard to the 51st Highland Division; it also brought memories of the early days of the march; few now will remember having to sign agreement to be shot if found with any weapons. From Amiens we headed north through St Pol where I recognised the remains of the racecourse stand under which we had found a store of Bully and Biscuits, the first real food for about a week. The following day of the march, during a rest period, I had reason to feel in my trouser pockets, and was prompted to ask if anyone wanted to start a war. There were no volunteers: so I quietly buried the two grenades I had carried from Beaumais.

Later we came to Divion outside Betune, one of the memorable days of the march where the whole village turned out to give us all a good meal and Red Cross cards to send home: mine arrived about four months later. We found the Mairie to say a belated thank you in person and although the Maire was not available, members of the staff knew of the incident although they must have been children at the time.

The weather having decided to rain continuously, it seemed the right time to bring down the shutters on

memories of 1940, so we fled to Belgium for a few days holiday before returning home from Ostend.

N.T.

The Service Battalions of the East Surrey Regiment

Of the eight Service Battalions of The East Surrey Regiment which saw active service in the 1914-18 War, the 7th was formed in August 1914, and the 8th and 9th (later known as 'The Gallants') in the following month. The 12th (Bermondsey) Battalion, nicknamed 'the Shiny Twelfth' was raised by the Mayor of Bermondsey in May 1915. The 13th was raised at Wandsworth in July 1915, largely through the efforts of the Mayor, and was composed almost entirely of local men. The Wandsworth Battalion was authorised by the War Office to wear a special badge. This was similar to the badge of The East Surrey Regiment, but the Arms of Guildford on the central shield were replaced by the Arms of Wandsworth, with the motto 'We Serve' on a scroll beneath them.

All the Service Battalions were disbanded by June 1919, except the 9th which remained in existence until March 1920.

During the war years the Service Battalions saw a great deal of heavy fighting, and their achievements added lustre to the record of The East Surrey Regiment. Their awards for gallantry give some indication of the fighting qualities of these war-time units. Three VCs were won – Sgt Cator of the 7th, Pte MacNamara of the 9th and Cpl Foster of the 13th. The decorations totalled 17 DSOs, 133 MCs, 91 DCMs and 441 MMs. Their losses were heavy: 169 officers and 2,131 Other Ranks were killed. The 8th Battalion especially suffered very severe losses: in all 714 officers and men were killed.

Figures can give little idea of the conditions in which these Service Battalions fought, the inspiring leadership of the officers and NCOs and the stolid courage of the men in the ranks. The gallant deeds of these war-time soldiers are admirably recorded in the Regimental History. This short tribute to the Service Battalions concludes with some examples of the type of officers and men which brought such distinction to our Regiment.

Lt Colonel A.P.B. Irwin DSO

The name of Colonel Alfred Irwin will always be associated with the 8th Battalion with which he served throughout the 1914-18 War. He was the only officer of The East Surrey Regiment to win three DSOs. He was also four times mentioned in despatches. Quiet and unassuming, Colonel Irwin radiated a personal charm and strength of character which inspired all those under his command. His determination and professional skill stamped him as an outstanding leader. He was never content to accept reports when the situation was confused: he had to go forward to see for himself. He was several times wounded, once severely which put him out of action for three months. One of his Company Sergeant Majors wrote, 'He led from the front, always with the forward companies. He was indeed one of the Regimental "greats". His calm confidence and outstanding bravery were a continual inspiration to his men.'

Major C.A. Clark DSO MC

In July 1916, RSM Clark received a commission and was posted to the 9th Battalion in France as Adjutant. He was then an experienced soldier of 20 years service, and had served in the South African War. Within a month

Lt Clark had won the Military Cross for bravery during the Battle of the Somme. A few weeks later, as a result of heavy casualties at Delville Wood, command of the Battalion devolved upon Lt Clark. He was promoted captain in 1916 and major the following year. The 9th Battalion saw much heavy fighting in the German offensive of March 1918, and at Rosieres was completely cut off. Nobby, again in command after the Commanding Officer had been killed, told his men they would either be killed or captured by morning. 'Stick it out for the honour of the Regiment.' The Battalion fought on, literally to the last man and the last round, until it was overrun. For his personal bravery and leadership in these desperate straits, Major Clark was awarded the DSO.

Nobby Clark, who lived to the age of 92, was a remarkable man – a great enthusiast, leader, trainer and companion. The 9th Battalion could not have been better served.

Sgt H. Cator VC MM

Harry Cator joined the 7th Battalion on the outbreak of war. He went to France in June 1915 and soon showed himself to be a good steady platoon sergeant. He was awarded the Military Medal for his fine work during the Battle of Albert. In the Battle of Arras in April 1917, Sgt Cator's platoon suffered heavy casualties from a German machine gun. In full view of the enemy he worked his way forward with a Lewis gun and killed the entire machine gun crew. His continued covering fire enabled a bombing squad to work along the trench with the result that 100 prisoners and five machine guns were captured. For this act of gallantry, Sgt Cator was awarded the Victoria Cross and the French Croix de Guerre. He was severely wounded by shell-fire a few days later. Besides being a fine fighting soldier, Harry Cator was a sincere unassuming man of high principles, imbued with great kindness and humanity.

Pte J.J.E. Bagg DCM MM

This soldier of the 8th Battalion was one of the very few privates to be awarded the DCM and two MMs. His first Military Medal was for gallantry in the heavy fighting for the Schwaben Redoubt in September 1916. A month later, he received a bar to his MM for gallant conduct at the capture of Desire Trench. For the action at Cheras in May 1917, Pte Bagg was awarded a second bar to his MM. This fine young soldier was an inspiration to all ranks in the Battalion. Finally, he was awarded a third bar to the MM for bravery in the Battle of Poelcapelle in October 1917. This award was subsequently cancelled, and in place of it he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal by Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig for 'gallantry and devotion to duty in action'.

A private soldier, a war time volunteer, three times decorated for gallantry in the field – this record must be unique.

After the war was over and the Service Battalions had been disbanded, King's Colours were presented as a memorial to their record of service in the Great War. Those of the 7th, 8th and 9th Battalions are laid up in Kingston Parish Church, the 12th Battalion's in St Mary's Church, Rotherhithe, and that of the 13th Battalion in Wandsworth Parish Church.

At the Battle of The Lys in April 1918

The great German offensive on the Somme, which commenced on the 21st March 1918 and resulted in the enemy advancing to within forty miles of Paris, had been

more or less brought to a halt by the end of March, mainly owing to the heroic defence and self-sacrifice of the British troops on that front. It was known that the enemy would make another attempt to break the Allied line in the West, before the Americans could arrive in sufficient numbers to redress the balance of power in favour of the Allies. The Arras and Vimy Ridge sector of the front was presumed to be the most probable point and it was as part of the preparations to meet this new threat that the 33rd Division (which included the 1st Bn The Queen's) was withdrawn from the Passchendaele salient, where it had been holding the line for the previous three months, transferred to the back areas of the Arras front and placed in reserve. The 1st Queen's (CO Lt-Col Kemp-Welch DSO) arrived there on 1st April and were billeted in the village of Beaufort, about ten or eleven miles in rear of and to the west of Arras. I was in No. 12 Platoon 'C' Coy. We remained there nine days, during which time we marched up on 5th April to reinforce the line against an enemy attack, but before we could arrive the attack had been repulsed with heavy loss to the enemy and we were ordered to 'About Turn' and marched back to billets.

The enemy next selected the Armentieres front as the most likely place for his plans to meet with success. This front was rather thinly held, as it had been drawn on for reinforcements for the Somme battle and some of the British divisions there, which had only a week or two previously taken part in that battle, had been severely handled and were consequently weak in officers and men. The enemy opened his offensive at Armentieres on the 9th April, his ultimate objectives being an advance to the coast and the capture of the Channel Ports. He attacked at dawn in over-whelming force, over-running a Portuguese division that was in the line and forcing the remaining (British) divisions to give ground and make a fighting retreat. The enemy succeeded so well (in spite of gallant resistance by the defenders) that by the end of the first day he had advanced to a depth of four miles on a ten mile front, extending from Bois Grenier in the north to La Bassee in the south, the furthest point of his advance westward being the village of Estaires.

We in the 1st Queen's did not know all this at the time but during the night of 10th-11th of April we were roused from sleep in our billets, ordered to parade in full marching order on the road outside and marched off in the darkness to a railhead a mile or two distant, where we entrained for what was to most of us at the time an unknown destination. After travelling through the remainder of the night and for several hours after daybreak, we eventually arrived at Castre where we de-trained, marched up the road through Fletre and into a camp of huts, about half a mile in rear of Meteren and about ten miles west of Armentieres. There we were informed that we were under orders to move at ten minutes notice. In the evening armed pickets were detailed and placed at strategic points some distance in front of our camp with instructions to intercept everyone coming from the direction of the battlefield and ascertain their business. This was a necessary precaution, as apparently the line was then in a rather fluid state, with nobody knowing exactly how much farther the enemy had advanced since the previous day and just where the defending front line positions were. The village of Meteren was under continuous shellfire all night.

The morning of the 12th dawned fine and sunny and as the sun climbed higher in the sky it became quite warm, more like summer than spring. We could get very little news, except for a rumour that the Germans had broken through at Messines Ridge, about ten miles to the north-east of where we were. But the whole of our Division was apparently still being held in reserve by the Higher Command. The enemy continued to shell the village of

Meteren during the morning, then at about 12.45 p.m. a squadron of six German aeroplanes flew over and circled our camp. The fuselages of the aeroplanes were painted red and one of the older soldiers told me that they were Richthofen's squadron. They were flying low so that they must have been able to see quite plainly that the camp was occupied. Soon after they had flown back to their own lines, the gun that was shelling the village lengthened its range and started dropping shells close to our camp. At 1.05 p.m. orders from Brigade were received for the Battalion to at once move out and take up a defensive position of 3,000 yards in length covering Meteren, as the 31st Division was reported to be retiring north in the direction of that place.

The companies moved out at 1.15 p.m., 'C' Company leading, the OC (Capt. Cooke) being given direct orders by the Brigade-Major to take up ground with the right of the Company at Hoegenacher Mill, the remainder deploying on a line facing east-south-east. 'B' Company (Capt. Allan) was directed to take up ground from the Mill to the southern end of an enclosure, 'D' Company (Capt. Avery) prolonging this line to the south-west. These three companies were to be front line. 'A' Company (Capt. Carpenter) was held in reserve.

When it was our (No. 12 Platoon) turn to move off, we marched up the road towards Meteren and, upon reaching the point where the road curved to the left, we saw our Brigadier (Brig-Gen Mayne, 19th Brigade) standing in the doorway of a house on the right of the road. Our officer gave the order 'Eyes Right' and saluted. The Brigadier returned the salute and called out something but I could not catch what he said. It may have been an order to our officer, who then led us off the main road and on to a secondary road, leading in a more direct line towards the front. A short distance on we met some horse-drawn limbers, apparently coming from the front. The limbers were piled high with baggage and a number of wounded men were perched precariously on top with others (walking wounded) clinging to the sides and backs of the limbers to be helped along. The drivers were crouched low over the horses necks, trying to whip up their tired mounts to a canter and put as great a distance as possible between themselves and the pursuing enemy, who we could not yet see, but, by the sound of rifle and machine gun fire, were not very far away. We continued marching, crossing the Bailleul-Strazeele road, and a short distance farther on came to a hamlet with a farmhouse on the left side of the road. We went through an open gateway into a meadow and about 500 or 600 yards away we saw German infantry debouching from a wood and advancing towards us. They evidently saw us at the same time and opened fire. We immediately received the order to deploy and take what cover we could, at the same time returning the enemy's fire. By this time the other three platoons of our Company, No.'s 9, 10 and 11, who had preceded us from the camp, had taken up position in a field of young green corn (about six inches high) and were engaged in firing at the enemy to check his advance, at the same time digging in with their entrenching tools as and when opportunity permitted. They had, whilst moving into position, come under enemy machine-gun fire from the Mill but this had been immediately engaged and captured by Second Lieutenant Russen and eight men.

Our platoon, which was attached to Company Headquarters, was now ordered to move further over to the right and take up position on a sunken road, which would place us about 200 yards in rear of the other three platoons, where we would be able to act as support and at the same time cover Company Headquarters, which was in a farmhouse about fifty yards away and partially sheltered by a small clump of trees. The time was now approximately 1.45 p.m. and as the other two companies

came up to the high ground they were to occupy, this was found to be held by enemy machine-guns which inflicted a few casualties on them, but both 'B' and 'D' Companies were able to take up their positions and dig in.

Lt-Col Kemp-Welch reconnoitred to the flanks and found no formed body of British troops in rear of or on the right flank of the Queen's, and deciding that it was inadvisable to have a flank in the air between Belle Croix Farm and Outersteene, he ordered 'B' Company to find a defensive flank on the right, with one platoon under Second Lieutenant Denny.

The Battalion was now strung out on a front of 2,100 yards, no touch had been gained on either flank with other British troops, whilst the sole artillery support was provided by two anti-aircraft guns. But the machine-guns of two companies of the 33rd Battalion Machine Gun Corps were disposed behind the 1st Queen's and rendered valuable service throughout the operations that followed. One company of the 5th Scottish Rifles was at 4 p.m. ordered by the Brigadier to hold a position astride the Meteren-Bailleul road and to get connection with the left of the Queen's at the crossroads; but as there was still no touch with any British troops on the right, a platoon under Second Lieutenant Ashpitel was sent to a bridge on the right with another platoon under Second Lieutenant Parkes in support.

During the late afternoon and early evening the enemy attacked in waves several times, but was stopped without difficulty and suffered many casualties.

Night when it arrived was clear and starlit with no moon. During the lulls between the bursts of firing at the front the night air was very still, and it was possible to hear sounds from quite a long distance. From behind the enemy lines we could hear what sounded like the noises made by gunwheels on the roads and the hoarse shouts of drivers to their horses, as guns were pulled into new positions by the enemy, ready for the renewal of battle in the morning. Shortly before midnight Captain Cooke and CSM Elderkin went on 'Visiting Rounds', making a short tour of the Company section of the front line to see the men and give them a few words of encouragement. It was whilst on this duty that CSM Elderkin was unfortunately killed, being shot through the head by an enemy sniper. His body, with those of several others who had been killed during the afternoon, was carried back, sewn up in blankets and deposited on the rear bank of the sunken road, where we were on guard duty.

With the coming of dawn on the 13th the enemy resumed operations. He commenced with a number of range-finding shells registering on our positions, followed by a terrific barrage of whiz-bangs, five-point-nines and (by the noise and size of some of the individual explosions) even some eight-inch shells, interspersed by the dull 'plop' of gas-shells. It was one of the most intense bombardments I can ever remember, made worse by the fact that there was not a single field gun at the back of us to reply. Apparently our Divisional artillery, being less mobile than the infantry and being forced to take a long and circuitous route, had been unable to arrive in time to support us in our engagement with the enemy.

The houses close to our position on the sunken road received hits from shells and were set on fire, the thatched roofs blazing furiously. Then people came running out, seeking escape from the inferno. There was very little we could do for them, as we were under orders to 'stand to' and be prepared to repel an enemy infantry attack, which was momentarily expected. One old invalid lady was carried out in a chair by two of her friends who asked for help. One of our officers who could understand and speak French asked them for a wheelbarrow which one of the Frenchmen produced. He and the officer hoisted the old lady and chair on to the wheelbarrow and the officer

started to wheel her away to the comparative safety of Company HQ at the farmhouse. I never saw him or the old lady again, as at that very moment a runner arrived from the 5th Scottish Rifles on our left, with a message to the effect that they were being driven in by sheer weight of enemy numbers and that unless they received reinforcements they would not be able to hold their line. Captain Cooke replied by sending No. 12 Platoon to assist them. As we ran out towards the Scottish Rifles we had to cross a patch of ground which was almost devoid of cover and in addition to encountering machine gun and rifle fire, we were subjected to a barrage of minenwerfer missiles but we were able to reach the Scottish Rifles position and strengthen them sufficiently to hold their line, at least for the time being. A sergeant of the 33rd Machine Gun Battalion came up from behind with his gun and also rendered assistance.

Whilst all this was happening to us the remainder of the Battalion were experiencing a tough and strenuous time. From 5.30 a.m. onwards very many attacks had been made against the Battalion front and at about 8.45 a.m. certain posts of 'B' Company were overwhelmed when the enemy pressed on down the road towards Belle Croix Farm in rear of 'D' Company, and both these Companies had to be withdrawn, and the Germans occupied the farm. Two very gallant attempts, led by Second-Lieutenants Dickinson and Corry, were made to recapture the farm, but were unsuccessful in restoring the situation, these counter attacks not having sufficient weight behind them. In the early afternoon of the 13th the situation was most critical. 'C' Company on the left flank of the Battalion front had also had to give ground, and we of No. 12 Platoon were ordered to retire a short distance of about 400 yards and take up position in a hopfield just beyond the crossroads we had passed on our way up the previous morning. We remained in our new positions, improving them by making breastworks and revetments.

The night of the 13th/14th was for the Battalion as a whole fairly quiet and uneventful, except for intermittent shelling and machine gun fire and it was possible to bring up small arms ammunition and to reorganise. We could see the sky illuminated by a number of fires behind the enemy lines and now and again we could see figures momentarily silhouetted against the skyline, but we could not tell whether they were friend or foe, as we were not sure then just how far in front of us our other three platoons were. At dawn on the 14th the enemy launched very heavy attacks against our positions from the south-east and south of Meteren. A gap was made in the centre of the Queen's line covering the Meteren Becque; a second gap was made on the left of the 5th Scottish Rifles covering the approach to Meteren from the east. Another gap was made between the right of the Queen's and the 1st Cameronians north-east of Merris. The enemy exploited these gains to full advantage, pushing forward light machine guns with great rapidity.

For us in No. 12 Platoon several peculiar happenings took place. First at about ten o'clock in the morning a French civilian came riding up on a bicycle from behind our lines. One of our officers went over and interrogated him. He said that he was on his way to one of the houses further up the road, to fetch another bicycle that had been left behind the previous day. After a certain amount of argument he was allowed to proceed, although it was pointed out to him that the Germans might by then be occupying the houses. Some of our men conjectured that he might be a German spy, although I presume that our officer must have been satisfied concerning his bona fides. On the other hand I don't remember seeing him return with any bicycles.

Later on a German Red Cross ambulance came along the road from the direction of Bailleul. When it

reached the crossroads it turned to the right and came a short distance down the road towards us, then stopped and two men in German uniform jumped out from the side farthest from us and ran off back towards the crossroads through a gap between some houses and disappeared. We did not fire at them and no-one went out to investigate, as we suspected that it might be a trick of the enemy's to cause us to reveal our position.

Some time during the afternoon we heard the report of a gun firing from somewhere behind us and a small shell came whizzing over our trench and exploded only a few yards in front. Then several more at intervals of a few seconds, none of them going very far ahead. Whoever was at the rear, they were firing short and in more danger of hitting us than the enemy who, as far as we could tell, were anything from 200 to 400 yards away. We reported the fact of the shells dropping short to Company HQ and they managed to get a message through to the people in rear and have the gun stopped firing. We were very glad. That was the only occasion during the whole three days that we had been in the line that we had heard or had any evidence of the presence of any artillery support on our side, beside the two anti-aircraft guns previously mentioned.

Between 6 and 7 p.m. another determined attack was made by the enemy on the whole of the front held by the 19th Infantry Brigade. The Queen's fell back and the retirement of our troops became fairly general. But without conceding too much ground the line was stabilised before dark. Night came again and was fairly quiet as regards any enemy activity, so that whilst keeping a sharp lookout, we managed to get a little rest and sleep between turns of sentry-go. In the early hours of the morning of the 15th April, we were relieved by a Battalion of the 4th King's Liverpopol Regiment, 98th Brigade. We marched away in single file as quietly as we could, (no talking or smoking), and the relief was carried out without the enemy apparently being aware. After an hour or so marching across the country we arrived at a village a few miles behind the line, where we were able to have a few hours sleep, a wash and clean-up and some much needed food and drink. We also received the welcome information that Marshal Foch, the Allied Generalissimo, had sent substantial reinforcements of French and British troops to our part of the front and that with the assistance of these the enemy advance had been arrested.

A day or two later the Battalion was paraded and inspected by the Divisional Commander, Major-General Pinney, who told us we had done very well, that the Queen's were the first Battalion of the Division to go into action and that we had held up the enemy, enabling the remainder of the Division to deploy. He also told us that on our first day there (12th April) we had fought with a gap of four miles on our right flank and that had the enemy known he would have been through but fortunately he did not.

The 1st Queen's casualties in this action totalled 370.

One bright spot during the battle was that whilst we of No. 12 Platoon were reinforcing the Scottish Rifles on the morning of the 13th, one of our men discovered about a dozen cases of champagne in the cellar of a farmhouse that had been evacuated by the owners. As there was no point in leaving it there to be either destroyed by shellfire, or perhaps captured later by the enemy, we all helped ourselves to it, imbibing freely, and some of the men even emptying the water out of their bottles and filling up with the vinous liquid. I, personally, retained the water in my bottle deeming it to be of greater value in an emergency.

After a few days rest we marched up to the battle line again and this time we had no lack of artillery supprt. We saw numerous batteries of the famous French 75 millimetre guns lined up almost wheel to wheel, blazing away at the

enemy lines, with the gunners ramming the rounds of ammunition into the breeches of the guns as fast as they could work.

V.E. Fagence

Deaths

We regret to announce the passing of the following former members of our Regiments:-

Benton—On 10th March 1983, Major C.P. Benton MC. Served in 2/5th Battalion The Queen's Royal Regiment 1940-1944 (see obituary.)

Berrow—On 1 February 1983, Captain Robert J. Berrow (Bob), aged 83. Served in the Surrey Army Cadet Force from 1949-1959 and was Honorary Curator of The East Surrey Regiment Museum and The Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment Museum from 1949-1977.

Bingham—In mid-1982, Sgt Harry Bingham (6084762), aged 71. Served in The Queen's Royal Regiment from 1931-1956.

Conacher—In January 1983, Walter Conacher. Served as Corporal in the MT section of 1/5 Queen's 1939/46.

Coningham—On 27 January 1983, Lieutenant Vincent (Vic) Francis Coningham, aged 83. Commissioned to the New Zealand Army in 1919, he served with the 5th Wellington Regiment (NZ). In 1939 he was in UK and served in the 8th and 9th Bns The East Surrey Regiment until 1943 when he was invalided out of the Army. A man with a wry sense of humour, for census purposes he described his occupation as "goatherd".

Dew—On 6 January 1983, Donald D. Dew (6137240), aged 72. Served in the 1st Bn The East Surrey Regiment from 1926-1933 and with the Royal Air Force from 1939-1945.

Dickson—On 21 December 1982, in Gibraltar, Colonel Duncan Graeme Dickson OBE, MC, TD, aged 74. Served in The East Surrey Regiment from 1936-1950; in the Mobile Defence Corps (Surrey) from 1956-1958, and the Royal West African Frontier Force from 1940-1946. (See Obituary).

Dollaway—In December 1982, William Dollaway, aged 90. He joined The Queen's in 1908, returning to England in 1914 to continue his service until 1918.

Herbert—On 26 July 1982, WOII Ivan Arnold Herbert (6746215), aged 67. Served in The East Surrey Regiment from 1933-1939 and from 1953-1958. He also served in The Queen's Royal Regiment from 1939-1953, and was in the 2nd Battalion of that regiment in Burma and India from 1942-1947. A staunch member of the Association and of the Warrant Officers and Sergeants Association.

Morgan—On 18 December 1982, Lieut-Colonel Gerald Elias Morgan, aged 80. Served in the 1st and 2nd Battalions The Queen's Royal Regiment from 1921-1947. Was Administrative Officer (Surrey) of the Joint Committee of the Order of St John of Jerusalem and the British Red Cross Society (War Disabled Help Department) from 1956-1969.

Renshaw—On 22 January 1983, Lt Col Alick John Renshaw DSO MC. Served from 1939-1946 in the 2/6th and 2/7th Bns The Queen's Royal Regiment. Commanded the 2/6 Battalion from December 1943 to January 1945. (See obituary).

Veasey—On 4 October 1982, Brigadier Harley Gerald Veasey DSO, aged 86. Served in the Queen's Royal Regiment from 1915-1948. Commanded 1/7th Bn The Queen's Royal Regiment from 1945-1946. (See obituary).

Regimental Families Deaths

Domoney—On 12 March 1983, Mrs Laurie Domoney, aged 95, widow of the late CSM A.J. Domoney and mother of Major A.W.V. Domoney, late The Queen's Royal Regiment. Her pride in the Regiment, which she joined as a bride in 1911, never faltered.

Grimston—On 4 February 1983, Stella, wife of Lt Col George W. Grimston, late The Queen's Royal Regiment.

Scriven—On 15 January 1983, after a long illness, Mrs Doris Scriven, wife of WOII Arthur Reginald Scriven MBE, late The East Surrey Regiment.

Turk—On 29 November 1982, Mrs Jean Turk, widow of Major (QM) Ernest Joseph Turk, late The Queen's Royal Regiment.

Obituaries

Major C.P. Benton MC.

"Chunky" Benton joined 2/5 Queen's at Ashford, Kent, in 1940 as assistant Signals Officer. He served with the battalion until 1944 when the battalion returned to Egypt after Anzio. He had been appointed Company Commander after Salerno and as such was well-liked and respected. He left to become an instructor at the School of Infantry in Palestine.

P.S.G. Cunningham

Percy Seymour Glencairn Cunningham was educated at Oundle, and was commissioned in The East Surrey Regiment in January 1932. He served in the 1st Battalion in India, and represented the Regiment at polo. Percy had an original mind and was an amusing and spirited companion. He had the misfortune, while on a shooting expedition in India, to contract a tropical disease which led to his being invalided from the Service in 1938.

He was recalled to the Regiment on the outbreak of War, but again had to be discharged on the grounds of ill-health. He then studied Law, qualified as a barrister and practised for several years. After years of recurrent illness, which he accepted with courage and humour, Percy died, shortly before Christmas 1982, at the age of 70.

P.G.E.H.

Colonel Duncan Graeme Dickson OBE MC TD MA

Graeme Dickson was educated at Charterhouse and Hartford College, Oxford. In 1936 he was commissioned to the 6th Bn The East Surrey Regiment (TA) with which battalion he served as a very lively subaltern until December 1939 when he was posted to the 1st Bn The East Surrey Regiment, serving with that unit throughout the Fall of France and the Dunkirk evacuation during which he was wounded. After a short spell with the 2/6th East Surreys he was posted to the 8th Bn The Royal West Africa Frontier Force and served with that battalion in the Gold Coast, India and Burma from 1940 to 1945 as a company commander and Bn Second in Command until August 1945 when he was promoted Lieut-Colonel. In April 1946 he served with the Polish Resettlement Corps until his release from the service.

On the reconstitution of the Territorial Army in January 1947 he became the first Commanding Officer of the resuscitated 6th Bn The East Surrey Regiment (TA), throwing his boundless energy and enthusiasm into raising and recruiting that unit until his tenure of command ended in 1950.

Graeme was awarded the Military Cross in 1944; a bar to the Military Cross in 1945, the Territorial Efficiency Decoration in 1948 and the Order of the British Empire (Military) in 1959, the last award being for his services in command as Colonel of the Surrey Mobile Defence Corps from 1956-1958.

His civilian occupation was as an East India Merchant, and he was Chairman and a member of several Chamber of Commerce bodies dealing with Far East commodities. On his retirement from business he went to live in Spain. After a long illness he died in hospital in Gibraltar and was buried in the military cemetery there.

A man with a quick brain, he had many interests and a keen sense of humour and fun shared by his wife Bym. To her and her daughter we send our sympathy.

F.J.R.

The last two issues of the Newsletter have contained a racy account of the experiences of the 1st Bn The East Surrey Regiment in action on the Maginot Line in March 1940. 'Dick', the author, was Colonel Graeme Dickson, who had written the article in April 1940 while the events were still fresh in his mind.

I knew he had lived in Spain for some years on account of ill-health, and I asked how he was. The reply was typical. While conceding that he was 'in trouble healthwise', crippled with arthritis and suffering from a progressive bone marrow complaint, Graeme concluded his letter with a flourish. 'To Hell with all this gloom! The weather is glorious - 6 to 9½ hours sunshine a day. We have a nice fat Spanish girl who comes in every morning to clean up, and a charming nurse who pumps injections into my backside.'

"Captain Peter"

Lieut-Col A.J. Renshaw DSO, MC

Many wartime soldiers and others will be very sad to read about his death at his home, Walton-on-the-Hill on January 22nd 1983. He joined the Regiment on 1st Sept 1939 and was posted to the 7th Bn and later joined 2/7 Queens before 56 Division went overseas. He won a MC as a company commander at Enfidaville and later a DSO whilst commanding 2/6 Queens in Italy. As the Regimental History states "he had a remarkable record with his Battalion with which he had fought in every battle since Enfidaville. He had been a splendid CO and had set a magnificent example to his command". After the war he returned to run his very successful family business of A.J. Renshaw. He was a good golfer and President of the Walton Heath Golf Club.

Sadly we have lost another of our very successful wartime soldiers and we all send our sincere sympathy to his wife and family.

J.B.H.K.

Brigadier H.G. Veasey DSO

It came as a great shock when one was told the sad news of Gerald Veasey's death on 4th October 1982.

He was educated at Haileybury, joined The Queen's Royal Regiment in 1915 and in 1918 was gassed at Cambrai. He won his DSO in 1938 in Palestine chasing terrorists. During World War II he served in East Africa

commanding 2nd The Northern Rhodesian Regiment and later for a time 28th (East African) Brigade. He retired in 1948.

He was a keen soldier who always demanded and got a high standard from all of us who served under him and there are still many "gunners" about who will remember him with much respect and affection. He tempered strict discipline with a great sense of humour and was quite happy telling stories against himself.

A good mimic, he and his friend Dickenson had a flair for writing musicals and always produced the battalion pantomimes which were very topical and amusing.

Gerald had been ill for some time and was looked after devotedly by his wife, Iris. When visiting him one could not but admire his great courage and determination and he always enjoyed recalling the many amusing events of the past. He always asked for news of the Regiment and his many friends, and having been a TA Adjutant, many of these were Territorials. He was intensely interested in the Regimental Museum and was very knowledgeable about the many exhibits.

To Iris and all members of his family we all extend our deepest sympathy.

J.B.H.K.

Residential Home

The Joint Committee of the Order of St. John and British Red Cross Society maintains a residential Home, Mais House, Bexhill on Sea, Sussex, for which ex-servicemen, are eligible. Priority is given to the War In addition, ex-servicewomen and widows of ex-servicemen, are eligible. Priority is to give the War disabled and their widows but there are presently vacancies for all eligible categories.

It is the aim at Mais House to provide a permanent home and that extra care which the disabled and the elderly and frail need when they can no longer look after themselves. Whilst residents are encouraged to maintain their independence and are allowed as much privacy as possible, they are assisted as may be necessary in the ordinary course of their lives, such as by helping with dressing, bathing and mobility.

Applications should be made to the Director, Wing Commander H. Broadmeadow, MBIM, at the address shown above.

The Dead Marines

The expression 'a dead Marine', signifying an empty bottle, is well known in the Services. Many years ago, Major W.P. Drury of the Royal Marines published a poem which explained this somewhat uncomplimentary nickname.

The scene is dinner in the wardroom of one of His Majesty's ships in the reign of George III. Here are the first two verses.

'The King's health, Gentlemen!.....and now Her Majesty the Queen's.
Another magnum, Steward! Clear away yon dead Marines.'
Thus to his guests the Sailor Duke, but ere they gained their feet
A soldier at the table leapt in anger from his seat.

'Before we drink, Sir, I would ask Your Royal Highness why
A useless empty bottle should be held to typify.....'
'Yourself?', laughed Clarence, 'Surely, Sir, the inference is plain?
You both have done your duty and will tackle it again.'

Cannon's Historical Records

In 1836, King William IV decreed that 'an Account of the Services of every Regiment in the British Army shall be published under the superintendence and direction of the Adjutant General'. This immense task was entrusted to Richard Cannon, Principal Clerk of the Adjutant General's Office.

A first edition of the Historical Record of the 31st Regiment and the Marine Corps has been presented to the Regimental Museum by Lady Oliver, widow of Lt Gen Sir William Oliver, KCB OBE DL, the last Colonel of The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment. Accompanying the book were two letters in Cannon's own handwriting to Major G.F. White of the 31st Regiment. This officer had commanded a company in the Sutlej Campaign, and his sketches and recollections were of great assistance to Cannon.

The proof sheets of the account of the 31st Regiment's service in the Punjab were sent for verification to Colonel James Spence CB, who commanded the Regiment at Moodkee, Ferozeshah, Badowal and Aliwal and the 1st Brigade at the Battle of Sobraon. This Historical Record of the 31st Regiment, beautifully bound in leather, and inscribed on the fly leaf 'Major G.F. White. With the Author's compliments', is a valuable addition to our Regimental Library.

Memorial Plaques

There are probably some of our readers who possess a bronze memorial plaque inscribed with the name of a relative who died in the 1914-18 War. They were presented to the next of kin of all men killed in the War, and were accompanied by a parchment scroll and a letter from His Majesty King George V.

Designed by Mr E. Carter Preston, who also designed the War Medal (1939-45), the plaque measures 4½ inches in diameter and ½ inch in thickness. Each is inscribed with the deceased's Christian name and

surname. The scroll bears the man's rank and regiment in addition to his names.

Distribution commenced in 1919, and 1,355,000 plaques were issued. A collection of these memorial plaques can be seen in the Regimental Museum.

'On the Draft for India'

This is the name of an interesting narrative of the 1914-18 War by Pte A.J. Morris, 5th Queen's, edited by his great-granddaughter, Jane Brighton. The 1/5th Queen's were in India from December 1914 to December 1915 when they embarked for Mesopotamia. Pte Morris's draft of reinforcements sailed for India in June 1916, and it was not until November that year that they were able to join the 1/5th Queen's at Nasariyeh.

The greater part of the book is taken up with the voyage to India and the young soldiers' service there for the next five months. Some of Pte Morris's experiences will bring back memories to those who served in India before the 1939-45 War. 'The native boot boy, who is paid 4 annas from each man per week, cleans our boots and buttons twice a day. The cooking is done by the native cooks, who also prepare our meals and wash up. In order to pay these, each man is stopped 10 annas a week. The barber boy, who comes round night and morning, receives 2 annas a week for shaving and 2 annas for haircutting.'

This comfortable, though unexciting, life was brought to an end by the posting of the draft to Mesopotamia in November 1916. This was a theatre of war and conditions were very different. The 1/5th Queen's had been at Nasariyeh for a year when their draft of reinforcements finally joined them. It was not until September 1917 that Pte Morris first saw action at the Battle of Aziziye Ridge, which was virtually the last major operation of the campaign.

The book is well illustrated by the author's own drawings and by his photographs of scenes in Mesopotamia. It is published by Living Colour Publications, MM House, Aldershot, Hants.