



# THE QUEEN'S ROYAL SURREY REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION OF THE QUEEN'S REGIMENT

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Number 34  
November 1983

Regimental Association  
Newsletter

## Editorial

The anniversary of Salerno has proved a focal point for some very interesting articles and letters and some satisfying events. The plans to celebrate the anniversary of Cassino next year are going forward and I hope to receive some good stuff for the Newsletter.

**Copy for the May issue should be sent to 50 Ashdene Road, Ashurst, Hants. SO4 2DN by 31st March 1984.**

## President's Notes

I think we can look back on our celebrations of the 40th anniversary of the Battle of Salerno with a good deal of satisfaction. The Officers Club lunch party on 9th September seems to have been reckoned the best we have ever had, and the annual reunion the following night was a splendid occasion. The success of these two events depended primarily on the preliminary planning of Major John Reed, and the organisation and sheer hard work of Lt. Col. Les Wilson who had the difficult task of taking over responsibility in mid-stream. We are very grateful to both of them.

With all that behind us and after six years as your President I am sure it is right that I should now stand down, and I am delighted that Col. Toby Sewell has agreed to take over from me at the end of the year. When General Rowley Mans asked me to accept this appointment the future of our Association was in doubt. In the interests of developing the cohesion of The Queen's Regiment it had been decided to abolish the county Deputy Colonels posts, and there were those who felt the days of the old Regimental Associations were numbered. So I was not at all certain about my role.

Now the picture is much clearer. First and foremost your support left me in no doubt that you were not going to accept the chop, but something had to be done to meet the Colonel of the Regiment's mandate to develop the "one family" concept. Over the years I believe we have achieved this double aim in a remarkable way - despite the Staff College teaching that you score no points for having more than one aim! Our Association led the way by opting to become an integral part of The Queen's Regiment. The past and present reunions have been a great success from the start and the Warrant Officers and Sergeants Dinner has become a firmly established event.

At the same time our own events have gone from strength to strength. Since we moved it to London support for the Annual Reunion has grown steadily. The replacement of the cocktail party by a lunch party for the officers and their ladies has been very popular, and the move to Simpsons in the Strand for the officers' dinner has been well accepted by most members of the Officers' Club. In the summer the continued good attendance at the Guildford Cathedral service is another indicator of the strength of our Association.

This is a record which looks pretty good compared with the uncertain future six years ago. Even so to my mind the real encouragement is the genuine feeling of togetherness which exists to-day. We are now accepted by those still serving as part of the Regiment. It is our Regiment as much as their Regiment and we had a very good feel of this at the Salerno reunion with the TA band and drummers alongside the old comrades of the Queen's and the Surreys and the Queen's Surreys, together with some new recruits from 40 years ago and others who have already retired from The Queen's Regiment. I also detect a growing sense of comradeship, of people feeling the strength and the fun and the satisfaction of getting together with old chums you know you can rely on in a tight corner.

In a world of changing values and standards this is a prize we must hold on to at all costs, and not only sustain but strengthen it by encouraging new old comrades from our Regiment to join us.

It has been a great privilege to be your leader for the past six years and I am truly grateful for your support.

Major F. J. Reed writes "Dear Friends, Through the medium of the Regimental Association Newsletter I write to thank all of you who so generously subscribed to the truly magnificent presentation made to me on my retirement as Regimental Association Secretary. I was deeply moved as may have been apparent to those of you who so kindly came to Guildford on 5 June to wish me Godspeed.

The coffee table regimental drum will give Moyra and me a great deal of pleasure in the years to come; bringing back happy memories of all the occasions we have all spent together. The cheque will be spent on something we both need when we finally move house.

## FORECAST OF REGIMENTAL AND QUEEN'S SURREYS ASSOCIATION EVENTS – 1984

Date	Place	Event	Detail
3 May	Richmond	Queen's Surreys Golf Society Spring Meeting	Separately to members
3 June	Guildford	Regimental Association Church Service	Guildford Cathedral 11.15 a.m.
3 July	Fleet	Queen's Surreys Golf Society v. Royal Marines	Separately to members
July/Aug	Bassingbourn	Grand Reunion Queen's Regiment	To be issued separately
5 October	London	Queen's Surreys Officers' Club Dinner	To be issued separately
11 October	Richmond	Queen's Surreys Golf Society Autumn meeting	Separately to members
2 November	London	Queen's Surreys Regimental Association Annual Reunion	To be issued separately
11 November	Guildford, Kingston & Battersea	Remembrance Day Parades	

Once again I thank all those individual members and affiliated Associations who gave me their backing and help over so many years. Fortunately I shall continue to see you all at the many Association and Regimental occasions which are still to come.

With my very best wishes to you all.

### Museum Notes

The Salerno Display attracted great interest throughout the Summer. All the work and jogging of memories by Mrs. Daphne Hill has been very widely appreciated, and a special tribute is much due to her. As much of the Display as possible is to be preserved within the Museum, and it is hoped therefore that it will be added to by additional photographs and records so that it will remain as an archive of real historical value and interest. As already reported Cassino is to be the subject of the special display for 1984 and, as in the Battalions of the Queens, recollections are already being stirred by Mrs. Hill within the Surreys.

The Salerno Display has brought back to contact with the Regiment quite a number of those who were there and who had lost touch, or did not know of the Museum. It was also very nice to see so many people in the Museum after the Officers' Club Lunch. Visitors in general have continued to flow through in satisfactory numbers, and amongst others we were particularly glad to see the Honorary Colonel of The Queens York Rangers, Colonel A. S. Stewart.

For the future it will be of interest that the Trustees have appointed Mr. John Woodroff to be Curator of the Museum in a part time capacity. He has been a frequent helper at the Museum. During the War he was with the Rifle Brigade and the Manchester Regiment, having applied for the Surreys who had no vacancies at the time of his commissioning. He continued in the TA for 12 years after the War. He is a Life Member of the Military Historical Society, and has been directly involved with Lyn MacDonald in the production of her memorable books on the 1914-1918 War, the latest "Somme" being published this Summer.

During the Winter the Working Party will be meeting at the Museum on Wednesdays at 1030 a.m. starting on 2nd November.

### Desert Rat

The Regimental Museum would be glad to receive the original Desert Rat Flash as worn by 131 (Queen's) Brigade in the Desert. The design worn on the battledress by the 7th Armoured Division after their return to the UK in 1944 was a different rat.

### Bequest

Regimental funds have received the very generous sum of £6,000 from the estate of the late J. S. Knee. The Trustees have expressed their sincere thanks.

### Regimental Museum Appeal

The Trustees of The Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment Museum thank the under-mentioned gentlemen for their generous donations:

Major C. F. Cole  
Major P. A. Gray

### The Late Brigadier H. G. Veasey DSO

The Queen's Royal Regiment Charitable Fund has received from the Shamley Green Branch of The Royal British Legion, a donation of fifty pounds in memory of Brigadier Gerald Veasey who died on 4 October 1982. Brigadier Veasey was President of the Shamley Green Branch of The Royal British Legion for fourteen years - from 1964 to 1976.

### News of the Associations

#### 2/4th Queen's O.C.A. 1914-18

The annual luncheon gathering took place on 30th April 1983 at the Mitcham Road Barracks, Croydon. Forty-two members and guests attended. The shrine service will take place on Sunday, 20th November at the Croydon Parish Church at 3 p.m. Tea is laid on at the Barracks afterwards for all those attending. Last year the attendance of old comrades and relatives was thirty-six. The Association is believed to be the oldest in Surrey, the members' ages ranging from 85 to 95 which is very good going.

## 5th Queen's Old Members Association

The Annual Dinner was held on May 7th at Sandfield Drill Hall, Guildford. One hundred and sixty members attended. Among the guests were Major General R. S. N. Mans, Brigadier G. B. Curtis, Major John Reed and Lt. Col. L. M. Wilson. In addition the CO of 5 Queens TAVR, Lt. Col. D. H. A. Shepherd, was welcomed. Colonel C. R. Wigan attended at the ripe old age of 94. The evening was very successful and the catering first-class. Thanks were given to all those responsible.

A contingent of 30 supported the Regimental Service at Guildford and assisted with the collection. They partook of light refreshments afterwards while attending the presentation to Major John Reed upon his retirement.

A party of 30 went to the Salerno Reunion in London and had a very enjoyable evening. The Association will be attending the Armistice Service at Holy Trinity Church at 10.30 a.m., and will be parading afterwards for the wreath-laying ceremony in the Castle grounds. All members would be warmly welcomed.

Details of the Association can be obtained from the Secretary, Doug Mitchell, 3 Little Field Way, Fairlands, Guildford, Surrey.

## The Queen's (Bermondsey) Regimental Association

The visit of our Belgian friends did not take place owing to the sudden death of their Secretary, but we made a successful trip in September. The Association was represented at Guildford Cathedral and the Bassingbourn Reunion, and several members attended the Salerno Reunion.

There will be a Ladies' Night on October 22nd at the Union Jack Club, and a Christmas Social is being considered.

Membership has increased over the past few weeks, and if the trend continues we will be quite strong and social events will be better patronised.

## The East Surrey Regiment

A very enjoyable dinner was held for officers who had served in The East Surrey Regiment at Simpson's-in-The-Strand on the 8th April 1983. Sixty two officers attended. Brigadier Boxshall presided and proposed the loyal toast and that of the Regiment.

## The Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment Golf Society

The annual match of the Society versus Royal Marines Golfing Society was played at the North Hants Golf Club, Fleet, Hampshire on 12th July 1983. The result was a win for the Royal Marines by 7 matches to 5.

## The Queen's Regiment

The 1st and 2nd Bns have nearly completed a year of their two-year 'Resident' tour in N. Ireland; and in February next, the 3rd Bn will be going to Belfast (from BAOR) under a new commander (Lt. Col. David Beveridge MBE) for a 'roulement' tour of four months.

At RHQ we bade farewell to Maj. John Reed in June and presented him with a portable TV set. His successor, Lt. Col. Les Wilson MBE was busy, thereafter, arranging the Anniversary of Salerno celebrations held at Guildford and in London on 9th and 10th September.

The Colonel of the Regiment visited the 3rd Bn in Germany in mid July, and on 27th September he had an Audience in Holland with HRH The Princess Juliana, Allied Colonel-in-Chief, accompanied by Lt. Col. Richard Graham MBE (CO 3 QUEENS) and Col. George Langridge, President of The Royal Sussex Assn (Princess Juliana is Patron of that Association). In early October, Gen. Rowley paid a visit to the 1st and 2nd Bns in Omagh and Londonderry respectively.

The new portrait of HM Queen Margrethe of Denmark, commissioned by the Carlsburg Foundation, is now finished and, at the time of writing, plans are afoot to arrange for its presentation to The Regiment in Copenhagen in early December.

G.U.W.

## From Here and There

W. W. Rice - of 2nd Bn The Queen's Royal Regiment 1934 to 1939 - attended the reunion at Bassingbourn but was disappointed at making no contact with any other 2nd Bn men. He would like to make contact with other members of the band and drums of that period. His address is: "Renbil", 7 Flail Close, Elmstead Market, Essex.

H. E. Hannan - of 9th Bn The East Surrey Regiment (The Gallants) - is anxious to confirm details of a gas attack suffered by them at St. Eloi in the period October-December 1915. Captain Ashton of "D" Company received his MC then. If anybody has any information please write to 186 Chigwell Road, South Woodford, London E.18 1HA.

S. J. Wood - known as "Chippy" when in Signals of 1st Bn The East Surrey Regiment - sent in a very interesting stamp from Gibraltar. It was issued in 1975 and shows an officer of The East Surrey Regiment in full dress of 1846. The Regimental badge is also shown in very fine detail indeed. Mr. Wood writes that he still has his badge from 1923. Now nearly 80 years of age he lives in the Princess Christian Home, Stafford Lake, Knaphill, Nr. Woking GU21 2SJ. He is very comfortable and well looked after - and recommends the home very highly.

T. R. Kienzle - enjoyed the reunion at Bassingbourn which was a very successful day, despite the midges which were present in their thousands. To quote "The band and drums were magnificent, and this doesn't take into account the fact that they were TA and cadets of 16/17 years. Any regiment would be proud of them."

L. S. Duncan - writes from New Zealand with some news of other old members of the regiment. He is well and hoping to come back for a reunion soon. Drum-Major Bennett has left Wellington for a seaside bungalow at Lewin. Harry Reeves has gone to Paramater. Whilst attending a Burma Star Reunion recently there was a mild earth tremor. This served to counteract the effect of the refreshments apparently.

Walter John Blanks - is being enquired after by his daughter. The family broke up about forty years ago and she has no information other than he was in Quetta at the time of the earthquake in 1935 - with 1st Bn The Queen's Royal Regiment. The family was with him there although the children

were very young at the time. Apparently he excelled at cooking. If anybody can remember him or knows where he is now the information should be sent to the Regimental Secretary Lt. Col. L. M. Wilson, MBE, at Canterbury for onward transmission.

**W. Dadson 6289997** - information is requested by H. Field 6289432 of 2/6 Queens who lives at 30 Second Avenue, Sheerness, Kent.

**A. Campbell** - "C" Company, 2/6 Queen's was killed at Anzio. His mother recently asked for information about getting his medals mounted. Appropriate assistance has been given from regimental resources.

**R. H. Paskell** would like to hear anything remembered about his uncle Bill Paskell, who was killed on the Somme in July 1916 with 6th Queens. His address is, Garden Flat, 22 Dagnall Park, Selhurst, London, S.E.25.

**Tommy Atkins** of pre-war 2 Queen's wrote a very interesting letter and referred to previous comrades. Vivien Edwards is an In-Pensioner at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea and Fred Harcup now lives at Faversham, Kent. Full addresses could be supplied.

**Hornblow** - Corporal Albert Edward, served with East Surreys and Buffs, no current address known - but the police have recovered his military documents previously reported as lost by him. They are being held in The Property Office, Civic Centre Police Station, Southampton. Any information as to present whereabouts would be welcome.

**C. S. A. Avis** - a pre-1914 1st Queen's man has written from South Africa, giving some very interesting points. They include a suggestion made by "The Sketch" 16 December 1914 that the VC should be awarded to units for gallantry and that the award should be shown on the regimental colour. The photocopy of the newspaper uses the colours of The Queen's, the Loyals, and the Coldstream Guards for examples. Nothing came of the idea. Mr. Avis had been wounded and returned to U.K. by this time, but he has sent some photos of the Trianon Palace Hotel at Versailles where he had been treated en route. Luxurious surroundings indeed. After operations for cataract Mr. Avis can still read this Newsletter and continues to enjoy life. I am sure we all wish him well.

#### Upon Joining the Aussies

To those who were in Syria circa June 1941 there is no need to emphasise the heat, which originating above was reflected and amplified by the black basalt rocks which littered the hills of the Hermon range. They will recall that to touch one of these at mid-day was to risk scorching the very flesh! Neither will they forget those icy, near arctic winds that commenced after sunset - gradually increasing by midnight to howling blizzard-like gales from the still snow-covered slopes of Mount Hermon itself. For two and a half years they had experienced the suns of Palestine, Egypt and even the dusts and heat of Libya and in retrospect those had been pleasures compared to Syria. All main movements had been by night for many days, with rest impossible by day. The whole

16th Infantry Brigade was nearing complete exhaustion, but somehow carried on. Heat exhaustion was creating more casualties than the minor battles and skirmishes that were fought. This was the picture, which, together with the artillery from the Vichy French, made life really uncomfortable.

Our actual location on 27th June 1941 was along the lower slopes of the Hermon northern range, 3 miles north west of the village of Yaafour under the shadow of that infamous Pt 1634, not finally captured until July 9th. [Note: 1634 is metres - not feet!] 10 platoon of "B" Coy 2/Queen's had for two successive nights been out on a standing patrol - one night in shirts and shorts in those icy winds. On arriving back that morning at about 0645 warning was given that the platoon would have to be taken out again later, on "a daylight recce trip." (Sic!). The hour following was taken up with the routine of eating, provisioning with a full complement of ammunition etc - so we thought! The Platoon strength was 15. One man was ordered to report sick with very bad foot trouble and was later evacuated. Strength 14 all up! What follows is the story of the then 10 platoon which I had the honour to lead.

When the idea was suggested to me about a year ago that the events of 27-30 June 1941 might be of interest to this Newsletter I regarded it with trepidation. However, I was provided with a copy of the relevant History and commenced some research. I had some diary notes of the period, very scrappy, but relevant and I soon realised I could do little without notes from the Australian side. What follows relates to those days when 10 platoon - all 14 of them - decided to 'join' the 2/3rd Australian Infantry! Through my hobby of amateur radio I have many friends in New South Wales and I broached the project to one of them. He exceeded my expectation and through him I was able to obtain, not only the Official History of that period of the 2/3rd, but also a book by Ken Clift DCM, published privately. Having their permission I refer freely to their book, the Official Histories of the 2/3rd Inf Bn and our own and briefly to "The Tiger Strikes" by the late Field Marshal Wavell. My appreciation to them all.

So to 0845 27th June 1941. I was sent for by the then OC "B" Coy and given the following orders:- "Your platoon will load up with as much ammunition as you can carry, including grenades. You will take an extra waterbottle and double rations of "Bully" and as many biscuits as you can carry. Go on a course West over the ridge above us then towards the high ground. Search for a party of Australian infantry believed to be in the area of the highest ground. Only go as far as the ridge to the North of this point. Avoid combat as your task is one of carrier and recce. Deliver what ammunition you carry in excess of normal complement and return soonest." Explicit enough as it went, but I could not obtain even approximate details of the position of either "A" or "D" companies which I knew were on that ridge just above us but somewhere to the right of our position. I requested that as the patrol had no apparent time limit could I have a signal terminal or some means of maintaining contact? Meanwhile I got ready for the carrier part of the role. I have never discovered where those extra water bottles came from, but materialise they did and we were soon ready. Each man carried a minimum of 300 rounds of .303 in

bandoliers of 50, 2 fully loaded Bren magazines, and 3 grenades, plus 2 tins of bully and as many biscuits as could be tucked into what crannies remained! We all had the Lee-Enfield rifle, loaded with 2 clips, and of course the bayonet. My Bren gunner, by name Brown, was a hefty soldier and refused to be parted from his rifle with which he was a very good shot. He carried the Bren as well with magazine on. I discovered later he had also found room for a third magazine which meant he was carrying 4. We were as ready as we ever would be, and awaited the word to go. This came at 0945 and we prepared to move out at 1000. I was assured that all forward units were aware of my mission and that the two signal flags from the "B" Company terminal could go with me . . . someone had remembered that I was Signal trained! I also had glasses & compass, the latter proving invaluable later that same night. For tired men - heavy loads!

I would have appreciated far more information, particularly of the enemy positions, but as it was not forthcoming extreme caution was dictated from the start. This we found was not so difficult as the terrain was such that to make any headway at all rifles had to be slung, and we were compelled to move in single file. Frequent rest in our semi-exhausted condition was imperative. Nevertheless by about 1100 we had reached the first crest at about 1200 ft and the whole vista of point 1634 was before us. Also through the glasses I could see laterally about 800 yards away - the khaki clad forms of Australian infantry. But what country to cover! We must needs go down into a wadi at least 300 feet and then up the other side. The consensus of opinion was that it was going to be even worse than that which we had already climbed.

Just as we were ready to move forward again a very heavy bombardment was directed towards the Australian position both by 75mm and mortars. The latter appeared to be registering far better than the shelling which was either striking the cliff-like face below them or going harmlessly overhead into the valley to the rear. The guns that were firing could be seen away to the north below us. I would have been glad of an arty OP of our own at that time! As, so far, our presence had not been spotted we made no effort, with such an obvious target as a pair of flags, to make contact to the rear and we pushed on carefully, over the ridge down into the wadi. At least we would not be seen until we were close to the Australian position. So it proved. A little later we heard sporadic firing above us with very meagre but controlled fire from the Australian position. A very good indication that they were running short on SAA. We climbed as quickly as possible, but still required our hands for the task of climbing and the maintenance of balance. There were ample signs of discarded French equipment etc to indicate that some hard fought skirmishes had taken place during the immediate past. We approached within hailing distance of the Australians and I went forward. Identities settled, the platoon moved in and as they did so we came under another barrage accompanied this time with a ground attack by infantry. This one, though strong, was very uncoordinated indeed and with a few bandoliers quickly distributed the rapid but controlled fire from the combined forces dispelled the attack almost as soon as it had started. It was nearly 1300 before I realised that there were officers around and I was able to report correctly. Such was the discipline of both sides that 10

platoon fitted naturally into any vacant cover that could be found to assist in fending off yet another attack upon the Australian position. I reported to Captain Alan Murchison who commanded this tenuous position in the hills. It was a natural position that had been made into a sangar-like, miniature fortress almost at the peak of 1634. To the south east could be seen a lake which I afterwards discovered to be Lake Bouharet. Any attack must come from the flanks as the immediate front and rear faces were almost straight down. It had been captured by Capt Murchison the previous night on their third successive night attack. Like us, the Australians were showing outward signs of near exhaustion, but the spirit was high now they had at least a few more rounds of .303. We had grave reservations crossing that ground by day - the Aussies had attacked across it THREE times at night, and some of the men at that sangar had been on all 3 attacks!

Finally off-loading all ammunition we had 89 bandoliers, nearly 900 rounds in magazines, 50 M36 grenades and our loaded rifles. Every man had carried his whack and nobody had complained on that arduous journey. The 14 bottles of water were handed over, each of us retaining 1 tin of bully and 2 packs of biscuits. Captain Murchison voiced surprise that I had been sent up and when I pointed out that I had been prepared to go to the ridge to the North, he smiled and commented that my return was somewhat fraught with 'danger' as the ridge I had pointed out was now occupied by a strong force (he estimated about a Bn) of Vichy French and another was on either flank. Forward but below us were at least 6 tanks, together with a mass of artillery. Prognosis v.e.r.y uncertain indeed! I had no hesitation in placing myself under his command. With a "pleased to have you" he directed me to the left flank. There were not as far as I could see any LMGs in the position, and in that terrain where no field of fire was possible I gave instructions that the Bren was only to be used in an automatic rifle role - and only when an obvious target presented itself. Brown could be relied upon to follow those orders implicitly. His no. 2 was also by name Brown. Both from the same area of one of the Home Counties they were, according to Platoon rumour, gamekeeper and poacher respectively. One thing is for sure they were both excellent field-craftsmen. Country born myself I could appreciate the quiet almost casual way they moved across ground. One of the 'characters' of that platoon was by name Leadbetter. A typical anti-disciplinarian he came to Ten when he was RTU from the 50/51st Commando for which he had volunteered when they were formed. His FCS read like a 'bible', but I had no problems with him and he became a very accomplished platoon runner. He could be depended upon to know the 'location' of anything required, but above all he was a damn good fighting man!

A little later, about 1400 or so, came another of those very badly coordinated attacks by Vichy infantry with the artillery again using up ammunition to little advantage. The mortars were the main trouble and throughout they were very accurate and casualties were caused. The ground attack, as before, was stopped by concentrated controlled fire. The Vichy, permitted to get within 20-30 yards, were devastated by the well aimed rapid fire and withdrew very much more rapidly than they had advanced upon us. A number of

these attacks occurring during the next 1½ hours were repelled. During all the afternoon we had been pestered by sniping fire coming across the reverse slope of the hill from about 200 yards. Some of this was automatic. I put the Bren on to it, still on single shot, to fire at the flash whenever it was seen. This must have had some effect as later the firing became very spasmodic and finally ceased altogether.

By this time I had had a full talk with Capt Murchison and had realised that he had with him about 30 men, including 2 other Officers, Lieuts Hildebrandt and Williams. About 1445, maybe just before (my watch had been broken by a rock splinter), Lt Hildebrandt escorted an Australian with a white flag to Capt Murchison. He had been captured the night before and had a note from the Vichy Commander demanding we "surrender by 1700 hrs, or we would be blasted from our position." The reply was a verbal one to the effect that "if he (the Vichy Cmdr) wanted this position he was welcome to try to take it." When the courier was out of sight he called all the platoon leaders together. The note and his reply, were explained together with his not too optimistic appreciation of our position. He was I had discovered too good a soldier not to appreciate that our position was hopeless. We had no ancillary support, and no way of soliciting it either. Our ammunition supply was low again, and, in spite of strict discipline that had applied, not enough water to last overnight. A check afterwards indicated an average of 22 rounds per man, plus one magazine on the Bren. Of grenades my platoon had 4 (2 on me) and 6 between the Australians. This, though full use had been made of captured arms and grenades! We had to get out of it.

During a lull I obtained Capt Murchison's permission to make an attempt to get into touch with anyone who may have been on the look-out to the south. He agreed and for 15 minutes or more, until it was obvious that the rock behind which I was sheltered was beginning to be a target for a couple of mortars, I sent in Morse the letters AA interspersed with the last known code-names of the Queen's and the 2/3rd. To no avail. Finally I was ordered to stop.

At about 1630 another of those minor nuisance value attacks was made. This time across my own immediate front. A gun and crew had under cover of those rocks approached to within 20 feet of me. He was threatening the right Australian flank and I do not believe that the gunners realised that they were so close to us. Throwing one of my grenades I actually dropped it on the rock, but it rolled off to their rear exploding, as we then thought, harmlessly. The gun barrel was in full view, but even though two well-placed shots hit it sideways it appeared to have no effect so I prepared to launch the last grenade. This time I let the lever go counting 1, 2, 3 before I let it drop on the top of the rock. It was a perfect 'launch'! It dropped onto the gun. MISFIRE! After at least 15 seconds we saw the grenade just pitched to the front of the gun's position and a hasty scrambling backward. An Australian soldier just as casually walked out, picked up the grenade and threw it after them. In my service career it was my first grenade misfire --- and no guncotton or detonator with me! Though that grenade was lustily thrown and must have dropped very hard indeed we heard no reassuring detonation. It was not our problem

as by now 1700 had come, and just as promptly the threatened bombardment commenced. As before the artillery was no very great threat but the mortars did keep us down until the expected ground assault came. As before no cooperation between any of the attacking ground troops, who when permitted to come close were just as easily dispelled. The mortars had caused us, on the extreme left flank, to withdraw a few yards into a less exposed position. During the withdrawal of the Vichy ground troops the mortars again opened up, some of the bombs falling amongst their own troops. This must indeed have been bad for their morale as, apart from those snipers that had opened up again, no other attack was made upon us. This was just as well as an ammunition count indicated we were down to 10 rounds per man. I ordered the few rounds from the Bren to be issued around and gave instructions that the Bren should be stripped. The barrel was placed against a rock and an attempt was made to bend it - certainly the forward sight was broken off and all parts were tossed to the wind over the cliff at the rear. The magazines, deliberately damaged, followed. The only thing retained was the block which I carried out later with me.

It was now close to 1830 hrs and disconcertingly we could see a ring of infantry gradually encircling our position. Observation also indicated that there was every indication that the Queen's were pulling out, and that any counter-attack which we had half expected from that area was not going to materialise. What was even worse was the apparent withdrawal of other Australian troops, under the command of a Capt Hutchinson, who were no longer in sight. We were on our own! About 1845 Capt Murchison called us together and in his appreciation pointed out that his own Regt had no reserves to assist us, and that in fact he was at that time commanding the remnants of 3 companies. As it looked as if 16 Bde was withdrawing and re-grouping, they would not be likely to mount another counter-attack that evening. Withdrawal was the only thing we could do. This must be after dark in the hope that the winds would that night howl their worst and cover the noise, however slight, of the withdrawal. We had 4 wounded, two of whom were stretcher cases and would have to be carried. One of these was an officer of whose presence I was until then unaware, by name Lieut Brown. On the other hand, Alan Murchison went on, IF a counter attack was launched then our presence was of extreme importance and without it such attack must stand a poor chance of succeeding. He therefore had come to the conclusion that if no news, or warnings, of such an attack was known to us by 2230 we would pull out. I cannot recall now how the final escape route was decided upon. We had to go down, and in the steepest part, but how far? The Vichy French in their attacks that afternoon always avoided the front, and the only reason we could accept was that it was too steep for a frontal assault. We hoped therefore that it would be at best lightly guarded. I had previously mentioned to Capt Murchison that I believed that we could get out on to the valley floor by getting into the wadi below us, turning to the North with it, then moving East around it into the positions "B" Coy had reached on the 24th. I had taken some bearings that day, and made notes and a few rough calculations on a note book with a protractor, and

a few more bearings from our position had convinced me that I was correct. He had listened to this closely, had made a few calculations of his own and indicated that that was the route that we would take, as any other would be an impossible ordeal for the wounded and we were all approaching complete exhaustion ourselves. We might have made it to the hills, but the wounded never. Once at the bottom we would still be 3 miles from the nearest known water at Yaafour, and we would have to get there before dawn. It was to be hoped that any vacuum created by the withdrawal of our ground troops would not be filled too quickly by the Vichy French.

So, our plan of departure agreed we returned to our own section area, to instruct all as to orders, route etc. Each man was permitted to eat anything he had, as he desired, and to drink a small amount of the very sparse water supply, which in most cases was no more than a mere egg-cup full. We of the Queen's were the best off as at least we had had our fill before departure that morning plus our full water bottles. When we arrived that morning I understood that the Australians were down to a collective supply of 6-7 bottles full, this with the 14 bottles that we had taken up gave them an average of  $\frac{3}{4}$  each for that whole day.

As darkness fell everyone withdrew into a compact group in the sangar. This was done stealthily and without noise. All were quickly accounted for except Lt Hildebrandt, a Cpl Wilson and his section. Neither could they be found in spite of thorough searches. Afterwards it was discovered that Lt Hildebrandt had been severely wounded in a mortar attack and later had died. He had posted Cpl Wilson and his men on an OP without informing HQ of their location. Cpl Wilson stayed at his post all night until dawn when he discovered the mountain top was teeming with Vichy French. He surrendered and was later released under the Armistice terms. By 2230 when the order to pull out was given it had become bitterly cold to men dressed only in shirts and shorts. Just before the actual move out occurred one of those incidents, minor at the time, that nevertheless appear to remain firmly fixed in the mind for ever more. We had heard all around us signs that the enemy were placing out regular probing patrols. We maintained a complete silence. One of them came to within 4 feet of our position and stood above us on a large rock. A Senegalese, he appeared, in his long French style overcoat, to be all of 8ft tall, menacing, in the backdrop of starlight! Either Leadbetter or myself could have taken him with ease with either gun or bayonet but to have broken the utter silence would have been a mistake impossible to rectify afterwards. After trying to listen above a howling-gale wind, he withdrew. I always had the impression afterwards that Leadbetter, when he spoke of it, really wanted to have a go and never forgave my restraint! So to our withdrawal . . . .

2230, with Lt Williams and myself leading followed by 10 platoon and 2 Australians to act, if necessary, as runners, we started out. Every foot had to be investigated before moving on to the next, and though from bearings taken earlier we had a good idea of direction, it was impossible to move in a straight line. Often the fact that we were on the correct path was only indicated by the fact that we were going down. Just after the start there came a flurry of fire from the top of the mountain.

Capt Murchison, who was bringing up the rear from which direction mainly we expected to be attacked, permitted Pte Everett of 2/5 to go back thinking that the missing section may have been on the top. However, he returned soon afterwards - wounded in the arm. There was no sign of anyone on the top. It was assumed that it was some Vichy outpost who, hearing the noise, if any, of our movement had fired in the general direction of the noise. So we moved on. In single file, closed right up for contact, we clambered our careful way - often halted to seek slight detours and, as often, the leaders abortively returning to find another way. The lower we descended the darker it became and the more noisy became the wind as it blew down into that now quite deep depression. Finally we came to the point where I was sure we had to turn to the north and, after a short discussion with Lt Williams, I took two of my own men and 1 Australian and probed forward whilst the remainder sought a well needed rest. After about 250 yards I was sure that I was on the right track as the wadi, into which I had dropped, had already commenced to turn to the east again, and I could see the lower floor of the 'valley' and away to the north east the shadows of a smaller range of hills. Leaving my two scouts I returned with the Australian to the main body. By this time Capt Murchison had come forward and I explained what I had seen and heard, also that about 200 yds down was a suitable place for him to consolidate whilst I went forward to the track which by now I was positive was only about 500 yards or so away. Leaving the Australian guide to lead the main body Lt. Williams and myself went on ahead again. Picking up my two scouts we probed forward for another 350 or so yards and finally came to the track. Listening carefully nothing could be heard except the wind, which on the now wider part of the lower slopes did not feel so fierce - though just as loud. Having made the arrangement that, if after 15 minutes they had heard nothing, the main body would close up to us, we awaited its arrival. Lt Williams with one man went back 100 yards or so. After a period of time which seemed to us waiting like hours we heard the very slight sounds of the main body filtering very quietly through the lower slopes. Finally it was reported "all arrived." The first hurdle was over. The climb down had been a rugged one, and no-one came off that mountain without an abrasion of some kind or another. What it must have been for the wounded I can only guess, but no one heard complaints of any kind. Those that did the carrying must also have been gifted with the agility of goats to have performed the work they had done. Relatively, in the front and choosing the way we had had the easier task.

The time was close to 1 a.m. It had taken us 2½ hours to make that descent and though we still had at least 3 miles to go to our objective we at least could breathe sighs of some relief. Resting in silence for about 5 minutes we recommenced our journey. About a half mile down the track my scouts reported that they had located bundles of blankets and large packs at the side of the track. We identified them as belonging to "D" Company HQ of our own unit. I have often wondered since if they were recovered and how they got into that position? The progress was not fast, as knowing the approximate locations of the various forward Companies, each was investigated as we approached. This included the wadi in which I knew Bn HQ to

have been. Complete blank! The unit had certainly withdrawn, and to which position could only be guessed. Hopefully we continued towards Yaafour, and after another 90 minutes or so we reached the approaches of it - seeing it silhouetted in the starlight. The Northern side of the village, from which we approached, we had seen in daylight once before - in the early hours of the 24th as we attacked through it. We knew that the stream which could now be heard very close ran through higher ground creating its own little valley. It was into this that we headed. It was very close to 4 a.m. before all the Australian troops were in the area. 2 large caves were located and turned into a Headquarter location. Thirsts quenched, nearly everyone was soon asleep - though sentries were posted! One of the Australians who had been carried had been left behind about 1½ miles along the track. As daylight broke a truck could be seen about 200 yards to the North along the track. How it had been missed as we passed is one of the little mysteries of war. It was a Queen's truck!

Two Australians got to work on it, but not before they discovered that it had been a ration wagon containing a full 'haybox' of tea still quite warm and a half full container of Bully hash. These were taken back to the group and a fire was quickly made in one of the caves using camel thorn as fuel. The tea was re-heated after which the stew was put on. At least we would be able to go on for a while. Soon the truck was working and two volunteers went back along the track for the wounded man. Returning, the truck was hidden and everyone was instructed to get as much rest as they could. The day passed fitfully, interspersed by the periodic changing of sentries. Sporadic shelling was still taking place both in front of us to the North and on to the ridge to the South towards Qatana. We could only guess where our own troops were located. About 3 miles to the South the ground rose into a ridge hiding the higher ground of the Jebel AANTAR. As the occasional shell was falling from the French onto that ridge, it was safe to assume that someone, possibly of 16 Bde was behind it. It was unsafe to move by day as we knew, therefore it was decided to move out during the night. Again 2230 was set for the move.

Refreshed after the 'facilities' of the stream . . . adequate drinking water - ice cold - the concession of being able to thoroughly wash after nearly a week of very strict water rationing, and a full day's rest turned tired men into soldiers once again - almost ready for anything that might happen over the few miles still to go. With the track as a guide we set out this time with the Australians leading and 10 platoon bringing up the rear. It was 0030 when the word came back that we had made contact with the 2/3rd Australian Infantry, and in another 20 minutes we were in a laager position within their HQ with mugs of hot tea and, with borrowed mess-tins, a hot meal. Blankets and spare overcoats were issued from somewhere (known only to a beneficent Australian 'Q'), and all of the returned soldiery bedded down. 10 Platoon finally returned to our own unit late that afternoon in our Bn "B" Echelon position, to be welcomed by Major (QM) "Buzz" F. Waspe. It was good to be back again even if it was a dirty old dusty wadi! We rejoined the main unit that evening "with the rations" followed by a thorough inquisition both by Regt'l and Brigade "I" and Staff. I remember little of that debriefing, except

that delicious double whisky I was given by a certain Staff member of Brigade who is, I'm happy to say, still with us.

That was, unhappily, more or less the end of my association with 10 platoon as two days later following a visit to the M.O. Capt H. J. McCann RAMC (Jock) I was on my way, with a high fever, back down the line - finally reaching 60th General Hospital in Jerusalem. I remember nothing at all of the trip except a brief spell of consciousness when we arrived at Amman Station.

Thus ended 10 Platoon's service with the A.I.F. Their service over those days of late June are written up in the 2/3rd Bn. History and, though I personally think we could have had a little extra appreciation for the help we brought with that extra ammunition, food and water, I hasten to add I respect their reticence - as during those few days I learned to understand a little of just what made them 'tick'. They were certainly 'different' from any other soldier I had met - completely so. They had the ability to laugh, with a self-mocking humour, at the absurdity of the situation even when that had the stench of death about it. I can only, 40 odd years distant, salute them all with the assurance that the 14 men who that day made up 10 Platoon 2/Queen's also did on the day we left them.

Dare I with hindsight, agree with the official historian of the 2/3rd? That had Brigadier Lomax, commanding the 16th Bde, permitted a minimum of a company to reinforce our position, or had he insisted that the abortive effort to supply us with an arty OP been duplicated, we could that day have cleared the Vichy French from those slopes - and the later casualties preceding the Armistice in that area avoided. The 16 Bde report of this action also says (sic) "Unfortunately essential parts of the OP wireless set had been lost on the way up and the OP was unable to make contact with the Battery. Had this support been available there is little doubt that the objective could have been held" . . . At least it is gratifying to read that. However it still does not explain why the expected terminal, supposedly ordered to look out for my platoon failed to make contact . . . perhaps one day I may discover . . . a few shells resulting would have been of immense moral support!

C. R. (Lofty) Mountjoy

### Salerno Letters

Dear Colonel Wilson

Reference your letter in 'Adscene' giving details of the Regimental Salerno Reunion.

I would deem it an honour if you could offer my congratulations and respect to your members at the reunion. I have many memories of Salerno as I had the privilege of commanding the Bofors of the 'Beach Brick', which for lack of aerial targets were used for ground-shoots and my - very illegal - diary records how lonely the beach was and how happy I was to see ". . . the Queens coming ashore."

Having served with X Corps from Alamein onward your Regiment was no stranger and 56 (Br) Div. would have been the poorer without them.

Yours sincerely,  
J. Williams, Capt. R. A. (Retd.)

Dear Colonel Wilson

In August 1941 I was posted as C/E Chaplain to the 1st Bn. The Princess Louise (Kensington) Regt, and in August 1942 I was attached to the 2/7 Queen's Royal Regt, 169 Bde, 56th (London) Division in Shornecliffe and went with them to Irak, Enfidaville and the Salerno Landing. I recall many officers and men who gave their lives in these two campaigns.

My purpose in writing to you now is to say that I would be most grateful if it could be arranged that, sometime during the Salerno Reunion, my good wishes could be given to all present and hope that the Reunion will be successful in every way.

Yours sincerely,

(Rev.) Arthur J. Radford (Retd.)

### Salerno Again

From: Capt. W. A. Williams, 2/6 Queen's 1944/6  
Dear Captain Brooks,

In June this year my wife and I enjoyed a holiday at Le Axdie Hotel, Marina di Aequa, Vico Equense, near Sorrento, - our third visit.

The owner, Fernando Savarese and his charming wife (she was Violetta Elvin prima ballerina at Covent Garden in the 1950's) gave us the customary warm welcome and several evenings we spent sitting on the terrace chatting to them. He mentioned he could remember as a schoolboy acting as interpreter for British troops billeted in his parents' house in Vico Equense. They were, he recalled, resting and training after the rigours of Salerno and the advance over the Naples Plain. When I asked if he could remember the Black Cat sign his enthusiasm was remarkable. "Queen's" he kept saying "We had the Officers' mess and the Sergeants' mess in our house."

He and Violetta live in this house - or to be precise, the top floor and terrace of this house - Villa Maria, Corso Filangieri, Vico Equense. They invited us to drinks one evening there - a beautiful place, the terrace about 200 feet above the sea and looking down on to their hotel about a mile away. He keeps a sedulous eye on the staff through his field glasses! He showed us where the Adjutant had his office, the terrace outside the Sergeants' mess, the large terrace (at street level) outside the Officers' mess, the archway to the corso over which flew the Union Jack with a sentry either side. Finally he pointed to a small room leading from the terrace where he said the Padre set himself alight in bed one night.

From the Regimental History, it seems evident to me that the Officers were from 1/5, 1/6 or 1/7 Battalions forming 131 Brigade. 169 Brigade did not visit Vico. I wonder if anyone can remember Villa Maria? If so I am sure Fernando would very much like to hear from them.

P.S. I happened to have a Queen's tie with me which I gave to Fernando. He was quite overcome. He is not going to wear it, he's going to have it framed!

Editor's footnote: This hotel is about 25 miles from Salerno. It looks and sounds a very lovely place. Details of costs etc can be obtained from Brompton Travel Ltd., 206 Walton Street, South Kensington, SW3 2JP. A warm welcome for a very pleasant stay would obviously be enjoyed.

### Happy Landing

'Who's this descending from the skies?  
Is it an angel in disguise,  
Clad in an aviator's suit,  
Suspended from a parachute?'

With these deathless lines a local poet saluted the achievement of Mrs. Hannaford's parachute jump on 30 July 83 in aid of the Royal East Sussex Hospital. Tasha Hannaford, the wife of Lt Colonel Tony Hannaford, late The East Surrey Regiment, and the mother of Rex Sumner, late 3 Queen's, got to hear that efforts were being made to raise money by sponsored parachute jumps to buy a heart machine for the hospital. She unhesitatingly volunteered and arranged to undergo the preliminary training.

When the appointed day came, the party was taken to Lympne airfield, but the wind was so high it was not possible to make any jumps. The next day brought another disappointment, but on the third day the plucky amateurs did in fact parachute from their Cessna aircraft. Mrs. Hannaford made a perfect landing, and her jump raised over £700 for the project.

P.G.E.H.

### Regular Forces Employment Association

The task of the Association, as part of the Forces Resettlement Service, is to assist all non-commissioned men and women of the three Services with all aspects of their civilian resettlement, but particularly in helping them to find employment.

The services are free, and ex-Regulars may use them as often as they wish throughout their working life.

The Association's network of forty Branch Offices covers the United Kingdom and their addresses and telephone numbers can be obtained from Unit/Ship Resettlement Officers; Corps; Regimental and Service Associations; Post Offices, Job Centres and local telephone directories.

The Employment Officers, all ex-Regulars, maintain close contact with local employers, housing authorities etc., and with officials of the Employment and Training Divisions of the Manpower Services Commission.

### The Quetta Earthquake 1935

Late in 1934, the 1st Bn The Queen's Royal Regt. moved from N. China to Quetta, India in what is now Pakistan. Quetta lies at 5,000 ft. in a deep valley surrounded by mountains and commands the important routes to the Bolan Pass and the Afghan border. Known in those days as the "Aldershot of India", it was a large garrison town with the troops in widely scattered barracks on the mountain sides overlooking the town. Apart from the Queens, the garrison included a battalion of West Yorks, units of artillery, tanks, signals, medical corps, etc., a large contingent of R.A.F. and battalions of Gurkhas, Sikhs, Punjabis, Hyderabads, plus units of Indian Army Cavalry. The G.O.C. was General Carslake, who later proved such an excellent leader as to earn the highest respect and admiration from all who served in his command.

In spite of much military activity, most of us were soon bored with life centred round a small town. India seemed unexciting and we yearned for the high-life we'd been used to in Tientsin and Peking. We were soon to be literally shaken out of our boredom!

On the night of 30/31st May 1935, the battalion was on a night exercise and about 3.5 a.m. had come down out of the hills and were marching along the valley bottom some miles away from the town. There was suddenly a tremendous roaring, the ground heaved and those who were not thrown off balance, hurled themselves to the ground. My first dazed impression was that we'd somehow wandered on to a railway track and were in the path of an express train, enlightenment coming when Capt. Oxley-Boyle, then Adjutant, called out, "all right chaps, it's only an earthquake!". We plodded on up the hillside to White Barracks and apart from heaves and tremors which turned the stomach over, arrived safely and were dismissed at about first light. Thankfully flopping on to our beds with thoughts of a short rest, then breakfast, we were almost immediately called outside and carrying rifles plus 50 rounds of ammunition, were doubled down the hillside to the town.

Rounding a bend that led into Bruce Road, Quetta's main street, we saw with amazement that what had been houses, shops etc. was a huge pile of rubble, with dead and injured lying everywhere and distraught survivors wailing and making a hell of a din. Later estimates were that 30,000 had died in the town itself and 56,000 in the surrounding district. Military personnel, being situated well above the valley, were more fortunate, for apart from the tragic deaths of 56 R.A.F. men, we all survived. It seems worthy of note that practically all the damage was done in that first great shock which, as I remember, could not have lasted more than a few seconds!

The rest of that first day was spent in rescue work, digging for survivors amongst the tottering ruins made even more dangerous by the sudden tremors that kept occurring. Many were rescued and there were no serious casualties amongst the troops. A refugee camp and first aid post was set up on the race-course and as the day grew hotter, it was necessary to set some of us on loading the dead on to mule carts to be taken away for disposal well outside the town. Incidentally, a huge funeral pyre was well alight before it was remembered that Mohammedans bury their dead and a religious riot almost occurred.

Matters were further complicated when large numbers of Pathans came down from the hills in search of loot etc., hundreds of them even arriving before us. Martial Law was declared and the following day the town sealed off with barbed wire and troops with orders to shoot on sight at any sign of looting. Gurkhas picketed the hills and no doubt but for their great courage and efficiency, the situation could have become more critical.

During the remaining summer months we were kept busy for, apart from the main task of providing guards and outposts around the town's perimeter, we had our own domestic affairs to see to. The badly cracked barracks were uninhabitable and, with the aid of tanks and hawsers for the final demolition, we had to remove roofs, doorways, windows etc. ourselves. Then came the task of building "Wanna" huts, merely large tent tops with bricked in side walls and fireplaces and these had to be built by the section who were to occupy them - I still wonder where all the amateur bricklayers, plasterers, etc. came from! Anyway, by the time the first snows came we were all snugly housed and I, personally, much preferred this to living in large barrack rooms. Married families were sent home

and food was rather severely rationed, but by and large, it wasn't a bad winter at all.

During that summer we were visited by the Viceroy and the Queen's were chosen for the guard of honour. Never, in many years of service with a regiment that specialised in what we, rather irreverently, termed "bull", did I see a smarter turn out than on that occasion. The R.S.M. being the largest and smartest man in the battalion formed up as right-hand man of the front rank and it was really something to see the great man himself on parade bereft of his sword and carrying a rifle and bayonet!

Looking back nearly fifty years after and with war experiences that somehow tend to make the Quetta 'Quake rather a small event, I still feel a surge of pride that I was there. Apart from our World War I veterans, we were mostly young and inexperienced with certainly no training with which to cope with a disaster of this scale. Yet, cope we did and I saw acts of courage that in war would have earned decorations and indeed, some were awarded even then, perhaps the most notable being "Darkie" Henshaw's George Cross. True, the reaction brought mental breakdowns and nervous disorders here and there, but taken on the whole, there was a wonderful response to an extremely difficult situation and I felt a spirit of comradeship then experienced for the first time. To most of us it was our first contact with sudden and often hideous death on a large scale, our first shots in anger and these experiences alone must have helped us to cope with what lay ahead in 1939-45.

A. J. King

### The Queen's Reunion

As a poet I am rather dim  
But I would like to say  
How proud we were to march again  
On our re-union day.

Getting on a bit in years  
Thin hair and time-lined face  
We had an army bearing  
To our Regiment's no disgrace.

Of course the band and drums helped  
Of them what can one say  
Their playing was perfection  
They really made our day.

The reason for our visit  
With some almost in tears  
was again to meet old comrades  
Some unseen for years

Boasting of our Regiments  
"Oh no, mine was the best".  
Afraid I still tease Major Reed  
About the East and West.

It matters not what badge you wore  
Nor from whence you came  
Keep thinking you were in the best  
and glory in its name.

So God bless all you Queensmen  
Especially those today  
They've much they must live up to  
I think we showed the way.

T. R. Kienzle

### The Thirty First Regiment Colours, 1827 - 1848

The Regimental History of The East Surrey Regiment records that on 7th March 1827, Lady Amherst, the wife of the Governor General of India, presented new Colours to the 31st Regiment. The previous stand had been lost at sea in the burning of the East Indiaman KENT two years previously. We are indebted to Mr. Eugene Byrne for an extract from Edward Ward Walter Raleigh's 'The Log of a Griffin' which records the Governor General's visit to Meerut for the occasion.

This is an eye-witness's account of the ceremony. 'At half past four o'clock we went to witness the presentation of new Colours to the 31st Regiment by Lady Amherst. On arrival at the parade ground a salute of artillery was fired. On the Governor General and ladies approaching, the 31st, drawn up in line, gave a General Salute by presenting arms, with the band playing 'God Save the King'. General Reynolds and Lieutenant Colonel Cassidy then riding up to the saluting base gave Lady Amherst the necessary instructions, and delivered to Her Ladyship the new Colours. The Regiment now marched round, the band playing the 31st March, and formed into a centre and two side columns, Lord and Lady Amherst and Staff being in the middle.

The two junior ensigns now advanced up to Lady Amherst, and kneeling received from her the new Colours, on which the Regiment gave three cheers. Lord Amherst now on the part of Lady A. made a very feeling speech, in which he alluded to the melancholy occurrences under which the Regiment was deprived of its old Colours. He expressed his conviction that under every circumstance of warfare the 31st would support the representatives of those banners under which they had often gloriously conquered. The Regiment then formed line and again presented arms. The Artillery saluted and the Regiment marched past with their new Colours flying and their band playing the 31st March.'

That evening the officers of the 31st entertained the officers of the garrison and their ladies. Some 230 ladies and gentlemen sat down to dinner in the Officers Mess where the new Colours were on display. After dinner, dancing commenced and was kept up till morning. Before leaving Meerut two days later, the Governor General attended a review of the 31st Foot, 'after which the officers held a beautiful breakfast, where all the gay and fashionable were assembled.'

The Presentation of Colours ceremony was not so very different from today's, except there was no religious service and the Colours were not consecrated. According to Milne's 'The Standards and Colours of the Army', the practice of consecrating Colours was not general in the early part of the 19th Century. It would be interesting to know more about the Regimental March played by the 31st at this Presentation of Colours. It was not Lord Charles Montagu's Huntingdonshire March which is believed to be associated with Charles, the son of the 7th Duke of Manchester, who was born in 1861. Unfortunately, the Regimental History makes no mention of Regimental Music.

The confidence expressed by the Governor General in the 31st Regiment's gallant deeds under their new Colours was fully justified, for this was the stand carried in the Sutlej Campaign of 1846. They are now laid up in Canterbury Cathedral.

### An Unforgettable Character

The following may be of interest and provide a record of an unforgettable character who served with The Queen's Royal Regt.

#### Bandsman Thomas Lavin, MM

In February 1982 I received a letter from Mr. Ruthven Ryan of Massachusetts, U.S.A., who had long been trying to trace anyone who had known his father's half brother. Mr. Ryan's father, the late Capt. James Ryan, who served with The Queen's Royal Regt from 1917 until his transfer to the King's Own Royal Regt in 1925, had a half-brother named Thomas Lavin. After many enquiries through various record offices, etc. he was put in touch with our Regt. Museum and Major P. G. Hill gave him my name as having served with the 1st Bn between the two wars.

Fortunately, having served with Thomas "Paddy" Lavin as a fellow bandsman in Tientsin, N. China in 1933 and 1934, I not only knew him well but was able to meet Mr. Ryan when he visited England a few months later, give him a photo of the 1st Bn Band which included his "half-uncle" and tell him a lot about the man he'd been trying for so long to trace.

Bandsman Thomas Lavin MM, served with the Royal Irish Regt from 1912 to 1922, and after the regiment was disbanded, with The Queen's Royal Regt until his discharge in 1935. After his transfer he served at Stoughton Barracks and was posted to the 1st Bn on July 14th 1925. When the battalion was sent to India late in 1934, he was sent home and discharged the following year. Mr. Ryan has also established that he died in New Cross, London in October 1957.

"Paddy" Lavin was a great character, much liked and respected by all who knew him. In Tientsin he was Band storeman, lived in rather lofty dignity in the Stores, rarely turned in for band practice and only attended the more ceremonial parades, when we were treated to an impressive display of medals. Sometimes he'd wander into the barrack room and hold we young soldiers enthralled with service talk of years long past, but in his quiet and unassuming manner never mentioned any personal experiences and any attempt to switch him to talk of World War I failed completely. One of his stories which we could get him to repeat, was of an Irish regiment who, when on the N.W. Frontier, mutinied and was taken over by a Corporal who ran the regiment on very strict disciplinarian lines, holding his own daily "orders", dishing out punishment, etc. After a battle involving at least two infantry battalions with artillery support, he was shot along with the other ringleaders. Yet, such was "Paddy's" reticence that we never even suspected that he was there and it was not until last year that I learned from Mr. Ryan that he had served in the Royal Irish for 10 years until it was disbanded in 1922.

Such was "Paddy" Lavin, old soldier with a wealth of experience of considerable interest if only he could have been persuaded to talk of himself. There must be many alive today who knew him and if anyone should happen to read this, who knew him after his discharge until his death in 1957, both Mr. Ryan and myself would be delighted to hear from them.

A. J. King