

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

## Regimental Association Newsletter

*President*  
Colonel J.W. Sewell

*Chairman*  
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*Secretary & Editor*  
Lieutenant Colonel L.M. Wilson, MBE



**Number 41  
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Regimental Headquarters  
The Queen's Regiment  
Howe Barracks  
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### Editorial

As reported briefly in our November issue, the Regiment and particularly the museum, suffered a grievous loss in the death of Lt Col H.R.D. Hill, MBE. During his command of 1 QUEENS in Malaya I was his Signal Sergeant. As a former signals officer Colonel Hill was always so interested in all things to do with the Signal Platoon. His obituary appears in this issue.

A very successful annual reunion was held last November with a record attendance of all ranks, from all our old units. This year the reunion is again at The Union Jack Club, why not try and encourage another old mate to attend, I am sure he would enjoy the evening.

On May 31st our Annual Church Service is once again at Guildford Cathedral, it is an ideal opportunity to say a few prayers, meet old friends and perhaps visit the museum at Clandon in the afternoon.

I have received a number of letters thanking me for the Newsletter, this is always nice to hear, but you, the readers are the people who make the Newsletter by sending in your articles and letters of interest. If you send an article please try and send a photo, (with names) as this always makes easier reading. I will always try and publish, but sadly sometimes your articles are too long. I also like to keep a few 'snippets' over for the next editions. It is always very good to hear of old comrades keeping in touch with each other, but perhaps of more importance finding old friends after many years. This is the main purpose of The Association and The Newsletter, so do "Keep in Touch" and try and encourage more to join.

Finally, a word on benevolence. If you know of any old comrade from our old Regiments who is in need of help please do contact either one of your branch associations or me, and we will do all we can to assist.

Les Wilson

### Can you Help?

Mrs. H. Pritchard has written from 2 Blackthorne Road, Guildford, on behalf of her brother in Canada. Her brother served pre-war with the regular battalions of the Queen's and he is trying to locate some of his old mates. Some names mentioned are Harry Drayton, Peter Scott, Ron Smith and a chap named Sedding. Any information would be appreciated.

### NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTIONS

1. Subscriptions for this year (1987) Newsletter are now overdue. The subscription remains at £ 1.60 per year.
2. No action is required by
  - a) those who have already paid in advance;
  - b) members of the Officers Club whose Club subscription covers the cost of the Newsletter;
  - c) those who pay by Bankers Order, but please check you are paying the correct amount.
3. If you would like the Newsletter sent to a friend, please send his name and address, and enclose £ 1.60 for a year's subscription

### KEEP IN TOUCH

### President's Notes

My last notes were written before the Association's parade at Putney Heath last October, and I would therefore like to record my gratitude for the very fine turn-out of members on that day. It is of note too that our parade was distinguished by 7 DSOs displayed by 5 of our members, and 4 other officers with another 6 DSOs might easily have been present. I doubt whether any other Regiment could match this.

The passage of another six months regrettably means that more members leave our ranks, and these are of course recorded elsewhere. I, however, mention here Lieutenant-Colonel Bob Hill since he had been Chairman of the Association for 14 years. He was also the distinguished Commanding Officer of 1 Queen's for most of the time in Malaya, and recently for the last three years had been Chairman of our Museum. His sudden death was a great shock, and he is much missed.

I am though very pleased, and grateful to them, to welcome Colonel Bill McConnell as our new Association Chairman and Brigadier Michael Clarke as Chairman for the Museum - both have given great service to the Regiment over many years, and it is good that they have agreed to continue this service for us.

While 1987 will be a quieter year for the Association than 1986, I hope many more of you will enjoy increased companionship and pleasure at the various Association and Regimental events during the year. These events are listed by our Secretary elsewhere.

Finally, I record again our appreciation to our Honorary Secretary. Nothing is too much trouble for him, and he works tirelessly on increasing numbers of benevolence cases, on roping in more members, and sets the highest standards of dedication - we are very very grateful.

Toby Sewell

### Benevolence

During 1986 a total of 284 cases were investigated, 229 grants-in-aid were given and 9 cases carried forward to 1987 for various reasons.

A summary of grants paid from our funds is shown below:

Fund	No. of Cases	Amount
The Queen's Royal Regiment Charitable	103	£ 10587
The East Surrey Regiment Charitable	71	£ 7661
The Queen's Surreys Royal Regiment War Memorial	10	£ 1105
The East Surrey Regiment War Memorial	8	£ 1176
The Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment Charitable	36	£ 5860
Former 1st Bn The Queen's Royal Regiment Charitable	1	£ 50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>£ 26439</b>

The Association, on behalf of The Army Benevolent Fund administer 26 cases of ABF Supplementary Allowance, an increase of 6 with a further 8 cases under consideration by the A.B.F.

*Chapman 133/2 18/12/86 + Chapman 283713 62 14/1/87 dm 1987*



# FORECAST OF REGIMENTAL AND QUEEN'S SURREY ASSOCIATION EVENTS

1987



Date	Details of Event
31 May	The Regimental Annual Church Service, Guildford Cathedral. 1100 hrs.
12 June	3 Queen's march through Kingston-upon-Thames (POSTPONED due to General Election - further details later)
8 July	Queen's Surreys Golf Society versus Royal Marines (North Hants) (Details to members from Major Shepherd MC.)
12 July	The Queen's Regiment Grand Reunion, Basingbourn.
9 September	SALERNO DAY.
26 September	Museum 'Open Day' Clandon Park, 2 - 6 p.m.
8 October	Queen's Surrey's Golf Society Autumn meeting Richmond. (Details to members from Major Shepherd MC)
16 October	The Queen's Regiment Officers Club Cocktail Party, Banqueting House, London.
17 October	WOs and Sgts Past and Present Dinner, Basingbourn.
23 October	Queen's Surreys Officers Club Dinner, Simpson's-in-the-Strand, (Details to members).
24 October	6 Queen's OCA - Dinner Dance.
30 October	East Surrey Regiment OCA Annual Reunion, Battersea Town Hall. Details from S J Jupe, 68c Havelock Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 8MD.
5 November	Field of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey, London.
6 November	All Ranks Reunion, Union Jack Club, London (Details with this Newsletter).
8 November	Remembrance Day Parades.
20 December	THE BRITISH BATTALION DAY.

1988

10 February	SOBRAON DAY
13 February	6th Bn Queen's OCA - Dinner Dance.
19 March	Queen's Surrey's Regimental Trustees & Association Committee meeting, Clandon Park. Details to members from Hon. Secretary.
26 March	Annual Reunion Dinner, 2/7th Queen's. Details from Harry Neale (01-693-5074).
23 April	YPRES DAY
14 May	5 Queen's OMA Annual Dinner. Details from D. Mitchell (0483 - 232043)
1 June	THE GLORIOUS FIRST OF JUNE.
5 June <i>SUN</i>	Annual Church Service, <del>Canterbury</del> <i>Guildford</i> Cathedral.
10 or 17 July	The Queen's Regiment Annual Reunion.
9 September	SALERNO DAY Officers Club Ladies Luncheon.
8 or 15 October	WOs and Sgts Past & Present Dinner, Basingbourn.
28 October	East Surrey Regiment OCA Annual Reunion.
6 November	All Ranks Annual Reunion at Union Jack Club.

## ANNUAL REUNION 1986

### 5 Queen's OMA

The Remembrance Sunday Service at Holy Trinity, Guildford was attended by 30 members of the Old Members Association. The march past after the service was led by the Band of the Womens Royal Army Corps. It was a pleasure to march behind a good band. A wreath was laid in the church by Col J.W. Sewell on behalf of the Queens Royal Surrey Regimental Association, and Lt Col F.B. Herd laid a wreath at the War Memorial on behalf of 5 Queen's OMA.

In November 40 members of the Cranleigh TA 1939, later C Coy, held their dinner at Cranleigh Cricket Club. The guests, President Lady William Mullens, MO Mr. Pat Jobson and Rev. Castle were welcomed by the Chairman Les May. Jackie Patch has taken over as secretary and treasurer from Reg Hubbard who after 25 years as secretary has moved to Norfolk.

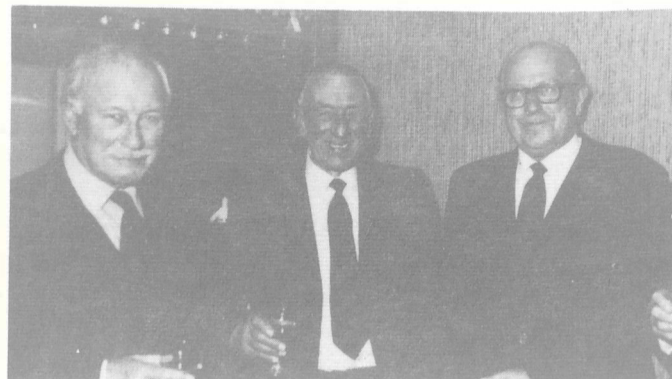
We look forward to seeing all our old members at our Annual Dinner on 16 May at Sandfield Terrace, and at the Regimental Service at Guildford Cathedral on Sunday 31 May.

Further information about 5 Queens OMA events can be obtained from Doug Mitchell, 3 Little Field Way, Fairlands, Guildford. (0483) 232043.

### CAN YOU HELP?

B. Neville, who served with The 1st Bn The Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment is trying to contact his old mates. Neville served in the Signal Platoon in Germany, U.K. and Hong-Kong. His address is 53 Zeus Lane, Purbrook, Portsmouth PO7 8AQ.

M.J. Healy is asking for news of his old comrades who served with him in C. Company 2/6th Queen's, before his transfer to 1/6th Queen's. Any reader who can help please write to Mr. Healy, 46 Walton Street, Southport, 4215, Queensland, Australia.



Top: Lt Col Bill Peet, Sid Waldron and Bill Elkins.  
Bottom: Brigadier Geoffrey Curtis and Colonel John Kealy.





## THE QUETTA EARTHQUAKE 1935

The 1st Battalion, The Queen's Royal Regiment was stationed at Quetta in north west India (now in Pakistan) in May 1935 when the city was struck by probably the worst earthquake in India's history. Most of the Battalion was out on training at the time, but immediately returned to undertake rescue and recovery. The Battalion was under the command of Lieutenant Colonel H.C.E. Hull, DSO, who subsequently received a Certificate from the Viceroy of India recording: "... the thanks of the Government of India (to the Battalion) ... for their share in the work of rescue and succour, which saved so many lives and mitigated so much suffering ...." Two soldiers of the Battalion L/Cpl G. Henshaw and Pte A. Brook were awarded the Empire Gallantry Medal (EGM), which medal was later converted to the George Cross by command of King George VI.

Colonel L.C. East, DSO, OBE, who was an officer of the Battalion at the time has written the following personal reminiscence.

An earthquake is an Act of God that, mercifully, does not appear to be one of the tribulations from which the British isles suffers. Those Britons who have travelled abroad for duty, for compassion or for any other reason may know what utter chaos is caused.

Quetta was one of the main military stations of the Indian Empire positioned to protect the British Raj from incursions by the wild, and often hostile, tribesmen living in the hills of Baluchistan. It lies on a plateau, surrounded practically entirely by hills with the main line of approach through the Bolan Pass from India, now Pakistan.

The earthquake struck at a few minutes after three on the morning of 31st May 1935. There were several shocks afterwards, some of them severe, but the main shock lasted for some twenty-five seconds and during those few seconds from 15,00 to 20,000 people lost their lives.

That night, the Battalion and an Indian Battalion were out on the Plain to the North of Quetta taking part in an inter-Battalion exercise. I was acting as an Umpire and as such was comfortably dozing in the back of a car which, to my astonishment, suddenly started to rock violently. In my dozey state, my first thought was that the car was running away backwards, the brakes having failed for some extraordinary reason: then, that my brother officers were taking the Mickey out of that favoured creature, the Umpire. On getting out of the car I found everyone looking towards Quetta, from which there were a few lights flickering and from whence there sounded a curious rumbling. As soon as it was possible, the exercise was abandoned and both Battalions marched back some twenty miles to their respective lines. Our Commanding Officer despatched officers to the City to find out what had happened. There was little doubt. The first casualty that one of these officers encountered was the Garrison Supply Depot, which contained all the reserve non-perishable rations for the Garrison, both British and Indian, and some of the perishable rations which were about to be issued.

The Depot was practically flat with all the stores an easy target for any light fingered looter. The Guard were not really in a condition to take any positive action. This situation was soon put right by a fresh Guard and a supply of tents.



*A part of the cordon wire round the City.*

The next few days were spent in digging dead bodies out of the mass of ruined mud buildings. The troops were magnificent; they were most of them young and the stench was appalling, while pulling or digging in the debris, following the clue of an exposed hand or foot was a real test of guts. No one who has not been in an Eastern city knows what the everyday atmosphere and stink is like; human and animal garbage and excreta, refuse of every description and rotting vegetation abound with few, if any, drains and clouds of flies thrown in for good measure. When to all this the foul odour of putrefying flesh is added, the stomach really revolts. In the hot sun, putrefaction sets in immediately after death. As soon as possible, first aid dressings were issued for use as gas masks.

I have already mentioned the several earthquake shocks that happened. On the second day, when the next most severe shock occurred, I was marching with a body of troops into the city. The reaction of the troops was immediate – it might have been in accordance with the Training Manual – they took cover in the nearest ditch, which luckily did not open up. The mules, carrying certain supplies, stood four square with their legs stretched out stiff and rigid. My own first thought was "but I didn't have anything to drink this morning"! I also, like a mule, stood stock still and lucky that I did for an enormous chasm had opened up a few feet in front of me.

After four days the City was closed except for patrols. The Battalion had provided security guards and patrols during the rescue operations. Looting had started almost at first light on 31st May. News spreads like wildfire in the East and tribesmen and predators from the surrounding villages soon gathered to see what they could collect. These guards and patrols were not too unpleasant in the daylight but at night they were frightening in the extreme.

You did not know what was around you or close to you. The City was soon completely surrounded by a high barbed wire barricade. Inside this there was a deadly silence, broken by a slight whimpering and the snarls of packs of wild, savage and half-starved Pariah dogs digging to gorge themselves on the dead flesh. On the other side were the dark hills, standing out faintly against the sky; there was no moon. One knew that the hills were filled with dark and swarthy tribesmen ready to rush down and stick into you a long, razor sharp knife. A rifle was their most prized form of loot.

Again, the men were magnificent. It is on occasions like this that the real worth of the British soldier stands out. While the men were thus occupied their wives gathered to help the overworked nursing staff in the hospitals and refugee camp. Some of these women had never seen anything worse than a cut finger; now no menial task was beneath them and no vivid imagination is required to picture what these tasks were.

When our duties of guarding the City were over and we had time to reconsider events, we all of us remembered the sort of sultry, oppressive silence on the evening of 30th May, as if a thunderstorm was brewing. Very few of our personal Indian retainers seemed to be about and there was a complete absence of birds; there was certainly very little sound of the former and absolutely none of the latter. We all felt and thought the same, so it cannot have been entirely imagination.

On the nights when we were not on duty we slept outside our bungalows; these were still standing but were badly cracked and could not be used or entered except for rapid visits. It was bitterly cold with a wind from the East that might have come straight off Mount Everest. We of course had to sleep in our clothes in case of sudden emergency and most of us had



**THE OFFICERS, QUETTA, 1935**

Back Row: 2/Lt. A.R.C. Matt, Lt. D.G. Loch, Lt. C.D.H. Parsons, Lt. B.E.I. Burton, 2/Lt. J.R. Terry, Lt. M.F.S. Sydenham-Clarke.  
Middle Row: Lt. M.V. Fletcher, Lt. H.S. Kelly, Lt. H.G. Duncombe, Lt. J. Sykes-Wright, Capt. J.F.K. Ponsford, Lt. L.C. East, Lt. J.A.R. Freeland, Lt. P.R. Terry, Lt. E.T.R. Jennings, Lt. W.H. Larkin, Lt. R.P. Mangles.  
Front Row: Capt. N.A. Willis, Capt. D.E. Bathgate, Major L.L. Welman, M.C., Major F.J. Jebens, M.C., Lt. Col. H.C.E. Hull, D.S.O., Capt. R.F.C. Oxley-Bayle, M.C., Major J.B. Coates, M.C., Capt. H.G.M. Evans, Major R.C. Haggard.



revolvers under our pillows. I remember thinking – “do I shoot if anything moves, will it be a friend, a cut-throat or merely my imagination?”

Many enquiries poured in from all over India as soon as the enormity of the situation was known, but visitors were discouraged and readily understood that their presence would be more hinderance than help. A few V.I.P.'s did however appear, probably for necessary reasons, and the Battalion had to provide one Guard of Honour at the station. For the third time, I wish to pay tribute to our soldiers. These young men might have been on parade for Guard Duty at Buckingham Palace; their turnout, marching, drill and steadiness were first class. They rose to the occasion though standing as they did on a cracked station year, surrounded by tumbledown buildings and knowing that they would shortly return to a by no means ideal existence. It may be mentioned that the single line railway, though damaged by the earthquake, had stood the shock well and was soon repaired and fit for use.



*A sentry watching the cordon wire.*

This short word picture has attempted to show what an earthquake was like to one who was present. It does not really portray the grief, tribulation and desolation that was caused. It has attempted to show what a small part of the British Army, male and female, did for one of the peoples governed by the British Raj. Doubtless the soldier of today would act in the same way, should occasion arise. It makes one realise how lucky one is to live in the British Isles where the worst disasters appear to be caused by floods or our own manmade follies.

LCE

#### 6th (Bermondsey) Bn. The Queen's Royal Regiment O.C.A.

A very successful Christmas Social was held aboard H.M.S. Belfast on the last weekend of November. This was a well attended function.

The annual Dinner/Dance held at the Union Jack Club in February was also a successful and well attended night. Although we would like to have seen more members attend.

At the end of May we will be entertaining our friends from Belgium. A full programme of events has been laid on for their benefit.

On July 12th it is the intention of 6th Queen's to run a coach from Bermondsey to Bassingbourn for the Grand reunion. Details will be available from the Secretary. 01-821 0028 after 1900 hrs except Sundays).

The Ladies night Dinner this year will be at the Union Jack Club Waterloo on Saturday October 24th.

JTB

#### 2/7th Battalion, The Queen's Royal Regiment

Under the presiding hand of Brigadier Maurice MacWilliam, 61 ex-members of the Battalion held their 41st Annual Reunion Dinner at the “Barley Mow”, Horseferry Road, SW1, on Saturday 28th March 1987. As always, we stood after the meal to remember “Absent Comrades”, both from wartime and those by name more recently deceased. Snippets from messages of apology were read out and good wishes for recovery sent to our ailing members – anno domini also seems to be having a wider effect, as the years pass.

However, a fit-looking Harry Neale, our secretary, had been as persistent as ever in gathering us together so that conviviality and good fellowship could follow its traditional course for the evening. the customary raffle towards Battalion funds had generous support from members with a popular win, drawn by ‘Mac’, for Gus Leaney on leave at this time from Zimbabwe.

Should all circumstances be right for the occasion, we shall meet once again on Saturday 26th March 1988, and if – and only if – you are still in touch with Harry Neale (01-693 5074), the full details will reach you early next February.

A.G.S.

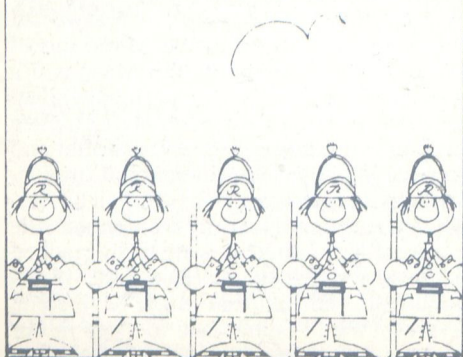


*Ray Sunderland, “Toddy”, Ted Law, Ron Velvick and others in jubilant mood.*

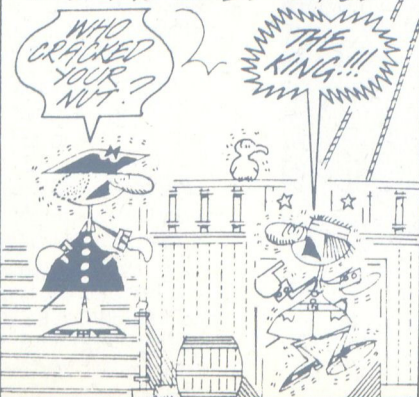
#### CAN YOU HELP?

Were you with the 2/6th Queen's at Anzio on the 22nd February. Did you know Cpl Albert David Mallinder (Bert)? Any information would be greatly appreciated by his daughter. He was posted missing after being wounded whilst out on patrol on the above date. Please forward any details through the Secretary at RHQ The Queen's, Canterbury.

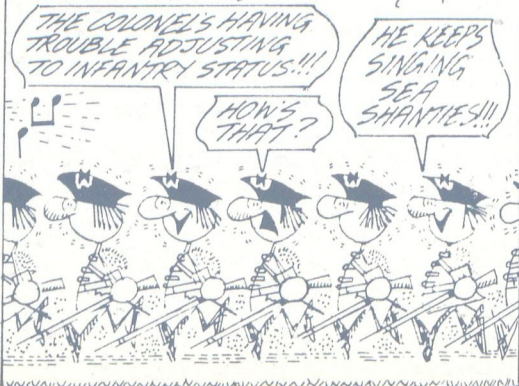
THE FIRST BATTALION OF THE EAST SURREY REGIMENT WAS RAISED AS MARINES UNDER THE COMMAND OF COLONEL GEORGE VILLIERS IN 1702.



THE MARINES SERVED AT SEA FOR TEN YEARS, GAINING THE PRIVILEGE OF DRINKING THE LOYAL TOAST SEATED



VILLIERS MARINES TOOK PART IN THE CAPTURE OF GIBRALTAR, BECOMING THE 31ST REGT. OF FOOT IN 1715



George Robinson



## The Shortest Way Round is the Longest Way Home.

On 15 April 1940 a detachment of Surreys based in Shanghai were ordered back to England to be trained as instructors. This detachment consisted of Sgt McRoyal, Sgt Watson, Cpl Good, L/Cpl Holmes, Ptes Dover, Nathan, Longley, Hessey and six others whose names escape me. We were not too happy at leaving the Regiment, but after a four day delay we arrived at the Bund, the Shanghai waterfront. Almost immediately we were in a launch heading for SS Narcunda anchored midstream in the Yangtse River. Within a few minutes of getting aboard, the anchor was weighed and we were on our way to Hong Kong. Here we stayed a few hours to pick up small detachments of Royal Scots and RAOC together with a few married families. Then off to Singapore where we picked up a few more British Troops together with some married families. As far as the war was concerned, the general impression was that things were not going too well. After a hasty departure from Singapore our destination seemed anybody's guess.

At sea we were kept busy with weapon training and firing at mock-up targets, as well as a strict vigil for enemy aircraft and submarines. We finally arrived at Colombo in Ceylon; all British troops were ordered to disembark but the families remained aboard. Apparently adjustments had to be made to the ship and there was a possibility that it would be used to transport Australian troops to the Middle East. In the event we finally sailed but without the Australians. Our next port of call was Aden but only to take on fresh water, and so we were soon sailing up the Red Sea. It was getting very hot and conditions were not very comfortable. We called in at Port Sudan to disembark a few British troops, and then on towards the Suez Canal.

We now heard that France had capitulated and wondered how this might affect the rest of our trip especially in the Mediterranean. We went through the Suez Canal and on to Port Said where all British troops were disembarked. We were taken to the French Hotel de In Poste and for the first time since leaving Shanghai, slept in beds. Our comfort was short lived; after four days we were on our travels again, this time to Alexandria. We were beginning to experience the unhealthy atmosphere of war and were bombed quite frequently, but soon we were on the move again. We boarded a British destroyer and, running the gauntlet of air attack, soon reached Malta.

We played a guessing game of what and where next. We landed in Malta and spent the next five days digging slit trenches. Then it was back to the docks and aboard a British destroyer. Where now? We found ourselves back in Port Said just in time for an air raid.

We then went by train to Jaffa and for about a week were once again digging trenches. Then to Haifa for a few days and so back to Alexandria. With no time to relax we were embarked on a cargo ship. In the docks was the battleship Queen Elizabeth which was undergoing extensive repairs. We spent a little time loading stores and six trucks, and then with a naval escort we knew not where. After what seemed like ages, we were informed that we would soon disembark. Where? It turned out to be Farmagusta in Cyprus. The six trucks were unloaded, we joined them embussed and in about two and a half hours were at Paledmedin – the main training camp for the Cyprus Volunteer Forces.

We were settled for a few months and were engaged in very intensive training with the local inhabitants. After six months I was detailed to proceed to Nicosia and report to a Major Roberts of the Public Works Department. My duties were to instruct the personnel of the Department in weapon training, arms drill and the use of explosives. After about six weeks we all moved to a properly constructed camp at Larnaca where we were joined by three sergeants of the Royal Engineers and training was more in the use of explosives.

After a further five months I was detailed to report to the officer commanding the Forestry Company at Troodas. I was to instruct the company in weapon training, arms drill and elementary mountain warfare. We built an assault course. We were living in tents and at times it was extremely cold. After about four months of this my next posting was to the Transport Company at the Cyprus Volunteer Regiment. This was at Avros in the east of Cyprus, now in the Turkish section. I was the only British NCO with this detachment. I spent about four months training this company and then was ordered to report to the RTO at Farmagusta. On reaching this destination I was delighted to

meet Cpl Hessey of the Surreys who had left Shanghai with me aboard the SS Narcunda. We both embarked and were joined by small detachments of Sherwood Foresters, the Loyal and the RASC.

After some hours sailing we found ourselves in Alexandria harbour picking our way among sunken ships. The Germans had just made their daily air raid. We disembarked and were making our way to the town when we had to take cover, another air raid had started. After about twenty minutes the raid was over, leaving considerable damage and many fires. We were soon on our way again to Port Said, and after a few false alarms, were on our way by train to Port Suez.

On arrival we reported to the orderly room and were allotted tented accommodation. It was a large camp and I was surprised to find that each tent was surrounded by slit trenches. I soon discovered why. Our stay was quite an experience, we were regularly bombed three times a day for the five days, and so we were quite happy to move on. A party of 6 Surrey NCOs, 8 Beds & Herts and 11 ORs from different units reported to the Orderly Room at 3 o'clock in the morning and proceeded to the docks.

We very soon set sail; we found that the ship was an American freighter the Boan Queen. I give them full marks for their food which was in abundance and a large variety; the best I had eaten since leaving Shanghai. Thank goodness we soon got out of reach of the bombing – it was the Americans first experience. We were sailing south but had no idea of our destination. At last we called in at Mombassa and picked up a detachment of American medical orderlies. They seemed to be provided with everything except the kitchen sink, and they knew everything except where we were going. About a week after leaving Mombassa the order came over the loud hailer that all British Troops were to pack up their kits. Nothing happened that night, but next morning we were delighted to see two British destroyers escorting us, and we found we were entering a port; this turned out to be Durban. We disembarked, clambered into trucks, and after a drive of about twenty minutes, arrived at a South African white troops camp, Clairwood. We were allocated to tents and were given some duties. After a week we were back at the docks and were soon aboard a coal burning ship, the Empress of Russia. It was a very slow ship. We had prisoners of war aboard and part of our duties was looking after them. They often proved very awkward but our method of control proved very successful. After about a week we realised that we were in convoy and being escorted by two destroyers, the battleships HMS Queen Elizabeth and Barham with an aircraft carrier shadowing us in the distance. We were soon rounding the Cape and running into very foul weather. The prisoners were causing us some trouble, but we set them to work cleaning up their quarters after the rough sailing. Things were a little better, but the atmosphere below decks was not a happy one. All throughout the journey we were very much on the alert and strictly on the lookout for enemy aircraft and submarines. After about another three weeks we discovered that all that remained of our convoy was the Monarch of Bermuda and one destroyer.

Then one morning we were told to get our kit ready and assemble in the lounge. In the distance we could see land. A few hours later we were sailing into England. It was the 3rd September 1942. It had taken me 2 years and 9 months since leaving Shanghai to reach Liverpool.

We at last disembarked and were whisked off to Lime Street Railway Station. We had now come to the last stages of our journey and hoped our trials and tribulations were over. But wartime England was very different from the peacetime England I had left. At the station we tried to get a trolley to take our kit from the truck to the platform. We could only get one from the porter, however, at a price and so we had no alternative but to carry our kit. We reported to the RTO officer and the East Surrey detachment were informed that our destination was Shorncliffe. We entrained and were only a short way out of the station when the Germans bombed the docks. We finally reached Euston Station and reported to the RTO for transport to Waterloo. A party of Royal Engineers and Beds & Herts joined our transport and so, as they were bound for Shoeburyness, we went to Waterloo via Liverpool Street. An air raid was in progress and this delayed us a bit, but we finally got to Waterloo at 9.15 p.m. and caught the 9.45 p.m. arriving at Shorncliffe at ten minutes past midnight. There was a strict blackout, it was teeming with rain and there was no one to meet us. I found my



way to the Police station and with their help contacted Coolidge Lane, and it was not long before transport arrived. We were soon at the Barracks. With the help of the cook and storeman we were soon well fed and bedded down. We had quite a good night's sleep and were awakened at 5.30 with a mug of tea. After ablutions and a good breakfast, we attended Commanding Officers Orders and were then passed on to Company office for pay, ration books and travel warrants for a fortnight's leave. I was very soon on a London bound train and on arrival at Victoria was greeted by another air raid. I was feeling rather lost but soon caught my local train to Wandsworth Town. It seemed a strange new world, but I was going to enjoy a well earned fortnight's leave.

AE

### The Battleaxe returns to Carinthia

On May 8th 1945, elements of the 78 Division entered Austria from Italy via the Croce Pass, and became part of the Army of Occupation in western Carinthia, with Headquarters at Dellach in Drautal.

Forty-one years later, on May 7th this year, that route was retraced by 43 comrades, wives and friends from 78 Div. Battleaxe Club.

The road over the Pass is somewhat different from the narrow and much churned-up route which our 3-tonners, laden with troops, slowly inched their way in bottom gear. Now it is a well-engineered road with avalanche tunnels and easily negotiable by a large tourist coach.

I remember in 1945 sitting in my jeep on the top of the Pass, listening on the 18 set to Winston Churchill's speech, declaring the end of the war. Then I was wearing KD shorts, and the sun was shining fiercely. This year there was snow on the ground and we were glad of our anoraks when we got out of the coach.

This trip was the third organised by 78 Div. Battleaxe Club, the others having been to Cassino, and to North Africa. The group comprised of people from many different arms of the Division. There were folk from the East Surreys, the Lancashire Fusiliers, the Royal Irish Fusiliers, the Northants, the Kensingtons, the Buffs, the Artillery, the RAMC, and 38 Bde Signals. (The Surreys were Bernard Clapham, Bill Baynes and Eddie Rolph.. HER)

There being no battlefields to visit, trips were made to Vienna, and to Italy via the Brenner Pass, and to the numerous villages where members of the party were billeted. Some returned to their old billets to find the original residents still there; others found the present new residents only too willing to befriend the former British troops.

In many cases we were invited back to meals or other celebrations, so it turned into a goodwill visit as well as an intriguing and delightful holiday. We visited places as far apart as Innsbruck and Klagenfurt; Gmund, Mallnitz and Udine in Italy; Volkermarkt and Lienz. In Udine we visited the small British cemetery, and in Klagenfurt we went to the cemetery there, where a service was held and a wreath of poppies laid on the central Cross in memory of our departed comrades.

During these trips through the length and breadth of Carinthia, various members of the party took up the microphone in the front of the coach, and told anecdotes relating to their stay in villages and towns through which we passed. This made it all very interesting to the rest of the party, and the ladies in particular said afterwards that these little bits of wartime history had made them understand much more what their men had been doing all the time they were away, since letters home were not always informative!

Our headquarters was at the delightful small town of Millstatt, on the Millstattersee, where in 1945/6, 36 Brigade had their headquarters. From the hotel many of us made trips up the mountains which rose immediately behind the town, or took trips round the lake on the steamer.

We were fortunate to stay in a beautiful hotel where the proprietress seemed glad to welcome our party of old soldiers. Indeed, on our last night she allowed us the exclusive use of the dining room for our farewell dinner and even provided unlimited quantities of excellent wine.

East Surreys may like to know that we also visited Notch and Eisenkappel, near the Jugo-Slav border, where Bernard Clapham pointed out the various billets that were in use. In the Klagenfurt cemetery, I only saw one Surrey headstone, and this

was to 5777865 Private C R Shepperson, possibly the last 'Surrey' casualty of the campaign. In Millstatt, the coach proprietor, had, as a boy, been employed in the NAAFI. GCP

### Back to Square One

Not many of us will know that the famous expression 'Back to Square One' has a regimental connection.

On the 15 January 1927 those tuning their wireless sets expecting to hear music would have heard the then unfamiliar voice of Captain Teddy Wakelam giving Britain's first running sports commentary from the Rugby Union International between England and Wales at Twickenham.

To help the listeners the BBC distributed a plan of the pitch, divided into eight numbered squares. These numbers were called out by the Commentator's assistant as the play moved from one part of the pitch to another. If a team was forced back into defence it was therefore 'back to square one', now an everyday expression, intimating 'starting again'.

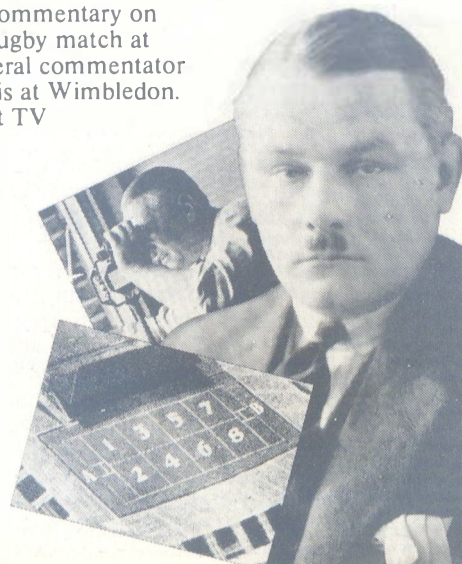
Teddy Wakelam was a former Harlequin and England rugby player; he was also a distinguished gunner officer of the First World War. As Major HBT Wakelam he joined the 35th (First Surrey Rifles) Anti-Aircraft Battalion RE and was given command of 342 AA Company on 7th November 1936.

He was the great BBC commentator of those days for tennis and rugby union football. He recognised the potential of radio and using his influence with the BBC organised a live broadcast to recruit for his company. In due course the date and time was published in the Radio Times for this programme. This led to the Commanding Officer, Col. RC Foot, OBE., MC., TD., having a hell of a row with the War Office and a Staff Officer came to tell him that the broadcast must be cancelled because it contravened King's Regulations and that serving officers must not communicate with the press. The CO stuck to his guns and got the support of his immediate commanders. The broadcast took place as advertised and the whole of South London listened to the broadcast and those that could came along to watch the men at their searchlight drill. No doubt all units benefited, but the First Surrey Rifles 'stole the show' and got most of the recruits.

The First Surrey Rifles were part of the Corps of The East Surrey Regiment. At the outbreak of the war in 1939 they were a Searchlight Battalion Royal Engineers becoming Royal Artillery the following year. After further amalgamations their descendants can be found in the 6/7th (Volunteer) Battalion The Queen's Regiment.

*The following is an extract from "Who was Who".*

WAKELAM Lt.Col. Henry Blythe Thornhill. 1893-1963. TD., BA., RE. Born 8 May 1893. Educated Marlborough and Pembroke Cambridge. Commissioned August 1914 2nd Lt. Royal Fusiliers. Served Malta, France and Belgium March 1915. Transferred to RA served Gallipoli, Egypt, Palestine and France. Twice wounded. Mentioned in dispatches. Resigned Commission 1921. Author and commentator. Married 1922. Joined TA 1936. Major in RE (As we know in First Surrey Rifles but this is not mentioned in Who's Who). War 1939-45. Was GSO I at GHQ Mid East 1940. Invalided out 1944. 1927 did the first ever running commentary on England v. Wales rugby match at Twickenham. General commentator on rugger and tennis at Wimbledon. He also did the first TV commentary on cricket. England v. Australia Lords 1930.





### The Third Colour.

The unique distinction of the Regiment in bearing a Third Colour has been the subject of much discussion over the last 150 years. The most recent contribution was the excellent News Letter article by Major Peter Hill several years ago, which summarised much of what is known. I have drawn heavily on his article for factual material.

As has already been stated in this series, the Regiment carried ten Colours in 1686 (Royal Warrant 21 August 1686). After the Infantry reorganisation of 1707, the Colours were reduced to three. The next reduction came in 1747 when Infantry Colours were reduced to two. The Clothing Regulations of 1747 also forbade Colonels of Regiments from displaying their own Arms on Colours and for the first time specified what numerals and distinguishing badges each Regiment might display.

All Regiments seem to have complied with this order except The Queen's. Milne, in his **Standards and Colours of the British Army** 1893 believes this to be because the Regiment did not receive the Order being at that time stationed in Gibraltar. Cannon, in his **Historical Record of the 2nd Queen's** 1837 takes the same line and adds ... "it had been erroneously considered that the Regiment had a peculiar privilege of carrying three stand of Colours."

Milne's and Cannon's view is a highly likely explanation of the state of affairs. Colonel Davis, however, in his **History of the 2nd Queen's** disagrees and advances the view that first, the Third Colour had been retained in consequence of having been presented by Queen Catherine and secondly because although a Royal Regiment, The Queen's had retained green facings instead of changing to blue. There is little to support these views. There is no documentary evidence to suggest that Queen Catherine ever presented Colours to the Regiment either before or after its time in Tangier, nor is the fact that the Regiment kept green facings any ground on which to base a deliberate disobeyal of an Army Regulation.

Whatever the reason, the Regiment retained its Third Colour and in 1749 moved from Gibraltar to Ireland. In January 1750 the Regiment marched into Dublin with three Colours flying; these three Colours were described by Ensign Donkin, later Major General Donkin, who was carrying the Third Colour, in **Donkin's Military Recollections** 1777 as:

"1st. The Union throughout and in the centre the Royal Arms.

"2nd. The Union throughout and in the centre the Queen's cypher.

"3rd. (A Regimental Sheet) of Sea Green colour which was the original facings of the Regiment, and in the centre the Colonel's Arms."

It has been suggested that the 1st and 2nd Colours were the old Lieutenant Colonel's and Major's Colours of 1686, which is quite possible but it should be noted that the 1686 Colours were green, with a red cross bordered white whereas by 1750 "The Union" would have taken the form of the red cross of St. George bordered white on the white and blue saltire of St. Andrew. These could therefore be new Colours although there is again no record of such Colours having been presented between 1686 and 1750. More likely that the old Colours, worn and tattered by campaign service, were patched and reworked to conform to new patterns.

The Third Colour is another matter. Donkin states that the Colour bore the Colonel's Arms in the centre. This must be open to question for a number of reasons. First, Donkin was writing 27 years after the event and human memory is notoriously tricky. Secondly, The Queen's were particularly distinguished by their title and were proud of it. They had always displayed the Queen's cypher and it seems unlikely that the Arms of a Colonel would have been given precedence over the Royal cypher of Queen Catherine. Thirdly, since 1686 the Regiment had served on a strenuous campaign in Ireland, in the Low Countries, in Spain and had undertaken a 29 year tour of duty in Gibraltar. The condition of the Colours after this time can only be guessed at but it is probable that so worn were they, that any badge would be difficult to make out. This points strongly therefore to Donkin's Third Colour being the original Colonel's Colour of 1686.

At this point, official policy reasserted itself. On seeing the three Colours, the Colonel of the Regiment, General Fowke,



Fig 1

ordered that the Third Colour should be withdrawn at once. To the chagrin of the Regiment which, as Donkin states, believed the Third Colour to be a special privilege, it was at once taken away and was laid up in the chapel of the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, near Dublin.

For the next 74 years the Regiment bore only the two Colours of any Line Regiment; once the Third Colour had disappeared, not much thought was taken of it until the advent of Sir Henry Torrens. Torrens had been a Major General at the age of 35, was Adjutant General of the Army in 1820 and Colonel of The Queen's in 1822. Visiting the Regiment in 1824 - it was once more at Dublin - he heard of the old Third Colour lying nearby and decided to petition the King for its return to the Regiment. In preparation, he withdrew the Colour from Kilmainham and returned with it to England, followed soon afterwards by the Regiment which moved to Chatham.

In due course, King George IV approved the restoration of the Third Colour to the Regiment - no doubt Torrens's position as Adjutant General was most advantageous. There were, however, problems. The old Third Colour was now so ragged that nothing could be made of its design. Instead of consulting the Royal Warrant of 1686, it appears that Torrens invented a new design and submitted a copy to The College of Arms where it is still held. Lady Torrens herself worked the design, which is quite different from anything which had appeared before. The Garter King of Arms' paper, submitted by Torrens, describes it thus:

... "in the centre of the Third Colour of sea green within a wreath of roses, thistles and shamrock, The Pascal Lamb surmounted by the words From The Queen 1661 and bearing the mottoes above specified. (NB: Vel Exuviae Triumphant and Pristinæ Virtutis Memor). In the dexter canton the Union with the Royal Arms, Crown and Supporters."

A sketch of this extraordinary design is shown at figure 1, and it should be noted that there is one major inconsistency highlighted: Queen Catherine did not become Queen until 1662, after the Regiment had sailed for Tangier.

The new Colour was duly presented to the Regiment at Chatham on 31st January 1825 by Lady Torrens herself. The Ensign was Lieutenant George Dalhousie Raitt, whose portrait appears as figure 2.

The Regiment was not long to enjoy the fulness of the Colour's restoration. A short ten years later, King William IV amended his brother's ruling and decided that no Regiment should be permitted to display a Third Colour. This ruling was tempered by the concession that the Colour need not actually be withdrawn so long as it was not displayed in the ranks of the Regiment. For some years after this, interest in the Colour lapsed.

Interest was revived, however, in 1853 when the then Commanding Officer of The Queen's, Colonel Burns, ordered a replacement Colour from a firm in Cape Town, the old Colour being now much decayed. Burns consulted The College of Arms for a design and was given Torrens's sketch and description. Using this, a new Colour was made exactly like that of 1825. Moreover the firm in Cape Town used the centre portion of the 1825 Colour to be incorporated in the new. This Colour



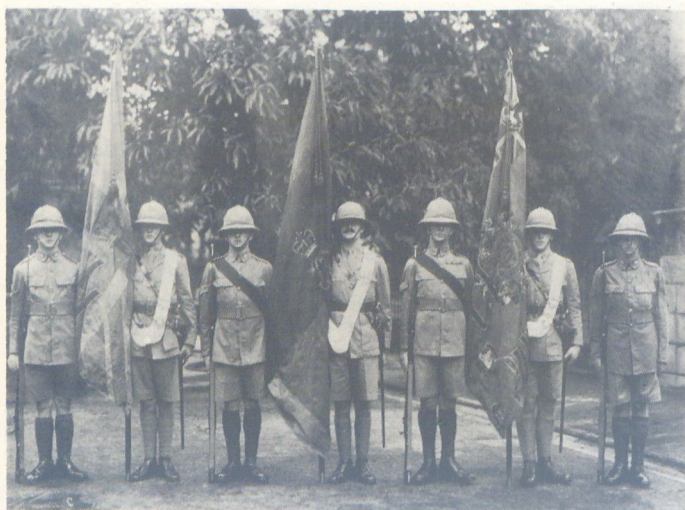
continued in service until 1894 when it was laid up at Holy Trinity Church, Guildford. It was later moved to the Regimental Museum, much tattered, where during the last year, Mrs Jean-Anne Stock has been working on the fragments and has saved a good portion of the embroidery, which is to be returned to the care of the 1st Battalion after a lapse of 92 years. One can clearly make out the Lamb, surrounded by its wreath; the Union with the Royal Arms, Crown and Supporters; the two mottoes and the words "From The Queen 1661". In addition there appears to be a crowned Harp, the distinguishing badge of British Ireland, which must have been added at some stage for reasons unknown.

To replace the Burns Colour of 1853, the Officers of the 1st Battalion presented a new Colour in 1894 while the Battalion was in Malta. This Colour, known as the First Malta Colour, reverted to the original design of 1686 - plain green with the interwoven cypher of Queen Catherine surmounted by a Royal Crown. This design has been followed ever since. It was this Colour which,



Fig 2

in defiance of the old order, was carried at the King's Birthday Parade in Hong Kong in 1927. A photograph of this is shown as figure 3. There are all kinds of rumours surrounding this event, such as that the Commanding Officer was sacked, and other horrors. All these rumours are without foundation.



Colour Party, Hong Kong 1927  
1./Cpl. Hoad, 2/Lt. E.J. Foord, Sgt. Handscombe, 2/Lt. H.G. Duncombe,  
Fig 3 Sgt. Talkington, 2/Lt. J.B.H. Kealy, L/Cpl. Harris



Fig 4

The central portion of this Colour is now preserved in the Regimental Museum whence it was taken after 36 years service, being replaced by the Second Malta Colour. The 1st Battalion was once again in Malta and the old Colour being much worn, Colonels Clark and Ponsonby presented a new Colour which made its first appearance in the Officers' Mess on 30th June 1930. The green silk was supplied by Liberty's of London and the cypher was embroidered by the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary at Casa Balzan, Malta.

In 1977 the 1st Battalion was in Germany and was to take part in the Silver Jubilee celebrations of HM Queen Elizabeth II. The old Second Malta Colour was by now patched and tattered so that the Commanding Officer, Colonel Davidson, ordered a new Colour from a firm in India. The old Colour was given into the care of the Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess of the 1st Battalion and the new Colour, after a Service of Blessing, made its first appearance at the Silver Jubilee celebrations at Sennelager.

The Davidson Colour continues in service with the 1st Battalion under the authority of King George IV's Royal Warrant of 1825.

(to be continued)  
OVID.

#### ANNUAL REUNION 1986



Top: Sid Lea, Bill Steeles, Dave Wheeker and Bob Riley



Bottom: Pat Hoey, Maj Gen Mike Reynolds, Alan Martin and Ron Morris.





## THE QUEEN'S REGIMENT

1661

### The Battalions

1 Queen's have now returned from a successful tour in Gibraltar and are based in Tidworth as part of 1 Inf Bde. They will be on operations in N. Ireland from June to October. 1 Queen's, stationed in Minden, have exercises later in the year in Canada and Denmark to look forward to. 3 Queen's have now almost completed their tour in N. Ireland and return to Canterbury in June until their move to Aldergrove next January. Our three TA battalions continue to lead a busy life, with much expansion and reorganisation, particularly in the cases of 6/7 Queen's (V) and 8QF (V).

### Senior Officers in New Years Honours List 1987

Two of our Colonels were appointed CBEs in the New Years Honours List. They were Colonel J.C. Holman who is now Divisional Colonel of The Queen's Division and the senior Deputy Colonel of The Queen's Regiment, and Colonel H.N. Tarver who, like Colonel R.W. Acworth CBE, is to be promoted to Brigadier later this year. Our warmest congratulations to them all.

### The Queen's Regiment Museum

Preparations are now well advanced for the new Regimental Museum in the Inner Bailey of Dover Castle. Much credit is due to Lt Col Les Wilson for the exceptional dedication and imagination that he has put into this exciting project. The official opening will be on Albuhera Day (16th May) by the Lord Lieutenant of Kent. Further details are being issued separately, but the ceremony will include a display by the Regimental Free Fall Team 'The Flying Dragons', and a Beating of Retreat by the Quebec Band, The Volunteer Band of The Queen's Regiment and Corps of Drums of the 5th (Volunteer) Battalion.

### Exercising the Freedoms

A contingent from the 3rd Battalion will return from N. Ireland in time to exercise the Regiment's Freedom of Barnet on 9th June, Chichester on 11th June and to receive the Freedom of Ashford on 13th June. On 5th September, a contingent from the 6/7th Battalion will exercise the Freedom of Brighton. At all these ceremonies an area next to the saluting dais will be reserved for members of the local branch of the Regimental Association to parade with their standards. In 1988, between 13th and 19th June, it is hoped that a contingent from the 1st Battalion will march through Guildford, Reigate and Banstead, Maidstone and Ramsgate. The Regiment is very proud of its 19 Civic Honours and it is a great privilege to be able to exercise them regularly in this way.

BURMA STAR  
ASSOCIATION

**DEKHO!**  
**BURMA ROOM**



THE RIVER KWAI AND BURMA CAMPAIGN DISPLAY

FELIXSTOWE HISTORY AND MUSEUM SOCIETY, RAVELIN BLOCK  
LANGUARD FORT, BURMA ROOM.

F. Harvey from Ipswich has been busy with an old pal over the years collecting memorabilia for a display on the Far East, and arranging displays for charity. On May 24th, the Mayor of Felixstowe will officially open the Burma Room, at Languard Fort, Felixstowe at 11 a.m. For those who served in the Far East there is a private viewing from 11 a.m. until 2.30 p.m. when it will be opened to the public. Fred Harvey asks any members who may be in the area on that day, or any other day to come along and make themselves known.

### The Queen's (Southwark) Regimental Association

The Annual Dinner was held at the Union Jack Club on 7 March 1987.

It was a unique occasion, as this year the main guests were The President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary of The Patriotic Committee, from Saint Niklaas, Belgium, a City liberated by 1/7th Bn The Queen's Royal Regiment, with the support of 44 Royal Tank Regt, on 9th September 1944.

Links of friendship have developed and been maintained with the officials and citizens of Saint Niklaas since the end of World War II. Delegations from the 1/7th Queen's have made annual visits, received wonderful hospitality and developed firm friendships. Therefore this visit to us by their representatives was most welcome and gave the Association an opportunity to reciprocate, not only at this Dinner but also over their 4 day visit.

Our President, Lt Col W.D. Griffiths, DSO, MC, was in the chair, and was CO at the time of the liberation of Saint Niklaas. He welcomed the guests most heartily. Mr Jose Huybrecht responded to the Toast of the 'Guests' in a most feeling manner which was supported by a message of goodwill from Burgomaster Paul De Vidts (son of Romain De Vidts, the Burgomaster liberated in 1944), which was very ably read by Commandant Rene Van Den Berg. Their President was presented with a Queen's Shield and the other 3 members each received a one pint glass tankard engraved with the Queen's Royal Regiment badge.



*The Belgian delegation at the Regimental Memorial in Kennington Park after laying wreaths on the Sunday of their visit. In the centre is Lt-Col. W.D. Griffiths, D.S.O., M.C., flanked by the Southwark Branch of the Royal British Legion and the Belgians.*

Mr. Harry Palmer and Mr. Ernie Allen were also welcomed from the Royal British Legion, Southwark, and thanked for providing facilities at their Club for our monthly Committee meetings.

Major John Tamplin TD proposed the Toast of "Absent Comrades" most competently. "The Regiment" was proposed by Ex Sgt (Pilot) Jimmy Graham who spoke of the good old days when he was in the TA and before he took off to the RAF (and shot down 7 enemy aircraft - which he didn't mention).

Major General D.S. Gordon, CB, CBE, DSO, who never misses the Association's Re-Union Dinner was congratulated by the Chairman on becoming President of "The D-Day Fellowship Organization". He responded by saying he would welcome members for £5 a head.

C.S.M. V.G. Edwards, now at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, rounded off a splendid evening with some well chosen experiences - until it appeared he might go too far! (for our guests).

Members present, who travelled from far afield in many instances, thoroughly enjoyed the evening and gave a standing ovation to our tireless Hon. Secretary, Major John Tamplin, so ably assisted by Vice President Mr Frank Wilkins, Mr Joe Roe, MM, Mr David Smith, Mr John Beckett and Mr Ken Issom and other members of the Committee for not only their help with organizing the Dinner but also to their ladies who helped with the various social events over the period of the visit of our guests from Belgium. The Raffle was ably run by Mr. George Paisley.



**R. EDWARDS** writes from Swansea, "May I once again congratulate you and your staff for such a professional and informative newsletter which I look forward to each May and November. At that time it becomes my number one reading, which I read at least three times. As the nephew of an ex Queensman, C.S.M. W. Doncaster who served in 1 Queen's before the 2nd World War and in Africa and Italy during that war, I have an interest in that era. As an ex 1 Queen's myself from 1952 to 1956 serving in Malaya, I have a personal interest in that time. Having read the news letter, I then pass it on to my nephew who served in the Queen's Regiment in the late 70's seeing service in Northern Ireland, who incidentally, is the son of another ex Queen's who served with 1 Queen's in the 60's.

I especially like the contribution by Tommy Atkins who was my CSM with 'A' Coy when I was in Iserlohn in Germany. He may have fleeting memories of me as the private soldier on temporary transfer to the Coy Office in late 1953 just before returning to the UK, who dropped the precious 'A' Coy typewriter on the floor, resulting in a Court of Enquiry in Maidstone.

Happy Days!"

**ALFRED BAKER (Gerry)** writes:- "You will see by my address that I live in Ramsbottom, Lancashire. I was stationed here during the last war having come home to 'Blighty' from India where I was serving with the 1st Bn The Queen's Royal Regiment.

Just recently an old mate from Ipswich, who I had not seen for 43 years came up to visit Ramsbottom again. He very kindly sent me the Assn. Newsletter which is so interesting because living in Lancashire I have lost touch with my Regiment.

I am surrounded by Lancashire Fusiliers and I cannot resist letting them know now and then that my Regiment was the 2nd of Foot not the 20th!

Regarding the 20th Bn The Queen's, when that was formed I was Signal Sergeant at Peshawar. A list went up for volunteers on all coy detail boards. After a night out with the lads I was very brave and volunteered but as Signal Sgt I was told I was a key man and could not go.



In 1942 at Peshawar Lt. Wilkes from The East Surrey's joined us. After about six months he joined the Gurkha's. He would have met me, and I wonder if he remembers the Signal Officer, Lt. Polkinghorne.

Regarding the battalion football team, I remember Darkie Hill, the C/Sgt and Sgt Hooper was my Pl Sgt at Quetta. I have an idea that the top unknown man was L/C Bicknall.

Before I close I must mention the 1st Bn Colours, in 1942 Sgt Hughes and I were escorts to the Colours when Gen. Wavell visited us. I was very proud that day!

Although surrounded by Lancashire Fusiliers, I am the East Lanc's county British Legion Parade Marshal, and proudly wear my Paschal Lamb!

Thankyou for the best bit of reading I have ever had."

**FRANK TURRELL** writes from Australia:- "My sincere regrets I was not destined to meet you while on our trip this year. It is quite possible you may still have to face up to such a meeting in the future, as I am giving thought to a return visit. It will not be for some 3 years (depending on savings)! I write this with the hope you will be able to publish this short message in the May Newsletter.

My wife and I have returned to Aussie-Land after our tour of England where we spent some 7 months and had a really great time. Most of our time was spent in hired caravans, different Counties each week. We had arranged to be in England when certain events took place, and work them in with our touring.

To that end, we were able to attend the Blackpool reunion, a couple of "Tenko's", the September reunion Festival Hall, and the East Surrey reunion in October. We were also very happy to be able to attend the service in St. Martins and wreath laying at the Cenotaph after the Service.

We were touched with the warmth of the welcome we received at all times, really great to be 'back with the Lads'. Thank you all for the Welcome and Friendship - hard to pick out a special, but I would like a special thank you to Jim Browning (me old squad mate), and send a kiss to his wife Anne, and their charming daughter Joyce. Many thanks to Dave Boorer for advice and help.

To you all, the very best for always."

**Major MICHAEL HARE** writes: "I have just returned from a visit to the south of India, and whilst I was in Madras I went to visit the War Cemetery there at St Thomas' Mount to look for a particular grave, which I found.

Whilst looking around the whole cemetery, I found, too, five graves of soldiers of The Queen's Royal Regiment who died of illness or possibly war wounds and who are buried there. They were: 14461010 LCpl A.E. Hardy, 30th June 1946, aged 19; 6104042 Pte A.E.T. Crassweller, 21st July 1943, aged 22; 6088461 Pte P.S. Welsh, 30th July 1943, aged 22; 6295209 Pte R.V. Round, 9th October 1944, aged 29; 13048631 Pte T.H. Webber, 3rd September 1944, aged 29.

I thought that perhaps if you published this letter in the next Regimental Association Newsletter, it might be of interest to anybody who knew them or is related to them to know that their graves are very well cared for and that the whole cemetery is beautifully laid out with flowering shrubs and bushes, looked after by an Anglo-Indian and of course administered by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Of Regimental interest too, I also found a grave there of a Leading Stoker of HMS Braganza."

#### CAN YOU HELP?

To members of the 1/7th Queen's who served with the Regiment during the Normandy campaign, 1944. I am seeking information regarding my brother, Pte James Arthur Scutt, as to whether he was wounded prior to dying on 18th August 1944 during the advance to Livarot and has no known grave. If anyone knew my brother, who was with the Regiment for approximately 4 years, or who can direct me to a casualty list of days up to 18th August 1944, would you please contact me. My address is:- Mr. R.A. Scutt, 10 Ingress Gardens, Greenhithe, Kent DA9 9HW. I also intend to attend Clendon Park during September on the Regiment's Museum Open Day.



**LEO DUNCAN** writes from New Zealand - Greetings from the land of the long white cloud.

At the moment for me it's a dark cloud. Since Christmas I have been very ill. I went to a Physiotherapist for a pain in my leg, and he damaged my spine to the extent that I could not walk or use my hands. It has been sheer hell for the last six weeks. I am going to a Chiropractor and am slowly getting better.

After this is over, I shall get some money together somehow and come home to my family. It has put the wind up me being all alone. My friends around here have been fantastic - they bring me dinner and do my washing. Lance Bennett came down from up north to look after me for a while. We were boys together in the regiment. He was like a mother hen and was very good at putting my socks on in the morning.

So much for my troubles. Thank you for Newsletter No. 40. I always get it very late, but it is most welcome. This one is one of the best you have turned out. Great work.

I have enclosed a photo of C Company at the top of Alexander picket at Razmak, N.W.F. It was the last picket to climb and the tallest on road opening day. There were about ten of these hills to be covered before the convoy could go through. Any old frontiersmen would recall the names Das and Dun, Horse shoe, Nuler Bend, etc. Going up was bad enough, but coming down was the worst. At the back of the main body was a red flag; as the battalion marched down the road back to Razmak, we had to peel from the hills as they went by, and go like hell for the red flag. Nobody stopped running till they reached it. As if that was not enough, sometimes the Pathans got to the top and fired at you as you went down. When that happened we did not run, we flew!

The sergeant standing behind me is Pop Jenner. The one with his rifle on his knee thinking of home is L/C Bennett. Next to him is Holister, and next McBonough.



**6095446 Ex. Cpl T.C. SUMNER** writes: Thank you for the Newsletter which I found very interesting, especially the last two numbers which contained the articles by Tommy Atkins. It brought back so many memories.

I joined the 2nd battalion in the desert with 2/Lt's Merritt and Robinson Walker after a long journey round the Cape. I was transferred to the Pioneer platoon as a carpenter under R.S.M. Wally Macken and Sgt Richardson. We lost two of our pioneers at Sidi Barani. On our return to El-Tahag I took my carpenters trade test under C.S.M. Freddie Harcup, my practical consisted of designing and making a collapsible latrine which was later adopted by the brigade.

I was with Sgt. Richardson on H.M.S. Glenroy when he was wounded. We were taking gun magazines to the gunners on deck when he was hit. I just missed seeing him in 1964. I was working in London and went to see Freddie Harcup who was a Beefeater at the Tower, and he told me that Sgt. Richardson had been to see him the day before. He had lost his leg.

I was also with P.S.M. Wally Hacker when he was wounded with a bullet through the arm. We were trying to take a machine gun post in the hills outside Damascus when he caught it.

I well remember what we called the mad mile, that stretch of road continually under artillery fire. I came across there with a truck load of prisoners on our way to the Citadel. The Palestine Police driver was sitting on the floor of his cab, one hand on the steering wheel and the other on the accelerator. I was waiting for transport back when B. Echelon was bombed. I remember laying under a truck with incendiary bombs falling round our ears.

The other interesting article was the account of our ambush at Milestone 20 in Burma. I was a member of that ambush. I think we were very lucky to get out of that one.

On my return to England from Burma, I got married during my disembarkation leave and after a short spell at Gravesend I was posted to Berlin to join the 1/5th Queen's in C Company.

**G.J. THORNTON** writes from Camberley: I am extremely grateful to you and your staff for printing a very interesting and colourful Newsletter twice a year, more so with the centre piece in the November issue. Absolutely tremendous.

In the same issue an old comrade from D Coy 1 Surreys was asking anyone to contact him from the old days in N. Africa, so I did just that and we have been corresponding ever since and have built up quite a friendship and we both look forward to meeting each others families. If it had not been for the Newsletter we would never have known of each other, and we do not live that far apart.

So thank you once again for your wonderful Newsletter, and also for printing my letter in the last issue.

### Birthday of the News Letter

This is the 21st birthday and 41st issue of the Regimental Association News Letter. On the formation of The Queen's Regiment a new Regimental Journal was required, and consequently the Journals of the former Regiments ceased publication. However, it was felt there was a requirement for news of our old comrades, notices regarding Regimental functions and other items of Regimental interest.

Accordingly, the Regimental Association News Letter was instituted in 1967, and it has been published in May and November ever since. There have been three volumes, i.e., Volume I - May 1967 to November 1976; Volume II - May 1977 to November 1983; Volume III - May 1984 to date.

These News Letters contain a great deal of interest in the history and personalities of The Queen's Royal Regiment and The East Surrey Regiment, and are a valuable source of reference. But, there are two difficulties. One is knowing where to look. For Volumes I and II, three-part indexes have been prepared: that is to say, Personal Names of The Queen's Royal Regiment, Personal Names of The East Surrey Regiment and a General Index of subjects. A similar index will be made for Volume III in due course.

These indexes should be bound into the Volumes, and here the second difficulty arises. The trouble is that bookbinding is extremely expensive. Any suggestions from our readers on how to overcome these difficulties would be appreciated.

### Golf Society

The Autumn Meeting was held at Richmond Golf Club, Sudbrook Park, on Thursday 16th October 1986. 17 Members attended and enjoyed two rounds of golf in ideal weather.

#### Results:

Autumn Bowl	M.J. Power, Esq. Net 65
Glasgow Greys Cup	Major T. Medcalf Net 68
Heales Memorial Trophy	Capt. B. Scripps 39 points
Veterans Halo	Lt Col G.S. Abbott 41 points
Petri Plate	M.J. Power, Esq. Net 134
Harry Adcock Memorial Trophy	Col J.G. Davidson 29 putts

#### Sweep Winners:

First	Capt. J.A. Clark
Second	Lt Col G.S. Abbott
Third	Capt B. Scripps

### 'The Drummer Boy'

This is the title of the autobiography of Leonard Phillips who joined the 2nd Bn The East Surrey Regiment as a Boy in 1938. A number of Regular soldiers of the Surreys are mentioned in this interesting narrative, and the tragic days of the campaign in Malaya and the subsequent years as prisoners of war of the Japanese are well recorded.

The book was published in the United States, but there are a few copies available from Mr. C. Harman, 78 Dudley Road, Walton on Thames, Surrey. The price, including postage and packing, is £ 6.00.

## Regimental Deaths

- Alderman* – on 8th February 1987, Sgt R. Alderman, The East Surrey Regiment.
- Beattie* – on 24th March 1987, Major Ian Dunbar Beattie, aged 67 years, The Queen's Royal Regiment and The Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment.
- Benson* – on 1st May 1987, Major (Q.M.) Roy J. Benson, aged 55, The East Surrey Regiment and The Queen's Regiment.
- Burchett* – on 3rd November 1986, (6086815) Private Colin Burchett, aged 66 years, The Queen's Royal Regiment. Private Burchett served as a Regular for eleven years and then joined The Territorial Army. He lived in Christchurch, New Zealand.
- Climpson* – on 20th December, 1986, Major John C. Climpson, aged 87 years, The Queen's Royal Regiment. Major Climpson joined The Queen's in 1923. He served with the 1st Battalion in Malta and India and was commissioned in 1941 and served with The Royal Berkshire Regiment. He emigrated to Australia after completion of his service.
- Cowie* – on 7th January 1987, Major Charles Cowie, MBE, aged 84 years, The East Surrey Regiment and Royal Military Police. He was a founder member of Crown Imperial, a society for military enthusiasts on all matters military.
- Crangles* – on 26th February, Sgt Joseph Francis (Paddy) Crangles DCM, The Queen's Royal Regiment
- Hacket-Pain* – on 17th January 1987, Major Andrew Uniocke Hereford Hacket-Pain, MBE, FRGS, aged 83 years, The Queen's Royal Regiment.
- Heather* – on 3rd November 1986, Private Charles Heather, aged 68 years, 2nd Bn The Queen's Royal Regiment. Pte Heather served with the 2nd Bn from Palestine to Burma.
- Herridge* – on 24th December, 1986, 6082540 CSM R.S.(Bill) Herridge, The Queen's Royal Regiment.
- Kettle* – on 8th January 1987, (6084391) RSM Walter Henry Kettle, The Queen's Royal Regiment. He served with the 1st Battalion and was RSM of The Depot and 5 Queen's in Guildford.
- Lannigan* – on 27th January 1987, The Reverend H.C.C. Lannigan, MC, (RACHD), aged 70 years.
- Lawrence* – on 3rd November 1986, Major Sir William Lawrence, 4th Baronet, aged 73 years, The East Surrey Regiment.
- Lee* – on 4th November 1986, In-Pensioner Arthur Cecil Lee, aged 83 years, The East Surrey Regiment – Royal Hospital, Chelsea.
- Lloyd* – on 26th March 1987, Major Thomas Peter Lloyd, aged 79, The Queen's Royal Regiment and RAOC. Major Lloyd served in Malta, China, India, The Desert Campaign and in the Gold Coast. He retired to Malta, and is buried there, where he first commenced his overseas service.
- Pattenden* – on 1st November 1986, (6097925) Corporal Arthur Pattenden, The Queen's Royal Regiment. Saw service with the 1st Battalion on the North West Frontier, Burma and Arakan.
- Pepper* – on 1st April 1986, Private James Richard Pepper, aged 77 years, The East Surrey Regiment.
- Radford* – on 31st March 1986, Arthur J. Radford.
- Risbridger* – on 22nd March 1987, Private Ernest Risbridger, 1st/6th Bn The Queen's Royal Regiment.
- Robinson* – on 20th December, 1986, Major Philip Napier Robinson, MC, MA, Queen's Royal Regiment.
- Rockall* – W.F.C. Rockall, The East Surrey Regiment.
- Skinner* – on 2nd March 1985, RQMS Albert Edward Skinner, aged 83 years, The East Surrey Regiment. He enlisted at Kingston in May 1922 and served until October 1952. He was for many years a member of The Warrant Officers & Sergeants Association.
- Smith* – on 13th July 1986, Private Frank Henry Smith, aged 76 years, The Queen's Royal Regiment.
- Walker* – on 27th April 1987, (6137698) Sgt Reginald Walker, aged 78, served with 1st Battalion The East Surrey Regiment.

*Washington* – on 23rd January 1987, C.S.M. Stanley John Washington, aged 62 years.

## Regimental Families

- Clarke* – on 27th October 1986, Alys Emily, widow of Colonel E.G.H. Clarke, The East Surrey Regiment.
- Combe* – on 29th October 1986, Barbara, widow of Colonel H. Combe, The Queen's Royal Regiment.
- Cranham* – on 12th December 1986, Idia Joyce Rex, wife of Lt Col R.G. Cranham, The Queen's Royal Regiment.
- Evanson* – on 21st November 1986, Barbara, wife of the late Major General A.C.T. Evanson, CB, MC, The East Surrey Regiment.
- Woodcock* – on 12th January 1987, Olive E.F. Woodcock, eldest daughter of CSM A.J. Domoney 2nd Bn The Queen's Royal Regiment and sister of Major A.W.V. Domoney 2/7th Bn The Queen's Royal Regiment.
- Ziegler* – on 24th December, Rosamund Ziegler, wife of Captain C.A. Ziegler.

## Obituaries

### The Reverend H.C.C. Lannigan MC (RACHD)

Harry Lannigan, who died on 27 January 1987, became Chaplain of the 1st Bn The East Surrey Regiment in July 1943 at the end of the Tunisian campaign, and served with that unit throughout the Sicilian and Italian campaigns, right through and into Austria.

A Scot and a Presbyterian with a strong antipathy to all things to do with the Church of Rome, and also the higher Anglican Communion, he nevertheless had a highly developed and ready sense of humour with a down-to-earth manner and outlook which made him a well-liked and trusted member of the battalion.

He was very much a part of the unit, working closely with the Regimental Medical Officer (he was usually to be found in or near the RAP). In June 1944 at Citta del Piave, the battalion had a pretty bloody time, and during the battle, four wounded British and two wounded Germans were carried to a house which was under heavy machine-gun fire. Harry and the RMO remained with the wounded under fire, even after the battalion had been relieved. For their devotion to duty they were both subsequently awarded the Military Cross. On 22 December 1944 a night raid of platoon strength was mounted in the Spaduro area. Harry, wearing his beret and carrying his walking stick, insisted on accompanying the platoon. During the action which developed, the platoon commander was killed and Harry came back to the RAP with the wounded. Harry was a great inspiration and booster of morale. One only had to mention to him that there were corpses in the line of an advance and he was off immediately to bury them so that they would not be seen by our advancing troops.

After the war he returned to his Ministry in Scotland from which he retired in 1982. I am glad to have once been a friend of Harry's.

FJR

### Major I.D. Beattie

Ian Beattie, who died at Brighton on 24 March 1987, was an inveterate breaker of the oldest rule in the Army – he was an incorrigible volunteer. If there was any difficult, tiring or boring job to be done, Ian was usually the first to offer his services. If, late in the evening on one of those interminable BAOR exercises in the 1950s, somebody was missing, Ian was the one who went out to look for him. He was a man of immense personal charm and although always holding definite opinions he was never abrasive or argumentative. To know him was to like him, he exuded a warm friendliness and generosity, and the Warrant Officers, NCOs and soldiers who served under him soon discovered that in terms of their well being and man management he set standards that others could admire but few attain.

To be able to see clearly the other man's point of view can sometimes be a disadvantage, but Ian never allowed this gift to undermine his sense of discipline or affect his judgement of what was right, just and fair. I recall a remark made to me by a soldier of the 1st Bn. The Queen's Royal Regiment in Iserlohn in 1959. "That Major Beattie, sir," he said, "is a good officer." Let that be Ian's epitaph.

CJDH



### Major A.U.H. Hacket-Pain, MBE, FRGS

Jacky Hacket-Pain was born in 1904 and went to school at Pangbourne Nautical College and the Royal Naval College Dartmouth, but left and served as a cadet officer with the Shaw Saville line.

Later he got a King's cadetship to Sandhurst and in 1924 was commissioned into the Queen's, in which Regiment his father also served from 1875-1886. He went to the Far East with the 1st Bn and in 1933 was seconded to the Sudan Defence Force. He returned to the 2nd Bn in 1938 and went to Palestine and became the Area Security Officer at Force HQ.

He spent the war years in central Palestine as a very successful Intelligence Officer as he had a great rapport with the Arabs. He was awarded the MBE for his energy and resourcefulness in keeping this turbulent area loyal to the British, even when their fortunes were low.

He was twice mentioned in despatches and received a C-in-C's commendation. He retired from the army in 1949 and immediately joined the Foreign Service as Vice Consul in Nabulus until 1957.

He really enjoyed the work he did in Palestine over some 20 years as it meant working on his own and at times entailed considerable risk. He had a nice sense of humour and was never afraid to stick up for what he thought was right and fair. He was very unassuming and few knew what he had achieved and he was a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.

He had explored widely in Africa, where he was born, which he loved and where he is now buried. He died on 17 January, on a visit to the Gambia with his wife Lindsay, where they were highly respected. The President of the Gambia, H.E. Sir Dawda Jawara, honoured him with a public funeral, with full military honours - a fitting climax to a lifetime of service to his country and overseas.

To his wife Lindsay and son John, we all extend our deepest sympathy.

JBHK

### Major C.B. Cowie, MBE.

Charles Cowie, who has died at the age of 84, was a loyal supporter of The East Surrey Regiment and a regular contributor to the Regimental Association News Letter. After service in the 2nd and 1st Battalions before the War, he was commissioned in the Royal Military Police. He served in North West Europe, and was awarded the MBE.

A keen collector of militaria, Charles Cowie was the founder of 'Crown Imperial', and was well known in the field of military enthusiasts.

### C.S.A. Avis

The name of Alex Avis is well known to readers of the News Letter to which he contributed over many years. He was probably our oldest Regular soldier, having joined The Queen's Royal Regiment in 1910. One of his earlier Regimental recollections was the dedication of the window in Holy Trinity Church, Guildford, to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the formation of the Regiment.

At the outbreak of war on 4th August 1914, Corporal Avis was serving in the 1st Queen's. Nine days later the Battalion was in France. An account of his experiences was published in the November 1981 News Letter. In September 1914 he was severely wounded and sent back to the United Kingdom. He spent over a year in various hospitals, but was downgraded as unfit for further active service. He served at the Regimental Depot at Guildford from November 1915 to March 1919, and was appointed Orderly Room Sergeant in 1918. Joining the Old Comrades Association as a Life Member in 1929, Alex Avis remained a loyal supporter and correspondent.

There being no future for him in the Regular Army, Sgt Avis went out to South Africa in 1921 and joined the South African Police in Cape Town. After retirement from the active list in 1950, he continued serving with the South African Police Assurance Fund for another 21 years.

Alex Avis took an active part in the St John ambulance Brigade, and was honoured in 1936 by being admitted a Serving Brother of the Order of St John. Throughout his long life, Alex maintained a great interest in the Regiment. He died aged 93, and in his will has left his medals to the Regimental Museum and a substantial legacy to the Regimental Association.

### Lieutenant-Colonel H.R.D. Hill, MBE

The sudden death of Lieutenant-Colonel Bob Hill last October was a great shock - he was on his way to a much looked forward to holiday, after having been on parade at Putney, and having two days before chaired the annual meeting of the Museum trustees.

Bob Hill was born in 1915, and was educated at Marlborough and the R.M.C. Sandhurst. He was commissioned into the Queens Royal Regiment at the age of 20 in August 1935, joining the 2nd Battalion. He went with the Battalion to Palestine at the end of 1938, and remained with them until February 1940 when he was appointed to the staff of 16th Infantry Brigade. This Brigade, of which 2nd Queens were part, the other Battalions being 2nd Leicesters and 1st Argylls, fought as hard and continuously as any throughout the fifteen months from the autumn of 1940 to December 1941, and this took in Sidi Barrani, the attempts to relieve Crete, Syria, and Tobruk - for his special service Bob Hill, as a Captain, was awarded the MBE in 1941.

When the Brigade was transferred to the Far East in early 1942 he held staff appointments in Ceylon before becoming GSO 2 of 26th Indian Division in Burma. He returned to UK in late 1944 to become an Instructor at the Staff College, Camberley, and then continued to alternate regimental and staff service until rejoining 1st Queens as 2 I/C in January 1954. At the end of General Piggott's tour in command Colonel Hill took over the 1st Battalion in Malaya in November of that year, bringing the Battalion back to Iserlohn again in April 1957. He handed over later that year after three years of successful command mostly in the very testing conditions of Malaya with a Battalion very largely composed of National Servicemen. The Battalion received much praise, and Colonel Hill's distinguished service was recognised by two Mentions in Despatches. Colonel A.G. Jones who was I.O. for much of the tour in Malaya has written:

"Like most Commanders of British Battalions in Malaya, Lieutenant-Colonel Bob Hill found his Command widely dispersed geographically, operating in company or smaller sized packets and engaged on every task from routine patrols to food denial operations.

Not only this but the forces in each area were controlled for operations not directly by the Commanding Officer, but by a joint Civil/Military war executive committee of which the Commanding Officer or local company commander was a member.

This must have made command of a well trained Battalion frustrating as other than the very rare large scale operations the role of the Commanding Officer became largely one of a co-ordinator, persuader and administrator. Quiet and dogged determination, a sense of humour and of proportion, with the capacity to encourage and sustain were the characteristics required and so selflessly demonstrated by Bob Hill. Nothing was too much trouble for him or his wife, Brenda, who did so much to help those families separated from their husbands in various locations."

After his command Colonel Hill filled a number of further staff appointments and qualified at the Royal Naval Staff College before retiring from the Army in November 1962.

On retirement he worked for "Save and Prosper", and initially lived in Warwickshire, but in the 1970s came to live near Midhurst, Sussex. Here he took on the job of Chairman of the Association, and when the Museum was to be moved from Kingston to Clandon became a very active member of the new committee, subsequently becoming Chairman. His contribution at the Museum was great, as besides his counsel and general work, he was a very clever carpenter, and a lot of the construction in the Museum is a memorial to him. He was also always busy locally; as a keen sailor he became Commodore of the Bosham Yacht Club, and was honorary treasurer and organiser of many local committees and societies.

In all his work and activities Colonel Hill was always a lively and undaunted person with a great loyalty to the Regiment. He was determined and effective in all he did but remained modest and unassuming, and through this combination he achieved a lot and leaves much achievement behind him.

The Regiment's and the Association's sympathy is deeply felt for his wife Brenda who supported him so well, and for his children and grandchildren. A large congregation with many from the Regiment attended his Thanksgiving Service at the Priory Church of St Mary Eastbourne on the day of his funeral.

JWS





### Tobruk September - December 1941

The 2nd Battalion The Queen's Royal Regiment disembarked at Alexandria on 20 September 1941 and moved directly to Amariya staging camp on the outskirts of Alexandria.

For the remainder of that day and night we were left guessing as to where we were bound. The only clue was that we were to take Field Service Marching Order and to wear plimsoles. Packs had to be loaded with extra rations.

Early morning of 21 September 1941 saw us back at Alexandria and boarding the destroyers HMS Napier and Kingston. Embarkation complete, the two destroyers sailed without delay and when we were well out to sea it was announced that our destination was Tobruk.

We arrived at Tobruk harbour late at night and disembarked without delay, for the destroyers wanted to sail immediately and be as far away from the coast and Tobruk as was possible before daylight.

Tobruk was a target for the German air force on most nights and by day. In fact in daylight, we in the forward position of the Tobruk perimeter could observe the German aircraft taking off from El-Adam and making their way towards us for their bombing missions.

The Battalion stayed in a reserve position for two or three days whilst advance parties from each company went forward to the positions they were to take over from the 2/13 Bn The Australian Regiment. The Aussies who had done so well over the past six months in holding Tobruk against all that the German army could throw at them, were going home to Australia where they were needed for the defence of their own homeland which was under threat from the Japanese.

I was one of the advance party for C Company and as the Platoon Sgt for 14 Platoon, I was sent to post R65 which was to be my platoon position. It should be remembered that up to this time I had been with the M.T. since 1938, my only experience as a platoon sgt was what I had learned during the past six weeks, so this was really being thrown in at the deep end.

The first night I went out with the Australians on a familiarisation patrol of the area for which we were going to be responsible. The little that I had learned about briefing and patrol formations went out of the window that night. The Australians had a completely different approach to the patrol routine. An example, to the best of my knowledge I saw no briefing nor was I told to attend one. A party of about ten men under an NCO left the post and proceeded to the far side of the minefield on the far side of the anti-tank ditch. Here they split up into three groups, went their separate ways until meeting up again back at the post. It would be quite wrong for me to be critical then and even now forty three years on, for the Australians had done a wonderful job and they had their own way of doing things.

The main body of the Battalion occupied all the front line

and on the 25 September the Australians left for home. A point of interest here - one battalion of the Australians was unable to be relieved and remained as part of the Tobruk Garrison until the final breakout in December 1941.

The battalion stayed in the Tobruk perimeter for about three months. During this time the daily routine was fairly repetitive. "Stand to" at first and last light every day without fail, half an hour before dawn, and half an hour before and after last light. There were patrols every night of one sort or another. We were never allowed to become bored.

I mentioned earlier the Australians moving through the minefields to commence their patrols. I think it would be interesting to see how this was accomplished and a habit that we ourselves continued throughout our stay. The reason will become obvious.

The defences of the Tobruk perimeter consisted of a number of concrete prepared positions dug by the Italians. The perimeter was semi-circle in shape and about 30 miles long. In front of all the prepared positions was a continuous double barbed wire fence. Between the fence and the beginning of the outer minefield was an anti tank ditch, and between the fence and the near side of the anti tank ditch was another minefield. There were no plans of the minefields except we knew roughly where they were.

When a patrol leader took a patrol from my position, R65, he passed through a gap in the wire fence on to a path that led over a foot bridge across the anti tank ditch. Here, he took hold of a telephone wire which had been secured into the ground by a metal stake and holding the slack under his arm would continue through the outer minefield until the wire disappeared into the ground, again secured to a metal stake. This told the patrol commander that he had safely negotiated the outer minefield. The patrol he was leading obviously had to be in single file behind the patrol commander until the telephone wire gave out.

After that, the patrol shook out to the prearranged formation, mostly in our case, diamond formation, and got on with the job in hand. It was necessary on these patrols for the patrol commander to be a reasonably good compass reader and a counter of paces for those were the most necessary aids to navigation and distance covered. I think we used to estimate one hundred paces would be equivalent to one hundred yards. We were normally briefed to proceed on a compass bearing for a distance of one thousand paces, change compass bearing, and proceed along the enemy front for another one thousand paces, and then reset the compass to return on the third leg of the patrol for the necessary number of paces to bring one back to where they had started. If one was a good compass reader, then one would land up somewhere near the point from which one had started. I only managed it once the whole time I was there.

One patrol which will always stay in my mind. I had been briefed to take out a reconnaissance patrol to try and find out what was happening in the enemy forward localities about a mile from our own positions. I think my CSM Fred Jode or C/Sgt Spike Gage was a little too generous with the rum tot, and one or two of the patrol developed a touch of the hiccups. It was obvious I could not take them on, so I did the unforgivable as a patrol leader - sent the patrol back under the control of a Cpl, giving him the compass. I would continue and try to find out what I had been sent out to do. On the return journey all I had to guide me back to the perimeter was the North Star. One had only to pick up the plough, trace the North Star from that and it would at least lead one in the right direction.

I gathered a certain amount of information, then headed back. I arrived somewhere outside the perimeter wire because I could see it in the distance, although it was dark. After that it was a guessing game as to where I was in relation to my platoon position. I guessed wrong, went in the wrong direction and landed in the minefield. Having set one off by kicking a trip wire, I decided to stay put for the night and wait for daylight. 'A' Company were on the alert and at first light I gingerly stood up and made my presence known and they sent out a guide to bring me in. THANK GOD FOR 'A' COMPANY.



*HMS Hobart, which carried the advance party under Major E.S. Bingham*



In the meantime my Cpl had reported me missing on patrol. I was more worried at the time because I had my Platoon Commander's watch which he had lent me. He was Lt. Martindale, who unfortunately was reported missing during the breakout. I think the information that I gave on the de-brief was not accepted because I could not pinpoint what I had heard, but could not see. Many weeks later on the breakout, I found I hadn't been too far wrong. The final word on the patrol was that I got a telling off from the Commanding Officer for leaving the patrol. Well I did say I had a lot to learn.

Lt. R.M. Merrett of 'C' Company was probably the most prolific patrol leader, and led many a fighting patrol. CSM Fred Jode was in one of those patrols which had to make a bit of a run for it. He told me later that on that occasion he could have beaten Sydney Wooderson over a hundred yards sprint. He also remarked one could reckon on some hassle if they went out with Dick Merrett, he had an appetite for looking for and seeing off the opposition.

'C' Company HQ was about five hundred yards in rear of the forward platoon positions. There were a number of times when I was called to report to Company HQ for some reason or other. This call was normally made over the field telephone. It was on occasions like this that C/Sgt Spike Gage would have his bit of fun. He had an old captured machine gun of Austrian origin. As I commenced the journey towards HQ, (out in the open) he would fire this gun to stir up the German/Italian opposition. He also knew it would bring retribution from the oppositions artillery. The result was a salvo or two of the big stuff and on hearing either the report of the guns firing or the salvos on their way, one had either to hit the ground pretty quick, or run like hell to the safety of HQ - literally falling into the safety of one of the trenches, gasping for breath and there would be the C/Sgt with a big mischievous grin all over his face. Our verbal response to this of course unprintable.

On another occasion when I had to make the trip to HQ, I was midway between the two positions when I became aware of a heavy droning and looking up and behind me I saw a swarm of Stukas preparing to dive. One always knew when they were going to dive because they broke formation. I can still remember, I didn't know whether to run back to my platoon, go on to HQ, or just hit the deck. I chose the middle course and in the safety of HQ listened to a tremendous onslaught of bombing close by. On hearing the aircraft flying away, I peered over the top of the trench to see my platoon position covered in a cloud of smoke and dust. Returning to the platoon position, laying beside the entrance was an unexploded five hundred pound bomb. Some of the weapon pits had been destroyed and a number of the men a bit shaken up, fortunately there were no casualties. The UXB became a landmark, and the longer it stayed there the more bold did we become, and we used to give it a pat as we passed by. It was still there when we left on the breakout.

One must appreciate that everything had to be brought in by sea: food, ammunition, reinforcements or replacements, evacuation of the sick and wounded. This all put a terrific strain on the Royal Navy and they suffered more grievous losses in their loyal support of the army. Breakfast would normally be tinned bacon or soya links already described - there might be bread but normally it would be hard tack biscuits. Mid-day would be something very light such as biscuits and marmalade and the main meal which was cooked at Company Headquarters had to be collected after dark. It would almost inevitably be bully stew. The contents of the stew would be a six gallon container one quarter filled with water, thickened up with numerous small tins of bully beef and thickened even more by the addition of rice. There might be from time to time some vegetables but this would be on very rare occasions. The water always had a salty taste, this made the tea taste as if salt instead of sugar had been added.

I did have a young soldier in my platoon by the name of Spud Taylor who volunteered to be platoon cook for the breakfast meal. He was very good. He got to know that I liked a slice of bread and dripping so he used to save the bacon fat from the tinned bacon, put it in a cool place to set, and if there was bread, he would produce bread and dripping and say "there you are Sarge, get that down you, it'll do you good". He would also produce a hot brew of tea (salted) at the most unusual times and during the breakout, when the battle was at its height, and we were the recipients of some pretty heavy artillery fire he would produce hot tea. It would be well to remember that we did not

have the modern day soldiers aid to cooking in the field, neither was petrol available for the so called desert cooking. Where Spud Taylor got the fuel to set a fire going was always a mystery. I tell this story because I feel it is one of the human ones that get missed in all the big histories and also chaps like Taylor were worth their weight in gold in a platoon.

In contrast, we had a company cook (I won't name him) who had no imagination. In 1941, The Army Catering Corps came into being and most regimental cooks were automatically transferred to that Corps. On the day of his transfer he was asked what he was going to give the troops for their hot meal. His reply was to use one of those very much used obscene swear words so used by the British Soldier "..... em, give 'em stew". We all knew what the contents of the stew was going to be.

The battle for the relief of Tobruk began back at the frontier around Sollum about the 19 November 1941 and the Tobruk garrison began their battle on the 20 November when our old friends The Leicesters and The Black Watch moved out of the perimeter and joined battle. There was stiff opposition and The Black Watch suffered very severe casualties.

'A' and 'B' Companies of our own Battalion had also been very involved in the initial breakout battles and had also suffered heavy casualties. 'C' Company were a little more fortunate in that we did not move out until about 24 November when we relieved 'B' Company at Tugan. It was then our turn to put in an attack on a position called Bondi. This was a night attack and it didn't go well from the start. One of the carriers carrying the mortar platoon was blown up on a minefield, CSM Fred Jode and myself lifted him from the wreck of the carrier, but it was obvious he was beyond help and he died. We then had another man by the name of Georgie Poole badly wounded. He was a north country lad and loved his cigarettes, but, when I offered him one he refused, he must have been bad to do that. Captain Armstrong who was 2 i/c of the Company and had only joined us recently (I believe he had only just married), was in conference with the Company Commander, Captain P.R.H. Kealy, when a shell or mortar bomb landed and Captain Armstrong was killed. Cpl North, one of my section commanders in 14 Platoon was killed lying quite close to me. I hadn't realised it until after our withdrawal and a roll call. We found him the next day in an attack we put in by day.

The final outcome of the battle overall was that Tobruk was relieved, or as we in the Tobruk Garrison will always hold "we relieved ourselves" and about 10 December we were given a most unpleasant task - that of burying the dead from the carnage that had taken place at Sidi Rezegh. The New Zealanders had taken a fearsome battering from Rommels armoured columns and the Queen's had the job of gathering in the badly decomposed bodies, both of the infantry of the New Zealanders, and the crews from our own tanks that had been knocked out. Even in this task we suffered a few casualties from unidentified minefields. I think this task lasted about a week and took us to about 21 December, when we concentrated for a move back to our old staging camp at Qassassin, where we arrived on Christmas morning. It was a good start, for the camp was under water from a recent rain storm.

Most of us were soon sent on leave to Cairo and it was on this leave that I suffered one of the most unpleasant episodes in my career. I had gone on leave with C/Sgt Spike Gage, Sgt George Munns, Sgt Gordon Chessel. We had booked a room in a hotel and all gone out in the evening for a meal and then onto a place called the Bardia Cabaret. In the course of the evening, my colleagues found themselves female company. I still being very wary declined and started to make my way home when I was felled by an almighty blow to the face and collapsed into unconsciousness. When I came to, I couldn't see nor speak because of the severe battering my face received in the assault, and I had been relieved of my AB64 Parts 1 and 11, and all my money, including £5 which I was looking after for George Munns.

The next day my colleagues tried to get me medical assistance, firstly at the 15th Scottish General Hospital and then the Middle East OCTU. Neither place would treat me because I hadn't a "sick report". When I appealed for someone to do something because I was in great pain, they just told me I couldn't be treated unless I had a sick report and that I as a senior NCO should know better. Where was I to get a sick report other than from the nearest Military Establishment which was where I had gone to for treatment? Eventually a Nursing Sister on duty in



the Medical Centre at the OCTU told me to wait and she would see to me when she had time. Some two hours passed while I sat in the waiting room, until she condescended to see me and when she removed the bandage from my eyes and face she gave a gasp of horror and had the audacity to say to me "Why on earth didn't you say this was so serious". A Medical Officer was called immediately, he concurred with the Nursing Sister's assessment that the injury was severe and I was taken without delay to the British Military Hospital at Heliopolis outside Cairo where I remained a bed patient for the next ten days.

Subsequent Military Police investigations unearthed the culprits as being British Army deserters. The final ignomy of it all was that I had to appear before the Commanding Officer for "losing by neglect" my AB 64 Pt. 1 and 11. BHQ had neither been informed that I had been an inpatient for ten days, or that I had been the innocent victim of what is today 40 years on called "Mugging".

Talking to the Adjutant of the day some weeks later, he asked how my injuries were coming along and what hard luck it was to be inconvenienced whilst on leave. When I replied that I didn't have any leave except for the first night he couldn't believe it and the Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. Oxley-Boyle said it was only because I was a senior NCO that he believed my story and I was cleared of the losing by neglect charge.

Early in February 1942 we returned to Syria once again because of the crisis in Russia and an expected breakthrough by the Germans via that area. However, it didn't materialise and greater events were happening in the Far East and we returned to Qassassin and prepared for embarkation on the Dutch Liner Nieuw Amsterdam for an undisclosed destination to the Far East.

This Western Desert Story has been somewhat longer than the rest, but it should be remembered it covers the span of 18 months of Middle East conflict and when our Battalion with others were required to hold the fort until better equipment, and more of it, was available. It also includes two campaigns outside the desert, Crete and Syria.

For myself, I had learned a lot. I think I learned more at Tobruk, immediately before when I had been returned to duty, and immediately after Tobruk. The man who guided me was Fred Jode, my Company Sgt. Major in 'C' Company. He was a great friend to me, and through this story I would like to say **THANK YOU FRED.**

TA

#### ANNUAL REUNION 1986



Top: Major's John Reed and Peter Hill  
Bottom: George Deacon and Alan Fell



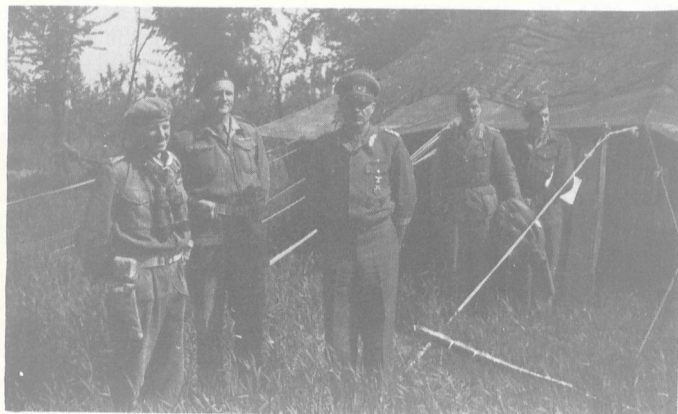
#### German General Surrenders

W.R. Tomkins, who describes himself as "a one time amateur soldier" has sent in some interesting photographs, taken in Italy in 1945. He wonders if any of our readers can remember the occasion or the name of the German general.

Tomkins was in South Africa on the outbreak of war and joined The Capetown Highlanders. After service with the First South African Division in North Africa, Private Tomkins found himself at an OCTU near Cairo commanded by Colonel Oxley-Boyle with Major Peter Kealy as his Company Commander. After commissioning in the South African army he served until 1943 and then volunteered to be seconded to UK forces and was posted to 2/6th Queens in Holy.

When the Division returned to Egypt for a refit and training Colonel Alec Renshaw nominated him as a liaison Officer for 56 Division Headquarters. He recalls that his greatest moment whilst serving with 2/6th Queens occurred one evening at a bar (Editor - all great moments happen whilst at a bar) He claimed to have worn the Queen's Royal Regiment badge before any of them. As a boy he had been educated at Whitgift School in 1926 and had joined the OTC, where they wore the Paschal lamb.

"As a one-time amateur soldier in the Queens who has enjoyed receiving the Newsletter over the last two or three years I thought that the enclosed prints might be of some interest. I took them in Northern Italy two or three days before hostilities ceased on that front in 1945.



I served as an L.O. at the Headquarters of 56 Division for the last eight or nine months of the war and I remember that sunny morning when we heard that a Boche Corps commander had surrendered to forward troops; he was brought in with his A.D.C. by the commander of the brigade concerned who was accompanied by a member of his staff. General Whitfield was out in his jeep visiting forward troops at the time but after a while he returned to receive his visitor. I had grabbed my camera and was in time to record the moment when the Boche saluted our general who, of course, duly acknowledged. It seemed to me that the Boche showed very good manners and a subtle deference to our general and I couldn't help admiring his well-tailored copy of the British Army battle dress; perhaps he had had it made some months beforehand in anticipation of his surrender!

I never throw negatives away but despite a detailed search of my stock I have been unable to trace these at all. I had the film processed very shortly afterwards, possibly by an official photographer or by an Italian (frilly print edges) when the paper would have dropped off the back of the cart. I know that I was very disappointed with the print quality and should have waited until my return home. However, I wanted to be able to give a set of prints to General Whitfield; in the event I was reluctant to call on him personally but asked his A.D.C. to hand them to him. I never heard anything more and have a nasty feeling that the A.D.C. kept them for himself - no, he wasn't a Queen's man.

I wonder if there is somebody who could quote to me the name of the German officer and his command. I suppose the incident occurred somewhere between Ferrara and Rovigo but I should be most grateful if somebody could tell me where it was."



## Don't Join the Infantry, Son

The day war broke out my father said to me (to paraphrase Robb Wilton) "What are you going to do about it? Whatever you do, don't let them put you in the Infantry." He - my father not Robb Wilton - had served as an infantryman in the 1914-18 war on the Somme and at Passchendaele and had related some frightening tales of trench warfare and of 'Butcher' Haig and his bloodthirsty generals.

With this sound advice in mind I duly reported for my medical in February 1940 at a bleak drill hall in Croydon. I was soon ushered into a cubicle where I explained to the medical officer that I was allergic to corned beef which brought me out in a rash and that loud noises were wont to produce in me a nervous tic. The doctor, a grim-faced bald-headed individual brandishing a glass hammer, made no reply, but handed me a glass bottle. "Sample" he growled.

I was somewhat dismayed to learn after my medical that there was nothing radically wrong with me physically, and I was then interviewed by an Army officer who asked me into which Service I would like to be drafted. I gave my first choice as the RAF and the second the Royal Navy. "If we have to put you in the Army" said the officer - a major - "is there any particular branch you would like to serve in?" "If the worst comes to the worst then perhaps I could be posted to the Pay Corps as my father served with them in 1914-18" I lied, "it's a family tradition" I added somewhat lamely. "We'll see what can be done" replied the major ending the interview.

I had told this officer that I had had no particular antipathy towards the Germans; in fact I didn't know any Germans, or Italians come to that, so I felt fairly confident that the authorities would realise my heart wasn't in it when it came to fighting the King's enemies and that I would be posted to some non-combatant unit where I would see out the war in blissful anonymity in the Orkneys or somewhere well away from hostilities.

A few weeks later I received in the post a buff-coloured envelope containing a railway warrant and a postal order for one shilling; but it was the slip of paper which accompanied them which worried me greatly. I was required to report to the Depot of the East Surrey Regiment at Kingston Barracks in one week's time!

After downing a stiff whisky I tried to look on the bright side. I remembered that in 'War and Peace' Tolstoy wrote that military service is a life of irreproachable idleness, which appealed to me, although I doubted if this blissful state would continue in wartime.

So to Kingston Barracks I reported. I somehow got through my basic training at the Barracks and Richmond Park where I learned how to stick my bayonet in a sack of straw hanging from a sort of gallows; unfortunately throughout the war I never encountered a sack of straw hanging from a gallows to enable me to put this skill into practice. I also discovered that one had to be in the very pink of condition in order to report on sick parade at 7 o'clock on a cold March morning.

At the beginning of June 1940 I found myself at Dover with a draft of SURREYS. It had been the intention to ship us over to France but by then the evacuation from Dunkirk had begun and so we stayed put. A few days later we were sent, for some reason, to Yeovil in Somerset and from there to Axminster. It was in this small Devon town that the remnants of the First Battalion had assembled and our draft was to reinforce them, a prospect which they evidently did not relish.

We were marched to a large field on the outskirts of the town and were addressed in turn by the C.O., Lt-Col Boxshall, and the redoubtable RSM, Buck Adams. Buck began by asking if there were any tradesmen among us. Getting no response, he enquired if any of us knew shorthand. Now although I was a shorthand writer I knew from experience that this was an old Army joke. Any soldier fool enough to answer would be told to report to the cookhouse where they happened to be short-handed. It's companion joke was a call for anyone interested in music, who would then be required to shift the piano in the officers' mess. So I remained silent. The RSM then asked if any of us could type. It then crossed my mind that this might be a genuine enquiry, so taking a chance I told Buck I had learned shorthand and typing. "Report to the Orderly Room at the George Hotel at once" I was ordered, and thus began my six-year career as an Army clerk.

I was only separated from the First Battalion for four months or so. In early 1944, following hospitalization for hepatitis, I was posted to the York and Lancaster Regiment as a rifleman at the Anzio beachhead. This was a terrifying experience; the Germans made determined efforts to kill me on several occasions. Almost as terrifying was the language problem with my North Country comrades.

Eventually, through the efforts of my friends in the First, I rejoined the Battalion and remained until the end of hostilities. In Sicily I was blown up on an anti-personnel mine which killed three men and wounded several others. I received a chunk of Krupps in the arm and odd bits of metal in the shoulder; like the men of Agincourt I can roll up my sleeve on St Crispins Day and show my scar.

I managed to hold my rank of Private throughout the war. Incidentally, whoever thought up this designation for the common soldier must have been a humourist. Privacy is the last thing he can expect!

Looking back, I am proud to have served with the East Surreys. I made many friends, some alas no longer with us, but happily I am still able to talk over old times at the Regimental Reunions. Long may they continue and my gratitude to those who make them possible.

HC

## Museum Notes

Lieut Colonel H R D Hill MBE, whose death is reported elsewhere in this Newsletter, had been Chairman of the Museum Committee for the past two years. He supervised the development and improvements in the Museum, but was never happier than when, clad in dungarees, he was working with his carpenter's tools on some problem of display. Brigadier Michael Clarke has succeeded Colonel Bob Hill as Chairman.

Throughout the winter months a band of helpers has met weekly in the Museum, cleaning and refurbishing the exhibits. During the open season a number of volunteers has kindly undertaken to assist the Museum staff on week-ends, Bank Holidays and other busy periods. An excellent illustrated Museum Guide is now on sale for 50p; this serves to explain to visitors the lay-out of the Museum and makes a colourful souvenir of their visit.

It is the intention of the Museum Trustees to maintain interest by mounting displays on various subjects of Regimental interest. The Far East has been on display for the past two years, and the current theme is that of the Volunteer and Territorial battalions of our Regiments. A booklet which outlines the history of each of these battalions from 1859, augmented by some personal reminiscences, will shortly be available. It is hoped this booklet will be attractive to those who have served or who are serving in our Territorial and Volunteer battalions, and will prove a valuable historical record for the general public.

It has been the aim of the Regimental Museum to produce accounts of the operations of our Regiments in the 1939-45 War by authors who were there. This year will see the publication of 'Salerno' by Brigadier Geoffrey Curtis.

A new show case, designed by the late Lieut Colonel Hill, has been installed in Room 1, and contains uniform, accoutrements and other items relating to the Surrey Rifle Volunteers. The cost of setting up this show case was largely met by a substantial donation from the Queen's Surreys Territorial Trustees. In addition, a most generous bequest has been received from the estate of the late Colonel CR Wigan MC, TD, Honorary Colonel of the 5th Queen's Royal Regiment. A number of interesting items has been presented to the Museum, including a 400 year old hand-bell, 'acquired' from a Cathedral in the Peninsular War by an officer of the 2nd Queen's.

Of special Regimental significance is the opening of The Queen's Regimental Museum at Dover Castle on 16th May, for which contributions have been made by the other Regimental Museums, including our own. It is almost superfluous to inform readers that the Curator and Archivist of the new Museum is our own Colonel Les Wilson, to whom we offer our best wishes for the success of this monumental project.

The Queen's Surreys Museum Open Day is on Saturday, 26th September, from 1400 to 1800 hours. It is a good opportunity for old Regimental friends to meet.

PGEH



## BIRTH OF A BATTALION

### In The Beginning ....

Some people still believe that the world was created in six days. Not only all the plants, fishes, animals, birds, Adam and Eve, but also the sun, moon, and stars. When the Territorial Army was reformed after the war the powers that be thought along similar lines, and imagined that somehow a Territorial Battalion could spring into existence almost overnight, rather like Venus who at her birth came up out of the sea fully developed and very beautiful. They came to expect an 'instant T.A.', which would be ready and fighting fit in a matter of months rather than years. Most of the regular officers posted to the staffs of Territorial Brigades and Divisional Headquarters were ambitious, highly successful staff trained officers, no doubt with distinguished war records, but possibly with little or no more knowledge of the T.A. than I had. In the early days they often failed to understand that individuals could only give their spare time to part-time soldiering, and this must of necessity take second place to their civilian careers, and obligations to their families. If for example some T.A. officer failed to turn up for some vital exercise laid on by Brigade, it was usually entirely due to pressure of work – and not the fault of the Adjutant!

In 1946 I was in Macedonia with the 1st Bn The East Surrey's when the news was received that I had been selected as the first post-war Adjutant of the 6th Bn. I thought the 1/6th and 2/6th Bns were already in existence (the war just having ended), and I had no idea what the peacetime T.A. was, other than they had drill halls, drank lots of beer, and occasionally fired their rifles on the ranges. I had joined the 1st Bn in 1938 when almost a schoolboy, and this was to be my first posting away from what was really my home. I had never been considered an expert in the simple war-time accounting and administration, so this was going to be something of a challenge, and the thought of becoming a peace-time T.A. Adjutant filled me with a certain amount of apprehension.

After a period of leave I duly reported to the Regimental Depot at Kingston, which was a convenient place to live, having learnt by now that the H.Q. of the 6th Bn was in Surbiton. Next day I drove to Vine House the home of the Surrey T.A. and A.F. Association and reported to Colonel Underhill, the Secretary. He seemed very busy with other things to do, and after wishing me well suggested that I should go and see his deputy who would 'put me in the picture'. 'Chang' turned out to be a delightful man ('Chang' was the name of an elephant in a pre-war film), and over the next few months he was to be a source of invaluable help to me. I now forget his surname, but as everyone called him 'Chang' it did not matter much as he will be so well known to most readers who will recall him as a good and loyal friend of the Surreys. Also at Vine House was Mr Stan Bayes, a former Surrey and equally experienced. After a long session with these two I was handed the keys to my new H.Q., which turned out to be a pleasant villa in Claremont Avenue.

On entering I found the rooms sparsely furnished, but in what I took to be my office a desk, chair, telephone, safe, and for some unknown reason a book of railway warrants. Pulling up the chair I sat down and stared in front of me. Where should I begin?

Clearly the first task was to 'establish' the Battalion by publishing a Part II Order, and having completed this, post myself to it. As there was no typewriter I wrote it all out in longhand using carbon paper for the many copies required by Records. I often wonder if the Records Office had ever before accepted Part II Orders written out in longhand, but I received no complaints from them.

Gradually the weeks went by and things began to fall into place. George Birdsall, MBE, arrived as regular Quarter Master, and was soon joined by our first recruit, Mr Walklin, as his RQMS. Various PSI's were posted in, one for each of our four drill halls (Kingston, Richmond, Hersham and Chertsey). I cannot recall them all now, but CSM Spenser, MM, went to Richmond, and Sgt Babbington to Chertsey. (Rowley Mans, Adj. 6 Queen's, had, I believe, only one drill hall, at Bermondsey, with a small close-knit recruiting area. We were scattered throughout East Surrey – an added complication as some volunteers would have to travel many miles to reach their nearest drill hall). 'Pinky' Williams joined me at RHQ as RSM, a very correct Regimental Sergeant Major with beautiful copper-plate handwriting.

The pre-war married quarters were still largely occupied by

de-mobbed soldiers, so an early task was to find homes for the PSI's and their families. In this I was greatly helped by Alfie Forsdyke, the Town Clerk of Kingston, who suggested sending eviction notices to the present illegal occupants, but at the same time tell them not to worry, and certainly not to move. After they had received three eviction notices they automatically went to the top of the local housing list, and would soon be re-housed. So that was one problem solved – I had to keep the PSI's happy. Another was that I needed at least one clerk for the Orderly Room. By now the QM was getting in plenty of G1098 stores and equipment, and recruiting had to begin in earnest. I advertised in the local papers (there was little unemployment in those days), and had only one reply. The applicant's chief qualification for the job was that he claimed to have played hockey for England! Hardly what I needed in the office, but he did his best for a few weeks until in desperation I had to sack him.

Luckily I was soon rescued from my predicament, for by now Mr. Scriven had been de-mobbed and was available. Arthur Scriven was, to use an overworked expression 'a tower of strength'. He had been a pre-war PSI, war-time ORQMS and holder of the MBE and MSM. For me a saviour had arrived, a man of great wisdom, and unassuming efficiency; calm and confident under all circumstances, it is largely due to his hard work that the Battalion "got off the ground". It is only right that I should put on record the debt and gratitude that I, and the 6th Bn owe to him.

Now things were under way at last, but after years of war the country was largely fed-up with the sight of men in battle dress, many people wanted to forget all about it. This is where the 'staff' failed to appreciate that it was going to be a long, and at times frustrating process, to build from scratch a new TA Bn. However if Arthur Scriven was one of the founding fathers of the new 6th Bn, our first Commanding Officer was to be the other.

I first met Graeme Dickson in France early in 1940 when he joined the 1st Bn as a Platoon Commander. Early on he showed his flair for soldiering when we were in action in front of the Maginot Line; his patrols being both daring and successful. As a Battalion Commander in Burma, where he won the M.C. and bar, I can well imagine that he led from the front and his men would have followed him anywhere. A man of infinite charm, sense of fun, and undoubted ability, with an occasional stutter which somehow seemed to add to his personality. And as an extra asset – a touch of pleasant irresponsibility which certainly did no harm.

When in uniform to say he was not exactly the smartest of officers would be an understatement, but never mind he was an ideal CO and with the help and support of the other officers who joined at about the same time was able to establish the firm foundations from which the infant Battalion was to grow.

Under Lt Col Dickson the battalion gradually expanded, a trickle of recruits now coming into the drill halls, which during the war had largely been used as 'Village Halls'. They had been valuable centres for such things as postal sorting offices, canteens, WVS and St John's Ambulance headquarters; not to mention dog shows, dances and whist-drives. The organisers of these events naturally resented the intrusion of the TA, quite forgetting the purpose for which the halls had been built!

The first recruits were mostly officers, who for several months outnumbered the other ranks. They formed a strong team round the CO and included Philip Drew, Humphrey Walker, Anson Squire, John Sherrard, 'Johnny' Johnson, John Alchin, 'Chalky' White, Arnold Cummins, Brian Aldis, John Ennis, John Richards, 'Teddy' Edwards, Brian Ramsey, 'Lefty' Wright, and soon afterwards 'Buck' Buchanan. Others I have now forgotten but all enthusiastically undertook the task of forming the Rifle Coys. and Specialist Pls. Here I will not go into all the hard work put in at the drill halls during the evening parades, at week-ends, on the ranges, or annual camps.

I was busy as a PR man continually calling on the many Mayors, Town Clerks, Clerks to the Council, Trades Union leaders, Rotarians, and other influential people in East Surrey. Recruiting teams had to be arranged, displays of equipment in the local towns, advertising in press and cinema, writing accounts for newspapers, and a hundred and one other things, as well as general administration, pay, and training programmes.

On looking back I find it rather like thumbing through an old photograph album, the long forgotten pictures sparking off a handful of memories, some quite trivial or amusing, but all



remain in the mind as if they had only happened yesterday, and not 40 years ago.

Here are a couple of them.

**A Wireless Exercise** – Quite early on, Jimmy Cox, the Signals Officer and I decided to hold a wireless training day in Richmond Park. Our few signallers assembled there with the 18 and 38 sets, and after being spread around the air was soon full of the usual chatter. "Report my signals." "How do you hear me?" "I hear you strength niner." "Roger so far .... wilco and out." It was all going very well, but soon we could hear Police Cars sirens blaring all over the place, not to mention numerous ambulances rushing madly around. This seemed unusual but we carried on, thinking that there may have been a serious accident somewhere near.

Next day Val Adams rang up to tell me that Brigadier Block was not exactly pleased. I gathered we had been using frequencies allocated to the Police and Ambulance Service, and had caused considerable chaos in the neighbourhood. We would not be allowed to use our wireless sets until new instructions were issued. Our very enthusiastic signallers were not amused.

**The Secretary of State for Defence** – Rowley Mans (Adjutant 6 Queen's) arranged for the Secretary of State for Defence, Mr. Shinwell, to address a large gathering, including the 'top Brass' in his drill hall at Bermondsey. We all went along, but before it started I popped down to the 'Gents' to 'spend a penny'. As I was standing against the wall I was joined, on my right, by a small man in a dark suit. To be sociable I turned to him and said, "Are you here to hear Mr Shinwell speak?" The reply, "I am Mr Shinwell".

These are but a few of the memories which have remained in my mind over the years. There are very many more mostly of a military, and serious nature. Thorough training, leading to efficiency was of course our 'raison d'être' and I trust that my recollections do not appear to be too lightweight, in what after all was a demanding posting.

After 2 years my place was taken by John Reed who carried on the good work, no doubt 'doing all those things that I had left undone'. I have very happy memories of those far off days especially as I was privileged to be in at the birth of a now flourishing Battalion.

R.C.T.



#### MINI REUNION

*Doctor John Sumner, who served as Medical Officer with 1/Queen's in Arakan and Kohima recently visited England from Canada where they live. During their visit they visited the regimental museum and were most impressed. A small party gathered at Capt. Dick Kensington's home on the 11th October. The photo, taken by Mrs. Audrey Sumner, is of Lt Col Mike Lowry, Lt Col George Grimston, George Rothery, John Sumner, Hugh Ford, John Hamilton, Graham Polkinholme, and Godfrey Shaw.*

### WITH 2 QUEEN'S IN THE EAST 1942 - 45

#### Ceylon

What a thrill to sniff the spicy breezes in Colombo harbour when we arrived there in March '42. We had had nearly two years in Western Desert, Syria, and the Canal Zone, as part of 16 Inf Bde. We sang on the march from the ship, such singing as I'd not heard since May '40. Now there were trees and shrubs coming into blossom, huge butterflies, pineapples growing alongside the road, up country a rainfall of 200 inches a year, and leeches. I remember picking 80 leeches off my skin and clothing after a night op at Peradeniya before I gave up counting! and I still have a vivid memory of the leeches on the grass at the roadside converging from all around onto me, so that I had to move my feet every minute while I repaired a M/C puncture. I was a non-smoker, but I carried cigarettes for tickling their tails, to make them drop off.

I succeeded Terence Close as Bn Liaison Officer with Brigade, so when the battalion moved to Habarane in the centre of the island in August I stayed at Bde HQ in Peradeniya Rest House with successively as my batman Walker (sent to Cypher Section & later commissioned), Knight, and Taylor (who had a fine singing voice). We feasted on Ceylon curries and jaggari prepared by the cook who had cooked there for King George V. Ouvry Roberts, who had succeeded Brigadier Lomax, was a more relaxed character and called us by our Christian names!

We had left North Africa intended for Burma, but too late, so we were landed in Ceylon to defend it from the Japs. After about a fortnight in Colombo we were taken to Peradeniya outside Kandy, where the battalion had its camp, except for its spell at Habarane. Jack Phillips joined us as C.O., in succession to Billy Oxley-Boyle, who had taken command of the ME OCTU. We were away for numerous exercises in central and northern parts of the island. As L.O. I reckoned in August already to have ridden or been driven over 10,000 miles. Returning from one four day exercise I fell asleep on my bike and was twice jolted awake off the road, so lay down for a short "kip" before going on. One horror for the motor-cyclist at night in the blackout was the fear of riding into a steel rope stretched across the road by Jap agents – there were several cases of decapitation. Sometimes too

in jungle country you would see ahead of you one or two cobras stretched out across the road, and you had to decide quickly whether it was best to slow down or accelerate! But the ticks were the worst danger for all of us, causing discomfort and many absences sick.

We had several games of hockey against local teams in Kandy; and I enjoyed with John Williams, George Hicks, and John Fox the hospitality of a Singhalese family with whom we dined and danced. For an A Coy Fair we hired an elephant for rides and got Singhalese dancers to perform. Tim Simon, Charles Jacobs, and I (all three of us A Coy officers) visited the ancient rock fortress of Siguriya, with its voluptuous paintings. I saw many of the great "tanks" (reservoirs built AD 300-1100) and the wonderful Trinco Harbour, and bathed near by among flying fish.

For a month in the summer I deputised for Donald Riddle, our Intelligence Officer, who had broken a collar-bone in a M/C accident. In Jan 43 I succeeded David Clarke as Adjutant. At about the same time RSM Sam Sharp left us for training as QM (he returned to us in India) and Freddy Harcup became RSM. Mattingley was our efficient Orderly Room Sgt. He was horrified at my taking two or three bulky files to my tent each evening and reducing them by morning to a quarter of their size. We were carrying an unnecessary bulk of "bumph" and we never later on found ourselves needing anything thus destroyed. I thought we were wasting time with all the checking of figures to ensure a seekly strength state for Command; they seemed to make no difference to the number or frequency of reinforcements. So I ordered calculations to cease, and entered for my signature any reasonable guess (and occasionally an unreasonable one) – it made no difference, and was never queried!

#### India

Then suddenly, Ceylon apparently no longer threatened, the Div was moved to India in early Feb 43. We had tedious days in the troop train, with work for Adj. QM Bob Hawkins and his staff, and the Orderly Officer, but little for anyone else. We



arrived near Ranchi in Bihar, where we encamped on a bitterly cold treeless plain. Here "Jonah" (H.O. Jones, then our M.T.O.) received a Christmas cake, baked by his mother in New Zealand in mid 1940, which had travelled via N.Z. House London, N. Africa, and Ceylon; well packed and laced with brandy it was in excellent condition – but only for an hour or so longer. Mails were erratic and very welcome when they came. Later on in Burma knowledge that the air drop contained mail meant strenuous efforts to collect all the drop. We officers had to censor letters written by O.Rs in our coys – a distasteful job. One man had a very fertile imagination, inventing crocodiles for the river we went bathing in, and so on.

In May we went to occupy Jingagatcha near Khulna in E. Bengal. It was very hot. Officers' mess was under a large mango tree and the ripe fruit was delicious. I went off on leave to Naini Tal with Harry Sparrow, a young officer who had joined us in Ceylon and was later killed in Burma; and we rejoined the Bn at Y Tank outside Bangalore.

Soon after this the Bde was given to Wingate as part of the Special Force for his second operation in Burma, and Bernard Fergusson became Bde Commander. We went back to Bangalore and thence into jungle in Mysore for training. All over 40 years old and those not physically fit were posted to Bn Rear HQ or left us, and the Bn was reorganised into two columns, No. 21 under Graham Duncombe now our C.O., No. 22 under the 2 i/c Terence Close. I as Adjutant went with 21 Coln, Edward Clowes was 2 i/c, and Chris Phillips I.O.

We were going to walk into Burma and would have to get our mules to swim about 300 yards across the Chindwin, so we had several exercises to practice this. Some of the mules took to water more readily than others. I remember a whole day stark naked with Peter Kemp and others in and out of the water with the mules. One of our training camps, Gangau, was beside a lovely stretch of water, so that we could have a good swim each day. It was there that I decided that I'd had enough of socks, so often wet and always shrinking, and I experimented with bare feet in my boots. It was much pleasanter, and I didn't wear a sock again for six months or more.

## Burma

Before the end of '43 John Metcalf came to succeed as C.O. Graham Duncombe, who went to command 1 Queen's on the Arakan front. We were all very fond of Graham, but soon liked and respected John. We had a few days and nights with torrential rain at Ledo, railhead for our 400 miles march into Burma, in early Feb. 44.

Bernard Fergusson has told the story of 16 Inf Bde's operations and tactics in "The Wild Green Earth" (Collins 1946). But he was wrong in saying that General Sir George Giffard, then C in C 11 Army Gp, missed us. We were delighted to have him visit us at Ledo. Wingate too came to wish us well. He had already inspired us with great confidence in his leadership, but we officers were appalled when addressing all ranks he said "Go your own pace each one on the march; sit down and rest when you feel you must." for after the first few days anyone left behind would have little hope of survival. Later we learned that, after travelling the first day of our route, he hadn't expected us to get through; but we never doubted it, although it took us longer than we planned. Gradients were sometimes 1 in 1 in the Naga Hills through which we started. Bde engineers had revetted traverses up the first such slopes onto the animal track on top of the hill, but the planners had not calculated for the unceasing rain there, annually over 400 inches. So the slope was slippery and unstable too. Mules had to be unloaded and pulled up, and their loads carried, revetments and steps were broken away, and it took the whole first day to get 21 Coln up. It took us 11 days to cover the first 24 miles south to Khulak Ga. "Column snake" was single file – 400 men, 60 mules, and some ponies. We had to move as silently as possible, communication within the column was by walky-talky. the front section used its dahs to cut a way through the entangled undergrowth, and there were numerous delays and detours. At the rear marched Doc Harrison and Padre Pritt to fortify the laggards in body and soul. Each of us carried 70 lbs or more weight of arms, equipment and food. Rain was ceaseless for the first few days, but we were soon short of water because we were travelling along a ridge and the rainwater fell hundreds of feet down each side to streams we couldn't possibly reach. We were lucky to find a small piece of open ground, just enough for a drop.

Before leaving India we had arranged for cans of water to be available for an airdrop if needed when we reached the dry jungle 300 miles to the south, so on about our eighth day I ordered a drop of water. Major John Stobbs at Air Base Sylhet was astonished and queried my message, but we got the water. In the Naga Hills it was very difficult to find clear level spaces for supply drops, which we needed, for food chiefly, every five days or so. Maps were insufficiently detailed. Inevitably we lost a good many parachute loads stuck up trees or down the hillside; and then we had to make 3 or 4 days supply of K rations do for 5-7 days. We lived for the first 5 weeks solely on the American K Ration, designed for emergency use. I was glad to vary the flavours with curry powder I'd brought with me, supplemented by chillies gathered en route; and I collected young lime leaves, which did duty for lemon in my tea, preferable to the horrid milk powder supplied. It was mess tin cooking all the time except occasionally at "Aberdeen", when we had the luxury of meat flown in and cooked by RQMS Tommy Atkins and his staff. We marked dropping grounds by fires (flame by night, smoke by day), but we each carried for this purpose also if needed a map of Burma on a 26 inches square brilliant orange silk handkerchief, which could be seen from the air high up. We all grew beards for camouflage, as well as to save time and water.

An evening encounter with a group of Japs as we moved into bivouac showed how confusing and difficult was fighting at night in jungle. We could seldom see a target. A day or two after our arrival at "Aberdeen", 20 miles north of Indaw, and the establishment of our brigade "stronghold" there, the brigade was ordered to attack with the objective of securing Indaw airfields. Only 6 columns were yet available, tired after marching 400 miles, there were 2-3000 Japs in and around Indaw, and the country through which we must move was waterless – and we mustn't disclose our position by having an airdrop. 21 Coln had one sharp engagement, in which John Metcalf was wounded and many mules killed. Otherwise I remember only our thirst and vain search for water. The attack had to be called off. There had been confusion after Wingate's death through ignorance at Special Force HQ of his orders given verbally to the brigades in Burma. A few weeks later we again approached Indaw to find that the Japs had gone. Although we hadn't done much fighting our presence in the area made possible the location and destruction of great dumps of ammunition and petrol destined for the Jap attack on Imphal.

By 1944 we had only three officers and few O.Rs who were regular soldiers, but the best traditions of a regular battalion had survived; a third of us officers and O.Rs had served together since autumn '40 fighting Italians, Germans, and Vichy French, with comparatively few casualties; relationships among all ranks were excellent; and morale was very good. We had some tough times together in Burma before we marched NE to "Broadway" to be flown out in May, but spirits remained high.

Back at Comilla beards came off. In June the Bn was moved to S. India again. Gradually all went off on a month's leave. Without any load on my back and well fed again I strode over the lanes at Simla at 6 mph. Then repatriation of those with long service overseas (at first those over 4 years and 10 months) began in August, and so many of us were looking forward to going soon that, with replacements too, the character of the Bn inevitably changed. Training continued, but in a relaxed way. We had malarial relapses, hockey, swimming. Jimmy Flint succeeded me as Adjutant and I took command of C Coy – only six men left who were with me in it at Sidi Barrani in Dec 40. I was PMC for my final months. We had peacock for Christmas dinner. By then Dick Merrett, Jonah, and I were the last of our 1940 draft still in India – Jonah waiting to see the 4 1/2 years old daughter he'd never seen and Dick with a 5 years old son he'd left as a baby. We embarked for home towards the end of January.

RUSSELL ACHESON

## Donations

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