

# THE ROYAL PIONEER CORPS ASSOCIATION



APRIL 2007

# NEWSLETTER



c/o 23 Pnr Regiment RLC - St David's Barracks - Graven Hill - Bicester - OX26 6HF  
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# The Royal Pioneer Corps Association **SHOP**

Please send cheques payable to  
RPC Association with your order...

Royal Pioneer Corps Association, c/o 23 Pnr Regiment RLC,  
St David's Barracks, Graven Hill, Bicester OX26 6HF



< **New Corps Tie**  
A new tie is now available from HQ RPC Association, although keeping the same pattern the new one contains the Corps Badge on the blade of the tie.  
**£7.50**



^ **Blazer Buttons**  
gilt on brass, engraved,  
6 small and 6 large **£22**



^ **Cufflinks**  
solid silver **£20**



^ **Cufflinks**  
bronze **£13.50**



^ **Tie Pins**  
lovely **£3.50**



^ **Seasons Greetings Cards**  
x10 **£2.50**



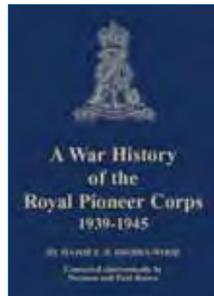
^ **Wall Shields**  
hand painted **£20**



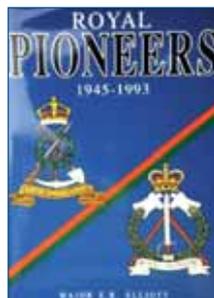
^ **Wall Shields**  
85-93 badge **£20**



< **Blazer Badge**  
silk & wire **£7**



< **"A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps 1939-45"**  
by Major E H Rhodes Wood  
This book, long out of print, is now available on CD-Rom at a cost of **£11**



< **"Royal Pioneers 1945-1993"**  
by Major Bill Elliott  
The Post-War History of the Corps was written by Major Bill Elliott, who generously donated his work and rights entirely for the Association's benefit. It was published by Images, Malvern in May 1993 and is on sale in the book shops at £24. **£10**



< **Blazer Badge**  
silk & wire **£7**



^ **Photograph CD's**  
The Association has a large number of old photographs taken over the years. They are now available on CD's (each CD contains approx 400 photographs).

- They are:
- Named, partially named vol. 1
  - Named, partially named vol. 2
  - Unknown
  - Reunion Weekends
  - WOs & SNCOs Pnr Reunion Club
- £2 per disc**



^ **Bronze Statue**  
why not order & collect at Reunion Weekend to save postage  
**£60 + £5 postage**



< **Blazer Badge**  
silk & wire **£6**

# Editorial

It is with great sadness that I have to report the sad loss of our Treasurer, Major ER "Bill" Elliott, who passed away on 21 March 2007 at the age of 83. An article on page 7 describes a presentation made to Bill on 20 February 2007 in recognition of his 52 years loyal service to the Corps. The photograph on page 19 shows Bill admiring the silver "Working Pioneers" which he had just received. An obituary is included on page 18. In my time as Controller of the Association his advice has been invaluable and his wise council to the Trustees will be sorely missed. Our deepest sympathies are extended to his wife Joan, his daughters Pam and Jayne, his son John and his grand-children (and his great-grandchild).

Convergence was finally completed in December 2006 when all monies and assets held by the RPC Association were transferred to the RLC Association Trust. This followed the signing of the Trust Deeds in November 2006 by the Chairmen of the RLC Association, RAOC Association, ACC Association and of course our Association. Guarantees have been made that the RPC Association will remain as long as there is a requirement for it to do so. This requires your support, help us to preserve the Association and it's history for many years to come.

I must thank members for their generosity in buying tickets for the Christmas Draw, the results of which are shown on page 7. It is pleasing to report that a profit of £3,600 was made, this helps to ensure that the work of the Association will continue. As normal, tickets for the Derby Draw are included with this Newsletter (unless we have already been informed that you are unable to sell them). If you feel that you are able to sell more tickets please let us know and we will despatch more. For those who included a donation to the Association in addition to their tickets sales, and there were quite a few, we thank you.

You will see in this Newsletter that articles have been received from members recounting their service with the Corps, these have always proved to be of great interest to members - as can be seen from comments in the letters page. Similar articles are required for future issues, please put pen to paper, you must have some factual, humorous or unusual story from your service days. Let us have them before they are forgotten forever.

Details of this year's Reunion Weekend are shown on page 4 and a return for the weekend is attached. Unfortunately with 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC being employed on 3 separate operational deployments (Iraq, Afghanistan and Bosnia) during 2007 the Weekend will, of necessity, be a low key affair. This is not the result of convergence but simply because there will be few soldiers within Barracks to organise a large event. You will notice on the return for the weekend that there is no requirement to pre-book meals. From April 2007 the 'Pay As You Dine' system will be in operation within Graven Hill, this means that you pay as you have your meal. The dining room is currently being refurbished and will shortly be completed, this will include a bar within the dining room and meals will be available until 2200 hours.

As reported above 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC will be undertaking three operational tours during 2007 we wish them all a safe and speedy return.

Finally, I would like to place on record thanks to both the CO and RSM of 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC, Lt Col MJ Bennett and WO1 J Frame, who are both posted in July of this year (whilst on duty in Afghanistan). They have both proved to be conscientious members of the Association Council and have given valuable assistance during their time with the Regiment. We wish them good luck on their tour and also their future postings and hope to see them both at Association events.

*Norman Brown*

# THE ROYAL PIONEER CORPS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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# Past Events



> **60th PAST AND PRESENT OFFICERS' DINNER**  
**23 Pnr Regiment RLC, St David's Bks, Graven Hill, Bicester Fri 13 October 2006**  
 It had been decided not to invite a guest speaker for the sixtieth past and present dinner but to mark the occasion 'in house'. This proved to be very successful with 58 past and present officers sitting down to dinner. A photo display showing officers of the Corps from 'yester-year' proved successful along with Lt Col John Starling showing off the progress he had made in collating Tracer Cards together with other aspects of the Corps history.



> **WOs' & SNCOs' PIONEER REUNION CLUB LADIES DINNER NIGHT**  
**Saturday 14 October 2006**  
 Unfortunately some members had to be turned away from what is now a very successful event in the Club's calendar. 95 members and wives attended this function with some travelling many miles, it was pleasing, especially to an ex clerk, to see Frank Lyle who had travelled from Dublin and Dave Liptrot who is now recovering from a heart attack. The evening was also used to dine out WO2 Gas Beckett from 23 Regt, Gaz who was the main Club link to the Regiment as SSM 144 Sqn has worked hard for the benefit of the Club.



**FIELD OF REMEMBRANCE**  
**Westminster Abbey,**  
**Thursday 9 November 2006**



> HRH The Duke of Edinburgh officially opened Westminster Abbey's Field of Remembrance on 9 November 2006. The Duke laid a wooden Remembrance Cross and toured the North Green plots before signing the St Margaret's Church visitor book. The Duke of Edinburgh spent a great deal of time speaking to the crowds and stopped at the Royal Pioneer Corps plot to have a long chat to Mr E Mears, an ex member of 173 Coy who landed on Normandy on D Day, who fronted the Royal Pioneer Corps plot.



> **LONDON LUNCH**  
**Westminster, Thursday 9 November 2006**  
 It was decided this year to resurrect the London Lunch following the Field of Remembrance and 19 attended lunch in the Marquis of Westminster restaurant. Two daughters of the late Cpl George Scully GC joined us for the meal. It is intended to continue this lunch following the Field of Remembrance.



> **REMEMBRANCE PARADE**  
**Whitehall, Sunday 12 November 2006**  
 More than 8,000 veterans, including 19 from the RPC Association, participated in this year's march past and service, notable for the absence of World War 1 veterans for the first time. The RPC wreath was laid by Mr PN Thomas, other members marching were Mr GJ McQueen, Mr TA Whipps, Mr HL Bishop, Mr A Hibbs, Mr R Fox, Mr I Easingwood, Mr PJ Wilmer, Mr H Mazell, Mr A Fawcett, Mr J Kear, Mr P McPhillips, Mr B O'Donovan, Mr I Anderson, Mr N Brown, Mr P Brown, Mr HA Mitton.



It has become a tradition to 'retire' to the Civil Service Club in Old Scotland Yard (200 yards from Whitehall) for a meal and drink afterwards.



> **39/93 CLUB**  
 The Club hold two dinners annually at The Red Lion Hotel, Fareham and have arranged very advantageous rates for hotel accommodation.

These events are held in early March and October and details can be obtained from the Club Secretary, Mr Les Rowley, on 01628 890913.

# Future Events



> **PIONEER REUNION WEEKEND**  
**6/8 July 2007**  
 The Pioneer Reunion Weekend is once again, thanks to the Commanding Officer 23 Pnr Regt RLC, to be held at Bicester from 6/8 July 2007. A Booking Form is enclosed with this Newsletter and must be returned by Friday 15 June 2007. Once again it is hoped to accommodate all requiring accommodation within St David's Barracks.



Unlike last year's event, which was special because of the Regiment being granted the Liberty of Bicester, this year it will, unfortunately, be a low key event. It must be emphasised that this is in no way because of convergence but simply because most of the Regiment will be deployed in three operational areas, namely Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq. In view of this there will be no open day on the sports field, we hope to return to this next year.



You will also note from the booking form that there is no requirement for payment for meals to be made in advance. The reason for this is that from 14 April all meals will be under the 'Pay as you Dine' system. Meals will be served similar to a cafe system and will mean that you pay for your meal as you collect it. The more you have the more it will cost you. The Dining Room in St David's Barracks is currently undergoing refurbishment and will be completed in April. The bar from what was the NAAFI will be included within the Dining Room. Another advantage will be that meals will be available to a later time. Costs and times of meals are, at the time of going to press, unavailable but will be included in the programme for the weekend which will be issued on arrival.



The provisional programme for the weekend is as follows (this may change):

- Friday 6 July 2007**
- Invitation to Sergeants Mess 1800 hrs
- Dress: Collar/Tie
- Saturday 7 July 2007**
- WOs & SNCOs Pnr 1000 hrs
- Dress: Collar/Tie
- Reunion Club AGM (Sgts Mess)
- Church Service**
- 1100 hrs Dress: Collar/Tie
- (War Memorial)
- RPC ASSOCIATION AGM**
- 1145 hrs Dress: Collar/Tie
- (Sergeants Mess)
- Saturday afternoon free to 'explore'
- Bicester and Bicester Village
- Pioneer Night/BBQ** 1800 hrs
- Dress: Casual (Not jeans) (Sgts Mess)



It will be noted from the above that most of the events are to be held in the Sergeants Mess, this is by kind permission of the RSM, WO1 J Frame. Members are





reminded that they must observe mess rules and etiquette. Members are also reminded that all military buildings are classified as "No Smoking" from 31 December 2006. This includes all living accommodation.

**WOs' & SNCOs' PIONEER REUNION CLUB**  
The Club will be holding the following functions during 2007

**ARMY v NAVY RUGBY, TWICKENHAM  
Sat 5 May 2007**

> Details of this event have already been circulated in the January 2007 Club Newsletter. Further details may be obtained from the Secretary, Mr N Brown on 01869 360694

**LADIES DINNER NIGHT  
Sat 13 Oct 2007**

Last year this dinner was over-subscribed and members had to be turned away so please book early, cost will be £25 per head. Details will be published in the Club's July Newsletter.

> **61st PAST & PRESENT OFFICERS DINNER  
Officers Mess, 23 Pioneer Regt, Bicester  
Friday 12 October 2007**

Once again this is to be held in the Officers Mess, 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC, Bicester on Friday 12 October 2007. Bookings can be made at any time to Secretary, RPC Association, c/o 23 Pnr Regt RLC, St David's Barracks, Graven Hill, Bicester, Oxon, OX26 6HF. The cost will be £20 per head.

> **LONDON LUNCH  
Thursday 8 November 2007**

It is intended to make this an annual event following the Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey. Bookings can be made to Secretary, RPC Association, c/o 23 Pnr Regt RLC, St David's Barracks, Graven Hill, Bicester, Oxon, OX26 6HF. The cost will be £15 per head.

**FIELD OF REMEMBRANCE,  
WESTMINSTER ABBEY  
Thursday 8 November 2007**

> The Field of Remembrance will open on Thursday 8 November at 1100 hours, when a short service will be given. Members attending the planting of crosses at the Corps Plot (No 135) are asked to arrive by 1030 hours. It would be prudent to bring a means of identification, entrance to the Field will involve passing through Police security checks. All those attending must be prepared to stay until the reviewing party has departed the Field. The use of large 'intrusive' camera equipment is not allowed, personal hand held cameras are acceptable.

The field will be open from 9 to 5.30 hours until Saturday 10 November 2007. Following the Field of Remembrance a 'London Lunch' is to be held, see details above.

> **CENOTAPH PARADE  
Sunday 11 November 2007**

Last year 19 members marched at the Cenotaph, this year we have been allocated 30 tickets; these can be obtained on application to RPC Association on a first come first served basis. Tickets will be distributed in October 2007.

Following the Parade it has become the custom for all marchers to have a meal and a drink in the Civil Service Club, Old Scotland Yard (about 250 yards from Whitehall).



> **39/93 CLUB**

Club Dinner, Red Lion Hotel, Fareham  
The Club hold two dinners annually in March and October at The Red Lion Hotel, Fareham where discounted rates of accommodation have been arranged. If you would like details of these events please contact the Club Secretary, Mr Les Rowley on 01628 890913.

> **NORTHAMPTON BRANCH  
RPC ASSOCIATION**

The Branch still meet at 2000 hrs on the first Wednesday of each month (except August) in Gibraltar Barracks, Northampton. The programme for 2007 fixtures is still being arranged and details will be notified in the Branch Newsletter, if you do not receive this please notify Secretary, RPC Association, c/o 23 Pnr Regt RLC, St David's Barracks, Graven Hill, Bicester, Oxon, OX26 6HF who will arrange for your inclusion on the distribution.



## News Articles



> **PINGAT JASA MALAYSIA MEDAL**

The Pingat Jasa Malaysia (PJM) is a special medal of service to eligible UK service personnel who served from Independence until the end of Confrontation in the security of Malaysia, during the period 31 Aug 57 to 12 Aug 66 inclusive.

To qualify for this medal individuals must have been on the posted strength of a unit or formation in direct support of operations for 90 days or more. Application forms can be obtained from RPC Association.



> **THE ARMED FORCES MEMORIAL**

The Armed Forces Memorial Project will provide a new National Memorial dedicated to the men and women of the UK Armed Forces (Regular and Reserve) killed on duty or as a result of terrorist action since the Second World War. It will commemorate some 16,000 members of our Armed Forces. Construction began on 24 Jul 06 at the National Memorial Arboretum. A ceremony to mark the cutting of the first turf was held on 4 August. The main contractor on site is Geoffrey Osborne Limited and progress on the construction of the six metre high mound on which the Memorial will stand is currently ahead of schedule.

The Trustees need to raise the £7 million to complete the whole Project which includes the Memorial in Staffordshire, Rolls of Honour for the Royal Navy and the Army similar to those for the RAF that will record the names of those who have died in Service, and a Memorial in Westminster Abbey, without names, to those killed in conflict. £5 million has been raised so far including a grant from the Treasury of £1.5 million from the sale of the Trafalgar coin and a pledge of £2 million from the Millennium Commission. Further information about how to support the appeal can be found at [www.forcesmemorial.org.uk](http://www.forcesmemorial.org.uk)



> **ROYAL VISIT OF COLONEL-IN-CHIEF  
ROYAL LOGISTIC CORPS, HRH THE  
PRINCESS ROYAL  
2 FEBRUARY 2007**

In the photo gallery are a number of photographs of the very successful royal visit by HRH The Princess Royal to 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC on 2 February 2007 - they say pictures say a thousand words!



# News Articles continued



**NEWS FROM 23 PIONEER REGIMENT RLC**  
Our congratulations to 23 Pnr Regt on achieving second position in the RLC Gore Trophy in November 2006 - this is a notable achievement. This tests military knowledge, shooting and fitness (assault course, timed 1.5 mile march and 6 mile speed march).



The Regiment has recently been tasked to deploy a number of Sub Units on operations across three different operational Theatres in Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq. The necessary pre-operational training is currently taking place and when this Newsletter is distributed most will have already deployed and the remainder will deploy in May.



187 (Tancred) Sqn has recently had detachments in Gibraltar and Malawi as well as participating in the Cambrian Patrol (where they were awarded a Certificate of Merit). In addition they provided the teams for the Gore Trophy and represented the RLC at the Cenotaph Parade in Whitehall. They are now training for the upcoming tour to Afghanistan having been tasked with being the Kabul Patrols Company which is currently being done by 170 Pioneer Squadron. This task involves patrolling police area 9 an area of 25 square kilometres and over 200,000 people. In addition the squadron will provide 2 QFRs and guard camp Souta.



206 Sqn following a two week Adventure Training Camp in Penhale in September 2006 have had detachments deployed in and around Edinburgh where they practised their artisan skills, a troop deployed in Belize with 1 Irish Guards Battlegroup taking part in realistic jungle training and a troop deployed to Australia for General Service Respirator tests in the sub-tropical Northern Territory.



518 Sqn following the handing over of the 'guard-shift' or Guard Sqn the Squadron deployed on Ex Wild Duck, Ex Viking Duck and Ex Urban Duck (for those who served in either 518 Coy or 518 Sqn will know the meaning of the Duck). The purpose of these exercises was to re-fresh the Sqn on tactics and artisan skills.



522 Sqn participated in Ex Highland Raider at the Barry Buddon Training Area in Scotland. This was a three week Battle Camp designed to train and test both JNCOs and their Sections using the mediums of Live Firing, Physical Fitness and Artisan Training. On return the Sqn split three ways, 13 Troop headed to Copehill Down to complete a range refurbishment, 15 Troop headed to Beckingham to also complete a range refurbishment and 14 Troop remained in camp to conduct some low level training mainly focused around the rugby pitch.



During the next few months we shall be saying farewell to the Commanding Officer, Lt Col MJ Bennett, and the Regimental Sergeant Major, WO1 J Frame who before posting have an operational tour in Afghanistan. Both have given the Association great assistance during their tours and have been active members of the Association Council, we wish them well on their future postings and hope to see them at future Association events.



## LONG SERVICE & GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL PRESENTATIONS - 30 JANUARY 2007

On 30 January 2007 Long Service & Good Conduct Medals were presented to four members of 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC, three of which had enlisted into the Royal Pioneer Corps before convergence into The Royal Logistic Corps. They were Cpl Mark Cox who enlisted in March 1991, SSgt Mark Lawson who enlisted in April 1991 and SSgt Dean Samuel who enlisted in June 1991.



Since enlistment Cpl Cox has served with 1 (BR) Corps at Bielefeld and became the only soldier to win the Friend Memorial Shooting Trophy in two consecutive years. He was then posted to 170 Sp Sqn ARRC, HQ Northern Ireland and 9 Radio Troop Cyprus before joining 23 Pnr Regt RLC in August 2004. He served on detachments to Kosovo, Ghana and Sierra Leone before he was posted to 9 Sp Regt RLC, he rejoined 23 in 2006 where he is the Regimental Provost Corporal.



SSgt Lawson also on completion of basic training was posted to 1 (BR) Corps at Bielefeld and then, remaining in Germany, to the newly formed Support Battalion Headquarters Allied Rapid Reaction Corps where his first deployment was to Bosnia as part of SFOR. He was then posted to BAD Kineton and then to 187 (Tancred) Squadron at Bicester where he deployed to Slovenia, Norway, Oman, Macedonia, Albania, Ascension Islands, Trinidad and the USA. A posting to Deepcut in the Pioneer Labour Support Wing followed and then a posting to 522 Squadron as a Troop Sergeant. Following promotion to SSgt on 1 December 2006 he was posted to 144 (Headquarters) Sqn in the position of Regimental Career Management SNCO.



On completion of basic training SSgt Samuel was posted to 518 Coy and served in Belize twice and on an Op Banner tour in Northern Ireland during which he was detailed to drive Saxon and Land Rovers for the Parachute Regiment. He qualified as a PT Instructor and attended and passed the All Arms Commando Course making history as the first Pioneer to achieve this. He then deployed to Bosnia as a Section 2IC. He was then posted as an instructor at Deepcut where he attended and passed the Map Reading Instructor, NBC Instructor, First Aid Instructor, Fire NCO Course, PI Sgts Battle Course and the Military Proficiency Certificate Advanced. Remaining an Instructor he was posted to Arborfield where he was voted the best RLC instructor for 2 years running. A posting back to Bicester followed first with 206 Squadron and then to 187 (Tancred) Squadron as the Troop Sergeant for Charlie Troop who later deployed to Qatar in Jan 03 on Op TELIC 1. He is currently the SQMS of 518 Squadron.



As it is now approaching 14 years since the RPC converged into the RLC it must be remembered that in one year's time there will be no ex Pioneers being awarded this medal, they will be all RLC enlistments.



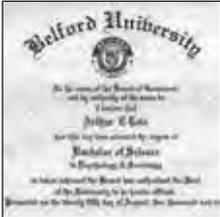
## LABOR OMNIA VINCIT

This is also the town motto of West Bromwich in the Midlands, quite appropriately as it was a heavy industrial region in the past. Most recently West Bromwich Albion FC used the motto on their shirts at the end of the 20th century (perhaps showing that hard work doesn't always pay off!!).



**> RPC ASSOCIATION CHRISTMAS DRAW 2006 - RESULTS**

1st	£500	Sgt P Jordan 187 Sqn 23 Regt
2nd	£250	Mr C Thompson Nottingham
3rd	£125	Mr M Hugman Lowestoft
4th	£75	Mr H Rooney Liverpool
5th	£50	Pte P Beresford 522 Sqn 23 Regt



The draw was held in the WOs' & Sgts' Mess. 23 Pnr Regt RLC on Friday 15 December 2006 by WO1 (RSM) J Frame and witnessed by Mrs M Brown (and approx 20 Mess Members).

**> CONGRATULATIONS**

We must congratulate Ex Sgt Arthur Charles Cole (13093381) who, at the age of 86, was awarded with a certificate of distinction after achieving over 95% points and awarded the degree of Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Sociology at Belford University.



He writes "Hope all is well with you, our thoughts are with you, wish we could visit but must sit still and behave (difficult). Sorry for the scribble down to Impaired vision, all down to the indignity of growing old. Bless you all".

**VETERANS BADGE**

Veterans who served in the armed forces during the 1960s are now entitled to receive a Veterans Badge, it is available to all those who served prior to 31 Dec 69. Since the Armed Forces Veterans Badge was launched in September 2004, over 328,000 have been awarded.



To apply for the badge contact the Veterans Agency on 0800 169 2277 or visit [www.veteransagency.mod.uk](http://www.veteransagency.mod.uk)

**FALKLANDS ANNIVERSARY**

The 25th anniversary of the Falklands conflict is to be marked this June with a host of events. Commemorations will be held in the UK and the Falklands Islands from 14-17 June 2007. There will be Royal representation at the events.



The series of events will begin with the annual Falklands War Remembrance service, which is held at Pangbourne College in Berkshire on behalf of the Falklands Families Association.



Services will take place around the Falkland Islands, with the involvement of forces personnel currently posted in the area. The service at Christ Church Cathedral in Stanley, the capital of the Falklands. The commemorations will conclude with a spectacular event in London's Horse Guards Parade, attended by 15,000 veterans and their families.

Visit [www.falklands25.com](http://www.falklands25.com) for more information about the anniversary plans.

**SPOT THE TERENCE CUNEO MOUSE !**

Cuneo painted 'Sword Beach' which shows the activities of the pioneers who were among the first British troops to land on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day. By 1st Aug 1944 there were over 35,500 pioneers in Normandy. In most of his paintings Cuneo hid a small mouse which was his trademark and somewhere in this newsletter we have hid a Cuneo mouse! The first person that emails me with the location of the mouse will win a prize !



**> PRESENTATION MARKS BILL'S 52 YEARS OF MILITARY DUTY**

A lifetime's military service was duly recognised in Presteigne this week when Major Bill Elliott was given a magnificent presentation piece commemorating the D Day landings during the Second World War.



After a career launched during the dark days of the conflict - Major Elliott was a year short of the enlistment age in 1940 - he went on to join the Regular Army and his 52 years' service with the Royal Pioneer Corps was roundly applauded on Tuesday when he was handed his remarkable trophy by Brigadier John Hickman at a special ceremony at the Radnorshire Arms.

"I was gobsmacked!" says Major Elliott. "I knew I was going get something, but I had no idea it would be something like this!" During his years with the Army, he served in Germany, Aden, Bahrain and at home, and after his retirement in 1977 he took up an appointment as corps secretary, and was editor of the corps journal, The Royal Pioneer, a post he held for 15 years. "I loved the job it was the happiest time of my career," says Major Elliott, who lives in retirement at Presteigne with his wife, Joan. "I was in a unique position, and was able to observe many notable events."



He has been treasurer of the Royal Pioneer Corps Association and Benevolent Fund for seventeen years, and he also wrote an acknowledged history of the Royal Pioneers covering the years 1945-1993.



The splendid presentation piece recalls a special feature from a painting of the D-Day landings by artist Terence Cuneo, and its inscription pays tribute to Major Elliott's loyal dedication to the Corps dating back more than half a century.

As a 17-year old back in 1940, the young man from Birmingham attempted to join up, but was told he was too young. "There was quite a queue, and I was told if I ran around the block and came back and said I was 18 I could join up, so that was what I did!". Though he signed up under his real name, Eric, he quickly earned the nickname Bill. "I was a bit reckless, so I was nicknamed Wild Bill Elliott!".



He also served with the Rajput Regiment in the Indian Army, and took part in border skirmishes. After the war he tried the civilian life but was soon back in uniform when he joined the South Staffordshire Regiment. Then in March 1954 he joined the Pioneers, the beginning of a long and illustrious service to the corps.



"They were very much the underdog of the Army, but I turned that around," says Major Elliott. "I visited every unit both at home and overseas." During their Army life, Major Elliott and his family moved extensively, notching up a remarkable 23 moves in one three-year period, "It was an excellent life," says Mrs Elliott. The couple have three children, Pamela, Jane and John, seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.



The following day Bill wrote "I would like to thank the Trustees, my family and I were gobsmacked!" A further letter from one of Bill's daughters is shown on page 9.

Sadly Bill passed away on 21 March 2007, his obituary is shown on page 18.

# Letters

to the editor...



Hi Norman,

Firstly, many thanks for an excellent re-union weekend back in July. It was my first, and unfortunately it will be my last due to emigration to Australia early 07. It will be a fond memory to take away with me.

It was nice to see a few old faces, especially my old Plt Commander at 187, 2nd Lt Bennett, well we all know what he's doing now!!

Mick Tomsett

Hello Norman,

I congratulate you and your Son on our Newsletter, and amused to read my e-mail.

Well our Armistice Parade will soon be with us. Next Sunday I will be on the door of the Rhondda Sports Centre, as part of the R.B.L.Awareness Week, then in the evening we hold our Remembrance Concert same venue, which as always been well attended.

David Bendon

Dear Norman,

Your Magazine does you enormous credit - for its thoughtfulness - careful arrangement of content, and presentation. I was also very pleased to be able to catch-up with details of my father's Pioneer career in the 'History' which was at Dinner Night last Friday week (13 Oct). An occasion worthy of anyone's 60th! Well Done.

DH Hallett

Dear Norman,

I wish to thank you for forwarding the Newsletter to me. I enjoy reading it and enjoy getting to know what the Pioneers did during the War, they were more than a small cog in the wheel.

Once a paratrooper I got to know asked me what I was in, I told him the Royal Pioneer Corps, he replied that they were the back-bone of the British Army. When someone tells you that it makes you feel proud.

I thought the photographs of the Pioneers marching through Bicester were very good, it is nice to know that the Pioneers are still remembered now that everything has changed to the RLC. Those men on the Parade must have felt very proud. Good Luck to them all and thank you once again for the Newsletter.

RW Stone

Dear Norman,

Many thanks for another excellent Newsletter. My membership goes back to my service with 263 Coy at Longmoor Camp in Hampshire, as a 2Lt along with one Capt Tony Ridings. I remember one interesting period when he and I practiced for a Bren 'run down' competition - an annual Royal Engineer event. Tony kept me at it seemingly for weeks and I don't know how many thousand rounds (all without ear defenders of course!). At 70 I'm now 50% deaf and duly pensioned. Anyway we managed to come 2nd, much to the indignation of the Sappers.

Subsequently I enjoyed TA service with RMP then much later as a Captain - 'oily boy' in charge of an Independent Petroleum Company based in Gillingham. Then, with business interfering, I went over to the UK Warning and Monitoring Organisation (under Home Office control) and ended up as a Group Controller (SEO Grade); an interesting 13 years.

My old Corps tie having worn out many years back, could you please send me one of the new ones I hope the cheque covers postage.

Paul HB Cox

Dear Norman,

Once again I wish to thank you for sending me a copy of the RPC Newsletter. It is by far the best illustrated and presented Newsletter of any Association that I have seen.

However, I was very saddened to read in your column for Last Post details of the death of Mr R Crump, Ex CQMS on 22 Sep 06 in the Royal Hospital, Chelsea. He and I reported together on 4 Jul 40 at Southend on Sea and were allocated to No 37 Coy AMPC.

We became billeted together in Napier Square Barracks, Queen's Ave, Aldershot. He was a great pal and we stayed together with three other lads until he became promoted to Sergeant early in 1941. He was posted to another Coy soon after and I did not hear of him again until 63 years later when I read in the Newsletter that he was a librarian in Royal Hospital Chelsea. As I am disabled I could not go to see him. I wonder how many of our comrades with service numbers commencing 1304.... Are still out there, not knowing about each other?

Thank you for your efforts in keeping us "Old uns" informed.

C Thursby

Dear Norman,

We must always remember the admirable men who went before us and I felt that I should place on record how I recall my time at the RPC Depot and Trg Centre, Hermitage Camp, Wrexham when the late Brigadier Ridings, Director of Pioneers and Labour was a young and eminently smart and able CSM about to be commissioned to Lieutenant. I was a young National Serviceman and very raw and as I recall the situation he had crossed the road to us from the Depot Royal Welch Fusiliers.

Apparently he was so delighted by his promotion that he had made it known, at least to some in camp, that he would give 2/6 (or half a crown) to the first soldier who saluted him as he marched out of the WO's & Sgts Quarters dressed in his smart best BD and highly-bulged brown boots.

He was well aware that some soldier would calculate on being around at the right time but he would not be caught in that ambush and varied his timing.

As a National Serviceman was paid only twenty-five shillings per week then and had some of that lopped off in credits the coin was of some value to the poorly paid soldier and this ought to be regarded as a most generous and thoughtful celebration of Brigadier Ridings elevation in the Army of the 1950's and beyond. At that time Lt Col Maw commanded the Depot and we had an RSM Sheffield formerly Coldstream Guards whose favourite roar was "I don't care who you are or where you come from but you will listen to me or take the consequences... do you hear me you lot?" I finished my service at 523 Coy, Syston, Leics led by Major John Leech of happy memory, the year 1956, leaving the Orderly Room to the efficiency of the late Sgt Thackray from Mansfield.

Capt John F Coleman, formerly 23031664  
Pte Coleman JS

Dear Mr Brown,

Many thanks for sending me the copy of the Oct 2006 Newsletter and 2 books of Christmas Draw tickets. I always enjoy reading the Newsletter, it gives rise to reminiscence and reflection.

I hope you will excuse this rather delayed return of the draw counterfoils. I have been thrown somewhat out of gear by two weeks of illness which I am convinced was severe influenza. The unmistakable symptoms of a cold appeared on the third day following an influenza injection. I must have picked up the virus in the surgery before I had the "jab" which is designed to prevent "flu". Is it perverse to believe that the Doctors surgery is the cosy meeting place for all sorts of germs etc!

I am recovered and now enclose the 2 pads of draw counterfoils together with a cheque for £25 to include a small donation into Association funds. Bash in and Bash on!

George Greaves (Very Ex 231)

*Ed Note: thank you and also many others who also forwarded donations with their draw tickets*

(letters continued on page 13)

Hi Norman,

I would be most grateful if you would publish the following in the next Association Newsletter:

"I must apologise to my many friends who are on my Christmas card list for not sending them cards last Christmas, unfortunately I was taken into hospital twelve days before Christmas and was only discharged on Christmas eve, far too late for me to be able to send them out. Could I therefore take this opportunity to wish you all a peaceful and healthy year, and I look forward to seeing you at the next Corps Reunion Weekend."

Derek (Taffy - head of the Welsh Mafia) Luker.

Dear Norman,

I wanted to thank you for taking the considerable time and effort involved including a promotional card in each and every of the last Pioneer Newsletter.

The book, "Moves with Spirits", written under my Non du Plum ND Scott, is doing far better than I could ever have imagined. Since the launch the books sales have been fantastic and it has just been ranked in the top 1% on amazon.co.uk (where they have over 5 million books for sale). The hardback is now out and the reviews (The Officer Magazine and various others) are all brilliant. In addition the reviews on www.amazon.co.uk are beyond my greatest expectations.

I hope any of your readers who bought copies really enjoyed my first supernatural, military, crime thriller. The second, "Pyramid Wars", is well underway!

Nic Pratchek

P.S. If any of the 1980/90s ex and still serving Pioneers remember me and are curious about what became of their friend or slightly crackers subaltern, or the book, they could always visit the website at: [www.ndscott.com](http://www.ndscott.com)

Dear Norman,

Many thanks for the latest edition of the RPC Association Newsletter. I always enjoy reading all the articles, which I find interesting and usually see some names that I remember from my service days. I don't envy you the mammoth task of compiling the Newsletter as you obviously put a lot of hard work into it, but I'm sure your efforts are appreciated - well done.

I was pleased to read that the RPC Association will not be losing its identity when we become more integrated with the Royal Logistic Corps.

Maurice Grange

Dear Norman,

Thank you very much for the copies of the RPC magazines which have just arrived here in Bulgaria. They make fascinating reading, and are of very high quality in content - Best wishes from the Balkans.

John Allen

A very Happy and Prosperous New Year to the two of you. Thanks for the data you manage so well for us. An old Pioneer like me, feels so connected to you all, reading the columns on line. Again thanks for your hard work. My new email address is [nesscilffe56@yahoo.com](mailto:nesscilffe56@yahoo.com)

I,am still here in Florida, but bought another house in Safety Harbour, still working at my business.

I will be 71 in March, but still remember being in Suez and other places with the Corps. I have lots of photos of those days.

Terry Hobbs  
1954 1957

Hi Norman

On behalf of all my family I would like to thank you very much for organising a very memorable day yesterday (20 February 2007).

My father was overwhelmed. Both he and mum had a very special day.

Thank you,

Jane

The Royal Pioneer Corps Association  
c/o 23 Pnr Regiment RLC  
St David's Barracks  
Graven Hill  
Bicester OX26 6HF



or email us at [pioneers@rpca.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:pioneers@rpca.fsnet.co.uk)



**W**e have only been in Belfast just over a week, from Liverpool. We work for Pollock Brothers Plastering Contractor of that town. My mate Jimmy Stinson is also from Liverpool, which makes him a real 'Scouse'. Me, I'm from the smoke, London to you and I'm a proper cockney.

We've had a hard week getting ready for the main gang, who are coming over in a week or so, by the way the job being an extension to the General Post Office. We worked up to 12 o'clock today, Saturday so we are off until 7.30 a.m. Monday. So tonight is 'Party Time' through a man Jimmy was yapping to, we've got an invite for tonight, to a night out with the 'Boys', just a few streets away from our lodgings. So this is Saturday evening with the usual November drizzle, and it finds us two live wires moving smartly along the Falls Road, and smart we were. Our hair slicked down with Brilliantine, Jimmy's new white scarf folded neatly under his chin so as not to show his collar stud. He's just give his boots another lick on the back of his trouser leg. Me, well I bought a new semi stiff collar from Woolworth's today it goes well with the orange tie mum got me for Christmas.

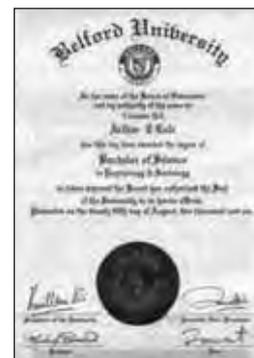
# The Party 1937

A short Story by Arthur C Cole

I've got a spare pair of shoes besides my working boots, so I'm all set, any how as I said I'm from Lunnon and I think it shows. Well we found the house inside Rodney Drive, we could see which house in the terrace, because of the people on the pavement outside. We told the chap on the door that John O'Connor invited us along. He said, "That's right, our John is Joes nephew, so push right in." Inside the small room straight off the street was wall to wall people. Someone on the other side of the room was scraping a lively jig on a fiddle, I said to the man beside me where's the beer. He said its being passed round, we've a Barrel to drink before the nights through, he added its coming round in jugs, when it gets to you drink as much as you can then pass it on. True enough I saw about 3 half gallon enamel jugs at different places.

Jimmy got hold of a jug and his adams apple started working overtime. When he ran out of steam he passed it over to me, I'd hardly wet my lips when I found the jug was empty. My neighbour seeing my concern said its your turn to fill it. "Go out into the scullery over there to the left, have a good drink there and bring it back full to me." Off I trots, or rather pushes

my way, I found the scullery and the Barrel on top of the brick copper. A stuttering candle was burning on the top when I got used to my bearings, I stood there gazing around me. When suddenly I took a double take just over my right shoulder, in the corner and in shadows was a man in a coffin, there was a band of cloth holding him upright. I'm sure he was grinning at me, I didn't have to be a Rocket Scientist to tell me that I was at Uncle Joe's WAKE! Beer tap still on, half filled jug in first available hands, my feet followed each other in hot pursuit. For me party over and cold sober. ■





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# "Pioneering" A.M.P.C. to P.C.



by  
Charles Thursby



Charles Thursby (2nd left) 5th Jun 94 - 50th Anniversary of Normandy Landings at Pegasus Bridge on Caen Canal with 3 members of Croydon Branch, NVA.

It was a beautiful sunny day on the 4th July, 1940, when equipped with a letter of instructions and a rail ticket from the War Department, I made my way from Fenchurch Street Station, London to Southend on Sea, Essex.

Here as instructed I reported to the recruitment officer who informed me I was an intake into the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps. I was directed to join a group of about 20 other men. We were placed in rows of three and marched down to Southend sea front, where we were seated in an old garage which was equipped as a temporary feeding centre. We were given a heavy metal plate with a knife, fork and spoon. One of the cookhouse staff brought a dish of re-heated liver (which had earlier been the mid-day meal) and a plate of dried lumps of white bread. We were told to help ourselves. Needless to say - very little of the meal was eaten.

We were then led by a Corporal to our billet a short distance away where we were to spend the next two days. It was a converted shop with bunk beds installed. Known as "Bartlett's Billet". The two days here were spent in being issued with some clothing. Due to shortage of suppliers I received only denim trousers, thick socks, khaki shirt, vest and pants, but no denim jacket. I had to wear my own silver grey civilian jacket and brown shoes.

On the 7th July 1940 we were transported to Westcliffe on Sea a short journey away, where we were billeted in Earls Hall school for the next 4 days. Here all the intake of recruits were sorted and allocated to 37 Company AMPC, and divided into sections. The next 4 days were spent in learning about rifles, Lewis gun, Vickers machine gun, Bren gun and Boyes anti-tank rifle. Our officers and NCOs' were mainly from units of the Green Howards Regiment. On the 11th July we were taken by train to North Camp, Farnborough (Aldershot District) where we were billeted in Little Barracks, adjacent to the Aldershot "Glasshouse" unit for military crime punishment.

We then spent 8 weeks being issued with a rifle, kitbag and full battledress and all other necessary equipment. The period was spent in parade ground instruction and drill. Our final pass-out parade was taken by the Regimental Drill Sergeant from the "Glasshouse". It was here on 16th August that we had our first encounter with the

enemy, when 12 Heinkel III bombers dropped bombs on Farnborough Aerodrome and turned away directly over our parade ground at 5.30 pm flying at about 1000 ft as we were queuing for our meal.

The crews were clearly visible though the Perspex noses of the aircraft as they flew over us in line abreast formation. Luckily no guns were fired down at us, but we were certainly very shocked. The Company then moved to Ash Vale, Farnborough where we underwent rifle firing practice at the rifle ranges with our Canadian Ross rifles and on 5th October we again moved this time to Napier Square Barracks, Aldershot.

Here our work as Pioneers began and continued until April 1942 with the 'Battle of Britain' conflict taking place in the skies above us. Our work consisted of building miles of deep anti-tank trenches across Berkshire and Hampshire. We also worked at the CRE Stores Depot at Aldershot Station, unloading and transporting tons of barbed wire, Nissen Hut sections and Mayerete Hut units. During this period the Ross Rifles were exchanged for Lee Enfield Mk 4 rifles and each section was issued an American Thompson sub-machine gun.

I was sent as a Lance Corporal to a NCO School of Instruction at Duxhurst, Surrey for 4 weeks in March 1942, where our pass-out parade was taken by Lord Reading, who at that time was Commandant of the Pioneer Corps. In April 1942 we moved to Littlehampton, Sussex. Here we worked digging trenches for telephone cable laying along the coast road. During the 4 weeks here we were subjected to several hit and run raids by enemy fighter aircraft machine-gunning the streets and each one dropping a bomb. We suffered no casualties.

Our next move was in May 1942 when we moved to Monks Common, Horsham, Sussex. Where we worked together with a RE Company building a large Nissen Hut camp which we were told was to contain some of the first American troops to be sent to England. A further move in September 1942 took us to Dover, Kent. Here 2 sections of the Coy were detached and sent to Tin Town Camp at Lydd, Kent where they constructed a light railway among the gravel dunes on the beach for moving targets for tank firing practice. The remainder of the Coy worked in Dover Castle digging trenches for cable laying. I

was now promoted to Cpl. It was at this period that Dover became known as "Hellfire" corner. Frequent enemy air attacks on shipping and land targets together with long range gunfire from the coast of France made the area very unhealthy. Again we did not suffer casualties, although the cookhouse at the Lydd camp was bombed.

At the end of October 1942 the sections at Lydd rejoined the Coy at Dover. We were all issued with woollen jumpers (long sleeved), balaclava woollen hats and woollen gloves and warm underwear. We were all now thinking that our next move would be to a cold climate - perhaps Scotland or even Iceland?

On 8th November we boarded a train which took us to Liverpool, arriving on the 9th. We were then transported to Victoria Docks where we were embarked on a very large ocean liner the SS Orion (23,000 tons). When we were finally quartered, all the heavy woollens were taken from us and we were given cream coloured light-weight tunics - in long and short trousers for tropical use. We now understood the meaning of all the posters displayed in England at that time "Careless talk costs Lives!" Had we known our destination it could have cost ours!

When the ship was loaded with some thousands of men and equipment, it departed from Liverpool and made its way up the Irish Sea and into the Clyde estuary where it dropped anchor between Dunoon and Gurock. We were surprised in the early morning light of 13th Nov to see about a dozen ships of our own size already anchored there, together with a large number of Naval warships - cruisers, destroyers, corvettes etc.

The next night the convoy up anchored and moved out into the Irish Sea. Passing round the North of Ireland, we sailed westerly and southerly for a few days before turning Eastwards and passed through the straits of Gibraltar at about 0200 hrs.

The huge rock of Gibraltar stood up clearly in the moonlight on the port side and the town of Tangiers on our starboard side with its streets and houses all lit up. At about midday on 22 Nov we entered and berthed in Algiers harbour. The large French Atlantic liner "Ile de Fromme" was berthed at the other end of the quay.

All men and equipment were disembarked

as speedily as possible. Our Coy was marched along the coast road and positioned about a quarter mile east of the harbour on the beach to await our next move. During that first night the enemy sent over a very large air attack and the defensive gunfire from the ships around the harbour reminded us of the raids on London in 1940 and 1941.

The next day we were marched back to the docks. Our big ship had gone and in its place were 2 ships and 2 large naval Destroyers, HMS Lightning and HMS Lookout. The two ships were converted ferry boats from Holland, "Queen Emma" and "Princess Beatrix". These four ships were loaded with several Companies of men and equipment. We were ready to sail at 2200 hrs that night but due to an incoming air raid, our departure was delayed until 0200 hrs the next morning. Thirty minutes after departing the Captain of our vessel "Queen Emma" announced over the tannoy speakers that the large landing craft attached to each side of the ship could not be lowered in an emergency and if the order to abandon ship was given we should switch on the red light on our life jackets and drop over the side into the water, where we would be rescued as soon as possible. We did not feel reassured! However, nothing happened and we sailed on Eastwards through the morning. The sea was calm and weather lovely. Suddenly, at approx mid-morning, the large gun mounted on the stern of our ship opened fire with a deafening bang, followed by the chattering of batteries of Oerliron canon firing.

All the other ships were firing, and approaching the convoy were 4 x 3 engined aircraft flying at low height. They each dropped a torpedo and swept away to the east. They were Savoia Marchetti SM73 aircraft. All four torpedoes missed the convoy and we were able to relax again. Just after mid-day on 24th November 1942 our part in Operation "TORCH" was about to begin. We arrived at our destination, the port of BONE (now called Anana). We disembarked and unloaded our equipment, our OC, Maj F Oats MC, found us a billet in the town - in a tobacco factory. During our first night, the air raids were so severe, showering us with broken glass and debris that he re-positioned us the next morning to a sheltered area on the beach about 1 and a half miles out of town. Our work commenced immediately on unloading cargo ships coming from America and the UK together with some other Companies of Pioneers and Royal Engineers.

From Nov 1942 until April 1943 we unloaded some 98 ships (some returning more than once). Due to a shortage of RASC personnel, a large number of Jeeps, 3 ton, 6 ton trucks and gun-towing quads and 17 pound guns had to be driven away to a parking area by those of us Pioneers who could drive. Thousands of tons of tins of petrol, shells, ammunition of all types and miscellaneous supplies were unshipped

and reloaded onto vehicles to be quickly despatched to the forward combat areas via supply dumps at Souk-el-Arba and Medjez-el-Bab in Tunisia.

We were subjected to frequent air raids by day and night and casualties were sustained. One ship was completely destroyed and many damaged. For 2 months our only defence was provided by 6 cruisers berthed 2 at a time weekly. These were HMS Ajax, Aurora, Dido, Penelope, Achilles, Sirius. From April 43 our Coy was relieved from docks operating and detached in sections to work at petrol depots, food supply units (41 OSD) and my own section went to Leriza, where with Italian POWs, we were attached to 5 Field Hospital. Here we moved wounded men from wards to X Ray tents and operating theatre tents and back to wards.

In November 1943 our Coy now reformed and moved to Phillipeville (Algeria) where we embarked on the liner "Duchess of Bedford" and returned to Liverpool on 10th December. We were transported to Bourton on the Water, Gloucestershire. After 14 days disembarkation leave, the Coy underwent a training period. During this period I was sent to the RE Bomb Disposal School at Christchurch, Hants, for a Course No 20 on Reconnaissance and Disposal of Unexploded Bombs and German Fuses. This lasted from 14-19 Feb 1944.

Two sections of us were then sent on detachment to Morris Motor Works at Cowley, Oxford where we used the endless mass production line to inspect and spray paint hundreds of 1st World War Bell tents for the coming invasion preparations. When this was completed we re-joined the Coy which had moved to Botley, Hants in May. From here we moved again to Chandlers Ford, Hants where we underwent battle training using thunderflashes and live ammunition.

In May 44 the Coy moved into Southwick Park, HQ SHAEF and were camped very close to Field Marshall Montgomery's field camping vehicle. We were all confined to the camp area. Southwick House was used by Staff Officers in preparation for D Day Normandy.

Early in Jun 44 after an address given by Field Marshall Montgomery, units moved out from the park and although our Coy was ready to move, for some reason unknown to us we were kept back from the initial crossing to Normandy and were given a variety of jobs to do in Portsmouth Harbour area. We were eventually embarked on an LCI ship and arrived in Arramanches on 14 Aug 44. After 2 days in wet conditions under bivouacs in an orchard we were moved to work in 2 BAD for 5 days at SIBLES. Here on 19/20 Aug we moved 500 tons of ammunition with 60 men for transfer to forward areas.

We then moved to BUSSDY on 21 Aug

where we constructed a barbed wire compound. We then travelled as guards to the Fallaise area and escorted POWs back to the compound. It was at this time I was promoted to W/Sgt by our OC (still Maj F Oats MC).

On 30 Aug we moved to NONANT still working as guards for POW work parties, escorting 400 POWs to an Ordnance Depot daily. On 26 Nov we moved to VAUCELLES until 5 Feb 45 when we moved back to NONANT for 10 days.

We were then moved forward to LENS for 8 days and on 23 Feb we moved to St Omer, Pas de Calais. Here we did a variety of jobs. We also lost our long time OC who was taken into hospital. Our new OC, Maj R Andrews, moved the Coy to BOOERDONK, Holland, stopping in stages at VENLO, GELDERMN, KEVELAER and GOCH to move supplies forward.

On 24 Mar, whilst working at GOCH, one of our men stepped off a mine cleared path and trod on a mine. His foot was blown off and he died of shock in hospital later. On 28th Mar 45 we crossed the River Rhine at WESEL and 5 days later we moved to HEES, Germany, where we worked on No 111 Airstrip handling ammunition and petrol, and controlling wind direction indicators for aircraft landing.

On 27 Jun our Coy was moved to AACHEN where we occupied what had once been the HQ of the local Gestapo and Waffen SS Units. Here the Coy was engaged in the control of German civilian arriving in large numbers at the railway station, fleeing from the Russian controlled Eastern Germany. On 5 Jul I was sent with a Cpl and 10 men to EUSKIRCHEN where I was attached to HQ 6 Guard Tank Brigade (Guards Armoured Division) under command of Brigadier Greenacre (Welsh Guards) and Maj Milligan (Irish Guards). Our job was to control and supervise the rebuilding of a large boiler-house which been bombed and destroyed. I worked together with a local German master-builder and also a master steel erector and about 30 men from local villages, employed under the Civilian Labour Corps Unit. When the site had been cleared and partially rebuilt I went with the foreman to Krupps works in ESSEN where we salvaged some undamaged boilers for the job.

The rebuilding took until April 1946 and finally provided hot water for baths and heating for the barracks, which had previously been used as an Ergieunghseim (Home of Correction for boys) similar to a Borstal Institution in England. Our Coy had now been moved from AACHEN to BAD GODESBERG and I rejoined it there. The Coy was finally disbanded on 27 May 46. Those of us in demob No 29 were sent via Dusseldorf and Krefeld back to England where we were discharged at Shorncliffe Barracks, Kent. I feel very proud to have served as a Pioneer for six years. ■



Outside X Ray Dark Room 5th Fd Hosp, Zeriza, N Africa 1st Army 26 Aug 43



With a X-Ray Member of 5 Fd Hosp at Zeriza, N Africa, 1st Army unit, 3 Oct 43



Sgt C Thursby (Back row Left) with 4 members of 37 Coy PC at Dusseldorf Germany May 46 at demob transit centre



# A Piper in the Army by Iain Insch

*In the October 2006 Newsletter we reported the sad death of Ex Sgt JD Insch (13049147) at the age of 93, he served in the Corps from 1940 to 1946. His daughter has sent a copy of the following article he wrote at the age of 90.*

replacements would be found. We always played up hill on route marches. After some time we were measured for kilts and were supplied with new pipes and also practice chanters. I had the kilt until recently and still have the chanter.

On one occasion we had to travel to London in a Comer wagon and we were billeted in the Royal College near the old Crystal Palace with beds on the floor. By this time I had been appointed Corporal in MacRae's place - he had been missing from a parade and Colonel McLure, a stern man, had him posted. We were there to play for the Marchioness Townsend, I believe, who had arranged a ball at the Grosvenor Hotel in Park Lane. Our duty was to play up and down the ballroom floor in the interval, counter march, form a circle and then break into a strathspey and reel and then retire to a corner where we given liquid refreshment. The Marchioness sent for me to congratulate me on our excellent performance and handed me two bottles of whisky. This was like gold in wartime but it did not last long!

While we were in London, we went into a pub and sent MacAlister to the bar for the drinks. Tom, as I have said, stuttered badly at times and he did not know that the bar-man also stuttered. Each thought that the other was trying to be funny and a fight nearly ensued.

At the New Year 1940/41 we were asked to play in the Officers' Mess. I think the Colonel may have been in a Highland Regiment in his younger days and wanted a similar function to take place. At midnight we lined up, me at the front and five pipers in file behind and we marched into the mess, played round the table and then the pipers retired to the next room where they had drinks and turkey with all the trimmings. I had to remain behind. The Colonel handed me a glass of whisky, a very large glass. Fortunately, just behind me there was a hatch into the pipers' room and so I was able to just have a sip and then put it on the hatch where an alert person speedily removed it, downed the contents and replaced it. This happened a number of times. I heard one officer say to another, "By golly, that fellow can really drink!" While all this was going on, I heard the pipes being blown up. However, I had to collect the fellows and all the sets of pipes, pack them, load them on our vehicle and assist the men into the lorry too. They were very much the worse for wear.

Our duties as regimental police consisted of keeping the prisoners under lock and key. Perhaps a man would go absent from his unit, return home to Oldham and be picked up by the civilian police who would inform us. I usually took Tom MacAlister with me to the police station to pick up the absentee who would then be put in our guard room to await an escort from his

own unit. We posted a man on the gate who directed approaching vehicles. One day MacKay was on duty and I heard the RSM call for me at the top of his voice. He said, "Bring in the gateman!" A soldier was in his office when we entered. He said, "Don't you pay compliments to officers, MacKay?" Alec looked this man up and down and said, "I didnae ken you were an officer, I thought you were one of the lads." The RSM said, "Alright, you can go, Mackay." He then told the officer he did not think he looked like one; he was wearing an other-ranks greatcoat, had a brass cap badge rather than the dark brown one worn by officers, his anklets were blanched a grey colour not khaki like the officers, he had black, rather than brown, boots, carried no gloves and no swagger stick. However, he did have a pip on his shoulder, the rank of Second Lieutenant. He had obviously just started a commission and was sternly rebuked by the RSM.

Another day the gate-man came in and said that the wife of one of the prisoners was at the gate asking for him. I asked if she could prove her identity and she showed her ID Card and the officer granted them fifteen minutes together in a side room. About two hours later the gate-man came in again and announced, "There's another wife come for that prisoner!" As proof she showed me her ration books and she was given fifteen minutes with him too. But shortly afterwards a third woman turned up with a child in a pushchair. Her identity was letters sent from the prisoner. She too got a quarter of an hour. I never did find out which was the real wife.

Smoking was forbidden for prisoners and, although we searched the cells, we could never find cigarettes or matches although we knew it was going on. I used to allow one of the prisoners out to wash up the dirty plates and he said he would tell me the secret when he left. The prisoners threw a note out of the window to passing girls to get them to buy cigarettes. A sewing thread was lowered out of the window to which the packet was tied and then pulled up. To get a light they would hold a cigarette against the electric light and after a few puffs it would smoulder, ready for smoking. Another way was to scrape a tooth brush onto the floor to make a powder and then strike the floor with something metallic to cause sparks.

At night the pipers would all go into town and spend the time in the pub. One night MacFarland and MacRae were both talking in Gaelic; after a drink they never spoke in English. Two ladies sitting next to Billy Wright said, "What language are they speaking, it sounds like German, could they be spies?" He replied, "You ought to go and inform the police, I can't go as I'm a soldier." This they promptly did. Ten minutes later the pub door burst open and two burly police officers grabbed the two

Macs who still would not speak a word of English! In the middle of the night the police contacted an officer who was not at all pleased at having to get out of bed and so they were left in the police cells. They were released the next morning ... still speaking Gaelic!

One of our duties was to open up the concerts at the Odeon Cinema in Oldham. The Colonel wanted three pipers to walk down the aisle at each side followed by a drummer while the bass drummer walked down the centre aisle. The plan was that on arrival at the front of the hall we would stand and play the normal strathspey and reel before marching. I knew this would not work but it was impossible to argue with the Colonel. The concert was broadcast on the radio which my father heard. He asked if we were drunk! As we played back into the foyer the Colonel came and congratulated us saying, "You're the finest pipers in the whole of the British Army!"

One day the Colonel sent for me and said, "You're going home tomorrow for one night. Leicester Caledonian Society has requested you play for them for an exhibition of Scottish dancing at the Ordnance Depot at Woodhouse Eaves. This is a great honour so put on a good show." On another occasion I went home on leave, I had just got in the door when a telegram arrived saying, "Return immediately for important duty, leave may recommence afterwards." Actually, it was just a parade around Oldham to raise funds for a Spitfire. The Colonel came up to me afterwards and apologised for bringing me back, "Take two extra days leave." When I went for my leave pass, I said to the Adjutant, "You've only made it out for seven days, Sir, the Colonel gave me nine." He retorted, "Don't you give me that rubbish. Don't come the old soldier with me." There was only a thin screen between his office and the Colonel's and the Colonel bellowed "Give that man his nine days at once. He's done more for the war effort than you!" I kept clear of the Adjutant after that.

By now we had begun to do night duty as guards. Adam Garrett got his leave pass for Stranraer. A great boy for sleeping, he was deeply asleep for most of the journey and awoke in Inverness! On reporting to the Railway Transport Officer, he was fortunate to be granted another twenty-four hours and eventually got home to Stranraer. One night when we came off guard the snow was about six inches deep. Adam was already in the hut off-duty and sound asleep. We lifted his bed up and carried him down to the Company office. At 0600 hrs the bugle sounded reveille and Adam leaped out into the snow in his bare feet! He never did find out how he got there. On another occasion when we came in we heard lights-out being played. Billy Wright said to the sleepy Adam, "That's the breakfast call, you've slept in." He dashed off, half dressed, in the dark to find the cook-house deserted. He took it all in good part.

Towards the end of 1942 11 Centre was closed and the pipe and bugle bands were sent to Sherfield on Lodden Camp near Bramley Ordnance Depot, Basingstoke. The concert party joined Nat Gonnella's Band in London. However, we were getting rather bored with band duties. Jock MacIntosh got a transfer to a Dockers Company as that was his trade and Alec

MacRae obtained his discharge due to poor eyesight. Tommy Brannan was recalled to civilian life as a printer for the war effort.

When we went in for meals, we sat eight to a table. Ours always seemed to be making complaints and we were told by the Orderly Officer that he had heard enough. Next day, however, we had another complaint and he got very angry until the soldier making it put his hand into the serving dish and pulled out a sink plug with about two feet of chain attached. He asked, "How would you like this in your food, Sir?" Off went the officer to 'play merry hell' with the cooks.

Another little incident was when a friend and I thumbed a lift into Reading. A large chauffeur-driven car pulled up and the passenger commanded, "Jump in, lads." After a few miles he turned through the gates of a large house and set us down. The gardener trimming the hedge enquired, "Do you know who that was?" When we said no, he told us that it was the Duke of Wellington.

One day the Major informed me, "You have got a compassionate posting to a Company near your home. There is nothing I can do about it." I was quite pleased and I joined a Company at Hathern near Loughborough. By then I wanted to get my third stripe and become a Sergeant and requested a promotions course. I must have done well as, on my return to my unit, I was recommended for immediate promotion and attendance at OCTU for officer training; I turned this down as I was quite happy as a Sergeant.

One of the soldiers was killed in a car crash and I was detailed to take his body home to his wife in Manchester. Lt Campbell drove me and another soldier to the mortuary at 0600 hrs to get the body. It was a very eerie in the blackout in the driving rain. The mortician asked if we could give him a hand screwing the coffin lid down. Campbell said "I don't think I can, will you do it, Sergeant Insch?" We took the body to the station in a 15cwt pick-up truck and it travelled up to Manchester in an empty goods wagon, the coffin being covered in the union flag and providing us with a seat. "Don't forget the flag." We were ordered. In wartime the carriages were full and people would ride in the goods wagon. But at every station we stood up at either end of the coffin and people turned away. We were met at Manchester by the hearse and went to the man's home which was in a very poor district. The coffin was laid on a table in the front room. His wife was out at the time and I was concerned she would get an awful shock when she came back. I was right as she fell down in a dead faint! When she had recovered and had viewed the body I had to get her signature on three forms. She kept saying, "Oh, I can't do that," and then it transpired they were not legally married. Eventually she signed and we set off for home, only to be called back by the woman waving the union flag which we had forgotten.

As the second front opened up, we were sent to Normandy and dug in at Grace Sur Mer near Arromanches. One day I heard pipes being played on the ack-ack gun in the next field. The piper asked me if I would like to play a few tunes so I did so, circling the gun. Next minute there was feverish activity and a series of loud bangs from the gun. The gunner said, "Don't stop

playing; this plane comes over every day taking photographs." A minute or two later, I was surprised to see my audience jump into a trench beside the gun and I realised that the plane was firing at the gun - and me! I too made a hasty retreat into the trench. The men said, "He's never fired on us before, it must be your playing!" To which I replied, "He's got a damn funny camera."

In Normandy we were two officers short and so I became Acting Officer. I had to learn French rather rapidly in order to negotiate for various goods and services. From Normandy we went through northern France to Belgium. At first we were stationed in Antwerp where I experienced my first V rocket. The first night was spent in a three storey disused factory. Suddenly, there was a terrific explosion, the building rocked and then came another explosion which was I think the vacuum closing in. I said to my Corporal, "Your face has gone green!" He replied, "So has yours." From there we went to Wetteren. One night I was in the café with the Corporal and he whispered, "That civilian has a pistol under his coat." He went across the road to get a sten gun. When he returned, the man ran out of the other door with the Corporal in hot pursuit. He soon came back in when a bullet splintered the door jam by his ear and the man got away. He could have been a German. Shortly after that we were stood-to when the Battle of the Bulge started but I did not see any of the enemy.

In 1945 we were stationed in Borg Kamen where we had taken over the Krankenhaus (hospital) as our barracks. In due course, the Company Sergeant Major went on leave and as Senior Sergeant I took over for the week.

One night I sat in the orderly room. The door burst open and four Jocks frog-marched a young German into the room and dumped him on the floor at my feet. The peculiar thing about these four is that they all referred to one-another as 'Jock' but the correct one always knew who was being addressed. They said that had been in a café and the German insulted them. When I asked what he had said, Jock Armstrong replied, "He called us 'Englischer Schweinhund'. I didnae mind being called a Schweinhund but calling me English is going too far!"

I was finally demobbed at the end of January 1946. On the night train to Calais there was no electric lights and it was packed. A soldier on the other side of the carriage started to whistle Loudens Woods and Braes, when he finished the first measure, I whistled the second. We could not see each other but he said, "Are you a piper?" and told me that he was and that he was a Skye man. When I finally got home to Leicester it seemed such a come down to have no reception on the station after 6 years of service.

*Iain Insch died at the age of 93. He made bagpipe reeds and sold them all over the world for over forty years. He was, until the age of 90, Honorary Piper to Leicester Caledonian Society. He taught over twenty people to play the pipes his last pupil was a twelve year old girl student at his daughter's school in Birmingham where he then lived. Iain's roots are in Strathdon, Aberdeenshire where he had been able to trace his family back nearly three hundred years. ■*



# My Army Years

by Ex Pte Leonard John Hooper

*Len's family have talked him into writing his life history, the following is an extract from this...*

When assembled we were told that we were there to work in the underground ammunition dump and were impressed with the importance of what we had to do in moving supplies. Whilst we were not the only depot it was one of the largest and a big unit in the chain of supply. We were also told of the need for secrecy.

One of the early happenings was the withdrawal of our 'old' rifles and replacement with brand new Lee Enfield's all separately wrapped and greased. They took ages to clean ready for use but we only had them for a short while before they were collected in and despatched, we understood, for front line units. We most certainly could not have been the only unit without arms for some time and in fact I have recently seen in a new book "Forgotten Voices of the Blitz and Battle of Britain" returning servicemen from Dunkirk saying the same thing.

I feel sure that had 'Jerry' really taken the plunge at that time to attack us we could have been in serious trouble. I feel I have to put down here Churchill's famous remarks in his speech after European Victory. On 8 May 45 on a balcony overlooking Whitehall he said: "We were left all alone against the most tremendous military power that has been seen. We were left all alone against the most tremendous military power that has been seen. We were all alone for a whole year. There we stood alone. Did anyone want to give in? Were we downhearted? The lights when out and the bombs came down, but every man, woman and child in the country had no thought of quitting the struggle. So we came back after long months from the jaws of death, out of the mouth of hell, while all the world wondered."

We found that we were working in former Bath and Portland stone quarries which were spread through the hill towards Corsham on the other side. Some 'miles' of tunnels had been cut out in pre-war years to recover the stone for building use and these areas were being converted to hold ammunition of all kinds for the war effort. The story is now told in the book "Secret Underground Cities" by NH McCamley as a result of an immense amount of research.

Large areas of galleries and tunnels had already been, and were still being concreted and tunnels were equipped with conveyor belts or narrow gauge rail tracks with access slopes to the surface. In our district we had both means available to us.

We went into a heavy schedule of receiving and despatching ammunition. I have no recollection of our area having the large stocks of shells and bombs as in some other sections. I can only remember wooden or metal boxes of presumable

small arms ammo. The wooden boxes had rope handles and those of metal had their handles covered with a rough canvas material. Both the rope and canvas, with continuous handling, played havoc with my hands not used to 'hard work' and I found I regularly had to find some wrapping for protection.

The whole floor was covered in a mixture of asphalt and other dust material to prevent sparks in event of accidents and this caused an eerie silence away from work areas. We used to say we could hear a mouse squeak a mile away.

After a short and difficult time in tents and because of fear of air-raids (they had just had one) arrangements were made to convert some unused galleries into 'barracks' with 2 tier bunks and so we slept and worked below. We surfaced for meals, drills, guard duties and spare time. It was such an isolated location we rarely went far. We were taken into Bath for 'baths' weekly.

Use of the conveyor belt access/exit was much easier than the truck end. The latter entailed hooking the truck fore and aft with a chain to the overhead cable. A chain with a hook had to be slung up to wrap itself around the 'overhead' being careful not to 'crown' yourself in so doing. When at the top, as the truck came up over the brow on the flat surface it had to be quickly pulled forward a little to give slack on the chain to unwrap it. If we got stuck we had to quickly shut the engine power. Trucks were then pushed to off-loading sits and, when empty, sent back down the shaft.

In the early autumn there were invasion fears and more guard duties but fortunately nothing transpired.

Our sleeping quarters were in rough rock galleries and surroundings were always damp. I was on a top bunk and when sitting up I could touch the ceiling and feel it. On my leave from there, having to take my kit bag home some contents were mouldy.

I did have two weeks respite when I was allocated to the First Aid Hut for some reason. A wooden hut on its own in another gallery. Unless a rare 'customer' came along it was days of deathly silence.

Just before Christmas a small section of us went to London for nearly two weeks to prepare some quarters for us to move into early in 1941. On Christmas Day 1940, being off duty, a friend Arthur Toombs and I hitch-hiked to Cheltenham for the day. He lived there so went home and I spent the time with my brother Stuart and his RASC unit who were stationed there. Some welcome light relief. Around tea-time we hitched back to 'the mine' - what a long

It was Thursday 25th July 1940 and I received my 'Calling Up' papers. I had to report to Westward Ho! near Bideford in North Devon to join 190 Company Pioneer Corps, being newly formed there on that date. I had said goodbye to my wife Joan part way down the cliff walk from Eastleigh to the town as she did not want to go to the railway station.

At Westward Ho! I was one of approximately 300 new recruits mostly from the West of England. We were issued with uniforms by an RQMS who guessed sizes of everything simply by looking at each man - completely correctly in my case, plus blankets, cutlery and plate and mess can. Then we were directed to sleeping quarters and introduced to plank camp beds and palliasses. Within two days I had lost my cutlery and had to buy new.

We had three weeks basic training and were issued with old type rifles, possibly 'Ross' with which we had some basic rifle practice which was new to me. On our last day there we had a company photo taken.

On 24 Aug 40 we entrained for Bathford, Wiltshire not knowing where we were going. On arrival there kitbags were off-loaded to vehicles (fortunately) as we had considerable 'footwork' in front of us. We marched to the foot of the hill leading to Monkton Farleigh but once there we had to revert to walking up the hill - it was really steep especially with back-packs and rifles.

At the top (and to the best of my recollection) we eventually moved left into a camp site where we had to erect our tents including two marquees for meals.



climb up the hill to finish.

It was apparently the practice to rotate Pioneers and REs regularly, perhaps of the damp conditions, and on 14 Jan 41 '190' Company moved to Bermondsey in the East end of London for 'Blitz' assistance. Reading information since on the humidity problems below ground it was perhaps fortunate we had that problem because apparently efforts to dry out the areas resulted in instability and some rock falls.

We were billeted in an empty school in London and spent our time clearing Bomb Damage sometimes bodies including Hartleys Marmalade factory where we found the bodies of fire watchers embalmed in the marmalade in the basement. Not a nice job.

After London we went to Mere in Wiltshire where we built a Nissen hut camp and dug trenches in chalky soil - hard going when the sun was shining. On Sundays we had church parades through the village.

We then moved to Cranbourne at the back of Bournemouth and built more Nissen huts among the trees in the grounds of a large house Nine Yews or Elms. We slept in a large stable block and there was good scope there in an attached field to play cricket. Again we were ferried to Bournemouth for baths,

Then to Weymouth in Sep 41 to work on the Breakwater Forts with the REs. The Forts were very much 'dated' and needed renovation of all kinds. We regularly had to

convey building and other supplies by small cargo boat which we had to load and offload all by hand. The worst job to me was moving bricks. Throwing two at a time, one to the other played havoc with my hands and again I had to have them bandaged at times. Several of us were a bit rankled when we were billeted in private houses as cheap, unpaid fire watchers in air raids. With a friend I was in a house owned by a local brewery manager.

On the Breakwater we also had to be ready with small arms fire for German planes which had a habit of coming in low over the sea with the sun behind them in early morning raids trying to hit oil tanks on Chesil Beach. I don't think they succeeded. Weymouth kept us busy until 1 May 42 when the section I was in was moved to Falmouth for a short period, but I don't remember what we did there. Later in May we moved to Seaview, Isle of Wight on AA gun sites and odd jobs.

At home my wife Joan and everyone else experienced sporadic raids, although much damage was done my family were not harmed. My son Leslie had arrived on 4 Apr 42.

After Seaview we had various jobs and places in Southern England and during this time, playing in a football match for '190' against another unit, I was knocked violently sideways just as someone else launched a kick and I got it in the lower part of my spine. I woke up being put into an ambulance for hospital. After spells in Bournemouth and Totland Bay (I of W)

hospitals I was moved from 190 Company into a Group Headquarters at the back of Bournemouth. I was in the office on telephone work. I was there for a few months before being sent for two medical boards and as a result in Apr/May 1943 I was invalidated out - walking with a stick.

I have been disappointed since to learn that a good friend in my section, one Ron Wills from Chudleigh, was killed on the beach in Normandy on D + 1 after '190' went ashore early on D Day. I have also seen that one who also played in the 190 football team, Paddy Rudkin, was later shot and killed on guard duty. Five others were listed as wounded.

I wonder whether any of those who joined up with me in 1940 are still alive.

Post-script: Len recently visited Monkton Farleigh and found his old camp, unfortunately it was closed so he wrote to the firm who manage the site. He has recently received a reply from the Mine Manager who said that he would be welcome to visit at any time. He pointed out, however, due to Len's age that there are 109 steps down (and of course another 109 steps up!) but they could provide a conveyance for him underground because of the extent of the workings. He also said that he had served 22 years in the Royal Hussars (Cherry Pickers) reaching the rank of WO1 (RSM) but he promised "Not to Shout". Len thought that this was an exceedingly nice reply and is now waiting for his son to transport him there, he promises to keep us informed. ■

# Alien Corn

by Alfred Perles



The following are extracts from the above book written by an Alien LCpl who served in 249 and 137 Companies.

**Alien:**

"Incidentally, I do not like that word, alien; the word has a derogatory, hostile, almost cruel ring. I should have much preferred being called a stranger. But stranger was, perhaps, too vague a term; anybody from Yorkshire, or Dorset, would be a stranger in Kent, without being an alien. Why, then, couldn't we just be foreigners? It would have sounded less humiliating that alien."

**Scene England 1940:**

"It was a joy for me to see the English waking up and getting going. And it was my good fortune to be one of a million and a half to give them a hand. The Pioneer Corps had a tremendous part in the preparations, if I may say so without false modesty. We were untrained, unskilled, unarmed, but we knew what it was all about. It was up to us to get the defences ready, and we did it! It was good

to be a Pioneer in those days. We bore the brunt of it, but it was worth the trouble. Merely to see the artillery manning a gun emplacement we had just finished was sufficient reward for us, and encouragement to carry on.

It did our hearts good to watch the planes taking off on the runways we had just finished asphaltting. The factories worked on a twenty-four-hours-a-day basis, and little by little the result was to be felt. We were still pathetically weak compared to the gigantic German war machine, but not quite as weak as a couple of months ago. Already we had a few guns, and a few tanks, and a few more planes; we had some rifles and even ammunition. If the worst came to the worst, we were no longer reduced to fighting for our lives with pitchforks and kitchen knives.

It was during those two months, from the beginning of June to the end of July, that we won the war - because we willed to win it. The British Lion was awake, and roaring!" ■

*Published in 1944 by the Riverside Press, Edinburgh*



# Lost Trails

the following are trying to re-establish contact with members, if no contact details are shown contact through the Association

**PALMER, ADRIAN.** I am trying to find Aidy with whom I served with in Lisburn with 39 Bde. Contact Alec Kelly (Ex RCT for his sins)  
[alec77@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:alec77@blueyonder.co.uk)

**6 COMPANY.** Is there anyone surviving from No 6 Coy with whom I served from Jun 40 to late 45 when I was posted to 142 Coy prior to demob in Jan 46. I am now 93 years of age. Contact: G Coombs, 01747 811421

**HOYLE, MICK GERRARD EX 144 COY,** he was my best man in Northern Ireland and last seen in Moscow Camp, he was a Geordie and his nickname was Nipper also Howarth, Gary ex Sgt 144 Coy also Weapons Instructor I believe he came from Manchester. Contact Neil Taylor  
[yellowperil7@hotmail.com](mailto:yellowperil7@hotmail.com)

**ANDREW GEORGE WILLIAMS.** Last seen in Cyprus in 1981 or 1982. Contact Les Perry  
[lezzp@hotmail.com](mailto:lezzp@hotmail.com)

**DAVE DUCKER, TOM HARDY, LEO DAVIES, BILL CARTY, PETE SMITH AND THE SHELDON BROTHERS.** Ex LCpl Richard Jessop (Jess) would like to hear from them or anyone else who remembers him from 522 Coy (Dog Section) or HQ N/Ireland (Dog Section). Contact 0793 2935800.

**CPL JOHN POOL(E) AND CPL DAVID HAZEL.** Archie Goode who served with them in 39 Bde from 1973-1976 would like to contact them. Tel 0121 453 2912

# Last Post

it is with sadness that we have to report the following deaths

**CHERRINGTON GV** (24682806) ex Pte 26 Sep 06 Cleveland (Aged 40)

**ALLMANN, G** (23736841) ex Pte 4 Aug 06 Newcastle (Aged 65)

**CLARK, G** (24116005) Ex Cpl 522 Coy, 7 Oct 06 Sunderland (Aged 55)

**LAING DH** (24198256) Ex Pte 28 Aug 06 Kennoway, Fife

**HALLIWELL WW** (Ex Sgt served from 4 Jul 40 - 1 Oct 46) 4 Oct 06 Brighouse, Yorks (Member of Assoc since 7 Jan 48)

**GILLIGAN, N** (14768022) Ex Pte 8 Jun 06 Middlesbrough (Aged 80)

**LIDDLE I** (25004416) Ex Pte 30 Aug 06 Marble Arch

**WILLIAMS EJ EX PTE** Jun 06 Dudley (Served Aug 40 - Dec 45, joined Assoc 10 Sep 47)

**McMAHON HC** (13077746) Served 8 Jan 41 - 1954 - 10 Oct 06 Clacton on Sea (87)

**TAYLOR G** (7954822) Ex LCpl 3 Coy 9 Mar 42 - 17 Jun 46, May 2006 Bath

**McFARLANE W** (13022441) Ex Pte 121 Coy (POW Poland), May 2006 Honiton

**WILLIAMS H** (4193082) Ex Sgt- 2 Nov 06 Mold, Clwyd (Joined Assoc 14 Apr 49)

**DICKSON A** (346504) Ex Lt 31 Mar 06 Belfast

**DEVENSH A** (825315) Ex Pte 2006 Erskine Home

**TAWSE H** Ex Pte 15 Oct 06 Bellshill, Scotland

**SEAGER B** Ex Pte 27 Nov 06, TRBL Halsey House, Cromer (Aged 87)

**JUDSON EC** Ex Major, 14 Jan 07 Aged 93 Rotherham. Landed in Normandy on D+1 with 92 Coy.

**HARKNESS T** (22739009) Ex Pte 11 Feb 07 Aged 72, Berkhamsted, (Served 52-54 in MELF Egypt)

**ELLIOTT ER "BILL"** Ex Major, 21 Mar 07 Aged 83 Hereford

**JURGENS D,** Major PSAO 104 Pnr Sqn, 168 Pnr Regt RLC(V) 18 Mar 07

# Obituaries

may they rest in peace

**SAUNDERS WJA CAPT (RETD)** Kirkcaldy Aged 92. His wife Mrs JS Saunders writes: It is with great sadness that I tell you that my husband died on 11th November 2006.

I include a summary of his army career: William James Alexander Saunders Retired Captain, Royal Pioneer Corps. Joined 1940, Pay Corps, was survivor on SS Lancastria on return from St Nazaire on 17 June 1940.

## MAJOR ER (BILL) ELLIOTT

Bill Elliott died after a short illness on 21 March 2007. He was the Corps Secretary Royal Pioneer Corps from 1978 until 1989, and Treasurer of the Royal Pioneer Association and Benevolent Fund from 1989 until 2006.

His military career thus spanned 66 years from his enlistment in 1940 at age seventeen, after falsifying his age, into the South Staffordshire Regiment with whose 1/6th Bn he landed in Normandy on D Day. He then served with 1st Bn Gordon Highlanders, before being commissioned into The Buffs. At the end of war in Europe, he was posted to India where he joined the Rajput Regiment of the Indian Army and took part in border skirmishes in Waziristan.

On his return to the UK and after a short time in civilian life he returned to the Army, joining the RPC. He served with units of the Corps at home, Germany, Aden and Bahrain before retiring in 1977 to take up the appointment of Corps Secretary. He then began what he has described as the happiest part of his Service life, during which time he travelled extensively, visiting most units of the Corps. As Editor of the Corps Journal 'The Royal Pioneer' twice during his service and again as Corps

1945 - Commissioned into Pioneer Corps  
1946 - 49 - Egypt Operation Medlock  
1949 - 51 - Training Officer Saughton Camp  
1951 - 53 - Germany 3 PCLU Dusseldorf  
1953 - 55 - Japan and KOREA Commonwealth Div, Adjutant  
1956 - Egypt, East African Labour Force  
1957 - Cairnryan Port 21C, temp Major  
1959 - 61 - Germany Civil Labour, Rheindahlen Garrison  
1962 - Retired as Captain

Secretary, he regarded it as a unique vantage point from which to observe events in the Corps he had served during thirty-five years as a Pioneer.

He brought to the task of Editor and Corps Secretary an array of talents that were to make him outstanding in his field; he was skilled in matters of finance; he had a deep emotional attachment to matters of regimental and Corps esprit; and he was a knowledgeable and authoritative curator of the Museum and its artefacts. He took a particular interest in the use of the Museum to promote interest among the families of the thousands of RPC recruits who passed through the Training Centre. He was also an accomplished photographer and used his skills in this field to great effect for the benefit of the Corps. Bill also had a flair for external and public affairs; he created a personal network of highly effective and positive relationships with local authorities, politicians, press, radio and television networks and professional institutions and used these relationships to good effect not just within the Corps but across the Army District network. He was also instrumental in developing working methods across the network of Corps and Regimental Secretaries and Museum Curators at a time when their work was less well valued and understood. He was

After retirement employed by Earl Haig Fund Scotland, Poppy Appeal Organiser for 5 years, then Secretary to Earl Haig Fund Relief Committee.

He was very proud of his regiment and regularly attended re-union weekends and dinners.

It was fitting that a dedicated soldier died on Armistice Day.

widely regarded in these specialist communities as a safe and authoritative pair of hands.

He served on the Restoration Committee of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (The Crusader Round and Soldiers' Church) at Northampton. He also had an appreciation of fine wine and food and, under his encouragement and stewardship, the culinary achievements of the Chefs of the Central Messes were at an all-time high.

Bill Elliott retired again in November 1989, and moved to Herefordshire and Presteigne. He then wrote the History of Royal Pioneers from 1945 - 1993, giving the rights of the publication to the Association, commenced work for SSAFA and continued his work for the Corps through the Association and Benevolent Fund until these roles were converged with The Royal Logistic Corps. His contribution to serving and ex-service life in the Corps is almost certainly unique, and was marked by the presentation to him in February 2007 of a silver commemorative piece. He continued to serve on the Council of the Association. He is survived by his wife Joan, their daughters Pam and Jayne and their son John.

**MID WALES JOURNAL**

# MILITARY HONOURS 'WILD BILL' ELLIOTT

Major Bill Elliott admires his gift of a silver model of the

## "The Working Pioneers"

The inscription reads...

"Presented to Major ER Elliott by the Royal Pioneer  
Corps Association for 52 years of loyal service.

Commissioned RPC Service Mar 54 - Mar 78

Editor the Royal Pioneer Mar 60 - Dec 62

Corps Secretary and Editor The Royal Pioneer Mar 78 - Oct 89

Treasurer RPC Association and RPC Benevolent Fund 89 - 06

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