

the



the newsletter of the Royal Pioneer Corps Association

Pioneer



October 2012

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DISBANDED



THE CHANGES to the Army ORBAT as it affects The Royal Logistic Corps is as follows:

The structure of the Royal Logistic Corps will be reduced by six regular regiments.

It has already been announced that 8 Regiment RLC, 19 (CSS) Battalion and 24 Regiment RLC will be removed from the ORBAT.

Three close support logistic regiments and three theatre logistic regiments will support the reaction forces, resulting in 1 Logistic Support Regiment being removed from the ORBAT not before Apr 15, and 2 Logistic Support Regiment being removed from the ORBAT not before Oct 14.

23 Pioneer Regiment will also be removed from the ORBAT not before Oct 15. Force logistic regiments will be a fusion of supply and transportation from point of entry to foxhole for the entire force. In order to mount, deploy and sustain future operations, approximately 20% of the logistic output will be delivered by the reserves.

The increased reliance on the Reserve will see a restructuring of RLC reserve units, which will be paired with regular regiments across a number of RLC capabilities; details of which to follow.

The Regular component of the Royal Logistic Corps will deliver the following capabilities:

- Three close support logistic regiments.
- Three theatre logistic regiments.
- Two force logistic regiments.
- An air assault support regiment.
- One regular port and maritime regiment.
- One regular postal, courier and movement regiment.
- An explosive ordnance disposal regiment.

(Note: details of the Reserve component structure and basing plan are expected to be announced in December 2012).

Letter from Maj Gen MW Poffley OBE, Master General of Logistics dated 5 Jul 12:

Army 2020 - The Proposition for the Royal Logistic Corps.

For some time we have been anticipating the announcement on the A2020 Proposition by the Secretary of State. Today you heard it. Unsurprisingly its content centred on some of the broader issues and design of the future Army; it was light on detail, certainly that level of detail that you might need to relate the A2020 proposition to the future of the RLC.

Over the next few days you will receive a formal briefing from the Corps Colonel supported by key staff from CD CSS; the latter has been closely engaged in the development of the A2020 (RLC) proposition since last November. Hopefully this briefing will help frame your minds as to what emerging changes are afoot; and enable you to discharge your command responsibilities better prepared in terms of Corps awareness. You will also receive a presentation pack which will ensure you are afforded good opportunity to cascade the A2020 outcome across your commands, and likewise satisfy me that consistent messaging is in place. Note also that the Corps Colonel and Colonel RLC TA, again supported by key staff from CD CSS, will conduct a number of liaison visits across the RLC Reserve units. This carries the similar intent in ensuring consistency and integrity of message. Finally you should all have access in the near future to the Army Internal Report on A2020. This is an extensive piece of work aimed at codifying the rationale, and providing the intellectual audit trail, that underpins the force design work to date. This Internal Report is the vehicle by which A2020 momentum is maintained, pan Army, as it moves forward towards implementation. I encourage you to be familiar with its content and do what you can to add your weight to its momentum.

With all that I have outlined above, you will understand my reluctance to delve into the A2020 detail in this note. But allow me to put some early shape on your thoughts and prepare you for some of the features and issues that will emerge over the coming days and weeks.

In recent years the RLC has taken up a greater proportion of the British Army as the overall size of the Force shrinks. At 15,172, we represent approximately 15% of the Army's liability. This is approaching half the size of the Navy and 40% of the RAF. An organisation of this size represents a significant leadership and management challenge, not to mention the implications that such size has in terms of recruiting and retaining the right quality of people across the structure. The Corps has played a significant and highly acclaimed role over the past decade on both Operations TELIC and HERRICK in particular, but there have been various pockets of capability that have shown some affluence against the operational requirement. In an Army that

is shrinking in size, and you will all be familiar with the 82K regular liability target, we can no longer afford as a Corps to be anything other than 'wholly relevant'; and to ensure we concentrate the distilled professionalism of a smaller Corps on the prime functions of logistics. We have a breadth of skills and competencies on which this and the future Army will rely; this A2020 exercise has been an opportunity to hone each of these areas to a capability set that best fits the future environment and anticipated operational demands. It follows therefore that there ought to be some liability 'down arrows' as the detailed proposition unfolds. Some of these reductions will be difficult to bear both emotionally and operationally but rest assured that the RLC RHQ is firmly set to manage the transition in liability and manning.

The A2020 proposition is both a concept and an associated structure. The headlines will undoubtedly be found in the structure; but it is worth you taking some time to understand the intellectual thrust of the conceptual thesis underpinning the proposed structure. It centres on the need for an adaptable and integrated force. Adaptable in terms of being structured for uncertainty; being able to deliver and generate operational capability under changing circumstances and as mission specific task lines become apparent. Some of these task lines will require a high readiness force visibly capable, through its contingent preparation and readiness stance, to conduct high intensity warfighting operations. Many task lines require a less ready but highly adaptable force; able to engage in upstream capacity building, or UK resilience operations and meet the exigencies of any future enduring operation. Integrated means the need to design and shape a Reserve force that complements, as opposed to supplements, the regular force elements. This will require us all to think carefully about how we affect this. We will need a Reserve that is able to achieve routine outputs and maintain an equitable stake in our capability. Positioning the RLC force structure such that it meets this paradigm shift towards a single integrated contingent of logistic capability, unified in both command and purpose, is an obvious feature of the proposition. But the regular force structure is insufficient on its own to deliver the operational outputs of the future. You will witness a proposition that demonstrates a substantial increase in reliance on the RLC Reserve; such increase tailored and attributed towards those logistic activities that most lend themselves to 'the territorial'. It will require a change in approach from both the regular and reserve components and we must embrace this change. We must start right away, in line with a broad number of strategic and operational level initiatives, drawn together under the Future Reserves 2020 (FR20) banner, to

“You've truly won your place among the best – you are the Fighting Pioneers”

SHOCKED!

understand the challenge and begin to set the conditions for a successful integrated logistic force.

There have been opportunities in the A2020 analysis to redefine some aspects of 'how' the Army plans and executes its logistics. Some of these changes are required to meet the growing concept of a Total Support Force, or the non-discretionary need to better control and manage the Army's inventory. You will see some important first steps in the A2020 proposition towards redefining the role of the Corps in such changing circumstances. I am determined to extend still further and see through some of these early advances in how the Army employs the RLC in the planning and execution of its logistic line of operation. But it will require continual proving, both conceptually and operationally – most of all it will demand a collective shift, particularly from across the officer cohort, to embrace the totality of their profession.

It will be this combination of a smaller, ever more professional Corps, fully integrated with its Reserve contingent and industry, dominating logistic operations right across a land environment, and able to adapt its operational outputs to consistently meet future demands which will form the RLC of 2020. The A2020 (RLC) work to date has set some early conditions. There must now be a ruthless drive towards greater expertise and professionalism, complementing the range of measures required to transition the RLC structure to its 2020 footing, which will subsume those force design conditions into the broader conditions for a Corps suited to CGS' vision for A2020.

Letter from Col JS Grinstead MBE (Late RLC) to CO 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC and the Chairman of the RPC Association dated 5 July 2012:

I am writing to you and the wider Pioneer community at this difficult time to express my genuine regret at the outcome of the Army 2020 deliberations, as announced today by the Secretary of State, specifically where we see the deletion of 23 Pioneer Regiment from the Order of Battle of both the Royal Logistic Corps and the British Army as a whole.

Whilst the loss of other Regiments within the Corps will be breaking some important historical links, the loss of 23 Pioneer Regiment ends an important connection with one of our Forming Corps, which, I know, will be felt keenly within both the serving and the veteran communities. This is not mere sentimentality but a reflection of the important contribution that the Pioneers have made to the history and heritage that binds us together as a Corps.

Even prior to their amalgamation into the RLC in 1993, the Pioneers have had a long and proud history. With incarnations as the Army Works Corps, the Labour Corps, the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps, the Pioneer Corps and, in 1946, with the granting of the Royal prefix, these roots date back to 1762. During your distinguished service in the Crimea, through two World Wars and numerous campaigns and operations since, you have demonstrated tremendous versatility, adaptability, resilience and professionalism, whether that be in more recent times when in support of the Civil Authority during Foot and Mouth epidemics, in restoring order to Umm Qasar during TELIC 1 or in leading the way in C-IED Search operations in Afghanistan.

You will be aware that the pioneer capability has come under regular and sustained scrutiny during previous reviews, culminating in the initial reduction of the CEG with the removal of 206 and 522 Pioneer Squadrons from 23 Pioneer Regiment and in the reduction of 170 Pioneer Squadron in the ARRC Support Battalion to a Troop as part of the Planning Round 11 (PR11) measures. Subsequently, the demand to find additional liability savings within A2020 has, as you now know, proved irresistible and, as a result, the remainder of the Regiment has been taken as a saving.

Whilst this will cause dismay amongst many – and not just those who are serving or have served in the Pioneers – we must now all recognise that the decision has been made and look to the future, whilst

Warrant Officer Class 2 Charles Wood was killed in an explosion in Afghanistan in December 2012, said "I'm absolutely devastated. Charlie was a massive Pioneer through and through. I'll be honest, it's because of the Pioneers and the way they are that got me through the last 18 months, and it is still a massive part of my life."

Mrs Wood said she was angry about the announcement and said lives would be "ripped apart".

She said, "I'm so angry – you've got people who don't get paid much, who are doing a dangerous job in Afghanistan and this is how they are treated. Is this how we treat our heroes? I know Charles would be absolutely devastated."

"The Government should take a hard look at itself and its finances. How much money has been wasted and lives lost, and now people's lives and their families are being ripped apart. People are going to Afghanistan, facing the prospect of redundancy and the potential of losing their life as well."

Norman Brown, of the Royal Pioneer Corps Association, said, "It's just disbelief – the Pioneers have been here since 1941."

He said he was sitting with soldiers in the Sergeants Mess at St David's Barracks yesterday and added the mood was one of "shock".

In a statement the Royal Pioneer Corps Association, which is preparing for its annual reunion this weekend, said "The disbandment of any regiment is always felt with an acute degree of sadness among its soldiers. However, the men and women of 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC can rightly be proud of their history and achievements both on operations and at home."

The MOD said a further decision over the Pioneers' base, St David's Barracks, and Army housing in Ambrosden, will be made towards the end of the year.

"We of the Pioneers, will not go quietly into the night. Our Corps and Regiment will live long in the hearts and minds of all who have served within its ranks. We will be remembered and held in great regard by the Corps and Regiments we have served and have been attached to and will hold in high regard all who have fought and died within its ranks for our great country. The Red / Green and Blue are colours of our once great Corps/Regiment. May it live on in our hearts and minds forever." Taff Powell

preserving the rich legacy that we inherit from our past. What is certain is that the contribution of the Pioneers will never be forgotten and the crossed axes of our cap badge will serve as a constant reminder of your valuable contribution to the history of the RLC.

You've truly won your place among the best – you are the "Fighting Pioneers."

The following are extracts from Bicester's local press:

"War widow Heather Wood last night launched a stinging attack on the Government over how it has treated 'our heroes'. Yesterday it was announced the 600-strong 23 Pioneer Regiment based in Bicester in some form since 1941, will be disbanded.

Soldiers at the base were in shock last night after being told the Regiment will cease to exist by October 2015. No details of how many troops face redundancy or how many would join other regiments elsewhere have been released.

Mrs Wood, of Bicester, whose husband





■ Dusty Bryant & Ginge Hurdman on parade at the Reunion Weekend Picture: Scouse Bradley



Front Cover
Disbanded
Picture: Paul Brown



Back Cover
Immeasurable
Picture: Paul Brown
Words: Maj Taff Teague

WHAT a turbulent six months we have had, and I am not talking about the torrential rain that hopefully did not lead to any members being flooded.

Two days before the Reunion Weekend we had the devastating news that 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC was to be disbanded. On pages 2 and 3, I have included letters from the Master General of Logistics and the Regimental Colonel The RLC.

As most of you are aware the strength of the regular army has to be reduced by 20,000 men to a total force of 82,000. In the RLC this meant the loss of 6 Regiments.

The final details of disbandment are still not known but members will be informed through the medium of our Newsletters and our Facebook page.

Notwithstanding this devastating news the Reunion Weekend was a great success despite the weather trying to dampen our spirits – it certainly did not dampen our thirsts as the bars and beer tents were kept busy.

It was decided on the Friday that the sports field was unusable for the normal activities and displays so a last minute move of tentage and displays was made to the MT square. This involved soldiers walking 24' shelters along the road.

A selection of letters regarding the weekend are shown on pages 58 to 61.

We do appreciate that we had problems

with transport from St George's Barracks but we hope that this will not occur next year.

Next year will probably be the last Reunion Weekend at Bicester, the dates are 5th and 6th July, I hope you can all make it.

A booking form will be included in the April 2013 Newsletter, I will not be taking bookings prior to this.

It is still intended to hold a Reunion following the disbandment of the Regiment, suggestions as to the location would be very much appreciated. It is known that many Regiments and Corps' hold their Reunions in hotels throughout the country.

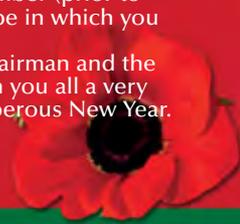
Once again we publish a long list of members who have sadly passed away since the last Newsletter, our condolences go to their families, it is always sad to lose ex Pioneers.

As usual I am enclosing Christmas Draw tickets with the Newsletter (unless you have already indicated that you are unable to sell them). Please give the Christmas Draw your fullest support.

If you are purchasing the tickets yourself you need only to put the number (prior to your name) from the envelope in which you received this Newsletter.

Finally on behalf of the Chairman and the Council Members may I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Norman Brown



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CONTENTS | OCTOBER 2012

- 2 Loss of 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC**
Betrayed
- 4 Past Events / Future Events / News**
Details of past and future events with latest news
- 12 News from 23 Pnr Regt RLC**
News from 23 Pioneer Regiment
- 15 New "Pioneer" Centre at Bicester**
New Bicester development
- 16 RPC Association Shop**
Please place your orders and help the Association
- 17 Disbandment of 8 Regt RLC**
Pioneers had strong links with this Regiment
- 18 Lost in France**
Search for missing Pioneers from the BEF 1940
- 28 Photo Gallery**
A large collection from various events
- 36 Harry's War**
Harry Carass's letters home in 1940
- 41 Pegasus Pioneers**
Pioneers with 1st Airborne Division
- 42 Wartime Service in the Pioneers**
Ray Wilson describes his wartime service
- 45 Letter from my Father**
William Cartwright describes the D-Day Landings
- 46 Photos from the Suez Crisis**
Recently obtained photographs
- 48 Press Cuttings from 1940**
Various press cutting from our archives for 1940
- 52 Blast From the Past**
Various recipients of the LS&GC (except Gus)
- 54 AGM Minutes**
Minutes from this year's Association AGM
- 56 History of the RPC Association / Lost Trails**
Interesting history
- 57 Bill Carty recollects his service in RPC**
"War" stories during Reunion Weekend
- 58 Letters to the Editor**
We welcome your letters, emails and your views
- 62 Pioneer Services Section**
More recommended service providers
- 63 Book Reviews**
Three more books reviewed and recommended
- 64 Last Post - May they rest in peace**
May they rest in peace
- 66 And Finally...**
Closure with a little humour



PAST EVENTS



■ MR D C Turner of Bexleyheath carried an Association Standard at a special ceremony to raise the Armed Forces Day flag in Bexleyheath on Monday 25 Jun 12 ahead of the national day on Saturday 30 Jun 12.

The MP for Old Bexley and Sidcup, Mr James Brokenshire, said:

“Armed Forces Day provides us with a special opportunity for us to recognise the huge contribution they make - often serving thousands of miles away from home. It shows our support for their work in keeping us safe and secure from those currently serving abroad to the cadet force, reservists and volunteers. They put their lives on the line and this gives us the chance to say thank you.”

This year's national event took place in Plymouth.

Mr Turner also carried the standard at Ypres and Nieuport on 4th and 5th of August.

■ NORMAN and Marlene Brown attended the unveiling of the Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park on 28 June 2012.

Marlene's father had been a rear gunner in a Lancaster as part of the Pathfinder Force. Whilst there they met Mr Dennis Gimes who was a leading fundraiser for the memorial.

The following article appeared in the Sunday Express on 29 July 2012:

Sometimes only bear-faced cheek can raise money... and that's exactly how former soldier Dennis Gimes came to give £10,000 for the Bomber Appeal.

He realised the appeal association's mascot, a teddy bear called Roger, was a photo opportunity in the making and persuaded more than 50 celebrities to pose with it. They included movie stars Ewan McGregor and Ray Winstone, rock legends Brian May and Rick Wakeman and Second World War forces sweetheart Dame Vera Lynn.

Dennis, 64, of East London, said: “The Bomber Command Memorial is so important, and I just want to help. I really didn't have a clue how to do it. So I just bombarded people with e-mails.”

His campaign saw Roger being sent to New Zealand and Canada where prime ministers John Key and Stephen Harper, respectively, were happy to oblige. “Unfortunately,” said Dennis, “no member of the British Government agreed to give the two minutes it would have taken to pose with Roger.”

■ MR JIMMY Carlson from Islington, north London has been appointed OBE for helping to improve services for the homeless in London.

A former Pioneer (1968 - 1973) he spent 23 years sleeping rough in London and was recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours list.

A former alcoholic he became homeless after he was discharged from the Army and lived rough on the streets and in hostels until 1996 when he stopped drinking. Since then he has worked with Groundswell, a self-help organisation for the homeless, and has also helped to bring homeless people together with government ministers.

He has raised £100,000 for The Haven, a club where people in recovery from substance misuse can meet in an alcohol and drug-free environment.

He said that he was humbled to receive the honour.

Pembroke Dock

Commemorating a fatal accident 70 years ago



■ War Memorial Pembroke Dock

Pictures: Supplied

ON SATURDAY 28 April 2012 a parade was held to commemorate a fatal accident that happened exactly 70 years earlier in Defensible Barracks, Pembroke Dock where a number of Pioneers from 87 (Alien) Company, including the Officer Commanding, were killed.

The Association was represented by Lt Col (Retd) John Starling, and the service was attended by family members of those who died as well as representative from the Royal British Legion and the Swansea Branch of the Royal Engineers Association.

A wreath-laying ceremony was held for the families first in the military cemetery where 17 of the 19 who died are buried.

87 (Alien) Company was a working Pioneer Company composed of Austrians and some Germans who had escaped the Nazi tyranny in Europe and subsequently joined the Pioneer Corps (in the early stages of the war they were only allowed to enlist into the Pioneer Corps).

The Company had served in France with the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) and had managed to withdraw without casualties.

In October 1941 they moved to Pembroke Dock in South Wales to be employed on a variety of tasks including preparing beach defences, pipe laying and hutting.

Pembroke Dock had been a Naval Base ranking alongside Chatham and



■ Headstones of those killed in explosion (main pic), List of those killed (bottom left), Pembroke Dock (bottom middle), Parade (bottom right) Pictures: Supplied

Portsmouth during the 1800's and there were a number of forts guarding the bay.

The Navy closed the Dock in the 1930s and the RAF moved in and made the facility the major Flying Boat Station before the War. These aircraft were responsible for protecting the convoys on the Atlantic and ensuring safety of shipping off the coast of Wales.

87 Company consisted of British Officers and a mixture of British and German Sgts, whilst all the men were of Alien birth. One soldier was Pte Freud (the grandson of Sigmund Freud).

The Company Commander, Major Geoffrey Theodore Garratt MBE, had served in the Great War and between the wars had served in East Africa, he was a known Communist and had written a number of key papers just before the War condemning Mussolini and other Fascists.

He was defiantly an intellectual man and was also very brave - he had been awarded an MBE for Gallantry for :

"On 4th November, 1941, an Officer of the Pioneer Corps (Major Daniel Moss) was accidentally killed while searching for unmarked mines in a minefield.

With complete disregard of personal danger, Captain Garratt entered the minefield, which was covered with long grass and extremely dangerous, and brought out the officer's body."

On 28 April 1942 along with members of 19 Bomb Disposal Company Royal Engineers and soldiers from 9th Battalion Kings own Scottish Borders (a total of 19 men) the OC and 3 other Pioneers were undergoing instruction in the

fusing/defusing of Anti Tank Mines when a mine exploded.

Although one man survived the explosion he died later of his injuries. No full explanation was given as to why the accident happened.

The disaster was quickly hushed up by the authorities as it happened at a bad time in the war, the only references to it in the press were an 'explosion in Wales' not even referring to the town it occurred in.

It then became one of the forgotten tragedies of the Second World War, even though it was one of the largest domestic non-combatant losses of life during the war years. The army sold the Barracks to Pembrokeshire council in 1956, who used them as stores. In 1986 the barracks were bought by a businessman who had grand plans to convert the listed buildings into a hotel complex.

However he sat on then site for 25 years and did nothing to it, and last year it was bought by a family who are slowly converting it into apartments, one wing is nearly converted and they currently are living in one of the finished apartments.

The fact the place is dry moated and surrounded by stupidly high walls with tiny windows means it's suffered zero vandalism, just natural decay and stripping by previous owners.

It is regarded as the highest loss of Service Personnel in UK during the War not associated with enemy action.

The casualties were buried in the local military cemetery (the only Military Cemetery in Wales).

The Pioneer Casualties were:-

- | | | |
|------------|--------------|----------|
| GARRATT, | Major, | GEOFFREY |
| THEODORE, | 135713, MBE, | |
| MARLOW, | Serjeant, | WILLIAM |
| GEORGE, | 7895632 | |
| ABRAHAM, | Corporal, | HEINZ, |
| | 13801220 | |
| SCHWARTZE, | Private, | HEINZ, |
| | 13801014, | |

All parties met in the Barracks and initially went to the Military Cemetery in the Town. Wreaths were laid by Family Members as well as Regimental Representatives.

All the casualties are buried along side each other. Among the personnel present were the daughter of Sgt Marlow (from Kettering) who was only 3 months old when her father was killed and the Grandchildren of major Garratt, who still have their Grandfather's medals.

Following the laying of the wreaths everybody returned to the Barracks to attend a service of dedication and the unveiling of the Plaque which was mounted in the Barracks.

As mentioned the Barracks has been derelict for the last 25 years but has just been bought by a family who are steadily repairing the buildings and converting them into a house and a number of holiday lets. The plaque will be erected in the entrance tunnel.

Following the service refreshments were provided and there was an opportunity to tour parts of the Barracks and look at the old fixtures, courtesy of the owners, Mr & Mrs Doug Jones and family to whom grateful thanks are extended for their help and support.

FUTURE EVENTS



■ THE FIELD of Remembrance will open on Thursday 8 November at 1100 hrs, when a short service will be held.

Members attending the planting of crosses at the Corps Plot (Plot 181 - please note that once again the plot number has been changed and possibly also the location) are asked to arrive before 1030 hrs, although it is recommended as early as possible in order to avoid congestion at the police security checks.

To gain entry to the Field a ticket is required, the RPC Association has been allocated thirty tickets and these will be distributed on a first come first served basis.

All attendees would be prudent to bring suitable identification as entrance to the Field will involve security checks.

Those attending should avoid bringing luggage or large bags as this will delay the security checks. The use of large 'intrusive' camera equipment is not allowed.

All those attending must be prepared to stay until the reviewing party has departed the Field. The Field will be open daily from 9am on 8 November to 5.30pm Saturday 10 November 2012. Following the Field of Remembrance a London Lunch is to be held.

■ A LONDON lunch will follow the Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey on 8 November 2012

It will be held, as usual, in the Marquis of Westminster Public House, Warwick Road - approx 400 yards from Victoria Station.

Attendance at the Lunch has increased steadily in the last few years and new faces are always welcome.

■ ONCE AGAIN the RPC Association has been allocated 30 tickets for the Cenotaph Parade in Whitehall on Sunday 11 November 2012.

Attendees should be on parade (on Horseguards) by 1010 hrs ready to march onto Whitehall.

A number of these tickets have already been allocated but any member who wishes to attend should contact the RPC Association.

Following the march it has become the custom for a large number to have lunch and then a leisurely chat (with one or two beers) in the nearby Civil Service Club in Old Scotland Yard.

Last year a mini bus from Northampton proved successful and will be repeated this year, it will depart from Victoria Street, Northampton at 0715 hours. If you wish to travel on this please let the Association know soonest.

■ THE WOS & SNCOs Pioneer Reunion Club will once again be organising a trip from Bicester to Twickenham for the Army v Navy Rugby match on 27 April 2013.

Details will be circulated to Club members in early January 2013.

This may be the last year the bus will depart from Bicester so let us make it special and have a large attendance and allow us to show the "Red and Green" Pioneer Rugby tops.

■ AND LAST but certainly not least don't forget to make a note in your diary - 5/6 July 2013 - The Pioneer Reunion Weekend at Bicester.

Possibly for the last time. If you have not attended before than it may be your last chance. The more attenders the better.

Elizabeth Cross

awarded to family of a Pioneer who died in Korea



■ Mr Rodney Wilson with his father's photograph and Elizabeth Cross

Pictures: Supplied

ON 18 June 2012 at Crathorne House, Crathorne the Elizabeth Cross was presented to Mr Rodney Wilson, brother of Lawrence who died in Korea on 31 October 1953 by the Lord Lieutenant for North Yorkshire, Lord Crathorne.

In attendance was Mrs Ann Wilson (wife of Rodney) and their daughter Mrs Louise Mudd and son Mr Edwin Wilson. Also in attendance were Maj Anselm Allen and Captains Alan Pickering and Phil Metcalfe from 104 Pioneer Sqn, 168 Pnr Regt RLC(V), and Capt Rob Parkyn and Miss Eleanor Carter from HQ 15 Bde.

The following citation was read by Capt Phil Metcalfe:

Private (22682546) Edwin Lawrence WILSON - The Royal Pioneer Corps

Private Wilson, known to his family as Lawrence, was born in Pickering, North Yorkshire, on the 14th of December 1932 and enlisted into the British Army on the 19th of June 1952, joining the Royal Pioneer Corps.

The Korean War had begun in June 1950 and involved troops from the United Nations supporting South Korea against

the forces of North Korea who were aided by the People's Republic of China. The war was a result of the physical division of Korea by an agreement of the victorious Allies at the conclusion of the Second World War. An Armistice with North Korea was signed in July 1953 but the United Nations presence was needed to maintain stability in the volatile region. On the 30th of July that year Private Wilson arrived in Korea and joined the Guard Company in the strategically important area of Pusan.

On the 31st of October 1953 Private Wilson was one of detachment travelling by truck to the main supply depot to carry out guard duties when the vehicle left the road on a hill crest and plunged into a ravine. Lawrence, along with two others, died in the accident.

Lawrence now lies in the United Nations Military Cemetery, Tanggok near Pusan, Korea.

In recognition of their loss and sacrifice, the Elizabeth Cross is presented to Rodney, brother of Lawrence, and his family on behalf of a grateful Nation.



■ Dennis Gimes with Mr D Radcliffe MBE Sec RAF Bomber Command Association and Roger the Bear

Picture: Dennis Gimes

The Pioneers changed my life

Derek Gimes thanks the Royal Pioneer Corps for changing his life

WITH THE success of the RAF's Bomber Command Memorial campaign, Dennis Gimes (64) sees the occasion as a chance to give thanks – not only to the young heroes of RAF Bomber Command who fought for our country – but also the Royal Pioneer Corps, which made him the person he is today.

Coming from an underprivileged childhood, Dennis thought it inconceivable that he'd ever achieve anything in life. His lack of education denied him the chance of joining the military at first, but he now describes this as a 'blessing in disguise'. But with help, did manage to enlist.

This transformation has led to a snowball of generosity, as he now stands proudly as one of the directors of the Heritage Foundation (an entertainment based charity that worked tirelessly for the Bomber Command appeal).

Working amongst Lords, Ladies and celebrities such as the late Robin Gibb CBE (Former President of the Heritage Foundation) is a privilege that Dennis has come to acquire in his time as director, but this prestigious position is only a small part of what he has helped to achieve

with the charity. Seventy-two years after their service and the first Bomber Command memorial has finally been erected.

"It's great to look at the monument and think that I helped build it. But none of this would have been possible if it weren't for the Royal Pioneer Corps. I learnt to never give up, and ultimately it's got me where I am today."

The RAF Bomber Command Memorial is situated in Green Park, London, located near Hyde Park Corner.

Still inspired by his time in the army, Dennis is continuing to support the RAF by raising awareness for the memorial's maintenance with the official mascot of Bomber Command, Roger Bear.

Roger is a small cuddly toy that has had its photo taken with various celebrities, including Ewan McGregor, Sir David Jason and has even received support from the Prime Minister.

To this day, Dennis emphasises the impact the Royal Pioneer Corps had on his life, and can't stress how proud he is to have been part of the corps.

All that he has achieved since is purely a result of his service, and for that he is eternally thankful.



Reunion Weekend

■ A Veteran lays a wreath at the Corps War Memorial

Picture: Scouse Bradley





■ Members of 23 Pioneer Regiment march off after Church Service

Picture: Paul Brown

An update from this years enjoyable Pioneer reunion weekend

TWO DAYS prior to the Pioneer Reunion Weekend we received the devastating news that 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC was to be disbanded in the latest round of defence cuts. (Full details are shown in pages 2 and 3).

This did put a damper on the weekend but not as much as the weather! It was decided on the Friday morning that the sports field was too wet to be used so all the tentage and stalls were quickly moved to the MT Square which had been quickly emptied. A visiting General on the Friday was delayed leaving the camp as his car was stopped by 24 feet tents being walked along the road!

Old Comrades started arriving at 1000 hrs on the Friday and were allocated their beds (291 beds had been booked). It was nice to see the regular attenders but also the large number of members attending for the first time.

As usual the Corporals' Club started off the weekend's proceedings, the Club quickly filled and the car park was used as an overspill.

All moved down to the WOs' & Sgts' Mess during the early evening where supper was provided. Once again the lawns of the mess were filled and many old war stories were told and re-told.

Saturday morning came and so did the showers, although this did not stop the Church service at the Corps War Memorial. As so many Old Comrades were marching to the Church Service this

year the column had to be split into two with Mr Ian Dewsnap and Mr Bob Barfield shouting out the orders, Mr Dusty Bryant and Mr Ginge Hurdman carried the Association Standards.

After the service the Old Comrades were marched off and gave an eyes left to the Commanding Officers of 23 and 168 Pioneer Regiments and the Chairman of the RPC Association.

Following the group photographs everyone returned to the WOs' & Sgts' Mess for tea and coffee and then the Annual General Meeting of the RPC Association - the minutes of which are shown on page 54.

Saturday afternoon saw everyone on the MT square for displays and exhibitions (and a few more showers which kept the beer tents busy!). Entertainment for the children was in the MT Hanger and proved very popular.

A six-a-side knock out football competition was held on the sports field and the Old Comrades were unlucky to be knocked out in the semi-final. Mr Brummie Burrows has already stated that the Old Comrades will be going all out to win this competition next year.

The Saturday evening event, normally held on the sports field, was held in the Scully Club and proved to be well attended with the chefs managing to feed nearly 500 people in one and a half hours - quite an achievement. A band and a disco kept everyone entertained. Very late

in the evening what started as a steady trickle turned into a flow back to the Sergeants Mess where the bars were once again kept busy.

Many letters and emails have already been received stating how much everyone enjoyed the weekend and are already planning attending next year's event (a selection of these letters is shown in the letters section).

We must thank the CO 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC for once again allowing us to hold our Reunion in St David's Barracks and also the RSM of the Regiment, WO1 Wayne Fuller, for allowing us the freedom of his mess. Thanks must also be paid to 187 (Tancred) Squadron who had been tasked with organising this year's reunion. The inclement weather made this task more difficult with the necessary change of location.

Next year the Reunion will be held on 5/6 July 2013, a booking form will be issued with the April 2013 Newsletter. Please note that bookings will not be taken prior to then. This will probably be the last Reunion to be held at Bicester so we hope to make it special. I hope that as many members attend as possible.

Suggestions are required for future locations for our Reunions - please let the Association have your ideas/views. It is known that a large number of Regimental Associations hold their reunions in hotels where good "out of season" deals have been arranged.



■ A stop-motion film will be shown to serving personnel to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS).

The light-hearted three-minute animation, "Just Another Routine Patrol", created with the British Legion's help, shows toy action figures on a patrol that doesn't quite go to plan. Its message is that financial support is available to those injured as a result of Service and at the end it points viewers to the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme website, www.mod.uk/afcs

The film was developed with The Royal British Legion and the mental health charity Combat Stress. Sue Freeth, the Legion's Director of Health and Welfare, said: "It is vital that our Service men and women who put themselves at risk know what support is available. We are confident this humorous video will stand out at briefings.

The Legion offers practical support to those claiming under the AFCS.

■ THE REPATRIATION Memorial Bell has been unveiled along the repatriation route in Oxfordshire.

Installed opposite the Memorial Garden in Brize Norton, the bell will toll for passing corteges. A fundraising appeal, supported by local councils, students, charities and the British Legion's Oxfordshire County Branch, raised £25,000. Lee Mackie, the mother of Royal Marine Jason Mackie who was killed in Afghanistan in 2009, was among the bell's supporters, working with a local volunteer group to help raise the money.

"The bell will echo the sentiments of the people gathered to pay their respects to those who made the ultimate sacrifice. It is wonderful for something so positive to come out of all this adversity," she said.

The 312-inch, 644lb tenor bell, emblazoned with a poppy, was designed by Ellie Simmons, a student at Carteron Community College, and was cast at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in London. It was transferred to Oxfordshire in late May and installed in its new home, a 4m oak bell tower specially made by Whites of Appleton.

■ FOLLOWING JUSTICE Secretary Ken Clarke's decision not to scrap the post of Chief Coroner, Judge Peter Thornton QC has been appointed to the position.

He started his new job as England and Wales first Chief Coroner in September and his duties will include drawing up new guidelines for coroners and helping to make sure that bereaved families are treated with care and sensitivity.

Chris Simpkins, Director General of The Royal British Legion, said: "The Legion congratulates Judge Thornton on his appointment to this vitally important role.

This marks another major milestone in how we as a nation honour the Armed Forces Covenant, those who sacrifice their lives for their country and the families they leave behind. We campaigned long and hard for a Chief Coroner because bereaved Armed Forces families urged us to. They deserve a coroner's system that fully involves them and treats them with sensitivity and respect as they go through the painful inquest process of finding out how their loved one died in the service of their country.

News from 23

Latest news from 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC



■ Search Team from 518 Squadron

Picture: Supplied

For 144 Squadron, 23 Pioneer Regiment the rapid pace of operations has seen the third quarter of 2012 fly by.

As well as deploying personnel on Op ESCALIN and Op OLYMPICS, 144 (HQ) Sqn has also been tasked with supporting numerous HOSPEX and Brigade exercises. However, arguably the Squadron's proudest moment this autumn was providing the Lion's share of manpower to this year's Gore Trophy Competition staged on September 15. In all, 14 members contributed to one of 3 teams – the A-team, veterans and mixed team.

The weeks of training beforehand handsomely paid off as both the A-team and the veterans teams romped their way to victory, taking with them most of the silver wear that was up for grabs. The trophies won included the 'best shooting', 'fastest march' and the Merit Cup. The mixed team was narrowly piped to the post but nevertheless put in a sterling effort.

For 518 Squadron, 23 Pioneer Regiment the search teams deployed from 23 Pioneer Regt RLC and the Royal Engineers, to make up the Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Search Taskforce (EOD & S TF), and their role is providing High Assurance search of Routes, Compounds, areas and vulnerable points. Advanced search teams, C/S BRIMSTONE,

will only deploy to areas of known high threat, thus constantly putting them in harm's way to FIND and CLEAR crude Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), weapon systems and Bomb Making Equipment (BME) in order to DENY the Insurgents of resources, Provide security to the local population and maintain Friendly Forces Freedom of Movement (FoM).

21 Feb 12 saw the start of 206 Sqn (prior to the disbandment 22 Mar 12) Search Tp deploy to Afghanistan as part of the EOD & S TF, all complete in theatre by 11 Mar 12. Following RSOI and a comprehensive Role specific training package, provided by Herrick 15, the first team led by SSgt Foster deployed with the HRF to Ops Box Fluffy near CF Burma, unfortunately they suffered a casualty on that first Job. SSgt Foster was unfortunately shot by insurgents as the team were conducting isolation of the target. His Team now led by Cpl Bolton was then sent to Lash Khar Ghar to be the PM for the IEDD instructors.

Sgt Soper and his team were next out the door and went to PB Attal in Lash Khar Ghar where they spent the first half of their tour conducting deliberate search jobs as well as responding to 10 Liners in the heavy role and instructing the CF in CIED tactics. They deployed alongside an Engineer team to search a route through



■ The Gore Trophy Winners

Picture: Supplied

compounds and found 5 devices whereas the Engineers they were with found none! Sgt Soper provided valuable Subject Matter Expertise to the CF in order for them to make decisions regarding Insurgent activity. Whilst the team were conducting continuation training for the Kings Royal Hussars and Welsh Guards.

Lt Turner's team pulled the short straw as they were kept back in bastion for the first two and a half months to conduct the vital task of instructing all arms on RSOI, CIED day. Eventually they were able to put their training into use and deployed to PB Salaang in Nad e Ali where they stayed until their RnR. The conducted a number of jobs, both 10 Liners and deliberate searches, in the light role. 10 Liners in the blistering heat causing a minor heat casualty for them in Pte Mackie, and often they would be searching along route Neptune and would be facing effective fire from the insurgents.

Lt Rickards's team deployed to FOB Ouellette where they conducted 1 deliberate job and a number of 10 Liners prior to the FOB receiving IDF, resulting in the tragic deaths of two of the team, Cpl Andrew Steven Roberts and Pte Ratu Manasa Silibaravi, as well as a number of casualties resulting in the team being combat ineffective. They were returned to Bastion where they met the new members of the team from the Corps of Royal Engineers, and conducted some training tasks prior to being redeployed to Nad e Ali. Here they were very quiet and conducted only 1 deliberate search and 2 10 liners before their RnR. One of the 10

liners being to search the route to a vehicle stricken by a 20-40Kg Main Charge, whilst searching the route (Neptune) received very accurate fire, resulting in the task being conducted with the infantry suppressing the firing point!

Following RnR the teams redeployed to different AOs less Lt Rickards's team who stayed in Bastion to conduct RSOI training whilst he went to cover Search Advisors for other teams for a period of 4 days to 2 weeks at a time. Where again they mainly conducted 10 Liners with the occasional Deliberate search. The tasks of note being; where Pte Heath claimed a find on a Hermes 450 at 300m!!! LCpl Kelly being told to look on the roof by Sgt Soper, as he had been told by a local national that there was a pressure plate up there, and claiming that as his find!! Finally Lt Turner's team whilst out on isolation found a carrier bag with twin flex and a DFC in a temporary cache (fair play, good find)! The second half of the tour went without serious casualty thankfully with the only casualties being Cpl Stevenson who was returned with a (Dubious) cat scratch as he had to get his rabies jabs and they didn't have any in the PB, and LCpl Stevens who injured his ankle (maybe it's in the name!).

Both Lieutenants Rickards and Turner consider themselves very fortunate to have been able to command the Pioneer soldiers on this search tour. They had some testing times and some enjoyable ones. They had been blessed to have some Characters within the Search Tp ensuring that times are never dull but are

full of surprises and laughs. Lt Rickards speaks for both of them when he says that they will never forget their time with the Pioneers, they really are a joy to command!

The teams returned to the UK at a difficult time now having to think of career changes due to the announcement during our tour that the Pioneer CEG is being deleted, meaning the soldiers now need to find new jobs or leave the Army, a big ask following a tough and difficult tour.

522 Squadron deployed as part of the Venue Security Force (VSF) for Greenwich Park which was established from a wide range of other units for all three services totalling 756 personnel during the main Olympic games period reducing to 430 for the Paralympic games.

The Squadron was responsible for all Pedestrian and vehicle access to the Venue. At its height we dealt with up to 55,000 spectators a day, together with Olympic athletes, a wide range of VIPs and a huge range of workers, volunteers and contract staff. The height of the task for some of the soldiers was being accommodated on HMS Ocean and the free travel in and around London. Before deploying to Greenwich Park we went to Longmoor for a weeks training whilst we were there we were shown how to use the search kit and the Rapiscan Systems (X-ray machine) that we would be using whilst at the venue. The lads were extremely busy, however managed to see a few of the London attractions and some Olympic events.

NEWS IN BRIEF



■ **BEREAVEMENT** IS a time people should be spending with their family and friends, not navigating government red tape.

Tell Us Once service recently won the prestigious Virgin Media/Guardian Innovation Nation Award for delivery of frontline services. The Tell Us Once service allows people to notify key local and central government departments and services of a death (or birth).

The service is now available in over 80 per cent of Local Authorities in England, Scotland and Wales/ As well as a face to face and telephony service, there is an online option as well. The death must be registered before the Tell Us Once service can be used.

Tell Us Once informs up to 28 services in central and local government including the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency who use the information to update War Pension Scheme records.

More information about Tell Us Once is available at:
www.direct.gov.uk/death-tellusonce

■ **THE MOD** is preparing to launch a new Defence Discount Service which will replace the old Defence discount directory in the near future.

High profile companies are already on board and will be offering discounts on cars, supermarket shops, holidays and phones from the launch. The new scheme will be available to members of the Armed Forces community including Serving regular and Reserve personnel, Armed Forces veterans, spouses/partners of Service personnel and bereaved spouses/partners.

It is also open to MOD civil servants, members of the cadet forces and NATO personnel serving in UK-based posts.

A key part of the new Defence discount service will be a privilege card available for a small cost.

Members will be invited to apply for the card which will facilitate access to a wide range of discounts and privileges.

■ **THANKS TO** all members who supported the derby draw.

The following are the winners. The profits help to finance the work of the Association.

1st Prize £1,000 - Mrs J Harvey
 Ticket No 03339
 Rayleigh, Essex

2nd Prize £500 - Mrs H Perks
 Ticket No 03268
 Daventry

3rd Prize £200 - Mr D Durrant
 Ticket No 34741
 Belfast

4th Prize £100 - Maj P Fleming
 Ticket No 05420
 Hanslope

5th Prize £50 - Mr N Evans
 Ticket No 04858
 Lincoln

■ **WE MUST** have made this competition too difficult in the April edition as no-one found the mouse. It was on page 25 in the cab of the recovery vehicle.

In this edition we have made it easier - remember there is a prize for the winning entry drawn from the hat, good luck! And it's not the mouse on P66.

Best Soldier

Each year the association presents the friend memorial trophy to the best soldier



■ Pte Smyth receiving his award of the Friend Memorial Trophy from Lt Col Clouston
 Lt Col John Starling presents the 'Cash'

Picture: Paul Brown

EACH year the RPC Association presents the Friend Memorial Trophy to the best soldier in the Pioneer CEQ (Regular or TA).

This year the Association Council decided to make two awards, one to a regular Pioneer from 23 Pnr Regt RLC and one TA Pioneer from 168 Pnr Regt RLC(V), each soldier received an engraved silver plate and a cheque to the value of £200.

Their citations were as follows:

30126619 Pte ROUGH A

A young soldier, Pte Rough has served three years in 100 Sqn. A Class Two Pioneer, he deployed on Op TOSCA as part of 23 Pnr Regt RLC, serving in the Mobile Force Reserve, providing the Public Order QRF for those units

monitoring the Green Line.

Well trusted by both his peers and his chain of command, he is a highly proactive soldier and invariably willing to take responsibility above his rank and is more than capable of leading and supervising other soldiers.

This was best seen on Op TOSCA where he would frequently work as a Section 2IC and often supervised troops from other nations (Argentina, Hungary and Slovakia). Despite the language barrier, he conducted this task to a notable standard, ensuring a high level of output. Notwithstanding the high level of taskings given to the MRF, both artisan tasks and exercises, Pte Crouch consistently maintained a professional, calm and conscientious approach to all his duties.

Rightly confident in his abilities, as a member of the MRF, at short notice he briefed at 1* and 2* levels whilst in Cyprus, providing clear, unambiguous information in a concise and crisp manner. This amply demonstrated the mature approach he has to all tasks within the Army which invariably results in high standards on all the tasks that he undertakes. A practical soldier, he is a skilled artisan and is invariably willing to develop and propose imaginative and original solutions to complex problems.

He stands clear of his peer group by virtue of his inherent abilities and approach and is willing and able to think above his rank, cheerfully mentoring other soldiers to develop them further. Additionally, he seeks to better himself, taking a part-time Open University degree in Management.

In the long term, Pte Rough already shows definite potential for promotion into the WO's' and Sgts' Mess and is currently regarded as being a candidate for warrant rank in the future.

He is considering service in the Regular Army as a commissioned officer where I believe he will do well.

30087599 PTE MD SMYTH

Pte Smyth is a 21 year old Pioneer trade soldier from Leeds; having served for less than a year he was selected for deployment to Afghanistan on Operation HERRICK 14 as part of the Counter IED Task Force.

Employed as one member of a seven man Advanced Search Team, Pte Smyth was involved in the clearance of routes,

compounds and areas within the Helmand area of operations.

The nature of Advanced Search dictates that the teams are only utilised for "High Assurance" or "High Risk" tasks meaning that when they do operate there is a very high probability of functioning IEDs being present. Within this environment there is no opportunity for anyone to simply partake or "learn the ropes", as every step or poorly searched piece of ground could lead to catastrophic injury or death.

As one of the most junior soldiers to deploy with his troop Pte Smyth was thrust into a role requiring great skill, confidence and maturity at a very early stage in his career; a responsibility and opportunity that he grasped.

Thriving under pressure he quickly showed his aptitude for search, with a natural ability to detect ground sign he would often see devices long before he was even close enough to utilise his issued detecting equipment. His robust approach to operations kept him calm when others might have lost their heads.

On one occasion whilst his flank protection was being engaged Pte Smyth continued to search utilising a nearby compound wall as cover.

Later during the tour and following the disablement of an armoured vehicle by an IED, Pte Smyth's team were tasked with the safe extraction of the vehicle and it's occupants including the Battle Group Commander; as the lead searcher Pte Smyth reached the vehicle first and whilst continuing with his task he reassured the vehicle occupants that all was OK and that they would soon be safe.

During breaks in the battle where rest time was available Pte Smyth and his comrades were required to man sentry positions, complete general duties and instruct infantry troops on search techniques; Pte Smyth showed his true class during these times.

Always the first to volunteer, no matter what the task, he would apply himself fully. During a period of Rest and Recuperation in Camp Bastion, Pte Smyth's team were tasked with instructing those troops that had just arrived in theatre.

Whilst the threat was much lower, the importance of this task was exponentially higher; here the true specialists in searching for IEDs could pass on their knowledge to those ground holding troops that had received far less training. The experience and knowledge that Pte Smyth was able to pass across will have saved the lives of some of his audience, whether it be the way he taught a drill or his insight into finding ground sign that someone absorbed.

Whilst the task that Pte Smyth took on is similar to some of his peers, what makes him stand out was his conduct and pose during it. Most young soldiers will use the first few years of their career to settle in and try to avoid any adverse attention; Pte Smyth seized the opportunity that he had been given and has proven himself.

Tested under arduous conditions of an Afghan summer and in combat, Pte Smyth has risen out above those around him.

The mark of this man can be judged by his willingness to volunteer for Operation HERRICK 18 in the same role.

Pioneer Centre

Bicester's 23 Pioneer Regiment is to be honoured with an entire town centre redevelopment in Bicester

THE new town centre shopping area, including a Sainsbury's supermarket, seven screen cinema and six new retail units, is to be named the Pioneer Centre.

The naming was suggested by Bicester Town Council and agreed by development partners Cherwell District Council and Sainsbury's.

Lt Col David Clouston, commanding officer 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC, said: "The regiment feels both humbled and proud that the people of Bicester have honoured us by naming the new development the Pioneer Centre.

"The 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC has a long-established relationship with the town, recognised by the Freedom of the Borough bestowed upon us in July 2006.

"We feel at home in Bicester and are extremely grateful to everyone for making us so welcome and part of this thriving community."

The news comes just months after it was announced the 600-strong regiment, which has had a presence in the town for

70 years, is to be disbanded.

Work on the Bicester town centre redevelopment is scheduled to be completed next summer, before the town says a final farewell to the troops.

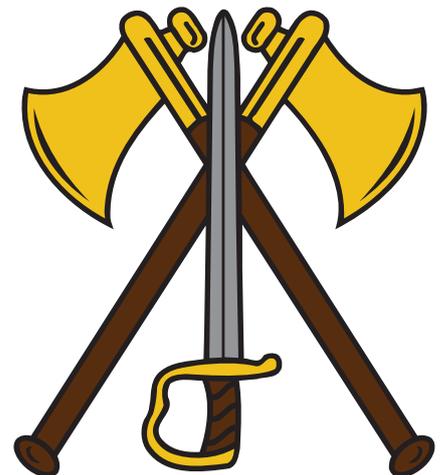
Bicester Town councillor James Porter, said: "We're absolutely delighted the new part of the town centre is going to be named the Pioneer Centre.

It reflects the long-standing and excellent relationship we have had with 23 Pioneer Regiment." Steel structures of the new town centre buildings is in place and work is progressing on brick and stonework.

The concrete floors of the new cinema and retail units are complete. The retail units are in the process of being marketed and further details about occupants will be announced in due course.

Norman Bolster, Cherwell's councillor for estates and the economy, said: "I for one am proud to have the new town centre development associated with the Pioneer Regiment, showing appreciation for the efforts of our brave troops."

Tim Watkins, regional development executive for Sainsbury's, said, "I can't think of a more appropriate name for this development, it is great that the Pioneer Regiment will be honoured in this way."





Association Shop



Please support the RPC Association and place an order today...



◀ **Corps Tie**
Two different styles are available. One with the older 'Blackpool Tower' cap badge and one with the newer cap badge.
£8.50 each



▲ **Buttons**
both badges available
£1.50 each
or 6 for **£8**



▲ **Cufflinks**
new badge
£5



▲ **Cufflinks**
bronze
£6



▲ **Tie Pin**
lovely
£2.50



▲ **Tie Pin**
lovely
£2.00



▲ **Wall Shields**
hand painted
£20



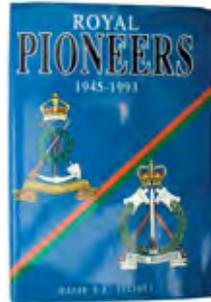
◀ **Pioneer Mug**
Drinks taste better out of these!
£6



▲ **Wall Shields**
85-93 badge
£20

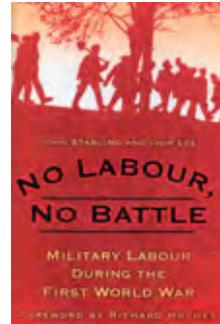


◀ **Blazer Badge**
silk & wire
£8



◀ **"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

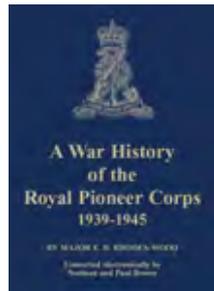


◀ **"No Labour, No Battle"**
Military Labour during the first World War
by John Starling and Ivor Lee

A new addition to the shop and only just published. Price includes a **£10** donation to the RPC Association. Hardback.
£30



◀ **Blazer Badge**
silk & wire
£8



◀ **"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

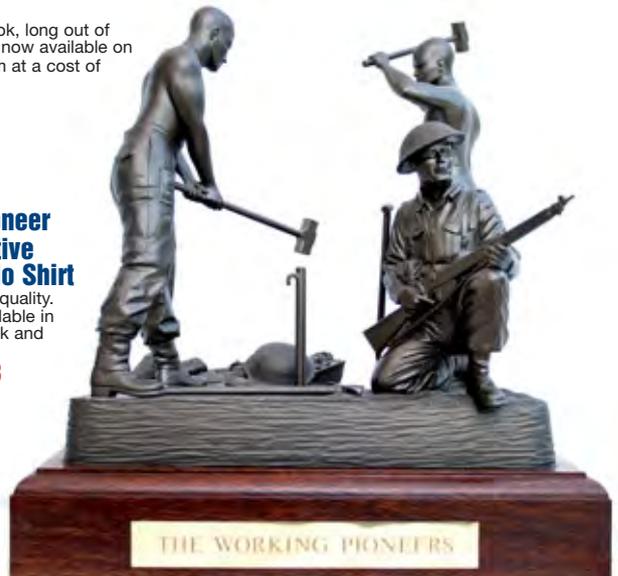


◀ **Pioneer Active Polo Shirt**
Top quality. Available in Black and Red
£13



◀ **Blazer Badge**
silk & wire
£7

▶ **Bronze Statue**
The Working Pioneers
£145



Disbandment of 8 Regt RLC

The Royal Pioneer Corps had such strong links to this Munster based Regiment

Report: The Sustainer
Picture: The Sustainer

THE following article appeared in the Summer 2012 edition of The Sustainer. As our Corps had such strong links with this Regiment especially in the eighties when we had two Companies (70 and 144) as part of the Regiment I thought a lot of readers would find it interesting.

The news that 8 Regiment was to disband was met with disbelief by many; after all, how could a Regiment with such a strong identity and unique history be considered for closure? It is still hard to believe, even after the event, but the Disbandment Parade took place on Tuesday 27 March 2012 in York Barracks, Münster and the majority of the soldiers have now moved on to other units; but the story of 8 Regiment started in 1964.

A unique history. 8 Transport Column (Advanced Weapons Support), Royal Army Service Corps, was formed in Münster in 1964 at the height of the Cold War; initially based at Nelson Barracks, then Portsmouth Barracks; the Regiment's task was to carry tactical nuclear weapons for the British Army of the Rhine. Contingents from the US Army were also co-located to operate the 'dual key' system for arming the nuclear warheads. At a very early stage in the Regimental story, the Scorpion, the eighth sign of the zodiac, was introduced as its symbol.

Because US soldiers were serving alongside the Regiment, the black American Scorpion was chosen. The choice of the scorpion was also appropriate because, for much of the Cold War period, 8 Regiment included platoons of soldiers in a force protection role to protect the nuclear warheads. Initially infantrymen were attached, but later RPC artisans and RCT drivers served as 'Soldiers First' in the infantry role. Battalions of infantry were also assigned to the Regiment on exercise in order to provide additional protection. Because of the scorpion emblem and the presence of so much combat power (both conventional and nuclear) in a logistic unit, the Regiment's motto became "The Sting in the Tail". The Regiment was re-titled several times during its history but it retained the Scorpion emblem throughout. From 1993 to 2008 the unit was stationed in Marne Barracks in Catterick, North Yorkshire. It was then titled 8 Artillery Support Regiment RLC and supported the three Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) Regiments of 1st Artillery Brigade. 8 Regiment RLC eventually returned to Münster in 2008 as part of 102 Logistic Brigade in support of the 1st Armoured Division.

The Regiment has taken part in or contributed troops to the majority of operations since 1964, including Op GRANBY, Op GRAPPLE in the Balkans, Op BANNER in Northern Ireland, Op TELIC in Iraq, Op TOSCA in Cyprus and Op HERRICK in Afghanistan.

The Regiment has also been called upon to counter foot and mouth disease, supply fresh water during floods in the UK and provide fire fighting crews and tanker drivers during strike action; it has also taken its turn to provide the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace. However, the squadrons of the Regiment which were

disbanded in 2012 could trace their history back further. 3 and 5 Squadrons were both formed in 1870, and were part of the original group of 12 Army Service Corps companies; both served in the Zulu War of 1879. 13 Company ASC was formed in 1878 and it deployed to South Africa to fight in the Boer War of 1899 to 1902. All three squadrons went on to serve in the First and Second World Wars and in support of imperial policing, the withdrawal from Empire and the Cold War.

A time of uncertainty. It is ironic that the move from Catterick back to Münster, to the Regiment's "birth place", was actually a contributing factor in its demise. Following the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) of 2010, reductions were expected in the size of the Army; plans for these reductions were drafted in the summer of 2011 and it was suggested that at least one deployable brigade would be removed from the ORBAT.

The emerging RLC plan was to support each of the remaining five deployable Army brigades (less 16 Brigade) with a Logistic Support Regiment (Log Sp Regt) at 2nd Line and a Theatre Logistic Regiment (TLR) at 3rd Line. At the time the Corps had five Logistic Support Regiments but six 3rd Line Regiments (6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 27).

The writing was on the wall for one of the 3rd Line units: now based in an isolated station and recently back from operations, 8 Regiment appeared to be the obvious choice for disbandment. It did not take 'the brains of an Archbishop' to recognise how vulnerable the Regiment was and the majority of the soldiers quickly came to that conclusion.

However, with a successful operational tour under its belt, a full sports trophy cabinet and a fantastic identity and ethos, it was hard to understand why it should be the first choice to be disbanded.

As well as the threat of disbandment, the Regiment was also losing personnel without replacement (particularly Officers and SNCOs); the loss of 'Chiefs' while there were still a large number of 'Indians' made life increasingly busy for the members of the Officers' and Sergeants' Messes.

To ease the burden the decision was made to merge 3 and 13 Squadrons together. It created one large sub-unit, to be known as 3/13 Squadron (but nicknamed 'Three and a Third' by the troops).

The road to disbandment. The decision to disband 8 Regiment was finally made and communicated to the Commanding Officer on the first day of summer leave, Mon 1 August 2011, by the GOC Theatre Troops. The Regiment had stood down for leave on the previous Friday and therefore the announcement was not made until the soldiers returned; only the newly-arrived 2IC and the field officers in station were informed during the leave period. The decision was announced to the Münster-based soldiers on Monday 22 August 2011 in the station cinema.

The disbandment parade. 8 Regiment's disbandment parade was held on Tuesday 27 March 2012, a gloriously sunny day. The parade was a sad occasion but also very poignant. The Regiment was joined by five former COs: Maj Gen Graham Ewer (1985/87), Brig Gerald Blakey (1976/78),

Brig Chris Murray (1995/98), Col David Kelly (2002/05) and Lt Col Greg Hughes (2008/10). Col Nigel Gilbert, representing The RLC Association and a former OC of 5 Squadron, two former RSMs (Lt Col John Roskelly and WO1 Tony Shearan) and twenty-six members of the Regimental Association also made the trek to Münster. The last Regimental Officers' Mess Dinner Night on the previous evening, with Maj Gen Mark Poffley as guest of honour, was particularly special, and included a performance from the Corps of Drums of The RLC.

HRH The Duchess of Gloucester, wife of the Deputy Colonel-in-Chief took the salute; she stood in at very short notice for her husband the Duke of Gloucester who was representing the Queen at the funeral of the King of Tonga.

The Duchess was superbly supported by Maj Gen Mark Poffley, Col Peter McCall and Capt Anna Swales. After the inspection, 64 Squadron marched off the square first, passing through the ranks of the other squadrons, to signify their departure to 6 Regiment.

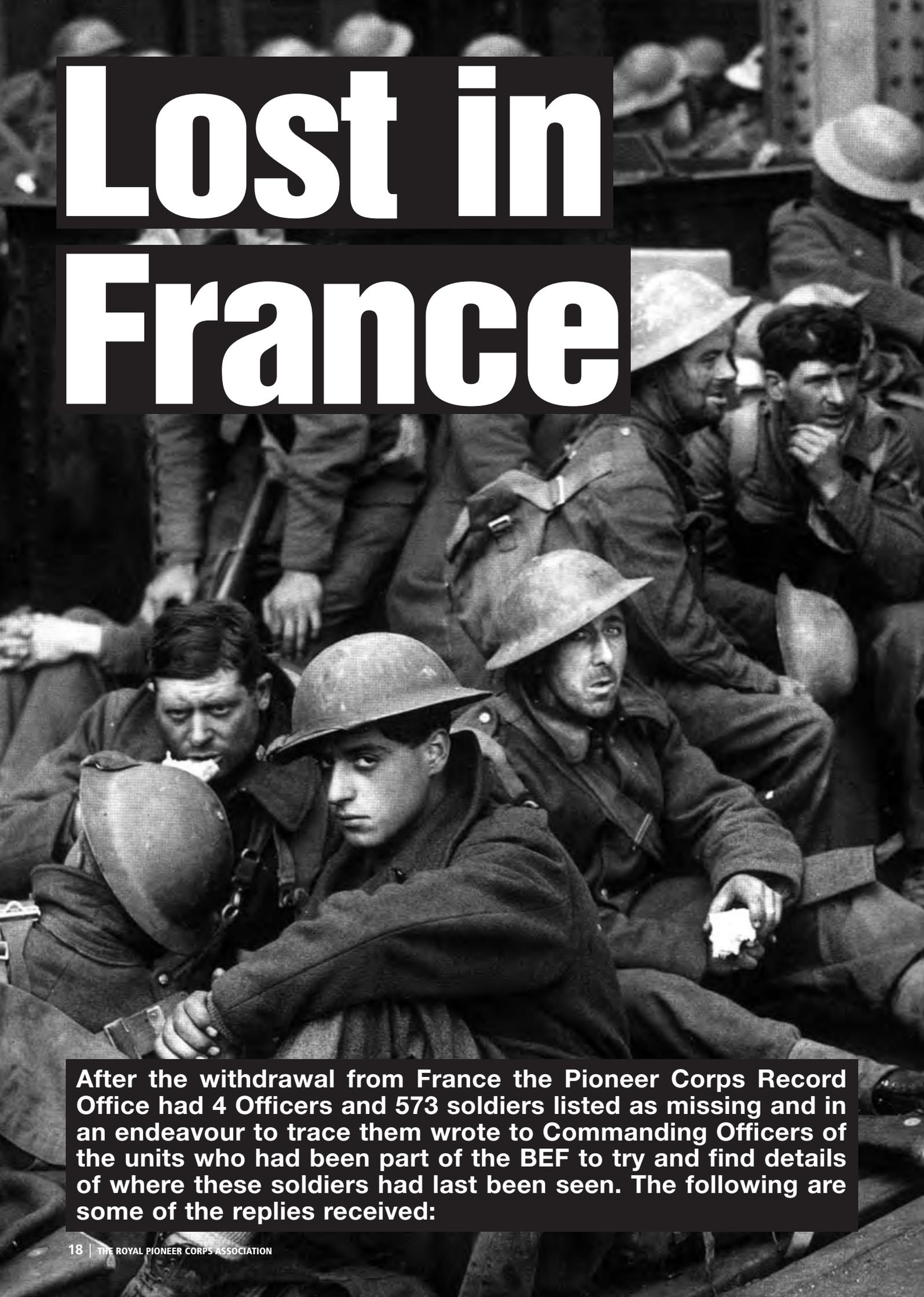
The CO, Lt Col John Atkins, then asked permission for the remainder of the Regiment to march off the square for the final time; the Regiment marched off to Auld Lang Syne and the sound of applause from the families and old soldiers. The last man to march off the square was WO1 (RSM) Graham Sheridan.

The sight of the Regimental flag being lowered on the parade square to 'Sunset' (played by two buglers from the Corps of Drums), was exceptionally moving; at least four former Commanding Officers (and, apparently, the current CO) were seen to be wiping tears from their eyes.

The soldiers of the Regiment, both past and present, would not claim to have been the best in the Corps, but there is no doubt that they have made an outstanding contribution to the success of The RLC and its predecessors since 1964. 8 Regiment, with its unique history and identity, has served our nation with distinction in peace and war; it will be sorely missed.



The US Army located in Münster was supported by 8 Regiment for much of its time in Germany. The regimental task was the transportation and protection of tactical nuclear weapons, originally destined for the three nuclear tasked artillery regiments, 24, 39 and 50 Missile Regiments RA, armed with the towed 8 inch Howitzer and the HONEST JOHN ROCKET; later the M110 Howitzer and LANCE rocket. ■



Lost in France

After the withdrawal from France the Pioneer Corps Record Office had 4 Officers and 573 soldiers listed as missing and in an endeavour to trace them wrote to Commanding Officers of the units who had been part of the BEF to try and find details of where these soldiers had last been seen. The following are some of the replies received:

OPERATION DYNAMO was the successful evacuation of 200,000 British and 140,000 French, Polish and Belgian troops from the French seaside town of Dunkirk, this has entered folklore as a triumph against the odds.

Churchill said "wars are not won by evacuations" but it enabled the battered British Army to regroup and rebuild.

History has tended to overlook the fate of the British soldiers who never made it back across the Channel. When Operation Dynamo was formally wound up, more than 100,000 men were still in France, some fighting with the rearguard against the German army, others looking for ways to escape. 40,000 of them were marched off by the Nazis to captivity. To boost national morale, the British press wrote about the soldiers who escaped rather than those who were left behind, but the latter suffered a miserable fate. A lot of them were marched hundreds of miles into Germany and Poland and spent the rest of the war working in mines, fields and factories, they became slave labour.

Some managed to evade the Germans and made their way through the French countryside, attempting to steal boats to row across the channel or to reach home via neutral counties. A large number were wounded men and British doctors and medics stayed behind to look after them.

Near the town of Wormhout the SS herded large number into a small barn and then threw hand grenades into the building before firing indiscriminately, there were few survivors.

The Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps (AMPC) strength in the BEF peaked at 278 Officers and 20,805 men (17 Group Headquarters and 101 Companies).

After the withdrawal from France the Pioneer Corps Record Office had 4 Officers and 573 soldiers listed as missing and in an endeavour to trace them wrote to Commanding Officers of the units who had been part of the BEF to try and find details of where these soldiers had last been seen.

The following are some of the replies received:

Labour Personnel Centre 13006456 Pte MATHER F

Statement by Maj S Lewis – OC 240 Coy PC, Donnington, Shrops – 9 Jun 41

The a/m was a clerk in the Record office, Foreign Labour Units, BEF, of which I had charge. On the 16th June 1940 I returned with my staff to St Nazaire with a view to evacuation to England. I left Pte Mather with the rest of my staff and numerous others on the Quayside awaiting evacuation to England. Through circumstances beyond my control I was separated from these men and had to board one ship while they boarded another, which I learned afterwards was the SS 'Lancastria'. On my return to England I made enquiries as to the whereabouts of my staff, and ascertained that all the Records personnel had been rescued from the sinking liner with the exception of Pte Mather, whom it was presumed had been drowned.

Statement by Sgt (4536415) Morgan W - 216 Coy PC, Postern Hill Camp, Marlborough – 1 Jun 41:

I find there is one man whom I know very well, as he was engaged on clerking and typing and was also the alien interpreter for our office.

I saw him last on 17/6/40 when we embarked on the SS 'Lancastria', I was speaking to him for about five minutes before the boat was hit. I have never seen or heard of this man since that day, and to the best of my knowledge, must presume that he went down with the 'Lancastria'.

(Ed Note – Pte Mather enlisted in Paris and joined 7 Centre PC on 25 Jan 40. He lost his life on HMT Lancastria and his details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Col 153)

Depot BEF – Le Mans 2872401 WO2 MURRAY JF 754746 Sgt BALDWIN T

Statement by Maj ERV Rickman – OC 255 Coy PC, Co-operative Hall, Carnforth, Lancs – 22 Jul 41:

In reply to your A5/226 of 19.4.41, I have interviewed Sgt Dance. The only information he can give is what Sgt F East (Provost Sgt and Interpreter at base Depot)

told him at the dinner in London on 13.6.41. Sgt East was left at base depot after the Headquarters personnel left, and he informed Sgt Dance that the Camp was heavily bombed the day after the Headquarters left for the coast. 754746 Sgt Baldwin T was killed in this raid, according to Sgt East. Sgt Dance states that the last he saw 2872401 CSM Murray J F at the Base Depot on 2 Jun 40 (before the raid).

Statement by CSM Hickman – CSM 180 Coy PC, Eglinton, Londonderry – 3 Jun 41

On the morning of the 16th June 1940 I was CSM of the AMPC Base Depot stationed at Pornichet, France. The a/m WO and Sgt paraded at the Campo and marched off en route to St Nazaire. As I was detailed to remain behind with the baggage, that was the last I saw of them. After the evacuation, I met Sgt J Ritchie, who was with the 11 Centre, Oldham, and he told me that they were with him on the Lancastria when she sank.

(Ed note: WO2 Murray enlisted at Aberdeen into the Gordon Highlanders on 16 Apr 25, transferred to the Pioneer Corps and lost his life on HMT Lancastria and his details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Col 148. Sgt Baldwin enlisted into the Royal Artillery on 2 May 24 and transferred to the Pioneer Corps, he also lost his life on HMT Lancastria (not as shown in the above statement), he is buried at La Couarde Sur-Mer Communal Cemetery grave ref 347).

6895683 Sgt Wigley AE Statement by RQMS Kench 15/19H – 58 Trgt Regt, Bovington – 20 Jun 41

The a/m NCO was attached to the Base Depot, AMPC and remained so until the evacuation from France.

On 16-6-40, I as SM of the Depot, proceeded with a party of about forty-eight ORs from Pomichet? To the port of Embarkation, St Nazaire with baggage etc. The remaining personnel of the Depot (about 250 Officers + ORs) marching by road, were considerably delayed owing to other units joining the column at various points en-route.

On arrival at the Keyside I, with my men, was instructed to embark at once. I

Time-Line

May 1940

- 12 *Belgium.* Five RAF Fairey Battle bombers attack bridges over the Albert Canal but are shot down. The Belgians blow up all the bridges over the River Meuse to stop the German advance
- 13 *France.* German Panzer Divisions cross the Meuse at Sedan
- 14 *Netherlands.* Rotterdam falls to the Germans after heavy bombing from the air kills 980 people and destroys 20,000 buildings.
- 15 *Netherlands.* The Dutch army surrenders to the Germans
- 17 *Belgium.* Germany occupies Brussels, Louvain, Malines and Namur
- 18 *Belgium.* Antwerp capitulates, while in France St Quentin and Cambrai fall
- 20 *France and Belgium.* Amiens in France falls to the Germans; in Belgium,

Rommel surrounds Arras and German forces reach the English Channel at Noyelles

- 23 *France.* The Allies start to evacuate Boulogne as the Germans press on to the Channel ports
- 25 *France.* Germany captures Boulogne, the Allies fall back to Dunkirk
- 26 *Dunkirk.* The evacuation of Allied troops begins *Germany.* Hitler belatedly orders his armies to attack Dunkirk
- 27 *France.* Calais falls to the German army, which now surrounds the Allies at Dunkirk; only 8,000 men are evacuated today
- 28 *Dunkirk.* 17,800 men are taken off
- 29 *Europe.* The Germans take Ostend and Ypres in Belgium and Lille in France *Dunkirk.* Three Allied destroyers are sunk and seven are damaged. 47,300 men are taken off

- 30 *Dunkirk.* 53,820 men are taken off, amongst them Lt Gen Allan Brooke whose 2 Corps has played a large part in the successful withdrawal to the Channel
- 31 *Dunkirk.* Lord Gort hands over the command of British troops still in France to Maj Gen Harold Alexander and departs for Dover; 68,000 troops also leave today

June 1940

- 1 *Dunkirk.* 64,420 men are evacuated despite very heavy air attacks which sink four British ships
- 2 *Dunkirk.* A further 26,250 men are taken off
- 4 *Dunkirk.* The last ship, the destroyer HMS Shikari, leaves at 3.40am; 26,175 men have been taken off in 24 hours, leaving 40,000 behind.
- 6 *France.* XV Panzer Corps breaks through the Somme defences near Amiens
- 10 *France.* With the Germans just 50 miles away, the government leaves Paris and heads west for Tours
- 11 *Soissons, France.* The French Army pulls back across the Marne river *Paris.* Gen Hering, the military governor, declares Paris an open city
- 12 *France.* Germany occupies Rheims and Rouen
- 15 *Verdun, France.* Germany captures the city, bitterly fought over in the last war *Cherbourg, France.* The evacuation of British and Canadian troops begin
- 16 *France.* Allied evacuations from Brest and St Malo start
- 17 *France.* With German forces pouring through the Maginot Line, Petain's government sues for peace *St Nazaire, France.* British Troopship HMT Lancastria sunk with the loss of approx 4,000 lives

requested that we should remain until the main party arrived but was ordered to board at once. To my knowledge, no others of our Depot boarded our vessel (HMT Georgie), it sailed the same evening.

I wish to add that having since spoken to several survivors of HMT 'Lancastria' which was due to sail the following day 17-6-40. I was informed that the personnel of the RAC Base Depot and the remaining personnel of the AMPC Depot (assuming Sgt Wigley be one) were on this ship.

(Ed note: Sgt Wigley enlisted on 2 Jun 36 into the Kings Royal Rifle Corps and transferred to the Pioneer Corps in April 1940. He lost his life on HMT Lancastria and his details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Col 148.)

8 Group PC 1300769 Pte NOKES A

Statement by Maj F Davey – 2IC 8 Group PC, Biddestone, Chippenham – 10 Mar 41

The above mentioned man was granted leave from 21 Apr 40 to 30 Apr 40 but failed to return to this unit. There is no evidence to prove that he left the UK to return to the BEF, and the OIC PC Records has recently intimated that a Court of Inquiry should be held to have him declared a deserter, but without the necessary available evidence this has not so far been done, and further instructions are awaited.

(Ed note: Pte Nokes enlisted at Manchester and joined 5 Centre PC for training on 27 Dec 39. He was declared a deserter for the period 6 May 40 until 15 Mar 43. He served until 10 Dec 45)

12 Group HQ 102660 Sgt Mallalieu B – Orderly Room Sergeant 12 Group

102319 Pte Barmma F – 45 Coy PC
Statement by Maj FE Bicknell – OC 183 Coy PC, Portadown

I think I can give information of the above men as I was probably the last British Officer to see them. These two men with about 12 others (I cannot remember the exact number at this date) were entrained with me at Armentieres at about 1245 hrs on Tuesday 21 May 1940, on a French Troop train bound for Boulogne. The train did not reach Boulogne. I was the last officer of 12 Group to leave Armentieres. This was exactly 1300 hrs on 21 May 40, after I had seen everyone else safely (as I thought) away. As I made my way to Boulogne I saw the railway line and main road from Armentieres to the South, bombed that afternoon especially at Holbecke and St Omer.

(Ed note: Sgt Mallalieu enlisted on 5 Sep 39 into the RASC and transferred to the Pioneer Corps in Apr 40. He died on 25 May 40 and is buried at Montreuil Sur-Mer Communal Cemetery grave ref 13. Pte Barmma enlisted on 20 Sep 39 into the RAOC and transferred to the Pioneer Corps in Apr 40, he died between 25 May 40 and 4 Jun 40 and is buried at Boulogne Eastern Cemetery Plot 12, row d, grave 4)

15 Company PC 4904890 CQMS LESTER JT

Statement by Lt Col CRB Knight – CO 4 Group, Lockerbie – 29 Jul 41

I have carefully examined the list and the only case I can possibly help you with is that of CQMS Lester of 15 Coy PC who was last seen by 5043858 Pte Newman on 17 Jun 40 at Rennes. Pte Newman returned to the ITC North Staffords on being evacuated from France. May I suggest you get in touch with him through OIC Records, North Staffs Regt, Shrewsbury.

Statement By Maj CH Bryant – OC 15 Coy PC, 8 Osborne Villas, Jesmond, Newcastle Upon Tyne – 2 Jun 41:

CQMS Bailey F at present serving in the Company under my Command states that he was on the train at Rennes (France) with CQMS Lester when the train was bombed by enemy action. That was the last he ever saw of the aforementioned NCO and under the circumstances he is unable to say what became of CQMS Lester.

Statement by Maj GV Wickham, OC 818 Coy PC, Billingham – 7 Jun 41

The only information that can be given is in respect of CQMS Lester who was wounded on 17 June 1940 at Rennes and was taken to Rennes French Hospital at 1400 hrs, his condition was serious.

(Ed note: CQMS Lester enlisted on 16 Aug 39 into the South Staffs Regt and transferred to the Pioneer Corps in Jan 40. He was killed in the Rennes Troop Train Bombing and is his details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Col 148.)

16 Company Capt (125435) DA STUART

Statement by RQMS Alexander J – 16 May 41

Capt Stuart left the Company about 15th June 1940 but was later seen by Sgts Farren and Sharp at Rennes Railway Station. This was about the 17th June and after the dive bomb attack. He was then wounded in the arm and leg. Later he was seen on board a ship sailing for Southampton.

Statement by Capt KA Begg – 2IC 165 Coy PC, Bridestone, Nr Okehampton – 3 Jun 41:

The above officer was seriously wounded at the Quai Militaire, Rennes on the morning of Monday 17 Jun 1940 when he entrained with the Coy to which he was attached, preparatory to leaving for their port of evacuation (St Malo). A loaded ammunition train was drawn up alongside that in which Capt Stuart was, when several German bombing planes swooped down and scored a number of direct hits on the ammunition train and also machine-gunned the troop train. Capt Stuart was seriously wounded but managed to make his way with others from the troop train, which was set on fire, to the cover of a ditch some little distance from the railway lines.

He was, I understand, last seen by at least one officer of 14 Group, Lt Cameron, in the vicinity of this ditch.

Several comprehensive reports of the air attack on the Quai Militaire at Rennes on 17 June are among the secret documents of HQ 14 Group PC, including, I think, a statement by Lt Cameron (initials unknown) when last seen Capt Stuart was just able to walk.

Statement by Mahj GD Coleman – OC 84 Coy PC, Worksop – 3 Jun 41

Capt Stuart was known to me at Rennes, France. On or about 17th June the Quai Militaire was heavily bombed and this officer was last seen by Capt Sellis MC, 58 Coy PC, lying on the platform badly wounded. It is probable, if he survived, that he is a Prisoner of War. Maj Temperely TR, OIC No 2 ESBD, Rennes, may be able to throw some further light on the subject.

Statement by Capt JJ White, Adjut 36 Group PC, Monkton Farleigh – 4 Jun 41:

Capt Stuart joined 14 Group PC late in May or early June of 1940. He was one of several officers who were formed into a composite company by No 6 and 14

Groups with the idea of defending the town of Rennes as far as possible. Early on the morning of 17 Jun 40 this composite Company received orders to proceed to Rennes station for evacuation. At approximately 1015 hrs trains loaded with troops were standing just outside Rennes station when they were bombed and machine gunned by 4 German planes. Late the same day HQ 14 Group (in which unit I was serving) received orders to proceed to St Malo and on arrival there I saw Maj JH Miller DCM (OC 58 Coy PC) who had been the OC of the Composite Company. He told me the story of the raid and mentioned that Capt Stuart had been badly wounded but taken away to a temporary dressing station. Late in June 1940 when 14 Group PC reformed at Corsham, Wilts, 2Lt DM Cameron (who is now serving in 8 Group PC) reported to Group HQ and from him it was learned that he and Capt Stuart had been in the same railway carriage outside Rennes Station and a full report regarding Capt Stuart was sent away (I believe to AG17d, War Office) a précis of which was to the effect that Capt Stuart had one arm blown off and was badly wounded in the chest and head and that after 2Lt Cameron had seen him into the temporary dressing station (a private house) he, Cameron, was not allowed to go back there and was afraid that Capt Stuart had died.

(Ed note: Capt Stuart died as a result of the Rennes Train Bombing on 17 Jun 40 and is buried in Rennes Eastern Communal Cemetery Sec 18, plot 1 row C, grave 28. Capt Stuart had also served in World War One)

31 Company PC 2182498 LCpl BURKE John

Statement by Lt LE Moore, 245 Coy PC, Horsington House, Templecombe – 22 Jun 41

To the best of my knowledge LCpl Burke was last seen by me at St Nazaire, France on the 16th June 1940 whilst waiting for Coy to embark for England.

Statement by Capt H Andrews, Adjut 19 Group PC, Stourness – 12 Jun 41:

With reference to the attached list of missing personnel CSM SG O'Dell (6081296) of 196 Coy PC whom it is believed formerly belonged to your Coy (31 Coy) had made a statement to the effect that the above mentioned returned to Falmouth on the same boat as himself, and was last seen by him at Galashiels, Scotland with your Company.

Statement by Maj HH Blanchard, OC 31 Coy PC, Kinloss – 13 Mar 41:

LCpl Burke was reported sick on leave at 30 Spring Place, Liverpool, a warrant was forwarded instructing him to rejoin his unit on 10 Jul 40, he failed to comply with these instructions and no news of him has been received.

(Ed note: LCpl Burke enlisted into the RE on 10 Sep 39 and was transferred to the Pioneer Corps when his unit was re-designated Pioneer on 1 Dec 39. He was reported missing in May 1940 and listed as a Deserter on 30 Jun 40)

35 Company PC 13004640 Pte SIMPSON RD

Statement by Lt WJ O'Brien, No 6 Centre, Calverley – 12 Jun 41

Amongst the names thereon appears that of Pte Simpson of 35 Coy. I was serving with the unit concerned during the time it was stationed at Galashiels after the

evacuation. To my definite knowledge there were only two men with the name of SIMPSON serving with the unit, and although they were both detached to Traffic Control Wing of the Corps of Military Police, they were definitely with the unit during the time it was at Glasgow.

Statement by Sgt (3949962) Pugh W – 258 Coy PC, Rugby – 27 Jun 41

Pte Simpson left Huyton, Liverpool on 21 Dec 39 with then what was called a reinforcement Coy for France, whilst in France we were numbered 25 Coy AMPC and split up. Many of his section formed a New Base Depot. Pte Simpson who was A/Sgt was sent somewhere away. During my service in Base Depot, A/Sgt Simpson was sent to us 'Y' Listed, and was reverted, but allowed to wear chevrons, in case, of a posting as Sgt, in the meantime he committed a misdemeanour, and was ordered in March 1940 to take his chevrons off he did so on or about 10 Mar 40, while station at Nullsanne Camp. We were called out in the morning about 0100 hrs by a French civilian and informed that one of our soldiers was lying unconscious on the Tours Road, or Rue 258. On proceeding there and investigating, it was ascertained, that the man was dead, Police enquiry. Pte Simpson, had been knocked down and killed by a motor car and killed on the aforementioned road whilst returning to camp, he did not belong to Base depot but only attached whilst awaiting reposting.

(Ed note: Pte Simpson enlisted on 20 Nov 39 and was posted to 35 Coy PC – it appears that both the above reports are wrong! He is listed as drowning on HMT Lancastria and his details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Col 154)

38 Company PC

13001552 Pte KELLY J

Statement by Pte (706673) Pte Wellings T, 164 Coy PC, Eglington, Londonderry – 13 Jun 41

This man was seen at St Nazaire at 1100 hrs on 16 Jun 40 in an estaminet en president Wilson Boulevard. He was not wounded but was not able to keep in touch with other men of the same party. There is an unconfirmed report that he may have been on board SS Lancastria on 17 Jun 40.

Statement by Sgt (218114) Burrrough F, 38 Coy PC, Caines Lane, Nr Feltham – 9 Jun 41

I last saw Pte Kelly on 16 Jun 40 during the evacuation from the port of St Nazaire, France. We broke cover during a raid by enemy aircraft and I haven't seen him since.

Statement by Cpl (13006861) Harris HA, 166 Coy PC, Barking, London - 3 Jun 41

I saw the above mentioned man at St Nazaire in a Cafe on 17 Jun 41, and he was hopelessly drunk. I left the same day and can give no further information.

(Ed note: Pte Kelly enlisted on 2 Nov 39 and joined 38 Coy PC. He is listed as drowning on HMT Lancastria and is buried at La Bernerie-En-Retz Communal Cemetery, row A, grave 48)

39 Company PC

7606923 Pte CARR W

Statement by 7606995 Pte KAY G, 39 Coy PC, Didcot – 7 Jun 41

I was a great friend of Pte Carr and was asked by his mother and wife to look after him. I saw him slide down a rope with the hope of getting into a raft, unfortunately he was unable to reach the raft, and was

drowned. I watched him long enough (3 to 4 minutes) and saw him go under and did not see him come up again.

Statement by 7606995 Pte Kay G, 39 Coy PC, Didcot – 3 Jun 41

I saw Pte Carr slide down a rope with the hope of getting on a raft, unfortunately he was unable to reach the raft, and was drowned.

(Ed note: Pte Carr enlisted into the RAOC on 23 Oct 39 and was transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 31 Jan 40. He is listed as drowning on HMT Lancastria and is buried at La Plaine-Sur Mer Communal Cemetery, Grave 4.)

13000110 Pte DELANEY R

Statement by 13000107 Cpl Mellor W, 39 Coy PC, Didcot – 4 Jun 41

I was on the SS Lancastria on the 17 Jun 40. I was standing with Pte Delaney when a bomb struck the ship. We were standing underneath the Captain's Bridge at the time and he was killed outright.

(Ed note: Pte Delaney enlisted into the Pioneer on 26 Oct 39. He is listed as drowning on HMT Lancastria and is buried at Pornic War Cemetery, Grave ref 2.J.7.)

40 Company PC

101290 Pte CLITHEROE FE

101353 Pte GIBBONS H

13009121 Pte GILMORE WG

849925 Pte HAMPSON HY

102131 Pte GREGORY SFH

101397 Pte MOSSMAN C

101483 Pte TAGGART W

101490 Pte VINT JT

101515 Pte YOUSON WA

101316 Pte DODDS E

Statement by 4968061 WO2 (CSM) JH Smith, 205 Coy PC, Wilton, Wilts – 3 Jun 41

On the 28th May 1940 I was a Sergeant in charge of No 5 Section of 40 Coy AMPC, which was commanded by Maj Haywood. About 2200 hrs on 25 May 40, we proceeded down to the beach at Dunkirk, and the Company was practically intact. On reaching the beach we separated, and by the night of the 29th, when I searched the beach for any of our Company, I could not see of the aforementioned. On information received from a Lieutenant (Regiment unknown) we proceed to the Pier and actually embarked about 2300 hrs.

I do not know if these men actually embarked, but to the best of my knowledge, they were on the beach on the night of 28 May. None of the men mentioned was actually in my section.

Pte Gibbons was in No 2 Section – Sgt Watson in charge – the last time I saw Sgt Watson was in Feb 41 and he was then CQMS of 20 Coy, York.

Ptes Gilmore, Taggart and Dodds were in No 4 Section – Sgt W Robson in charge – I last saw Sgt Robson about Aug 40 when he returned to the Coy after being treated as a casualty, he was then posted to the Training Centre at Bradord.

Ptes Hampson, Mossman and Youson were in No 6 Section – Sgt C Robinson in charge – I last saw the latter in Feb 41 with 40 Coy at Cavalry Barracks in York.

Ptes Clitheroe and Gregory were in No 10 Section – Cpl MacDonald in charge – I last saw the latter in Jun 40 when he rejoined 40 Coy at Westcliff.

Pte Vint was in HQ Section and was employed in the cookhouse. Pte Healey was in charge of the cookhouse and the latter was last seen as Cpl Cook with 40 Coy at Cavalry Bks, York in Feb 41.

I regret that I can give no information regarding Pte Hartley as I did not know this man very well.

Statement by Maj W Haywood, OC 77 Coy PC, Long Marston, Stratford on Avon – 24 Jun 41

I was in Command of 40 Coy in France. Many of the men were Company Cooks and are likely to have been kept together during the evacuation from the beaches at Dunkirk. I understood from one of my late Sergeants, viz Sgt Brailsford, who was on the destroyer 'Wakefull' (or 'Wakefield') which was sunk mid Channel that Hampson and others were aboard and drowned. He, the Sergeant, was picked up and given three weeks sick-leave and posted to the 'Y' List and did not re-join 40 Coy. If the OIC Pioneer Corps Records could get in touch with this Sergeant, he would no doubt be able to give detailed information as he is now with another Company and is unlikely to see this list.

Further, my last CQMS has some news of Pte Vint. He is now serving with 203 Coy PC as CSM and, if communicated with, is likely to have further details of the missing cooks.

A search through the Acquittance Rolls of 10 Jun 40, when the Company was paid to leave for BEF men, would reveal if any of the men were present with the Company on that date, as there were quite a number of absentees. The Company was made up to strength and proceeded to York. A list of absentees was handed to the Adjutant of No 1 Centre, then at Westcliff.

Statement by 101364 Pte Henderson T, 158 Coy PC, Borough Green – 18 May 42

The last time I saw Pte Gilmore was in billets just outside Dunkirk. The billets were hit and the surviving members of the Company were marched to the beaches and ordered to disperse. I was told by some of my companions when I reached England that Pte Gilmore had been 'knocked out'.

Statement by Maj AW Goddard MC, OC 238 Coy PC, Dover – 18 May 42

Ptes Gilmore, Gregory and Hampson as far as I can remember were last seen by me in Malo les Bains about the last day of May 40. They may have been wounded or killed around this time, or been taken prisoner when in hospital if wounded. There were some men taken to hospital in Dunkirk about this time, who had been wounded, but whether these three were amongst them I cannot say.

Statement by 101281 CQMS Brailsford W, 1808 (East African) Coy PC, Quassassin, MEF, 7 Mar 42

On the 18 May 40, 40 Coy PC was instructed to leave their billets at Fort Boorvines and proceed to Dunkirk. After a long march through France and Belgium, detouring owing to enemy activity we reached St Malo a suburb of Dunkirk on the 22 May 40. The following day half the Company were detailed to work on the docks at Dunkirk. The first half of the Company started work at 0600 hrs till 1400 hrs when they were relieved by the second half who worked until dusk. The work consisted of unloading ships of petrol and stores to enable tanks to embark for England.

On 24 May we had a terrific air raid lasting from dawn to dusk several of our Company were wounded and taken to hospital. Owing to the Company split up in different billets I can only give the name of one casualty, Pte Betts, who came from Nottingham.

On the night of 25 May we were instructed to go to the beach. I, with several others, spent the night on the beach and was taken off by HMS Wakeful at about 1600 hrs 26 May. I got on board with the following NCOs and men: Sgt Robson, LCpl Dodds, Pte Alf Hodgson of Leeds, Pte Bert Gibbons of Leicester, Pte Walter Yousoon of Derby, Pte Mattock of Leicester and Pte Gilroy. These are the only men I can say were definitely on Wakeful. When we got on board we were given food and put in the aft gunners bunk. After a while I dozed off and was awakened by a loud explosion.

On climbing to the deck I saw the stem of the ship slanting at about an angle of 45 degrees out of the water, and sinking fast, the bows of the ship had sunk. After a while another ship came and shone a light on us, as the wreck was sinking fast, and there was not much room for those who could not swim, those who could, like myself, dived into the sea and started to swim to the other ship. After being in the water for a while I was picked up by the whaler of HMS Grafton.

Eventually I got aboard, and was being told by a ship's officer to go below and see if there were any dry clothes, when another explosion occurred and I found myself in the water again. I was in the sea again for a while, and managed to get back onto the Grafton, later on the SS Malines came along and we were transferred to it. I was in such a dazed condition on getting aboard, that I do not know if the men I left on the Wakeful were picked up. They said that they would have to stay there as they could not swim.

We landed at Dover early on the morning on 27 May where I was put on the hospital train, which reached Sedgfield early morning 28 May, where I stayed until 4 Jun when I was granted 14 days leave. When I had finished my leave I went to Westcliffe on Sea and was informed that 40 Coy PC had been reinforced, and after a few days in Westcliffe I was posted to 107 Coy PC.

Statement by 101467 Pte Schofield H, 10 Platoon 278 Coy PC, St Helens – 14 May 42

I submit my evidence regarding the whereabouts of Pte Gregory of 40 Coy PC, who was with me at the time of the evacuation of Dunkirk, and who I presume to be killed. I last saw him running from behind cover under heavy bombing, his nerves having gone, at the time I was with him.

Statement by 101395 Sgt Leach H, 278 Coy PC, St Helens – 14 May 42

In replying to your enquiries regarding the men missing from my previous Company (40 Coy) since the Dunkirk evacuation. I can only quote the words of ex Pte Betts since discharged from the forces. On meeting this man in Nottingham after his discharge, I asked him how he was injured and who was with him at the time, the following is his reply:

"I was in the cellar of a house along with Pte Gilmour, Pte Bennet and Pte Clowes when a bomb landed through the cellar opening. Pte Bennet was instantly killed, Pte Clowes injured severely, Pte Gilmour was also killed. Myself (Pte Betts) had my heel blown off which turned septic, and I had my leg off at the knee."

That was the reply I got from Pte Betts. I cannot give his address other than he lives in the St Anne's Well Road District of Nottingham. Ptes Bennet and Clowes are not being enquired for. The exact date

when Betts received his wound was 27 May 40. I remember Pte Gilmour distinctly he served in the Great War 1914-18 and was a good entertainer at canteen concerts.

(Ed note: Pte Clitheroe enlisted into the RASC on 19 Sep 39 and was transferred to the Pioneer Corps in Feb 40, he is listed as being killed between 28 May 40 and 2 Jun 40 and his details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Col 150.

Pte Gibbons enlisted into the RASC on 6 Sep 39 and was transferred to the Pioneer Corps in Feb 40, he is listed as being killed between 28 May 40 and 2 Jun 40 and his details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Col 151.

Pte Gilmore enlisted into the Pioneer Corps on 8 Jan 40, he is listed as being killed between 28 May 40 and 2 Jun 40 and is buried at Sage War Cemetery, Germany, grave ref 6.A.8.

Pte Hampson enlisted into the RASC on 11 Sep 39 and was transferred to the Pioneer Corps in Feb 40, he is listed as being killed between 28 May 40 and 2 Jun 40 and his details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Col 151.

Pte Gregory enlisted into the RASC on 13 Sep 39 and was transferred to the Pioneer Corps in Feb 40, he is listed as being killed between 28 May 40 and 2 Jun 40 and his details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Col 151.

Pte Mossman enlisted into the RASC on 19 Sep 39 and transferred to the Pioneer Corps in Feb 40. He is listed as being killed on 29 May 40 and his details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Col 153.

Pte Taggart enlisted into the RASC on 5 Sep 39 and transferred to the Pioneer Corps in Feb 40, He lost his life on HMT Lancastria (17 Jun 40) and his details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Col 148.

Pte Vint enlisted into the RASC on 5 Sep 39 and transferred to the Pioneer Corps in Feb 40. He is listed as being killed on 29 May 40 and his details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Col 154.

Pte Youson enlisted into the RASC on 10 Sep 39 and transferred to the Pioneer Corps in Feb 40. He is listed as being killed on 29 May 40 and his details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Col 155.

Pte Dodds enlisted into the RASC on 9 Sep 39 and was transferred to the Pioneer Corps in Feb 40, he is listed as being killed between 28 May 40 and 2 Jun 40 and his details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Col 150.

47 Company PC 7606657 Pte THOMPSON G 7613055 Pte TIFFNEY R

Statement by SSgt Gardiner, Military Prison, North Camp, Aldershot – 23 Mar 42

On Sunday 19 May 1940, the Staff and Soldiers Under Sentence of GHQ Field Punishment Camp, Arras were ordered to evacuate Arras and march to St Pol. During this march the above mentioned soldiers absconded from their party and did not rejoin before the remainder of the Soldiers Under Sentence were handed over to the Reception Officer at Calais on 24 May 40.

(Ed Note: Pte Thompson enlisted into the RAOC on 22 Sep 39 and transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 31 Jan 40. He returned safely from France and served until 9 Apr 46.

Pte Tiffney enlisted into the RAOC on 23 Jan 39 and transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 31 Jan 40. He is listed as being killed between 10 May 40 and 21 May 40 and is buried at Aubigny Communal Cemetery

Extension, grave ref Plot 4, row AA, grave 3.

50 Company PC Lt RJ MARKEY

6972252 Cpl CAVANAGH J
Statement by Cpl Dickinson B, 119 Coy PC, Woburn Sands – 17 Jun 42

Lt RJ Markey went to St Nazaire and embarked on Lancastria. Maj Thomas and 2Lt Gauld of 66 Coy AMPC who were survivors and maybe able to give further information. Cpl Cavanagh went on leave on 8 May 40 to the Channel Isles and did not return to unit.

Statement by Maj RC Gallop, OC 35 Coy PC, Ord Depot, Greenford, South Ruislip – 7 Jun 41

While I was serving at No 4 Centre Pioneer Corps, Clacton, I remember Lt Markey who went overseas with 50 Coy, the Command of which subsequently devolved to Maj HJ Thomas, who I know well. During the summer of 1940 Maj Thomas came to No 4 Centre to collect a draft of men to reinforce the Coy he was then Commanding (50 Coy) who were stationed in Scotland.

Maj Thomas was himself a survivor from the Lancastria. He told me that he had seen Lt Markey within the ship, down below, that Lt Markey was ill, or in a state of exhaustion, or words to that effect, and that he greatly feared when the ship was bombed that he had been unable to get on deck. Maj Thomas was himself rescued from the water by a tug.

Statement by Lt Col WW Honywood MC, CO 3 Group PC, Shrewsbury – 31 May 41

Lt Markey was seen by me at St Nazaire on 17 Jun 40 and I believe embarked on the Lancastria.

(Ed Note: Lt Markey lost his life on HMT Lancastria and his details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Col 148 – he had also served in WW1.

Cpl Cavanagh enlisted into the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers on 31 Oct 39 at the age of 43 and was transferred to the Pioneer Corps on the same day. He lost his life on HMT Lancastria and is buried at La Bernerie-en-Retz Communal Cemetery, grave ref, Row A, grave 46.

51 Company PC Subject Missing Personnel of 51 Coy AMPF France. Letter from Pioneer Corps Records, Dunholme Manor, Bournemouth Dated 3 Nov 42

In connection with enquiries it has been learned that during the evacuation 56 men from Field Punishment Compound whose sentences were almost expired were attached to the Company, 19 were on the SS Bellorophon. But the Company is still short of 30 men who were left at the Company Dump South of the Seine and who have not been traced, but the belief is they were attached to some other Company. The slightest information you might have may prove to be a valuable missing link in our chain of investigations and will be much appreciated.

Statement by late Sgt TC Lewis, Off Talbot Rd, Blackpool – 7 Nov 42

Your letter received on 3rd Nov etc regarding any information I can give you on the evacuation of our Coy 51st P Corps is this. I was detailed that day to take a party of men down to the docks to load up a ship with guns and stores etc when I got the word to get all my men on a boat which I did. I then proceed back to the Company to see if I could get a lorry for the

men's kit as we thought we would be going back to dinner but I was stopped on the way by my Commanding Officer Major Montgomery and he asked me to get back to the Docks and see all the men of 51 Coy on the boat and then report to him if all was well etc.

I was up and down from one boat to another and seen the boats leave and I found the CO and reported to him all was on and he told me to get away myself but I was unlucky and I really thought I was trapped.

I ran to far dock and on the way noticed about 20 men going into a Cafe they were drunk and I noticed they were the men who were attached to us after being released out of the compound and there was one of our Coy with them, I cannot remember his name but I went with them and told them to get going as Jerry was well on his way to getting us but, all I got was abuse, I am sure those men were trapped and must be either dead or taken prisoner.

I made my way then to the far dock and I was the last man on this dock to my knowledge to be left. I got hurt and I saw a trawler called Blighty pulling away from the side and I jumped six feet and managed to lay on the deck for 18 hours until we reached Plymouth.

I was put in hospital after a while after being rejoined to my Coy and I had a big operation and was on my back for many months and then got disabled out of the Army worst luck and never seen a penny of that pay I lost through being in Hospital.

Now a lot of men that got back were off on a train and sent home and you can bet a lot stayed home and perhaps are home yet as there was no check on any one this side of France and it was simple to get away

I am still doing a bit for my country I am an anti-aircraft Home Guard Gunner on a big factory here and its a light job as I cannot do any heavy work on account of being sewed up so much in my back side

Excuse scribble but I never went to school and was selling papers when I was 7 in the streets of Australia and don't know what school was, I taught myself what I know.

Statement by Maj WD Montgomerie MBE, OC 813 (Smoke) Coy PC, Belfast – 12 Nov 42

It is correct that approximately 56 men from E P Compound at Brest were attached to the Company during evacuation.

How many were on the SS 'Bellerophon' is not known as the Company was evacuated on three different boats when they arrived at the docks.

All office papers including, it is believed the nominal roll of these men were destroyed before leaving.

It is also correct that some personnel were sent to the Company dump south of the Seine under a Lt Stewart, Gordon Highlanders.

There would be no more than 20 men and it is understood they all either returned to the Company before it left or were attached to other Companies.

When the Company was reformed at Wellsworthy Camp, Devon, all Company personnel could be accounted for with the exception of approximately six. Some were then with other Companies.

I have no documents relating to the matter.

2188173 Pte SOULEY J

Statement by Maj GE Crowder MC, OC 51 Coy PC, Brize Norton – 12 Mar 41

It can be stated that he was given 90

days Field Punishment at the beginning of Jun 40 and was sent to the compound at Brest.

Statement by Sgt McMennis MPSC, Military Prison, Aldershot – 28 Mar 42

I was in charge of the Field Punishment Camp at Brest when it was evacuated in Jun 40. I brought 42 Soldiers under Sentence back from Brest to the Military Prison, Aldershot and on checking I cannot find any trace of Pte Souley as being in the party.

(Ed note: Pte Souley enlisted into the RE on 22 Sep 39 and was transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 1 Dec 39. He returned safely from France and was discharged on 30 Sep 43)

52 Company PC

7615077 Pte KELLY O

13001592 Pte WALTERS T

Statement by Maj RNB Campbell DSO OBE, OC 62 Coy PC, Broghton, Chester – 3 Jun 41

Pte Kelly was posted to No 1 GBD, BEF on or about 18 Apr 40 for evacuation to UK as he was under 18 years of age.

Pte Walters was admitted to No 3 Casualty Clearing Station on 4 Jan 40.

Neither of the above soldiers rejoined this Company after the dates mentioned.

(Ed note: Pte Kelly enlisted on 24 Oct 39 into the RAOC and was transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 31 Jan 40. He lost his life on HMT Lancastria and his details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Col 152.

Pte Walters enlisted into the Pioneer Corps on 3 Nov 39. He lost his life on HMT Lancastria and his details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Col 154).

53 Company PC

13004983 Pte THOMPSON J

Statement by 13006088 Pte Ward J, 116 Coy PC, Barry Docks – 6 Jun 41

With reference to information being required by you concerning Pte Joseph Thompson of 53 Coy AMPC whose home address was 5 Fawcett Terr, Ryhope Colliery, Sunderland, Co Durham. I beg to submit this to you as I am of the opinion that I would be the last person to be with Pte Thompson before the Lancastria sunk on 17th June 1940, as we were mates from the day we were posted to 53 Coy PC until the date stated above, because Pte Thompson and myself held the rope of a lifeboat for Maj Scott-Bowden to cut it loose just before the boat sank which would be approx 3.50 pm on 17 Jun 40. So I presume that Pte Thompson drowned with many men of 53 Coy. Hoping this might enlighten you in the course of your duty.

Statement by Maj HD Jarrett, OC 53 Coy PC, Barry, Glam – 8 Mar 41

I was with the left half Company and HQ Section of this Company overseas. We were transferred from HMS Haverlock to SS Lancastria on the morning of the 17th June 1940.

Personally I have little doubt that all the ORs named on the attached list were either killed by the bombs which struck SS Lancastria or were more probably drowned when the ship sank.

It should be borne in mind however, that a large number of small vessels took part in rescue work and many of the survivors were landed again at St Nazaire. Those who were wounded may have become prisoners of war though, in such an event, I presume information concerning them would have been forthcoming by now.

(Ed note: Pte Thompson enlisted into the Pioneer Corps on 3 Nov 39. He lost his life on HMT Lancastria and is buried at St Dennis-D'Oleron Communal Cemetery Grave 4.

The following is an extract from the War Diary of 53 Coy PC:

15 Jun 40 OC ordered to take command of all British troops and fall them in on ST NAZAIRE-REDON road and await transport

16 Jun 40 0230 hours – transport arrived 2359 hours - reached ST NAZAIRE

Docks

17 Jun 40 1130 hours- embarked HMS Havelock – proceeded out to sea where 2 officers & 109 ORs were transferred to SS 'Lancastria'

1400 hours - SS 'Oronsay' hut during an air attack

1555 hours – SS 'Lancastria' struck in stern apparently doing little damage. Later struck by two bombs amid-ships. Heavy casualties among men crowded in confined space. Ship took on much water and began to list immediately. When bombs struck attempts were made to check figures of supposed 5099 men and crew aboard. Believe only 3 of ship's boats successfully launched.

Total casualties between 2800 and 3000. Coy was relatively fortunate as having boarded ship late, men were distributed over the upper decks. Casualties probable about 50 men. OC picked up and taken Back to ST NAZAIRE, thence to CASABLANCA arriving in England some months later via Gibraltar. Did not rejoin the Coy but was invalided out. Lt H D Jarrett returned to ST NAZAIRE with a mixed party including 5 men from the Coy.

18 Jun 40 2300 hours - Boarded 'Ulster Prince'

CSM Butcher MM and 11 ORs reached PLYMOUTH and collected another 20 ORs

Right Half – under Capt C Baldwin, attached to 22 Coy in defence of the ferry at CAUDBEC experienced heavy bombing. Engaged in manning road blocks and preparing the road for mining. Later used to control refugees on ferries.

Party under Sgt Pantling DCM (21 ORs) was detached to VILLEQUIER as ammunition guards. Bombed and machine gunned from the air and 2 men wounded. Later most of the men reached LE MANS by road and attached to 124 Coy. On 15 Jun 40 sailed from BREST in SS 'Canterbury' and arrived PLYMOUTH on 17th Jun 40.

Sgt Goreham and a second detachment moved to DUCLAIR (18 kilometers from ROUEN) but later made contact with main body at CAUDBEC

Capt C Bladwin & 73 ORs eventually evacuated from ST MALO and reached SOUTHAMPTON on 17th. They remained attached to 22 Coy until rejoining 53 Coy at WREXHAM on 19 July 40.)

56 Company PC

Capt GGJ Clifford

Lt P Nicholson

2182885 Sgt Woodhead FM

2182140 Pte Lenton TA

5098566 Sgt Thacker E

Statement by 2196029 Pte ADAMS WH, 221 Coy PC, Woburn Sands – 22 Jun 41

1. I was in 59 Coy PC and went to France with them on 1 Dec 39 and remained with the Coy until the evacuation of the BEF, when I left France on 25 May 40.

2. Capt Clifford. This officer was my 2IC all the time I was with the Coy and we were stationed at Etaples. On 14th May we had the first severe air raid on Etaples. I

was Coy Runner on that day and had a message to deliver to Capt Clifford from the OC, Maj Parr. I searched the whole of Etaples Town where Capt Clifford was thought to be, also the CRE's office in Etaples, but could find no trace of Capt Clifford and it was then generally accepted that he had been killed in the raid and buried by debris.

3. Lt Peter Nicholson and Sgt Woodhead FM. This officer and Sgt were in my Coy and I knew them well. Sgt Woodhead was at one time by Section Commander. On 24th May Lt Nicholson was actually in charge of the party to which I was sent as a runner. The party was engaged in defence positions behind barricades protecting the quayside at Boulogne. Lt Nicholson issued instructions that on his command the party were to get into two waiting lorries and try to get through Boulogne which was thought to be surrounded. This order was given some hours later and Lt Nicholson got into a lorry with Sgt Woodhead and half of the party, and I got into the second lorry with the remainder of the party.

The lorries became separated and my lorry ran through Boulogne and on to Wimereux and just before getting to Wimereux we came under direct enemy machine gun fire and there Lt Nicholson's lorry was seen at the roadside burning. We made enquiries later at Calais to see if Lt Nicholson had arrived there, but were told "No".

4. 2182140 Pte Lenton Thomas Arthur. This man was in my Company all the time I was in France, and I knew him well as he was on Headquarters (Sanitary Squad) and I was Coy Runner. Lenton and I shared a room in Company Headquarters.

Lenton was in the same lorry as myself (see para 3 above) when we retired from Boulogne on 24th May 40 and when we were near Wimereux we came under direct enemy machine gun fire (see para 3 above), and Lenton who was sitting next to me, received a bullet through the chest, and actually fell dead across me.

Lenton's body was taken through to Calais where we reported to CMP Headquarters to make enquiries for ambulances as there were still some wounded men on the lorry, myself included as I was shot through the arm. The CMP commandeered two ambulances, one of which took three of us who were wounded to the CSS, the other took the bodies of three dead men, one of whom was Lenton and two more privates in the Yorks and Lancs (attached to 59 Coy).

Statement by 13006540 Sgt Sharman B, 164 Coy PC, Eglinton, Londonderry - 16 Jun 41

8096 Capt Clifford - On approx 23 May 40 at Etaples the above named Officer was seen coming across the Hotel de Ville to Company Office a distance of 50 yds when enemy planes raided the town dropping bombs in the area. Capt Clifford was seen to fall and was found to be dead on examination although no wounds were apparent.

155951 Lt Nicholson - This officer was seen at Etaples in Company of the above officer before the above mentioned are raid, but was not seen afterwards. It is suggested the Sgt Ellis of 47 Coy PC may be in a position to furnish more details regarding this officer.

Statement by Cpl Johnson, 59 Coy PC, Turnhouse, Edinburgh - 3 Jun 41

From 2 Dec 39 until approximately 2 weeks prior to the evacuation of Calais, I was a member of the same Company and

personal friend of the men mentioned above.

About two weeks before the evacuation of Calais I was sent from the Company on detachment with the 651 AW RE at Dannes Camiers and have not seen them or been in touch with them since. At this time 59 Coy PC was stationed at Etaples.

I was on the beach at Skegnec during August 1940 and happened to pick up a piece of newspaper (British) on which was a photograph of troops that had been evacuated from France and I feel sure that Sgt Thacker was included in the photograph.

There were several other old members of 59 Coy PC who also agreed that the man concerned was Sgt Thacker.

Statement by 5825990 Pte Tiddy HAC, 4 Group PC, Lockerbie - 3 Jun 41

I last saw 6098566 Sgt Thacker E at Nantes, France mid June 1940.

(Ed note: Capt Clifford is recorded as being killed on 21 May 40 and is buried at Etaples Military Cemetery Grave Ref 46.A.9. He served in WW1 with 8th Royal Irish Hussars and was Mentioned in Despatches.

Lt Nicholson is recorded as being killed on 24 May 40 and is buried at Boulogne Eastern Cemetery Grave Reg 12.D.5 He had prior service in RA.

Sgt Woodhead enlisted into RE on 28 Sep 39 and transferred to Pioneer Corps on 1 Dec 39. He is recorded as being killed on 25 May 40 and is buried at Boulogne Eastern Cemetery Grave Ref 12.E.5.

Pte Lenton enlisted into RE on 5 Sep 39 and transferred to Pioneer Corps on 1 Dec 39. He is recorded as being killed on 24 May 40 and his details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Col 152.

Sgt Thacker enlisted into RE on 15 Oct 39 and transferred to Pioneer Corps on 1 Dec 39. He is recorded as being killed between 28 May 40 and 3 Jun 40 and is buried at Boulogne Eastern Cemetery Grave Ref 13.A.17.

**60 Company PC
2186767 Cpl DEWIS WH
2196133 Pte HIGGINS M**

Statement by Sgt G Power, 60 Coy PC, Wilcott Camp - 13 Jun 41

Cpl Dewis left the Coy in Libercourt, France for the Hospital base somewhere around Feb 40 - recommended for discharge suffering from silicosis.

Statement by Maj W McKechnie Robson, OC 60 Coy PC, Bethnal Green, London - 10 Mar 41

Cpl Dewis was sent to Hospital and evacuated to England from the BEF sometime in January 1940.

Pte Higgins was given leave to Eire from the BEF and did not return. A Court of Inquiry, held a few days ago, has declared him a deserter.

(Ed note: Cpl Dewis enlisted into the RE on 18 Oct 39 and transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 1 Dec 39, he did not make it back to England, he lost his life on HMT Lancastria and his details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Col 148.

Pte Higgins enlisted into the RE on 18 Oct 39 and was transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 1 Dec 39. He was declared a Deserter on 7 Apr 40).

**61 Company PC
102688 Pte PRIOR CR**

Statement by 7606195 Sgt Murphy MP, 120 Coy PC, Patterton Camp, Thornliebank - 17

Jun 41

Last seen passing though Estaire near Lille, was badly wounded, presumed dead. As near as I can remember it would be about 26th May 1940. I was with the above at the time.

Statement by Sgt HS Leonard, 233 Coy PC, Connaught Barracks, Dover - 6 Jun 41

I last saw Pte Prior on the Docks at Dunkirk, after he had been wounded in the abdomen. He was moved from the Docks but I do not know to where he was taken. This was approx on the 8th June 1940.

Statement by 102844 Pte JC Ouldfield, 61 Coy PC, Hurst Green -

I was with Pte Prior near Merville on 26th May 1940, when he was wounded in the stomach by machine-gun fire. He was unconscious when I saw him last, and he was taken to Bailleul Hospital.

The following day I enquired at the hospital, and was told that Prior was 'not too bad'. Owing to operational movements I do not know what happened to Prior after this.

(Ed note: Pte Prior enlisted on 3 Oct 39 into RASC and transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 10 Apr 40. He is reported as being killed on 27 May 40 and is buried at West Cappel Churchyard, France, grave ref Row C Grave 5)

**76 Company PC
13006398 LCpl HUNTER A
13006584 Pte BIRBECK J
13006218 Pte OTHEN G
13006283 Pte ROBERTS R
13005819 Pte Le GOUPILLOT C**

Statement by WO2 (CSM) AE Kitchenham, 76 Coy PC, Melbourn, Cambs - 5 Jun 41

LCpl Hunter, Pte Birbeck and Pte Roberts arrived with my section at Dunkirk, but I can give no further information regarding them. At about 0230 hrs 28th May 1940 we arrived on the beach near a hotel named Maes Hotel, we were a considerable distance from the Dunkirk Harbour. As no boats were available I ordered all the party to have a rest in the sand dunes until morning.

I pointed out the risk of going to the hotel which was full of troops. I had heard suggestions by different men that as it was raining slightly they did not intend to say in the dunes but wanted to get in the hotel. At this stage the three above named were present, but as day broke when the roll was called they did not answer their names.

Pte Othen after marching about three miles complained of very sore feet, as his inability to move normally was liable to cause loss of contact in my party, I advised him to get on the back of an ambulance that had stopped owing to a raid. He agreed saying it was impossible for him to march again.

I gave him instructions to report himself to whoever was in charge of the ambulance, I did not see him again.

Pte Le Goupillot left my section for Casualty Clearing Station about a month before the evacuation, but on the evacuation of the civilian population for Guernsey I met his wife who told me that he was safe and in hospital either in the town of Warwick or in the County of Warwickshire

(Ed note: LCpl Hunter enlisted on 23 Jan 40 and is recorded as being killed between 28 May and 4 Jun 40, he is buried at Vlieland General Cemetery, Netherlands, grave 19,

Pte Birbeck enlisted on 6 Feb 40 and is recorded as being killed between 28 May

and 2 Jun 40. His details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Column 149.

Pte Othen enlisted on 19 Jan 40 and is recorded as being killed between 27 May and 2 Jun 40. His details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Column 153.

Pte Roberts enlisted on 19 Jan 40 and is recorded as being killed between 28 May and 2 Jun 40. His details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Column 154.

Pte Le Goupillot managed to return to England and served until 9 Jan 46)

79 Company PC

13009730 Pte McKEE WC

Statement by 13009801 Sgt S Baker, 243 Coy PC, Liddymore Camp, Nr Watchet, Somerset - 4 Jun 41

I was with 79 Coy in Boulogne when it was attacked by the Germans on the 24th May 40.

I saw Pte McKee with the CSM on their way to take up positions, that is the last I saw of him. When I got back to England later, I heard that the CSM and all with him had been taken prisoner.

13009453 Pte GILROY W

Statement by 13009822 LCpl Gifford R, 78 Coy PC, Chatfield, Northumberland - 3 Jun 41

I saw Pte Gilroy at Boulogne when he came to the Rest Camp with Major Kibby and CSM Lucas both of whom are now prisoners of war.

13009499 LCpl ATTWOOD F

Statement by 13009597 Sgt D Morgan, 78 Coy PC, Chatfield, Northumberland - 4 Jun 41

I saw LCpl Attwood at the dockside at Dunkirk. He was badly hit and placed in an ambulance with Pte Battershill who has now been 'Y' Listed

7891366 LCpl OLIVER GDM

I saw LCpl Oliver at Dunkirk facing the First Aid Station. He was standing next to me when he was badly hit. We were both taken into the First Aid Station, I did not see him again.

3766873 Pte MARSH F

Statement by 13007423 Pte Bostock P, 78 Coy PC, Chatfield, Northumberland - 4 Jun 41

I was with Pte Marsh at Dunkirk. We were both lying alongside a lorry when it was bombed. I didn't see him again. I was hit but managed to get down to the beach.

(Ed note: Only 1 Officer and 19 Other Ranks managed to return to UK from a Coy strength of 288 men.

Pte McKee enlisted on 22 Jan 40 and is recorded as being killed on 24 May 40. His details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Column 153.

Pte Gilroy enlisted on 16 May 40 and is recorded as being killed on 24 May 40. His details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Column 151.

LCpl Attwood enlisted on 17 Jan 40 and is recorded as being killed on 17 Jun 40. He is buried in Dunkirk Town Cemetery Plot 2 Row 18 Grave 10.

LCpl Oliver enlisted into the RAC on 9 Mar 39 and transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 17 Jan 40, he is recorded as being killed on 28 May 40. His details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Column 149.

Pte Marsh enlisted into the RAC on 10 Feb 37 and transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 17 Jan 40, he is recorded as being killed between 28 May and 2 Jun 40. His details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial

Column 153.

81 Company PC

13005685 Sgt HAYWARD F

Statement by 6002336 CQMS W Sheekey, 81 Coy PC, Overton - 3 Jun 41

I saw this NCO on 17 May 40 at Ecoust, France. I wrote a will for him which he signed. This was the last I saw of him. On my return to England I heard from several 81 Coy men who had got back that he had been severely wounded. I cannot confirm this but suggest that information could be obtained from personnel of 62 Coy PC stationed at Craigmillar, Edinburgh a large proportion of whom are ex 81 Coy men.

13006123 Pte WARRILOW W

Statement by 2650819 CSM Stewart N, 208 Coy PC, Upper Norwood - 12 Jun 41

We were unloading tins of biscuits in a field just outside Bergue, when a German bomber attracted by the reflection of the sun's rays on the tins, came down and bombed us. We just had time to jump into a shallow trench before the bombs dropped. The bomb dropped alongside the trench and blew a Cpl Harrison and Pte Warrilow out of the trench. Whilst lying on the ground they were machine-gunned, Cpl Harrison was wounded and Pte Warrilow killed.

13006537 Pte SMITH J

Statement by 2650819 CSM Stewart N, 208 Coy PC, Upper Norwood - 12 Jun 41

We were in convoy between Nergue and Dunkirk when a German plane dived on us and started machine-gunning. Pte Smith was in the rear lorry and received wounds in the stomach. He died after a short while in my presence.

Statement by 3529981 Sgt W Berry, 6 Company NCC, Pershore, Worcs - 20 Jun 41

I wish to state that I am certain that Sgt Hayward, Pte Warrilow and Pte Smith were killed at Bruges, France, between the 10th and 13th May 40.

13006197 Pte CARVER F

7884114 Pte GOSLING F

13005587 Pte O'NEILL F

13005535 Pte PITCHFORD CA

13005923 Pte WILTSHIRE W

13006563 Pte FIELD GA

Statement by 7887768 Sgt GARLICK AC, 62 Coy PC, Longhope, Orkney - 7 Apr 42

I last saw Pte Gosling at Ecquse St Main about the 20th May 1940. We had to leave this place about 2 am and on marching out the section was broken up by enemy tanks advancing. I lost contact with the remainder of the section and did not see Pte Gosling again. Pte Morris (7887760) was with the same party and has been reported a prisoner of war.

Statement by 13005607 Cpl CARWFORD R, 62 Coy PC, Longhope, Orkney - 7 Apr 42

I was at Ecquse St Main up to the middle of May 1940 with Section 8 of 81 Coy PC. Ptes Carver, O'Neill and Field were with me. As I was suffering from an injured leg I was sent on in advance by lorry and the rest of the section including the above men started marching. I understand that the enemy passed through the day after they commenced the march. Pte RW Smith (13005613) of the same section is known to be a prisoner of war.

Statement by 13005715 Pte MITCHELL W, 81 Coy PC, Branksome, Bournemouth - 7 Apr 42

I am afraid the only information I can give about any of the men in question was seeing Ptes Carver, Field and Gosling being in a lorry passing Doudi with material for making a barricade, but being in a convoy carrying petrol myself I could not stop to ascertain where they were going. After 81 Coy were organised into various sections after the Germans broke though the above men would be in the section under Lt Hodge, also I think likely that Sgt Tucker of No 1 Section who took the roll call of 81 Coy at Bruges before we marched to Dunkirk may be able to give more information as he worked very hard to get what information he could with him being Senior NCO, and also Cpl Westerman may know something as he gathered a few stragglers from 81 Coy at Bruges

Statement by 5981372 Cpl Radford LT, 121 Coy PC, St Asaph - 20 May 41

The Ptes about whom this enquiry is made were in 81 Coy AMPC with me at Rebere. We marched then to an unknown destination which we reached in about 2 days. Here an AMPC officer whose name I do not know gave us orders to get to the evacuation ships at Dunkirk as best we could. I and 8 ORs arranged to get on board in the early morning two days after having reached the coast east of Dunkirk and marched along the beach about 2 miles west.

The last time I saw the missing men was in the main street of Arras at about 1100 hrs on the day we left Revere. They were looking at a German tank. After leaving Arras we made for Avesnes and St Pol. They may have been in St Pol, but I am not certain as the enemy began to machine-gun us about 5 kms outside St Pol on the way to the coast.

Statement by 13005530 Pte Joyce MP, 32 POW Camp, Bangor - 28 Mar 42

I last saw Pte Gosling at Doulens on 13th May 1940 as one of a party holding the Doulens Wood. Subsequently the wood was heavily bombed and I think it nearly certain that all or most of the party were wounded or killed.

I last saw Pte Field at Riveria (near Beaumont) on 10th May 1940 when in a working party unloading ammunition and destroying a petrol dump. I believe that the party went on from Riverie to Beaumont but I did not see or hear Pte Field again.

I last saw Pte Carter on 27th May 1940 at Dunkirk - I may have mixed up the name Carver with Carter since I did not know him well.

Statement by 1057603 Pte Reville R, 23 Coy PC, Eythorpe Park, Stone, Nr Aylesbury - 27 Mar 42

Pte O'Neill was employed in the cookhouse of 81 Coy. He was last seen at Dunkirk in the company of Cpl Robb of 81 Coy and Lt Hedge (or Lock) of 81 Coy. They were all in the process of being evacuated but O'Neill was not on the same boat.

Pte Wiltshire was last seen at Aubigny au Bec about a week before the evacuation of the BEF.

Statement by 3529981 Sgt Berry W, 6 Coy NCC, Blundellsands, Liverpool - 27 Mar 42

I recollect the names of Ptes Carver and O'Neill but when 81 Coy was split up on 1st Sunday of May 1940 (various sections moving to different places) these two Pte soldiers were not put in my Section. The Company was split up at Riviers (France) and from this place we moved to Beaumont on the following day. We thence

moved to Vielle-Chappelle where my section was on convoy duties. We were next told to stand-by preparatory to moving to Steenvoorde – this would be on about 7th May 40. Steenvoorde is a small village near Dunkirk Docks. From this village we proceeded straight to Dunkirk Docks later to be picked up by two RE officers and taken down to Bruges for guard duties on petrol. My party consisted of myself and 14 men (including Pte Gosling). We remained there for a few days and later I reported to GHQ Bruges with my Section. It was here that I took over guard duties at a 'Strong Point'. On later reporting to the FOOS Supply Depot at Bruges I was order to proceed forthwith with 8 men to????(the name of the village I cannot remember but it was quite close to the village of Sombrin or Some Brinne's). It was here, on or about 15th May 40, that I saw Pte Gosling very seriously wounded. He was lying on the side of the road. I did not see him again and I don't know to what hospital he was taken. It was apparent from a cursory observation that he was mortally wounded. The task he was on at this time (immediately before being wounded) was camouflaging petrol.

(Ed note: Sgt Hayward enlisted on 9 Jan 40 and is shown as being killed between 10-24 May 40. He is buried at Bucquoy Road Cemetery, FICHEUX Plot 8, Row D, Grave 2

Pte Warrilow enlisted on 11 Dec 39 and is shown as being killed between 10-24 May 40. He is buried at Longuenesse Street (St Omer) Souvenir Cemetery Plot 8, Row C, Grave 28.

Pte Smith enlisted on 1 Feb 40 and is shown as being killed between 10-24 May 40. He is buried at Longuenesse Street (St Omer) Souvenir Cemetery Plot 8, Row C, Grave 27.

Pte Carver enlisted on 18 Jan 40 and is shown as being killed between 15-20 May 40. He is buried at Bucquoy Road Cemetery, FICHEUX Plot 8, Row E, Grave 3.

Pte Gosling enlisted into the RAC on 6 Apr 33 and transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 16 Jan 40. He is shown as being killed on 15 May 40. He is buried at Bucquoy Road Cemetery, FICHEUX Plot 8, Row B, Grave 10.

Pte O'Neill enlisted on 4 Jan 40 and is shown as being killed on 20 May 40. He is buried at Bucquoy Road Cemetery, FICHEUX Plot 8, Row C, Grave 9.

Pte Pitchford enlisted on 2 Jan 40 and is shown as being killed on 14 May 40. He is buried at Bucquoy Road Cemetery, FICHEUX Plot 8, Row B, Grave 9.

Pte Wiltshire enlisted on 15 Jan 40 and is shown as being killed between 14-20 May 40. He is buried at Bucquoy Road Cemetery, FICHEUX Plot 8, Row D, Grave 1.

Pte Field enlisted on 5 Feb 40 and is shown as being killed on 20 May 40. His details are included on the Dunkirk Memorial Column 151

82 Company PC

13006799 Pte HISSEY WG

13006766 Pte DAVISON RF

Statement by Maj H Perowne MC, OC 82 Coy PC, Swindon – 16 Mar 41

Pte Davison returned from the BEF with this Company to Westcliffe. When the Company left Westcliffe for Wilton on 26 Jun 40 he was absent. AF W3011 was rendered to 1 Centre, Westcliffe transferring him to that Centre on 26 Jun 40. It is not known if 1 Centre published this in Part 1 Orders. There is no information on our records extant regarding the striking off our strength of Pte Hissey. It appears, however, that he went into hospital at Le Harve in

May and did not return to the Company.

Statement by 13006872 Shy Buchan, JD, 82 Coy PC, Wilcott Camp, Swindon - 13 Aug 41

Pte Hissey was in my section in France, but went into hospital about 3 days before we came home to England. On asking as to his whereabouts my men who came home after me I was told that he went down in the troop ship Lancastria.

(Ed note: Pte Hissey enlisted on 19 Feb 40. He is shown as drowning on HMT Lancastria on 17 Jun 40. He is buried at St George's D'Oleron Communal Cemetery Grave 11.

Pte Davison enlisted on 16 Feb 40. He is shown as being a deserter for the period 19 Jun 41 until 15 Dec 43. He was discharged on 29 May 44.

102 Company PC

219523 Pte MacGUINNESS A

2183007 LCpl HUMPHREY CG

2182813 Pte UNSWORTH J

5878577 Pte WHITE A

Statement by Lt Col NS Taylor, CO 18 Group PC, Southborough, Kent – 13 Jun 41

Pte MacGuinness was granted leave from BEF and failed to rejoin his unit. He was declared a deserter by Court of Enquiry on 31 Jun 41. Our Part II Order 157 of 5 Jun 41 refers.

Statement by 52487866 Cpl Latham J, 186 Coy PC, Aldershot – 3 Jun 41

LCpl Humphrey was last seen wounded at Eire-Belgian Frontier – I presume he was killed

Pte MacGuinness was granted leave from Monchiet to his home in Liverpool on 15 Mar 40 – failed to return.

Pte Unsworth was last seen at Eire-Belgian Frontier – probably killed

Pte White was last seen on the St Pol Road holding a position against the German advance with two others – Cpl Gibson and Cpl Bloxham

Ed note: Pte MacGuinness enlisted into the RE on 6 Sep 39 and was transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 1 Dec 39. He was classified as a Deserter from 8 Apr 40 but re-enlisted into Royal Navy.

Pte Humphrey enlisted into the RE on 6 Sep 39 and was transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 1 Dec 39. He was killed between 20 May 40 and 5 Jun 40 and is buried at Aire Communal Cemetery Plat 4 Row G Grave 8.

Pte Unsworth enlisted into the RE on 23 Sep 39 and was transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 1 Dec 39. He was killed between 17-26 May 40 and is buried at Aire Communal Cemetery Plat 1 Row AA, Grave 3.

Pte White enlisted into the RE on 6 Sep 39 and was transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 1 Dec 39. He was killed between 22-25 May 40 and is buried at Boulogne Eastern Cemetery Plat 10 Row A, Grave 14).

104 Company PC

3385375 Pte BARNES H

Statement by Maj D MacDonald MC, OC 104 Coy PC, RAF Lossiemouth – 11 Mar 41

Pte Barnes who was reported missing is now serving in the Royal Artillery as No 1623541 Gunner Barnes H. This man failed to report on evacuation to OC, and was reported missing to this office.

(Ed note: Pte Barnes enlisted into the RE on 14 Oct 39 and was transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 1 Dec 39. He was

reported missing in June 1940 and fraudulently re-enlisted into the RA on 7 Feb 41. He was discharged under medical grounds in 1941)

115 Company PC

2182015 Pte McCANLEY T

Statement by 2182378 LCpl Malone JE, 115 Coy PC, Ellesmere – 10 Jun 41

I saw the above named at Crystal Palace, London in July 1940. He proceeded on 48 hours leave and did not return.

(Ed note: The above is completely wrong. Pte McCanley enlisted into the RE on 7 Sep 39 and transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 1 Dec 39. He is recorded as died in Rennes Troop Train Bombing on 17 Jun 40, his details are recorded on the Dunkirk Memorial Column 152)

2186362 Sgt FOWLER R

Statement by 2185469 Pte Dove AE, 115 Coy PC, Elson – 4 Jun 41

On 17th June 1940 at about 1000 hrs I was in the same railway truck as Sgt Fowler and Sgt Bacon. They were the only two Sgts in the truck. We were attacked by enemy aircraft and I lay down quickly on the floor of the truck. A bomb exploded very near the truck blowing one side of the truck away. After the planes had pass over for the first time I jumped up and started to scramble out of the wreckage. As I was getting out I had to step over a headless body which had three stripes on its sleeve. I have since met Sgt Bacon in England therefore I assumed that the headless body was that of Sgt Fowler.

(Ed note: Sgt Fowler enlisted on 8 Sep 39 into the RE and transferred to the Pioneer Corps on 1 Dec 39. He is recorded as died in Rennes Troop Train Bombing on 17 Jun 40, his details are recorded on the Dunkirk Memorial Column 148)

(Ed note: 48 AMPC personnel lost their life on the Rennes Train Bombing a large number were from 115 Coy AMPC. At approximately 10.00am on the 17th of June 1940, as the British Expeditionary Force desperately tried to make their escape from France, via any available port a group of around 4 or 5 trains, loaded with troops, stores and ammunition converged on the town of Rennes, approximately 60 miles from St. Nazaire.

One of the trains was carrying refugees from the north of France who were trying to escape the German advance. Almost certainly the majority of troops were en route to St. Nazaire and embarkation on one of the waiting troop carriers, the Lancastria being one of them.

As they waited in the main railway station 3 German bombers appeared from the West and flying at low level towards the town. No air raid warning was sounded as they started their attack, in which they initially strafed the main street of the town, before banking slightly right and which led them directly to the main railway station. A French military munitions train had pulled in alongside, belonging to the 212 French Artillery Regiment. As the German bombers dropped their bombs they scored a direct hit on the wagons of this Regiment, causing it to explode in a massive blast which demolished nearby buildings and the other trains alongside. However, a large number of the British troops killed belonged to ordinance or ammunition units and it is quite possible equipment and stores they were carrying with them exacerbated the scale of the incident.

177 British troops are believed to have been killed, with 78 of them remaining unidentified such was the ferocity of the

blast. Rescue efforts were hampered as the remaining munitions continued to explode for the next 24 hours as adjoining wagons caught fire. However the greatest toll was amongst the refugee train and historians now believe around 800 people, including the British troops, were killed in the bombing with thousands more left wounded.

For decades these 78 men were assumed, by the Commonwealth war Graves Commission, to have been killed aboard the *Lancastria*. Through extensive follow-up research by *Lancastria* author Brian Crabb and others we now know this is not the case. Whilst the names of these men do appear, mistakenly, in some lists of *Lancastria* dead, including the first edition of Brian Crabb's book, *The Forgotten Tragedy*, it now appears their remains, although unidentifiable, were buried in the communal plot of Rennes Eastern cemetery.

It is a reasonable assumption to make that given the inability to properly identify these men, that it is likely they were closest to the initial, and most major blast when the French munitions train exploded.

The German army occupied the town the following day, the 18th. At least 2 of the victims, buried in the cemetery, died of their wounds in the days following the attack.

122 Company PC

13012481 Pte LEE E

Statement by 13012596 Pte JA Munro, 24 Salvage Unit, Falkirk – 6 Jun 41

I saw Pte Lee with whom I was serving on Boulogne quayside on 2nd or 3rd of June 1940. He was employed as Company Runner.

(Ed note: Pte Lee enlisted on 6 Apr 40 he was captured at Boulogne on 25 May 40. He was awarded "Mention in Despatches" for escaping. His citation is as follows:

"LEE escaped from the line of march soon after his capture at BOULOGNE on 25 May 1940. Given food and civilian clothes by a helper, he walked to HAM where he was apprehended as he had no papers.

After three days in a camp at ST QUENTIN, PW were marched to CAMBRAI and LEE again slipped out of the column. He made himself a bicycle from spare parts he found in a village and made his way south. He obtained food and shelter without difficulty during the three or four weeks it took him to cycle to BORDEAUX. At CAPBRETON he tried unsuccessfully to obtain a boat, then continued through BAYONNE to the Spanish Border.

Three hours after crossing the frontier, LEE was captured by Spanish police who returned him to France and handed him over to the Germans.

In Oct 40, LEE was imprisoned in ST DENIS Internment Camp, PARIS, from where he was released on 28 Aug 44.

He served until 24 Dec 45

13012466 Pte BLAKEMORE E

13012481 Pte LEE E

13912675 Pte RUSSELL P

13012762 Pte TAYLOR JW

Statement by Maj WJ Powell, OC 122 Coy PC, Charterhouse, London – 11 Mar 41

Upon enquiries being made, the above mentioned men were last seen on the Quay at Boulogne on the night of 23rd May 40, when the Company was embarking for England. They are listed as "Missing, believed Prisoners of War".

(Ed note: Only 1 (Pte Lee above) was captured the other 3 were killed.

Pte Blakemore enlisted on 6 Apr 40 and

is listed as being killed between 23-25 May 40. He is buried at Boulogne Eastern Cemetery Plot 13, Row C, Grave 15

Pte Russel enlisted on 10 Apr 40 and is listed as being killed between 23-25 May 40. He is buried at Boulogne Eastern Cemetery Plot 13, Row B, Grave 7

Pte Taylor enlisted on 11 Apr 40 and is listed as being killed on 27 May 40. He is buried at Boulogne Eastern Cemetery Plot 11, Row R, Grave 14.)

13 Salvage Unit

Statement by 945509 Gunner Stein L, 13 Salvage Unit, 36 Castle St, Shrewsbury – 23 Jun 41

Although the information which I am able to give is only second-hand, I feel that if further enquiries are made the fate of my comrades will be proved beyond doubt.

1. I Gunner Stein of No 13 Salvage Unit served with this unit in France, from which only 15 men returned safely to England. The rest of the men of the Unit were on the cargo boat Abukur which was torpedoed and sunk after leaving Ostend harbour.

Thirteen other men and myself were taken off the Abukur and transferred to the Marquis in order to guard a number of German prisoners being escorted to England.

On arriving back in England we learned the tragic news that all but one of our men on the Abukur had been drowned, and it was from this man we learned the fate of our comrades.

This man – a Pte Williams of the Pioneer Corps has since been transferred to another Salvage Unit, as far as I know it is No 2 Salvage Unit situated in Hertford, Herts.

His version of the tragic loss is as follows:

"Two hours after leaving OSTEND harbour the Abukuyr was intercepted by a U-Boat and after a torpedo had struck her she went down in a few minutes. All our men except me were down in the hold, consequently they had little if any chance at all, as they were all apparently asleep in the hold when I left a few minutes before to go on the upper deck to go to the lavatory"

The under mentioned men were on the ill-fated boat (all 13 Salvage Unit):

13011126 Pte BOYLE P

13011135 Pte DICKSON R

13011143 Pte GALLAGHER J

13011158 Pte LIDDLE JW

13011029 Pte PERKINS A

13011172 Pte SMITH RWP

13007926 Pte TAWSE J

13009068 Pte WATERSON WS

13011173 Pte WHELLANDS AP

13007988 Pte WIGNALL T

13011102 Pte WRIGHT T

2. Concerning Lt HARRIS, being OC of No 13 Salvage Unit and since you have no mention of him on your lists, I feel bound to add that he was on the ill-fated ship Abukur.

3. Concerning 13011129 Pte CLEMENTS D, on your list of missing personnel you will notice that you have placed him under 110 Coy, whereas he was in the No 13 Salvage Unit. He was also on the ship Abukur

(Ed note: The Abukir was torpedoed and sunk in the North Sea by motor torpedo boat S-34 *Kriegsmarine* with the loss of 205 of the 231 people on board. The survivors were rescued by HMS *Codrington*, HMS *Jaguar* and HMS *Javelin*).

NOTES ON THE PIONEERS CORPS – FRANCE 1939/40

At the commencement of the War, when the urgent need for labour became

apparent, such reservists as were immediately available were formed up into companies and sent out to France. Recruiting was then opened for various kinds of Royal Engineer and RASC Labour; and Docks and other companies of RE Labour were hurried to France.

While it was being decided to use the establishment of the dormant Labour Corps under the name of the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps, recruits were flocking in to the RASC Labour Depot Companies, etc., which were for a time the only Corps open for voluntary enlistment, and received a quantity of men anxious to join the Army containing a considerable proportion of old soldiers, whose reserve service was finished.

Companies of the Pioneer Corps were made up quickly by the Depot Coys and by the Training Centres which followed them, and were sent out to France.

The original companies of reservists were incorporated into the Pioneer Corps, and the various RE Companies for Dock labour, Railway labour, etc., were also turned into Pioneer Corps Companies, frequently by splitting the original RE Companies into two. Most of these reservists were removed from the Pioneer Corps in June 1940.

There were two Groups of Pioneer Corps Companies in the forward area working with the RE on defence work; and there were also attached to 1st, 2nd and 3rd Corps, Companies for work of all kinds, with various Services.

There was a Group of Companies with GHQ and another working with the Advanced Air Striking Force (AASF), and a number of Groups with Companies working at all the various bases and depots on the lines of communication, together with a Base depot. Also under the charge of the Pioneers was a certain quantity of civilian labour, including a number of Italian Prestataires.

The Director of Labour, with his staff at G.H.Q., looked after this whole labour force, which at one time amounted to a very considerable force and was working on every conceivable unskilled and semi-skilled job, usually in conjunction with one or other of the Services whose skilled men were diluted.

When fighting became active, all the Pioneers in the forward areas who could be put on to work for the various Services, such as ammunition, petrol, food supplies and medical services, were quickly snapped up and moved about with the Services concerned, who, realising their worth, hung on to them like (and frequently until) grim death.

Many parties of Pioneers were singled out for high praise for their action in the face of the enemy.

Nos 5 & 12 Group HQs, with some elements of their Companies, reached England through Boulogne, while No 11 Group HQ, with its Companies and parts of Nos 5 & 12 Groups, formed part of the force evacuated from Dunkirk.

The remainder of the Pioneers in France, many of whom had been formed up into temporary battalions for operational purposes, left eventually by various Ports round the North West corner of France. There were very few Companies which were not involved in some strenuous times, which included such incidents as the sinking of the SS *Lancastria*.

There is no doubt, as the newspapers testified, that the Pioneer Corps, though often very short of Officers, made a great name for itself in France, and unquestionably built up a reputation for both having grit and shifting it. ■



■ Lowering the Flag at the Church Service

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Veterans on Parade

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Veterans march to Church Service

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ All ready for the Church Service

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Veterans and spectators

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Members of 23 Pnr Regt march to Church Service

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ Keeping in step

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ Mr Dewsnap shouts out the orders

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ A fine body of men

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ Still in step

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ Despite the weather still cheerful

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ The mobile Brigade bring up the rear

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ Stand By the Officers

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Showing the flag

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Group photograph 2012 Reunion. Copies available.

Picture: Paul Brown



■ The vets football team including Capt Dilkes

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ Recruitment Team?

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ Jules Green receives his telegram from the Queen

Picture: Supplied



■ All kids weapon training course

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Cheungie with the current search team, Afghanistan

Picture: WO2 Cheung



■ Geordie Butler's Funeral. RIP Geordie.

Picture: Neil Butterworth



■ Friends re-unite

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Teague's gang

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Gore Trophy Winners

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Football winning Captain with Lt Col Clouston

Picture: Paul Brown



■ The Mayor of Bicester with Pte Smythe

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ Ginge Roberts's mother with Billy & Twiz

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Taff offering to buy beers

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Veterans posing for the camera

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Mrs Thompson having a charity haircut

Picture: Scouse Bradley / Paul Brown



■ Jock Killeen asks if Les Rowley is the waiter

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Will buys Norman a pint at last

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Pete and Norman - the Old Pioneers

Picture: Paul Brown



■ The 39/93 Club quartet

Picture: Paul Brown



■ CO & RSM 23 Regt with families

Picture: Paul Brown



■ The wives corner

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Still sober at the end of the night

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Winners of the dancing competition

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ Paddy celebrating his birthday (Jane has just rung the bell!)

Picture: Paul Brown



■ "Do you want another drink Norman?" says Will

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Vets posing for the camera

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ Exchanging war stories

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ All smiles after the buffet

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ Dave Ravenscroft explains how he's not bought a pint

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ Heather, Rob & Sarah Reminiscing

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ All smiles

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ Where is his Corps tie?

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ The winner of the stupid look competition

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ Where has Bob Popkin got his hand!

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ Norman needs to sell more polo shirts

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ Old friends meet up

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ Defence Coy Reunion within a Reunion

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ Winners of smiling competition

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ The Pioneer 'Mafia'

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ What a motley collection

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ I want to be in Dougies's gang

Picture: Scouse Bradley



■ Is Micky proposing?

Pictures: Scouse Bradley



Harrys War

A series of letters from Harry Carass age 24 of Leeds to his Sister Dorothy covering the period of 9th May 1940 to 21st Nov 1940.

Report: Harry Carass / John Carass
Picture: Harry Carass / John Carass

HI NORMAN, thought you might be interested in the attachment I am sending. These are transcripts of my Father's letters to his sister in 1940.

They cover a very brief period till he was discharged on medical grounds following a relapse of a childhood rheumatic fever. This was rather a pity as he may have gone far, helped by his experience in Spain in the 30's with the International Brigade.

Though there was no fighting it still gives an interesting insight into one aspect of wartime army life. I do wish he had talked about it more, until I received those letters from my aunt I knew nothing! He even kept quiet about his time in Spain with the International Brigade. I only found out about that after he died.

Apparently he was imprisoned in Barcelona in '38 but managed to escape and jumped a Swedish ship which he was told was going to Liverpool. It did, though he soon found out it was sailing via Uruguay, Cape Horn, Chile and the Panama Canal! He was so late getting home he was listed as Killed in Action! I corrected this error a few years ago.

Regards, John Carass

The Association hold the following information on John's father:

13047440 Cpl Harry CARASS (DOB: 5 Jan 16). Enlisted at Leeds and joined 2 Centre Pioneer Corps on 4 Jul 40, on completion of training was posted to 118 Coy PC and was discharged on 20 Dec 40.

31 Jul 40 Formed at GLASGOW
Maj C A Branfill MC - OC

5 Aug 40 Moved to MANCHESTER – part of 24 Group – 100 men with RASC remainder training
Capt Dunkerton MC – serving 2IC
Lts C Vivian & J M Clark – serving

7 Sep 40 Capt Rogers – tos 2IC vice Dunkerton (sos to 59 Coy)

24 Sep 40 Capt J W Henderson – tos 2IC

2 Oct 40 Lt Dart – tos

20 Nov 40 CSM Hughes – tos

31 Dec 40 There have air raid warning practically every day since arrival in Manchester and some heavy air raids but the Coy has suffered no casualties

C/O BURNLEY GPO 9th MAY 1940

Dear Bid,

Thanks for letter received. Glad to hear everything is going well. Don't work too hard! Am leaving Blackburn for Burnley Lincs on Saturday, so send any letters to GPO there. Have written to brothers Alf, Eddie & Joe, who will answer via you. Have the Canadians arrived yet? What does Topen think about the Norway situation? Is he keeping well? And Ken, is he all right? Well, I haven't much to report in this letter. I went to see Reg Toomi? at the Grand Theatre last night, it wasn't so bad. I'm getting fatter! Give everyone my regards. I'm afraid I can't get home for Whitsuntide, it's too far, but if I change the old thinkbox I'll write you. So leaving you for the present. I wish you an easy weekend. Hoping you are well.

Your affectionate Bro. Harry XXXX.

(Topen X)

CAISTER ON SEA 5TH JUNE 1940

My Dear Sister and Family,

It is with deep contentment I write this letter (I've just had my noonday grub!)

Have arrived safely & am settled in quite comfortably in a tent! This camp is mainly the fitting out depot & we expect to be removed very shortly. We have done nothing as yet, as regard work, to that I don't object!

Am afraid the Pioneer Corps is going to be as I expected, manual labour, fatigues etc. That does not worry me, but what does is that every blessed chappie (Captain's description of the recruits) wears specs!! What a sight, I'm the tallest of the lot! (Can you see me marching with em!! "Cor lummy"! I'll be a sergeant or bust.

I have made friends with an ex schoolteacher, decent bloke. Went to my University "fact". Well I wonder how you are managing & what you are doing? Above all things take care of yourself & show mercy when enraged. Will write more next time. When Pater, Joe and Ken reach this part, here are my regards XXXX & the same to you.

I should appreciate it if you would forward me a tin of that boot polish by return, could you? & also Alf and Eddie's address! Please don't grumble about not having sufficient sugar, I had to eat rice pudding without today & the tea we have is sweetened with saccharin, but! we enjoy it, fact!

All love and respect, Harry.

POST CARD, SAME ADDRESS, 10TH JULY 1940

Dear Sister,

Just a few words to inform you of my departure from Caister, will write later. Have received letter "thank you" At time of writing I'm almost a perfect soldier. "phew" what a day! "left"! "right" !!!!. Wait before answering until I write. Don't need anything but cigs "hnh" Thanks for polish, Keep happy.

All love to all. Harry.

POST CARD SENT SAME DAY FROM CAISTER, 14TH JULY, GLASGOW 1940

My Dear Sister and Family,

At last I have found the time to write a letter, although it's going to be a short one. I'm due to take a squad of rookies for rifle drill in half and hour, imagine me an instructor, its a fact. But "By George" I've earned that stripe and privilege. They've worked the very blood out of me this last few days, sweat and fire, commands and curses, until I nearly cracked, but it's my turn now!! We had a rotten journey from Caister to Glasgow, 20 hours on the train without a drink of tea. We were glad to reach camp & it's a rotten camp! You ought to see the bedmates we have, bloecocks *, earwigs & thousands of bugs with their kilts to keep us amused. I was on parade this morning & when I took out my roll call sheet it was black with em! Simply crawling out with a nonchalant shrug, I continued with duty. "Your in the ruddy army now " says the Sergeant Major. by!!! We know it.

I have made an allotment of 7/- per week but when you will get it, I can't say. We haven't had any wage yet! I'm going crazy for a smoke, do you think you could send me 10 caps, I have tried to stop smoking, but I'm afraid I can't do it altogether, have you stopped yet? How are the family behaving now? As usual have you kept the expense sheet going? I'm afraid there is going to be no leave for quite a time now I'm a corporal. Maybe Christmas all going well will see me home. There are rumours going round the sergeant's mess of a move to Yeadon. Lets hope so, its time I had a decent cup of "Cha"

The 2nd Coy of this army of misfits changed camps 5 times in 3 weeks, practically covering England in the

procedure. You see in the operation of forming & training a Coy, rapid movement is necessary to allow fresh recruits to follow on. However the sooner we move from this place the better. Write to enclosed address, any letters that may arrive after we move (which will not be before the 22nd of this month) will be delivered safely. Give my regards to anyone that may ask for them & for goodness sake keep calm, cool & collected. Forgive shaky writing it's my hands, shaking like a tree in a breeze. Rifle drill etc. Write soon, All Affection to all, Harry XX

*Difficult word to decipher, could be bluecocks or blackcocks. Obviously a beetle of sorts!

GLASGOW 16TH JULY 1940

Dear Sister,
I daresay this will be a surprise, two letters in so short a time. Well it happens that Joe wanted to come to Glasgow for some reason so I joined him and having nothing to do we decided to enjoy the hospitality of the C.T.S. Free writing material etc. One of the girls in the canteen has apparently taken a liking to me; at the time of writing she is sitting next to Joe making eyes at me. I can see a free supper on its way!

We have had a deuce of a day, digging in the camp, draining etc. and at 9.15 I'm acting guard orderly until 6 a.m. "Coo Lummy" & to top all tomorrow is inoculation day, nevertheless, I can take it, one thing is I'm feeling remarkably fit, that helps.

Have you been anywhere lately? I had a letter from Wynne today (she still loves me) incredible!! We have 5 lads belonging to Joe's regiment in camp tonight, I believe they are travelling further north tomorrow & using our camp as a resting-place.

How is Joe? Tell him there is no reason why he shouldn't write just because you do. You might also impart that to father & Ken.

I'm getting an awfully commanding voice- like a rasp in fact. I have nothing to do but shout "Hoy you there, shift that ruddy so & so" "Squad.....Shun etc." However, enough about me.

Have you got the windows fixed yet or any plans made concerning removal? There will be something said if you haven't when I obtain leave next summer (JOKE)

Well I'm running dry & really feel tired, so until the next time, cheerio & may all go well.

Your affectionate Brother, Harry
PS Never go out with soldiers, "BRUMPH"!! Don't trust em!!

GLASGOW 19TH JULY 1940

My Dear Sister,
Many thanks for letter & P.O. Was feeling somewhat damp when it arrived, its been raining since Monday, "Crikey" the whole camps swimming, my boots are circulating round the pole, my bed has scuttled itself & to cap everything we have to parade at 2.30 for baths. That means walking 4 1/2 miles into Glasgow and back!

New army orders have been issued today. Owing to an excess of sergeants, other N.C.O.'s & Comm. officers, no conscript can rise above the rank of Corporal & even then he will only be acting corp. That means 2 stripes but the pay of a lance corp, one stripe. I'm absolutely miserable!

I was advised by our acting Major that promotion to the administration; meaning

an eventual commission was inevitable. You cannot believe that the amount of stupidity & mental incapacity in the camp could be of any earthly use! However, I hope to be a full corp. in a short time, although its the hardest job in the !!! army, the privilege make things more or less comfortable, and when the serg major asks us again "Are we happy in the service?" we shall reply (Joe and I) "Tickled to death Sir, tickled to death"

Am sorry to hear Father spent more than usual last week, it seems as if he can't save! How are you managing with the new rations? They don't affect us apart from the butter, meat we have plenty, since coming to this camp we have stew every day, stew and more stew, its the only thing they have the implements to produce in the cookhouse.

Is this writing legible? It's somewhat difficult to write sat in a puddle & have some real blisters through rifle drill. Which reminds me, our Coy are now front line infantry, don't of course tell anybody, its better kept quiet.

Am continuing this 20 mins later from above. We have just had an air raid. Jerry has just dropped some post, about 7 parcels, seems to be in Glasgow, we can see some large columns of smoke.

Did you hear of the raid at Caister the night we left? They had some fun according to the chaps that stayed behind!

Well I can't think of much else to say my dear, do take care of yourself & Father & of course Ray & Ken. And don't work in the afternoon!!

Your Affectionate Brother, Harry XXXX

P.S. If Father will not wear my coat, use your discretion about selling. If you sell it buy yourself something. Do your best to persuade father to wear it.

P.S.S I am perfectly willing to receive letters from whosoever may wish to send 'em, but at 2 1/2d postage I do not guarantee replies! (Let me know as soon as you get my allotment through)

GLASGOW 25TH JULY 1940

My Dear Illustrious Sister,
Thank you very much for letter & fags, it was quite the most interesting letter I've had the pleasure of receiving yet. The weather is now fine, everything is once more in an orderly state,

I told you I had received a stripe, well in 13 days I go to Cornwall for a month's special training. To return a full Corporal Instructor, might I say without boast it's easy. Or, (pardon the "ego") it is my obvious intelligence, "hm?"

I'm sorry to hear of the friction between Ray and Ken, it does upset things, of that I'm quite sure. However, its something that carefully examined proves itself to be much worse if recognised - if unrecognised it fades, fact.

Do write more often if it's possible. You can send me if you will those envelopes of mine, those large ones, I can use them. Be very careful to put correct address on letters or parcels, it's a lousy system of sorting here. Your last letter was held up 2 days, simply because it looked like 7 company instead of 9, however you will see we have attached to 118. Meaning that we are now a recognised company, almost ready for anything.

Having been on rifle drill all day I'm feeling somewhat tired, so I think I'll close down & go across to the canteen for a cup of !! Then to bed. I haven't been out of camp this week, have had to put all my energy into parades & drill.

Had a present of 5 cigars sent to me Tuesday, from Joe's fiancée, very tasty! Quite enjoyed 'em. Unless the Government grant a ration of fags, I'm definitely going to stop, it's a waste of money.

So until the next time, Cheerio, Give love to self and Pater & of course J & K.

Harry XXXX

PS Excuse pencil & scribble. Have not received any other letters yet from "Chapply"*

*Chapel Allerton, Leeds. JDC

GLASGOW 28TH JULY 1940

My Dear Sister,

At last its Sunday, day of rest, having removed the last of my most enjoyable breakfast from my ironware (tin plate), I've sat down to write this letter & having nothing to do all day it looks like being a long one. The letter I mean!

Had a walk last night with some of the lads & visited Crookston Castle. The alleged resting place of Mary Queen of Scots and B. P. Charlie. Wandering through the countless passages, etc., made it seem quite possible & at every corner I expected to see Mary coming round in a long white so & so with plaited hair, calling for Charlie! Silly Ass me! I voiced my thoughts & some rude blighter made a further comment, the result being a melee! The sightseeing tour ended by us being ejected bodily by the caretaker.

Have you done anything out of the ordinary this week? Or have you been too busy? Personally, I'd feel much better with my feet propped up against the fireplace instead of my tent pole with the pan in my hand!

"Crikey"!! I can hear the Sergeant Majors silvery fluted voice, the lilting words are not unlike those of my nom de plume! Excuse me for a minute.

(Ten mins later) "Coo Lummy" I've got to take the chapel parade into town, & just before this I was enjoying the joke about Joe, he was picked for church parade but Methodist parade is voluntary & it appears I'm the only NCO that has claim to that religion, I haven't cleaned my best Sunday boots "tut" so cheerio till after lunch xx

2.30 p.m. Whew! I didn't know I was so good, the Vicar nearly cracked his collar in his endeavour to beam upon me whilst I was lifting my voice in joy. He might have invited me to lunch though!

Coming back from Chapel was a!!!! We picked a crowd of kids up outside & they followed us all the way back, everything I said or ordered was repeated in good rolling Scotch, was I annoyed?!!

However, after having an enjoyable lunch, "stew & fruit" I feel much better. Tell Pater to put the pan on!

I think you had better retire behind the chair when you read this out, if it is still customary for you to read them aloud. I want Pater to lend me 28/- . You do not say whether you have received my allowance yet. (I have had my receipts so far) By wed 1st August you are 3 weeks due, 21/-, 7/- per week. If Pater can send me 28/- he can automatically take my allowance. You see I've broken my specs and I must replace them myself and then put in an indenture for reimbursement. To await a free pair of army specs means a waiting period of about 6 to 8 weeks. That I can't do! It's all a muddle of organisation but there it is. The Major gave me a form for reimbursement, which will also take a lengthy period of time to go through, but that doesn't matter as it will always be there, I await the verdict. It's a blinkin mess but unavoidable, the things were almost gone & I can't do

without them.

Well I think I've said enough, hope everything is well. I'm getting married in 1949 according to Wynne, a fact! Take care of yourself & the rest. Am disappointed at not hearing from Ken & Joe etc., Tell them so!

So until the next time Cheerio to all, Your affectionate Brother, Harry xxxx PS Forgive envelopes. They were supplied by the mobile church canteen, may as well use em "economy". x

NICHOLLS HOSPITAL MANCHESTER 9TH AUGUST 1940

Dear Dorathea,

Have just arrived in Manchester! The order to move was quite sudden. Have not received any letter since last Monday, have you written?

I haven't much time just now to write, we are upside down. Have received that second stripe, am now a full Corporal. They decided, (the Major etc.) that I was competent enough to miss that training I spoke about.

Hope everything is well at home. Write back straightaway without fail. Have had no post from Wynne or anyone else since your letter posted last Sunday 29th. Can't understand it.

So cheerio till I have more time. All blessings to all.

Harry x
PS Nicholls Hospital is an old nursing home converted into a barracks.

ST AUSTELL CORNWALL 28TH AUGUST 1940

Dear Dorothy,

Sorry to be so late with my letter, but really the activity etc. Shown by our Coy this last week has been terrific. Last Wednesday I was sent to Glasgow on a minute's notice (to bring some prisoners back.

Saturday night I was instructed to report to St. Austell "COO" I left Manchester at 8 am Monday and arrived at St. Austell 11.15 p.m. same day. I'm here for one month's special training, if I pass out with good marks etc. Further promotion is mine "if not!!!" Well I'm afraid they will carry me away before I fail!

It's terrific, the course I mean, if I were not a gentleman I would call it something else!! "hmm"

Everybody is mad down at this place, 30% of the men sent down here pack it up. We have a total of 73 instructors and every one of them is stark raving crazy! Life begins at 5.30 am & ends at 6 p.m., between those times everything is done at the double. You can't imagine the work we've got to do! Anyway, it's worth it. Am glad to hear my back pay came through, hope Father has got things straight. Am not glad or even pleased of your determination at joining up, actually I don't know what to say or do, I do believe you ought to think again! However! If you must I suppose there is nothing I can do about it, what Father will do, I can't imagine. What does he say? My allotment is increased to 10/-, which as I told you is yours, well together with what Father gives you, you can't possibly hope to be better off in the blinkin WAAF.

Anyway I've got to close now, I shall be home in exactly 28 days. Hope all is well, give my love etc. To Father, Ken, Joe & yourself of course. Pass my new address on will you. I haven't time just now to write to anyone else, (I say write, I should say scribble)

I'll write again Friday, so until then

Cheerio etc.

Your affectionate brother, Harry xx

ST AUSTELL CORNWALL 1ST SEPT 1940

Dear Sister,

Just a few lines to let you know that I'm still alive "Only just though" I've never worked or moved as fast in all my life, as I am doing now! 12 hours a day continuous instruction, lectures on military law, maps, economy, health etc. & dozens more. All of which have to be taken down and swotted in your spare time which we don't get in between rifle & drill instruction, physical training and at the end of the day, four days a week at 6 p.m. we go on guard until 6 a.m.! A fact! We don't even get a break after guard, straight to PT before breakfast, Cool! They either turn you out efficient or wear you out, so far I am getting on fine, another 21 days & I shall be home for a rest!! Either a full Sergeant or a corporal, or maybe even a Pte! All men promoted from Pte to Sergeant etc. Must go through this course, a War Office order, to retain the promotion or advance from it.

Well, I wonder what you are doing, hope everything is all right, did you get your frock?

Will you please ask Father if he will advance me the small sum of about 3/- until Friday, on which day I shall return it. This Friday I didn't receive any pay owing to my No 2 pay book not being forwarded in time. I shall have to wait now until this coming Friday for double wages. The reason for my asking is obvious, I'm rather flat, so I would appreciate it (if possible). Seems as if I need something every time I write. Anyway, I'm going to close now, its Sunday afternoon & in a few mins we've got to carry on with drill. So think about me when you're resting, I'm working & when you're working so am I! But much harder!

Have you heard from Alf yet? You ought to write to his C.O., will you? Or perhaps Father will!

Give my love to everyone & also to any spare inquirers & of course to yourself with much ado & write back quickly. In about 15 days time start throwing my bed about a bit will you. "A thank you" Note different writing, "good eh?"

Cheerio till next time

Your affectionate bro, Harry xxxx XX.

ST AUSTELL CORNWALL 7TH SEPT 1940

Dear Sister

Thank you so much for your letter & contents, it was quite sufficient and I'll return it.

Am glad to hear you are taking up writing, when you have written something, send it to me, it will pass the lonely hours by. You ask me if I am fit, cool! I've got muscles on my elbows, a fact. But I'm getting a voice like a bear. We have vocal training now before breakfast, one hour of shouting. I've lost my voice twice. Things are still going strong. In a few minutes it will be 7.40 and I shall be wending my way to the physical training ground to be treated to 3/4 hour of what the instructors call mild exercise. My description of it is hardly printable. You ought to see me leaping about turning cartwheels, etc. "Like a blinking gazelle" "Whoopie" The first three days I was so stiff I creaked every time I moved. But it's worn off now. I weighed myself last night and found the result was 12st 11lb. I've lost 3 1/2 lb since leaving Manchester. I can do with it.

Am afraid that this sentence is rather late, its now Friday afternoon. I couldn't finish last night. I've done my washing! Had a

swim and done up my bed, its our weekly half day, we received our pay, 5/- again! What they expect us to do heaven knows. That makes me £1.18s in credit since leaving Manchester. It's all right, but the trouble is you can't draw it until you go on leave. We went to see the Major after pay parade and let off steam especially some of the older men, but to no avail. Until the records office forward the field service papers. (papers that follow a soldier when on the move). We can do nothing. That may sound Greek to you but its part of the army regs. When a soldier is transferred, his personal reference papers A.S.A.P. must be forwarded to his destination from record office & until those papers are received even a Sergeant Major must mark time and be considered a private. That works all right as it prevents any man or men adopting a false position. Got it? But crikey, I shouldn't care to go to China on that system. Lets hope they are through by next Friday. We had a lovely night last night, (Thurs.) We were on fire picket. A fire picket turns out in an air raid or air raid warning & stands by in case of fire. Well, last night we had 3 warnings, 11 pm, 2.30 am and 5.15 am. Each time get out of bed, dress & stand in the square. I got two hours sleep! You see it doesn't make any difference to training, if you lose a nights sleep, its just too bad! But I bet Adolf's ears were burning, the verbal expressions used by us were almost sufficient to start a fire, never mind the incendiary bombs!

Well it's almost teatime & I'm feeling somewhat hungry so I think I'll close. If you haven't sent me your photo, do by all means. By the way, treat my bed very carefully, it won't be long now. Have you heard from the Air Ministry? What Alf is thinking about I don't know!

Write when you have time, but I would appreciate if you would post your letters Monday and Thursday, will you? A thank you. Be good & keep cheerful. Give my love to Father, Ken and George. Also in abundance to yourself.

Your affectionate Bro. Harry xxxxxxxxxx

ST AUSTELL CORNWALL 14TH SEPT. 1940

Dearest Sister

In answer to your last letter, it's very nice to hear so often from you "believe me"! Your snap's marvellous, 5 of the chaps want to write to you, but they are not, I'm afraid of sufficient intellect. Seriously though, it's the best yet. You look much better in frocks than you do in uniform!!!

Well, I'm afraid our training has become somewhat erratic, we are having to stand by on the beaches all night now, you will know the reason of course. During the day we carry on with training in full equipment & loaded rifles. It's a deuce of a mess, as "The Bishops daughter" exclaimed! At the time of writing this I'm sat on my bed really exhausted, I've never felt so tired before. We've come off the beach wet through, it's poured down all night and having no cover, we caught it! For some reason or another we are to be allowed the rest of the morning off and instead of having our half-day as usual on Friday, we have to attend lectures! All passes are cancelled and we are confined to barracks. Curse Adolf Hitler! How we long for him to appear whilst on the beaches!!

Anyway, 9 days more from Sat will see us back at Manchester, about a further three...home, all being well! Have you written to the Air Ministry? I know we seem to push all these jobs on to you, but you are the only one we can trust to do anything correctly.

You ask me if I shall take you out when I come home, What do you think I'm coming home for but that! "Twirp!" Am sorry to hear that Raymond is still!!!!!! Do you mean to say that father has allowed him free access to his allowance etc.! Whilst we are on the question of money, if you are not intending to use all the allotment on Monday can you forward me a little of it. I can't seem to manage on 5/-. What you have sent me I'll return when I come home on leave if not before. All the blinkin credit accumulating will be paid to me then, anyway I shan't touch it till then. It will be about a fiver when I draw it, so perhaps going short now is worth it! It doesn't seem quite fair giving you something with one hand and taking it back with the other, does it?

We learnt yesterday our Coy is to be sent home for winter & act as home guards or something, so if I'm Sergeant by the time we are demobilised things are going to be fine "what". The CO wrote to me via the CO of this place & asked me to state whether I should like to go home or be billeted somewhere else. You can imagine what I said! He gave us the privilege of deciding because we took on this course.

Who is Maide engaged to now? I'm sorry I can't write her a note but I've run short of paper!!! Anyway, give the twirp my felicitations or whatever you give them in such a case!

The rain is playing pop outside, hope it will stop before night! It's a lovely place here, but not when it's wet, it's too clayey. They ship china clay from nearby by the way.

When on patrol just before dark last night, I was passing a house and what do you think I saw? A row of almond trees loaded down with nuts, I'm still eating!!

Well I'm just about dry for this time, hope it will do, scribble & all. Keep cheerful no matter what odds! To please me, in future start going down into the air raid shelter during raids. I've seen some awful messes lately, you are not safe in bed!! So please go into it, will you? If you go, Father & Co. will follow. Give my love to Father & Co, tell them they need not expect a letter from me until I receive one from them. Oh, I'd forgotten, Kennie did write, give him my apologies for not answering straight away. I hope he still likes his job, how does he take to long pants? Do write as soon as you can, you are the only correspondent I have now, I've turned strict bachelor. So cheerio and be...etc.

Your very affectionate Bro. Harry xxxxx
Paterx
Have ordered flat hat for leave.

ST AUSTELL CORNWALL 19TH SEPT. 1940

My Dear Sister,

At the moment of writing I'm on duty as guard Commander & having a considerable amount of spare time. I can't think of a better way of spending it than writing to you. Please consider yourself duly flattered!!

It's rather a welcome job at the moment, being on guard. I started at 6 p.m., its now 7.15 p.m. & I shall be on until tomorrow 6 p.m., 24 hours. As I'm unable to sleep for that time, Thursday will be a day off. We have practically finished training now, Monday we have our examination, Tuesday we leave for Manchester. All being well I shall be on leave about Friday, but I'll confirm that as soon as I get to Manchester, something may alter.

I did want to wait until I received a third stripe before coming home, but (providing I pass out here) it would be a week or two

before that would occur & I cant wait.

Do you actually mean that Raymond has left home? I didn't quite understand your letter, surely he has returned by now! If not, perhaps you know where he is?

Had to take rest from the last line, its now 12.30 p.m. Wednesday? I have just received your letter. Funny I should finish of asking where Ray is & getting your letter saying you didn't know! I wonder where he can be? Perhaps at Mothers, or maybe Borobridge? The sooner this war is over and I resume control of NB St, the better (ref. to home, 24 Northbrook St, Leeds) He will be all right though, I wouldn't be surprised if he's returned by the time you get this. I'm glad to hear Ken branched out in long pants, feels quite important I'll bet. Excuse writing please but I'm rather tired.

How is everything looking at home? The leaves are beginning to fall down here & it is getting somewhat cold at night. Have been eating blackberries all morning, all the hedgerows are full with them.

Wish the post was quicker & especially if I had more time I would pick a box and send 'em.

How is the baking progressing? I've got a piece of apple pie (small drawing of slice of pie) and half a cup of cream in the guard tent. Brought to me by an admirer "hm" trouble is she happens to be about 65, in future I'm sticking to 60's and over!

We hear that they are calling the 50's into the AMPC. Tell Father he will walk a blue pencilled sight further than 8 miles if I get hold of him! Whoopee! "Pick em up there"!!!! What a pity its only a rumour. Anyway, I'll give him a bit of practice when I come home, just in case. Well, I don't think there is anything else I can mention now besides that in 1/2 an hour I shall have to turn out my guard for relief inspection & I have got a lot of work to do. I am looking forward to next week, "I'll say!" says me!

I've not written to anyone else this last three weeks so there will be some grumbling somewhere!

So till the next time cheerio little gel. Am forwarding you the 5/- back tomorrow (Friday) Thank you ever so much for sending it.

I had a surprise Tuesday, the other chaps & myself received 6/- in fags from the Coy in Manchester, sort of nice of them, so I will not need any money, pity I didn't know beforehand. Anyway, cheerio again, be good etc.etc. Continue with your Sunday dinners. "From a full belly riseth a contented mind" excuse type of language, but that is what it says on the dining room wall & its true, I've been in a bad temper ever since I came here!

All Love, yours Harry. Etc. To Pop, Ray & Ken.

ST AUSTELL CORNWALL 24 SEPT 1940

My Dear Sister,

This is the last of my letters from Cornwall. Have just completed "Examination"

"Am I overjoyed"!! We don't know whether we have passed yet, we shall learn that tomorrow. "I have no doubts"! pardon my "ego"! But what an exam! The worst part was the voice and command exam, we had to go before the Colonel and drill a section of men. You know what my voice is like! Well after 18 lessons on sheer bawling its now something awful. I can hardly speak quietly, every time I breathe out things move! So I passed that exam with about full marks. The only thing that I worried about is the written exam, in all we have been through my memory still persists in being dormant at the wrong time.

We had 325 questions to answer and out of that 275 have to be correct, so if I've passed that I deserve more than a mere certificate!

Anyway, when I've finished this I'm going to clean my equipment, rifle etc. they have presented me with a new one (rifle) along with 7 more students for getting the highest scores at shooting, I was fourth, 2 bulls and an inner circle. It was all a farce giving us new rifles, they just happened to have these when they told us to keep and retain them for the duration and to save an argument as to who should have them.

Well, I shall soon know whether or not I shall get home this weekend. I shall let you know by letter or postcard or even telegram on Sat morn if not before. At the moment there is a general stand to arms in the country, "official Secret" but I don't think that will affect us in Manchester.

Jerry has been sending a lot of post over lately. We haven't undressed for 10 days and my pants look as if they were issued in 1914! Anyone that passes out of here as I mentioned before will deserve all they get under these circumstances.

I can't understand where Ray can be, there is something funny, he must be with someone he knows, its damned worrying. But as you say, you will certainly be getting some peace! "What a life!"

Am sorry to hear that Father is having to work over, ask him if he is getting overtime, "HO HO"

You remember me mentioning apple pie, well, the dear old twirp wants me to promise to return after the war and take over her business, I found out she owns 4 guest houses, one of them a damned hotel! I'm sure she's a bit "you know", if only we had not been confined to barracks I could have had a blinkin holiday! She sends her car down every night to see if I'm allowed out, it's a joke. You would laugh if you could meet her, she's something like Ma Senton* but a lot older. She says she always wanted a son like me, ahem! The sooner I get away from here the better!

I think I'll finish now and drop a line to Eddie, while I have time. So cheerio sweet one. When you hear the postman the next time and you see a pencil mark on the letter don't bother to open it straightaway but get upstairs and turn back my bed, put your warpaint on and catch a tram.

Be good and etc. etc.

Your affectionate Bro. Harry.

XXXXXXXXXX

Don't write any more until you hear from me. Regards to Pop & Ken
Ma Coates etc. if necessary.

* Milkman's wife, Northbrook St. LEEDS.

MANCHESTER 27TH SEPT 1940 POST CARD

Dear Sister

Am unable to come home just yet. Shall be home for 1 day next week. Will send card the day before. I am to be made Sgt. Next week as arranged !!! Wish I could have come as I said but it can't be helped. So cheerio until next week.

Yours Affectionately, Cpl. H. Carass

MANCHESTER 17TH OCTOBER 1940

My Dear Little Sister,

It gives me great pleasure to inform you that I shall be home on Sat, City Station (I believe) at 9.15. The only trouble is that it is only for the day. Nevertheless, my appearance should (I hope) greatly please and delight you etc. And also atone for my lack of thought in not having written to you before this, especially after receiving two very welcome and interesting letters from you and Ken. However, you will forgive me

no doubt.

I have not as yet been promoted, we are waiting for our D.C. Major to return from his course and at the moment things are somewhat "you know". Anyway going to close now, see you on Sat. Be good.

Your affectionate Bro' Harry XXXXXX
PTO

If you think of meeting me I shall be in front of the Queen Hotel 9.15 AM. But don't come and upset your work, remember, "heigh ho, heigh ho, its off to work we go!

MANCHESTER 18TH OCT 1940

Dear Sister,

Time of arrival will be delayed, do not come to meet me. Am having to catch later train,

"Curse it " Excuse short note, am in a hurry to catch post.

All Love, Harry XX

MANCHESTER 22nd OCT 1940

My Dear Sister,

Herewith begins the promised epistle. I hope everything is the same as I left it! We have had quite a busy and disturbing weekend, but I'll come to that later.

At the moment I'm a " Guard Commander ", this time at a military prison at the other side of Manchester, quite a job. I've got 32 jail birds in at the moment and I've just had a raid warning so I've bundled em into the cellar, (not without a somewhat excessive amount of grumbling) and returned to my office to write this. Couldn't stick the smell in the cellar.

The poor blighters go through it here. They may come in and be detained for a week and unless they possess towels etc., they can't wash or shave! Believe me, the things that move about here are not all human!!

However, it's quite a change, wish it was a weekly job instead of " forty eight hours "

Did Father tell you we had to skedaddle on Sat night to avoid being adopted? Tell him I enjoyed the drinks we had, but I've been hopping about ever since, its no good, I can't take it!

Now to an official secret, just look around before you read this!! On Sat night 6pm we were dragged on parade and told to pack and prepare to move, under two hours notice. " obviously, something is up " it not only applies to us, but the entire forces in Manchester. We are still standing by, what is going to happen we can't say, but keep cool, it may be all a front.

We have just been out to see "jerry", he's just passed overhead, we couldn't see him only his smoke trail or whatever they call it. He was too high up, they don't come down very low, the anti-aircraft defence is far too strong especially in daytime. You must consider yourselves fortunate in Leeds, we are getting sick of hearing the sirens go, especially at night. But still, its got to be done, it could be worse.

You see, in barracks we poor N.C.O.'s have got to turn out every time, there are not enough of us to take turns. Now I'm going to tell you something else, my writings getting worse, must be my horny palms etc.

Well, I don't think there is much more to say at the moment, give the family my affection etc. Tell Ken I haven't quite time to write a letter to him just now, but I will do. Tell him to keep the creases in his pants well creased, a sign of good business etc. Give anybody else my respects that might be in your opinion we worthy of them. Let me have an answer straight away, don't keep me waiting!!! Wish it was three weeks from now! I'm dying to get into my own bed

(and have my socks darned) By the way, you look very "doo da" in your new coat. But perhaps you are becoming too accustomed to using rather a lot of flour, if you don't object to my saying so. Too much, like too little spoils the effect. I had better shut up or you will be falling out with me. So cheerio etc. until approx. Friday, be good, be careful (blackout etc.) and don't work too hard !!! Tell Raymond that I hope he has succeeded in getting a job! bet you do too!!

All Affectionate thoughts etc.
Bor. Harry XXX

MANCHESTER 28th OCTOBER 1940

Dear Sister,

Thank you very much for your letter and contents, very sweet of you! Don't know what I would do without you! "A fact"

Have got a job for you! You have got to think up a good excuse for me to enable me to obtain my leave on compassionate grounds. Otherwise I don't look like getting home until next year. Things have been changed again, all privilege leave is temporarily cancelled, why we don't know! The only way we can get it is for compassionate reasons, illness at home etc. etc. The only trouble is you have to furnish proof etc.

I'm getting really tired of the carrying on here. If I don't get a blinkin rest I'll go nuts!

Has anything fresh happened in Chaply recently? Any air raids? I believe I told you that we are packed ready to move if called for. Well, apparently we are to act as relief to the AMP in London. We don't know when but it looks as if it will be soon. It will be quite a change! Am glad to hear you have heard from Alf, did he give you any reason for not having written before? Don't suppose so.

Well I can't think of much more at the moment. Am a very poor letter writer aren't I? In a few minutes I am going on parade to teach a section a lot of stuff they don't want to learn so I had better go and gargle.

This last few weeks I've apparently been on trial, for this morning, they (the clerk) posted a notice on the board acclaiming me as COY drill instructor, quite a distinction but a hell of a strain on the vocal cords and what's more, no other stripe yet.

Can't understand it. Perhaps they are waiting for the Major to return. Anyway keep cheerful contented and happy etc. and try to think of a reason for leave etc. Is Irene Webb going to S.Africa? Pity she isn't someone else, I could have used her as an excuse. The, you know "beloved etc. departing for foreign soil and extreme desire to be present at parting, oh dear"

Well, cheerio my dear Sister, be good and careful. Give my respects to Father, George B and Ken W and to the usual possible-----.

You're Affectionate Bro. Harry XXX

MANCHESTER 31st OCTOBER 1940

My Dear Sister,

Prepare for a shock, I have at last attained the rank of sergeant! Only acting of course but you know what that means, four weeks test and then substantiation. Am coming home for the day Monday. This time definitely 9.15 am. I find now that I shall also be able to have my leave, probably within the next few days. But until Monday I'll say no more as then I shall know for certain, funny how things work out! I hope this cheers you up and lifts you out of the gloom I put you into with my last letter eh? Perhaps as you say I'll be able to do something about mother when I get home though I don't know

what! Forgive this letter being short but I'm in rather a hurry, I've just snatched a few minutes to write this and let you know etc. Hope you feel better, be good until Monday,

Yours etc. Bro. Harry XXXX

Written down side of letter "Love to Pa and Bros."

DAVYHULME MILITARY HOSPITAL MANCHESTER 7th NOV 1940

My Dear Sister,

I have rather a surprise for you, at the moment of writing I'm in bed, enjoying a few days rest.

On Tuesday morning I woke up with a double head and shaking knees, so I reported sick. Two hours later I was being tucked up in bed in hospital! Nothing serious, just a bad cold. They happen to be particular about catching those things at the beginning apparently.

I shall be about four days before I'm allowed out, but as fond of bed as I am, I think I shall be rather tired of it, it really does get monotonous lying in bed. However, I've got a pretty nurse who makes a fuss of me but likes now and then to be a little too domineering. For instance, she started to moan at me this morning for getting out of bed but I just scowled at her and she shut up.

They will persist in messing and fooling about with you, forever straightening beds etc. This afternoon I'd just moved my pillows into a comfortable position when in floats my little "taken care of" and puts them all straight saying they couldn't possibly be comfortable! How the deuce could she know? Maybe she was getting her own back for this morning!

Anyway, I trust that all is well at home. This hospital business will not affect my leave so I'll finish for now. Write to same address, letters are bought over daily if any. Be good etc. etc.

Your Affectionate Bro. Harry XXXX
PS Give regards to Pater and family. I hope Ken has found a job.

DAVYHULME MILITARY HOSPITAL MANCHESTER 21st NOV 1940

Dear Sister,

Sorry to disappoint you by not coming on Monday. For some reason my discharge papers are not cleared though I shall get them anytime now, perhaps tomorrow.

I believe it's my fault for their being delayed, you see, when reckoning my credits etc. I found that the clerk had omitted to add the extra pay I'm entitled to as Sgt, approx. £4.15.0 so of course I mentioned it, which seemed to upset em somewhat.

They partly insist that I'm not entitled to it, I insist that I am. The whole trouble is that I'm not substantiated until the 21st of this month.

The usual 21 days wait, you remember I was made Sgt on the first of this month. Well they claim that my being under supervision for discharge during my 21 days does not entitle me to full pay. So the matter went before the paymaster on Monday. It looks by the delay as if I am going to get it, there will be trouble if I don't.

Anyway, expect to see me any day, that's all I can say at the moment. Hope everything is all right at home, give regards etc. and be good.

Your affectionate Bro. Harry XXXX

Harry's career in the army came to a sudden end in November following the re-occurrence of Rheumatic fever he had in childhood. ■

Pegasus Pioneers

September 1944 saw 963
Admin Civil Labour joining up
with the 1st Airborne Division

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: RPCA Archive

SEPTEMBER sunshine in 1944 found five puzzled members of 963 Admin Civil Labour frantically packing kit.

They had been informed they were part of 1st Airborne Division and that they were already a day late in joining their new formation at an airfield. Arrival at Bulford did nothing but add to the puzzle. After two hectic hours they found themselves arrayed in red berets and smocks, and were the proud possessors of a jeep trailer and paratroop helmets. Here, too, they met those who were to be their comrades, including 277 Pioneer Corps Company. This Company had been recalled to England from Normandy after taking part in the land assault. They had been told they were wanted for a "special task", which had later turned out to be work with Airborne Forward Delivery Airfield Group, loading stores and establishing dumps.

Dawn the next day saw a huge crocodile of jeeps heading for the Midlands, each one bulging with newly fledged "Red Devils", travelling they knew not where but all seeking adventure. Such was the exuberance shown that if the destination had been Berlin no-one would have been dismayed. Then followed two awful weeks of briefing and re-briefing, again and again, day after day. As the Allied Armies advanced so had the ultimate destination of the force to be changed. At long last final orders were received that the unit would be strategically placed just outside the left flank of the British spearhead.

The flight started in a gale and as England slowly swayed past details of briefing came to mine, "In the event of a plane getting hit the crew will bale out, airborne personnel will take their chance". The skies over the North Sea proved boisterous and it was easy to sympathise with the unknown men who waved from a rubber dinghy 700 feet below. To them the passing of such a mighty armada must have been symbolic – a big brother coming into a fight on the side of a smaller brother who had been knocked down by a bully. Towards the Belgium coast a British submarine nosed forward to its duty. It was difficult to imagine that the thing which looked like a huge cigar was in reality a dangerous fighting machine.

The Belgium coast, Brussels, long road convoys covered with white starts, other without visible markings, tiny puffs of smoke from German guns, chancing camouflage. Nijmegen bridge being plastered. This was the view from a grandstand seat at one of the biggest two sided tussles ever staged. A sudden tile, a rush of

air, a slide across the sky and the landing was accomplished. Planes lined two abreast on a small wet green space surrounded by canals. There was no runway, no landing sock; just wet grass and a few glider pilots waving silk squares to give wind directions.

AIRBORN IN TWO HOURS

Here the men of 277 Company came into their own and with complete indifference to the fact that they were among the first allied troops to land in German occupied Holland they off-loaded the planes so quickly that none were grounded for more than a few minutes. The entire flight of over 200 planes was off-loaded and airborne again in approximately two hours. Then a quick forming of patrols and guards, followed by a meal in hastily dug fox holes. It was a quiet night, broken only by news that the Germans were pulling out from a village two miles away. Where noise had been expected, quiet was found.

At first light "963" became mobile. A short journey, and the fording of a canal, brought the party to the next village.

"Where is the Mayor?", they asked.

"There isn't one", was the reply.

"Where is the Labour Exchange?"

"There isn't one."

"Who runs the village?"

"Father X."

INVITATION DECLINED

So, amid great excitement the first British jeep seen in the village pulled up at the Priest's house. A mixture of Dutch and German brought out the information that manpower in the village was in short supply but that it was much better in the next town which was still held by the Germans. An invitation to accompany the Priest to the town was instantly declined. A compromise was reached and a journey was made to the next village from where the unit was able to procure sufficient tentage to deep dry in the succeeding days.

Then followed a few lazy days with no one using civil labour and time being spent in ration hunting. British supplies were not arriving and all had to get what they could where they could. A civilian car and a knowledge of the language gave "963" a good issue of German rations which, although not good, certainly helped out.

Civil labour remained almost unwanted, for the units preferred to make use of 277 Company rather than take the risk of using civilians so far forward.

The force gradually broke up but 277 Company stayed on and with REs built an alternative pontoon bridge over the river Waal, when the Nijmegen bridge came

under shell fire. The task was done under fire from which the company suffered eight casualties.

CHASING THEIR TAIL

Officers and men of "963" spent most of their time chasing their sea-tail. The tail contained all their bedding and personal kit and went astray so long that at one time they despaired of ever having a clean shirt again. Their day became dominated by laundry questions. Every day one of the unit washed his smalls and was then off duty until they were dry. The OC had the indignity forced upon him of appearing at Divisional HQ in beret, a smock, a pair of trousers and boots.

This was a strange adventure. It could have been so different had luck and the weather been on the side of our fighting men. For those who were in the operation it was thrilling to think that they of all the Pioneer Corps had been chosen for the job. At least, even if they did not get the chance to help the men of Arnhem, they did make history by being the first Pegasus Pioneers.

Major S CLAPP

The above appeared in a Souvenir magazine issued commemorating the record of the Pioneer Corps Groups and Companies in 21st Army Group in 1946 it was entitled "The Pioneer – British Army of the Rhine."

The following is an extract from the War Diary of 277 Company Pioneer Corps

20 Aug 44	Landed in Normandy and proceed to SUBLES – working at ESBD and TN (Transport) Stores Depot.
27 Aug 44	Moved to ST MARTIN DES ENTREES – railway construction.
31 Aug 44	Returned to UK and proceeded to BULFORD. Joined 1st Airborne Division and prepare for the drop on ARNHEM. Due to operate in 162 FMC but found operationally impossible so unit formed at GRAVE under the administration of 21st Army Group.
19 Sep 44	Moved to SPANHOE, Lincs.
26 Sep 44	Landed in HOLLAND – clearing airstrip
28 Sep 44	Moved to REEK, Holland – 2 Sections at NIJMEGEN
4 Oct 44	Moved to NIJMEGEN
1 Nov 44	Road maintenance
17 Feb 45	Moved to CLOISTER near CLEVE – road maintenance
12 Mar 45	Moved to REISCHWALD Forest – road maintenance
26 Mar 45	Working on 'BLACKFRIARS BRIDGE' over the RHINE. ■



My wartime service in the Pioneers

Ray is 87 and served in the Pioneer Corps between 1944 and 1946. He has only joined the Association last year! Here is his account of the war.

Report: Raymond Edward Watson
Picture: Gareth Watson

MY name is Raymond Edward Watson (known as Ray or Ted), I am now 87 and I served in the Pioneers Corps between 1944 and 1946. I joined the association last year after my son found the details on the internet when he started to get interested in my wartime experiences. With his encouragement I have written an account of my war, as best I can remember it after 70 odd years. I hope you find it of interest.

I was nearly 14 when the war started, had just left school and was living with my mother and father in the village of Brandesburton in Yorkshire, about 15 miles north of Hull. You might assume that a small village would be a sleepy backwater in the war but next to Brandesburton, no more than a mile across the fields, was RAF Catfoss, a training aerodrome where in peacetime we'd watched aerobatic displays at the Empire Day air show and which was now expanding for wartime use.

Catfoss brought the war to our doorstep and it soon became clear that most of the danger would come from our own side. What was probably the village's first bomb was dropped, not by the Germans, but by one of our planes coming into land at the airfield. It was a land mine – accidentally jettisoned, we were told later, when the bomb release mechanism jammed – and it fell into a heap of manure in the fold yard of the farm at the back of our house. The bomb didn't go off, thank goodness; if it had our house and everything around it would have been destroyed; and we spent an anxious night in the village hall while they defused it and I wonder to this day if it was the soft landing that saved us.

A few months after this incident, early in 1941, I started working at Catfoss as a civilian labourer helping to lay concrete runways and dispersal points. The airfield, by this time an Operational Training Unit for Coastal Command, had three runways in the shape of an extended letter A; two of those runways were then grass and the one existing hardened runway needed extending so it could handle larger bombers. We also laid drainage for the runways, filled bomb craters and cleared the runways of the gravel and other debris which could be thrown up in a crash.

Being a training airfield there were a steady stream of crashes, some of them fatal for their novice crews. Most of the training at Catfoss was on twin-engined planes; what I expect are now half-forgotten names – Ansons, Oxfords, Blenheims, and particularly Beaufighters which were an effective, heavily-armed night fighter and mainstay of Coastal Command's strike force. It was said the Beaufighter's engines made them front-heavy and difficult to handle and, in inexperienced hands, I watched them swing across the runway and even flip over. Sometimes we would be working at the end of the runway as planes were taking off and I can remember a few anxious moments wondering if the struggling pilot was going to get the plane off the ground in time.

It was a few months after I started work at Catfoss that I had my second narrow escape. It happened early in the morning as dawn was breaking when we were crossing a runway to start work. A lone bomber was

descending from the east with its lights on and its undercarriage down. It was assumed to be a Blenheim coming in to land so the runway lights were switched on but, when the plane was half-way down, it opened fire. The "Blenheim" was actually a Junkers 88. We dived into the ditch at the side of the runway as the Germans strafed the planes parked up at dispersal points alongside. As it gained altitude and headed off we got out of the ditch, shaken. The airfield defences hadn't fired a shot, we were told later they couldn't open fire without permission from HQ.

I continued to work at the airfield until May 1943 when, aged 17½, I went to Hull with some friends and enlisted. It was a few months before I would have been called up anyway but I remember part of my motivation in volunteering was to get into the forces rather than be sent down the mines. I was sent to Chesterfield for basic training but, literally a few days in, a group of us were doing fatigues one evening – cutting up cabbages – when the hand of the man next to me slipped and his knife slashed the back of my right hand, badly damaging the tendons of my middle finger.

If I needed a reminder of why I hadn't wanted to go down the mines I got it in Chesterfield hospital as I was put in a ward with miners who had been injured – lost limbs even – in pit accidents. I was very happy to leave hospital once the doctors had repaired the damage but I spent the next six months in a convalescent home – Hargate Hall in Derbyshire – regaining the use of my hand.

From Hargate Hall I was sent first to a convalescent depot at Halifax to get back to fitness. With me were men who had been wounded in action and were being readied for a return to active service. We spent the next few weeks running up and down slag heaps and being drilled by a Parachute Regiment Sergeant Major who grew increasingly frustrated at our inability to reach his standards, as hard as we tried, until eventually he admitted defeat and gave up. But I passed the fitness test and was ready for another go at basic training, this time at Bradford.

One of the requirements of basic training was to throw two hand grenades. In fact we only threw the second grenade as the first was thrown as a demonstration by the sergeant in charge. For the second one the sergeant pulled the pin and handed the grenade to you to throw. If this was for safety reasons it failed in the case of one of our squad who, when the sergeant handed him the grenade, promptly dropped it into the pit. The sergeant reacted quickly, picked it up and threw it clear, yelling at us to get down behind the sandbags. It exploded in the air and it was close enough that we could feel the force of the explosion.

As well as my hand injury, I had very poor sight in my left eye. It didn't affect my shooting as that was the eye I closed when taking aim but, on completion of my basic training, I was graded A4, fit for Home service only, and that's how I came to join the Pioneers Corps; posted to 840 Smoke Company, who were stationed in Devonport providing air raid smoke screen cover for the docks and shipping. This was in the run-up to D-Day.

840 company operated the Haslar smoke machine. The Haslar was usually mounted on a trailer pulled by a Bedford truck or sometimes directly on the truck itself. The

mechanism, a contortion of pipes, valves and gauges, was fed by oil and water tanks – there were tanks on both the truck and trailer – and was connected to a large, cowled metal chimney which hung precipitously over the back of the trailer. The Haslar worked by heating and condensing oil to form smoke which would tumble out of the chimney and hang as a low-level, noxious cloud obscuring the ground from the air.

Of course, this marvel of science and engineering was only effective if the wind was blowing in the right direction.

We usually went out on duty in the late afternoon and remained on standby through the long night at sites around the harbour dictated by the weather forecast. When the wind moved, we moved. Housewives with washing on the line were never very pleased to see us as the smoke deposited a sooty layer over everything in its shadow, but we rarely lit up. I can only remember one German air raid during the time I was there so the few other times we generated smoke were training exercises and most nights were just spent trying to stay alert.

Each Haslar had a two man crew, a driver and an operator – my role. When the order came to light up it was my job to open the outlet valve, ignite oily rags and feed them into an opening at the base of the chimney. Then it was a matter of adjusting the flow until the smoke turned from black to a biscuit colour, which apparently provided the optimal cover. It was a dirty job so we spent most of our time in denims. It could occasionally be a dangerous job as well and one of our company's Haslars – not mine – did accidentally go up in flames. At the time I thought it was strange that we were never issued with ammunition, even though we always carried our rifles on duty, but on reflection perhaps they were worried that oil tanks and live ammunition were a potentially explosive mix.

As well as the regular Haslars on Bedford trucks we also operated Haslars on permanently moored barges in the harbour. I was never keen on the barges, not only would they rock violently when hit by the wash from passing vessels but they were moored close to ammunition ships and we knew that, if one of those were to blow up, we would stand no chance.

The barges and the dockside did give us a front-row seat, however, to watch some of the comings and goings in the harbour which was, naturally, crowded with shipping in that Spring of 1944. All the big naval vessels called into Plymouth – battleships, destroyers and cruisers – including one of the big American battleships but it's the regular traffic I particularly remember: H.M.S. Black Prince, a light cruiser and Channel raider, and the motor torpedo boats which would both slip out towards dusk to attack German convoys along the French coast.

When D-Day came we knew what had happened simply because all the ships had left the harbour. A few months later, with the threat of German air raids gone, 840 Smoke Company was wound up. Our drivers were posted to the RASC and many went over to France. I found myself with around 30 of the non-drivers heading north on a train for a new assignment.

Our destination was a place called Springhill Camp in the Gloucestershire

countryside, known officially as 185 POW Camp, one of the many camps hastily constructed after D-Day to cater for the thousands of German prisoners arriving in the country. When we reached the camp they were just finishing construction and the first prisoners were yet to arrive.

The camp lay in a hollow close to woodland at a crossroads on the road between Moreton-in-the-Marsh and Evesham. Roughly octagonal in shape, it was surrounded by parallel wire fences and guarded by four crude, wooden watchtowers. Inside, seemingly scattered at random, were a mix of huts of various shapes, sizes and methods of construction: wood; concrete and brick; and corrugated Nissen huts. The majority of these were, naturally, accommodation for the prisoners who slept 70-80 per hut in bunk beds, sometimes triple bunks, but other huts were used in the administration of the camp or made a basic provision for the prisoners' needs – cookhouse, dining hall, chapel, sick quarters, wash houses and latrines – and there was a recreation ground where they played football, practising penalties no doubt.

The garrison numbered about 100 strong and, apart from the Pioneers, included a mix of men from other regiments who were not rated fit enough for active service. I estimate that, eventually, there were 2,000-3,000 POWs in the camp. They were low-risk prisoners – not expected to cause trouble – private soldiers and junior NCOs from the Wehrmacht; and not just Germans, there were Poles and Russians who'd fought alongside them, I remember. This was my first sight of Germans up-close, the first time the enemy had a face. That felt a bit strange at first but you soon got used to it.

When new prisoners arrived at the camp they were interviewed by the headquarters staff who had their offices inside the main gate. I would describe the headquarters company as a cross between the Intelligence Corps and the Military Police; though I'm not sure they were either. Trained in interrogation and including German speakers they really controlled the camp and the rest of the garrison were there to support them.

Although new prisoners were meant to be pre-sorted, sometimes in these initial interviews higher risk prisoners – like SS and U-Boat crew – were found to have slipped through and we had to escort them to another camp at Comrie in Scotland. We travelled by train, there would be 4 guards, usually led by a sergeant and a corporal, to 2 or 3 prisoners. Those were the days of corridor trains and we would secure a compartment and keep a watch over them but, unlike at Plymouth, this time at least we were armed. We would arrive at the camp at Comrie in the evening so we would have to spend the night there. The camp was run by Poles, a tough bunch who hated the Germans, and we were warned bluntly to stay inside our hut until morning or we risked being shot on sight.

We weren't often in such close contact with prisoners and, in fact, guards seldom went into the camp except in support of the headquarters staff. Viewed from the perimeter, most prisoners remained distant, grey, anonymous figures, either massed at roll-call or in smaller groups moving around the camp. For that reason I can't tell you much about how they spent their days. Roll-call, which happened three times a day before meals, was the only real structure to the day for those prisoners who didn't work, and many didn't. For those who did, there were some jobs based

inside the camp, cooks and medical orderlies for example, but the biggest working contingent were those who went outside the camp to neighbouring farms where they weeded cabbages or picked potatoes. I would often escort them, perhaps 3 trucks would go out in the morning, 60 prisoners in total, with a driver and guard on each. Only trusted prisoners were allowed outside the camp to work, we would drop them off in batches and only the last group would have a guard; the others were under the farmer's supervision. I am not sure how many prisoners were given the opportunity to work but I think those who did were better off really, life in the camp must have been very claustrophobic and monotonous for the rest.

I did get to know some of those farm workers. Many were friendly enough, spoke good English even, and were clearly relieved to be out of the war but others remained surly, uncooperative. You see, the camp was run according to a strict regime, low risk or not, and that could be a cause of friction with some prisoners who didn't like being told what to do or, indeed, being made to do it. I was threatened by one farm worker – told I would be killed if I ever set foot in Germany – but I didn't take it too seriously. If there was wariness, distrust, dislike even, at times in the relationship between guards and prisoners it shouldn't come as a surprise given the war was still going on; but I am sure boredom and frustration also played a part in these tensions.

The guards' days were more structured but they could be very repetitive. Our regular duties lasted for 24 hours at a time starting around 6pm, made up of perhaps 30 men split into 3 shifts. The first shift would be out patrolling the perimeter or manning the watch towers while the other two shifts would be in the guard house just outside the main gate. One of those shifts would be sleeping, the other had to be more alert, reading perhaps or playing cards, and partially dressed in case the guard was called out. Each shift lasted 2 hours so you were effectively 2 hours on and 4 hours off throughout that 24 hour period.

I spent a lot of my time on duty patrolling on the south and west sides of the camp, close to a wood which bordered the perimeter, and in the watch towers which contained small, battery-powered search lights a bit like a car headlamp. At night these lights traversed the camp but otherwise it could be a lonely vigil waiting for dawn to break.

My imagination had me wondering who was coming up the ladder after me because it wouldn't have taken much for a determined escapee to get out; the fence wire was well spaced out and we would have been quickly overwhelmed in a mass break-out as we were armed, not with a machine gun, but with just a rifle and probably 5 rounds of ammunition.

Of course, things were that way because escapes were not expected; but there were some, though none successful. I remember once there was a rumour of a tunnel but it came to nothing. We did carry out searches of huts during roll-call looking for knives and improvised tools, anything that could be used as a jemmy, but most, if not all, escapes were opportunistic and made by the prisoners who worked on farms. For those left without a guard it was simple enough to slip away if they wanted. Most didn't as they got extra food on the farms and knew when they were well off.

If someone did escape, something like a

ten mile area would be sealed off with extra troops drafted in to help search. Escapees were soon re-captured as we knew where they would go. Those that had tried and failed to escape would be shipped off to a higher security camp and their farming days were over.

When not on duty we were based in our own quarters just beyond the perimeter. Life wasn't much different for the guards as it was for the prisoners. We slept in similar huts, only with single beds instead of bunk beds, froze in winter, washed in cold water and ate pretty much the same food. We did have a NAAFI, though, and the chance to get out to somewhere like Evesham or Broadway; but the camp was a long way from anywhere and we had no transport so a visit to the pub could mean a 3 mile walk each way unless you happened to meet one of the black American drivers who were based nearby and would usually stop and give you a lift.

When I got bored I did find myself wishing for something more adventurous. In the last months of the war some of the guards were re-assigned to active service and sent to Germany as replacements for the heavy losses the infantry were suffering. There were rumours more of us would go but they came to nothing. At the time I was disappointed not to see action but I realise now I might not have lived to this age if I had.

When the end of the war came I viewed it with mixed emotions: I was relieved it was over but its end didn't mean either we or the prisoners were going home soon. Life in the camp carried on but, of course, the regime did relax. For one thing I think we stopped carrying ammunition. More prisoners went out to work on farms and a trade sprang up between the prisoners and guards for materials for the handicrafts which the prisoners made and gave away or bartered or sold locally. These handicrafts, toys particularly, went out with the farm workers who would offer us cigarettes and chocolate in return for the raw materials they needed. I know later some of the prisoners got on very friendly terms with local families who they often gave these handicrafts to but, during my time, the tension in the relationship between the prisoners and the guards never quite went away, despite the arrival of peace.

My service came to an end in March 1946 with early release from the army on Class B as I had experience in the building trade and re-building was obviously a major priority after the war. I returned home, which was now Bridlington, but couldn't find work so I moved to Hull and, a few years later, to London where I live now.

I wonder if there are veterans of 840 Smoke Company or 185 POW Camp still going strong? Not many, I'm guessing. I'd be interested to hear from anyone who knows the places and events I describe, or has photographs perhaps.

From: Gareth Watson
grwson@hotmail.com
Date: Thu, 16 Aug 2012 16:19:01
Hello Norman,

When my dad's article is published in October, do you suggest we include an email address for anyone who's interested to contact us or should we let all correspondence come through the association?

I am happy for this email address to be published with the article and I will pass any questions on to my dad.

Regards, Gareth. ■



Letter from my father

William John Cartwright, Pioneer Corps writes to his brother after the D-Day landings in which he describes his experiences on the beaches

Report: William John Cartwright
Picture: RPCA Archive

WRITTEN on Canadian Red Cross paper in pencil. William John Cartwright, Pioneer Corps Army Number 13113106 to his brother George Cartwright after D Day landings in which he describes his experiences on the Beaches and his return to England.

Hospital in England Tuesday 13th June

Dear George

Just a few lines to let you know that I am back in England again after 5 1/2 days of the invasion beaches.

I am in "dock" with a swollen knee but I don't know yet what is wrong with it although it can't be serious for I manage to walk up and down on it. This is how it all happened as far as I know.

We landed OK on "D-Day" a few hours after the assault troops and there wasn't much opposition for our troops were well off the beaches, all we encountered were snipers and mortar bombs. All went well for me although there were a lot getting panned out mostly by mortar and dive bombers but on Thursday morning I happened to be in a spot when he dive bombed and the blast knocked me flat and started a big fire which was on us before we could get up.

I lost everything including my blouse with my money, wrist watch, wallet, fountain pen, AB64, and all my equipment etc. and I think I was lucky to get out at all. On getting away from the fire I found out

that my knee was a bit stiff but I didn't pay much attention to it. Next day though I couldn't walk so the CO sent me to the field Dressing Station where the MO put me on a stretcher for evacuation to England.

Well Bro. I have had a real sample of war now and I must say I am not keen on it although it wasn't as tough as I expected and once we push further inland it ought to be quite easy on the beaches, where most of our work is done. As it is now, we are within easy range of his coastal batteries, mortars and bombers and our main object was "dig low" the deeper the better.

I hope Mother doesn't worry because I am in "dock" but I assure her that after a bit of rest I will be OK. It was the biggest surprise of my life to find out I was coming back to "Blighty".

We seem to be doing fairly well out there but believe me George it is hard work and a tough job, and the infantry are having a hell of a life but they seem to be in good spirits and I think it is a decided step which had to come before we could ever get back to "civvy street."

We were expecting to move from this hospital although we only arrived here off the boat yesterday, leaving France on Sunday, my birthday, what a way to spend my birthday travelling across the channel in a hospital ship!

We didn't have a single shot fired on us going across until the "ramps" went down but I expected to see big high walls, mines and all kinds of things but all we found were snipers mostly youngsters, even two days after we had been in, they were

fetching snipers out of houses overlooking the beaches who had been taking an occasional shot at our chaps and then moving about in underground tunnels. The RAF have done fine work though and still are.

I am hoping to get a spot of leave after this but don't know what will happen to me now.

I had better close now will give you my address as soon as possible

Cheerio for now
Bill.

Ed Note: Bill landed on D Day with 53 Company Pioneer Corps, an extract from the War Diary of that unit shows:

5 Jun 44	Embarked NEWHAVEN – 90% of coy sea-sick
6 Jun 44	Landed in first wave in NORMANDY. HQ established within 2 1/2 hours of landing. Under shell fire throughout day. 1 OR killed, 11 ORs wounded & 9 ORs missing
7 Jun 44	6 sections on beaches with RE on stores and maintaining beach exits 1 section collecting dead 1 section miscellaneous duties 2 sections at Beach Sub Area and Beach Group HQs
8 Jun 44	1 OR missing
9 Jun 44	4 ORs missing. These were with the unit transport (1 x 3 tonner, 1 x 15 cwt, 2 motorcycles) and accompanying stores which were also lost. ■

Suez Crisis

In the last newsletter (April 2012) we published an article on Suez, unfortunately we did not have many photographs to accompany the article. We have recently found a selection of photographs from that period and have decided to publish some of them.



■ Officers of 30 Group Faroe Islands 1942/43 Group
Commander Lt Col JE Adamson DSO

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Pioneers at Work

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Laughing faces of Officers – Day of Departure

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ First UNO Troops to arrive

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Recovery of Sten. Diver just handing the sten up.

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Taken from RE Offrs Mess

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Our home – Navy House

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ 522 Coy RPC (OC & 2IC)

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Day of Departure – Bill Steadon on the rail

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ A Happy Day!

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ 30 Pioneer Group Guard of Honour for Lt Gen WD Morgan CB DSO MC GOC-in-C Southern Command, Aldershot, 21 December 1944.

Picture: RPCA Archive

Press Cuttings 1940

The following have been taken from our archives. These cuttings are all from the year 1940, as the main story in this Newsletter "Lost on France" was also based on that year. It is the intention in future Newsletters to print details from other years.

Report: Norman Brown
RPCA Archive

THE following have been taken from our archives. These cuttings are all from the year 1940, as the main story in this Newsletter "Lost on France" was also based on that year, it is the intention in future Newsletters to print details from other years.

The Times 7 Mar 40 EX-GERMAN NCO IN BRITISH ARMY

Samuel (or Willy) Teller, 48, described as a butler, who served in the last War as a sergeant-major in the German Army and who has now been accepted by the British Army, was at Liverpool Police Court yesterday sentenced to one day's imprisonment – meaning immediate release. He was accused under the Aliens Order of failing to furnish to the registration officer at Liverpool particulars as to the date on which his residence was to be changed and his intended place of residence. Mr TA Smith, for the prosecution, said that Teller had been freed from restrictions by the Aliens Tribunal at Liverpool. He failed to notify his removal from one address to another, and said that he had been too busy to notify the change. He thought that he had 14 days in which to notify, and expressed his regret. Mr Smith added that Teller's conduct had been satisfactory and he had been accepted for service with the British Auxiliary Pioneer Corps.

(Ed note: Willy Teller (DOB 3 Jun 91) enlisted at Liverpool and joined 3 Centre Pioneer Corps for training on 12 Mar 40 and was discharged on medical grounds on 23 Sep 40)

Hansard 20 Mar 40 JEWS AND ARABS ENLISTMENT

Sir A. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies how many Jews and how many Arabs, respectively, have enlisted in Palestine for service overseas since the war began?

The Secretary of State for the Colonies (Mr. Malcolm MacDonald) Since the war began 1,709 Jews and 392 Arabs have enlisted in Palestine for service overseas. These figures include the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps already in France, which contains 742 Jews and 306 Arabs.

Mr. T. Williams: Will the right hon. Gentleman say why he could not give the House the figures when they were asked for last week, and since there are two Jewish volunteers to every one Arab, does not that definitely prove the loyalty of the Jews to this country?

Mr. MacDonald The reason why I did not give the figures last week was the reason I gave in answer to my hon. and gallant Friend's Question, which was that the exact figures were not available in this country, and I had to get them from the High Commissioner. With regard to the second part of the Question, nobody doubts the loyalty of the Jews to this country, and we very greatly appreciate it. We appreciate the help we are getting from both the Jews and

the Arabs in Palestine.

Mr. Williams May I ask—

Mr. Speaker rose—

Mr. Williams On a point of Order. Statements have been made, presumably officially, that there were 700 members of the Auxiliary Pioneer Corps which left Palestine for France. The right hon. Gentleman now intimates that there are about 1,100 members of that Corps, and surely I am entitled to ask the right hon. Gentleman who was responsible for the first so-called official statement of 700 compared with the 1,100 to which he has referred?

Mr. MacDonald I am afraid I have not seen the official statement to which the hon. Member refers, and I very much doubt whether it was official. The figures I have given are the accurate figures of the unit serving in France.

Mr. McGovern Can the right hon. Gentleman tell us how many M.Ps. have volunteered for service?

The Times 15 Apr 40 HANDY MEN WANTED BY THE ARMY NEW RECRUITING CAMPAIGN

The War Office is starting a national campaign to recruit thousands of recruits this year for the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps. Men between 30 and 50 years are wanted, and defective eyesight or any other slight physical disability will not be a handicap to those otherwise fit. Their duties will include the handling of stores, ammunition and fuel at docks, railheads, and dumps; keeping roads in repair and making new ones; building camps; clearing sites for new aerodromes; and similar work.

In the last War the numbers in the AMPC ran well into six figures. They relieved the fighting troops of immense burdens, and during the great German attack in March 1918, they showed that they could handle rifles as well as picks and shovels. Rates of pay and allowances are the same as those for the infantry. All details can be obtained from local recruiting offices.

Local authorities throughout the country are being invited to cooperate in the campaign, and at the Mansion House at 1 p.m. today the Lord Mayor will open a recruiting inquiry office, with Adjutant-General Sir Robert Gordon-Finlayson as the chief speaker.

The Times 3 May 40 OLD BILL IN A NEW FILM FINANCIAL HELP FOR THE CHEVRONS CLUB

Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield, as president, has been informed by Mr CM Woolf, of General Film Distributors Limited, that the Chevrons Club is to benefit from the proceeds of the premier performance of Old Bill and His Son, a new film about soldiers. The Chevrons Club, a residential club for petty officers and non-commissioned officers, is appealing for funds for extensions which are urgently needed, and on May 12 Lord Derby will broadcast an appeal.

Part of the new film was made in France. It is a comedy in which Old Bill, his son, and

wife are represented as typical Britons in their reaction to war. Old Bill joins the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps, his son becomes a private in the Army, and an adopted daughter joins the ATS. Old Bill and his son meet in France, and in friendly rivalry have many adventures together.

The screen play is by Captain Bruce Bairnsfather and Mr Ian Dairymple, who also directed the film and was the producer of The Lion Has Wings.

The film will be completed this week, and the date and place of its first showing will then be fixed.

The Times 21 May 40 Letter

Sir, - In your issue of May 17 two correspondents write asking if a "British Foreign Legion" could not be formed for all aliens living in this country, including the refugees from Nazi oppression. They should surely have known that the British Army has agreed to the enlistment of all such aliens as are considered by them as appropriate in the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps. There are at present serving in this corps men of all nationalities and religions; men of all ranks of life - ex-bankers, diplomats tradesmen, and labourers; Roman Catholic priests, Mohammedans, Jews; all serve under British officers who saw service in the last War. Many are already trained and in France, where they are winning a first-class reputation for the corps, both in regard to efficiency and discipline. The work they are called upon to do is of the greatest importance to the successful prosecution of the war.

Recruits can be accepted at any recruiting office and at 17 Duke's Road, Euston Road. Special officers are in attendance to give advice and information on rates of pay and allowances, which are the same as for the British Army. It is to be hoped that all friendly aliens living in the shelter of this country at the time when the very life of the country is at stake will present themselves without delay for enlistment in the Pioneer Corps. Yours faithfully,

The Times 24 May 40 TWO TANKS CAPTURED BY PIONEERS

An exploit by members of the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps (Labour Corps) in capturing two German tanks near Arras was described in London yesterday. Several German tanks entered a village and pulled up at a petrol station to refuel. Groups of pioneers working by the wayside with picks and shovels attacked the tanks and damaged the tracks. Then they disarmed the crews and captured them.

The Times 29 May 40 GALANT B.E.F. PIONEERS CHILDREN PROTECTED IN AIR ATTACK FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT WITH THE RAF IN FRANCE MAY 28

Veterans of the last War, too old to take part in the fierce battles raging near the French coast towns, are nevertheless managing to conduct ground operations of

their own near the areas occupied by units of the Advanced Air Striking Force. Anxious to see service once more in the country where they fought so valiantly 20 odd years ago, they joined the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps – known as the “Amps.” These battalions are the back-bone of the pick-and-shovel army who clear blocked roads and repair the ravages caused by bombs.

While carrying out their normal duties in the last few days they have had several tussles with the enemy. On one occasion a number of “Amps” came across two German tanks which had strayed from their course. They attached the tracks with their picks, put the tanks out of action, and captured the crews. Another little band of veterans was working on a road near the scene of operations when a lorry laden with refugees, mostly children and old people, broke down near them. They repaired the ancient engine and then begged a lift to their base in a village near by. Hardly were they under way again when the lorry was machine-gunned by two Heinkels. The “Amps” jumped out, pushed the refugees into the ditch at the side of the road, and lay over the children, protecting their bodies from the bullets. One of the “Amps” was killed but the child he was covering escaped unhurt.

Hansard 11 Jun 40 CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

24. Sir George Broadbridge asked the Secretary of State for War whether he is aware that conscientious objectors, exempted from military service provided they do work of national importance, are being transferred to the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps for training and are wearing their uniform, which is causing unrest amongst the members of the Pioneer Corps, largely composed of ex-servicemen; and what steps he proposes to take to meet this dissatisfaction?

Mr. Law Conscientious objectors who are exempted from military service do not, of course, come to the Army. As regards those who are registered as liable to be called up for service for non-combatant duties only, I think my hon. Friend is confusing the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps with the Non-Combatant Corps. Such men are not posted to the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps.

The Times 18 Jun 40 VOLUNTEERS FOR THE ARMY A GREAT OPPORTUNITY

There is still a great opportunity for volunteers in Britain's war-time army. To remove any misapprehension that voluntary enlistments can only be made on normal Regular Army engagements, the War Office announced yesterday the following branches of the Service open for the “duration.”

It is particularly emphasized that youths between 18 and 19 and a half are urgently required for young soldiers' companies of Home Defence infantry battalions, where they can obtain valuable experience that will prove beneficial when they are taken into the Army.

Men between 35 and 50 are wanted for Home Defence battalions and the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps. This should appeal to the men who served in the last War and who are again anxious to do their bit.

Tradesmen between 20 and 45 are wanted for the REs, Royal Signals, RASC, RAMC, RAOC, RAPC. In some special units and certain trades maximum age limit is raised to 55 years.

For non-tradesmen between 29 and 35 there are vacancies in the RAC, RA, Infantry, RASC, RAOC, and the CMP, certain

enlistments are permitted up to 55 years. The lower age limit of 29 for non-tradesmen is that now in force. It will move upwards from the date on which each new age group is required to register under the National Service (Armed Forces) Act.

Volunteers between 20 and 35 can also be accepted for the Household Cavalry and Foot Guards. Youths of 19 and 20 can enlist on a normal Regular Army engagement (seven years Colours and five years Reserve) in all Corps, except the RAPC, RAVC, CMP, AMP Coys, and non-combatant Corps.

All age limits and particulars given about are liable to alteration from time to time. Details of trades open and further information can be obtained at any Army Recruiting centre, the address of which can be had at any police station or employment exchange.

Hansard 4 Jul 40 AUXILIARY MILITARY PIONEER CORPS

Colonel A. Evans asked the Secretary of State for War whether he is aware that during the battle in France the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps were armed 100 per cent., and, in addition, manned anti-tank rifles and machine guns of all kinds; and whether, in view of the corps' performance during this time, he will delete the word auxiliary from their title which has now no meaning, as such action would give great satisfaction to all concerned?

Mr. Law My right hon. Friend is aware of the excellent services rendered by the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps, and he will consider the suggestion which my hon. and gallant Friend makes.

Hansard 5 Jul 40 FOREIGN VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Wedgwood asked the Secretary of State for War whether he can give any hope of the early formation of a foreign legion officered by British officers in which friendly aliens in this country, refused for the British Army, could enlist and obtain at least training and discipline?

Mr. Eden As I explained in the answer which I gave to my right hon. Friend and to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing (Sir F. Sanderson) on Tuesday last, French, Polish, Czech, Dutch, Norwegian and Belgian units are being organised and equipped, and friendly aliens who do not join any of these national forces may be enlisted in the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps. A number are so serving already.

Mr. Wedgwood There is no question, then, of their being allowed to serve actively?

Mr. Eden The Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps is serving actively.

Mr. Wedgwood Not with rifles.

Mr. Silverman Can the right hon. Gentleman say whether, when he talks of friendly aliens, he is thinking of aliens who are friendly in the strict sense of the word, that is to say, in the territorial sense?

Mr. Eden No, Sir.

The Times 8 Jul 40 LORD MILNE'S MESSAGE TO PIONEERS

Field-Marshal Lord Milne, on his appointment as Colonel Commandant of the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps, has sent a message to the officers and men of the Corps in which he says:-

“The Corps has been formed only a few short months, but it did not start without traditions. Many of the officers and men had already served with great distinction in other theatres of war, and though they are now older in years their courage, determination, and sense of discipline has been only lately tried once more in the fields of France, and not found wanting. But you are not relying

on the past alone; you are building up day by day a tradition of esprit de corps and service to the country of which all ranks may be proud, and your deeds during the past few weeks have been the admiration of the whole world. I know that the same spirit of sacrifice and self-sacrifice will continue to manifest itself in the work which you are now called upon to carry out.”

Hansard 9 Jul 40 FIELD MARSHAL LORD MILNE

Captain Bellenger asked the Secretary of State for War what is the purpose of the appointment of Field-Marshal Lord Milne as Colonel-Commandant, Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps; and whether this appointment entitles the holder to any additional pay or allowances?

Mr. Eden The appointment of a Colonel-Commandant to the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps follows the precedent of similar appointments in other corps, and I am sure that all ranks of the corps are much encouraged and gratified by the appointment of such a distinguished officer as Lord Milne. The appointment is honorary and carries no emoluments other than a limited entitlement to travelling allowances.

Captain Bellenger While I have no wish to under-rate the distinguished services of this officer, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman whether, in view of the age limit of recruitment of the lower ranks in that corps, he will give an opportunity for those of a humbler station in life to offer their services in the corps?

Mr. Eden Everybody in the Army, I am sure, knows that these appointments of Colonel-Commandant are honorary positions. Lord Milne is already the Commandant of the Royal Regiment of Artillery, and I can tell the hon. and gallant Gentleman that one telegram, received since the announcement, reads as follows: On behalf of all ranks of the 14th Corps A.M.P.C. I thank you for your most inspiring and encouraging message. I assure you we are all behind you to pull our weight on British soil as we did in France.

Sir Percy Harris Is it not a fact that although Lord Milne is old in years, he is young in spirit?

The Times 20 Jul 40 SHOT HIS COMMANDING OFFICER

Found Guilty of wounding his Commanding Officer, Major Cyril Ernest Butler, with intent to do him some grievous bodily harm, by shooting at him, Walter Ernest Dewsberry, 32, a corporal in the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps, was at the Central Criminal Court, and yesterday sentenced to three years' penal servitude. He was found Not Guilty of shooting at Major Butler with intent to murder him.

Dewsberry had been reduced from the rank of acting sergeant to corporal, and it was said he apparently resented this. The prisoner, in evidence, said that on the day of the shooting he had 12 or 14 pints of beer in the morning and about 10 pints at night.

Mr Justice Atkinson, in sentencing Dewsberry, said to him: “But for the grace of God and the skill of the surgeon, I would now be sentencing you to death. You seem to have had some minor grievance, and that led you to spend the evening drinking. It ought to be impossible for publicans, for their own gain, to go on serving men in uniform with drink after drink, and then turn them out useless as soldiers, and a possible danger to the community.”

Ed note: 13016310 Walter Ernest Dewsberry (DOB 12 Dec 08) enlisted at Kingston and joined 1 Centre Pioneer Corps for training on 2 Apr 40 – he was discharged

on 17 Dec 40 with a character assessment of GOOD!

The Times 24 Jul 40

PALESTINIAN PIONEERS' FINE WORK

When Lord Lloyd, Secretary for the Colonies, visited the Aldershot Command yesterday and inspected the Palestinian Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps he congratulated the men on their fine bearing discipline. Lord Lloyd, who was received on his arrival by Maj-Gen BC Johnson VC, inspected lines of troops which included no fewer than 22 different nationalities, among them both Arabs and Jews.

Lord Lloyd told the men that the reason for his visit was to congratulate them on their fine behaviour in France.

Hansard 30 Jul 40

AUXILIARY MILITARY PIONEER CORPS

Colonel Arthur Evans asked the Secretary of State for War whether he is now in a position to make a statement concerning the title of the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps; and whether it is the intention to arm all ranks of this corps 100 per cent. for Defence purposes?

§ Mr. Eden While I have every sympathy with the representations made by my hon. and gallant Friend, a change of title would involve many consequential alterations in documents, badges and the like, and I do not think I should be justified in recommending it at the present time. It has now been decided to arm all the British members of the corps.

The Times 6 Aug 40

**LORD MILNE WITH THE AMPS
COLONEL COMMANDANT'S TOUR
FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

Field-Marshal Lord Milne, who recently took up his appointment as Colonel Commandant of the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps, yesterday made his first official inspection of their arduous activities. He visited a group in the north of London which made its fame more by fighting than digging in the battles of Flanders, and during a long tour of scattered camps met many who served under him in his various commands of the last War. It was evident that the Field-Marshal's name is as popular among the rank and file of the Army as ever it was.

The Amps, as they are known – and by a coincidence their GOC is Major-General Amps, who accompanied Lord Milne yesterday – were formed last November, largely of old soldiers, to carry out manual work for the Army not done by civilians. Few of those who went out to France were armed, but when they were caught up in the general withdrawal most of them found rifles somewhere, and this group were the last to leave Boulogne on May 24 after having defended the harbour under enemy fire from all directions.

Of 1,000 men nearly 500 were killed or reported missing. Days before getting away they were engaged against German mechanized columns, in some cases defending blocks which they themselves had constructed.

One of their number recently received the Military Medal for a typical act of bravery. He and a few comrades spun a coin to determine which of them should remove an un-exploded bomb from the road: and having won the toss he removed it himself. It seemed fitting that such dogged fighters should be commanded by a colonel of The Buffs who won the VC in the last War and whose counter-attack along the sewers of Lens has passed into military legend.

FILM STUDIOS TAKEN OVER

Lord Milne's first visit was to a group of film studios, which have been taken over as ordnance stores. He then motored to a clearing camp for prisoners of war that is being constructed by the Pioneers. He spent much time in talk with the men and watching them at drill, for now all Amps are armed with rifles and are forming tank-hunting sections.

At the gateway to a large munition dump he was challenged by a sentry of the old days and asked for his pass and any tobacco or matches he might be carrying – such are the rigid precautions against fire. To end a strenuous day Lord Milne inspected a camp under canvas and congratulated the officers of the group on the efficiency of everything he had seen.

In conversation with your Correspondent, Lord Milne said he had been deeply impressed by the spirit of the men, "old devils some of them," and particularly by the improved physique after only six weeks' training of the younger men who are being drafted into the corps as unfit for more active service, usually with slight defects of sight or hearing. The work of the hewers of wood and drawers of water, said the field-marshal, is not always properly appreciated.

One difference the older soldiers have found – the average age in this group is 40 – is that 2s a day now does not go as far as 1s in 1914. Some concession in the price of cigarettes and tobacco would be especially welcome.

Hansard 14 Aug 40

**ALIENS IN THE AUXILIARY MILITARY
PIONEER CORPS**

LORD DAVTES My Lords, I beg to ask the second question standing in my name.

The Question was as follows: § To ask His Majesty's Government whether friendly aliens and refugees were employed as Pioneers by the War Office in France and whether their services have given satisfaction to the military authorities.]

LORD CROFT My Lords, five companies of the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps consisting of friendly aliens were employed with the British Expeditionary Force in France, and did most excellent work. They are now employed in the United Kingdom and are giving satisfaction.

LORD DAVIES My Lords, arising out of the reply may I ask my noble friend whether, in the latest stage of operations in France, these men were equipped with rifles, and whether it is true that after they returned to this country they were again disarmed?

LORD CROFT It is true they were equipped with rifles when they were actually at the seat of war engaged in operations in the Lowlands and in France, as were all Pioneers, but I think they were only lightly armed. I was not aware that on their return to this country they had no arms, but I can quite imagine that would be so, because it was vital to rearm the whole of the combatant divisions as speedily as possible in view of the menace to this country which existed, and the Pioneers since their return have been working principally on defence measures.

**The Times 5 Oct 40
CLEARING AWAY DEBRIS
ORGANISING CIVILIAN LABOUR
URGENT MEASURES**

The Ministry of Home Security announces that urgent steps are being taken by Sir Warren Fisher for the clearance of debris from streets and sites in Greater London.

Discussions are proceeding with local authorities on the subject and it is clear that much additional labour will be required. The Minister of Labour and National Service

has undertaken as a preliminary measure to get together a civilian labour reserve in each local employment exchange area from which the necessary labour required for the work may be drawn.

Physically fit men who are unemployed in the Greater London area are invited to put their names down with the exchanges for employment on this work as and when required.

Arrangements will be made to insure that their employment on clearance work will not interfere with their re-engagements in their normal work as soon as that becomes available again. It is particularly hoped that men temporarily thrown out of work through air raids will enrol for clearance work until their own work is available for them. The various aspects of the arrangement for the clearance of the areas will take a little time to organise fully, and then the civilian labour reserve will be called upon.

An early start on the accumulated arrears will be made, and to supplement the civil labour reserve the War Office has agreed to lend some of the Pioneer Corps for a strictly limited period, not to exceed three weeks.

Ed note: the three weeks referred to above was, of course, greatly increased!

**SUNDAY TIMES 13 Oct 40
LONDON'S RAID DEBRIS
TROOPS TO AID IN CLEARANCE
5,000 TO START TOMORROW**

Advance parties of troops who are to help in cleaning air-raid debris from the streets of London are already at work. The main body, consisting of 5,000 men of the Auxiliary Pioneer Corps, will start on their task tomorrow. They will be assisted by a large number of unemployed.

They will have the use of a large amount of mechanical plant, including twelve mobile cranes from America. In addition, 500 lorries will be used.

ALL LONDON IN SCHEME

The most heavily bombed areas in the east and north-east of London will be dealt with first. 500 soldiers are also being sent to Middlesex and Essex. The cost of the work is being borne by the Government.

The scheme was announced yesterday by Sir Warren Fisher, the Special Commissioner responsible for co-ordinating the work of restoring damaged roads and public services and organising clearance of debris in the London region.

The LCC will act as his agent and a comprehensive plan has been prepared for the County of London, East Ham and West Ham. Arrangements have been made with a number of demolition firms for the clearance of particular places.

Similar arrangements are being made by County Councils for the London region outside the LCCs administration and there will be close co-operation with individual local authorities.

MOBILISING UNEMPLOYED

The good bricks recovered will be used for building shelters and other ARP works. Suitable timber will be used for bunks in shelters or repairing houses.

Unusable debris will be dumped in holes from which sand was excavated or put into barges and disposed of on the Essex marshes. If necessary it will be taken out in hoppers and dumped in the sea. Negotiations are in progress for the filling up of a disused portion of the Grand Union Canal.

Personal property salvaged from wrecked dwellings will be cared for by the borough council until claimed by the owners.

The Ministry of Labour will deal with the mobilisation of the unemployed, who will

be paid at fixed local rates. The Pioneers will receive their usual pay.

LCC TAKES OVER

"This is a question of helping and not superseding any borough," said Sir Warren. "If a borough is doing satisfactorily the LCC will say: 'Get on with it.' Another borough may not be able to cope with all the work and the LCC will take over until the local authority can tackle the job itself."

The county councils of Middlesex, Surrey, Kent and Essex have agreed to co-operate fully in the area outside the LCC.

The Pioneers, who will be divided into Companies of 280, will be able to "work down" to a unit of 25

The Times 19 Oct 40 LONDON CIVIL DEFENCES "IN FINE FETTLE"

MR LATHAM'S TRIBUTE TO ARP WORKERS

Mr Charles Latham, leader of the London County Council, spent yesterday inspecting civil defence arrangements in London. He went to a rest centre and accompanied a mobile canteen from which sandwiches and cups of tea were served to firemen and men of the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps, who were working among the ruins of bombed buildings. The canteen was a gift from the King.

Mr Latham had lunch at a school, where a communal feeding centre, one of 63 in the LCC area, was serving a sixpenny meal of stewed rabbit, potatoes, beans, and mince tart. He went into the control room of the London Fire Brigade headquarters and travelled up the Thames in a fire-float.

He said afterwards to a Press representative: "London's civil defences are in fine fettle. I am very pleased indeed with the arrangements and with the personnel. Some of these people had their rest disturbed during the night, but they were back on the job this morning and were game for anything."

The Times 31 Oct 40 SOLDIER CHARGED WITH MURDER

Private Francis Dignam Collins, 31, of the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps was charged at Salisbury yesterday with the murder of Company-Sergeant-Major Percy Durrant. It was alleged by the prosecution that he had told the police, "I lifted the rifle to give him a shock. I knew there was a

round in it, but I did not know it was 'up the spout.'" Mr JF Claxton, prosecuting, said that Collins, who had overstayed his leave, was sentenced to 72 hours' detention and lost two days' pay. The charge of being absent without leave was made out by Company-Sergeant-Major Durrant.

Collins, who pleaded "Not Guilty," reserves his defence and was committed for trial at the Bristol Assizes on November 21..

Ed note: 13011042 Francis Dignam Collins (DOB 18 Sep 09) enlisted at Dundee and joined 5 Centre Pioneer Corps for training on 2 Feb 40 - he was discharged on 21 Apr 41 with a character assessment of GOOD!

The Times 8 Nov 40 PRODUCING ORDER OUT OF CHAOS PIONEERS' GOOD WORK IN LONDON

The pioneer, at work on the removal of debris from bombed buildings, has become a familiar figure in London. He is not always, however, the man one might expect him to be. That is because the original volunteers of the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps - old soldiers of 1914-1918, and most of them drawn from the labouring classes - are no longer numerous enough to keep the corps at full strength. Their numbers have been made up by "intake," a military term which is used for describing reinforcements from the Militia.

This explains why a milkman from Peacehaven was among the company of pioneers who were at work yesterday in south-east London removing rubble, stacking bricks, sorting metal, loading rubbish into lorries, and generally producing ordered tidiness out of the chaotic mess that had been caused by a bomb.

A single company of the AMPC has been at this work for some time in south-east London on five separate sites. It is estimated that in a day they move 400 tons of debris, load 15 lorries of material, and stack 10,000 bricks.

The pioneers are making a good job of it. When they have reduced the mounds of ruins to their final stage, all that is left is a neat and tidy stack of bricks set out in the cellar space or at foundation depth.

The Times 13 Nov 40 CONTROL OF MILITARY LABOUR

A new War Office directorate has been formed with the name of the Directorate of

Labour to co-ordinate and control the military labour required by the various services in the field, both at home and abroad.

Among the units under its control is the Pioneer Corps, which, as a result of the experience of the last 12 months, has been turned into a fully armed unit.

The Times 7 Dec 40 NEWS IN BRIEF

At Sussex Assizes yesterday Private ARTHUR BURROWS, 36, of the Pioneer Corps, was found Not Guilty of murder, but Guilty of the manslaughter of Provost-Corporal GT Brown on October 1.

He was sentenced to six years' penal servitude.

Ed note: 13019202 Arthur Burrows (DOB 5 Jun 04) enlisted at Sutton and joined 1 Centre Pioneer Corps for training on 1 May 40. He served in prison from 1 Sep 42 until 12 Dec 44) and then transferred to the General Service Corps on 27 Dec 44 we do not know his final discharge date.

The Times 27 Dec 40 RESTORING ORDER IN MANCHESTER PATIENTS MOVED FROM FIVE HOSPITALS

From our own correspondent Manchester, December 26. It is now possible to judge the extent of the damage suffered by Manchester from air attack.

It is serious enough, but not so much as one would have expected after seeing leaping flames which, besides eating up buildings, acted as beacons for the raiders who followed.

That so much of Manchester is at work today is a tribute to the fire-men who worked heroically.

It would be idle to deny that commercial losses are heavy, but one should look rather at the premises only partly burnt out, premises sandwiched in a block and a menace to the whole.

Million of pounds' worth of property have been saved by prompt action. To-day Manchester is restoring some order in the heavily hit parts of the district.

The Pioneer Corps is helping in demolition and soldiers are doing wiring jobs, while corporation electricians have got the tramways over-head system functioning in streets where falling walls have brought the wires down. ■

History of the Pioneer CEG

Have you served in the RLC Pioneer CEG between 1993 and 2012?



It is our intention to produce a History of the Pioneer CEG within the RLC prior to the demise of the trade. We are looking for anecdotes and memories of service to assist in the compilation of the record.

Please send any memories, photographs etc to the RPC Association in Bicester. If sending photos please name any personnel on the photo and

date the item. Photos will be returned after digital copying.

Records may also be sent electronically. Email: royalpioneer corps@gmail.com

The more records received the better the record of our time in the RLC.

We wish to personalise the record rather than just copy entries from the Sustainer.

Blast from the Past



For this edition we have decided to publish a selection of photographs from our archives showing the award of the **Long Service and Good Conduct Medal**.

Unfortunately our archives do not contain a photograph of the award of the LS&GC to **Gus Patton** - if anyone has a copy of this we would gladly like a copy - it would be such a rare event that we would publish it on the front page!



■ Cpl Green

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Sgt Bob Popkin

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Sgt Kennedy

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ SSgt Fleming

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ SSgt Teague

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Can you recognise anyone here?

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Can you recognise anyone here?

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Can you recognise anyone here?

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Can you recognise anyone here?

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Can you recognise anyone here?

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Can you recognise anyone here?

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Can you recognise anyone here?

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ WO2 E Greaves, SSgt J Fielder, SSgt J Dunbar & Cpl P Prince

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ WO2 Fielding, Cpl Carr & LCpl Sellstrom

Picture: RPCA Archive

AGM Minutes

64th Annual General Meeting of the Royal Pioneer Corps Association

Chairman: Colonel A Barnes
Secretary: Mr N Brown
Members Present: 96

AFTER welcoming members present and receiving apologies from: Brig CB Telfer, Brig HJ Hickman, Col RM Baker, Col K Broome, Maj A Mycroft, Capt M East, Mr D Luker, Mr S Leech, Ma A Layton, Mr L Gayton, Mr J Layton, Mr C Hardy, Mr P Matheson, Mr S Harrod, WO1 A Batchelor, Mr M Gleadhill.

The Chairman opened the meeting at 1200 hrs and requested 1 minutes silence in memory of those members who had sadly died during the last year after their names had been read by the Secretary. They were: Ex WO2 Fred Blin, Ex SSgt Dougie Butler, Ex Pte Eric Pearsall, Ex Maj Clifford Tierney, Ex LCpl John Tate, Ex WO2 Leslie Easterbrook, Ex Pte Harold Jackson, Ex Cpl Wily Field, Ex Pte Trevor Howes, Ex Pte Sydney Cavem, Ex Pte Richard Geodecke, Ex Pte Reginald Osborne, Ex Cpl Willie Tordoff, Ex WO2 Derek Gascoigne, Ex SSgt Keith Blundell, Ex Sgt George Evans, Ex Cpl Ian Harris, Ex Pte Harold Stanley, Ex Pte Reg Parker, Ex Pte Danny Mullen, Ex LCpl Henry Watkins, Ex SSgt Stevie Blenman, Ex WO2 John Anderton, Cpl Andrew Roberts and Pte Ratu Silibaravi.

ITEM 1. MINUTES OF 63rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1. The minutes of the 63rd Annual General Meeting were unanimously agreed. There were no points arising.

ITEM 2. REPORT ON PIONEER ACTIVITIES

2. Lt Col D Clouston CO 23 Pnr Regt RLC gave the following report:

It is good to see so many of you return to Bicester for this annual Pioneer Weekend. As I said to one Squadron PT session this week, soldiers do their best and don't give up because of their friends.

People they know, and trust, and people they don't want to let down. People underpin everything that the Regiment does. Soldiers and their families have become my number one priority after delivery on operations. It is good to see that extended family here today.

I would now like to address some key areas as they affect the Regiment.

Firstly, People. The recent service of remembrance gave us a chance to reflect on the tragic deaths of Cpl "Ginge" Roberts and Pte Ratu Silibaravi in May.

We also remember those who have been seriously injured over the course of the year – SSgt Foster, LCpl Molloy and Pte Winspear. Tranche 2 has also selected 68 of our soldiers for redundancy. Of those around 60% were volunteers.

Our soldiers continue to do their very best on operations – collectively, they do us proud. Over the year we have had some notable recognition:

Carmen Sword – Lt Dave Jarman

MID – Lt Mike Lowry
MSM – WO2 Lane
CJO commendation – Cpl Bysouth
GOC's commendations to Capt Jessop, LCpl Dau and Pte Ranatora

And DRLC's commendation to – Cpl Downs, Cpl Martin and LCpl Thomas

Moving onto change. March saw the disbandment of 206 Squadron.

For those of you who managed to attend I'm sure you'll agree it was a moving parade, delivered extremely professionally and with considerable dignity.

Last month saw an initial operating capability for 65 Logistic Support Squadron. Whilst only 16 soldiers strong currently the Regiment is already planning for its growth over the course of next year.

Sporting success. The Regiment has a proud tradition of fitness and military skills. This last year has seen the Regiment win the RLC athletics championships along with the cross country events too. Semi finalists in the Army rugby cup, winners of the mixed gore trophy and winners of the commando speed march.

The training and determination required to compete to such a high level is significant. The Regiment should feel justifiably proud of what it has achieved.

Lastly, it was with regret, that I had to inform the Regiment of the decision to remove it from the 2020 ORBAT.

The Regiment was only informed towards the end of this week and we are now in the detailed planning stages of how we manage this significant change.

My foremost concern is for the people under my Command and I will continue to ensure that my team and I do the very best we can for them. They deserve no less.

3. Lt Col A Perry CO 168 Pnr Regt RLC(V) gave the following report.

I thought I would be unable to attend this morning as I have only just flown in from holiday in Cuba and it is my youngest son's final speech day at Monmouth School for Boys but with the devastating news in the Defence White Paper announced on Thursday I felt that I had to change my plans and attend.

Unfortunately there is no brief yet for the future of 168 Pnr Regt, with the loss of the Pioneer CEQ it may remain as is or have to assume a new role. This is still to be played for and will be announced later in the year.

In the last year the Regiment has had a busy period, we had 60 personnel deployed with 23 Pnr Regt on Op TOSCA in Cyprus and they bonded well with their regular counterparts. We have also had personnel deployed on Op HERRICK and this commitment is likely to increase in the next 18/24 months.

During the Easter period 168 Regt trained 2,000 Operators in readiness for the petrol drivers dispute, this provided good publicity for the Regiment at the highest level, including No 10 Downing Street.

Also in Cyprus we rebuilt the Special Forces Training Base in February during two weeks and will return in September this year for a further month, this will then

become an annual task. Here we are able to practice the full range of artisan tasks and will be used in the future for our own dismounted infantry training.

We recently held a very successful Reserve Pioneer Day which included a church service, a march through Grantham and was a great opportunity to welcome back former members of the Regiment together with the families of those serving in the Regiment. The turnout of the townsfolk was overwhelming.

We are currently preparing for an Adventure Training Exercise in the Alps and next year hope to send a party to the Himalayas.

On a final note WO2 S Salmuel was recently awarded the RLC Sports Coach of the year.

Whilst the future might not be orange, 168 remain thoroughly red and green!

ITEM 3. REPORT ON BENEVOLENCE

4. Maj R Corbey Controller Benevolence The RLC gave the following report:

Shown below for comparison is a tabular summary of RPC benevolence cases handled in the years 2008-2011 and an extrapolation from 30 June 12 stats to give a forecast for the current year:

	Cases In	Grants Made	Cost	Average Grant
2008	238	178	£54,024	£304
2009	223	169	£52,993	£313
2010	192	150	£51,446	£343
2011	177	129	£48,422	£375
2012 (f/cast)	174	128	£48,474	£376

We returned to normal levels in terms of caseload, after the surge caused by the economic slump and we saw the fall in the number of applications continue, as forecast prior to convergence and again last year, albeit the reduction this year is forecast to be very small indeed.

Contrast this to the fact that the overall benevolence workload for the RLC and the Forming Corps has increased dramatically to 2,800 applications a year. The RPC applications therefore represent just over 6% of the total.

The only income we have to spend on RLC and the Forming Corps' benevolence is 50% of the serving officers and soldiers One Day's Pay Scheme, plus the odd donation.

This year it amounted to a mere £525,000 compared to annual requests for assistance which total in excess of £2,500,000. Clearly the defence cuts will result in a reduction of our income, which next year is forecast to be in the region of £100,000.

Nonetheless, in line with current policy (and inflation) we have continued to increase the level of grant, though this years forecast is for a very small increase in respect of the RPC.

ABF The Soldiers' Charity continue to be rather generous in their support, contributing £38,179 over and above the RPC grants in 2011 and forecast to

contribute a further £44,554 this year. That of course is in addition to contributions from the Royal British Legion and the various occupational or regional charities approached.

Around 26% of grants made were for disability related matters, 21% on household goods, 17% on property maintenance and repairs, 4% on finding accommodation or moving into something more suitable.

The remainder encompassed pure debt related matters, holidays, funerals and general needs. But of course, all of the applications stem from a lack of funds in general and of late this has been caused by our ageing dependency seeing their savings and pensions being rapidly eroded at a time when prices are soaring. It is little wonder that they cannot manage.

ITEM 4. COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

5. Col A Barnes gave the following report:

I must thank Lt Col DS Clouston (Dave) and Lt Col A Parry CO 168 Regt RLC(V), for very comprehensive reports on their unit's activities over the past year, as usual both Regiments have had a very busy time. I must also thank Col Clouston for allowing the Association to hold its Annual General Meeting and Reunion Weekend in his barracks and for allowing over 285 Association members to stay over the weekend.

I must also thank the RSM, WO1 Wayne Fuller, for allowing us to hold our AGM within his luxurious mess. It is obvious from the surroundings that this is the "Home" of the Pioneers.

The marriage with the RLC continues to be happy, harmonious and successful and the RPC Association continues to be well represented on various RLC committees.

It is pleasing to have Major Bob Corby here today and to hear the marvellous work the RLC Benevolence Team are carrying out on behalf of ex Pioneers who have fallen on hard times.

Finally my thanks to the remainder of the Committee for their work during the past year especially Norman Brown and his son Paul for their fabulous Newsletters which are appreciated by all members.

It is pleasing to see so many attending this year's Reunion some travelling great distances Frank Lyle from Dublin, Mr Johnson from Germany Mr Trainer from Canada and Mr Simm from Denmark and many from Scotland, the North-East and the South-West.

It is exceptionally pleasing to see our one In-Pensioner Micky Hull here for the weekend. I am also glad to hear that a large number of ex Pioneers are attending for the first time or the first time for many years, I hope you all have a wonderful weekend and return next year.

I hope all have a wonderful day and the hang-overs are not too bad tomorrow!

ITEM 5. GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

6. Mr N Brown gave the following report:

a. Accommodation – I must apologise for those who are accommodated in St George's Barracks, unfortunately there is not enough accommodation here in St David's. There is a regular shuttle service to St George's Barracks so there is no excuse for drink driving. Can I ask all staying to respect the accommodation in both barracks and leave it in a tidy condition. It

would be appreciated if you could also strip the beds, this will help the works party to tidy-up.

b. Fire Alarm During the weekend if you hear the fire alarms please vacate the accommodation and make your way to the assembly area which is the main square for all.

c. Thanks. I must thank the members of 23 Pioneer Regiment who have worked so hard to make this weekend a success. Special mention must be made to the OC 187 (Tancred) Sqn and his staff for ORGANISING the weekend. The Quartermaster and his staff have worked tirelessly in arranging so much accommodation and ORGANISING stores and equipment for the weekend. The Master Chef and his team must also be applauded for their work in making sure that we have good quality meals.

d. Membership. It is pleasing to report that the number of active members has increased in the last few years and is now standing at approx 2,600 mark. Since we met last year 49 have joined the Association. 3 of these served in WW2 and one joined the Association the day before his 100th birthday and I am currently waiting for an application for membership card for another ex Pioneer who is 100 this week!

e. Change of Address. I have for the last few years complained about the large number of Newsletters which have been returned "Gone Away" or "No longer at this address" – the message seems to be working as only 10 were returned from the April edition. I did receive approx 40 notifications of change of address in March!

g. Cenotaph Parade. This Association is allocated 30 tickets each year for the Cenotaph Parade at Whitehall. If you would like to attend please apply to the RPC Association for a ticket. Tickets are also now required for the Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey, again please apply to the Association if you wish to attend. Following the Field of Remembrance we usually have a London Lunch and then take our In Pensioner Micky home where he kindly buys us all a beer in his club.

h. Newsletters. I am always keen to receive articles for the Newsletter, have you considered submitting an article.

j. Photograph. Copies of the photograph just taken can be purchased at a cost of £4 and £6 each depending on size, there will be an order sheet in the Association tent on the sports field. I will also be there selling items from the Association Shop. We have a new Polo shirt for sale with both Pioneer Badges and the crossed axes. We also have Pioneer Ale for sale!

k. Historical Aspects. During the year the Association receives hundreds of applications requesting historical information from the families of former members of the Corps.

Because of the work carried out by Lt Col John Starling we can now answer most of these queries. We now hold a data base of approx 700,000 ex World War 2 personnel.

We now hold a data base of all personnel who served in the Corps – we think we are the only Regimental Association to be able to do this.

l. Collection for Felix Fund. This afternoon and tonight you will see collecting buckets for the Felix Fund, although this fund is mainly for EOD personnel the fund was very generous to the Regiment in the helping for the funeral for the two casualties the Regiment recently had in Afghanistan. Please give generously.

m. Tonight's Function. You will appreciate because of the damp weather tonight's function has had to be changed to the Scully Room, I hope you all have a very good night.

n. Thanks. Finally I would like to place on record my appreciation of the help given to me by the Regiment not only during the build up to the Reunion Weekend but throughout the year. I would also, once again, to show my appreciation for the work carried out by my son Paul in preparing the Newsletter and keeping our web-site up to date and also for taking photographs today.

ITEM 6. ELECTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

7. In accordance with the Constitution one third of the Council must stand for re-election every year.

a. The following members were re-elected: Lt Col J Starling and Maj A Mycroft

b. The following were not re-elected: Brig HJ Hickman and Capt M East

c. The following were elected to the Council: Maj R Teague, Lt Col G McLane and Maj N Smith.

ITEM 7. ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEXT REUNION/AGM

8. The date of the next reunion/Annual General Meeting would be 5-7 July 2013

ITEM 8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9. Mr T Appleyard stated that the "One Army Concept" had been tried in the seventies and had not worked how was it expected to work now.

The CO 23 Regt replied that the Government had to make some hard decisions to cut the £38 billion deficit in the Defence Budget and the Commander Land Forces had said when he had visited the Regiment the previous day that the country was skint. It was recognised that it was cheaper to employ TA soldiers than regulars.

10. Mr Appleyard also reported that he had visited Bisleby to watch the Metheun Cup and had been disappointed at the RLC presence, no RLC Flag was present and it had taken him a long time to find the RLC Team.

11. Lt Col JS Starling proposed and all attending agreed that a vote of thanks be recorded for the work carried out by the Secretary, Mr Norman Brown and his son Paul.

12. A former LCpl then stated that the options in civilian life were there. He had served six years and then studied for a degree which earned him a good job with a local authority.

13. There being no further business the meeting closed at 1250 hours

N BROWN
Secretary



The Royal Pioneer Corps Association

The Royal Pioneer Corps Association was formed in November 1946 and is now in its 66th year

Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Paul Brown

THE first meeting of the RPC Association took place at the Labour Directorate, Metropole Building, Northumberland Avenue, London on 11 December 1946 after being legally registered with the Registrar of Friendly Societies in November 1946.

The Colonel Commandant Maj Gen Friend was elected the first Chairman and Lt Col Adamson the first General Secretary.

It is surprising that the Association now in its 66th year has only had 12 Chairmen and 9 General Secretaries.

The full list is as follows:

CHAIRMAN

MAJ GEN ALI FRIEND CB CBE MC
NOVEMBER 1946
BRIG JB HILIARY CEB APRIL 1949
GEN SIR FRANK EW SIMPSON GBE KCB
DSO MAY 1950
LT GEN SIR JOHN G COWLEY KBE CB AM
JANUARY 1961
GEN SIR NOEL THOMAS KCB DSO MC
JANUARY 1968
GEN SIR HUGH BEACH KCB OBE MC
JANUARY 1976
GEN SIR GEORGE COOPER KCB MC
JANUARY 1981
MAJ FK FORRESTER MBE OCTOBER 1981
BRIG HJ HICKMAN CBE FEBRUARY 1990
COL RF McDONALD OCTOBER 1996
BRIG CB TELFER CBE APRIL 2002
COL A BARNES JP TD JULY 2008

GENERAL SECRETARY

LT COL JE ADAMSON DSO OBE
NOVEMBER 1946
BRIG JHM EDYE DSO OBE MC

NOVEMBER 1949
MAJ CK BRIGGS JULY 1952
BRIG JHM EDYE DSO OBE MC
APRIL 1954
LT COL GF DONOVAN OBE
FEBRUARY 1957
LT COL LAL CLARK JANUARY 1969
CAPT AJ REYNOLDS NOVEMBER 1980
MAJ GF CROOK APRIL 1991
N BROWN ESQ MARCH 2003

TREASURER

LT COL MG HICKS TD NOVEMBER 1946
LT COL AE GREENLAND TD APRIL 1949
BRIG HH BLANCHARD CBE
JANUARY 1951
LT COL JD GEORGE OBE TD
JULY 1951
LT COL JPA McADAM OBE
OCTOBER 1953
CAPT BAC BEANI MAY 1976
MAJ ER ELLIOTT FEBRUARY 1990
(Post ceased December 2005)

It was reported at the first meeting that 213 Officers and 755 Other Ranks had joined the Association. Since then a total of 21,726 have joined, we know of these that 1,250 have since died.

We currently have an active list of 2,600 so that means we are missing nearly 18,000 members. If you know of former colleagues who do not receive a copy of the Newsletter please pass their details to the RPC Association.

One of those who have recently joined the Association (Membership Number 21,705) was Lt Col WT Lanaway who joined the Association the day before his 100th Birthday!

As a Lieutenant he landed in Normandy on D Day as part of 170 Company Pioneer

Corps. Details were published in the April 2012 Newsletter

On 6 December 1947 the Association (and RPC Benevolent Fund) moved into newly purchased offices at 51 St George's Drive, London, this was to become their home until 2005 when the building was sold and the Association moved into St David's Barracks, Bicester.

The first reunion of the RPC Association was held at the Connaught Rooms, Great Queen Street, London on 14 March 1947 and 210 personnel attended.

The first Annual General Meeting of the Association was held at Caxton Hall, Westminster on 17 September 1949.

The meeting opened at 1030 hours and closed at 1720 hrs with only a short break for lunch!

The second AGM was held at The Opera House, Blackpool in 1950 when only a disappointing 53 members attended but 120 attended the Reunion that evening.

In 1951, for the first time, the Annual General Meeting of the Association and what has now become known as "The Corps Weekend" was held at the Depot, Hermitage Camp, Wrexham on 9/10 June 1951.

When the Training Centre moved to Northampton in 1961 the Corps Weekend was held there until Simpson Barracks closed. Since then, with kind permission of CO 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC, the Reunion Weekend has been held at Bicester.

Next year the weekend is to be held on 5/6 July and a booking form will be enclosed with the April 2013 Newsletter – this will probably be the last ever Reunion Weekend to be held at Bicester so let us have a fantastic attendance – I hope to see you there. ■

Long Lost Trails

The following are trying to re-establish contact...

518 COY CYPRUS

Mr G Leach would like to contact members of 518 Coy in Nicosia and Famagusta in Cyprus from 1959-1961. He would also appreciate photographs from this period.

Contact:
martynleech25071971@hotmail.co.uk (this is his son's email address).

260 COY, SCARBOROUGH

Mr R Draper was stationed at Burniston Bks, Scarborough from 1958 to 1961. In Nov 58 two of his friends Pte Brian Walker and Pte Kenneth Keys

were blown up and died whilst clearing Yorkshire Moors left from WW2. He believes that Brian was buried on Olivers Mount, Scarborough but unfortunately has been unable to locate the grave.

He states that he wished that he had attended the funeral but he was boxing for the Company at the time and was too upset to come back. If anyone could help with this and also Kenneth Keys grave he would be appreciated.

Contact:
alannancy@alannancy.karoo.co.uk

149 COY

Mr Peter Sturgeon is seeking anyone who served with his father Sgt Harold Sturgeon in 149 Coy. Contact
petersturgeon@ntlworld.com

FORMATION OF 23 PNR REGT RLC

I want to ask you a massive favour do you know how I can get hold of the Regimental Photo that was taken when we amalgamated all those years ago when we became 23 Pioneer Regt RLC in Bicester many thanks Stephen Jones. If you have a copy of this please loan it to the Association - we

will return it within 7 days.

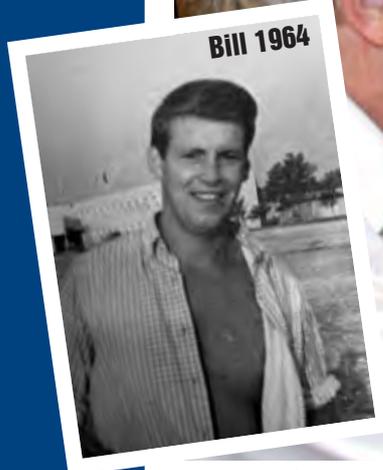
WILLIAMS, ANDREW GEORGE

Last known as a dog handler in Cyprus 1989/90. Contact Leslie Perry c/o RPC Association.

MR RAYMOND EDWARD WATSON

is trying to contact anyone with whom he served 44-46 (see article on pages 42-44). He served in 840 (Smoke) Coy and 165 German Prisoner of War Camp, Springhaill, Blockley, Nr Moreton in the Marsh.

Contact through his son at grwson@hotmail.com



THANK YOU for your letter dated 18 July regarding the photographs that I took to the Reunion Weekend. I joined the Corps in 1964 and trained at Simpson Barracks for 3 weeks then went to Gibraltar Barracks for the rest of my training. My first posting was to 522 Coy at Kineton where I became a Dog Handler until 1966. I was then posted to Bahrain and then to Aden in 1967. I was then posted back to the Dog Section at Kineton until 1969 when I was posted to 14 Sig Regt, Worcester. Then I completed a 9 month tour in Northern Ireland and then posted back (for the third time!) to the Dog Section at Kineton and was promoted Corporal. I left the army in 1974. Yours sincerely, Bill Carty.
 PS. Thank you for a great weekend, the rain did not spoil it at all. Everything was there for us all, I hope to see you next year.

■ Bill Carty shows his collection of old photos from 1963/1974 at this years Reunion Weekend

Pictures: Scouse Bradley





■ Fred Cooper in Suez, November 1956
Picture: Fred Cooper

Would love to come to a reunion

SORRY I could not make the 2012 Reunion Weekend but I no longer have a car due to having a new knee which unfortunately is not going right. If there is someone who comes through Amersham or lives in South Bucks and could give me a lift it would be nice for the 2013 Reunion. I will be 80 in November and would love to come to one of the Reunions. Hope you can help me.
Fred Cooper
(Ed note: can anyone help Fred with a lift)

Proud to be a member

THANK YOU very much for the 2 Magazines/Newsletters which you send me at the beginning of August and also the application to join the RPC Association to which I would be proud to be a member. I enclose a small donation towards the cost of producing such a fine quality Newsletter, words cannot explain how thankful I am to receive them, and to read the very interesting history and of the many various activities of the Pioneers, it brings me joy and happiness to a 92 years old veteran Pioneer,
My very grateful thanks, yours faithfully,
Rex Petheram

Stumpy Hazelwood

I HAD a fantastic time this weekend at Bicester.
Good to see so many old friends and comrades after so many years, especially Stumpy Hazelwood and his charming lady.
John Hatfield

Goodies

MANY THANKS for your hard work over the weekend. You never fail to set up a great weekend, ably assisted by the duty squadron.
Yet another year has passed and yet again you fleeced many gullible Pioneers to part with cash for Reunion goodies. Thank you again to all involved... long may they continue.
Paul Davis

Inviting my dad to reunion

JUST WANTED to say thank you for inviting my dad to the reunion weekend, we both had a great time, despite the weather.
Please pass on my thanks to everybody involved. Look forward to going again next year.
Janet McKeown

Denmark

I WOULD like to thank you and all those involved with the reunion weekend. I think it was made good despite the bad weather conditions. see you all again next year The man from Denmark.
Tony Simm

Mull over old times

Just a quick message to say how much my daughter and I enjoyed the reunion weekend, I think I should of attended much sooner.
Many thanks for all your efforts in setting the weekend up - it went very well and I congratulate you on a job well done. A few individuals may think otherwise "but you cannot please all the people all the time".
The weather and lack of power in the Mess on our floor meant that we had to cope with a little hardship, we managed when we had to whilst serving and it did not spoil the weekend.
Please thank everybody involved on our behalf. It was well worth the expense to

mull over old times and to see some old faces once again, particularly Frank Lyle, Dave Graves and you Norman. It was a little difficult to put names to some faces at first but I managed in the end.
The news that 23 Pioneer Regt RLC is going was very sad indeed, would appreciate if you could keep me informed of what will happen to the Association in the future.
Once again Norman Many thanks for your efforts in keeping the Association going and organising the reunion weekend and I hope to see you next year.
Hope we can keep in contact and all the best for the future. Kind regards.
Denis McKeown

Alleviate the great sadness felt by all

ON BEHALF of the 39/93 Group we would like to convey our thanks to you for all the dedicated work you and your son have put into making the RPC Association Weekend a great success under very difficult circumstances with the weather, and in some way, alleviate the great sadness felt by all on learning that the end is in sight for the Regiment.
Please convey our special thanks to the Commanding Officer for his continued support to the Association and the very direct and honest way he explained and confirmed the disbandment of the Regiment to the AGM.
Our thanks: To the bar staff and NCOs

of the Sergeants' and Corporals Messes for their continued support and comradeship on our annual visits.
To the Catering Staff who worked so very hard once again at very short notice to put on an array of food second to none and maintain a standard of cleanliness within the complex that at times seemed impossible.
Last but not least the Serving Soldiers, without whose dedication to duty nothing would have been achieved now or at any time past or present.
LABOR OMNIA VINCIT
Yours sincerely,
Bill Goode

Life on Mars

THANKS FOR a great weekend Norman and the rest of 23 Pnr Regiment, met some good friends who I have not seen for over 20 years.

And thank you to the young lady for her entertainment in the mess on the Saturday night where she really did believe in life on mars and was seen asking Scottie to beam her up the best part of the entertainment was her departure when she completed the mess shuffle of one step forward and three steps backwards followed a double back flip landing on her back flashing her red thong very entertaining and well worth the money.

Fun was had by all, at Gus impromptu wake he was last seen compiling his bucket list, great fun see you all again soon.

Dougie Durrant

Engaged

A BELATED thank you for a fantastic Sat at the Pioneer Reunion, it was great seeing so many faces from my time as QM and I certainly enjoyed a few drinks in both the Restaurant and Sgts' Mess, its been a long time since I supped that much beer!!

Thank you for arranging the accommodation, much appreciated.

Please keep me info'd on what is happening to St David's the infrastructure is too good so I would imagine someone will move in and hopefully let you remain on the camp!!

It is really bad news that the Pioneers are being disbanded, short sighted in my opinion?

Can you put me down for the Officers Club Dinner in Oct.

Once again thanks for the weekend it a pity we did not have time for a chat but every time that I wanted to get hold of you were engaged with someone.

Don Robertson

Ed Note: Buy me a beer next time you see me!

Next Year

MY NAME is Janet-Marie McKeown, I'm Dennis's daughter, we met briefly during the Reunion Weekend.

I just wanted to express my thanks for arranging the weekend. Both myself and my dad enjoyed ourselves very much.

He enjoyed himself that much he's already decided that we will be going back next year.

It was a pleasure to meet my dad's friends and to hear the stories - he speaks very highly of you!

Thanks once again, all the best
Janet-Marie McKeown

Outstanding

THANK YOU for an outstanding weekend.

Couldn't be much better, apart for the weather.

Gary McQueen

Sword Beach



■ Diorama of the Pioneers at Sword Beach

Picture: Gerwyn Bendon

THANK YOU for your information/History, concerning the Pioneer Corps, it is very helpful, this will be our first time to visit this part of France, our trips out there have been to the Somme and Flanders Battle Fields.

What do you think, a ex Pioneer is now the Civilian Chairman of the local Air Training Corps Committee, not my sort of

thing, but will try and do my best, as a Pioneer would.

I hope you don't mind me sending you my photos, of my little diorama of the Pioneers at Sword Beach, its part scratch and kit built.

Well thanks again for all your kind help. Kind regards.

Gerwyn Bendon

99 questions

THANKS FOR the information you have sent me, it gave me a wonderful insight into my grandfather's (and the Pioneers) life at that time.

Reading the sections of troops having to take warning shots and arresting civilians trying to survive by stealing coal (although some were obviously doing it just for money) was, I would have thought, difficult to do, because I'm sure many a soldier would have been happy to see some taken so they could cook and stay warm. As for my grandfather, he married my grandmother in 1946, his favourite job was as a caretaker at a school in a nearby town to where we live. But what he will probably be remembered for most in the village of Rishton, were we live, is forming along with some friends Rishton United

Football Club (for kids) in the 70's. And thanks to others continuing the Club it has gone from strength to strength with various age groups both boys and girls. As I write this email I am fortunate enough to look from my living room window and watch one of the teams playing at this time. My grandparents sadly passed away a few years ago, both living to a relatively good age, my grandmother 82 and grandfather 91. I could probably go on in more detail as like most kids I was always asking 99 questions. But I'll leave it there. Thanks again for your time. Regards

Anthony Tate

P.S. I will be sending a cheque for the c.d.(including additional as a donation) as I'm sure this will give me further insight into his life.

Proud to have served

I WOULD just like to thank Norman for organising yet another brilliant re-union. Sorry I had to leave after the parade, but an excellent turn out.

Glad to meet so many old faces. On a sad note gutted to hear the news that the Regt will be disbanded, I joined in 83 and

always wanted to be a pioneer, served 20 years and only left due to medical discharge.

I'm very proud to have served in the Pioneers it will be a very sad day to many I'm sure, Cheers

Andy Anderson

Gold Dust

IN THE April edition of the Pioneer there was an article entitled 'Grand Pere William's War', an account by Monsieur Jean Riom's grandfather of his experiences as a French Pioneer in the Great War.

As you may recall I am now a secondary school History teacher, having retired from the army 2 years ago. You asked for comments on the article.

I found the article absolutely fascinating and packed with wonderful detail. I have always found the Great War particularly interesting, my great grandfather having been killed in 1918.

This article brought a rare insight, for an English reader, of the French Army.

The mobilisation process, his arrival at

the front and his trench experiences confirmed and enhanced my understanding of that period.

Of course we read a lot about the British Army and occasionally about German experiences but I had not come across such a detailed account of the French.

I teach Yr9 pupils about WW1 and take them on trips to France. I will use this article in my lessons to broaden the pupils understanding of the war. They will love the bit about the rats leaping around.

My thanks Jean Riom and to you for publishing it. As a former RPC officer and now a school teacher of History it was gold dust.

Jonathan Lilley

Lancastria

I AM writing to thank you for all the information you supplied on Adam Robertson.

I applied to the Scottish Government for the Lancastria Medal and was successful, my mother received her medal on Saturday and is delighted with it.

Once again a big thank you for the help and advice which you provided it was very much appreciated. Best wishes

Lesley Innes

Suez Crisis

HAVING NOT received the Pioneer Magazine for over 15 years (my fault), just received one and was pleased to see the article on the Suez Crises having been involved.

I was one of the 79 posted from 260 Coy to 71 Coy but then two days later posted to School of Infantry to form Number 2 POW Cage Staff, there were six of us and it would be nice to hear from any of the other five.

23154889 Pte Ken Clark.

Old Soldiers

JUST A note to say thank you for yet another brilliant well organised Corp weekend.

I am fully aware this size of function does not happen overnight and without a lot of organising and help, it was great so many old soldiers turned out, this has not been by accident but down to your hard work and dedication to the job.

It also vindicates keeping the gathering going in one form or another. I was proud to be part of the weekend.

Tom Appleyard

Great weekend

THANK YOU so much for a great weekend, my husband enjoyed every minute of it.

Sorry I wasn't able to attend, due to not feeling too well after an operation, but hope to attend the reunion next year.

Please would you thank everyone there, for all their hard work and looking after everyone so well.

You all deserve a Medal.
Christine and Percy Powell

Sore Head

WELL HERE I am sitting back at home with a sore head - a very good weekend at Bicester - bitter sweet that the Regt will soon be gone.

Saw some guys that I had not seen for over twenty years or more - it felt like it had only been last week - great to see everybody.

Bob Barfield

Bob Goddard

JUST FINISHED reading the April 2012 issue of the Pioneer - great! Regarding the photograph (bottom left page 58) the Sgt was Bob Goddard and it was taken about 1953 or 1954.

We were Sergeants together and we were once called to a farm in the Welch mountains in 1954 to shoot a sheep that had fallen half way down a cliff.

The job was done and the farmer was pleased.

My number was 22881661 and I joined

in 1952 as a National Serviceman and then signed on for 3 years finishing as acting CQMS. I left in December 1957 and arrived in Australia on 1 May 1958.

I had a good time in Horsley Hall and Hermitage Camp. I was married in the parish church in Wrexham on 30 Oct 1954 - the same week I was promoted Sergeant.

I would love to hear from Bob, we are all getting a bit older.

Yours fraternally,

Jack McTaggart (Western Australia)

Base Wallahs

I WAS born in 1917 so could not take part in the 1914-1918 Great War. However on reading the article Grandpierre Williams Diary, I was glad I was not born in 1896.

The conditions the troops had to fight in were atrocious due to the weather and other reasons. The collecting of the meals i.e. stew and more stew makes me glad we had compo rations in WW2 even though certain items were always removed from

the wooden boxes by certain so called "base wallahs".

All ranks in WW2 deserved a special medal for courage and perseverance. However when I served in the Italian war I endured the winter of 1943-1944 which consisted of mud, snow and ice and gales but I survived.

Yours truly,
George Pringle

Unbelievable

HELLO NORMAN, I thought I must comment on the disbandment of 23 Pnr Regt RLC, the amount of skills that will be lost to the Army are unbelievable.

When I think back to the very varied tasks that 518 Coy (or should I say Sqn) carried out when I had the pleasure to be its Sergeant Major, who will carry the Pioneers' duties now? I must also say that, as a transfer into the Corps, the most enjoyable time that I had whilst serving was

with the Pioneer Corps.

I must also congratulate you on a well-organised Reunion Weekend even though the weather tried to spoil it for you.

I wonder why I have not attended before and I most certainly will be there next year. I am sorry that I did not attend the Saturday evening but I felt unwell and felt it would be best if I went home.

I hope to see you again soon.

Pete Collins

Proudly wearing his Pioneer tie



■ Jules on his 100th birthday, pictured with Mayor and Mayoress of Salford. Picture: Rodney Berkeley

FIRST OF all may I thank you for the tie and magazines that you sent to my father-in-law, Jules Green, on the occasion of his 100th birthday. This was a wonderful gesture on your behalf and he was completely thrilled with it.

I have attached a couple of photographs from his birthday party. One with the Mayor and Mayoress of Salford and the second with his telegram from the

Queen. You will be able to see in both that he is proudly wearing the tie you sent him.

Many thanks. Best wishes,
Rodney Berkeley

Ed Note: Jules celebrated his 100th birthday on 26 June 2012, he served in the Corps from 28 Nov 40 until 19 Feb 46. Second photo of Jules on page 30.

We should have had arms like weight lifters

I LOOK forward to my Newsletter twice a year, sorry to hear about the cost of postage, I would willingly pay this as it is the only way I can read it as I do not have any way of going on line.

Reading the reminiscences of John Young in the last issue he stated that he did guard duties one hour on. I had to do two on four off.

The last issue contained an article on the Suez Campaign, although 405 Coy did not go to Suez we did our bit by working at the underground ammunition depot at Monkton Farleigh (this is now open to the public).

We would be searched by the WD Police to ensure that we had no matches or lighters before going underground.

We had to walk down a large number of stairways and once at the bottom there were bays stacked with shells, 100 lbs in weight.

Plus boxes of ammo which we had to put on conveyer belts which then went to the underground railway bays at Thinsley

Junction. All of this went to Suez.

We should have had arms like weight lifters!

We also had to do picquet duty carrying a pick handle around the camp perimeter in groups of two while the guards were on the main gates.

This was during the time of the IRA period. After doing our 12 hour stint on picquet duties it was breakfast and back to our normal duties. No bed until the night!

Can you inform me during the period 1955 to 1957 did any personnel who went on guard duty ever get issued with live ammunition.

I think at one time we were given five rounds which we were told to keep in our greatcoat pockets in case of emergencies - or was I dreaming, it's a long time ago and I could be mistaken.

Yours faithfully, Phil Marks

Andy Bates

(Ed note: does any reader remember being issued with live ammunition whilst on guard during this period?)

the Pioneer

■ **G'DAY** Norman, I thank you very, very much for my April issue of the Pioneer received today being the 14th May and amazed at the quality. Many thanks again Norman!
Kelvin McConville (Western Australia)

■ **WHAT** a weekend, loved it can't wait for the next one. Thanks to Norman Brown for all that you do. Felt really proud to see my old mates.
Scouse Thomas

■ I WOULD like to thank Norman for an excellent weekend despite the weather trying to ruin everything Let's hope there will be many more despite the disbandment.
John Kear

■ HAD a fantastic weekend with our family reunion.
Glen Rosser

■ **NORMAN** a very big thank you to you and your team for yet another brilliant weekend. Cheers.
Yorkie Wilkinson

■ **THANKS** for a great weekend nice to see old faces look forward to seeing you all next year.
Ginge Hurdman

■ **GREAT** weekend despite the bad news.
John Kear



come on, send us a mail...

The Royal Pioneer Corps Association

c/o 23 Pnr Regiment RLC
St David's Barracks
Graven Hill
Bicester OX26 6HF



or email us at:
royalpioneer corps@gmail.com



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Ask John or Sara to tell a war story
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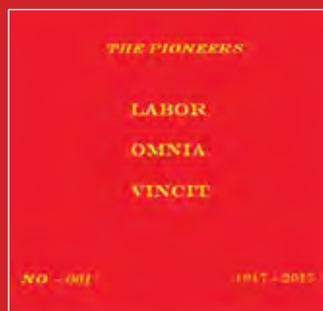
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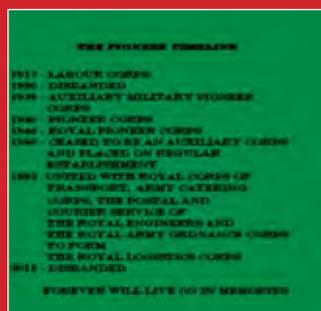
If you have a business
or a recommendation
then **send it in!**

Pioneer Medallion

LCpl Matt McKerlie (QMs Dept), 23 Pnr Regt RLC has designed and had produced a small Medallion to mark the disbandment of 23 Pnr Regt RLC. These can be obtained through the RPC Association at a cost of £5 (this includes postage).



Story Card Front



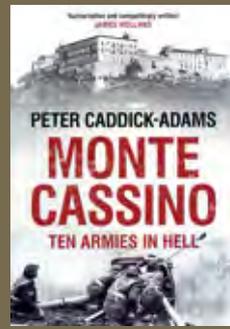
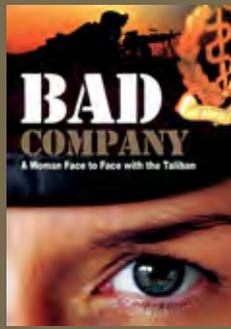
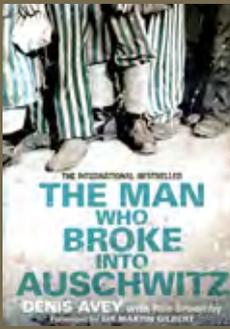
Story Card Rear



Medallion Front



Medallion Rear



Important book Monte Cassino

**Review: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied**

THIS IS a most important book, and a timely reminder of the dangers that face any society once intolerance and racism take hold.

Denis Avey, who is now ninety-three, wants his book to be a reminder that Fascism and genocide have not disappeared - as he has said, "It could happen here". It could indeed happen anywhere where the veneer of civilization is allowed to wear off, or is torn off by ill will and destructive urges.

It is good that Denis Avey now feels able to tell his story. Many of those who went through the traumas of the war years, including Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, found, as he did, that in 1945 'no one wanted to listen'.

It takes courage to be a witness. To this day, Denis Avey recalls with horror, among so many other horrors, a Jewish boy 'standing to attention, drenched in blood, being

beaten around the hear.' This book should be read by all those who want an eyewitness account of the nightmare that was the slave labour camp at Buna-Monowitz, just outside Auschwitz, where the Jewish prisoners in particular were subjected to the harshest of treatments, and killed once they were too weak to work for their SS taskmasters.

Denis Avey's experiences of the Nazi treatment of the Jews are disturbing - as they should be, for the human mind finds it hard to enter into a world dominated by cruelty, and where a small gesture like that of Denis Avey towards a Dutch Jewish prisoner is a rare shaft of light and comfort. He also tells us of his time before being made a prisoner of war; fighting in the Western Desert.

Here too he tells a powerful tale without flinching from the horrors, and the death of his friend Les, 'blasted to kingdom come' next to him. "Les was the chap with twinkling eyes, I had come all the way from Liverpool with him, I had

danced with his sister Marjorie, sat round the kitchen table with his folks, laughed at their jokes and shared their food." And now his first reaction, on finding 'half of poor old Les all over me', was 'Thank God it wasn't me.' The reaction still troubles him today.

The honesty of this book heightens its impact. The description of Buna-Monowitz is stark, and true. By swapping his British army uniform with a Jewish prisoner's striped rags and going into the Jewish section of that vast slave labour camp zone, he became a witness. "I had to see for myself what was going on," he writes.

Our knowledge of one of the worst corners of the SS kingdom is enhanced because he did so. This book is a tribute both to Denis Avey, and to those whose story he was determined to tell - at the risk of his life.

THE MAN WHO BROKE INTO AUSCHWITZ
By Denis Avey
ISBN 978-1-444-71419-7

**Review: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied**

IN THE spring of 1944, Europe had been at war for nearly four and a half years. Fighting had raged through Russia, North Africa, and, since the Allies' invasion of Salerno the previous autumn, the heavily defended European mainland of Italy.

At the beginning of the year, the Allied armies approached a network of important river valleys, through which ran key roads. Their destination was Rome, a further eighty miles north, but to get there, the troops had to inch past the town of Cassino. Overlooking the town is a monastery, perched on the summit of Monte Cassino, an architectural masterpiece established by St Benedict of Nursia in 529. It was recognised as one of the architectural wonders of the world.

From January to May, several small units of Germany's best-trained formations stalled the might of nine Allied national armies, assembled to overcome the Gustav Line and seize Rome. In a desperate attempt to remove the Germans from their redoubt, the Allies levelled the monastery with one of the most ferocious and concentrated air raids of the war. A month later their bombers returned and destroyed the town in similar fashion.

The following is an extract from the book:

"The porters of the Royal Pioneer Corps were frequently the unsung heroes of the Cassino campaign, managing to evacuate casualties and sustain troops in remote mountain positions that wheeled transport and even mules could not reach."

It also described the story of Pte Tancred who died of exhaustion after carrying a wounded officer down a mountain.

MONTE CASSINO - TEN ARMIES IN HELL
By Peter Caddick-Adams
ISBN 978-1-848-09358-4

Rush of blood

**Review: Norman Brown
Picture: Supplied**

THE BRITISH Army medic was sent to southern Afghanistan to save life, and found herself face to face with the Taliban in a fierce fire-fight and forced to kill, a new book reveals.

Sgt Chantelle Taylor, who served alongside US military medics, became the first female to shoot dead an insurgent when she was part of a combat patrol ambushed in the notorious district of Marjah in Helmand.

She was serving as the Commander of a small team of combat medics attached to B Company the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, otherwise known as 5 Scots.

Later a routine patrol she was sent on turned into a seven week siege. Along with a demoralised group of local soldiers from the Afghan National Army, Chantelle, her team and the Argyll's were forced to fight a relentless battle to defend a small isolated patrol base deep in Taliban held territory.

In total their combined force of Afghan and British soldiers totalled 100. four were killed and 66 injured in seven weeks of fighting. Their task was to hold Nad-e Ali against all odds.

She tells of the dramatic moment she gunned down a Taliban fighter after being caught in an ambush, saying: 'It was him or me.' The man was only 50 feet away and firing 'drug-crazed bursts from his

AK-47'.

The 32-year-old, then serving as a sergeant in the Royal Army Medical Corps in Afghanistan, was 'overwhelmed by fear' during the firefight but after a 'rush of blood to the head' she fired seven shots, killing him.

It was the first time she had ever fired her standard issue SA80 assault rifle at another person.

Soon afterwards Miss Taylor turned her attention to her colleagues, and saved the life of a soldier who had been shot in the stomach by making sure he was taken to their base in a helicopter.

BAD COMPANY - A WOMAN FACE TO FACE WITH THE TALIBAN
By Chantelle Taylor
ISBN 97800-955-7813-2-2

Last Post

It is with sadness to report the following deaths

BLIN FJD (18005975)

6 May 12, Luton

Ex WO, Aged 85, Served 1945 - 1954

BUTLER DOUGIE "GEORDIE" (24447303)

7 May, Preston

12 (Ex SSgt) Aged 54, Served 1977 - 1992.

The following Pioneers acted as pall-bearers: Ian Morewood, Neil Buterworth, Gary Harding, Mickey Myers, John McCuskey and Maj (Retd) J Shields. The small church at Peshaw was packed for his funeral and Maj Jimmy Shields paid a moving tribute. He started his speech by stating that Dougie (who was a Newcastle Utd fan) would have been proud of the attendance as there were more people in the church than at the "Stadium of Light".

PEARSALL ERIC (22770000)

25 Feb 12, Scarborough

Served Feb 53 - Feb 55 in 263 Coy RPC.

TIERNEY CLIFFORD RONALD HENRY (13096407)

9 Aug 11, Ivybridge

Aged 90 - joined the RPC Association in 1957.

TATE JOHN JAMES (23900017)

27 Mar 12, Prudhoe

Ex LCpl, Aged 69.

Served 4 Feb 62 - 2 Nov 75

EASTERBROOK LESLIE FREDERICK OSWALD

16 May, Weymouth

May 12 (Ex WO2 RQMS) Aged 92.

Served 2 May 40 - 28 Aug 46.

JACKSON HAROLD (13106806)

6 May 12, London

Pte. Aged 92. Formerly 13807046 Hans JOSEPHY.

FIELD WILLY (13046415)

12 May 12, London

Cpl. Aged 91. Formerly 13807111 Willy HIRSCHFELD.

KEAY DEREK JOHN (24543262)

17 Jun 12, Heywood, Lancs

Ex Pte Aged 51. Served Sept 79-May 84.

CARRUTHERS JOHN THOMAS (24156654)

9 May 12, Lancaster

Ex Pte. Served Nov 69-Mar 75.

WHITE DARYL ALAN (24767069)

4 Jun 12.

Ex Pte. Aged 48.

Served Feb 86 - Feb 89

MARSDEN DOUGLAS (13089824)

20 Aug 12, Leeds

Ex LCpl. Aged 91.

Served July 41 - March 46.

HARRIS THOMAS FRANK (1137993)

20 Jun 12, Droitwich

Ex Pte, Served May 42 - Oct 51.

MORTON JOHN WILLIAM (23984405)

30 Aug 12, Peterborough

Ex Pte, Served Feb 64 - May 69.

COLQUHOUN ROBERT (22595478)

14 Jun 12, Barrhead.

Ex Pte, Aged 79.

Served RASC 17 Oct 51-27 Jul 59 and

Pioneer Corps Jul 59-Apr 62

KING JOHN (23844334)

25 Sept 12, Luton

Ex Cpl, 1959-1977 mainly with 518 Coy tours included Germany, Aden, Malta, Gibraltar and Northern Ireland.

The Passing of two 'Alien' Pioneers

TWO ex-Pioneers and friends Willy Field and Hans Jackson have passed away in London within a week of each other and both in their nineties.

Hans Jackson died on 6th May and Willy Field on 12th May 2012. Both men were forced to flee Hitler's Germany in the 1930s. Hans Jackson was born Hans Josephy in Berlin; and Willy was born Willy Hirschfeld in Bonn. Hans came to England in 1939 as one of 200 craftsmen to rebuild Kitchener Camp near Sandwich in Kent - the transit camp which became the training base for the 'alien' Pioneer Corps companies in 1940. Willy Field also arrived in Britain from Germany in 1939, having survived four months in Dachau concentration camp. At the outbreak of war both men, like all German refugees in Britain, were classified as 'enemy aliens' and the following year in July 1940 they were interned. They were unlucky enough to be transported to Australia on the infamous troopship Dunera. After a year in internment camps in Australia both volunteered for the British army and

returned to England where they joined the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps. Hans served in 93 Company for the duration of the war. Willy was in 248 and 88 Companies, before transferring to the Royal Armoured Corps and landing on the Normandy beaches in the D-Day landings as a tank driver. After the war both men married, although only Willy and his wife had children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Hans and Willy were exceptionally proud of the part they played in the British forces. Why did they volunteer to fight against the country of their birth? As Willy often remarked, 'It is this simple: I wanted to give something back to Britain for saving my life.'

They were two very special war veterans and will be remembered. Hans Jackson has left a legacy of art and paintings to various institutions to continue his work of Holocaust education; and Willy's life has been documented in a biography From Dachau to D-Day written by historian Helen Fry.

Keith Blundell

IN THE April 2012 Newsletter we reported the passing of Keith Blundell, John Robertson has wrote the following:

It was with great sadness that whilst attending the Disbandment of 206 Sqn, there were a lot of former members of the old 206 Coy RPC, which was where I first met Keith. I was posted there in 1966 and Keith and I had the dubious pleasure of sharing the Blanco Room as there was not enough accommodation.

The Orderly Room at that time was George Turnbull, Neil McKenzie, George West, Jock Morrison, Keith and myself. We had a lot of great nights in the NAAFI Bar I still have photos to prove it. George was posted and we received Terry Sutton in his place and we also got a new trainee Alan Corkhill.

There are a couple of notable occurrences that I can safely tell:

When Keith was on the Shakespeare Birthday Parade he was the orderly on the Flag for the Ivory Coast, the Ambassador asked Keith what he had to do? Keith showed him the cord he had to pull, which he did there and then and the flag fluttered open. After the parade Keith and I had been in the Dirty Duck opposite the theatre and were walking back to the centre of town when a Rolls Royce pulled up and the occupant shouted to the Sergeant and waved us across it was the Ambassador and he explain that he had apologised to the Foreign Office Minister that it was his fault that the his flag had unfurled early. He said he was really proud that his flag was the first to unfurl and he would be telling everybody the story at dinners in the future.

Keith, Neil McKenzie, Bomber Glaister and I were invited to Steve Mills and Karen's wedding in Glasgow. When we were on the return train journey there were no seats available so we sat in the space by the door. Keith was sat leaning back on the door and when we got to Crewe a passenger opened the door. Keith did a backward roll out onto the platform to the astonishment of the people waiting to get on the train.

There was also the occasion at the Coy Smoker that Capt Peter Nicholson bet Keith and myself that we could not play chess when the star act was on. When the lady noticed what we were doing she tried her best to distract Keith and even gave him a slap. We won the bet.

So it's good bye to a dear friend, I will miss you.

Royal Logistic Corps soldiers killed in Afghanistan named

23 Pioneer Regiment, RLC lose two soldiers on the battlefield

CPL ANDREW Roberts and Pte Ratu Silibaravi were killed in southern Afghanistan on Friday 4 May 2012.

They died after an enemy mortar rocket attack at their base in the Nahr-e Saraj district of Helmand province.

They were both aged 32 and were from 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC attached to 1st Battalion The Royal Welsh Battlegroup. They deployed to Afghanistan on 11 March as part of an advanced search team in the operations squadron of the Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Search Task Forces.

Cpl Roberts, from Middlesbrough, was a section commander and joined the Army in 1998. He had previously served on operations in Bosnia and Iraq and was on his second tour of Afghanistan. Described as a "larger than life" character, he was said to be a very able sportsman and a highly regarded physical training instructor.

He leaves behind wife Lindsey, from whom he was separated, and children Jessica, Kayla and Kyle.

His children paid the following tribute: "You were the best Dad, we remember all the fun things we did, we will never forget you and will love you forever. You are our hero and we will pray for you always."

He also leaves partner Paula who said: "Andrew truly was a hero and I'm so proud of what he achieved, he was such a special, kind and caring person. I was blessed to have spent the past two and a half years with Andrew. I have lost my soulmate and my best friend. The memories I have of our time together I will hold in my heart forever."

His commanding officer in Afghanistan, Lt Col Simon Bell, said: "His upbeat, determined nature balanced with humour, humility and understanding allowed him to command his advanced search team extremely effectively. His team were utterly

reliable due to his professionalism and leadership abilities."

The Commanding Officer 23 Pnr Regt RLC, Lieutenant Colonel Dom Fletcher, said: "Cpl Andrew Roberts, known to everyone as 'Ginge', is a man I am proud to say I knew well."

"This junior commander was the epitome of a Pioneer soldier, brave, fit, robust and a 'salt of the earth character' who led his soldiers from the front and by example."

Fiji-born Pte Silibaravi joined the Army in 2002 and had previously served in Iraq in 2003 and Afghanistan in 2006 and 2009. He also undertook duties at Windsor Castle, Buckingham Palace, St James's Palace and the Tower of London in 2008. He was also said to be a promising candidate for the Royal Logistic Corps Rugby Team. Private Silibaravi leaves behind his parents and brother and sister, who live in Fiji.

He was an active member of the Bicester Fijian Community, and Fijian Community Church, and sang in the community choir.

Paying tribute, Col Bell said: "Pte Silibaravi was a professional and committed individual. Strong and fit, he had an excellent work ethic, throwing himself wholeheartedly at every challenge. The number of operational tours that he had successfully completed is testament to his dedication and professionalism."

Pte Silibaravi's team had conducted a number of search operations to clear irrigation ditches as well as supporting patrolling troops by searching for improvised explosive devices.

Maj Ben Hawkins, from the explosive ordnance disposal and search task force, said: "Private Silibaravi, or 'Sili' as he was more commonly known, was a quiet, composed and determined individual. Well respected by his team and exceptionally

level-headed Sili was truly a delight to be around. As a man of few words, he knew how to make his presence felt with his actions speaking louder than his words."

Pte Qalo of the Royal Logistics Corps said "Pte Silibaravi was known for his caring and good-hearted nature, I went to Afghanistan with him in 2006. He's the type that is always up to any challenge, who will give his all for anyone. A comedian and an entertainer, everyone knew him in the community."

Private Cayah 'Robbo' Ware-Roberts, from 23 Pioneer Regiment, said: "Sili was an immensely strong character, everyone liked him, it's as simple as that. I consider it an absolute privilege and honour to have served next to him."

Major Derren Battersby, Officer Commanding Operations Squadron, 23 Pioneer Regiment, said: "Pte Silibaravi was very much a 'soldier's soldier'. A cliché perhaps, but he was a dedicated stalwart of the squadron and of his community."

Charles Shouler, who represents Bicester South on Oxfordshire County Council said: "The Logistics Corps is very attached to the town and obviously a loss is felt not just individually but by the town as a whole."

Royal British Legion Oxfordshire county chairman Jim Lewendon called on people to attend the repatriation. He said: "I am sure we will get more people because they are local lads."



CPL Andrew Roberts

Pte Ratu Silibaravi



Pictures: Mark Hensworth

Repatriation, Brize Norton



And finally...

Paraproskodikians, lady of the streets, Sgt Dewsnap and Micky the cross dressing Chelsea Pensioner...

**Report: Norman Brown
Picture: Norman Brown**

- P**ARAPROSDOKIANS (Winston Churchill loved them) are figures of speech in which the latter part of a sentence or phrase is surprising or unexpected; frequently humorous.
1. Where there's a will, I want to be in it.
 2. Since light travels faster than sound, some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
 3. If I agreed with you, we'd both be wrong.
 4. War does not determine who is right - only who is left.
 5. Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.
 6. They begin the evening news with 'Good Evening,' then proceed to tell you why it isn't.
 7. To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism. To steal from many is research.
 8. I thought I wanted a career. Turns out I just wanted paychecks.
 9. Women will never be equal to men until they can walk down the street with a bald head and a beer gut, and still think they are sexy.
 10. Behind every successful man is his

woman. Behind the fall of a successful man is usually another woman.

11. A clear conscience is the sign of a fuzzy memory.
12. Money can't buy happiness, but it sure makes misery easier to live with.
13. I used to be indecisive. Now I'm not so sure.
14. To be sure of hitting the target, shoot first and call whatever you hit the target.
15. Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.
16. Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.
17. Where there's a will, there are relatives.

IN THE good old days 23 Group RPC had its own Training Cadre and Mr Iain Dewsnap was the drill instructor.

Once a week the RSM (WO1 Mel Evans) would take the parade to assess the improvement of the students. On this particular day as the RSM was marching them around the square they were ragged to say the least.

Nothing they did was correct, they could not keep in step. The RSM shouted to Sgt Dewsnap "Shout out the time Sergeant!". He shouted "Ten past nine, Sir!"

A FRIEND of mine, recently returned from a tour of Afghanistan, took his wife on a shopping trip to London. While his wife popped into Next in Piccadilly, he stood outside, drinking in the sights and sounds of the bustling thoroughfare and comparing it to the streets of Kabul.

He was approached by a most attractive lady of the streets, who sidled up to him and purred in his ear, "Hello soldier boy - like a good time?" exhibiting about three and a half pounds of cleavage as she did so.

By way of making polite conversations he enquired how much. 'Two hundred pounds, dearie,' said the demi-mondaine, bouncing her heavenly twins once again in his direction.

'What each, or the pair?' he replied in jocular fashion.

'Come on, I like the look of you,' she continued, ignoring his prevarication. 'Two hundred pounds, darling.'

'I'm not paying all that,' said my friend, and offered her twenty five pounds. 'Twenty five pounds?' she said scornfully, 'You'll be lucky, sunny Jim. You won't get much for that round here,' and wiggled her way disdainfully on her stiletto heels, heading for Soho.

An hour later, when he and his wife were walking arm-in-arm down Lisle Street on their way to a little Italian restaurant for lunch, there, in a doorway, stood the same pretty girl. Looking his wife up and down disdainfully, she called across the street,

There you are - I told you you wouldn't get much for twenty-five quid.'

TWO ARMY Chaplains, a rabbi and a Roman Catholic, found themselves exchanging views

"Tell me," said the rabbi, "why do you wear your collar back to front?"

"Because I'm a father", replied the priest.

"But I'm also a father," said the rabbi,

"and I don't wear my collar back to front."

"Yes, but I'm the father of thousands," answered the priest.

After a lengthy pause for thought the rabbi countered, "Well perhaps in that case you should have worn your trousers back to front as well."

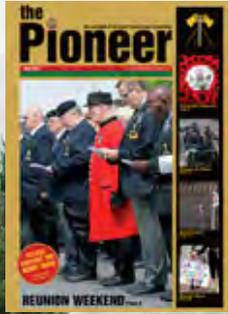
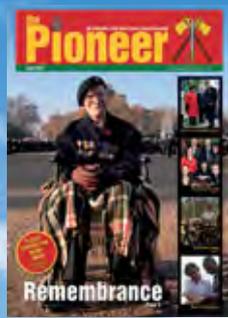
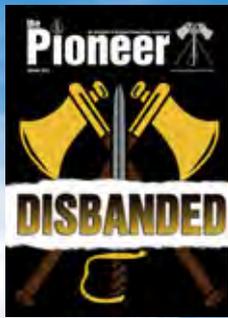
ACCORDING TO a recent Army Study, published in a Army welfare handbook those soldiers who don't understand women fall into two groups: bachelors and husbands."



"Micky says the women get preferential treatment at the hospital so now he wants to be called Michelle!"

Coming up in the next newsletter ...

- Forthcoming events
- Your stories
- Your Letters
- Photo Gallery
- News from 23 and 168 Pioneer Regiments
- Report from Cenotaph Parade
- Another unpublished Story
- Reviews
- And much more!



the Pioneer



■ Veterans talk to Josh Campbell at the Pioneer Reunion Weekend. Picture: Paul Brown



In addition to the wide distribution of the Newsletter within the U.K. and BFPO addresses, the Newsletter is also distributed to the following countries:

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Portugal
Qatar

Sierra Leone
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
USA





The **Corps** was born on **17th October 1939**, by the publication of an **Army Order**, but it was during the **forty days and nights** of bitter travail on the beaches, the highways and in the fields of France that the **esprit de corps**, without which a military formation is nothing, blazed into existence. For six weeks, using borrowed weapons; **Pioneers** had fought **shoulder to shoulder** with the flower of the British Army and found **none their superior**. A long, hard road still lay ahead of the **Corps** before it was accepted, grudgingly, into full **brotherhood** with the long established, jealous clans of which the Army is composed, but the men of the **B.E.F.** had set a pattern which was to be **repeated time and time** again in the years that followed and the **debt owed** to them by later generations of **Pioneers** is **immeasurable**