



**Working in  
Civvy  
Street**

**STORY  
P31**



**Pioneer  
Reunion  
Weekend**

**NEWS  
P6 & P7**



**Wayne &  
Mayor**

**PHOTOS  
P40**

# the **Pioneer**



October 2013



## **Corps of Drums at Pioneer Reunion**

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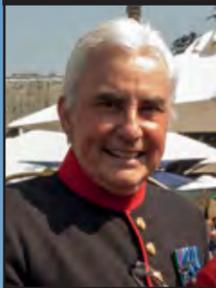
**PLEASE  
SUPPORT THE  
CHRISTMAS  
DRAW**  
Full details  
on Page 5



**General Sir Frank Simpson**  
GBR KCB DSO  
Colonel Royal Pioneer Corps 1950-1961



**Colonel Baker**  
CO 23 Pioneer Regiment & Regimental Colonel RLC



**Mickey Hull**

Our one and only Pioneer In-Pensioner. Not on parade this year, to busy delivering mail, perhaps.



# FOUNDERS DAY

Chelsea Hospital, London, 6th June 2013



**STOP PRESS...**

Tickets are available for the Field of Remembrance on 7 Nov and the Cenotaph Parade on 10th Nov, we already have 40 booked for the Cenotaph so this will be the largest attendance to date.  
We have just heard the sad news that SSGT Jimmy

**STOP PRESS...**

Dunbar died at his home in Northampton on 2nd Oct. Jimmy will be remembered as recruit training instructor at Northampton. Our condolences go to his family.  
Congratulations to 23 Pioneer Regt on winning the Gore Trophy on the 12th Oct for the second year running!



**Front Cover**

Reformed Corps of Drums, with RSM and CO of 23 Pioneer Regiment

Picture: Paul Brown



**Back Cover**

Association Members at Founders Day this year.

Picture: Paul Brown

## EDITORIAL

IT WAS nice to see so many at this year's Pioneer Reunion Weekend in July, especially members who were attending for the first time. Luckily, this year the weather was much better than last year's wet weekend!

Unfortunately since then two members who attended have sadly passed away, they are Tony McCormick and Joe Smillie our condolences go to their families.

23 Pioneer Regiment excelled themselves in the preparation and running of the weekend and I must thank the Commanding Officer and his men for their support. The only letdown for the weekend was the two bars in the Scully Club who managed to run out of beer at 2200 hrs, they did not appreciate how Pioneers can drink!

The feedback from the weekend has all been positive, this can be proved by the letters on pages 59-61. I had so many letters that I could not print all of them!

Photographs of the weekend can be viewed here: <http://tinyurl.com/oev9rwf>

If you wish to order prints please send your request to the RPC Association, the cost will be approximately £5 (for 8"x11") this includes postage.

The provisional date for next year's Reunion is 26/28 September 2014, probably the last one

to be held at Bicester. The reason for the lateness is that it is planned to coincide with the Disbandment Parade of 23 Pioneer Regiment. During the weekend the CO 23 Pnr Regt RLC asked members for their thoughts and a lot replied that they could not afford to attend Bicester twice in one year and that they would like to attend both the Disbandment Parade and the Reunion Weekend.

It is envisaged that the Disbandment Parade will take place in St David's Barracks on Friday 26 September and then the usual successful programme for the weekend will follow. It is hoped that as many veterans as possible will be able to attend.

Accommodation, for those travelling long distances, will be available from Thursday 25 September. Full details of the weekend and a booking form will be published in the April 2014 Association Newsletter.

By the time this Newsletter reaches members 168 Pioneer Regiment RLC(V) will have been disbanded. This Regiment was formed on 5 April 1993 when it evolved from CVHQ RPC. The Disbandment Parade will take place on 26 October 2013 and will involve a Church Service, march through Grantham and a 'Hanger Party'. One wonders how long it will be when the Army realises the mistake of

cutting the Pioneer CEQ.

As can be seen in the AGM Minutes, page 56, the RPC Association is to commission a painting to reflect the work of Pioneers from the Labour Corps of WW1, the work in WW2, post WW2 and tasks carried out since the formation of the RLC.

It is hoped to publish more details in the April 2014 Newsletter together with an order form for prints of the painting.

Once again I must ask you to inform me of your change of address, the distribution of the last Newsletter resulted in 29 being returned "Gone Away".

It is annoying when people complain that they have not received the Newsletter when they have moved without informing the Association, this results in double postage having to be paid - do we need to purchase a new crystal ball?

Once again with this Newsletter you will find Christmas Draw tickets please give the draw your full support. This is one of the few sources of income the Association has and helps to fund the cost of printing and posting the Newsletter.

The attendance at this year's Cenotaph Parade will be the largest ever this is a result of the Association being allowed an increase

of tickets from 30 to 54. The larger the contingent the better the chance of being mentioned by the BBC.

It is pleasing to report that the membership of the Association continues to increase. So far this year 40 personnel have joined, some who served in World War 2 and did not know that the Association existed. Others were ex National Servicemen who found the Association through our website or through Facebook. In a few cases members have passed details of ex Pioneers to me for which I am grateful.

Articles for the Newsletter are always welcome, it would be appreciated if they could include photographs, all photographs will be returned within 7 days.

Next year promises to be a busy one with the 100th anniversary of the start of WW1 and the 70th anniversary of D-Day.

Finally on behalf of the Chairman and members of the Association Council may we wish you all a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Hope to see you all in 2014.



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### Can you spot the Mouse?

We had 6 correct entries for the Cuneo Mouse competition, these names were put into a hat and the winning entry was Mrs Heather Hindmarsh - a prize will be sent to you soon. The mouse was, of course, on the back page under the left heel of the soldier.

Can you spot the Cuneo Mouse in this edition. Terence Cuneo painted 'Sword Beach'

which shows the activities of the Pioneers who were among the first British troops to land on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day.

In most of his paintings Cuneo hid a small mouse which was his trademark and somewhere in this Newsletter we have hidden a Cuneo mouse and it's not the one on this page or Page 66!

Names of correct entries will be entered into a draw and the first 'out of the hat' will win a prize.

Entries should be submitted (by letter, email or telephone) by 14th December 2013.



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Registered Charity Number 1024036

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### The Royal Pioneer Corps Association

c/o 23 Pioneer Regt RLC  
St David's Barracks  
Graven Hill  
Bicester OX26 6HF



## PAST EVENTS



■ WO1 (RSM) WB Fuller was dined out of the WOs & Sgts Mess, 23 Pnr Regt RLC on 22 Mar 13.

The following is the foreword of the menu for the evening:

Mess Members and partners, honoured guests, old friends,

It is with both joy and sadness that I welcome you into the WOs' and Sgts' Mess on the occasion of the Dine Out from both the Regiment and the fine institution that is the Sgts' Mess for my wife and I.

My two years in post have been memorable for all the right reasons, presiding over this Mess, whilst being the RSM of the finest Regiment in the Corps, if not the Army, has been an honour and a privilege, and my wife and I will cherish the memories of our time here forever more.

This Mess is quite rightly considered the backbone of the Regiment, its members the custodians of the proud traditions and ethos which underpins the collective that is the proud Pioneers.

You all have so much to be proud of and I sincerely hope that in some small way in the future, I can repay you all for the unwavering support and welcoming ambience that you have always provided for my family and I.

So, let's enjoy tonight, and like many nights we have shared before let's enjoy fine wine, fine dining and dancing and great company.

I salute you all.

WO1 (RSM) WB Fuller

■ EARLIER THIS year Todmorden driver Phil Powell saluted former army comrades by raising money for SSAFA – the national charity for former and serving Army, Navy and RAF personnel.

The ex-Royal Pioneer donned his old beret and spent four hours in Todmorden market raising funds for the organisation he also serves as a caseworker.

Phil, 57, served as a Pioneer for more than 17 years in places as far flung as Northern Ireland and Cyprus and to Denmark and Israel.

He said, "The Army is still like a family to me and I attend Pioneer Reunion every year. SSAFA does such a lot to support all our forces so it was the obvious charity to raise money for.

"I'm a caseworker for SSAFA so I speak to those in need as we work out how to best support them so I know this money is going to a very deserving cause. Our forces do an amazing job so I really feel for people when they need help.

■ THE FOLLOWING attended Founder's Day at Chelsea Hospital, London on Thursday 8th June 2013: Mr & Mrs P Thomas, Mr & Mrs T Appleyard, Mr I Dewsnap, Mr D Bryant, Mr P Brown and Mr N Brown.

The visiting dignitary this year was HRH The Duchess of Cornwall who reviewed the Parade and inspected the In-Pensioners.

Following the Parade refreshments and entertainment took place on the Hospital lawns.

The entertainment consisted of the band of the Irish Guards, Belly Dancers, a Jazz Band and various singers.

The Band of the Irish Guards even played Mr Dewsnap's Regimental March called "I'm Getting Married in the Morning".

# Scorcher!

## The Pioneer Reunion Weekend set a few records



■ John Mitchell with his new tattoo at Reunion Weekend

Pictures: Paul Brown

THE PIONEER Reunion Weekend held on 12/14 July 2013 at St David's Barracks, Bicester set a few records. Highest number of attenders, over 600 had booked in out of which 350 had requested a bed – this number does not include those who just turned up for the day. We had the highest temperatures recorded for the weekend and we also had the most WO1's (serving and retired) in attendance, a total of 22. They could nearly form their own Section.

The weekend started off with the first arrival at 0730 hrs (Mr A Cox who had travelled overnight from Fife, Scotland together with Mr JF Forster), elements of the re-formed Corps of Drums were next to arrive as they wanted to practice before their grand display on the Saturday. What started as a trickle of veterans arriving turned into a stampede and by early afternoon most had arrived. Unfortunately nearly 150 had to be accommodated at St George's Barracks but two mini-buses ran a shuttle service during the weekend. There were a few hic-cups with the accommodation mainly caused by people turning up a day early, having booked

only for the Saturday night eight people turned up on the Friday.

Some Association members had travelled long distances to attend notably Mr Trainer from Canada, Mr Simm for Denmark, Mr Lyle from Dublin, quite a few from Germany and of course, many from Scotland and from the South West. The two WW2 vets had travelled from Liverpool and we must thank Mr Dave Nelson for acting as their chauffeur.

The first event was the usual "Bring a Boss" in the Corporals Club where all veterans were also invited. The Club managed to sell over £3,000 worth of beer in three hours; the weather must have made everyone thirsty.

In the evening everyone walked down the hill to the Sergeants Mess where a supper meal awaited them. The chefs excelled, managing to feed over 350 in one and a half hours. The mess also managed to take record takings. Luckily the weather remained warm and most people used the outside tables to reminisce and swap war stories. The RSM had arranged for the big screen to show a collection of photographs dating from



■ Corps of Drum and Association members on the march past and eyes left at the Reunion Weekend

Picture: Paul Brown

World War 2 to the current Op Herrick deployments. This was well received especially from the veterans who saw themselves from many years ago. The only person not to welcome her photographs being shown was the Sergeants Mess "Annie"!

At 1030 hrs the Veterans formed up for the Memorial Service and with record numbers they had to be divided into two columns, the first being under the control of Mr Ian Dewsnap and the second under the control of Mr Peter Thomas. This year, however, they were to be led by the reformed "Corps of Drums", which had reformed about 9 months before. They played exceedingly well and brought back memories of Pass Out Parades at Northampton. They were led by Mr Dusty Bryant a former Drum Major of the Band. A short clip of veterans and the Corps of Drums can be seen at these web addresses:  
<http://tinyurl.com/o2anwr2>  
<http://tinyurl.com/nrj6gja>  
<http://tinyurl.com/pc7a87j>

The motorised brigade brought up the rear.

Three Buglers from the Corps of Drums also played (very well!) the Last Post and Reveille. Wreaths were laid by Pte P Farr from 144 (Headquarters) Squadron – the youngest soldier in the Regiment and Mr George Pringle a sprightly 95 year old World War 2 Veteran. Mrs Jenny Tubridy also laid a bouquet on behalf of her husband who had sadly died earlier in the year.

The veterans then marched past and

gave an "Eyes Left" to the COs' of 23 and 168 Regiments and the Association President and Chairman before marching to the steps of the Officers' Mess for a group photograph. All then went to the Sergeants Mess for the Annual General Meeting of the Association, the minutes of which are shown on pages 56 - 58

Following lunch, activities took place on the sports field where numerous stalls and exhibitions were on display, these included a range of bouncy castles for the children and even a waltzer and dodgems for those not so young. The two beer tents also attracted a great deal of attention.

During the afternoon the Friend Memorial Trophy was presented to Pte A Taylor of 518 (Pioneer) Squadron for being the best soldier in 23 Pnr Regt. A similar award was made to Pte Peirson of 168 Pnr Regt, both receive engraved silver plates and a cheque for £200 from the Association, copies of their citations are shown on pages 15 and 16.

The evening social night was held in the Scully Club where again the Chefs excelled and managed to feed over 400 people in less than two hours. All attending agreed the food was magnificent.

A live band and a disco kept the audience entertained and all went well until they ran out of beer at approx. 2200 hrs. The civilian caterers were not aware that Pioneers were always the leaders in the drinking stakes!

A return to the Sergeants Mess then ensued and a repeat of war stories and tales of dare doing etc went on until the

early hours – well until the Mess then ran out of beer (and vodka, and gin and shots and a lot of other drinks).

Most people had the sense to book accommodation well in advance but a well-known former RSM found himself late on Saturday trying to find a bed. This was found, even at the late hour of 0100 hrs, and a key in an envelope with his room number on was given to him. However, he thought he had lost the envelope tried every room in the mess annex, often waking people, trying to find his room, alas to no avail. This resulted in him sleeping in a laundry room. When he woke up, or sobered up, the following morning he found the envelope (with key) in his pocket. You can tell he is now an Officer!

Our thanks for a marvellous weekend must go to the Commanding Officer for allowing us once again to use his facilities, the team from 518 Squadron who organised the weekend so well, the QM staff for arranging stores and accommodation, to Sgt Sarah Ward and her team for cooking so well for such large numbers and the mini-bus drivers who worked so hard and so well, especially Pte Cameron (187 Sqn) who was the main organiser of the transport.

The Association has already received a large number of emails and letters from members expressing their gratitude for such a fantastic weekend.

Let us hope next year's will be even better. If you have any ideas on how things could be improved your suggestions would be welcome.

## PAST EVENTS



■ A CEREMONY to remember and give thanks to those who gave their lives in the Service of their country in 2012 took place at National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire on Friday 5 July 2013.

The service, led by Bishop John Kirkham, was for the families of those killed during 2012, with Mr Ian Dudson CBE, Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire; Lord John Astor of Hever DL, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence; and senior military representatives also in attendance.

The engraver, Nick Hindle, added the 52 new names to the Portland Stone walls of the Armed Forces Memorial during April and May of this year.

The Memorial was dedicated in the presence of HM The Queen in 2007 and is the UK's tribute to the 16,000 men and women who have been killed on duty or as a result of terrorist action since 1948.

All 52 names were read out during the service.

Afterwards there was a flypast by a Lancaster bomber and the families were invited to lay wreaths at the base of the Armed Forces Memorial's freshly engraved walls.

A short video of the service can be seen at: <http://tinyurl.com/q9psd7c>

■ MR KELVIN SMITH walked the short distance from Northampton to Bicester (some 36 miles!) on the Friday of the Reunion Weekend to raise funds for the newly formed Corps of Drums.

It was noted during the weekend that the walk had certainly made him thirsty. It is understood that the blisters have now disappeared.

## FUTURE EVENTS



■ THE FIELD of Remembrance will open on Thursday 7 November 2013 at 1100 hours, when a short service will be held.

Members attending the planting of crosses at the Corps Plot (Plot 168 - please note new plot number and also a possible change of location) are asked to arrive before 1030 hrs.

It has already been confirmed that tickets are required for admittance to the field, tickets can be obtained from RPC Association.

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

All those attending must be prepared to stay until the reviewing party has departed the Field.

The Field will be open daily from 9am to 5.30pm until Saturday 9 Nov 13.

Following the Field of Remembrance a London Lunch is to be held.

■ A LONDON lunch will follow the Field of Remembrance on 7 Nov 13.

It will be held, as usual, in the Marquis of Westminster, Warwick Road (approx 400 yds from Victoria Station).

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

After Lunch we normally accompany our In-Pensioner Micky Hull back to Chelsea not only to make sure he gets home safely but as an excuse to have a drink in his club with other In-Pensioners who always have some enjoyable yarns to spill!

Bookings can be made through the RPC Association.

# Sappers and Pioneers

## The close relationship with the Royal Engineers

THE CHIEF Royal Engineer (and CGS) Sir Peter Wall joined 4 former Colonel Commandants of the RPC, (Sir Hugh Beach, Sir George Cooper, Sir John Stibbon and Maj Gen GW Field), and 2 former Directors, (Brig HJ Hickman and Brig CB Telfer), together with the Chairman of the RPC Association, (Col A Barnes) and the CO 168 Pnr Regt RLC, (Lt Col A Parry) and the Controller RPC Association (Mr N Brown) for a Luncheon in the Farmers Club, Whitehall to mark the long association between the RE and RPC.

The CRE made the following speech:

"The RPC ceased to exist in 1993 with the formation of the RLC, however, the latest round of cuts to the Regular Army will result in Pioneers being deleted entirely. This will be a sad day for serving and retired Pioneers alike, but it will also be felt keenly by my own Corps. Your war history describes the Sappers as 'Your Sister Corps'. The first Director of the AMPC started life as a Sapper but retired having lost a foot as a subaltern in the First World War. He was brought back in 1939 as a Major General having avoided the inconvenience and expense of all the intervening promotions!

Your history goes on to say that 'In the fields of sport and entertainment they were the equals of the older-established formations and, of much greater importance, they were achieving a dexterity and efficiency only surpassed by men of the Royal Engineers'. This simply acknowledges the fact that Pioneers were now increasingly being employed alongside Sappers in our traditional roles of constructing roads, bridges, airfields, railways and camps, as well as field defences, mine clearance, bomb disposal, bulk fuel and water supply, port operating and so on. We shared all the tasks which enabled the Army, and the other services to fight, to move and to live. The major achievements of the Normandy Landings and the Rhine crossing, for example, would not have been possible without the joint efforts of Sappers and Pioneers. There are also plenty of examples in both Corps of individual courage and determination as displayed by your Cpl Scully and Pte Tancred.

It is a mark of the mutual esteem and friendship we share that ever since the appointment of Gen Sir Frank Simpson in 1950, all RPC Colonel Commandants have been Sappers, and I think that the presence here today of all surviving Colonels Commandant is a mark of that enduring relationship.

By the end of the Second World War the Pioneers were the largest force ever to have served under the same cap-badge in the annals of British Military History with nearly half a million men. The RPC Association has done splendid work in providing welfare and support for many of these veterans and it is very encouraging that the Association is thriving under the leadership of those here today. I wish it continuing success into the future.

And so to make the many years of

fruitful partnership and friendship between the Sappers and Pioneers I would ask you to stand and drink a toast:

UBIQUE ET LABOR VINCIT OMNIA"

Brigadier CB Telfer replied on behalf of the RPC Association:

Chief Royal and Elder Statesmen of the Royal Engineers,

You do us a significant and unique honour today. Your generous tribute to Pioneers reflects the very close relationship that has existed between us since the day of our first formation. There are two reasons why we, for our part, will always be grateful to the REs. The first is the way in which your soldiers and senior ranks at working level were always prepared to work closely with our own in a spirit of comradesly co-operation. This obviously stemmed from an understanding on both sides on who we were and the skills and energy we both brought to bear on the task in hand. Not all of our commitments enjoyed the same cross cap badge feeling as our men often had to overcome prejudices and ignorance on the part of others. It was never like that on a Sapper led task.

The second reason is that we have benefited immeasurably by having RE Colonels Commandant to help and advise the Directors of the Corps throughout our existence. The presence of no fewer than four past Colonels Commandant here today reflect the sincerity of that commitment undertaken by your Corps. Your presence over the years at our Regimental functions helped us create and sustain an esprit de corps and a regimental family spirit that was second to none. Additionally, the Director of the day could turn to a mentor and advisor in at the more senior levels of the MOD, outside the strict chain of Command. That relationship between the Director and the Colonel Commandant of the day was invaluable. I speak for all of us when I say that we were always received with friendliness, encouragement and were always given wise and helpful counsel.

All of this is reflected in the spirit and nature of the exchanges between us today. From the moment we met before lunch and the exchanges at this table, it is clear to all of us that we are amongst friends and comrades. I have two more things to say before finishing.

Firstly, Chief Royal I will ask you to put your CGS hat on. I will not have another chance to surprise a CGS; you are the only one here today not entitled to wear a Pioneer tie. I would ask you to accept the new appointment as an Honorary Colonel Commandant and also this tie which I hope you will wear from time to time (CGS accepted and said he would wear it around the MOD!).

Secondly, I ask the Pioneers present (Brig HJ Hickman, Col A Barnes, Norman Brown, Lt Col A Parry) to stand and join me in proposing a Toast to 'The Sappers'

The members present also had a chance to wish Sir Hugh Beach a happy 90th birthday



■ Sgt Strange, Lt Col Clouston, WO1 (RSM) Lane and WO2 (SSM) Aspinall

Picture: Premier Newspapers

# Pioneer Square now open

## Hundreds of people witness the unveiling of Pioneer Square in Bicester

**H**UNDREDS of people gathered in Bicester town centre early on Wednesday 10 July 2013 to witness the grand unveiling of Pioneer Square.

Troops from Bicester's 23 Pioneer Regiment formed a guard of honour at the £70million development's opening, conducted by Lieutenant Colonel David Clouston, Commanding Officer of 23 Pioneer Regiment, and Councillor Lawrie Stratford, chairman of Cherwell District Council (CDC).

Councillor Barry Wood, leader of CDC, said: "We wanted a brand mark that worked well with the name of the development, but also something that would convey our strong aspirations for the town centre. We believe this contemporary, forward-thinking mark for the new space does exactly that."

Unveiling a plaque commemorating Bicester's long-standing association with the Pioneer Regiment, Cllr Stratford said it had taken "a lot of time and a lot of work" to deliver the major scheme, which has created a large Sainsbury's store, a seven-screen Vue cinema, restaurants and shops.

He added: "I'm really proud to be here to unveil this particular plaque to

recognise the town's link with 23 Pioneer. This is an old garrison town, and many of you have links. This is an appropriate recognition over the years."

Lt Col Clouston said: "With the Regiment due to be disbanded, the naming of this new complex Pioneer Square is a fitting legacy, but also a hugely humbling moment for us all."

"We are extremely grateful for the thought and the gesture."

Sainsbury's store manager, Vince Brimble said: "The Pioneer Corps has a long history of serving our country.

"It is a fantastic tribute that the name of Bicester's town centre redevelopment recognises the history and dedication of Bicester residents that have made up the Pioneer Regiment."

Lt Col Clouston said some senior soldiers had returned to Bicester time and time again, and said the town was the only home some of his junior soldiers had ever known.

"Life is not so much about places and equipment, it's about people, and by the people of Bicester and outlying villages we have always been made welcome, and we're very pleased to be here," he added.



## FUTURE EVENTS



■ **THIS YEAR** the Association has had an increased allocation of tickets for the Cenotaph Parade in Whitehall on 10 Nov 13 (from 30 to 54 tickets).

At the time of going to press 40 have been allocated so the attendance this year is going to be the largest ever.

Attenders should be on parade (on Horseguards) by 1010 hrs ready to march onto Whitehall. If you would like to attend please 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) during the afternoon in the nearby Civil Service Club in Old Scotland Yard.

■ **THE WOS & SNCOS** Pioneer Reunion Club will once again be organising a trip from Bicester to Twickenham for the Army v Navy Rugby.

The date for next year is 27 April 2014. Details will be sent to Club members in early January 2014.

■ **THIS YEAR** the attendance at the Pioneer Reunion Weekend broke all records with over 600 members attending (of which 350 required a bed!).

Next year the provisional date for the Weekend is 26/28 September 2014. It is to coincide with the Disbandment Parade of 23 Pioneer Regiment. Although the programme for the weekend has yet to be finalised it is likely that the Disbandment Parade will be held on the Friday after this the normal Pioneer Weekend Programme will follow.

Let us say a big farewell to Bicester (the Pioneers have served here continuously since 1940) and have a record attendance.

## NEWS IN BRIEF



■ **THANKS TO** all members who supported the derby draw, this is one of the few areas in which we raise money to keep the Association running.

Cheques have been posted to lucky winners.

1st Prize £1,000 - W Hind  
Ticket No 38709  
Prudhoe

2nd Prize £500 - Mr P Alcoirn  
Ticket No 07556  
Strensall

3rd Prize £200 - A Boyes  
Ticket No 48532  
Beeston

4th Prize £100 - R Wallace  
Ticket No 47220  
Fulwell

5th Prize £50 - J Barket  
Ticket No 09191  
Whitefield

■ **BOTH PRIZES** from Corps of Drums Raffle at the Corps Weekend remain unclaimed.

White Ticket No 360 won the Bugle in Case, and pink Ticket No 288 won the engraved Piston. If they are not claimed by the end of October it is intended to auction unclaimed prizes on the RPCA Facebook page, for those not on Facebook a bid can be sent to the Association.

# Farewell Parade

## The closure of HQ and Rheindahlen Complex

**A** FAREWELL PARADE was held in Mönchengladbach on 15 Jul 13 to mark the closure of the Joint Headquarters (JHQ) and the Rheindahlen Military Complex (RMC).

On the Kapurinerplatz in Mönchengladbach's Altstadt soldiers from 16 Signal Regiment and 1 Military Intelligence Battalion, lead by the Band of the Prince of Wales's Division, with the Crossed Swords Pipe Band, paraded as a final farewell to the city.

In the presence of Oberbürgermeister Norbert Bude, Lord Mayor of Mönchengladbach, Major General John Henderson, GOC British Forces Germany and the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach KCB CBE RAF as the reviewing British VIP representative.

Following a General Salute OB Bude, Air Marshal Peach and Maj Gen Henderson inspected the parade, before Oberbürgermeister Bude presented Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach with the Stadt flag as a token of thanks and friendship between the two nations. Guests were then invited to a reception held in Haus Erholung in Mönchengladbach.

During the reception GOC BFG Major General John Henderson said; "It is the end of an era, a definite turning of a page of history". He thanked the Mayor and the people of Mönchengladbach: "for welcoming us into your city and supporting us through thick and thin."

**A REMARKABLE PLACE.** The 470-hectare site which has been the home to tens of thousands of Britons will be handed back to the German Federal Authorities at the end of this year. Building started in 1953 to house the HQs of the British Army, Navy and Air Force in Germany.

Over the years the occupants have changed as the military situation in Europe changed; currently the major occupier is HQ British Forces Germany

(HQ BFG). Following the move of HQ ARRC to the UK in 2010 and of HQ BFG to Bielefeld this year the site can be handed back saving annual running costs of approximately £50m.

JHQ at its height was a remarkable place, a British town in the middle of the German countryside with a population of over 12,000.

A very close association has developed with the German neighbours and there is genuine sadness expressed in the local villages and the nearby city of Mönchengladbach about the closure. There are local civilians who have worked on the camp for as long as 40 years. A two-year retraining programme has mitigated the loss of jobs.

**NEW EUROPE.** The following day in the centre of Mönchengladbach soldiers from 1 Military Intelligence Battalion and 16 Signals Regiment paraded in the bright sunshine. The large crowd of both German and British spectators saw the Mayor, GOC BFG and VCDS inspect the immaculately turned out troops. Hundreds of British schoolchildren excitedly waved German and British flags.

During his address VCDS recalled the words of Field Marshal Montgomery at the formation of the British Army of the Rhine: "We must build a new Europe from the ashes of the old. We must apply the same sense of duty to the common cause of Freedom".

The Air Chief Marshal said: "As your friends and partners we have tried to do this." He added: "On behalf of all serving and former serving British Forces and their families who have been associated with JHQ and Mönchengladbach I thank you and all the people of Mönchengladbach for including us as part of your family for the last 68 years. We wish you good luck and best wishes for the future." Whilst JHQ is closing, VCDS emphasised during an interview with BFBS TV that for the British Serviceman: "Germany is not closing for some time to come".

# Start up loan changes

## Comprehensive support to setup a business

**E**X-SERVICE personnel will be some of the first to benefit from removing the age limit on Start Up Loans.

The loans, to help people start up their own business, were historically only open to those under the age of 30. However, the Prime Minister's Enterprise Advisor, Lord Young, recommended that these loans be open to everyone who aspires to start up their own business. Now, ex-Servicemen and women, including those aged over 30, will be in the first wave to receive targeted support. X-Forces have become the first specialist Start-Up Loans delivery

partner for ex Service personnel and the wider Forces' community.

Currently around four per cent of Service leavers go on to set up their own business and it is hoped these number will increase.

The X-Forces team have commercial and military backgrounds, and will provide Service Leavers, veterans, spouses and reservists with a comprehensive package of active support to set up sustainable and successful businesses, including mentoring.  
<http://tinyurl.com/ph3jnc/>



■ The team at the bottom and top of Ben Nevis

Picture: 23 Pioneer Regiment

# News from 23 Pioneer

## Continued focus on requirements in barracks, exercise and operations

**T**HE REGIMENT has continued to focus on the myriad of requirements in barracks, on exercise and most importantly on operations.

187 (Tancred) Sqn took over the mantle of operational responsibility for all HERRICK deployments. This has been in the form of a search team deployed with the EOD & Search Task Force, a Mortuary Affairs team working out of BASTION Role 3 Hospital, a Protective Mobility Group and the Theatre Re-Deployment (TRD) Troop. A relatively new concept, the TRD Troop has been attached to 9 TLR in order to provide additional labour support for the redeployment of materiel from theatre. As such, they have been responsible for manning the War-Like Scrap Area and staffing the Bio Wash-Down which is responsible for ensuring VAME (vehicles and major equipment) meet the theatre exit standard.

This period has seen a number of Sqn level exercises, most notably was Ex OBUA PIONEER conducted by 518 Sqn. This involved an Urban Confidence Course, the use of the Dark House (a series of tight tunnels running through the bottom of a completely blacked out

house), OBUA build up training and numerous assault techniques. The exercise intent was to expose the soldiers to an unfamiliar and challenging environment, forcing many of them out of their comfort zone and developing further basic soldiering skills. The build up training additionally incorporated the new Rhino Rig - a MOE (Method of Entry) training facility. This allowed the use of numerous tools such as the Enforcer and sledge hammers, to gain entry through doors. The exercise culminated in a dawn attack on Copehill Down OBUA Village with an ensuing stretcher race for a bit of friendly competition.

The aspiration to put a Pioneer on every continent is progressing well. Eight members of the Regiment took part in Ex PIONEER DIVER, a sub-aqua diving Adventurous Training expedition run in Key Largo, Florida, USA. The exercise successfully built upon the skills each participant had acquired during their Ocean Diver Course in the UK and developed these further to qualify them for the Sports Diver award. Hot on their heels was Ex SPANIARD PIONEER, a rock-climbing expedition in Spain headed

up by Capt Emmit Andrews, the RCMO. Again a highly successful expedition ensuring participants were provided with the opportunity to individually progress their own respective climbing skills.

In addition to the aspired expeditions, a three week Regimental AT package occurred in Ripon throughout the majority of May. This saw the troops hill walking and camping in the Lake District as well as canoeing, climbing and mountain biking. There was also the opportunity to absorb some local culture as groups were provided with the opportunity to view the watch ceremony, conducted by the Ripon Horn Blower each evening.

On the in-house sports front, the Commanding Officer's inter-squadron cricket competition saw 144 (HQ) Squadron comfortably dispatch 187 Sqn and 518 Sqn. Later that evening, the Officers' Mess played the WOs' and Sgts' Mess in a fierce 15-over game of cricket. They arose the victors in what turned out to be, a closer game than some had initially expected. Following on from a successful day of cricket, the Regimental Cricket team won the RLC 20:20 Cricket

## NEWS IN BRIEF



■ **LT JOHN STARLING**, the Association historian, appeared in the Channel 4 programme "Attack of the Zeppelins" on Monday 26 Aug 13. He described how a new type of ammunition had to be invented to enable the Zeppelins to be shot down. The first pilot to shoot down a Zeppelin, **WL Robinson**, was awarded a VC, the first person to be awarded a VC for action in the UK.

The following press cutting describes the programme:

"For German meat-lovers, it was a worst-case scenario. As Kaiser Wilhelm tried to bomb Britain out of the First World War with his formidable fleet of Zeppelins, research has revealed that it came at a cost for the German public.

The Zeppelin airships – the biggest flying machines in history – were used to bombard Britain during the Great War in a ruthless attempt to break the nation's spirit.

But building the airships placed a huge demand on cow guts, used to make the cells which were then filled with lighter-than-air gas to make them fly.

It took more than 260,000 cows to make a single airship.

Cattle intestines became so valuable, Kaiser Wilhelm made it illegal for Germans to eat bratwurst and other sausages.

Details of the ban were uncovered by researchers working on a Channel 4 documentary. Dr Hugh Hunt, a University of Cambridge engineer, used the programme to examine the role of the Zeppelin in the war.

The menacing cigar-shaped airships rewrote the rules of war by carrying out the first aerial bombing campaign in history.

Details of the use of cow intestines – or goldbeater's skins, as they were known – for Zeppelins were found in a document prepared for the US National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics in 1922.

It set out how the ban was imposed on Germany as well as occupied Austria, Poland and northern France.

It read, "The collection of the goldbeater's skins was very systematic in Germany during the war.

Each butcher was required to deliver the ones from the animals he killed. Agents exercised strict control in Austria, Poland and France, where it was forbidden to make sausages."

Records have long suggested the Germans used cow intestines to contain the hydrogen needed to make the Zeppelins fly.

But it had never been clear how this was achieved until Dr Hunt visited a meat factory in Middlesbrough. He worked out that by making sausage skins wet, stretching them and allowing them to dry again, they could be bonded together to form ideal containers for gas.

Because of their stealth, the Zeppelin attacks were difficult to counter. Dr Hunt said, "If you shoot a bullet at a balloon of hydrogen, all you get is a small hole."

Eventually an incendiary bullet which set the Zeppelins alight was developed. Incredibly Dr Hunt discovered the bullet's designer was his own great-uncle, Jim Buckingham.

When the raids ended in 1917, 77 of the 115 German airships had been shot down, with 1,500 British citizens killed.

The Daily Telegraph reviewed the documentary and gave it 4 stars. This can be seen here...

<http://tinyurl.com/qcb5qrd>



■ **Ex SPANIARD PIONEER in Spain (top)**, **Ex PIONEER DIVER, Florida (bottom)** Pictures: 23 Pioneer Regiment

Competition, beating 25 Trg Regt at Deepcut in the final. In the annual RLC Cycling Championships held at Abingdon, the Regiment entered teams into the Road and Mountain Bike disciplines. Both teams competed favourably and achieved impressive results; none more so than Cpl Ravenscroft (187 Sqn) who won the novice cross-country race, and SSgt Archer (187 Sqn) who came third in the senior category. Overall, the Regiment came first and second in the team cross-country event.

Last but not least, six members of the Regiment recently took part in an Austrian Ironman Triathlon. Led by Capt Cheetham, a seasoned triathlete himself, all six finished the gruelling event with LCpl Beadle's time of 9 hours and 35 minutes particularly standing out among impressive performances all round.

### TEAM SCALES PEAKS FOR CHARITY

It has been almost 20 years since former Bicester mayor Dan Sames climbed a mountain. But now he has scaled three in little more than a day.

Mr Sames, 40, tackled the Three Peaks Challenge climbing Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon with fellow councillor Nick Mawer and troops from Bicester's 23 Pioneer Regiment.

The group completed the challenge in 29 hours and 45 minutes – missing their target of 24 hours.

The group has so far raised £2,000 for the Army Benevolent Fund.

Sgt Lee Pearn, of 23 Pioneer Regiment, based at St David's Barracks, Bicester said: "There were various things that affected

our time; the minibus was restricted to 60 mph, which added lots of time to our travel in between Peaks.

"The weather was horrendous, which didn't help our time either, as it affected us and slowed our pace."

Mr Sames said the last time he climbed a mountain was when he started Royal Navy officer training at Dartmouth training college, but said the Three Peaks Challenge was tough.

He said: "It was one of the hardest things I have done and I am grateful for the guys from the regiment getting me up and down all three Peaks.

"With Bicester being very much a garrison town we felt that we wanted to do something to show our support for the work of the ABF and those serving in the Army. "I'd always wanted to do the Three Peaks and the timing seemed right on the back of being mayor."

Fellow town and district councillor Nick Mawer said: "The hardest bit was probably the final ascent on Snowdon. The weather was really against us, with a strong gusting wind, and driving rain that made way to hail for the summit ridge. Navigation was also difficult in the dark and clouds on Scafell, but we always found our way eventually." "The easiest bit was all of it, now that I have forgotten the aches and pains. I would do it again for sure."

To donate to the appeal should view the webpage. [www.justgiving.com/teams/BicesterPioneers](http://www.justgiving.com/teams/BicesterPioneers)

(Members from 23 Pnr Regt were WO1 (RSM) Lane, WO2 (SSM) Aspinall, SSgt Casey and Sgt Pearn and Sgt Joyce).



■ Cementing in Pioneer Cypher in Cyprus

Picture: 168 Pioneer Regiment

# News from 168 Regiment

## A relentless tempo has been maintained both on operations and training

**F**OLLOWING THE announcement by the Secretary of State for Defence in July, when it was confirmed that 168 Pioneer Regiment would be disbanded in 2013/14; that being said, the Regiment has maintained a relentless tempo; both in the operational and training spheres.

Ex PROSPECTIVE PIONEER lasting four weeks took place in September 2013 in the sunny climes of Cyprus, where nearly 100 members of the regiment deployed on a hybrid artisan-infantry exercise. During the month long exercise, a significant amount was achieved; seeing an artisan team under the watchful eyes of the Regiments Master Artisan Mr Mitchell complete tasks across the island including infrastructure support to the various sports clubs on the island as well as providing real time operational support to RAF Akritiri in the form of enhancing the current airfield barbed wire network.

On the 'green phase' of the Exercise, the Regt deployed a Squadron group under the command of Maj Anselm Allen (OC 104 Pnr Sqn) into the arid Cypriot countryside, where a mixture of operations were prosecuted against a vigorous OPFOR; culminating in a dawn attack on the complex surrounds of

Shal'Aki Village (built by the Regt in 2012). For many of the Regt, the harsh conditions coupled with extreme temperatures made the exercise all the more challenging, however to their credit the mentors provided by 2 YORKS commented on the ability and vigour demonstrated throughout the field phase.

During the month in Cyprus, the Regt also received some noted guests; with the Honorary Colonel of the Regiment, Maj Gen T Cross CBE, Comd 104 Log Bde Brig D Capps RLC and the Asst Comd 104 Log Bde Col S Bennett all freeing time in their hectic diaries to visit.

During their stay, the Officers and Warrant Officers of the Regt treated them to a very special open-air dinner night on the SHal'Aki knoll overlooking Limassol Bay which the RSM; WO1 Fergusson and former RSM WO1 Anderson worked tirelessly to prepare.

Given the limited facilities, climactic conditions and resources available, the quality of food prepared by WO2 Guest and Cpl's Cortez and Stewart was quite remarkable, with a few having lumps in their throats as the flag was lowered at sun set.

Moving on from Cyprus, as many will

be aware, the date for the Disbandment Parade has been set as the 26th October 2013; the day will consist of a Church Service at St Wulframs Church, followed by a march through Grantham at 1200hrs and a formal Parade at Prince William of Gloucester Barracks at 1500; notable guests include the Chief of the General Staff, Lord Lieutenant of Lincolnshire and the Mayor of Grantham. Following the Parade their will be a social function at the Pioneer Hanger which everybody is encourage to also attend.

The Disbandment Parade is an event that is aimed not only at those soldiers and officers still serving in the Regt, but equally the 'past' cohort; with all former members invited along with their families. Anybody wishing to attend is requested to contact the Adjutant Capt David Harrison either via phone on 0115 957 3309 or via email to 168PNR-Adj@mod.uk

Whilst the day will offer all those associated with the Regiment an opportunity to reflect on its achievements,

It is hoped that it will also be an enjoyable social event for the Regiments wider family to meet and celebrate ably assisted by the specially produced Pioneer Ale!

## NEWS IN BRIEF



■ **HULL VETERANS Support Centre** aims to help Armed Forces and Reservist Veterans along with Merchant Seamen who have served alongside them in a conflict.

It doesn't matter where a veteran may have served or if they were regular or reservist, the fact that they have been willing to lay down their life for Queen and Country means they deserve the very best support we as a community are able to offer.

The majority of ex service personnel make the transition into civilian life with ease. However, there are a growing number who do not find the adjustment as easy for one reason or another. Unfortunately we are still not up to speed with the services for those that are experiencing challenges, especially those with mental health problems or having problems integrating back into civilian society after their Military Service.

Hull Veterans Support Centre will support all Veterans who live in the East Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire region. The first aim of the group is to provide an 'Immediate Needs Support Service' for Veterans who are suffering from PTSD, Ill Health, are having problems adjusting to civilian life, are homeless, are experiencing hardship due to a dramatic change in their personal circumstances or due to long term unemployment.

Like any small charity we are reliant on the good will of people to donate to our cause or offer some of their time to help us fundraise for the Support Centre.

To find out more about the Centre and how you can help or how to become a Veterans Support Centre Volunteer please go to our website. [www.hullveteranssupportcentre.org.uk](http://www.hullveteranssupportcentre.org.uk)

■ **AN EXHIBITION** is giving new insight into the hidden threat posed by improvised explosive devices.

The National Army Museum explores the history of the insurgents' weapon of choice, as well as the people who plant them, the soldiers who search for them and the deadly consequences of being caught in a blast.

Compiled with help from military experts, the exhibit includes an interactive experience, where visitors can walk down a simulated Afghan street seeded with devices.

Amy Cameron, the institution's education officer, said it had highlighted the "dedication, resilience and courage" of the counter-IED community.

Unseen Enemy runs until 31 March 2014 and entry is free.

■ **ARMED FORCES personnel can now travel for free on the Transport for London network when in uniform and carrying the MOD Form 90.**

The offer applies to Regular and Reserve soldiers and is applicable to bus, underground, London Tramlink and Dockland Light Railway services.

The concession will not impact on existing allowance entitlements for those in the capital. It does not apply to the National Rail network.

■ **NEW RULES** for Armed Forces recruits were introduced in July 2013. Recruits must now have lived in the UK for at least five years.



■ 168 Regt flag being lowered in Cyprus at sunset

Picture: 168 Pioneer Regiment

168 Pioneer Regiment Royal Logistics Corps has given Grantham's skate park a welcome revamp.

SSgt John Mitchell and his team rectified a serious structural problem with the ramp at G-Zone skate park and set about two weeks of intensive work. After stripping and gutting out the ramp's rotten wood, they then funded and installed higher quality ply wood. SKDC's waste and recycling crews and park contractors Veolia Environmental Services provided assistance to remove the old ramp.

Jenny Sutherland, treasurer of the GZONE committee said: "The work has given a lot of young people a skate park

they really appreciate. "We are all very proud of these soldiers and what Staff Sergeant Mitchell and his team have done. We couldn't have funded or completed the work without them."

SKDC's portfolio holder for leisure arts and culture Coun Bob Adams said: "It's always heartening to see community and volunteer efforts come together. "This wasn't a small project by any means and to have a local army regiment with soldiers who have trade background complete the job is more than the skate park users could have hoped for. They are a credit to the community and their regiment for the work they've performed."



■ Pte Taylor presented with the Friend Memorial Trophy from CO 23 Pioneer Regiment (left) and a cheque by John Starling (right)

Pictures: Paul Brown

# Friend Memorial Trophy

## Well done 30054997 Private A Taylor and 30104310 Private S D Peirson

**D**URING THIS reporting period Private Taylor deployed on Op HERRICK 17 as a member of an Advanced Search Team, attached to the CIED and Search Task Force. He excelled on the pre-deployment training and was singled out for demonstrating great potential and an instinctive grasp of leadership.

A dangerous deployment saw the team conduct 26 demanding search tasks ranging from no-notice '10-Liner' support to the IEDD (Destroy/Neutralise) teams, to planned Combined Force operations that required the search and clearance of many locations in the Task Force Helmand Area of Operation.

His CoC, and others who depended upon him, have commented on his highly professional approach. For such a junior soldier, he has the respect and the confidence of his team and troop. Private Taylor is forward-thinking and astute enough to understand the second-order impact of the team's actions. Private Taylor excels in all that he does achieving top student in both his Class 1 and Carpentry courses, this was further demonstrated when the CSM of Kandahar Coy repeatedly asked for Private Taylor to lead and implement camp improvements,

using his highly rated artisan skills, rather than employ the embedded Sappers. He is an excellent communicator and was selected to brief a VVIP, together with high ranking Officers, on a visit to a Forward Operating Base; which he did with clarity and confidence.

His dedicated approach means he has absolute knowledge of search TTPs and this was evident throughout. Tasked with continuation training of relief troops, his delivery was clear and well thought out; his lessons were well planned and set at the right level for the target audience to understand and apply. Private Taylor tackles additional responsibility with a verve and confidence that matches, and in some cases betters, his more senior counterparts. He has a good moral compass and conducts himself in a most professional way. Taking on responsibility far in excess of that which would be expected from somebody of his rank, Private Taylor has excelled; working to a level commensurate with a senior Lance Corporal.

Due to MST and deployment Private Taylor has been unable to partake in extracurricular activity. During his limited time in barracks, Private Taylor has stood

out against the other privates in the Squadron. He oozes confidence, reliability and acumen. His administration is excellent and this permeates to the more junior soldiers around him. He strives to ensure that maximum effort is applied to any given task and makes sure that tasks are completed in a timely manner and to the highest possible standard. A trustworthy and reliable individual, Private Taylor has a strong grasp of command and has been outstanding at motivating the junior soldiers. He is always willing to sacrifice his own time in order to assist those who are not as adept at learning and he has been invaluable to his Troop hierarchy.

For an exceptional performance: showing leadership, technical proficiency and self-motivation at a standard far in excess of that expected of a soldier of his seniority and rank.

### 30104310 PRIVATE SD PEIRSON – 100 PIONEER SQUADRON

Pte Peirson has been employed within 100 Pioneer Sqn for the last twelve months. In this time, he has demonstrated fully all the key attributes of both a Reservist and a Pioneer, living to the full

## NEWS IN BRIEF



■ A NEW permanent memorial titled "Never Forget" has been unveiled at the National Memorial Arboretum on 14 Sep 13.

It was officially opened by Amanda Binnie, whose husband Sean was 23 when he was ambushed and killed in Helmand province, Afghanistan, in May 2009.

The memorial features a giant wreath around which poppies, inscribed with individual names and dates can be planted as a permanent tribute. "Never Forget" is the shape of a poppy whose petals are flower beds for thousands of small wooden poppies to be planted, and is surrounded by a paved walkway.

Sarah Montgomerie, from the Royal British Legion, said everyday heroes as well as those killed in conflict would be honoured.

The National Memorial Arboretum is open year round except Christmas Day and forms part of the Royal British Legion's family of charities. Members of the public may visit the Never Forget website to create personal tributes for the memorial.

■ ON 1 August 2013, Mr R Palmer the town-crier for Mablethorpe read the following proclamation to the Archbishop of Canterbury who had been staying in a caravan in Mablethorpe.

Roy wrote: The Archbishop stayed in a caravan at Golden Sands Mablethorpe, with his granddaughters, for 2 or 3 days.

He seems like a very nice bloke, down to earth and ready to laugh.

Sorry the photo is as it is, but the Press were not allowed into the restaurant.

The photo was taken by my Brother in Law, who was the only one allowed in with a camera. (Photo on the gallery page).

### PROCLAMATION

FOR THE VISIT TO DAVE'S  
RESTAURANT MABLETHORPE  
OF:  
THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY  
ON  
THURSDAY THE 1 AUGUST IN THE  
YEAR OF OUR LORD 2013

Your grace,  
at this unearthly hour,  
we greet you, full of pride.  
to tell you,  
the citizens of mablethorpe  
are by your side.  
Welcome to Daves  
award winning restaurant.  
Here is the place,  
all the local people haunt.  
You've joined us  
for the best food in our town.  
but don't,  
let our hosts stories  
get you down.  
He says, his wine is better  
than the stuff you serve.  
but as it's so much dearer,  
we think, he has a nerve.  
Dave, at his club,  
will have many a free lunch.  
because, you came here,  
to have your brunch.  
When next you talk,  
with your clasped hands,  
tell the world, of Mablethorpe,  
and our Golden Sands.  
God save the Queen

the ethos of both.

A dedicated Pioneer, he has taken on the selfless philosophy to the full. Invariably willing to help his fellow soldiers, he is trustworthy, reliable and steadfast. Be it on training nights or exercise, he can always be found making sure that all tasks are complete or that other soldiers are being helped.

Enthusiastic and keen, he exemplifies the spirit of a Reservist soldier. He volunteers to attend training frequently, often going out of his way to attend despite a difficult civilian employment schedule. This frequently results in him making his own way to and from exercises due to late finishes on shift.

He has deployed on numerous training exercises over the last year, both infantry and artisan. Competent both in the field and on the worksite, he has repeatedly demonstrated the professionalism and flexibility that are the hallmark of a good Pioneer.

He deployed to Cyprus on Ex MOUFLON ARTISAN II, the Regimental ADE, where he conducted artisan and assault pioneer tasks in and around the Shal'Aki training village. A demanding exercise, due to both the nature of the work and the testing environment, he thrived and developed both as a soldier and as a Pioneer. He took full advantage

of the opportunities to improve his skills in a number of fields and proved that he was a good comrade and friend to many.

Exceptionally fit and highly motivated, he represented the Regt in the RLC Ski Championship this year. He completed in the Cross-Country events, getting much praise for his efforts, especially as he was competing in the novice class and was new to the event. He is also a dedicated triathlete and takes the opportunity when competing to raise monies for charity.

Despite being only a Class 3 Pioneer, he has already been recognised as a potential instructor of high calibre. To this end, he was selected for and passed both his Potential Assistant PTI and DITS Course this year. It should also be noted that to his credit, as this early stage of his career Pte Peirson was the highest placed candidate put forward for the Potential Non-Commissioned Officer Cadre; quite some achievement.

Pte Peirson is an excellent advertisement for the Army Reserve, he is eager and enthusiastic and determined to work hard and support both his unit and his fellow Pioneers.

Despite a demanding civilian work schedule, he attends training frequently and had developed a noteworthy reputation for reliability and dependability.

# The Nation Remembers

## Plans to mark the first world war centenary

**P**LANS TO mark the First World War centenary announced that the Historic centenary would be followed by a four-year programme of national acts of remembrance and UK-wide cultural initiatives.

Culture Secretary Maria Miller announced details of the four-year plan, which include national acts of remembrance, a scheme of Great War Battlefield visits for school children, together with an extensive UK-Wide cultural programme.

"It is right we remember and mark the centenary of this momentous day in the world's history." Marking the beginning of the First World War the opening day of the centenary on 4 August 2014 will focus on three events:

- A wreath laying service at Glasgow's Cenotaph, following the special service for Commonwealth leaders at Glasgow Cathedral.

- An event at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission St Symphorien Military Cemetery in Mons, Belgium – which has an equal number of British and German soldiers, and is where the first and last Commonwealth casualties of the war are believed to be buried, and a candle-lit vigil of prayer and penitence at Westminster Abbey finishing at 11pm – the moment war was declared.

The centrepiece of the commemorations will be the reopening of Imperial War Museum (IWM) London

following the £35 million refurbishment of the First World War galleries.

Other activities include:

- National acts of remembrance to mark the first day of the Battle of the Somme in 2016 and Armistice Day in 2018.

- An enduring educational legacy funded with £5.3 million from the Department for Education and the Department for Communities and Local Government, which will allow two student ambassadors, plus a teacher, from each maintained school in England to visit world war battlefields and undertake research on people local to their school who fought.

- At least £15 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund, including a new £6m community projects fund to enable young people working in their communities to conserve, explore and share local heritage of the First World War.

- A grant of up to £1 million from the National Heritage Memorial Fund to support HMS Caroline, the last surviving warship from the First World War fleet. Thousands of people will be able to visit her and learn about her unique role in the First World War.

Jenny Waldman, the Creative Producer for the London Olympics 2012, has been appointed director of this programme and will work with cultural organisations and partners across Britain to deliver the programme.





# Pioneer Diaries 2

Part 2 of a Pioneer Corps soldier's experiences in both North Africa (with 6 Coy) and Italy and Normandy (with 132 Coy) during the period Nov 1942 until January 1945.

Report: Unnamed Pioneer / N Brown  
Picture: RPCA Archive

**26 Jan 44** – Coy returned to San Giuseppe  
**18 Feb 44** – It is nearly a month since my last entry and we are still at the school, the longest period I have been at one place since coming aboard with the exception of Rades.

Little of moment has occurred since. Most of the company has been sent out on detachment in the surrounding districts for work on aerodromes and there remains a mere eighty at HQ. The weather has been rather miserable, and is now extremely cold. Cpl Thompson and I have tried on several occasions to get into the pictures but usually we have been unsuccessful. However, we have had the good fortune to make friends with a family who kept a chemist in the village and we spend many enjoyable evenings chattering to them than we probably would do seeing a second rate picture. The old man speaks French so I am able to get on quite well. Then there are his two nephews one of whom has but recently returned from South Africa having previously been taken prisoner at Bardia and transported to a POW camp. Both of them are married and have charming wives. Fernando the older nephew has three children, I have not established the relationship of another girl named Maria who also lives here.

Last Sunday in response to their invitation we went along to a gathering in the house of a relation, a Colonel. The room was very bare compared with English standards and rather shabby whilst the light was supplied by a naked electric bulb. The entertainment was not much in our line consisting of roulette. Neither of us was very keen about playing but it would have looked churlish to refuse. As it was we passed a tolerably enjoyable evening although we would rather have the tete-a-tete in the chemist's.

We have paid two visits there this week on Tuesday and again last night.

I have omitted to mention the day off last Sunday week when I took a ride out on the company bike. It was not a successful outing by any means, for the back tyre let me down after I had covered about ten miles. I suspected that the valve rubber was the trouble, and managed to borrow a pump to blow the tyre up again. But I had not gone far before it was flat again and I resigned myself to riding on the rim. It was my intention to call on the man I met some weeks previously on the station at Barra who

lives at Pugliano. I reached there about half past twelve but did not succeed in locating the house although I found someone that knew him who however told me that he was away for the weekend. So there was nothing for it but to make the return journey. This I did via Torre del Grecco, and Torre Annanziata thus making a complete circuit of Vesuvius. The exercise coupled with the fact that I was jolting along on a flat tyre tired me and I was heartily thankful when I arrived back at camp about half past four. I was nearly at the end of my endurance and during the latter stages could scarcely keep on the saddle.

**1 Mar 44** – The weather during the past few days has been very wet, although it is a good deal milder than it was.

Cpl Thompson and I have paid several visits to our friends at the chemist's recently. Last Tuesday week we went again to the Colonel's house. One of the girls there spoke English, and she told us that she played the piano. We all trooped into the best room to hear her play; she sang "Oh, Maris" in very spirited fashion. Bert had brought a little song book along and we obliged with a rendering of "Clementine", "Polywollydoodle" and a few others. Rather to our disgust however, the musical part of the evening was wound up quite early, and we returned to the former room for roulette. Incidentally I have omitted to mention that this day was Shrove Tuesday or "Martedi Grasso" as it is known here. It is the occasion in peacetime for much merrymaking, carnivals etc, but the only festive note tonight was struck by some of the boys in the household who dressed up in old fashioned women's clothes.

Last Sunday instead of the usual rendezvous we were invited to the pianist's house, the father of whom is a doctor although not a very prepossessing one. In an unguarded moment I had admitted I played the violin, and I was to regret that this evening for the pianist's sister is as it turned out a very accomplished performer and I enjoyed listening to her playing. But afterwards the two of them endeavoured to persuade me to play, but I flunked it, for there was no suitable music to play from and I could not trust my memory.

We received another invitation for the following evening. The music was rudely interrupted, however, about eight o'clock by what I thought at first was some scrimmage in the street. But somebody in the room had opened the door and I saw the old familiar sight of red tracer in the sky.

Everything suddenly became pandemonium in the room: the lights were switched off and suddenly in the blackness that followed one of the girls flung her arms about me and held on with convulsive tightness. It all happened so quickly that I hardly had time to grasp the situation as it were. When the lights went on again all three girls were shivering with fear: it was Maria I found who had rushed blindly to me for protection. It was thought advisable to get downstairs, the descent being negotiated by an outside stairway a peculiar feature of these houses. This occurrence certainly gave us an insight into the Italian make-up, and we realized how highly strung they are. Maria was the most shaken and was violently sick a little while afterwards. She was shuddering for about half an hour afterwards. I think the fact that she was not well (we were told she was in bed when we called on Sunday) had made her worse. The party broke up about nine o'clock.

Last Saturday Bert and I went to see a show put on by the two Leslie's at the local cinema. The supporting teams were mediocre, but Leslie Holmes and Leslie Sarony we found very entertaining.

There are peculiar customs conducted with funerals in this country. We have witnessed several recently. The dead person is laid out in state with the best bed-linen and wreaths and flowers drape the foot of the bed. The doors are opened and the body is in full view from the passers-by in the street. The hearses are extremely ugly of a horrible ornateness, drawn usually by scrawny looking horses.

**15 Mar 44** – This has easily been the longest stay I have ever had in one place since coming abroad and the conditions are without doubt the best experienced. But the fact remains that I get pretty fed up at times, due principally to there being so very little work to be done in the office. I cannot help thinking that a staff of two would be quite adequate to cope with normal business. I feel very dissatisfied and disappointed that a job which I had expected would yield a good deal of interest and experience should have proved so dull. However, the rumours which have persisted so long about the company going home are now so strong, as to leave very little doubt that the great move will take place within the next week or so, and no doubt there will be a big influx of work in connection with the embarkation. There is in England, too, usually more office work so perhaps then things will be more interesting.

**19 Mar 44** – Area around Coy HQ under 6 inches of dust from Vesuvius eruption

**20 Mar 44** – Last Tuesday we visited Amelia's house for another musical evening and spent a very enjoyable time. Towards the end of the evening I plucked up courage to play the violin, and although I was a bit shaky after all this time it felt nice to be playing again. Another diversion was when we attempted the Palais Glide with the girls.

Thursday evening we spent at the chemist's. We did not see Maria on this occasion as she was in bed with a cold. Lydia invited us in to the living room to sample some of her cooking. We found the "Muzzi Neapolitan" that she put before us very tasty and afterwards she toasted some cheese and bread for us.

On Friday I decided to have a day out and went in the ration truck to a place called Uola some seven miles from here. I went to the NAAFI for tea and cakes and listened to the orchestra for a while. Then I had a look round the town the interest of which I soon exhausted; I had my photograph taken by a street photographer the result of which was not too bad. I now just idled the time away until it was time for the cinema to open. The film to be shown, "The Light of Heart" was one I was rather looking forward to see but I had my usual luck, for the sound apparatus broke down after a couple of minutes and after waiting more than an hour for the Eyetie operators to get it to work but in vain, I gave it up and came out. There was nothing for it but a second visit to the NAAFI and then the journey back to camp. Bad luck seemed to be dogging me for there appeared to be little traffic on the road, but fortunately after walking about a mile, a DR that I knew pulled up and gave me a lift all the way back to camp for which I was very thankful.

Which brings me up to yesterday, Sunday 19 Mar, and a great day for San Giuseppe being the occasion when their patron saint is honoured. We had an invitation to Catapano's to dinner. We sat down to a right royal "do", but I am sorry to say that my capacity was not equal to it. We started off with a huge plateful of macaroni which filled me up pretty well. This was followed by some grilled meat, broccoli and fried diced potatoes. The third course consisted of cheese pasties and also a kind of salad including olives. I had just about reached my limit but just managed an apple, and sat back uncomfortably full thinking that the meal was over. But the 'piece de resistance' now made its appearance "Zeppole" as they are called. Apparently these are noted for this occasion. Maria put three on my plate but it was a sheer impossibility to cope with them. We spent the afternoon upstairs and were able to watch the procession from the balcony. This consisted of some children in white muslin frocks followed by choirboys and at intervals banners carried. There was also a huge plaster cast of S Giuseppe borne by four men and at the rear the town brass band.

I was now feeling the effects of my overeating by violent indigestion. At Ferdinando's suggestion we went back to the school for our overcoats and I lay down for a while after which I felt better. The evening gathering was at the Colonel's house to which we now went. The roulette made its inevitable appearance but we did not play, instead having some conversation with the Colonel's batman.

Living as we have done for the past three months under the shadow of Vesuvius as it were, what was at first a novelty soon

became a commonplace which we took little notice of. But during the past two or three days our interest has been revived from the fact that after a rather quiescent period it has suddenly burst into formidable activity. But a few minutes since I was watching it from the steps of the school and it certainly is a weird and awesome sight. The sky for miles around is lit by a lurid red glow and such a glow of less intensity can be seen extending down one side of the mountain where the molten lava has flowed. Already one village San Sebastaino is menaced and the people are preparing to evacuate. Every few seconds

a sullen rumbling explosion occurs and a shower of brightly glowing cinders and ashes are shot into the air descending in a cascade surpassing the most spectacular pyrotechnic display. All day long a haze has hung over the district from the smoke emitted, and earlier this evening there were smuts floating in the air. A breeze has since cleared the atmosphere and the volcano now stands out clearly against the night sky.

**22 Mar 44** – Last night we went along to Catapano's and spent a very pleasant evening. During the course of conversation I asked if they had any snaps they could give us as a souvenir. Maria brought out a big collection of photographs some of them quite recent and other going back fifty years.

The eruption of Vesuvius was still continuing last night and looked even more fiery than the previous night. The lava had now divided into four streams, one of which was flowing towards a village called Terzigno, only two or three miles from here. There were terrific explosions which rattled doors and windows every few seconds. This eruption has produced a lot of atmospheric disturbance, and I believe the rain we have had can be attributed to that. Ashes also have rained down in some of the nearby villages, and I noticed when I went out this evening that the square at the upper end of the village was covered with a thin layer of the stuff.

I have been told that it is as much as three feet thick at Terzogmpo. Just as we were having dinner this evening there was a sudden tremendous concussion and a flash of lightning appeared to leap across the room.

The detachments of the company have all returned today, the re-assembling of the company being according to very strong rumours for the purpose of going home. If the reports are true we should be bound for England at the beginning of next month.

Vesuvius seems much quieter now, and it is to be hoped that its period of activity is over for the time being. Already it has caused more hardship by the menacing of several villages and there are quite a number of evacuees in S Giuseppe.

Yesterday there arrived a company of Basuto Pioneers who are supposed to be taking over from our Company.

**23 Mar 44** – When we looked outside this morning we found everywhere blanketed in ash, and there were fine flakes of the stuff still descending. Old Man Vesuvius has certainly made a filthy mess everywhere, and the rain and cloud laden atmosphere are undoubtedly due to huge quantities of heavy smoke belched forth. By lunch time the air had cleared somewhat, although Vesuvius was still sending out plenty of black fumes and every now and again one would see a bright flash of lightning generated evidently from the friction.

**23 Mar 44** – Coy concentrated for embarkation

**26 Mar 44** – Last Wednesday we went along to Catapano's and found the shop only lit by a feeble glimmer as the electricity in the town had failed the previous day. There were some relations of Gacupina's staying with them as the ash from Vesuvius had rendered their home at Ferguo unsafe. The whole of S Giuseppe was covered to a depth of two or three inches with fine ash and the morning after the stuff had fallen people were to be seen on the roofs of their dwellings busy clearing it away. It appears that in the eruption of 1906 many people were killed by the roofs collapsing due to the weight of ash. Tonight we had a rendezvous with a friend of Ferdinando's, a lawyer. His house we found was only a few minutes away. We spent quite a pleasant evening and our host opened a bottle of real Scotch whisky for us. This he said was the last of a store that he had had since before the war: some had been stolen by Jerry leaving him with two one of which he had already consumed.

Last night we were supposed to go to Annelia's but learned that she and the family had fled to Naples when Vesuvius started to erupt. So we spent the evening at Catapano's. This afternoon we went for a walk to Ottovsair.

**2 Apr 44** – At the beginning of last week Vesuvius was still emitting plenty of smoke and when the wind blew in the direction of San Giuseppe the air became filled with small greyish particles of matter, most discomfiting to be out in. I have noticed that where the recent fall of ash has been left undisturbed a white crystalline substance soon begins to emit from it, rather lending the appearance of frost.

I believe it was Monday evening at Catapano's that Antonio suggested that I should on the following evening give him a lesson in English. Accordingly I went along the next night and Antonio showed me up to a room on the first floor which I had not been in before. It seems that Antonio and his wife have this flat to themselves; I had imagined that they were more cramped than is actually the case. Antonio finds the pronunciation very difficult, not merely in the reproduction of certain sounds such as "th" and "h" but also from the fact that our spelling is so inconsistent. I have been along every evening during the past week and writing has become rather neglected, but the fact is that I feel pretty restless just now with all these rumours about going home in the air, and welcome these visits as a pleasant diversion.

Yesterday afternoon Sydney James and I went to Uola to see "The Phantom of the Opera" with Claude Rains, Nelson Eddy and Susanna Foster. It was in Technicolour and contained some excellent music. Afterwards we visited the NAAFI and YMCA and then returned to camp. In both directions we got lifts practically the whole way and this added greatly to the enjoyment of the afternoon as I have found from previous experience nothing mars an outing so much as having to walk miles without the chance of a lift.

**9 Apr 44** – Yesterday evening we paid our last visit to the Catapano's and it was really quite a sad occasion parting from these people who have been such very good friends to us, and who probably we shall never see again. We had the good fortune to see Amelia, up from Naples for the Easter, and we went upstairs to have a final sing-song.

During a lull in the music Maria came and sat down by me and asked me point blank if I really did not know where we were going or was it that I would not say.

Previously in answer to question as to where we were going we had said that we

did not know but I could not hedge any longer and had to admit that I did know but could not say. Then she tried with all her feminine charm to coax it out of me and I had such ado to resist her. I said, however, that we would write as soon as we could and let them know our addresses. Actually there are many that have not been so cautious as we and the news that we are going to "Inghilterra" is known by quite a number of the villages.

The music finished about nine o'clock as Amelia had to go back with her father. We went down and sat in the shop for a little while and then Lydia invited us in to supper. This consisted of a kind of macaroni pie, followed by cauliflower seasoned with vinegar and olive oil, and lastly a slice of sponge cake altogether an enjoyable meal. Unfortunately it was time for us to depart and we wished that we had put in for a late pass. So we made our adieux. Ferdinando even going so far as to kiss me on both cheeks in true continental style. Certainly, although we are returning (or believing we were) to England we shall miss these people a good deal and our memories of Italy will always be happy ones. They have given us both some snaps as souvenirs.

Today has been quite a busy one preparing for the move which takes place tomorrow at eight o'clock. The company has been confined to camp since 6.30 but Bert and I got out for half an hour as a nominal roll was needed to be typewritten and our own machine having gone, we used 197 Company's. On the way back we looked in at the little general shop to say farewell to the people there.

Rather tough luck has befallen five of our Sergeants who will not be travelling with us due to the fact that some other Sergeants have been posted to us presumably on compassionate grounds.

**10 Apr 44** – Embarked Naples

**11 Apr 44** – It was little later than a quarter after eight when we marched off. The villages despite the rather early hour had turned out in force to see us go; Nicole, Antonio and Ferdinando were outside the chemist's as we went past and they waved us goodbye. I did see Guippina on the balcony until I had gone by and happened to look back.

The train was already in at San Guiseppa station and almost immediately after the company was aboard it was away. It was about two o'clock when we drew into the station at Naples. From there we marched to the docks. The route we took was along the Corso Garibaldi, a left turn under an old stone archway, through a street lined with market stalls which bought us out to the Corso Umberto. Along this latter as far as the Piazza Nicola Amione, then left down the Via Duomo.

After a roll call and a wait of two or three hours we eventually boarded the "Cape-Town Castle" a South African boat of 27,000 tons. Our quarters are extremely crowded: we eat and sleep in the same room. There are only two meals a day at eight and at four o'clock, but it is possible to buy tea and biscuits from the canteen. After considerable trouble we were able to get hammocks about nine o'clock last night. The atmosphere is pretty foul after blackout when the portholes are closed and by the time I had fixed up my hammock I was in a bath of perspiration. However, I slept like the proverbial log, or perhaps it would be more correct to say that I was in a stupor.

When I went up on deck before breakfast this morning we were passing Capri. This jagged lump of rock rising out of the sea is a most picturesque sight.

**14 Apr 44** – We are now well on with the voyage and should, I think, pass through the Straits of Gibraltar sometime tonight.

On Tuesday afternoon we had land on our port bow for several hours, and this presumably was the north coast of Sicily while to starboard a smaller piece of land might have been Stromboli.

Since Wednesday we have been sailing in constant view of the North African coast, and in the afternoon we sighted a convoy which I understand was just out from Algiers.

At dusk each day a smoke screen is thrown over the whole convoy presumably because this would be a good time for a U Boat attack. Yesterday morning the cable carrying the barrage balloon broke so we are now sailing without this protection.

The food after the first couple of days has improved considerably and yesterday for breakfast we had a hard-boiled egg and well cooked bacon besides bread, cheese and jam. For dinner we had pork and afterwards tinned pears. This morning for breakfast it was fried fish which I have not tasted since coming abroad.

The weather is beautiful, if anything too hot, whilst the sea for the most part has been as calm as the proverbial millpond.

Last night clocks and watches were retarded one hour although I do not really see the object of this as our time was already synchronised with that of England. But no doubt it is for navigational purposes.

On the first morning out the guns were fired for practice, the rocket gun in particular having a teasing and deafening sound.

**17 Apr 44** – During the afternoon last Friday we had the coast of Spain on our starboard, and the mountains were snow covered.

I learned the next morning that we passed through the Straits about midnight. A change in the weather and the sea were noticeable, the latter soon evidencing itself by the uncomfortable feelings inside which I have now come to associate inevitably with sea voyages. I was sick twice that day.

I felt a little better yesterday and at least kept my food down. In the afternoon I went to a cinema show held in the recreation room. It was a rather unconventional spy drama with Eric Portman and Ann Doorak in the leading roles. At least it had the effect of whiling away an hour or so.

Today the sea has been quite calm and I have felt almost normal although without much relish for my meals.

There are a large number of Americans on board, mostly Airborne troops, besides Guards of the Irish, Scots, Grenadiers and Coldstreams.

From tomorrow the fresh water will only be on from 6 – 7.30 and from 4.40 – 6 in order to conserve the supply and this will mean a great scramble to get washed.

I was vaccinated last Saturday. There are rumours of a quarantine at the end of the trip owing to one or two cases of what I had heard variously called "smallpox, typhus and malaria". All I can say is that I hope that rumours are unfounded.

**21 Apr 44** – I omitted to mention that the clocks were retarded a further hour in successive half hour periods last Saturday and Sunday nights thus putting us on GMT. Last night they were put forward an hour and another hour tonight to still bring us

back to English double summer time.

This evening we sighted the first land since leaving the Mediterranean and we had the happy knowledge that it's our own land that we are to see again after nearly eighteen months. I judged that it was today I saw first of all on the starboard side a hill, later on a larger mass of land must I think have been the Mull of Kintyre. On our port side was Ireland. We are expected to dock at Liverpool tomorrow.

**23 Apr 44** – W reached the Mersey estuary in the early afternoon, but did not actually dock until after seven, while it was half past one in the morning before our company disembarked. We had a march of ten minutes or so to the Exchange Station. We had bought our kitbags off the boat with us but had put them onto a lorry before leaving the quay. Our train was already at the platform. A pleasant surprise just before getting in was a mug of tea served out to us. I ate one of my sandwiches from the haversack ration we had been given prior to coming off the boat. Another goodwill gesture came rather surprisingly from the NAAFI in the shape of paper bags containing a Mars bar and ten cigarettes distributed through the carriage windows by NAAFI girls. The train drew away at three o'clock and as we knew now bound for Scotland. I snatched some sleep during the night. As light dawned it was very pleasant to view the English countryside again after close on eighteen months away from it. How refreshingly green the fields appeared, how trim and neat the houses and streets looked. Twelve o'clock and we were at Dumbarton. A march of about a mile bought us to a hutted camp formerly the quarters of an AA Battery as the sight of some guns, actually dummies now, showed. It appeared to be quite deserted but the barrack officer showed up, and we soon learnt that this was actually to be the company's quarters. Of course, the question uppermost in everyone's minds was leave and we considered how this would be booked now, for we had been expecting to go to a transit camp for a couple of days or so and then sent on leave. As the matter stands now we know that we are to get fourteen days, but a skeleton staff has to remain behind and it will certainly include one of us in the office.

The Nissen hut we are in is divided into three and we are sleeping in one part while the other two will be respectively the general office and the OC's room. We have wooden beds of the type I had on Islay and straw paillasses issued to us this afternoon. The telephone is laid on in the centre room and it is a great temptation to send a wire via it.

The weather today is typically Scottish fine rain and mist.

**23 Apr 44** – Disembarked at Liverpool

**23 Apr 44** – Moved to Dumbarton – part of 15 Group

**25 Apr 44** – We were kept busy all day yesterday with the preparations for the men going on leave. Only 75% of the Company is allowed to go at the same time, the rest following when they come back. It was quite late in the evening before we packed up for the day and after dinner which was not until nearly nine, Syd and I went along to the nearest telephone kiosk to send off some telegrams. I also got through to Winnie and broke the news that I was back in England. I said that I expected to be home in about a fortnight but I did not know then of the further disappointment that was to befall us today. We are now in quarantine due to a Yank contracting smallpox on the boat. The ridiculous part of the affair however is that it should have been decided on at this stage after having travelled all the way up from

**'The guns were fired for practice, the rocket gun having a teasing and deafening sound'**

Liverpool and even allowed out into the town last night.

**26 Apr 44** – It is rather difficult to see the real reason for imposing this ban upon us, especially so today we were told that we were allowed out again in the evening. All I can deduce from it is that the risk of infection is only considered extremely slight and area quarantine is thought sufficient. We are hoping that when the MO has checked up on the vaccinations that the ban will be lifted. In the meantime we have been proceeding apace with the passes, warrants, ration cards and so on, filling everything in except the date.

This evening Bert and I had a walk down to the town. Our first call was "The Elephant and Castle" where we supped a couple of pints of good English beer. A visit to the YMCA followed after which we had a stroll through the town, finding the shop windows with their displays of goods and stuff remarkably extensive and novel and attractive after what we had become accustomed to in Italy. A public garden with its neat beds of flowers was another feature absent from the other countries that we have visited. On our way back through the town we indulged in fourpenworth of chips each. We finished these in the YMCA and washed them down with a further cup of tea. When I arrived back I was sorry to hear that someone had been on the phone whilst I was out. I gave this phone number in a letter to Mother and also to Joan yesterday but did not expect a reply tonight.

**12 May 44** – Authority for leave was granted a week ago last Tuesday, but still another obstacle cropped up. It was the fact that our mob date occurs before the termination of leave and the OC saw fit to give only ten days each for the two parties at the same time wiring War Office asking whether leave should be curtailed in this way. At the time of departure (last Friday) no reply had been received, but on the Saturday a wire came which said curtailment was not necessary. Thereupon it became my task to dispatch 200 odd telegrams granting extension of leave to the people concerned.

I have been to the pictures twice since I arrived here; the first time was a fortnight ago when Bert and I went together and saw Sonya Henie in "Wintertime". I went myself on Tuesday evening to see "The Demi-Paradise" with Laurence Olivier and Penelope Ward.

Last weekend I managed to get a twenty-four hour pass extending over Sunday and Monday in order to visit Maizie's. It was rather an awkward journey necessitating first of all a walk to Bonhilly where I caught a bus to Balloch. Here I had to wait an hour for a connection to Drymun. Another wait of over an hour part of which I whiled away in some tea-rooms. It was about six o'clock before I arrived. I met all the family and found them little changed although of course Violet has married since I saw her last and Eric from a boy in short trousers has shot up to over six feet. I met a Sergeant of the RAOC who claimed to recognise me from my previous station at Gartuons, although I could not very well see how that could be as I noticed he only had two service stripes and it was well over three years since I was there. The four of us went for a walk during the evening and then sat around the fire and talked until two o'clock. Maizie kindly suggested lending me a bike and accompanying to Drymen. We did this after mending a puncture, setting off half past nine. We arrived in good time for the bus and I left Maizie here. I arrived back in camp at exactly twelve o'clock.

**20 May 44** – 4 sections on dock work at Glasgow

**7 Jun 44** – I find that it is nearly a month since my last entry. Leave has come and gone, and I am back once more in Scotland.

The weekend before leave I visited Mr & Mrs Fairlie but was not so fortunate this time as I was only able to get a half day pass. Still the two or three hours spent with them passed very pleasantly.

I arrived home on the following Saturday evening having managed to get away in time to catch the ten o'clock from Glasgow. Ray was on a "36" which expired on the Sunday.

Joan came to dinner on the Sunday. Monday Dad and I went over to Fulham to collect our wireless which a friend of mine was looking after. There was nothing left of our house now all the rubble having been cleared away. The damage in the district was appalling.

Tuesday I spent a very pleasant day with Joan. We went by train to Wendover and did a hike in the district through part of the Chequers estate, over Coombe Hill and Whiteley Hill passing very near to Mr and Mrs Baker's.

Wednesday I went with Aunt Lizzie and Mother to the Commandane to see "The Dearest Song" and a Charlie Chan film.

Thursday I cycled over to Joan's. The plan was to go for a bike ride but the weather was very uncertain and it was after midday before we started. Incidentally the shoes I had sent Joan from Italy arrived while we were waiting for the rain to cease. As it was we only went as far as Ruislip Woods and reservoir and back through Uxbridge. I went back to Joan's and stayed long enough to meet Mrs Reed and Auntie as they returned from work before cycling back to Boston Manor.

Friday evening I went with Joan to the Hippodrome to see "The Lisbon Story". Afterwards we had supper in the Quality Inn.

Elsie has for some time been very poorly with tonsillitis, and had been in bed all the week. She was, however, feeling sufficiently recovered to get up on the Saturday but was still far from well. Reuce and Aunt Beatie came to tea.

I went over to Kew on Sunday morning and had a walk in the gardens with Reuce. The rest of the day was spent uneventfully lying down.

Elsie and I went to Joan's to dinner on the following day which was Whit Monday. The weather was glorious, almost too hot for comfort. We had some music in the evening which we found very enjoyable after so long an interval. We both stayed the night and the following day which Joan was able to get off, we went out to Richmond and spent quite an enjoyable time, Joan came back with us in the evening.

Wednesday evening Elsie and I went up West to meet Daisy and Frank. We had a walk through the Green Park and then had supper in a Chinese restaurant in Wendover Street. Afterwards we walked through Hyde Park as far as the Albert Hall where we left Daisy and Frank.

Thursday I met Joan in the west end and we had lunch together. Afterwards I went to Fulham to say goodbye to Aunt Lizzie. I met mother at Hammersmith and travelled back to Green Park where we met Winnie and Elsie. The four of us went to the St James Theatre where we saw Agatha Christie's "Ten Little Niggers". Afterwards we went to Lyons Corner House for supper.

Friday afternoon Mother, Elsie and I went to the cinema at Hounslow to see Clive Brook in "On Approval". Joan came for the

last time in the evening and so ended this previous leave. Saturday morning I travelled back to Glasgow and arrived back in camp about nine o'clock.

Monday evening I went with Arthur and Sydney to the pictures to see "Aulteso Castle". Last night I went again this time to see John Garfield in the "Fallen Sparrow".

**20 Jun 44** – Coy moved to Upper Warlingham (Concentration Area)

**26 Jun 44** – Last Monday week went to Glasgow for the day. Took the opportunity of having my eyes tested but was told that I should have to wait at least a fortnight for the specs. Went to the pictures in the afternoon. On Tuesday evening went with Sydney to a friend of his who had a weird assortment of musical instruments. We had quite an amusing time playing the different instruments. On Wednesday evening went with Sydney and Arthur to see "Hatter's Castle" which if a trifle melodramatic I found very good entertainment. During this week I also saw "Jane Eyre".

Arthur and I went to a dance on the Thursday given by some of the girls in a massive engineering factory. We had a very enjoyable time and I even entered into the eightsome reel and Strip the Willow.

As I knew we were moving shortly I wanted to visit Mr and Mrs Fairlie again before we did so. But pressure of work nearly put paid to it and it was only after considerable difficulty and a lecture from the OC that I was granted a few hours off from six Saturday evening until eleven the following morning. As it was I arrived there about eight and spent a very pleasant time. Mr Fairlie kindly arranged for a car to take me back as far as Balloch as otherwise it would have meant catching a bus at 7.15 in the morning.

On Monday afternoon the 19th we left Dumbarton by train arriving at Upper Warlingham around about seven the following morning. We had a march of about four and a half miles to give us an appetite for our breakfast. The site of the camp is an estate called The Ledgers and it was expected the company is under canvas.

## 'Hitler's latest weapon, the flying bomb, is having an effect on people's nerves'

The orderly room, however, is in the house and Cpl Thompson and myself sleep here. I found that this place is only a few miles from Croydon and vowed to get leave at the first opportunity. It was not until Thursday that I managed it. The journey took me about two hours and I arrived home just after six. It meant leaving about 9.15 but

was well worth it. Friday afternoon I got home again this time however until Saturday evening. Hitler's latest weapon, the flying bomb, is having a considerable effect on peoples already over taught nerves. Whilst I was on the trolley-bus going home two of them landed not far away in Earlsfield. Roy came home for a few hours on the Saturday. In the afternoon Mr and Mrs Smith came and later Jean in the company of a Yank. Joan came to dinner. Aunt Lizzie came early evening to fit Mrs Smith for a dress and a little later Aunt Beatie and Reuce unexpectedly turned up, so there was a house full of visitors.

I had bid everyone a more or less final goodbye on the Saturday night but on the Sunday I was able to make it again, spending four hours at home.

**26 Jul 44** – Embarked Newhaven

**27 Jul 44** – Disembarked Arromanches and moved to Le Croix for work on roads

**28 Jul 44** – It is over a month since my last entry and I have considerable leeway to make up to bring these notes up to date.

Altogether we were at Chelsham just a month, much longer than I had expected but actually not nearly long enough. I had nothing to grumble about in this place for I was able to get home twice a week, and during the period we were there I had three 24 hour passes. I found too that it was not necessary to leave home in the evening but could spend the night at home and get into camp in time if I left about 5.45 in the morning. Elsie's friend at work, Anne, who lives in Thornton Heath kindly invited me to her house, and I went there on two occasions.

On the morning of Friday 21 Jul we left Chelsham and journeyed by train to Newhaven. This was the marshalling area and we knew it would not be long before we were over the other side. Actually we stayed there five days. Although not allowed out of the area I risked it to London on the Saturday as I wanted to know how Elsie was after her operation for tonsillitis. I only had about three hours but the journey was well worth while under the circumstances and I was very glad I was able to see Elsie. The operation had been carried out successfully but she was weak and it hurt her to swallow. I went along to the hospital with Winnie, and Aunt Beatie and Rona who had come to tea. On Sunday afternoon I went with Cpl Thompson into Brighton. We passed half an hour watching the dancing in Sherry's from the balcony. Afterwards we had a nice tea consisting of bacon, tomatoes and chips and then went into the Savoy cinema. The film was quite an interesting one about Poland with Paul Henreid and Ida Lupino called "In Our Time". Monday evening I saw "The Lost Horizon" at the cinema in Newhaven.

Tuesday evening Cpl Thompson, Syd and I went to Seaford. Once again we went to the pictures, this time to see George Formby in "Bell Bottom George" and Kenny Baker in "Doughboys in Ireland". Coming out a tempting aroma attracted us to a fish and chip restaurant where we enjoyed a good slap-up feed. This was our last evening in England. On Thursday afternoon we boarded a landing craft and the following morning disembarked in Normandy. We are at present living in crude shelters made from our groundsheets. The countryside hereabouts with its green trees, hedges and fields is quite English in appearance.

**30 Jul 44** – We moved to another field today about six miles away and close to an aerodrome. We are not better off as regards accommodation and once again we have had to improvise with our groundsheets. By employing three however, we have managed to construct a fairly commodious bivouac which we hope will be reasonably waterproof. The weather for the moment is fine and warm. There will I expect be plenty of aerial activity tonight being so near this airfield. Our first two nights in France were noisy enough with AA fire although last night strangely enough was quiet.

I have not mentioned our situation, it is not far from Bayeux, and we actually disembarked on one of the beaches used for the initial landings. Now, however there have been built two floating landing stages connected to the mainland by a bridge about a mile long consisting of a series of pontoons linked together, really a very remarkable piece of engineering.

**3 Aug 44** – The first couple of days here was spent building an orderly room out of tree trunks and compo boxes, the result being rather rough but quite adequate, except that it lacks a tarpaulin for a roof and will be sure

to leak if it rains heavily.

On Tuesday evening Cpl Thompson and I went for a short walk but found little of interest; the extremely dusty nature of the roads takes all the pleasure away, whilst there is scarcely a house or building which does not bears scars from the battles recently fought here, with in the roofs stripped of tiles or in the holes that have been torn in the walls.

We did have some conversation with an elderly French couple later in the evening when we went to draw water. Speaking of the latter reminds me of the primitive means of supply in this district, with its ancient wells and rickety pumps. I suppose for that matter it is little worse in the remoter parts of England, but as the wells invariably lack a rope and bucket it means providing one's own tackle and usually several ineffectual attempts have to be made to submerge the biscuit tin even though it is weighted with a stone.

Yesterday evening we went out in search of a film show which we had heard was screening each evening in a hospital. We located it after some twenty minutes' walk in the town of Villiers le See. It is actually a home for disabled ex-servicemen although it was, I believe, used as a hospital during the German occupation.

We found the hall crowded and decided that it was too warm to be enjoyable. The film "The Sidlioni" I had as a matter of fact already seen. On our way back we stopped to look inside a Roman Catholic Church. A number of the stained glass windows were broken but otherwise the building had not suffered very much. The graveyard proved to be very interesting by reason of its peculiar memorials. Wreaths made of fine glass beads and woven into flower designs hung on plain metal crosses, or were enclosed in glass cases. It struck me as cheap and tawdry and the colours except those of the most recent were drab and faded, whilst in the case of the enclosed ones the strings had broken and had deposited the beads in little heaps at the bottom of the case.

**15 Aug 44** – I went to the pictures one evening last week with Sydney but the hall was too hot and crowded for enjoyment. The film was "This is the Army!"

Yesterday afternoon I had a dip in the sea near Veso-sur-Mer. The sea was rather rough and did not give me a change to practice any strokes. This particular part of the beach had been the scene of one of the initial landings, and was strewn with the wreckage of landing craft. It was a picture of utter desolation. Thick black oil, or rather I think it was probably tar lay in patches all over the place, and although we carefully avoided these places with our bare feet they got caked in the stuff just the same.

There has been a change in the weather this evening. A thunderstorm is raging as I write and I have seen two balloons catch fire within the space of five minutes. I am a bit anxious about our bivvy standing up to the rain as although we have recently reconstructed it, it is I fear still far from waterproof.

**21 Aug 44** – The weather during the last few days has been variable alternating between fine spells and rain. This morning is the worst we have yet had and the orderly room despite the attrition of a bell tent spread over the roof is leaking badly. Our bivouac is standing up to it pretty well, however, which is one consolation.

Last Thursday I went with Sydney to the cinema in Villiers-le-See to see "The Girls They Left Behind Them" with Carmen

Miranda and Alice Faye. It was in Technicolour and was chiefly interesting for the kaleidoscopic pictures formed by the chorus girls and sets.

Last Saturday Cpl Thompson, Sydney and I went to a show put on by the RASC which proved to be much more interesting that we were led to expect.

**24 Aug 44** – Last Monday it poured all day and the Orderly Room had scarcely a dry spot in it despite the fact that a bell tent had been spread across the roof. Work was more or less out of the question.

Tuesday evening Cpl Thompson and I went to the cinema in Villiers-le-See to see Deana Durbin in "His Butler's Sister". Although one of the first to arrive we were nearly the last in by reason of the "system" of allocation of seats which just did not work.

That night the rain came down in torrents and our protection failed us, for the rain came in at the front where we had gas capes draped, and made a nice pool on the floor. We have built up the front now with sandbags and the rain we had last night did not penetrate.

**Aug 44** – Road work all month

**27 Sep 44** – Coy still on road work

**30 Sep 44** – Moved to Garvelle, Arras

**1 Oct 44** – Two days ago on Friday Sep 29th at about 10 a.m. we left La Croix on board lorries bound for Arras. The two months we were there had been uneventful to the point of boredom, but we had become settled down and the eventual move was a considerable uprooting. Apart from occasional ENSA concerts and films there had been little in the way of entertainment.

The journey was an extremely interesting one although the conditions of travel made one not sorry when we finally reached our destination. The first town of any size to go through was Caen and the stubborn resistance that the Germans had put up in this area was evidenced by the terrible destruction that the town had suffered. There is not a single house that has escaped some damage and the majority are just a heap of rubble. I should qualify this statement for the centre of the town around the cathedral is almost intact. And thus to a lesser degree was this havoc repeated in the successive villages we went through. Wreckage of burned out tanks, armoured cars and guns at intervals along the route on the road edge whilst fields had sometimes been "pattern bombed" so that they had the appearance that some gigantic plough had run amock across them. I was agreeably surprised with the style of the majority of houses. Some of red brick were quite English in appearance, whilst others were quite refreshingly novel being built from stone into attractive patterns. There was, however, far too much pseudo Tudor style and the plaster had often peeled off. The countryside was really beautiful and one could have easily imagined oneself in the heart of England. In parenthesis I ought to say that I am having much difficulty in concentrating on this by reason of a horde of French children who keep running in and out of the tent in which I am now writing obscuring what little light there is, and distracting one by their eager chatter. Earlier this afternoon a crowd of them came in and became intrigued by the typewriter. Finally they had us typing out their names and addresses and not content with their own, their family's as well; there were well over twenty names in one instance!

One village we passed through was called Conneuille and I noticed that a house here bore a inscription which had something to do with a legendary bell. Thus I concluded that this must be the place from which the

## 'Our first two nights in France were noisy with AA fire'

opera "Les Cloches de Corneille" derives its name.

The route we took is as follows:

Reviers, La Denrrande, Benouville, Troarn, Dozule, Pont L'Evêque, Pont L'Audemer, Baring Theroulde, El Boeuf, Adken, Serqueux, Foix Amiens, Arras.

A haversack ration had been given us before the start of the journey and this we ate at a halt about midday with some tea which had also been brought in containers. The roads since leaving Caen were good and this seemed to encourage speeding for at times during the morning we must have been touching fifty and the way we took some of the bends left my heart in my mouth.

We arrived at Rouen about five in the afternoon. Here something went wrong with our lorry and we were held up for more than an hour. In consequence the rest of the convoy had got miles ahead. We crossed the Seine on our way out of the town and a fine piece of work had been done here in spanning this wide river with a Bailey bridge for the original one had been blown up by the Germans in their retreat. A staging point had been assigned for the night some twenty kms out of Rouen, but we lost the way and made a wide detour before eventually getting back to the right road again. As we still did not know exactly where the convoy had pulled in for the night it was agreed that some tea should be brewed and we were fortunate here in having the cooks and the grub on the other lorry which had remained with us at Rouen to service our own vehicle when it broke down. As it was, we afterwards located the rest of them only a few miles further along the road. Sydney and I were lucky in finding a barn full of newly threshed corn and we spent a fairly comfortable night. The following morning was wet and miserable. After a comp breakfast of sausage and a few biscuits we boarded our lorries for the next stage of our journey. The weather improved later on in the day. As on the previous day we passed through towns and villages all bearing some scars of war to a greater or less degree. Despite this, however, the Frenchmen were dressed as smartly as if there had been no war, and many of them gave us friendly waves and smiles as we went through. We reached Amiens about midday and we stopped here for lunch. We were now nearing the end of our journey. About four we reached the outskirts of Arras and were halted here quite a time. There was a British cemetery here of soldiers killed in the last war. Sydney and I went into an estaminet and had a glass of beer, but it was very poor stuff, although we could not say that it was dear at one franc a time. We arrived in the heart of the town about six and the cooks prepared some stew and pudding, the first we had had since leaving La Croix. It was dark when we pulled out again. It was at a farm in a village some 8 miles out of Arras that we finally stopped. There were barns and outhouses for the company to sleep in, whilst some of us including myself remained in the lorry. We were able to take our bearings the following morning. The farm is clean and well kept, and has a prosperous air about it. The house adjoining is a large composing affair of red brick whilst opposite on the other side of the road is a similar house, the Mayor and private residence, where the Major is staying. We had a small marquee erected for the Orderly Room. Before we had any number of children running around the camp and it was more than we could do to keep them

**'We passed through towns and villages all bearing scars of war'**

darting in and out of our tent. The typewriter proved to be a great fascination and we had no peace until we had typed all their names and addresses. The first evening i.e. Monday (I am by the way now writing this on the 4th) we made a tour of the village which actually consisted in going from one estaminet to the other and judging the merits of each. The atmosphere in these places is bright and cheap.

**5 Oct 44** – HQ & 1 Section moved to St Laurent Blagny. 2 sections at St Omer. 2 sections at Lens. Remainder at St Pol – all on roads

**14 Oct 44** – On two succeeding evenings we walked to another village called Bailleul, some 3 or 4 kms distant. We found some extremely nice people in one estaminet, and on the second occasion we went there they gave us a cup of coffee with milk a rarity in France those days. We had brought along a bar of soap each with which were very pleased and insisted on giving us a couple of eggs each in return.

We did not remain long in Gavrelle moving on the following Thursday to another village about five kms along the road, called St Laurent Blagny and which is on the outskirts of Arras itself. We were very thankful to get out of the marquee which had been the orderly room and sleeping quarters combined for the past few days. Although we had been sleeping on the tables we had been nearly frozen by the time morning came.

Our present quarters are a decided improvement. We occupy a large house, called the Chateaux Brunival, standing on its own grounds. It is quite unlike one's usual conception of a castle being merely a large red brick building with stone facings to the windows. The Company Office is quite a nice light room on the first floor at the front of the house and we have a small room adjoining in which we sleep. We have added luxury also of beds.

We have been out most evenings into Arras but apart from the novelty of looking into the shop windows and going in an occasional café, there is little else in the way of entertainment. There are three cinemas in the town but they only show French films.

In St Laurent itself we have made the acquaintance of a most charming person in one of the estaminet's. He was very pleased when she learned I spoke French and asked me if I would do her a favour. She had known a soldier in 1940 and he had recently been to see her again. He had now gone to Belgium and she wanted to write to him, but as there is no service for civilians operating at the moment, she wondered if I would write on her behalf. I said I would be pleased to do this for her. On another evening I learned something of her history. Her husband had died two years ago from meningitis and she had been obliged to go out to work since to keep the home going. She lives with her thirteen year old daughter and her grandparents.

**23 Oct 44** – Last Wednesday the three of us went to a violin and piano recital at the Sale des Concerto in Arras. We were not very impressed by the outside of the place which was old and dingy; the interior, however, was bright and pleasing. An electric chandelier hung from the centre whilst the walls and ceiling were decorated with allegorical paintings rather in the Italian style. The seats were upholstered in red velvet and the whole appearance was cheerful and cosy if a little over elaborate. The programme consisted of three sonatas by Cesar, Franck and Beethoven and a

French composer unknown to me called Guillaume Lekeu. We all quite enjoyed it but would have welcomed some sort of relief such as an orchestra or another soloist. Nevertheless it made a very pleasant change and is I think the first concert of classical music I have been to in the army.

The weather has deteriorated rapidly since we arrived here, and for the past ten days or so we have had little else but rain.

I spent Saturday afternoon in Arras looking round the shops trying to get some inspiration for Christmas presents but without success. Most of the things are much too expensive. I did however manage to buy a couple of films at a reasonable price, which is more than one can do in England today.

On Saturday evening I went into Arras again in the company of Cpl Thompson and Sydney as we were walking across the Petite Place we noticed lights coming from one side of the Hotel de Ville. A closer inspection revealed the cause of it. Heavy black velvet drapes with small silver stars were hung outside and upon enquiring we were told that homage was being paid to six French civilians who had been killed by the Nazis. Inside were the coffins containing the remains of these brave men and draped with the tricolour. A framed photograph of each stood on the coffins and an inscription in stone beneath. Beside the coffins were some of the relatives of the dead men including two women. There were beautiful wreaths of chrysanthemums and dahlias and the whole was a most moving and respectful tribute.

**27 Oct 44** – Last Monday we went to the theatre to see an operetta called "Dede"

**31 Oct 44** – Of the 97 days we have been in France only 54 have been given to work, and that work could have been done by civilian labour which was available for it.

**25 Nov 44** – 3 Sections move from St Pol to Roubaix to prepare quarters for HQ L of C. Ordered to make the move of 43 miles in own unit transport i.e. one three ton GS Dodge. The move would have taken 60 hours if orders were adhered to but we managed to borrow two further vehicles from neighbouring unit. Rest of the Coy working on Abbeville-Doullens road.

**3 Dec 44** – Left St Laurent

**3 Dec 44** – Arrived Nijmegen for work on Nijmegen-Grave road

**4 Dec 44** – 1 Cpl. 1 LCpl and 3 men killed by shelling

**5 Dec 44** – Moved to a tented camp at Wijchen outside Nijmegen

**6 Dec 44** – The past month has been such a crowded and happy one that I have allowed these notes to lapse badly. After a more or less blank period when the only person we were on friendly terms with was Mme Jaune Vigreud, we did succeed in making a number of new friends. Sydney established the first link when out cycling one day a young lady also on a bike, spoke to him, and he gathered that she wanted him to meet her in a café in that part of the village where the factory is to which we go for our bath. Sydney suggested when he told me of the incident that I went along with him in order to facilitate the conversation. We were not quite sure of the café and did in fact go in the wrong one to begin with as a few enquiries elicited.

Without much hope as the details of the rendezvous were rather vague we tried another café a couple of yards away and here our luck was in for the young lady in question came in a minute or so after we entered. She invited us to come back with her to her house which turned out to be one we had often remarked before by reason of its peculiar gables and the fact that it stood back from the road and in rather an exposed

position. It was a great treat for us to cross the threshold, into a warm and comfortable living room, the first we had been in since leaving England. Andree (for that is the girl's name) told us that she was married and introduced us to her mother-in-law, in whose house they were living temporarily. The husband arrived home later in the evening and I spent an interesting time listening to stories of conditions under the German rule. He himself had been a prisoner for three years having been captured in Alsace where their original home was. Andree had fled with her four months' old baby to her parents in the south of France. We subsequently paid a number of visits to these people and spent some very pleasant evenings with them. One Saturday afternoon I cycled out with Felix to a village about 10 kms away. He introduced me to some farmer friends of his, people whom he had got to know whilst they were living in this village having evacuated there during the allied bombardment of Arras. We came away with one of two things "off the ration" – myself the richer by ten eggs which I got in exchange for a couple of bars of chocolate. Afterwards I went back with Felix and was invited back to dinner in company with him and Andree.

In the meantime we had continued our visits to Mme Jeanne and latterly she always invited us in to her "cuisine". Our memories here, too, are very pleasant ones and I do most sincerely hope that I shall have the opportunity one of these days of visiting her again. The Sunday before last we went there to dinner and there was such a spread that I could hardly move after it.

We also spent a couple of evenings at the house of the lady who used to do our washing. Although poor she was a very clean respectable soul and she made us very welcome. She had a daughter named Colette, a loquacious little lady of five who had an affectionate regard for English soldiers.

About three weeks ago when I was in Arras I had the good fortune to make another contact. Enquiring the direction to a certain street from a passing Frenchman I was invited back to his house to partake of some tea and some biscuits. He seemed delighted that I could speak French and I was introduced to his father-in-law. They wanted me to spend the rest of the afternoon and evening with them but I explained that I had to be back by five o'clock, at the same time promising to return that evening. I said that I should like to bring a friend along and they agreed by all means. Accordingly Cpl Thompson and I went along that evening and had the best time that we had spent since being abroad. An excellent meal together with some rare liqueurs undoubtedly contributed, but we also found ourselves in extremely pleasant company. M Vrouker's wife, we found to be a most charming person, who spoke a little English, and there were two daughters Claudine and Janine aged nine and fourteen, also Mme Vrouker's mother and father. We went along there the following Sunday and also on two subsequent occasions all of which visits were most enjoyable.

Arras has not boasted much in the way of entertainment, or rather I should say that the troops were not catered for. However, we have been to the cinema several times and on two occasions saw English speaking films. Also we paid two further visits to the theatre to see French versions of "The Desert Song" and "La Tosca". It was when we returned to our billet after the latter show

that we learned of the blow that had befallen us while we were out – the order to move had come through.

This was on Thursday and we were to move off early on the Saturday morning following. We had been greatly looking forward spending Christmas at Arras and I think that it would have turned out to be the best I had spent in the Army, but now it looks like being the worst. We just had had time on the following evening to rush round to our friends and bid them goodbye.

About nine o'clock on Saturday morning we set off on our journey which we knew was to take us away miles from Arras, across two frontiers in fact, into Holland. We picked the rest of the company up at Lille and by nightfall had reached Brussels where we stopped the night.

**23 Dec 44** – We reached our destination in the afternoon of the following day having come through several large towns including Tilburg. My impression of Belgium and Holland is that both these countries have the appearance of well planned and clean looking towns, the houses of which are usually of neat design. In Holland we saw a characteristic feature – the windmill and also a number in Belgium. We had been told to

report to a place called Gsave but this was only the Group HQ's location, and we received further instructions which resulted in a further journey of several miles towards the front and took us over a bridge of nine spans. The town we now arrived at was Nijmegen although we did not learn this until afterwards. Our billets turned out to be a religious college, a building of imposing appearance and size. It had suffered some damage from shells and in fact craters were to be seen in the vicinity. We were soon to discover that it was a pretty unhealthy spot, for not long after we got there shells started whizzing over and they were falling too close for comfort. We were allotted our rooms for sleeping and as most of the windows were out blackouts had to be improvised. We were not late in retiring that evening but our rest was considerably disturbed by the shells which kept coming over at frequent intervals during the night. And so it continued throughout the next day and every now and again one would knock a chunk off the building, fortunately for us at the far end to where we were. Already we had heard that some fellows in the other company billeted in the far end of the building had been killed, and the very real danger in which we were was brought home to us very soon. Early that evening five of our own chaps were killed as they were standing just outside the main entrance. This shook us all up and we decided we would be safer to spend the night in the basement. Practically the whole company slept down there that night and the floor space was pretty well filled. In the rooms underground there was a number of civilians who had either been bombed out of their homes or who came there for safety. We saw several black gowned fathers and one or two of them spoke very good English.

So passed our second and last night in this place. It was decided that we were in too dangerous a spot to remain, and we moved out the following day to a village called Wijchen about midway between Gsave and Nijmegen. It came as a bit of a blow to learn that it was a tented camp we were going into but our feelings of relief at getting away from this hot spot made even that welcome.

**25 Dec 44** – Got men into huts by Christmas  
**31 Dec 44** – It is more than three weeks since we started to live under canvas and the

last day of the year finds us still under the same conditions. These conditions have been the most miserable we have existed under for a very long time. Our orderly room is a marquee, cold and draughty and dark. The stove we have now is not too bad but requires coal which is in short supply to be really satisfactory. Most of the work has to be done by the dim illumination of hurricane lamps.

Christmas was a mediocre affair and I was not sorry when it was over.

Boxing Day and the two days following provided me with a welcome break for I went to Brussels on a "48" and had an enjoyable time there. The people at whose house we stayed were extremely kind to us and the two nights spent in a soft bed were real luxury. Our entertainment consisted of a visit to a "Stars in Battledress" show where we had our photos taken by the press; a picture "It's a Date" starring Deanna Durbin, a dance at the "21 Club" and a look around the shops.

**10 Jan 44** – Last week a great blow befell me. A list of names was received in the office from Echelen in which my name and Arthur's were included. The men listed were to be sent to 39 Reinforcement and Holding Unit for testing with a view to transfer to the Infantry. The OC did his best to retain us by sending a signal to Echelon but up to the time of departure no reply had been received.

We left 132 Coy on the Wednesday morning with heavy hearts but still hoping that something might turn up to save us. The journey which was made by road took us several hours and it was dark when we arrived at our destination, a place called Tesmonile somewhere between Brussels and Antwerp.

In the next day but one we will be put through the matrix test, the same as I had done two years ago and also had to fill in a questionnaire form. The time we spent at this place (close on a week) was free and easy enough but boring. The evenings we spent visiting the cinemas in town and a Canadian ENSA show.

When we were first told the results it appeared that out of the 35 entrants only 10 had been selected and the rest amongst which were myself and Arthur were to be sent back to the unit. We felt quite happy about this but received a rude shock when it turned out that owing to someone blundering 7 names had been left out and we were amongst them.

Yesterday afternoon we travelled by train to 52 RHU in a place called Mariakerke a sort of suburb of Ostend. Then preparatory to embarking for England and I hope a spot of leave. Otherwise the prospect seems to be a pretty gloomy one and I do not look forward to the idea of intensive training after all this time.

**27 Jan 45** – Since my last entry we have been in England, had a disappointing few days leave, reported back and the day following started another long journey which ended in Northern Ireland. And now heard a few minutes ago is the welcome news that we are to have the leave that is our due. Next to go back to where I left off.

We stayed at Mariakerke close on a week during which time we went into Ostend each evening. We had the opportunity of seeing "Song of Bernadette" at the Garrison cinema there besides a number of other films. There were three large canteens but even they were hardly adequate to cope with the large number of troops there. Conditions in the RHU were poor. A number of us were billeted in a pension some ten minutes' walk from the main building and, of course, we had to march down for meals

### 'Not long after we got there shells started whizzing over'

and the sundry other parades which were arranged for us. The food was unappetising and there was not much of it. Altogether, with the bitterly cold weather as well, it was miserable week we spent here, and we were glad when we got away from it. We left on Sunday morning 14th Jan. Reveille was at 5.30 unnecessarily early for we did not board the boat until late afternoon. LSTs took us across the channel. We did not get ashore until Tuesday afternoon, and we then journeyed by train to Sunningdale arriving there about six. The arrangements at this end were much more efficient than anything we had so far experienced. Lorries were waiting to convey us to the camp which was 44 RHU and upon arrival we were told that steps were being taken to get us away on leave that night. And we did – or rather it was half past one in the morning when we

boarded the train which got us into Waterloo at half past two. A paper van gave me a lift to the top of Fleet Street where I got on an all night bus to Marble Arch and here transferred to another which took me to the bottom of Boston Road where I walked home arriving at a quarter to four much to the surprise of the household.

The four days that we had been given passed all too quickly, and it was in very low spirit that I departed on Saturday afternoon in order to arrive back at Sunningdale by six o'clock.

The following afternoon we were again on a journey which we now knew was to finish in Northern Ireland. We reached Stranraer somewhat about half past five the next morning and marched straight on to the boat. It sailed at 9.30 and two and a half hours later we were at Larne. We had a

putrid meal at a transit camp there and then on the train again for another three hours to a place called Warren Point whence lorries took us a further fourteen miles to our new "home". The place looked desolate in the extreme and this was not lessened by the snow which clothed the countryside in white. We learned that we were in Mourne Park close to the famous mountains of the same name.

We were to start the course next Monday but word has just come through that we are to have our leave beforehand and this is good news indeed.

This camp has some amenities – a NAAFI, a rest room and there are weekly ENSA and cinema shows. These indeed are pretty essential for we are 17 miles from the nearest town although there is the village of Kilkeel 3 miles from here. ■

# Ernest's vital role on D-Day

## Norfolk D-Day Veteran's ashes taken to Normandy for internment

Report: Norman Brown  
Picture: Field of Remembrance 2006

**W**ORLD WAR 2 veterans who took part in the D-Day landings are returning to Normandy with the hope of interring the ashes of a comrade who died last year.

The veterans, from Norfolk and Suffolk, are taking with them an urn containing the remains of Ernest Mears of the Pioneer Corps.

They hope to make him a focal point for next year's 70th anniversary by having the ashes interned in Bayeux Cathedral.

Their trip has been made possible with money from the Big Lottery Fund.

The Heroes Return 2 programme gives WW2 veterans a chance to get funding to return to the places where they served.

Mr Mears, a former Barnado's Boy, who had no family, was given a military funeral by the Royal Norfolk Veterans' Association.

He played a vital role in the Allied Invasion on 6 Jun 44 by landing with the Pioneer Corps to dig trenches and build shelters under fire. Norfolk veteran Jack Woods, who served with the 9th Battalion Royal Tank Regiment and is one of the veterans making the trip to France, said Mr Mears was typical of the young men who went 'simply to do their duty'.

He said he hoped Mr Mears' ashes could be buried in Bayeux Cathedral next year.

"At the moment his ashes will be interred in a Commonwealth War Grave Cemetery as close as possible to the beach he landed on," said Mr Woods. "We think there should be a representative of all the young men who went over there from all over our land. There should be one ordinary guy similar to the unknown warrior to represent them and we think our Barnado's boy Ernie Mears is the type of guy who would fit the bill."

Alan King from Eye in Suffolk, who is also making the journey, said of the lottery funding programme, "I'm very grateful they're allowing us to go back again. It was my generation that died there you see."

Since 2009 Heroes Return programme has awarded more than £25m to more than 52,000 WW2 veterans, widows, spouses and carers across the country for journeys in the UK, France, Germany, the Middle East, Far East and beyond. ■



■ Mr Mears fronting the RPC Plot at The Field of Remembrance 2007

Pictures: Norman Brown

# Recruiting Pamphlet

Join the life line of the Army - The Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps



**JOIN  
THE  
LIFE LINE OF THE ARMY  
  
THE  
AUXILIARY  
MILITARY  
PIONEERS**

**His  
Majesty's  
Army**

## WHO MAY JOIN

The Pioneer Corps is open to all able bodied men between the ages of 30 and 50.

Certain physical handicaps such as defective eyesight and slight disability do not prevent a man from joining up.

The work is not only interesting but also has a definite military aspect.

The Pioneer Corps has been honoured by the Lord Mayor of London by being requested to march through the City of London with fixed bayonets, a rare privilege granted to very few.

THE PIONEER CORPS IS A PROUD CORPS TO BELONG TO.

## PAY and ALLOWANCES

The rates of pay and allowances are the same as for the Infantry of the Line.

## PROMOTION

Being an ever increasing Corps the chances of promotion are extremely favourable.

## Enlistment

Men will be enlisted for General Service for the period of embodiment of the Territorial Army.

## RATES OF PAY

SERGEANT .. .. .	6/- per day.
CORPORAL .. .. .	4/- ..
PRIVATE .. .. .	2/- ..

## Former Service Pay

1 year's former service .. .. .	2/3 per day.
2 years' former service .. .. .	2/6 ..
3 years' former service .. .. .	3/- ..

*i.e.*, 3d. a day extra for the first two years and 6d. for the third year. War-Time Proficiency pay of 6d. per day may be granted on recommendation of the Commanding Officer on the completion of 6 months' service.

## FAMILY ALLOWANCES

WIFE .. .. .	17/- per week.
FIRST CHILD .. .. .	6/- ..
SECOND CHILD .. .. .	4/- ..
THIRD CHILD .. .. .	2/- ..

Every additional child 3/- per week.

(Example—Wife and 2 children, 27/- per week.)

Eligible for children attending School or under School age.

GO TO YOUR NEAREST RECRUITING OFFICE  
IN ORDER TO JOIN UP



**AUXILIARY  
MILITARY  
PIONEER CORPS**

**HIS  
MAJESTY'S  
ARMY**



# Behind the **Scarlet** Coat

You may recognise Chelsea Pensioners as the men and women in **scarlet** coats but there's more than just a uniform.

Report: Norman Brown  
Picture: Paul Brown

IN THE heart of Chelsea lies a community that's reaching out to Veterans. You may recognise Chelsea Pensioners as the men and women in scarlet coats but there's more than just a uniform.

Colonel Simon Bate OBE, Adjutant Royal Hospital Chelsea, is a very busy man. He's introducing and supporting key changes at the Royal Hospital, not an easy task whilst ensuring the needs of over 200 Chelsea Pensioners (aged between 65 and 102) are met. He explained:

"We have three areas of change across the Royal Hospital; infrastructure and modernisation, 'giving back' to the Armed Forces and our local communities and developing ways to become more financially independent. Our modernisation started with the build of our infirmary and the introduction of women pensioners several years ago,

now, work continues on the replacement of our historic long wards by modern 'berths' which include en-suite facilities, internet and digital TV access. It is a huge cultural change to our pensioners to move to the modern accommodation. The long wards provided them with great social interaction that we don't want to lose as they move, so it presents a challenge to ensure they still integrate and don't become isolated but it is equally important that we move forward into the 21st century as this modernisation programme allows. We feel very lucky at the Hospital. Our pensioners are very much at the heart of an extended family with their every need met. We felt it was time that we 'gave back' to the Armed Forces Community, so we developed outreach programmes where our pensioners go out and provide support to others less fortunate."

"In our local community we support a night shelter providing meals and accommodation to the homeless

alongside our support to other Service welfare charities who include the ABF – The Soldiers' Charity, the Royal British Legion and SSAFA. In this current economic climate, we are keen to share resources and work together with other organisations supporting the Armed Forces Community. We have three projects that our pensioners are involved in: visits to Service personnel at Tedworth House, talks to ex-Service prisoners at HMP Wormwood Scrubs and support to 'Veterans Aid' and their hostel in the East End of London. Our pensioners really enjoy the outreach work and it shows that you are never too old to get involved. We are developing respite care services in co-ordination with SSAFA and hope to introduce this later in the year."

Financial independence is important, as Col Bane added: "We receive a large annual grant from the MOD towards running costs and are looking at ways we can generate income from the Hospital's assets. However, we need to

ensure that there is a balance, that we can recoup money while ensuring that there are no risks to the pensioners as it is their home. Some of our pensioners can be vulnerable so we need to take a realistic and sensible approach to establish financial benefits without detriment to their life here." There are misconceptions about how to become a Chelsea Pensioner that may be stopping eligible veterans from applying. The eligibility changed five years ago; while all must have served in the Army, there is no longer a minimum length of Service required. It's not essential for a pensioner to receive an Armed Forces pension either. During recent years, the Hospital has welcomed its first National Servicemen as in-Pensioners, so there is a real variety of Servicemen and women living at the hospital today; from the Second World War veterans to those who have served in more recent conflicts.

Col Bane said, "Some people think that the pensioners are still in the Army

and that life is really regimented. It's simply not the case; the only requirement is that our pensioners attend the annual Founders Day, which is attended by a member of the Royal Family or a senior dignitary. The Hospital is their home, they are free to walk outside its walls, go on holiday and visit with their families and friends. We've created a safe environment where pensioners can get involved in as little or as much of the daily activities as they want. Dispelling the myths surrounding the Hospital will help reinforce to veterans their families that we are here and can help. We are providing a safe and gentle environment which is part of our ethos and this starts with the pensioners. The first line of support is the pensioners themselves, offering comradeship and they really do step in and offer support to each other and raise concerns with us if they think someone is struggling. Being at the Hospital can alleviate pressure on the pensioner and family; sometimes they feel a burden or the family worry about their care and we step in to help in a caring and supportive way."

Marjorie Cole, 68, has been taking part in the Hospital's outreach programme for the past 18 months.

"I always think it could have been me if I hadn't been here, it can happen to anybody. PTSD, marriage, breakdowns, drink and drug problems, homelessness, they've turned to Veterans Aid and it's given them their life back, it's fantastic. When I go there, I just sit and chat to them, we don't talk about their problems, it's mostly for camaraderie. I joined up in 1961, and served in various places including Aldershot, Northern Ireland and Singapore. I had to have a couple of back operations and was medically discharged in 1977, and it felt like my life had finished."

In civilian life, Marjorie's back problems continued, affecting her employment and she suffered from depression. After nursing both her mum and sister through terminal illness, she again struggled with depression as she thought everyone she loved she had lost.

When she heard that the Chelsea Hospital were taking in women she'd never dreamt that she would have a chance to become a Chelsea Pensioner.

After applying, she came for the four day trial visit in January 2009.

"I knew as soon as I came through the gates. There was a warmth, Everybody greeted you... it was like coming home – coming back to the Army."

Marjorie arrived at the hospital the day after her 65th birthday – she was the third lady Chelsea Pensioner to join, there are now six in total and there are plans for increasing this number once the new en-suite accommodation becomes on stream in January 2014.

"It's the best thing I ever did. Life began again for me when I was 65. I've no worries. If I'd been out there now, like the majority of pensioners, I'd be worrying whether I 'heat or eat'. I've never looked back and it's given me assurance that I know someone is looking after me. You don't have to do anything if you don't want but I like to use my brain and it's a way of giving something back to the Army, because they gave me so much. I go to Belvedere House and help out with the homeless; it's a way of giving something back to Chelsea."

For veterans who have never heard of the Hospital or their family who might

be worried about looking after them, Marjorie has this to say: "Your family would have relief knowing that you're well looked after and they would have no worries whatsoever. Medical care you don't have to wait like you do outside, I've had very good medical care since I've been here, no worries about bills and food. You've all got something in common, you've all served, you're totally relaxed – I'd recommend it."

When asked what it felt like to wear the Scarlet coat, she replied, "I'm proud to wear the Queen's uniform again, it gives you respect, people respect you again. You feel so proud and it gives you confidence."

Brian Cummings MBE, 81, a former Army Families Welfare Officer, has been a Chelsea Pensioner for three years. He applied to the Hospital after his wife of 58 years died. He said, "My wife died four years ago. We'd discussed what would happen if I was left and I said I would apply to become a Chelsea Pensioner. I never thought any more about it."

When she died, I stayed at home for a year and I thought this was no good as she'd been with me all those years and travelled the world with me, so I got the information and thought let's see what it's all about."

I came for the four-day visit and as soon as I walked through the gates I knew this is where I should be. It has that effect on you, it's not for everyone, there are some guys who've always been loners and it's a very close community here, you could quite easily become isolated if that's what you want but if you want to join in there's plenty to do and the camaraderie is fantastic."

Being a Chelsea Pensioner keeps Brian busy...

"I was a Tour Guide for the National Trust and now I'm a Hospital Tour Guide as well as its photographer. I'm given various projects currently I'm taking shots of the Chelsea Flower Show, the build-up and when the flowers start coming in. My daily routine is the usual get up and have breakfast. If I've got a tour they are usually either 10.30 until 12.00 or 1.30 until 4.00."

The rest of the time I find myself sorting things on the PC with the camera or finding out what's available in the City – it's a tremendous place if you've never lived there, there's so much to do. I love going and looking at all the different markets. They say you get at least an extra seven years life expectancy living here."

Our eldest In-Pensioner is a Chap called Joe Britton – he is 102 years old and if you met him you would not think that at all, he's a very agile man, he lives on the second floor and will not use the lift! The rest of my time is trekking around London, taking photographs and tending to the projects running here. I also run the camera club."

You can go anywhere in the world knowing that you've got somewhere to come back to. It really is a great place if you want it to be, it's how you make it."

Putting on the scarlet coat gives him a sense of pride

"It makes you feel extremely proud, very privileged, you are representing hundreds of years of Service to the Crown and Constitution and that's how it affects me. As soon as you put that scarlet on it's great you're back in the Service again, back with your colleagues it makes a great difference."

Michael Fennell, 85, has been a

Chelsea Pensioner since 2010. He joined up in 1942 as a Boy Apprentice at the Army Technical School.

"When I graduated, I wanted some money and to get my knees brown, so I did paratrooper training and was sent to Palestine in 1947. I stayed until it became Israel in 1948."

After years in the Army, he left and worked as a technical translator for Volkswagen in Germany, retiring at 65.

"We came back to England when my wife became ill and I was her carer. She died of Alzheimer's in 2010, then I came here the same year."

Loneliness was the key reason why he joined the Hospital. "I didn't want to live on my own. I was thinking about coming here because an old friend of mine – George – from my paratrooper days was here, and then I saw another friend Fred was here – we were in the same room on boy service, I've known him since 1942.

A lot of people think that you have to have done at least 20 years in the Army to come here, and that's not the case any more it's been changed and now we've even got a couple of National Service lads – and why not – and ladies, have come, we've got six of them now! One of my friends, who was in the same intake as me in October 1942 said he wouldn't mind coming here but he said I'd never get in I only did eight years and that was what we thought.

We all believed you had to do 22 years and now he's arriving next week to do his four days. So there'll be three of us who joined as boys over 70 years ago. I like to go on the Military events, anything with a parade attached. Since I've been here, I've been to the Isle of Wight to celebrate VE Day, taken part in the Remembrance Day parade at Whitehall. Last year, I went to the Somme battlefield where my uncle was killed on the first day and saw his name on the memorial there. This place is the best retirement home in the whole of bloomin' Europe.

This place is definitely the tops and I would recommend it to any old soldier. The care is excellent; we are completely free to do as we like – you've just got to be 65, free of any encumbrance, no legal responsibility for anybody and you've served in the Army."

So what does it mean for Michael when he puts on the scarlet coat?

"What does it mean for me? Like coming back home – it's great, it's wonderful. My children, grandchildren and my great-grandchildren are all chuffed!"

Paddy Teegan, 69, is a relatively new Chelsea Pensioner who arrived in December 2012.

Joining the Army in 1962, Paddy was posted to various locations from Bicester to Singapore, Borneo to Germany. Signing up for Long Service meant he stayed on until he was 55. After leaving the Army in December 1996, he had a gap year to play golf and then became a MOD Civil Servant, retiring as a civil servant in 2007.

A life change made the decision for Paddy to become a Chelsea Pensioner

"I got divorced. I'd known about the Chelsea Hospital for a long time and always said that if my life changed this is what I would do and that's what I've done. I don't regret it one bit – it's an absolutely marvellous place to be. The activities on offer here money cannot buy. For instance, I was a step-liner on Lady Thatcher's funeral. I've been all over the place."

Paddy is fully involved in the activities

on offer from tending one of the allotments to creating a putting green in the Hospital's grounds.

"Golf is my thing, the Governor's wife opened my putting green, designed from scratch, last week. It's for all Pensioners' and all staff and I've got the golf team going as well. There's everything here that anyone might want, there's facilities here that people dream about."

The scarlet coat is a matter of pride to Paddy, "You're very proud you don't think you're back in uniform but you stand out, you're different and people do respect you, there's no doubt about it, just like when you're in uniform in the Army."

### The History of the Royal Hospital Chelsea

Few British institutions can boast three centuries of unbroken service, and none is closer to the heart of the nation than 'The Men in Scarlet', the Chelsea Pensioners.

The Royal Hospital Chelsea was founded by King Charles II in 1682 as a retreat for veterans of the regular army who had become unfit for duty, either after 20 years service or as a result of wounds.

The provision of a hostel, rather than a system of pensions, was most likely to have been inspired by the Hotel Des Invalides in Paris, founded by Louis XIV in 1670, about which Charles had received glowing reports from his son, the Duke of Monmouth.

Because the royal revenue was inadequate for the needs of the country, Charles received no help from the Treasury for this ambitious project. Responsibility for the future hospital was taken up by Sir Stephen Fox, who had been Paymaster General for many years, and he purchased the land for the hospital.

Together with a contribution of £7000 donated by the King and Fox's own surrender of his commission, the Hospital was built. Deductions from army pay and pensions continued to be the Hospital's main source of income until 1847. Since that date it has been supported by Parliamentary votes and a small income from the Hospital's own property and bequests.

There are approximately 300 In-Pensioners who are drawn from Out-Pensioners of good character and who are at least sixty-five years of age. Younger men and women may be admitted if it is certified that they are unable to earn their living as the result of a disability caused by service. Women were first admitted to the Royal Hospital Chelsea on the 12th March 2009.

On entering the Hospital an old soldier surrenders his army pension in return for board, lodging, clothing and medical care.

The military organisation of the Hospital has been preserved, and the Governor and Lieutenant Governor are assisted by an Adjutant, three Medical Officers, a Chaplain, a Quartermaster and six Captains of Invalids who command the six Companies of In-Pensioners.

The scarlet coats and ceremonial tricorne hats are a modernised version of the service dress of Marlborough's time. Parades are now generally limited to those before Matins on Sundays and Founders Day

Today, the Royal Hospital is home to veterans who served in Korea, the Falklands, Cyprus, Ireland and World War 2 and is making itself ready to receive soldiers from the current campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq when they retire. As the name suggests, the Royal Hospital continues to have close links with the

Monarch, and each year a member of the Royal Family comes to Chelsea to review the Chelsea Pensioners. The Royal Hospital is proud to continue to serve its original purpose into the 21st Century.

### Life as a Chelsea Pensioner

Sheltered, independent living, supported by full medical care and catering services, in some of the most beautiful buildings and grounds in the UK, gives Pensioners and their families peace of mind with financial security.

The state of the art infirmary with its resident Matron, Doctor and care teams enables Chelsea Pensioners to be among the fittest of their generation.

The social life of the Royal Hospital is rich and varied. The tranquil 66 acre site gives Chelsea Pensioners an exclusive post code from which to explore and experience the colourful life of London.

Chelsea Pensioners are regularly invited to attend high profile events such as Wimbledon, Chelsea football matches and various race meetings. The Hospital Bowls Team travels the world taking on all comers.

### The Royal Hospital Museum

The Museum at the Royal Hospital is small but very interesting. The Museum is mostly composed of artifacts left by deceased In-Pensioners and was originally opened in the Great Hall in 1866.

The entrance Hall is dedicated to the memory of the Duke of Wellington, and a variety of objects associated with him are to be seen in it, including six French "Eagles", George Jones' panorama of the Battle of Waterloo and a portrait of the Duke by John Simpson. There is also a contemporary painting of Queen Elizabeth II by Andrew Festing (1998).

In the Wellington Hall a diorama depicts The Royal Hospital in about 1742. This shows the Royal Hospital as it was then Ranelagh's land had been turned to commercial use and Walpole had acquired the site on the west side. The original water gardens may also be seen.

Leading from the Hall, the gallery contains the main museum displays and exhibitions. Because it is not possible to visit the Long Wards, a reconstruction of a typical berth has been provided.

The uniform of a veteran soldier is also displayed. Invalid units of Pensioners were created from 1703, formed from those who were claiming a pension but found fit for duty. Usually disbanded during peacetime there were 66 companies founded by the Royal Hospital when the invalids were converted in 'Garrison' battalions in 1803

The collection of medals has been built up from those of deceased In-Pensioners who bequeathed them to the Royal Hospital, and numbers over 2,100.

The Museum also has two major additions. The parade chair, which was presented to Queen Elizabeth II by the Royal Hospital and the Sovereign's Mace which was presented to the Royal Hospital by Queen Elizabeth II in 2002.

To book a guided tour with a Chelsea Pensioner Tour Guide call on 0207 881 5516 or email [tours@chelsea-pensioners.org.uk](mailto:tours@chelsea-pensioners.org.uk). Tours last approximately 2 hours. One tour guide can cater for a maximum group size of 30 people. In the case of larger tours multiple tours must be booked.

The museum is open from 1000 - 1200 and 1400 - 1600 hrs Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays).

The Royal Hospital website is [www.chelsea-pensioners.org.uk](http://www.chelsea-pensioners.org.uk) ■

# Pioneer Christmas Card

## A recent purchase of a Christmas Card and 2 letters from 87 (Alien) Company

Report: Norman Brown  
Photos: Norman Brown

I RECENTLY purchased a Christmas Card from 87 (Alien) Company Pioneer Card, the card came with two letters from a Pte Wuerzburger.

From our records I have the following information:

13807502 Pte Karl Robert WUERZBURGER – later changed service number and name to 13118392 Pte Kenneth Robert Ward. His date of birth was 29 Nov 22, he enlisted at Euston and joined 5 Centre Pioneer Corps for training on 18 May 42, on completion of training he was posted to 87 (Alien) Company and then transferred to RAC on 25 Aug 43. I can confirm that he survived the war.

The letters read as follows:

29th of Nov 42

Dear Mary darling,

I arrived here safely, and had quite a surprise to find out that I am leaving here tomorrow.

We hope to get stationed somewhere near London. I only hope it is true, for we might be able to see each other than sooner than two weeks' time. I will write to you tomorrow my new address.

Could you do me a very big favour and send me a picture of you? Please do excuse my bad hand writing, But I guess I can't write much better.

Do you know that you never told me whether you love me. If you would love me only a tenth of how I love you, I would be satisfied already.

The last day of my leave, on which we were together, was by far the best time of it. I never believed that I could fall in love on first sight, I can't understand it yet, but I suppose it just had to happen.

If I would only know how you feel about it. I will be counting the hours until I hear from you. You will have my new address tomorrow.

You know, it's funny we have only seen us on one evening and I know already such a lot about you, and still I know so little.

I had to walk all the way home from you last Sunday night.

I arrived about half past one. But that did not matter, for I thought all the way home about you, as a matter of fact, you still occupy most of my mind all the time, I can't even read a paper properly, I just sit back and start dreaming about you.

I must close now, as I still have to pack my things for tomorrow.

Cheerio till tomorrow,  
Much love and a thousand kisses  
From Charles

Long Marston  
No 6 Sec 87 Coy PC  
26 Nov 42

Mary darling,

I am sorry that I could not write to you last

night, but it was practically impossible. We got to that camp in the late afternoon, when it was already dark, there is no electric light so we had to unload one of our lorries which got stuck in dirt and mud in the dim light of our torches.

For the next few days we will have to sleep under canvas, there are always four men in one tent, so we actually have quite a lot of room but still it is very unpleasant.

I fell last night over a barbed wire fence and tore my best trousers to bits, so you can imagine what mood I was in last night.

The camp seems to be a good way from civilisation, as there is hardly any water to

eyes you have got or that you have the same ideas about politics, the same outlook on the world which we share. I suppose this all works together.

I hope you did not get into trouble last Sunday night because of me for coming in so late.

Do you know what the K.R. behind my name stands for? It is no title, it's just my initials, Karl Robert. I have changed Karl into Charles and forgot all about it that they called me Robert once. Do you think that I was right?

I am thinking all the time about you. It never happened to me before like that, I believe, I have never been in love with any girl as much as I am with you now. I only hope you feel the same way about me.

I might be able to come over a week-end to London, but I doubt it whether I would get permission.

Stratford is only seven miles from here, and London is about a three hours journey (90 miles).

Perhaps could you manage somehow to come on a week-end down here? You are not working on Sundays? Just think of the marvellous time we could have together.

It should be possible to get arranged somehow. I would pay you back your travelling expenses of course.

What do you think about it? Is there a possible chance? I would be as happy as a king for ten weeks is an awful long time. And the time to my next leave just won't pass by. I am getting quite made when I think that there is perhaps a chance that I see you earlier than ten weeks' time Mary darling. I love you so much, and know you only such a short time it really sounds unbelievable. I don't understand it myself, but I only know that I love you very, very much and I should think that's all it matters.

If I would only know how you feel about me. Will you promise me to write me truthfully what you really think and feel about me?

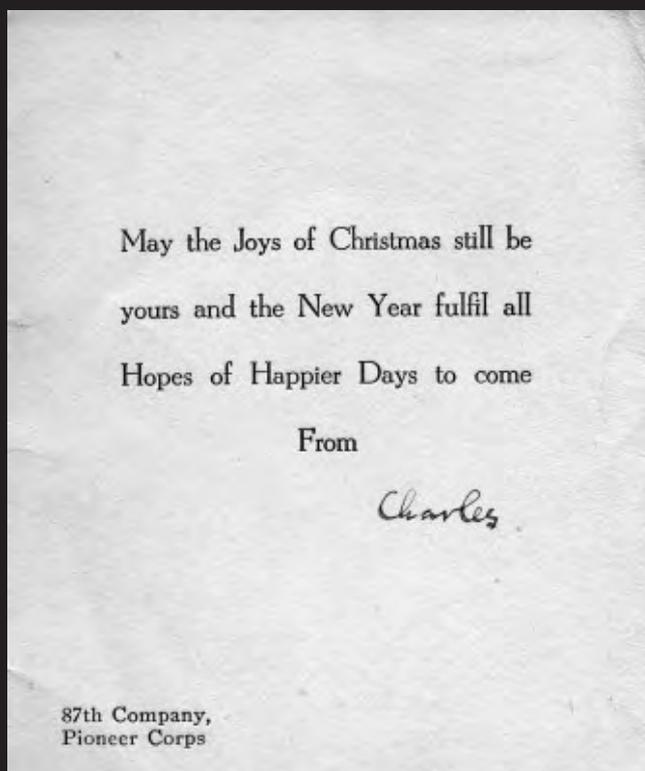
I can't stand this uncertainty in knowing whether you return my love or just laugh about me. But then I always get certain again that you must love me after all for I still can feel your lips on mine when I kissed you goodbye. And I am so longing to have you in my arms again.

Please do write me as soon as possible and send me a picture of yourself.

I'll be counting the hours until I get the first news from you.

I am sending you with this letter a thousand kisses. I kissed the paper because I know that your soft hands will touch the letter and your beautiful little eyes will read it.

Thousands of kisses and much love  
From your friend  
Charles. ■



wash with.

My exact address is:

Pte WUERZBURGER K.R.

13807502 No 6 Section

87th Coy PC, LONG MARSTON CAMP

Near STRATFORD on AVON

As the camp is rather bad I got reason to believe that we will stay here for some time.

I am sitting here rather uncomfortable on my palias whilst I am writing this letter, as there are no forms and tables here yet.

Did you get the letter which I wrote to you last Tuesday the 24th?

You can imagine how I feel, just having me you, and, after the first time we saw each other, being sent into a camp like this.

There is only one thing that could cheer me up now, and that would be a long letter from you. And something, that would cheer me up still more, that would be, if you could manage to send me a picture of yourself.

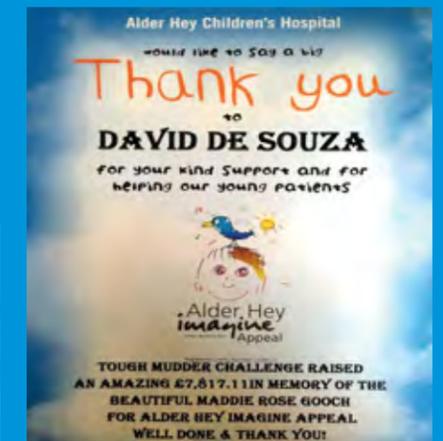
The NAAFI has opened now, so I am able to write now on a proper table. There is even a fire on in here.

I don't know what made me fall in love with you so much, whether it is the beautiful



# Working in Civvy Street

David De Souza served in 187 Squadron from October 1992 - June 1997



Report: David De Souza  
Pictures: David De Souza

IN THE beginning of 2004 up until my accident in December 2007 I was a private security contractor working in Iraq.

During my time in Iraq I had worked for several companies on many different contracts and had been involved in numerous incidents.

I have worked for Armour Group, Control Risk Group and at the time of the accident I was working for Aegis.

It was the 20th December 2007 when I was tasked to take a client (owner of Aegis) to an important meeting in Tikrit. My job that morning was rear vehicle driver whose main focus was to protect the rear so that the second vehicle (client) was secure from any suspect vehicles on the MSR.

Things didn't start out well that morning. The vehicle I was set to drive had a broken MTS (a satellite tracking system where if you're in a contact

situation you hit a button and it sends out a distress signal). This was replaced with another one which again was not working.

At this point I and the rest of the team members wanted to cancel the mission but because it was high priority it was deemed still a go.

We eventually received a third MTS which thankfully worked.

I and some other team members had a bad feeling about this mission but passed it off as just one of those things.

Thankfully that day I decided to wear my seatbelt and Kevlar helmet, something I hadn't done since being in a contact where my seatbelt had jammed and I had to cut myself free.

The 3 vehicle convoy moved off that morning from near the crossed swords inside the green zone in Baghdad and headed up route Tampa.

The move went relatively well until we were around 20 miles away from the venue location. A suspect vehicle came rushing at speed from the left hand side

dirt road just off the MSR. I reacted with the drills that my team had run through and practiced many times. I raced up to the left hand side of the client vehicle to protect it.

The suspect vehicle closed in rapidly and I was in its path for a T-bone collision, at the last minute I swerved to avoid what would only have been a fatal RTA at the speed the team drove at (120kmph).

Unfortunately the suspect vehicle turned out to be a VBIED (suicide bomber) the detonation caused my vehicle to roll over 6 times, it landed in a culvert on the opposite side of the MSR on fire.

I was dragged from the vehicle by one of my team before the fire really took hold.

My team started to take small arms fire from insurgents that had been watching. The team was a vehicle down with me and another team member injured. Luckily another private security company which was in the area came to our

assistance and controlled the fire fight.

I and my team member were medivac by Blackhawk helicopters to the American field hospital in Tikrit. I suffered internal bruising, cuts and abrasions, a broken T3 vertebrae and a brain haemorrhage.

My team mate suffered a collapsed lung and we both spent a week in the field hospital before being flown home.

I could not be treated properly in Iraq so the company I worked for flew me home and set in motion my recovery via a private medical plan.

I was under the impression that I would be back out in Baghdad and back on the teams within 6 weeks.

Unfortunately it has been a long road to recovery and I am not fully there yet. Thankfully my broken T3 would heal over time but hinders me in many ways because it restricts my range of movement and on some days can be quite painful for me.

The brain haemorrhage on the other hand has caused irreparable damaged. I

now have what is called an acquired brain injury.

This injury has caused brain damage leading to cognitive impairment.

Detailed neuropsychological assessment highlighted the following areas of impaired cognitive functioning: speed of processing, attention and multi-tasking, verbal comprehension, working memory, ability to concentrate severely affected, highly distractible, reduced ability to tolerate and manage stress, easily mentally fatigued and PTSD.

Thankfully with the help of all the specialists I have moved on significantly from when I first came home.

My fitness suffered but again with the help of everyone I have been working hard on this.

I spoke with my psychologist at length about doing toughmudder for charity. Over the past 3 month she has seen a massive improvement in my confidence, fitness and general over all wellbeing and believes that me attending Toughmudder and other events would

only be a good thing and is another step in my journey to recovery.

I completed Toughmudder on the 17th November in 3hrs 30min, and as of today's date have raised just under £8,000 for Alder Hey Imagine Appeal.

The reasons I wanted to do Toughmudder were two-fold.

One was to help me in my recovery and give me something within my remit to aim for and complete, and to raise money for my niece who passed away after only living for 18 days, hence why I am raising money for Alder Hey.

I'm sorry for the long story and I do hope you have stuck with it.

I have been in my local paper and on my local radio station, also in the Daily Mail on line all in the hope to raise awareness for my charity.

I'm now currently looking for another challenge. ■

*Ed Note: I would like on behalf of the Association to wish you all the best on your recovery and your future challenges.*



■ Reunion Weekend 2013 and what a scorching hot reunion weekend! This picture is available to purchase and I can assure you it will look very nice on your wall! Picture: Paul Brown



■ IP M Hull and IP L Parry enjoying the weekend

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Half of the Vets Football Team staying sober!

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Friends glad to meet up

Picture: Patrick Bradley



■ Ivor and Yvonne Whittaker meet old friends

Picture: Patrick Bradley



■ Everyone looking cheerful before marching to Church Service Picture: Paul Brown



■ Everyone looking cheerful before marching to Church Service Picture: Paul Brown



■ Corps of Drums laugh at Dusty's predicament

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Second Newsletter running showing Cheungie smiling!

Picture: Paul Brown



■ What a collection! (Of what I do not know)

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Sarah Ward about to fall down!

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Maj Robertson, Maj Teague, Lt Col Parry and Mr Hilton

Picture: Patrick Bradley



■ Bluey Joyce showing off his tricks

Picture: Paul Brown



■ More cheerful faces prior to marching

Picture: Paul Brown



■ More cheerful faces prior to marching

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Dusty Bryant leading the Corps of Drum

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Members of 518 Sqn formed up at War Memorial

Picture: Patrick Bradley



■ Corps of Drums followed by Association Standards

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Pte P Farr lays a wreath on behalf of 23 Pnr Regt RLC

Picture: Paul Brown



■ More smiling faces before the march

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Formed up at the War Memorial

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Formed up at the War Memorial

Picture: Paul Brown



■ WW2 Veteran Mr G Pringle lays a wreath on behalf of RPCA  
Pictures: Paul Brown / Patrick Bradley



■ WO1 (RSM) R Lane makes sure everyone is ready for Church Service  
Picture: Paul Brown



■ The motorised brigade bring up the rear  
Picture: Paul Brown



■ Mrs Jenny Tubridy lays flowers in memory of her husband Paddy  
Picture: Patrick Bradley



■ Ready for Church Service

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Buglers from Corps of Drums play Last Post and Reveille

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Association Standards at War Memorial

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Looking smart as they march off

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Keeping well in step

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Keeping well in step

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Looking smart as they march off

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Looking smart as they march off

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Keeping well in step

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Keeping well in step

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Preparing for Group photo

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Carry a standard and you can pull!

Picture: Paul Brown



■ What a motley collection!

Picture: Paul Brown



■ John Doble makes sure he is in the picture

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Families enjoying themselves

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Families enjoying themselves

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Tug of War competition

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Tug of War competition

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Mr Brown being presented with a plaque

Pictures: Paul Brown



■ Steve Stainton celebrates the vets team win

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Vets team pulling hard

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Sgt Sarah Ward who did a fantastic job of keeping everyone fed, particularly Micky whom seems to be getting an extra big plateful!

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Old photo and scrap books prove popular

Picture: Patrick Bradley



■ 5 ready to receive LS&GC Medals

Picture: Norman Brown



■ Sgt (now SSgt) Hildreth receives his LS&GC

Picture: Norman Brown



■ Sgt Jones REME receives his LS&GC

Picture: Norman Brown



■ Sgt (now SSgt) Fisher receives his LS&GC

Picture: Norman Brown



■ Cpl O'Hare receives his LS&GC

Picture: Norman Brown



■ LCpl Childs receives his LS&GC

Picture: Norman Brown



■ The 5 recipients after receiving medals

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Phil Powell collecting for SSAFA (See page 6)

Picture: Supplied



■ WO1 Wayne Fuller receives his leaving gift from CO 23 Pnr Regt  
Picture: Norman Brown



■ Wayne with the Mayor of Bicester  
Picture: Norman Brown



■ Dusty, Jayne Donague, Twiz and Clare and Mickey  
Picture: Norman Brown



■ Paddy and Twiz acting stupid (as usual!)  
Picture: Norman Brown



■ Mr Roy Palmer town crier of Mablethorpe reads ode to Archbishop of Canterbury  
Picture: Roy Palmer



■ Kelvin Smith who walked from Northampton to Bicester  
Picture: Norman Brown



■ Pioneers at Army vs Navy Day, Twickenham  
Picture: Paul Brown



■ Pioneers at Army vs Navy Day, Twickenham  
Picture: Paul Brown



■ WW2 Veterans Mr I Sullivan and Mr G Pringle. They were overheard during the Reunion that unless their photo was in this newsletter they won't be coming to next years reunion. See you next year chaps. Picture: Paul Brown



7th Annual Dinner of 64 Group RPC at Museum Tavern, London on 21 Nov 53

a short history of

# 64 Group

Our resident historian, Lt Col John Starling recently purchased this short history of HQ 64 Group Pioneer Corps at a medal fair. A lot of information has been published on Companies during World War 2 little has been published on Group Headquarters. At one time this Group had 35 Companies under its command (nearly 11,000 personnel).

Report: John Starling / Norman Brown  
Picture: RPCA Archive

**A** NARRATIVE of 64 Group Royal Pioneer Corps composed from the records and observations of Ex and Serving Members of the Unit.

**CHAPTER 1**  
64 Group HQ Pioneer Corps was formed at CLACTON on 19th January 1941 for service overseas. The original staff was: Group Commander - Lt Col RS BOOTHBY MC  
Second in Command - Maj HMB GUN-CUNNINGHAME MC  
Adjutant - Captain AL DOWNWARD  
Quartermaster - Lt (QM) GJF WHITE  
The HQ sailed from Liverpool for the Middle East on SS "LLANDAFF CASTLE" on 6 February 1941 and after an uneventful voyage disembarked at Port Said on 22nd April 1941 and went to the ITD at GENEIFA.  
A scheme was being introduced to enlist natives from the High Commission

territories in South Africa, i.e. Basutoland, Bechuanaland Protectorate and Swaziland, for labour service in the MEF. 64 Group was chosen to be one of the Groups for this job and Lt Col Boothby was flown to DURBAN, arriving there on 22nd May 1941. On arrival there he was met by a lot of officers sent direct to South Africa from England to form the company commanders and officers for these native pioneers. He proceeded with them to LOBATSU in the Bechuanaland Protectorate to form a camp there to receive recruits as they were enlisted. The remainder of the Group HQ left Egypt by sea and arrived at LOBATSU on 11th July 1941. The Bechuana live in tribes and it was decided as far as possible to keep to tribal companies. Where this was not possible, i.e. in the case of the smaller tribes, two or more tribes formed a company but kept to tribal sections. All companies consisted of 12 sections of 26 men, which with a small HQ made an African total of 318 other ranks. The British staff for a company was eight consisting of 1 Major, 1 Captain, 2 Subalterns, 1 CSM, 1

CQMS and 2 Sergeants. Each section was under an African sergeant the senior one in each company being in many cases the tribal chief's nominee.  
Originally it was intended that 64 Group should enlist 10-12 companies and then proceed back to the Middle East with them. But it was very soon evident that due to the great enthusiasm of Lt Col FAH OWEN-LEWIS, who was ADPL at HQ in Pretoria, and others the scheme was going to be very much bigger than originally intended. In consequence it was decided to start depots in the three HCTs and form more than one Group in each if numbers warranted it. In Bechuanaland the staff of 64 Group HQ became the LOBATSU depot staff and a new staff for Group HQ had to be found.  
On 26th August 1941 Lt Col JHM EDYE DSO NC, arrived in LOBATSU to take command of 64 Group. As mentioned above a complete new staff for the Group HQ had to be found. Capt HA AMPHLETT-CARTER became Adjutant and Lt HT FRYER quartermaster. A second in command,

Major J PAYNE, was appointed but did not join the Group for some time. Capt G SPANOPOLOUS (RAMC) was appointed MO and CQMS PJ CATLING was appointed RQMS. The remainder of the British staff of Group HQ was to be picked up on arrival in the Middle East.  
The companies as they were formed were given the number 1971 onwards and for the first four weeks of their training were under the depot authorities. After this they were handed over to 64 Group HQ for any further training that there was time for. Actually there was very little, and it was decided to give the men leave home before leaving LOBATSU, if possible, and this was actually given to 1971, 1972 and 1972 Companies. At last orders arrived for a move.  
On 30th September 1941 64 Group HQ left LOBATSU for DURBAN in two trains with 1971 (Major CS BOWER MC), 1972 (Major WB HUSKISON), 1973 (Major AB NIX) and 1974 (Major LC WILLIAMS MC). As, however, the ship was not quite ready

to sail, the party detrained at PIETERMARITZBURG on 1st October and marched about two miles to a field where tents had to be put up in the rain. Not a very cheerful beginning. However, owing to good work on the part of the British staff all was in order in a remarkably short time. The stay in PIETERMARITZBURG was not very long and on 6th October the party left by train for DURBAN and embarked on HMT "CITY OF CANTERBURY". Just before embarking Major J PAYNE, second in command, joined Group HQ.

**CHAPTER II**  
The convoy of which HMT "CITY OF CANTERBURY" was one left DURBAN Bat on 7th October. It was a large one which was due to split in two north of MOMBASA one half then proceeding to INDIA and the other to SUEZ. We were escorted by HMS "REPULSE" which afterwards was sunk by the Japanese off MALAYA.

An addition to the staff of Group HQ was Hon/CSM MOLEPHE who was given honorary rank as he was tribal chief in Bechuanaland. No excitement occurred on the voyage and on 19th October ADEN was reached. Here our first fatal casualty occurred and a private of 1973 Company was buried at sea. SUEZ was reached on 26th October and Group HQ and the four companies proceeded by two trains to the Pioneer Corps Base Depot at QUASSASSIN where they arrived just before dark. Lt Col HL PRYNNE MC, the Commandant, met the trains at the station and from then on until we eventually left the depot he looked after us right royally and saw to it we had everything we required. 57 Pioneer Corps Group HQ (Lt Col BTVB HAMBROUGH) and four companies of BASUTOS came up from South Africa in the midst of the desert which runs north of the Sweetwater canal between ISMALIA and CAIRO. Now came a very busy time equipping the men. In South Africa only the minimum of clothing necessary for the voyage was issued and no camp equipment was brought.

A series of inspections from the powers that be were carried out ending in a final parade by the LGA MEF in which the Group turned out six companies of over 2,000 strong. 1975 Company (Major JM HILLYARD) and 1976 Company (Major HW NEWTON) having arrived up from South Africa and joined the group as did likewise Lt E STEINITZ (RAMS) as our second MO.

On 29th November Major J PAYNE vacated 2IC and was replaced by Major CS BOWER MC, from 1971 Company. This company was taken over by Major ACGC SMITH and Major AJB CHESTER MC took over 1974 Company from Major LC WILLIAMS MC who became 2IC of 57 Group. In the middle of November news came that the Group was shortly to move up into SYRIA and as the winter climate there was very severe extra kit was issued. On 29th November 1941 Group HQ left QASSASSIN by train for HAIFA in Palestine and the companies were to follow. Arriving in HAIFA early next morning Lt Col HG HENMAN, ADPL NINTH ARMY, met the train and took the Group Commander and 2IC on by car to the Group's destination BAALBEK, via BEIRUT. The rest of Group HQ came by 10-ton lorry which by reason of its size had to make the journey via DAMASCUS to avoid the high hills.

It was learnt that the first companies were to work on the Syrian defences under the CRE of the 6th Australian Division (Lt Col LUCAS DSO MC). En route the Group Commander visited 1st Australian Corps HQ and at four p.m. on 30th November arrived at GOURAUD Barracks, BAALBEK,

which was to be the HQ for nearly two years. The rest of Group HQ arrived very late the same night after a very long and cold journey.

**CHAPTER III**  
At this time Syria was under 9th Army and the field troops were in two corps. The Australian Corps on the coast and 10 Corps further inland.

The role of these troops, many of whom had taken part in the invasion of the country which had only been completed in August, was to keep law and order and to prevent any attempt by the Germans, who were then nearing the CAUCASUS, from striking at Egypt through Palestine. This would make the second claw of the pincers, the first of which was thrusting from CYRENAICA. To this end a series of "fortresses" were being built stretching from the Mediterranean to the desert beyond Damascus and the River Jordan. The foremost of these were on the line TRIPOLI-RAS BAALBEK-DAMASCUS and it was to work on a sector of these that 64 Group, or, rather, four companies of it, was required. Our sector was that manned by the 6th Australian Division and stretched from the crest of the LEBANON Mountains. When we arrived the work was in a very primitive stage and our first job was the digging of an enormous anti-tank ditch over seven miles long.

Meanwhile in rear of the "fortress", which eventually became known as DJEDIEDE fortress, were being planned the large RE and RAOG dumps, REME workshops and other installations of the MEF and it was on the construction and working of these that the rest of the group was to be used.

This caused a bit of a problem as the four companies working forward were under the direct administration of the field Division and the others under the local sub-area concerned. Group HQ at BAALBEK, which was the HQ of the field Division, but just in the sub-area's territory, was liable to be nobody's child. The four forward companies were 1971, 1972, 1974 and 1975 and were located in RAS BAALBEK camp 15 miles north of BAALBEK on the HOMS road whilst in the rear was 1973 to be followed by numerous others as will be mentioned later. 1973 Company should have come forward with the others but was detained at HADERA in Palestine to do a job of work and also remained at BEIRUT for some time before coming on to MAJDALOUN camp four miles south of BAALBEK on the RYAK road. Group HQ in GOURAUD Barracks, BAALBEK, were with the RE of the field Division under whom the work on the fortress was being done.

The first problem was the weather. The men were under canvas with no beds and as the Bechuana was used to living in places like the KALAHARI desert the medical authorities were a bit worried about their health. However, despite the fact that it commenced snowing two days after the first companies arrived and a tremendous gale arose the men stuck it extraordinarily well and the health, due to the care of the company commanders and the expert advice of the MOs, was excellent. To see each man in the section going to work wearing his battle dress, greatcoat, gas cape, cap comforter and steel helmet was an unforgettable sight. And how they worked. The Australians were astounded at the amount of work turned out. Not a particularly fast worker, the Bechuana was a very steady one who plodded solidly and at the end of the day had done more than anyone had

hoped for. More particularly outstanding was their tremendous throw with a shovel which enabled men to throw the soil from the bottom of the anti-tank ditch right out in one, whereas the Australian Infantry had to make two throws, one on to the beam and one from there out.

The Divisions working on the fortress changed fairly often. At the end of January 1942 the Australians left to return home and were relieved by the 50th Division and they in turn were relieved by the New Zealand Division at the end of February. As can be well imagined this did not lead to much continuity of policy as regards the work to be done on the defences and also in OC 64 Group being consulted as the "expert" on the lie of the ground.

Meanwhile more companies kept on arriving in the back areas. 1976 Company who had been at MERJAYOUM in the south of Syria on fortress work arrived at MADJALOUN to join 1973 Company on 16th February 1942. On the way home they had one of those many jobs which fall to the Pioneer Corps. The railway from BEIRUT to RYAK climbs over the Lebanon range and in winter the summit is under snow. 1976 Company were given the job of clearing the railway of ice and snow after an extra heavy fall. The Group Commander found half the company under Lt J FREEMAN living in a train and hacking away at a 12ft high ice wall barring the track on the BEIRUT side of the range. Ten days later a sudden thaw did in 24 hours what the men were clearing at the rate of about 30 yards a day!

At the end of February, 1980 Company (Major ALLEN) and 1981 Company (Major HW BOBBY) arrived and went to MADJALOUN and were followed early in March by 1982 (Major E DONALDSON) 1984 (Major WL PICKFORD) and 1985 (Major JUPE) Companies who went to RYAK and TALIA. Then, on 26th March, 1978 Company arrived and joined 1984 and 1985 at RYAK. This gave 64 Group twelve companies covering a very large area and the Group Commander didn't feel he could efficiently control them all. In consequence 47 Group KQ (Lt Col VM LEWIS MC) who had lately arrived in Egypt from the SUDAN came up to Syria and established their HQ at ZAHLE. They took over 1978, 1982, 1984 and 1985 Companies from 64 Group leaving the latter with 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1980 and 1981 Companies.

Some changes in staff and company commanders took place about now. The Group had never had a proper QM. Lt FRYER who had acted since its reforming in August 1941 was really a company officer and was now wanted to go as 2IC of a company. So in May 1942 LT WE BOWEN, who had just been given his commission from a Light AA Regiment in the Western Desert arrived as our new QM. Captain DSL PERKINS from 2IC 1975 Company took over 1980 Company from Major ALLEN who was evacuated sick.

The German menace to Syria was still threatening but the fortress work was getting along. In consequence the area covered by the Group was extended. In the middle of May, half 1974 Company moved to PALMYRA and at the end of this month half of 1971 Company moved to TRIPOLI (Syria).

On 20th May HRH The Duke of Gloucester paid a visit to Syria. This was a great event to the Buchuanas. HRH saw

most of the Group. The companies at MADJALOUN lined the road and the Duke got out of his car and walked slowly down the line. The Group Commander was presented and in turn presented CSM KHARI (1973 Company) a ruling chief of the BAKWENA tribe. The companies at RAS BAALBEK lined the ground where HRH inspected and took the march past of the 4th New Zealand Brigade.

The threat of ROMMEL to ALEXANDRIA was getting very real at this time and all available troops were wanted to stem his advance. In consequence the New Zealanders amongst others left Syria and in some parts only the Pioneer Corps were left. This necessitated the taking over of a lot of guard duties and so a new phase in the history of the group commenced.

#### CHAPTER IV

Owing to having to take over the guard duties in place of other troops wanted at EL ALAMEIN there commenced a great moving of companies from place to place, and this necessitated change of Groups in some cases. In June, July and August the following moves took place: 26th June, 1980 and 1981 Companies to TRIPOLI: 29th June, one section 1974 Company to HOMS; 3rd July, remainder of 1971 Company to TRIPOLI where 1971, 1980 and 1981 Companies came under of 63 Group.

August 1908 and 1910 (Major H HOLMES) Basuto Companies joined the group and were stationed at AL AIN.

1995 Swazi Company (Major FPVAN OUDTSHOORN) came up to ALEPPO and joined the group who thus extended its area to the Turkish border.

Early in September an exchange was carried out between 1908 and 1910 Basuto Companies and 1980 Bechuana Company, the Basutos rejoining their old Group (63) and the Bechuanas returning to 64 Group.

On 25th September Captain and Adjutant HA AMPHLETT-CARTER was appointed Staff Captain (Labour) Ninth Army and was relieved by Lt J FREEMAN from 1976 Company.

In addition to guards several new duties fell to the lot of the Group. Small punitive expeditions against the local raiders were undertaken and a small party of men were sent into the lower LEBANON hills to see that the "Hashish" which was growing there amongst the other crops was destroyed.

In October the Group received a new type of unit – the 19th Mobile Bath Unit.

This unit was manned by British Pioneer Corps men and as its name implies was mobile.

In this month also 1995 Swazi Company left ALEPO and was replaced there by 1981 Company from 63 Group at TRIPOLI – this company thus rejoining its

old Group. It was relieved in TRIPOLI by 1976 Company which joined 63 Group.

A scheme was not put in force for the Bechuanas which had already been applied to Basutos. Owing to the great shortage of manpower it was decided to replace certain British personnel on static coast and anti-aircraft batteries by native troops. The original African Pioneer Corps Companies were chosen and they were to go to the RA Base Depot near Cairo where the men underwent a course of training and then joined certain RA batteries. In December the Group lost its first two companies, 1972 and 1973. In their place we got 1987 Company (Major D IVORY).

In January 1943 RQMS FJ CATLING, who had been with the Group since its reforming in Bechuanaland, was granted a commission and left the Group. He eventually rejoined the Group as QM in 1944.

In February General ALI FRIEND, Director of Labour at the War Office, visited the Group and had lunch at Group HQ.

In this month two more of the original companies, 1974 and 1975 Companies went to the RA Base Depot to be converted into "gunners" and were replaced by 1970 Company (Major J DICKSON) and 1988 Company. The latter company only remained a month and then went to 61 Group in BEIRUT. On 1st April 1934 Basuto Company at DAMASTCUS came under the Group.

In this month Captain J FREEMAN resigned the adjutancy owing to ill health and was relieved by Lt J GOLDEN from 61 Group.

On 25th April Lt Col JHM EDYE vacated command of the Group on taking up the appointment of ADPL Ninth Army and handed over temporary command to Major CS BOWER MC.

#### CHAPTER V

At the beginning of May, the Group received information that the majority of the Bechuana Companies would be leaving Syria to return to the Base Depot at QASSASSIN in Egypt. The purpose was two-fold, firstly, to continue the policy of transferring men to the RA where they were quickly becoming efficient with Heavy AA and Coastal Defence Units and secondly, to assemble and refit the companies for the invasion of Sicily with the 8th Army.

Consequently East African troops were being posted to Syria and the Lebanon to replace Bechuanas and Basutos for garrison duties and for work at the Depots.

1835(EA) Company were the first to arrive and took over from 1934 (Basuto) Company at DAMASCUS. They arrived on 7th May and 1934 departed for PCD on the 10th. 47 Group HQ had now very few companies under command so consequently 64 Group took over their remaining companies and 47 Group HQ, which was practically reformed, moved to Cyprus.

For the next two months or so the Group was very busy arranging for the move of the Bechuana Companies and the arrival of the East African Companies.

1832 (EA) Company arrived at RADJOU and commenced work on the railway on the Turkish border. 1821 (EA) Company replaced 1981 (Bechuana) Company at ALEPO. 1978 (Bechuana) Company departed for the PCD on the 24th May and the same day 1831 (EA) Company arrived at MAJDALOUN. On the 27th May 1970 (Bechuana) Company left for the PCD.

On the 30th May Lt Col G RICHMOND MC, arrived from the PCD and took over command of our HQ. Maj CS BOWER MC, reverting to his old appointment as 2IC.

June saw the change-over still continuing. On the 9th June 1851 (EA) Company arrived at TALLA and 1853 (EA) Company at TERBOL. On the 11th June, 1982 and 1985 Bechuana Companies left our command.

The 17th June brought a visit to HQ from Lt Col ARDEN CLARKÉ (the President Commissioner of Bastuland and late RC of Bechuanaland), He stayed with us until the 21st June and visited all remaining Bechuana Companies under our command.

1841 and 1846 (EA) Companies arrived at BEIT NEIL and TERBOL on the 6th July

**‘The men were hacking away at a 12ft ice wall and cleared 30 yards a day’**

and relieved 1981 and 1984 (Bechuana) Companies, who departed for the PCD on the 10th July.

A rather unique position now arose, here we were a Bechuana Group HQ, all drivers, batmen and orderlies Bechuana and all East African companies under command. Unlike the Basuto, the East African was quite a stranger to the Bechuana. Neither could speak the other's language and to us the East African quickly became "Jumbo", derived from his greeting of "Jambo". Information was received that shortly an East African Group HQ would be arriving at BAELBEK to replace us and we were greatly excited at the prospects of moving to the Depot to prepare for the invasion of Sicily. However, much to our great disappointment, this was not to be or at least for the time being it was postponed.

Instead, 67 (EA) Group HQ relieved us and 64 Group HQ moved to CHEKKA in the Lebanon on the 30th July 1943. Thus after practically two years of residence at Gouraud Barracks the Group moved.

It was a great disappointment to all our HQ that we were not moving to the Depot but as we learned later, had we moved we should have probably been "kicking our heels" with little to do at Chekka there was a job of work to be done, so to Chekka we went.

Chekka is on the coast road between Beirut and Tripoli and Latakia. The coast road from Beirut winds upwards along a path hewn across the Lebanon Mountain flanks and passes through a long tunnel. It was found that the Chekka Hill was moving from the top and this was endangering the coastal road and the safety of the tunnel. Strategically the tunnel was of great military importance; the coastal road and railway had to be kept open. Owing to the great fall of rock the road was frequently blocked and traffic could only move very slowly and at irregular intervals over an improvised road that the "bull-dozers" made. The only other road from Beirut was via Baalbek and Homs; this added approximately 100 miles to the journey and in winter time was often blocked for long periods by the snow. Thus it can be clearly seen that the coast road was a very important line of communication and more especially so if Turkey came into the war.

Hence Army HQ had decided to build a road round the Chekka Hill south of the tunnel to a point north of them which would then wind down the hillside and link up with the coastal road at Chekka.

64 Group were given the job of providing the labour for this immense project.

Firstly two camps were built to accommodate civilian labour and Lt KIRTLEY of the Pioneer Labour Control Staff was put in charge. He had a difficult job but worked tirelessly and after a lot of troubles re pay, rations and accommodation, etc, the civilians settled down. Incidentally Lt KIRTLEY was promoted Captain, a promotion well earned.

The new road had to be built quickly. Consequently 1832 (EA) Company arrived at Chekka and shortly afterwards 1987 (Bechuana) Company and 1988 (Bechuana) Company. These companies along with Indian sappers provided the military labour on the new road. Work went ahead with amazing speed and with very few incidents.

Enemy aircraft were overhead on the 18th August and again on the 20th when flares were dropped but it was presumed that they were the usual "recce" planes out on patrol

During blasting operations a Bechuana of 1987 Company was struck on the head by a piece of stone and killed instantly.

On the 10th August Lt (QM) BOWEN left the HQ to take over his appointment as Staff Captain to DDPL Ninth Army (Colonel JHM EDYE, our old Group Commander).

1855 (EA) Company arrived at CHEKKA on the 11th September and thus we had three East African Companies and two Bechuana Companies under Command besides the responsibility of approximately 2,000 civilian labourers. The 17th of the month brought a visit to the East African Companies of their own civilian officials and chiefs from East Africa.

After managing for nearly two months without a Lt QM, Lt (QM) S BOWER was posted and arrived at HQ on the 25th September. He was formerly RSM with the Royal Fusiliers and this was his first effort as QM after being commissioned. "Q" as he was always called was typical "cockney", and quickly settled down with us and became one of our most loyal, efficient and hard-working friends.

October brought the new road nearing completion and with it, changes once again occurred. Firstly, on the 11th Lt Col G Richmond left us to take over his new duties as OC 53 (EA) Group and once again Major CS BOWER assumed the responsibilities of OC.

On the 11th, 1850 Company departed for TULKARAM and on the 22nd both 1988 and 1987 (Bechuana) Companies left for HAIFA and QASSASSIN respectively. 1832 (EA) Company departed for the Cedars of Lebanon and once again our Group was practically without a command and on the 30th October we received a warning signal that at long last we should be prepared to move to the PCD for refitting ready for a more active life in the field.

The 1st November saw us on our way to QASSASSIN which we reached on the 2nd. We found we were but one of many Group HQ's assembled there. Rumour had it that these Group HQ's were going back to England ready for the invasion of France. Hence it was hard to conceal our excitement and later much harder to conceal our disappointment when we found that certain Group HQ's had departed for the UK but ours was to remain.

On the 8th November Lt Col CW BEADLE MC newly arrived from England, took over the command of our HQ, Major CS BOWER once again reverting to 2IC.

The Group now began to go through a difficult and trying period. On the 10th November we left QASSASSIN and arrived at SISI BISHR near ALEXANDRIA. There we took over the command of 1862 (EA) Company, 1985 and 1986 (Bechuana) Companies and our first Indian Company, 1216.

We never had the opportunity of doing much for these companies for by the end of the month we were once again under orders to move and actually, after handing over the companies to 202 (WA) Group, moved to TEL EL KEBIR on the 5th December.

Here we took the command of our old friends 1987 (Bechuana) Company and 1208, 1209, 1213, 1247 and 1254 Indian Pioneer Companies. Thus we had become more an Indian Group than a Bechuana Group.

Our main job was to train and refit all the Indian Companies ready for their

departure to Italy. This was quite a task but with the excellent help of the PCD staff, it was finally accomplished.

Major CS BOWER was posted to 63 Group and left us on the 8th December. The excellent spirit of comradeship that had always made 64 Group one of the best, was now lacking.

On the 23rd December RQMS BLACK was posted to the Depot and CQMS LLOYD of 1987 (Bechuana) Company took over his duties as Group RQMS.

On the 2nd January 1944 all the Indian Companies and Group HQ moved back to the Pioneer Corps Depot to complete their refitting ready for overseas service. Here we lost 1213 and 1218 Companies and in their place took over 1233, 1401, 1253 and 1416 Indian Pioneer Companies.

Major FF BOLTON was posted and arrived on the 6th January to take over duties as 2IC and the following day the Group ceased to be a Bechuana Group. All the Bechuana staff, who had served us so well and so faithfully were posted to the HCT Wing of the Depot and Indian personnel were taken on strength in their places.

On the 14th January Captain APH HOMANYOUNI, one of our Group MOs, was posted to No 1 General Hospital and the following day our baggage parties left QASSASSIN for the port of embarkation.

Information had previously been received that Lt Col BEADLE would not be in command of our Group HQ when it departed for overseas and this news was confirmed with the posting of Lt Col NJ REOD MBE, who actually took over the command from Lt Col BEADLE about midnight on the 18th January at QASSASSIN station as we were waiting to entrain for Port Said, our port of embarkation for Italy.

Group HQ and the following Indian Companies, 1208, 1209, 1247, 1253, 1254, 1401, 1416 and 1233 embarked at Port Said and Port Tewfik on the 19th January 1944. The nominal roll of officers of 64 Group HQ was:

Lt Col NJ REID MBE Officer Commanding  
Major FF BOLTON Second in command  
Capt J HOLDEN Adjutant  
Lt (QM) S BOWER Quartermaster  
Capt H SCHULLER Medical Officer

Dawn of the 20th January 1944 saw us well out at sea and it was at this time that the CO found that one company was unaccounted for owing to the fact that all were embarking about the same time, but on different ships.

However, after frantic efforts to find out what had happened to this company, the CO asked the Commodore if he would signal all ships in the convoy to ascertain if the missing company were abroad. This he readily agreed to do, and after a couple of hours we breathed more freely again, as the answer was that the company was well and truly installed on the Polish ship "Politski".

The voyage to Italy was very pleasant and enjoyable with nothing to mar our enjoyment, but when about a day out from Taranto one of the men of the company decided to take a bath, but first he put on two life jackets, took off his boots and socks and jumped in the drink. Fortunately for him he was seen and the cry went up "man overboard", which was signalled from ship to ship and he was eventually picked up by one of our escorting destroyers.

## **‘During blasting operations a Pte of 1987 Bechuana Coy was struck on the head and killed instantly’**

Needless to say it has never been determined whether the man intended to take his life or whether he did it for a bet in a spirit of "Brands". On the following day we berthed at Taranto and were met at the docks by Movement Control and by OC 42 Group.

The disembarkation then proceeded and the CO then learned, to his disgust, that his Indians whom he had brought through the Desert Campaign were to be taken from him and went to various Groups throughout Italy. However orders had to be obeyed and quickly, as Group HQ were to entrain at 1600 hrs for Naples.

During the disembarkation Lt (QM) BOWER was in charge of the baggage party and incidentally was left behind and eventually caught up with Group HQ about a week later, and to hear his account of the help he received from a certain group and the arrangements made by them is simply unprintable, but I will leave everyone who knew Sammy Bower to just imagine and if by any lucky chance they should meet him, perhaps he may be induced to tell the tale.

Disembarkation over and all our "cheerio's" said, Group HQs entrained for Naples, and after 40 hours in a German "hard seat" train in freezing weather bearing in mind too that we had just left the ME is it any wonder that hard words were said about Italy. Never have I had a colder journey and we were very glad when we reached our destination and were met by Major BRUCE PETERKIN, 2IC 66 Group, who took us to Major "TOMMY" SPINKS' Smoke Company, where we were made very comfortable and where we enjoyed a very brief and happy holiday.

The CO then reported to AAL and endeavoured to find out what the Group was going to do and what companies it would have but any information on this subject was NIL.

About this time the DDL 8th Army, Col CHARLES STATHER CBE applied for 64 Group to be sent to the 8th Army Front. This was met with a refusal with the information that this Group was urgently needed elsewhere.

At about the end of January orders were received to return to Taranto and relieve 42 Group. OC Group had been informed of our ETA but perhaps it will be more kind to omit any reference to our reception.

We eventually took over from this Group and they left us, I feel sure, without any feelings of remorse.

The companies which were taken over were mostly employed on "Docks" and Smoke and included 1968 and 1981 Bechuana, several British companies and quite a few Italian ones which had recently been formed.

On arrival in Taranto the supposed ceiling of civilian labour was 1,500 which in a month was increased to 4,000 and later to 7,000. This enabled more companies to be released for work in the forward areas.

About this time the Group had instructions not only to form Italian military companies, but also working companies from Italian naval personnel. After much hard work this latter proposal was left to the Navy and eventually the men were employed by them.

Whilst the Group was at Taranto, it was arranged that it should proceed to ANZIO to relieve 108 Group but owing to the attack commencing no changes or reliefs

were allowed.

Owing to the fact that so many civilians were employed, Taranto as far as military labour was concerned was rapidly dying and it came as no surprise when orders were received that 18 Group would relieve us and that 64 Group would move to BARI and take over from 61 Group who were under orders for 8th Army Front.

The move was completed in late May and the companies taken over by 64 were: 79, 150 British Companies, 1926 Basuto, 1968, 1979, 1981 Bechuana Companies, 847 and 848 British Smoke Companies, 1212, 1213, 1218 and 1247 Indian Companies, 3 Italian Regiments and two CLUs.

As can be imagined the port of Bari was very important being the main port for all our supplies and often and for long periods 3,000 men were employed night and day, further, the area administered by 64 Group was colossal and meant days of weary travel in a vehicle which had long passed its best, but all went well, except for a few civilian labour strikes, and the difficulty of providing clothes for the Italian POW Companies. This meant scrounge and still bigger and better scrounging and we were so nobly backed by Brig PALMER, Commander 6 Base Sub-area, and by Col FGDORON SMITH, DDL 2 District, that when the DL, Maj Gen A FRIEND and Brig HILLARY visited us we were complimented on the turn-out of the Italian Companies.

Just before the Group had orders to move from BARI it was found that the CO had a dump of 2,000-3,000 pairs of boots on which he used to draw to refit civilian labour and Italian Companies. These of course were not new, but quite a lot of wear was left in them.

About this time the HQ staff of Group bore no resemblance to that which left ME. Capt J HOLDEN was given his first company, Sgt KLAAR posted to a CLU at his own request and the miniature Pte BUNZL to AF HQ.

The MO, Captain H SCHULLER was posted to 22 General Hospital, RQMS LLOYD was expected to go any day to take a QM Commission, and he did leave us shortly after this time.

Captain WJC TAYLOR, the Assistant Adjutant, was appointed Adjutant, and again the Group had increased the civilian labour and it was at this time that DDL 8th Army made another request for this Group. This time his application was granted, 66 Group were ordered to take over (Lt Col Harvey Coney) and it was on about the 2nd August 1944 that the Group had orders to move to 8th Army Front at ARREZO.

The advance party consisted of Major FF BOLTON, Cpl BARKER, Ptes GARNER and DONLEVY, the main party following two days later.

On arrival a good number of the Group HQ staff experienced its baptism of fire and although it was spasmodic, I feel sure their minds went back to BARI and the comfortable billets they had just vacated there. Gone was the luxury life, it was now plain unvarnished soldiering.

The advance party, on its arrival at ARREZO in the late evening had instructions to contact PCLO regarding the talking over of billets. It was seemingly that the Group HQ would use the same building as that occupied by the PLCO but although this building was far too large for the PLCO and staff it was not big enough

for both units. A quick recce of the town before dark only showed up the empty shells of buildings, and after a journey of about three miles for water supplies, the night was spent with the PLCO and staff.

The following day we took over a large and rather shattered building which was prepared as well as possible for the arrival of the remainder of the HQ the following day. It was here that the Group worked with 55 Area, who were soon to be superseded by 86 (Army) Area HQ, an area HQ whom we were all to come to know well and respect very highly as we travelled up Italy together for a considerable space of time in the future.

We had approximately 20 companies under command varying from Bechuanas, Basutos, to Indians, Seychelles, Italian Labour Companies and Italian Smoke Companies.

The work entailed here was mainly on roads, railways and bridges and the companies themselves were spread over an extremely large area, making it very difficult to keep in contact with each one.

Our stay at ARREZO was, we thought, comparatively short, but was to be the first of many quick moves and very short spells in the towns we were to move to in the days ahead, for as we neared the end of August 1944 so 39 Group moved up to form a HQ a couple of miles south of ARREZO and eventually take over our companies as we moved, early in September 1944 to JESI.

This move, like many others the group had experienced was to prove rather an exasperating affair – the move, to be made by vehicles of a Canadian transport column which did not arrive on the day the move was designed to take place. After desperate efforts had been made by the OC Group by contacting Area HQ, and various transport columns it appeared that the vehicles were not available and would put in an appearance the following day. The following day, however, the convoy apparently got lost, at any rate, it never arrived; in the meantime the OC had sent off one party with Group transport and with whatever stores could be carried in the hopes of catching up with the advance party led by Major FF BOLTON and followed on later himself, leaving the Adjutant, Captain WJC TAYLOR, in charge of what remained. Lt (QM) S BOWER having a few days previously been admitted to hospital from where he was eventually evacuated to UK. The transport then arrived the following afternoon, too late to give us any chance of making the journey that day. Lorries were loaded and moved off at 6 a.m. the following morning. It was a very tired and dusty party that arrived in KESI that night after it was too dark to find the Group HQ. The party slept in bivouacs that night kindly lent by 1981 Bechuana Company and found its HQ the following morning.

The stay at JESI, whilst the weather was perhaps the hottest experienced by Group throughout the whole Italian campaign, lasted only for two to three weeks and consisted mainly of receiving companies moving up from the rear and equipping others to move on. The companies handled "in and out" of command amounted to approximately 25.

Mid-September 1944 saw us again on the move, this time up to FANO where we spent seven to ten days after much trouble had been taken in setting up the HQ in a magnificent villa just off the coast. It was here that the Group was relieved by 42 Group HQ. From here we moved to a tented camp for our HQ at CATOLICA

## **'The port of Bari was very important and employed 3,000 men day and night'**

whilst we were waiting to make an entry into RIMINI, which town had not yet been taken. Again our stay was not more than a week and the very large amount of work which kept everyone busy was receiving company after company in the area, also waiting until they might be able to enter RIMINI. In each case it was a case of finding each company billets or camping sites, which was no easy matter owing to the large amount of troops and stores arriving in the vicinity.

The day RIMINI was taken, the OC made a recce of the town, fixed up billets, and the HQ moved in the following morning, no mean task this, but by this time the Group had sorted out its staff and had a very fine team of both officers and men who worked together with such a fine team spirit that, although the work in the days ahead was really arduous, whatever had to be undertaken, and however long were the hours that had to be worked, all worked with a will and a spirit that I have not experienced in any other unit. Much of this spirit was certainly due to the way in which the OC treated and trusted his officers and men alike, and I am sure he must have been highly delighted with the machine-like way the Group was now beginning to prove itself under very harassing and trying conditions.

It must also be remembered that the Group had not yet received any replacement for Lt (QM) S BOWER; RQMS LLOYD had left at ARREZO to take up his QM Commission and had been replaced by CQMS KENWRICK of 1944 Basuto Company as RQMS and responsibility had more or less been taken over for the "Q" side by the 2IC, Major FF BOLTON.

For the first two or three days in RIMINI the Group was under shell fire but even so, it turned out to be quite uneventful.

Companies were now arriving in RIMINI at a rate of about three a day, all had to be found billets, mainly in the town, and owing to their regular arrival at this rate, it constituted quite a headache with having to find billets for all. All this was eventually fixed up satisfactorily and in a few days Group HQ moved itself into more convenient premises in the town and where it settled down for a stay which lasted nearly seven months, during the winter of 1944-45, a winter that not many of us wish to see again, particularly under the appalling conditions one experienced in the town.

During the stay at RIMINI our work, as had been the case ever since being at ARREZO was mainly at the railhead, the companies' under command eventually mounting up to 36-38, consisting of a formidable array of Bechuanas, Basutos, many Indian Companies, Mauritian, Rodrigue and Seychelles, a fair number of Italian Pioneer Companies and for a short time a Canadian Pioneer Company. The work in controlling these companies some of which were now moving a little further north, was terrific and each department of the HQ was strained to breaking point, particularly the "A" side where we were short staffed and carrying passengers.

November 1944 saw the arrival of Lt (QM) FJ CATLING, the group's previous RQMS in South Africa and a general straightening up of the "A" side, particularly with the help of two Mauritian clerks whose work cannot be too highly praised.

At this time Lt EI ROBERTS joined the Group as Assistant Adjutant and at the end

of December we were saying goodbye to our very fine friend, our 2IC Major FF BOLTON, who had worked so hard for such a long time without recognition. He was taking over the well-deserved appointment and promotion to Lt Col as ADL "C" Team, now in No 1 District at ARREZO. He was replaced the following month by Major YOCKNEY from 42 Group. Also at this time Lt (QM) FJ CATLING had proceeded on sea LIAP to UK and the OC was about to depart on 14 days' AIR LIAP to UK.

March 1945 saw a cross-posting of RQMS KESWICK with RQMS ADAMSON of 18 Group.

At this time 8th Army and 86 (Army) Area moved forward and RIMINI became the pigeon of No 1 District but by the end of the month the Group was packing up to move to FAENZA, our commitments being taken over once again by 42 Group HQ.

It will be noted that in all these moves of the Group HQ whilst with 8th Army, 64 Group was the leading Group and had the pioneering work to do, establishing new headquarters, fixing up the necessary billets for companies and setting the labour force in motion, which was all taken over by other Groups later on, and on we went with our pioneering once again.

The short stay at FAENZA was not very satisfactory, 8th Army was putting in what was to be its final magnificent push and companies were moving in and out of the various Groups in the Army Area so quickly that no group could possibly keep track of them. We would learn one day that a company was coming into our command and the following day we would find they had moved on elsewhere. In many cases we never got to know of their exact locations.

We had been at FAENZA only a week when an advance party consisting of the OC, Lt Col NJ REID, Assistant Adjutant Lt RI ROBERTS, SSgt BARKER, LCpls GARNER and WILLIAMS, and the DR, Pte WILKINSON, were packing for an unknown destination which turned out to be TRIESTE.

The first day's journey for the advance party was pretty going, everyone was rushing forward as hard as they could go with troops, transport and stores. However, VENICE was made that night where 42 Group HQ had just arrived, and the night was spent with them.

The following day we set off for TRIESTE although no definite news could be given to say whether the town had been taken. We entered TRIESTS and found the town, which presumably had only very recently been taken, in a real hubbub, civilians, New Zealand and Slav troops crammed the streets

until it was impossible to move a vehicle through.

We were looking for a Town Major but not a single English officer or soldier was to be found and making our way back to the town boundary, a report centre was found, established by 55 (Army) Area, who were taking over control of the district.

It appeared that as the New Zealanders themselves had taken the town at the same time as the Slavs entered it from the other side, everything was not working as it should and British troops were not allowed in the town – in addition to which the Slavs had commandeered practically every building possible and feeling was running very high between the Colonial and Slav troops.

We eventually contacted the advance party of the CLU destined for work in TRIESTE and together found billets at SISTIANA, about 18 kms outside TRIESTE.

At this time work became at a standstill, neither we, nor any troops were allowed to enter TRIESTS and all we could do was wait whilst negotiations were going through at the highest level, and from what we could see of it, not getting any further. A week to ten days later 55 (Army) Area opened an Adv HQ in TRIESTE and through the efforts of the Group Commander we were eventually given an office in their headquarters, but personnel still had to be billeted at SISTIANA, a most awkward and unsatisfactory procedure. However, later, owing to untiring efforts we were successful enough in finding billets in TRIESTE, but even so our advance party was the only unit allowed in the town. The day we moved into TRIESTE the Rear HQ arrived at the billets in SISTIANA and 187 Br Company were allowed in TRIESTE for dock work.

Shortly after this owing to the uneasiness and tension which existed between the British and Colonial and the Slav troops, or perhaps I should say authorities, as all troops were behaving extremely well under the conditions prevailing, all rear parties were ordered to evacuate behind a line running from the river to SAN GIORGIO and our Rear HQ had then to set itself up under canvas at SAN GIORGIO. Tension was still increasing in TRIESTE, and all ranks had to carry arms at all times and were confined to billets after duty; a position had resulted that in itself seemed ridiculous to the outsider, as the cease fire had been ordered in Europe whilst the Advance HQ was still at SISTIANA but the seriousness of the position was well known to those on the spot and rested heavily upon the shoulders of those in command.

Many companies were now moving up but all excepting 187 Company, who were in TRIESTE, had to remain out of the town and it was becoming increasingly difficult for the HQs to function split up into Advance and Rear HQ.

At this time demobilisation had started and the 2IC Major YOCKNEY, left for UK to be replaced by Major EJ PYKE, previously OC 847 Smoke Company. Overland LIAP had also started, this and the commencement of demobilisation was causing the "A" department staff treble the usual work, in addition to which, here we were, with 55 (Army) Area HQ, being controlled by 13 Corps, and belonging to 8th Army, a position in itself which trebled the work of the HQ and at the same time the only clerk left to the HQ was its SSgt in charge of the "A" side.

The men with the Advance HQ were working very long hours only going back to their billets to be confined to them and take turn in keeping guard, during which they overcame magnificently many a little fracas with Slav troops endeavouring to enter the billets; both Slav officers and ORs encountered in this were generally fully armed and not afraid to use their arms.

Many were the times when the SSgt IC the OR party would take more than his turn with the few men there were there as an extra "watcher" through the night in addition to the one guard at the billet entrance, a job that was not particularly entertaining under the circumstances and considering the large amount of work that every single man would find his lot the following day. Had it not been for the previous training and the usual spirit and team work of the Group in days gone by I am quite certain we could not have carried

## **‘Thirty eight Companies were eventually under command comprising of 8 nationalities’**

on for the period we did in TRIESTE.

Owing to the ugly developments with the Slavs appearing imminent plans were drawn up for the evacuation of the town at a moment's notice. This plan was divided into three sections, the Group Commander, Lt Col NJ REID, taking charge of one section, this again causing additional work for the "A" side of the HQ.

By the end of May the OC decided that it was impossible to run the HQ efficiently split up in this manner and everything depending upon the Advance HQ and the men not far from worn out, and permission was sought and eventually granted for the Advance and Rear HQ to re-unite at MONTFALCONE and work from there.

HQ was set up and at long last, and with a great sigh of relief I received an orderly room Cpl and a Pte clerk and within a fortnight we were working normally once again.

At this time the Bechuana and Basuto Companies were being prepared to return to South Africa and German Labour Companies and HQs were being formed.

By now many of the Group personnel were proceeding on overland LIAP and the HQ was working understaffed again for some time.

During June 1945 the Group Commander was appointed DDL No 2 District in the rank of Colonel, and although the appointment was so very well deserved all personnel were more than sorry that he was leaving and a gloom descended upon the HQ as each man realised that the pivot of the machine that had made 64 Group had now gone.

After the loss of the Group Commander, the 2IC Major EJ PYKE, became Group Commander and Major SURVAES 2IC 18 Group became our 2IC.

During this time Lt (QM) FJ CATLING had returned to the UK having completed his term of service overseas.

In September 1945 we were to learn of a further break-up of the HQ. Firstly, the new Group Commander, Lt Col EJ PYKE, returned to UK for demobilisation. Major SURVAES was posted back to 18 Group and the Adjutant, Capt WJC TAYLOR, took over command of 187 Company in place of Major EC HONEY who became the new 2IC of the Group and who took the Group personnel down to NAPLES, to take over from ADL "D" Team who were disbanding.

The Group travelled to NAPLES by road arriving on 27th September after each vehicle had broken down at least twice en route. Here the ADL "D" Team, Lt Col A KOENIGSBERT, became Group Commander, Captain ER DERRY and Lt (QM) WATTS, Staff Captain and QM of "D" Team respectively, became Adjutant and QM and as our orderly room Cpl had returned to UK for demobilisation, our other clerk returned on compassionate posting and several personnel were away on LIAP the other ranks of each HQ were combined.

Work down here was light and uneventful, mainly consisting of organising the new German Admin HQs and German Labour Companies and preparing Indian Companies for their return home.

By November 1945 the last of the Group personnel had proceeded on LIAP, SSgt

BARKER had been promoted RQMS vice RQMS ADAMSON who proceeded on LIAP and did not return.

Towards the end of November 1945 it turned out that the group was to be disbanded by the 30th of the month and 55 Group HQ were to take over.

The disbandment order was not really a surprise as nearly all the personnel were nearing their release group, nearly all being A/S release Group 26 or lower, five were to leave early December and three had already gone, the new RQMS being the highest with A/S 29 and he had just received posting orders to UK on compassionate grounds but was waiting to complete the disbandment and do what he could for the remaining personnel. Of these, three in A/S Group 27 and 28 were posted to 55 Group HQ and the remainder attached to a local alien company to wait evacuation for demobilisation in December 1945 and January 1946.

In conclusion, it is perhaps worth-while that when the news was received to disband and could be passed on to the men I gathered them together and informed them of what was to happen. I don't think that one of them could have said how he felt about it and not one could honestly say that he did not have tears in his eyes and a pang in his heart.

Thus we come to the end of a unit that had a most eventful career and one which one was proud to belong to, and to lead and help the personnel who worked so hard as to make it known as one of the most efficient and go-ahead Groups in the Pioneer Corps. ■



■ Lt Catling, Col Reid, Capt Taylor and Robbi – Rumini 1945 Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Lt (QM) Frank Catling – Monfalcone 1945 Picture: RPCA Archive



■ HQ Staff, 64 Gp, Rimini 1944 Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Lt Catling, Col Reid, Capt Taylor and Robbi – Rumini 1945 Picture: RPCA Archive



# Phoenix House

Phoenix House has moved to new premises on the road between Catterick Garrison and Richmond, the facility has 50 bedrooms, a gymnasium, classrooms, art rooms and leisure areas.

Report: Norman Brown  
RPCA Archive

**P**HOENIX HOUSE is a national tri-service facility supporting wounded, injured and sick service personnel, veterans and their families.

The Support Hub within Phoenix House provides support to veterans and families, and acts as an information, signposting and advocacy service covering such issues as money, health, housing and respite. We can help in signposting veterans to Charities, Agencies and Organisations that can provide specialist help or services.

Amongst other functions, Phoenix House provides courses which can be attended by both serving personnel and Veterans.

It also aims to assist personnel of all three Services including all WIS reservists.

## Health

- Psychological Support
- Prosthetics advice and support
- Support with visual impairments
- Assistance dogs
- Hearing loss advice and support

## Family Support

- Band of Sisters
- Bereavement support
- Respite and holiday's
- Counselling support
- Hospital Support (including hospital visits)

## Training, Education and Employment

- Volunteering opportunities and Work Placements
- Vocational assessments
- Employment searching and sustainability
- Developing employability skills
- Course Funding
- Core Recovery Events
- H4H courses

## Housing

- Homelessness support
- Housing benefit advice
- Assistance with adaptations
- House purchasing advice

## Finances

- Pay, Pensions, AFCS (SPVA)
- Financial support for learning and personal development
- Benefits and Grants
- Budgeting and Debt Management

## Other support and leisure

- Band of Brothers
- Battleback
- Phoenix House Strength and Conditioning Suite
- Transition programmes for personnel leaving the Armed Forces

The Support Hub offers information, advice and guidance on a wide range of issues. If you are facing any difficulties not listed above, this does not mean we cannot help. We work in close collaboration with many other professional bodies and

agencies, so please let us know and we will help in every way possible.

We offer a confidential service and we help to identify and meet your needs. We help you contact other Charities, Agencies and Organisations, that can provide specialist help or services and can support with advocacy and representation.

You can access the support hub by telephoning 01748 832685 or visitors can drop in and request support via Reception.

You can also contact us by email by sending a completed 'Request for Support' Form to:  
catterick.supporthub@helpforheroes.org.uk

Veteran soldiers have praised Help for Heroes for the part the charity has played in helping them on the road to recovery.

For Gaz (Gareth) Golightly, 31, finding support at the H4H-run Phoenix House Recovery Centre in North Yorkshire was a vital turning point not just for him but also for his family – wife Denise, 28, and children Clarissa, three, and Brianna, 21 months.

His career as a vehicle specialist in the Royal Logistic Corps ended less than a year after it began when he lost a leg after a car accident while driving back to barracks in Wiltshire in 2002.

For years, Gaz, of Middlesborough, didn't know where to turn for help. As a result, he became very introspective and withdrawn.

But an introduction to wheelchair basketball led him to find out about Phoenix House in February, 2013, which finally gave him and his family the support they needed.

"I had been doing nothing at home. I was quite outgoing before the accident and I didn't realise how withdrawn I had become," he said.

Now at the Centre, Gaz has become involved in all sorts of activities from archery to swimming. He was a key member of a 423-mile Hero Ride from Edinburgh to London in May 2013, which he completed using a hand bike.

Help for Heroes also helped Gaz with a funding application for a special wheelchair to use when playing basketball.

Since visiting Phoenix House, Denise has noticed a massive change in her husband.

"He never used to take the girls out on his own and did not speak to anybody," she recalled. "He's now talking to people, even in the street, and he will take the children out on his own to the park."

Denise has been able to use the facilities with the girls and they were the first to use the purpose-built family room to stay at the centre.

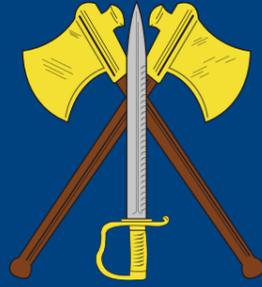
"I can come and get away too. I love coming here. Everybody makes us feel welcome and the kids love it. It's amazing how much our home life has improved with Gaz coming here. It's a big thing for us." ■



■ Gaz and Denise Golightly

Picture: Phoenix House

# Blast from the Past



To go with the front cover for this edition we have decided to publish a selection of photographs from our archives showing **The Corps of Drums...**

If anyone has any Pioneer related photos than please send them in.



■ Corps of Drums

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Corps of Drums

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Corps of Drums, Castle Station, Northampton, 1960.

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Corps of Drums

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Corps of Drums

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Corps of Drums

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Corps of Drums

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Corps of Drums

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ 184 Company, Labour Corps Band

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Corps of Drums

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Corps of Drums, Drum Major, Geordie Winters

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Corps of Drums

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Dusty Bryant, Drum Major, Corps of Drums

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Corps of Drums

Picture: RPCA Archive

# Press Cuttings 1942

The following have been taken from our archives. These cuttings are all from the year 1942. 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 1942.

The Times 20 Jan 42

## S. AFRICAN NATIVES IN MIDDLE EAST PIONEER COMPANIES

The Dominions Office made the following announcement last night:

Further evidence of what the populations of the British Commonwealth are doing for the war effort comes from the South African High Commission Territories of Basutoland, the Bechuanaland Protectorate and Swaziland, where an African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps has recently been formed.

At the beginning of the war the chiefs of these territories offered themselves and their peoples for any purpose for which they might be required, but only limited opportunities could at the time be provided to meet their desire to undertake war service. Recently, however, it proved possible to arrange for the formation and training of a force of native pioneer troops for service in the Middle East. When recruiting began in July the response was immediate, and recruits so far attested number many thousands.

Arrangements have been made to include in the establishment a proportion of Europeans from these territories who are conversant with the natives; a number of chiefs are also included in the cadre. Companies from Basutoland, the Bechuanaland Protectorate, and Swaziland have already arrived at destinations in the Middle East.

The Scotsman 2 Mar 42

## THE "PIONEERS" Men of Many Trades DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

When during the German advance across France, a company of the Pioneer Corps, armed with picks and shovels, put three Nazi tanks out of commission, after having, at an earlier stage of operations, attacked and defeated a force of armed motor cyclists with the same weapons, people in this country, when the news was published, had their eyes opened to the toughness and the fighting zeal of this Corps. In general, however, little is known by the public of the work the Corps does. Some idea of its wide variety was given to Press representatives the other day by the Deputy Director of Labour, Scottish Command.

The officers and other ranks of the Pioneer Corps – many of whom served in the last war – are drawn from a large number of different trades and professions, and include men who were formerly bakers, accountants, barmen, lawyers, solicitors, doctors, musicians, engineers, and electricians. There are few skilled jobs which the Corps cannot find someone from its ranks to do. Among the duties they are employed upon are the making of anti-tank obstacles, aerodrome construction, stone-quarrying, preparing anti-aircraft gun sites, hutting, road work, trench-digging, and cable laying for the GPO. Rat-catching is

one of their important "side-lines", the Corps includes in its membership a man who in peace-time was the head rat-catcher employed by the London County Council, and who is consequently expert in the whole subject of rat extermination.

## WORK IN THE "BLITZES"

In the Glasgow area the Corps has performed much fire-watching duty, and the co-operation between the Army and civil authorities in that matter has been excellent. During some of the air raids men of the Corps worked up to 24 hours a day helping the civilian population in the "blitzed" areas, assisting in the removal of debris, and generally earning the highest possible praise for their efforts.

The "Pioneers," in addition to serving in France, have served in Libya, Syria, and Crete, and have always been in the thick of things when there was any fighting. Their casualties have been considerable. There are two companies of friendly aliens – mostly Austrians and Germans – who escaped from concentration camps. Three of the aliens have been through an OCTU and are now serving in Scotland as officers in their own companies of aliens. The Deputy Director of Labour spoke enthusiastically of the general efficiency of these companies, and expressed every confidence that in action they would be of great use to this country.

"I would like," said the Deputy Director of Labour, "to see the Pioneer Corps becoming the Royal Pioneer Corps, just as the Army Service Corps in 1918 became the Royal Army Service Corps. We are doing an extraordinary amount of skilled work in this Command. A large number of the officers have practical engineering experience. The average age of the company commanders is between 48 and 50, and the age of the subalterns at the present time is considerably lower. Every kind of skilled trade is represented in the ranks and among the officers." He mentioned, in describing the work they were doing, that one of the finest camps in Scotland had been laid out by the "Pioneers" without any supervision from the Sappers.

The Times 11 Mar 42

## "GLARING EXAMPLE OF A GOOD MAN WASTED" LINGUIST IN PIONEER CORPS ABSENT WITHOUT LEAVE

Private Ronald Oliver MacGregor, 31, who, it was stated, can speak seven languages, pleaded "Guilty" at a Chelsea court-martial yesterday to being absent without leave from the Pioneer Corps.

The defending officer said that MacGregor volunteered for the Intelligence Corps and later applied for a transfer to the Reconnaissance Corps. After about six months he was told that he had no chance as his medical category had been reduced from A1 to B3 on account of his eyesight.

"To his final dismay he finds himself transferred to the Pioneer Corps", said the officer, "The Pioneer Corps is a very fine corps, but MacGregor felt that his services were being wasted. He decided to get out and in this way to bring the matter to the

notice of the authorities. This is a glaring example of a good man wasted."

The decision of the court will be made known.

(Ed note: MacGregor was discharged from the army under KR's XVI (Indifferent) on 13 Jul 42).

The Times 7 Apr 42

## SALVAGE FROM THE ARMY BIG TURNOVER AT CHIEF LONDON DEPOT

The Army at home is trying to make its units salvage-minded. There is, it is reported, steady improvement and the importance of salvage in the national war effort is becoming increasingly appreciated among the forces. Moreover, the London District salvage centre, manned by the Pioneer Corps is a remarkably efficient organisation, handling with skill and speed all salvage coming to it from service units within its wide area.

There is one central military salvage depot and five other smaller depots in different parts of the London District which are used for "feeding" sorted material to the central depot. At first sight the central depot seems like a well-stocked and neatly arranged store. There are stacks of straw, sandbags, rags, wire, boxes, tyres, tins, paper and metals of all kinds. Most of these things arrive by service lorry and the processes between unloading and sorting are performed with a smooth efficiency.

The Times 25 Jun 42

## VAST UNDERGROUND WAR DEPOT STORES OF 250 KINDS OF AMMUNITION A STAFF OF 3,000 FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT SOMEWHERE IN ENGLAND JUNE 24

In this pleasant stretch of English countryside one can agree with the man who says that here is an innocent looking spot, as he leads the way into a modest army hut. Even the large notice outside asking "Have you searched yourself?" seem to bear only a spiritual meaning when the policeman on duty at the gate are out of sight. But beneath the ground there are many thousands of tons of high explosives, and in these times of war the movement into and out of this ammunition depot sometimes reaches a total of thousands of tons in a single day.

The mere increase of its traffic is not, however, the only effect of war on this great depot. The entire rate of movement has been speeded up by developing a system of conveyor belts for transferring ammunition to and from the storage bays – known here as "districts". Vast new areas have been carved out alongside existing districts, adding their quota to the million tons of stone and rubble excavated in the earlier days. The largest of the depot's four sections, with its many acres of storage space, has been equipped with underground barracks, offices, and telephone exchange. Those are some of the more general effects of the war in this great storehouse of potential destruction.

In the Army to-day more than 250 kinds of ammunition are used. Here, far beneath the

surface of the ground, can be seen a "museum" containing every specimen in this great variety, from the giant shells of coastal defence guns to the small cartridges of the miniature rifle range. Modern war and the onward march of the tank have, for all their mechanical progress, produced strange things like the Blacker bombard, in which deadly efficiency is concealed behind an awkward looking construction.

#### STORES FROM AMERICA

These vaults in the depth of English soil are enriched also with vast stores of ammunition and bulk explosives from the distant shores of Canada and the United States. An officer of ordnance, passing from a district of English shells stacked in tons, changes his measurement to pounds as he turns to another district piled high with box upon box of TNT from Tennessee. They are, he will tell one, a remarkably good job of packing, and not one case in a thousand arrives damaged.

In one section of this depot a conveyor belt runs in a straight line for nearly a mile, carrying ammunition from the surface railway to a point underground from which it can be distributed on other belts to any district. The conveyor system has released whole companies of men – usually provided by the Pioneer Corps – for other work. These endless belts carrying their loads inward and outward with the inevitability of gradualness exemplify the smooth flowing efficiency of the whole depot. On the surface, far above, railway yards and sidings are operated by the military administration, and as many as 300 wagons may be handled in a day.

Of the 3,000 men on the establishment of the depot fewer than 100 rank as office staff, but their system of keeping records enables the Chief Ordnance Officer to know at any given time the precise location of every round of ammunition in the depot. The depot serves as a training centre in ammunition work for the RAOC. Men work an 8 hour day underground, and every six weeks spend a fortnight above ground in military training. The rate of sickness is well below the 5 per cent that is considered as normal throughout the Army, and crime is almost nil.

#### **The Times 30 Jun 42 FIRST ALL-AMERICAN SUPPLY SHIP STORES FOR US FORCES IN ENGLAND FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT A BRITISH PORT JUNE 29**

The first all-American supply ship to reach England has been unloaded here. She is the weather-beaten freighter Charles H Cramp, which has crossed on the north Atlantic run laden with 6,500 tones of provisions and stores for the United States Forces already based in England.

The uniformed allied forces who were in complete control of the unloading and dispatch of the supplies were working round the clock, and the speed with which the work was being carried out seemed likely to break recent records in the turn-round of ships in this port. The daily tonnage piled on to the quay and into the sheds was above the average.

The work was being done with typical American hustle by young Americans who volunteered after the Pearl Harbour attack, in cooperation with British Army labour units who, it may be recalled, helped to unload the first ship that took the BEF to France. Down in the hold were men of the British Dock Operating Company of the Royal Engineers. They acted as stevedores. On the quay, men of the British Pioneer Corps worked shoulder to shoulder with their opposite numbers, men of the United

States Quartermaster's Corps.

British spectators of the scene – dock officials and others – were keenly interested in the American methods. They particularly admired one smart piece of staff work. A number of motor-vehicles were unloaded by the Quartermaster's men, filled up with petrol and oil on the spot, and when water had been put into the radiators the engines were started. When the motors were running satisfactorily "OK" was chalked on the sides and the brands new trucks were backed into the sheds to carry away some of the first parts of cargo unloaded.

Americans over here will settle down the better when they begin to receive some of the foodstuffs brought by this ship that will remind them of home: Californian cherries and apples and blackberries, Atlantic Ocean mackerel, peanut butter, Frankfurters, Vienna sausages and the rest of it.

#### **The Times 18 Jul 42 DEATH SENTENCE FOR MURDER OF GIRL EVACUEE**

Sentence of death was passed by Mr Justice Wrottesley at the Central Criminal Court yesterday on James Wyeth, 21, a private in the Pioneer Corps, committed from East Harling, Norfolk, who was found Guilty of the murder of Patricia Ann Cupit, a 6 year-old evacuee, who was found unconscious and suffering from head wounds under some bushes at Riddlesworth Park, near Thetford, on May 5, and died the following day.

For the defence it was urged that Wyeth was insane at the time he committed the act. (*Ed note: 13089701 Pte James Wyeth enlisted on 10 Jul 41 – he was declared insane on 10 Sep 42 and his sentence was commuted to life – see entry on 10 Sep 42*).

#### **Hansard 29 Jul 42 BUILDING OPERATIONS**

Mr. Bossom asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Planning whether, in view of the apparent slowness in completing many building and constructional operations now handled by civilian operatives, he will obtain information as to the time taken to complete similar work by the Pioneer Corps?

The Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Planning (Mr. Hicks) The conditions of employment of the Pioneer Corps are so widely different from those of contractors' labour, it is difficult to see how a reasonable comparison can be made between the two organisations. Any such comparison would be influenced by so many factors that it would be hardly worth while.

Mr. Bossom Will my hon. Friend take cases where there is a comparison possible and then, if the Pioneer Corps work is done more quickly, see why the ordinary work is not done at the same speed?

Mr. Hicks I have made inquiry as to the type of work upon which they are usually employed, and it varies so much that to try to compare it with contracts by civilian labour seems to be an unnecessary inquiry, which would not produce any sort of satisfactory answer, but I am willing to inquire if my hon. Friend will give me any special points.

#### **Hansard 6 Aug 42 PIONEER CORPS (ALIENS)**

Miss Rathbone asked the Secretary of State for War to what extent and under what conditions members of the Pioneer Corps, who are of enemy alien extraction, are eligible for employment or training as tradesmen or technical experts in the Pioneer Corps or in other Army units, seeing

that a Record Office instruction recently posted in the camps where such men are serving has led to much misunderstanding and distress?

Mr. Sandys-Aliens of enemy origin are barred from wireless and radio and signals work, but dual nationals of enemy origin may be employed in that work within strict limits. Both classes can be employed anywhere else if they are vouched for and are required by the arm concerned either as tradesmen or non-tradesmen. They can be sent on trade courses if they possess basic knowledge of a trade which is urgently required and if the arm concerned can accept them.

#### **The Times 8 Aug 42 NEWS IN BRIEF SIAMESE JOIN BRITISH ARMY**

Forty Siamese in London, including seven Legation officials who refused to accompany the Minister and two other members of the staff when they left Britain with the Japanese recently for Tokyo, enlisted in the British Army yesterday. Most of the volunteers are students and some are specialists in chemistry and metallurgy. They will first be drafted into the Pioneer Corps.

#### **The Times 1 Sep 42 AMERICAN SOLDIER ON MURDER CHARGE ROW AFTER A DANCE**

At a United States Army general court-martial in Northern Ireland yesterday, Private William E Davis, 23, of Cleburne, Texas, was charged with the murder of a British soldier, Owen McLoughlin, 24, of the Pioneer Corps, by stabbing him in the chest with a knife. He pleaded "Not Guilty". McLoughlin was from Motherwell.

The prosecuting officer, Major CE Barnes, said that a Pioneer company of the British Army held a dance at Randalstown on August 1. A row started, and McLoughlin struck an American soldier with a broom. Davis took his coat off, and as McLoughlin was backing away he said, "Hit me with that broom, buddy, and I'll knife you." Davis then struck McLoughlin a blow. There would also be testimony that a Private Stevenson struck Davis in the back with a knife.

Evidence was called, and the Court adjourned.

#### **The Times 2 Sep 42 US SOLDIER GUILTY OF MANSLAUGHTER COURT-MARTIAL SENTENCE**

Private William E Davis, aged 23, a United States soldier who was charged before a United States Army general court-martial in Belfast with the murder of a British soldier, Private Owen McLoughlin, of the Pioneer Corps who was stabbed after a dance, was found Guilty of manslaughter, and sentenced to be dishonourably discharged from the United States Army and to undergo eight years' imprisonment. The court, which arrived at its decision by secret ballot, found him Not Guilty on the charge of murder.

#### **The Times 3 Sep 42 BRITISH SOLDIER ON WOUNDING CHARGES**

At a British court-martial at Belfast yesterday, Private John Stevenson, Pioneer Corps of Glasgow, was found Not Guilty of wounding with intent to murder Private William E Davis and Private George Seaton, both of the US Army. On alternative charges of wounding with intent to maim sentence will be promulgated. The case arose out of a fight after a dance. Private Davies has been sentenced to eight years' imprisonment for

the manslaughter of Private Owen M'Loughlin, Pioneer Corps.

#### **Hansard 8 Sep 42 PIONEER CORPS (TRAINED ENGINEERS AND SCIENTISTS)**

Professor Hill asked the Secretary of State for War how many trained engineers and scientists are still employed as other ranks in the Pioneer Corps?

Sir J. Grigg There are at present serving as other ranks in alien companies of the Pioneer Corps 61 scientists possessing degrees, 75 engineers without recognised degrees but who have qualified by examination and 95 engineering tradesmen who have served a full apprenticeship or its equivalent.

#### **The Times 10 Sep 42 MURDERER CERTIFIED INSANE**

Private James Wyeth, 22, of the Pioneer Corps, who was sentenced to death at the Central Criminal Court on July 17 for the murder of a six-year-old London evacuee, Patricia Ann Cupitt, has been certified insane. The sentence has accordingly been respited, and the Home Secretary as ordered Wyeth's removal to Broadmoor.

#### **Hansard 8 Oct 42 ALIENS**

Mr. Brooke asked the Minister of Labour whether the performance of some kind of national service, or useful work, is obligatory, as with British citizens of comparable age, upon men and women of enemy nationality who have been deemed friendly to this country and are therefore free from internment?

The Minister of Labour (Mr. Ernest Bevin) Yes, Sir. I have power under the Defence Regulations to direct persons of all nationalities into work which they are capable of performing. A large proportion of the persons to whom my hon. Friend refers are already working in civilian employment directly related to the war effort and many are serving in the Pioneer Corps and the Women's Auxiliary Services. I am, however, reviewing the position of all aliens registered under the International Labour Force Registration Orders in order to see how the services of those not yet fully employed on essential work can best be utilised.

#### **The Orkney Blast, Stromness 23 Oct 42 THE ARMY AT WORK PIONEERS START NEW "BLAST" SERIES**

In an attempt to paint a truer picture of the life of troops in Orkney than might be gained by a casual glance at THE BLAST each week, we begin today a new series of articles dealing with the side of the Army which has seldom been recorded here – not its entertainments and its sports, but the job of work that it is here to do.

Many considerations obviously forbid mention of more than a part of the everyday activities of the troops in these Defences, but, with the limits of security, we hope to present some glimpses of what the Serviceman is doing when he is on duty – and that means most of the time.

This week units of the Pioneer Corps have been visited by our reporter, "Emir," who describes some of the things he saw.

Thanks to the co-operation of Lt Col A J Vernon, DSO MC, I was recently able to visit detachments of the Pioneer Corps at their normal jobs.

It came as a complete surprise to me to learn the variety of work which the Pioneers are doing in Orkney, the extent to which they work without supervision.

#### **SAVING THE COAL**

We visited a large coal dump, from which most of the Army's coal is issued to units. This was in the complete charge of a Pioneer Corps corporal. He had a handful of men with him, and between them they were responsible for the unloading and loading of the many wagons that are need to keep the Islands' coal supply going. This corporal has spent his entire fourteen months in Orkney on this coal dump, for the most part with the same assistants.

I watched them loading a lorry. Everything was done by hand, or at least by manual labour. Some of the coal has to be bagged. On an average, these men fill about thirty bags an hour – or more if there is a special rush.

#### **EXPERTS AT WORK**

Pioneers are on regular duty at the various Service and Ordnance Corps depots and dumps, and also the RE stores. Their work here consists of the loading and unloading of lorries and the stacking of stores.

It was at one of the stores that I met the Pioneers' own concrete expert. He was engaged on the erection of offices, and, helped by three men, he was making a splendid job of it.

This particular corporal is in great demand wherever any concreting is to be done.

The Pioneers are called on, in addition to their normal work, to unload ships.

Stores and docks are always given priority in the work list of the Corps, but erection work always makes a great demand on labour resources.

Recently, the Pioneers completed the installation of a huge water tank on one of the islands in Orkney. They played a large part in the laying of the necessary drains, so that the island – and it is not very small – should be fully supplied.

As many men as possible are employed in work similar to that which they did in civilian life. An example of this was shown to me when I saw the manufacture of concrete blocks used in construction work. The three men working on the job can turn out 200 of these in a day. The LCpl in charge of the work was engaged on making these blocks before the war, although the other two are new to it.

I saw a gang of men at work on the side of a cliff in Orkney. I cannot tell you what they were doing, but the work was of great importance. It was misty, drizzling and the unpleasant Scotch mist hung over the whole scene like a pall. Yet the Pioneers were carrying on through it.

#### **SOME OF THE OTHER JOBS**

Labouring, however, is not the only accomplishment of the Pioneers.

The Islander Ratcatcher is a Pioneer; a Pioneer Barber is always in demand; the Pioneers provide men at the Garrison Theatre; during the harvesting a number of Pioneers helped in the gathering of the crops. High in the priority list at HQ is the Claims Officer. Whenever you damage a wall or a fence, either in manoeuvres, or just to take a short cut, somebody has to repair it. The Pioneers do so. They have saved the country thousands of pounds in repairs alone in the three years of war.

#### **THEY ARE ALSO FIGHTING MEN**

Strangely enough, until recently, the Pioneers were not eligible for trade pay, although they have a multiplicity of tradesmen in their ranks. Now, however, certain tradesmen can draw trade pay when actually engaged in their trade.

The Pioneers, too, have their important operational role. Time is set aside for military training, and, at one camp I visited,

as much pride was taken in weapons as is taken by infantry units. I saw congratulatory messages on the operations of the unit and extracts from the unit's history in France during the pre-Dunkirk days.

#### **FEEDING IMPORTANT**

An important part of the life of a Pioneer is his food. Without good food a man cannot work, and stress is laid on the preparation of food. I visited the cookhouse at each of the Camps I visited. They were all spotless and it was evident that the first consideration of everybody was the satisfaction of the bodily requirements of the man.

Colonel Vernon himself stressed this aspect, and in doing so he paid a great compliment to the OCs of his units.

"They are all old soldiers," he said, "and as such, they have been brought up to regard their men as of prime importance. They know that their first duty is the housing and feeding and bedding of the men. When that has been satisfactorily attended to, they think of their own comfort."

#### **REAL WORKERS**

Early rising is not a habit with the Pioneers – it is sheer necessity. In the summer work usually begins about seven o'clock, sometimes before that. An eleven hour day is all part of the game to these boys. As often as not they do not get back to their camps until six. But a hot meal is always waiting for them. And they can usually have as many baths as they want.

If you could have seen what I saw, your opinions of the Pioneers would have undergone a transformation. The tendency, I know, is to disparage this Corps.

Next time you feel like doing that just think for a moment. The Pioneers have played a big part in the measure of comfort you now enjoy. They have helped to build your camp, they have helped to build your Garrison Theatre, and they are instrumental in the provision of your rations, your coal and your stores.

They turn out in all kinds of weather to carry on with their job. And, whether under supervision or alone, they do that job well.

#### **Hansard 2 Dec 42 SOLDIER'S DEATH**

Mr. Ivor Thomas asked the Secretary of State for War whether he is aware that at an inquest at Keighley on the body of Private Ronald Olive Tillsley, Pioneer Corps, who died of peritonitis, the jury expressed their opinion that if the man had received medical attention in time his life could have been saved; that the unit medical officer did not think it necessary to see Private Tillsley although he was too ill to attend sick parade; and whether he will cause these circumstances to be investigated with a view to taking appropriate action?

Mr. A. Henderson This case is at present the subject of an investigation and I will communicate with my hon. Friend as soon as it has been completed.

#### **The Times 10 Dec 42 BIG STORES DEPOT FOR THE ARMY CONSTRUCTION WORK BY MILITARY UNITS**

#### **£5,000,000 SCHEME**

From our special correspondent with the British Army The Midlands, Dec 9

A Central Ordnance Depot is being constructed here which, when finished, will be one of the largest concentrated depots in the country. It will exist for the purpose of receiving ordnance stores from abroad and from manufacturers in this country, and of issuing them in bulk to smaller depots in Britain and overseas. It is the equivalent of

the store houses of a whole-sale merchant who supplies retailers in this country and wholesalers overseas. It is not in any way a manufacturing establishment.

The depot, which is only partially constructed, covers a large area, and the site is poor agricultural land, so that food production should not suffer more than can be helped.

The depot is being built where there are excellent rail facilities, which are essential for communications with the manufacturing districts, the ports, and existing military installations. The site is level, so that each of the storage sheds can be served by rail, if such a state of affairs is to be achieved cuttings and embankments have to be ruled out.

Living accommodation for the staffs is provided on low hills, which allow of good drainage. These assets outweighed the disadvantages of heavy clay, quite impervious to water, and indifferent country roads; the country roads have been widened and new ones made. The clay has been and is being dealt with satisfactory.

The depot is subdivided into five sections – MT, Small Arms, Armament, Engineer, Signals and Wireless. There is also gun parks and hutted camps to accommodate offices, WOs and other ranks, including ATS. The total floor space of the covered accommodation will amount to many hundreds of thousands of square feet.

#### PASSENGER TRAINS

The depot railway is run and maintained in all aspects by WD units. Locomotives are repaired and maintained at the locomotive shed. Rolling stock is kept in running order. Every wagon is examined for faults. Hundreds of wagons are handled each week. More than 12,000 passengers are carried weekly, passenger trains being run on a proper time-table for recreational purposes and WD staffs being brought into the depot by rail from neighbouring towns. The whole of this work is being carried out by military labour, augmented by that of civilians.

Work was not begun until the middle of July last year, when a general construction company, a railway construction company, and a transportation company, all units of the Corps of Royal Engineers, moved to the area.

The construction company chosen was one of the Royal Engineers companies that did so well in London during the blitz. It was the company that bridged and finally made good the famous crater in front of the Mansion House; the officer commanding was promoted and is now a lieutenant-colonel in executive charge of the project of constructing this depot. It is interesting to note that the company never lost one man

during its long work in London during the blitz.

The labour at present employed on construction consists of companies of Royal Engineers and of Pioneers, and also civilians. The Royal Engineer and Pioneer Corps units have to maintain their efficiency as military units and are periodically withdrawn from the site for 14 days' intensive military training. Some of the Pioneers are friendly aliens, very largely Jews who had to flee from their homes in Europe. One of them was found to be an expert horticulturist, and he is now in charge of the gardening on the site. This year the camp became self-supporting for all vegetable and can carry on in this respect until next summer. The total strength working on the camp is 4,200.

#### ACHIEVEMENT OF THE RE

Thousands of tons of material for construction and stores reach the depot each week, a large proportion of it by rail. By 8 o'clock each morning the last of the rail wagons that have arrived during the previous 24 hours is in its correct position for unloading. Every wagon is cleared and unloaded in 24 hours. In spite of the material supplied more was wanted, and a local quarry, unused before the depot came, is now producing between three and four thousand tons of stone, which is taken to the site each week by road.

Hundreds of thousands of bricks will be used on the buildings. If they were used to make a path it would reach from the camp to Berlin; (if they were laid end to end they would reach from the camp to New York). The total excavation done, or to be done, will amount to a vast number of cubic yards, the equivalent of a front line trench 600 miles long.

There are miles of water mains, sewers, surface water drains, and electric wiring. The CRE of the Command in which the depot is situated told me that the superficial area of the roads and hard standings is greater than the area of the football grounds in England of the First and Second League clubs. Twelve thousand tons of steel will be used on the job. So far 90 per cent of the man-hours worked has consisted of military labour.

This is the largest project ever carried out by the Royal Engineers and the value of the work when completed will be £5,000,000. It is essentially a military project, and the staff and military units engaged on it could be utilized in North Africa or on the Continent to carry out a similar scheme.

All ranks are trained to fight, and having seen the clay in which they are working it would not surprise me if some of them would not like to be released from their present job. So far no one has been drowned

or lost in the road, but in the early days of the construction it took four men to pull an officer out of a morass into which he was slowly but surely sinking to a certain death

(Ed note: most ex Pioneers will recognise the building of COD Bicester!)

#### The Times 11 Dec 42

#### "INTO BATTLE"

#### A NEW SERIES OF M.O.I. FILMS

The film section of the Ministry of Information has changed its policy, and, in place of the short five-minute film which has been seen weekly in the cinemas for the last year and a half, a film running for 15 minutes will be released once a month.

The new series will have the general title "Into Battle", and the first film, Lift Your Head, Comrade, which will go into the programmes on December 21, was shown privately yesterday. It is the purpose of this film to illustrate how men from enemy countries who have suffered persecution for political and racial reasons react to the responsibility entrusted to them by the British Army. It tells the story of one of the companies in the Pioneer Corps, and, as a British officer explains the work the corps has done – forestry in South Wales, demolition in London during the air raids and now construction work in new camps and military training – so does the camera pick out the individuals who form the company.

One, for instance, is a professional boxer who happens to be a Jew and who suffered at Dachau a punishment that is graphically illustrated. There is a proper determination here to make the onlooker uncomfortable, but the film is less concerned with old tragedies that with present hope and happiness, and both the men and the country they are now serving have reason to be proud of this first film in a new series. The technique aims at establishing intimacy between screen and audience, and it is most effectively used.

The current news reels have photographs of the Prime Minister speaking at Bradford – and in remarkably good form he seems – and of action in North Africa.

The landings were not all accomplished without casualties, and the Censor has released shots which two merchant ships on fire after a German bombing attack.

It is good to learn that the majority of the crews were saved, and the sight of the clouds of smoke billowing up from the two ships while many others are visible going about their duties, serves only to emphasize how remarkably low was the cost of so vast an operation

(Ed note: this film featured 74 (Alien) Company Pioneer Corps – copies are available from RPC Association at a cost of £5). ■

# Long Lost Trails...

**The following are trying to re-establish contact...**

#### **CPL MEARS, CPL RICHINSON, LT CLIFF AND LT COL MACTOSH MBE**

I am trying to find my old mates especially those who served at The Junior Soldiers Battalion, Norton Manor Camp, Somerset in the early eighties. Some names are:  
Cpl Mears,  
Cpl Richinson,  
Lt Cliff and  
Lt Col MacTosh MBE

Contact: Michael Kerry  
JKerry1@springwell-online.co.uk

#### **EX LIONSUN - CYPRUS**

Carl Edwards is trying to obtain a copy of a photo, it was a group photograph taken in Cyprus in 1993 on Ex Lionsun.

If you have a copy please send to RPC Association at the usual address printed on Page 4 of this newsletter

#### **PTE ALAN SHAW - FROM SHEFFIELD AND PTE JOHN WEBBER FROM DAVENTRY**

I am trying to contact two mates who served with me at 9 Sig Regt, Cypurs in 1971, they are:

Pte Alan Shaw - from Sheffield and Pte John Webber from Daventry.

Please contact Peter Marks (07782 195211).

# AGM Minutes

## 65th Annual General Meeting of the Royal Pioneer Corps Association

**Chairman: Colonel A Barnes**  
**Secretary: Mr N Brown**  
**Members Present: 96**

**H**ELD IN the WO's & Sgt's Mess, 23 Pioneer Regiment, Bicester on Saturday 13th July 2012.

After welcoming members present and receiving apologies from: Brig HJ Hickman, Col M Baker, Col RF McDonald, Lt Col J Lowe, Maj A Mycroft, Maj (Retd) A Shav, Mr Brian O'Donovan, Mr Ian Whittaker, Mr Dougie Durrant, Mr S Hollands, Mr S Winton, Mr D Heathcote, Mr J Layton, Mr D Parris, Mr J Upfield, Mr J Bennett, Mr A Cardow, Mr D Luker and Mr Tom Appoleyard, 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:  
Mr Brian Pigg, Mr David Skinner, Mr Christopher Vaughan, Mr Raymond Chancellor, Mr Ernest Greaves, Mr Michael Greaves, Mr Michael Smith, Mr Andrew Williams, Maj (Retd) Benjamin Lawson, Mr Patrick Tubridy, Mr Henry Lickfold, Maj (Retd) John Porter, Mr William Beresford, Mr Peter Marks, Capt (Retd) Paul Nicholson, Mr Alan Evans, Mr Robert Thompson, Maj (Retd) Harold Hill, Mr Wilfred Luke, Mr Thomas Kirk, Mr R Chadney and Mr Wildred Mears.

### ITEM 1. MINUTES OF 64th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1. The minutes of the 64th Annual General Meeting were unanimously agreed. There were no points arising.

### ITEM 2. POST OF PRESIDENT

2. The Chairman read a letter he had received from Brig HJ Hickman:  
You all know of the reductions to the Armed Forces and, in particular, of those in size and roles of the Royal Logistic Corps which resulted in the decision to delete the Pioneer employment group from the Order of Battle. In the years to come this will change the way in which our Association evolves,

My concern is to ensure that we have in post as President someone younger than I, but having the best possible experience of stewardship, during changes which may be profound. After much thought I have decided, therefore, that the time has come for me to hand on to a successor the office of President, Royal Pioneer Corps Association.

Brigadier Telfer has agreed to succeed me and there is no one better qualified and experienced than he to look after our Association interests in the years ahead. I wish him and you the very best of good fortune.

It has been my proud privilege to Serve the Corps and the Association for almost six decades. Countless numbers among you have served loyally with me and I thank you all for your support which I have

always felt so keenly. I am not forsaking my Pioneer heritage and will continue to be a part of our community, and help wherever I can, for as long as God allows.

My wife June joins me in sending to you all our very best wishes for success in all our Association and your individual endeavours.

3. Brigadier CB Telfer then addressed the meeting:

"It is with a sense of humility and great privilege that I take on the role of President of the Association at this time of great change.

Your Chairman and the Council have a huge task at setting out the options for the way ahead for the Association in the wake of the disbandment of the two Pioneer regiments and the deletion of the Pioneer CEG.

In this process it is vital that all members who have a view on the Association's future should find a way of expressing that as the Council considers all of the practical options.

The future location of the Corps Memorial and the venue for re-unions are but two of many matters which are to be settled. This AGM and the next and perhaps any Extra-ordinary General Meetings will have significant matters to discuss and decide. In all of this I ask you to support the Chairman and the Council in their deliberations.

For my part, I will not occupy a seat on the Council; but will remain ready as President to play my part in that process.

I look forward to meeting you at Association events and assure you that I will do all that I can to do justice to the responsibilities I have undertaken."

### ITEM 3. REPORT ON PIONEER ACTIVITIES

4. 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. Numbers seem to be growing – testimony to many things but not least of which your undoubted enthusiasm and Norman's unrelenting work ethic and desire to do the very best by us all. Norman – on behalf of everyone here; thank you.

I would now like to address some key areas as they affect the Regiment.

Firstly, People. People are right at the very heart of everything we do here. It was therefore great to see WO1 Reg Lane appointed as our RSM. He will be the last RSM of this proud Regiment and as I said at his dine in, it is absolutely right that the honour sits with a Pioneer. Tranche 3 of redundancy announced last month. The Regiment saw 96 of our soldiers selected with the vast majority of those being Pioneer LCpls and Ptes. The numbers, although high, were about that which we were expecting. It is worthy of note that of the 96 only 21 were non-applicants. This is proof, as if proof was needed, of the

outstanding work that has been going on here to prepare our people for the future.

We have also had a very successful rate of transfers. To date some 60 Pioneers have been transferred to other cap badges or other trades within the RLC. Another 60 have paperwork in the pipeline. There is undoubtedly uncertainty out there but I genuinely believe the soldiers could be in no better place than they are right now. When I cast my mind back to the address I gave last year – on the very cusp of the 2020 decision – I couldn't have wished for a better outcome than that which we face right now. The pace and scale of drawdown has allowed me, and my team, to start to draw the Regiment down in good order and, importantly, with dignity.

Our soldiers continue to do their very best on operations – collectively, they do us proud.

Moving onto change. The end of the Olympics commitment saw 522 Squadron manpower distributed across the remaining squadrons. 65 Squadron was also successfully transferred to 13 AA Regt. We now sit with 2 task squadrons and a HQ squadron – around 450 of us in total.

Sporting success. The Regiment continues to have a proud tradition of fitness and military skills. The Regiment won every conceivable cup at last year's Gore Trophy. We won a silver medal at the Cambrian Patrol – notably we were the only CSS unit to complete the competition. We are the RLC Cross Country champions and came second overall in the Commando Speed march with the best male and female time.

The Nordic Ski Team qualified for the Army Championships for the first time in the Regiment's history. We also won our league in the football cup.

On the back of Tranche 3 I wrote a note to my immediate Chain of Command stating that "We will deal with redundancy as we do any other military problem – careful thought, considered plans and strong leadership. It is also a time for compassion and humility." I stand by that statement. Our soldiers need us now, more than ever, and as the extended Pioneer family you all have an undoubted part to play too. It's great to see so many of you here today; we remain proud and we will continue to fight and win. The Pioneers would have it no other way.

Thank you.

5. Lt Col AJ Parry CO 168 Pnr Regt RLC(V) gave the following report.

It is always a great delight to attend the Annual Reunion. Thank you all for having me here once again and for inviting me to address the meeting. My part comes in 2 phases. I will be as succinct as I can!

The first is by far the most disappointing announcement that a Commanding Officer can do during tenure. David Clouston and I both have now had to make the announcement of disbandment, which for my Regiment will take place on the 26th of October of this year. Whilst this has been a possibility for the last year the loss of

uncertainty in no way balances the sadness that my people now feel!

But the new Army Reserve will have wider and more rewarding opportunities and overall is a better package for our soldiers. The Plan on transition includes the following elements:

- 34/101 Pioneer Squadrons disbanded (all National)
- 100 Pioneer Squadron (Cramlington) re-role to 5 RRF
- 104 Pioneer Squadron (Coulby Newham) re-role to MC
- 104 Pioneer Squadron (Hartlepool) re-role to PC
- This will herald the start of the complete loss of the Pioneer Capability
- New roles for all Pioneers continuing to serve
- 12 mobilising for HERRICK TLG – enduring
- Cyprus ADE
- Football this afternoon
- Every process is people focussed
- Disbandment Parade and Garden Party 26 October 13
- All in concert with our Regular sister Regiment.

I have had some challenges through my career, starting in 91 as Pl Comd for the 4 Armd Bde AWGS Platoon. This will undoubtedly be the toughest!

The second phase is a quick update on the RPCA Strategy Working Group, of which I am the Chairman. So I will give you the current state of play regarding:

- Past membership only by 2015
- Home for the RPCA including the Memorial
- Home for the Controller and the Council
- Role, function and focus
- How we communicate in the future

#### ITEM 4. REPORT ON BENEVOLENCE

6. 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
2011	180	129	£48,422	£375
2012	175	141	£48,194	£379

The number of RPC cases is now, as expected, reducing although this reduction is much later than expected. The number of debt and debt related cases is increasing which is a sign of the times in general.

The Royal British Legion is changing the way they deal with benevolent cases and now have a call centre in Wales which handles all cases throughout the country. They have also recently announced that grants to individuals will only be made once in a three year period.

#### ITEM 5. PIONEER PAINTING

7. Maj (Retd) R Teague then gave an update on the Pioneer Painting which was to be produced to reflect the history of the Corps (both Labour and Pioneer Corps). It was hoped to have 350 prints made signed by both the artist and the Commanding Officers of 23 and 168 Pioneer Regiments. It is intended to hand the original in a prominent place i.e. National Army Museum or the Imperial War Museum.

#### ITEM 6. RPC ASSOCIATION PROPERTY

8. Lt Col J Starling gave a report on RPC

property and produced the following hand-out for members:

A meeting was held at Bicester on 16 May 13 to discuss the property of the RPC Association following the demise of the CEG in 2014. Members included Lt Col McLane, Lt Col Starling, Maj Teague and Maj Fleming and representatives of 23 and 168 Regiments.

In 1993 the property of the RPC was disposed of to a number of sources. Most valuable items were transferred to the RPC Association, some were donated to the RLC (including the museum) and most surplus items were donated to the Imperial War Museum at Duxford. Donated items are no longer the responsibility of the RPCA.

Items retained by the RPCA were then loaned out to other units mainly 23 and 168 Pnr Regts. With the demise of the CEG these items will be returned to the RPCA along with many property items held by the Regiments. The RPCA does not have the ability to store or manage all the items.

It is intended to locate all the items back to Bicester by 1 Oct 13 and then a Property Board of Officers will be convened involving both the RPCA and the Regiments on 11 Oct 13. All items will be reviewed.

Any item, Regiment or RPC, which has been donated, should be offered to the donor if they are traceable (RPCA will assist with addresses). To assist in identifying personnel adverts will be placed in Soldier Magazine, Northampton/Bicester local papers and a couple of National Papers with the relevant details for re-claim.

They will be divided into a number of groups.

1. Property to be permanently transferred to other organisations i.e. RLC Mess, RLC Museum, Bicester and Grantham Towns,

2. Key items – to remain, for the time being, as property of the RPCA, and be loaned to other units (RMAS Army HQs etc)

3. Some furniture items will be offered to the incoming Regiment.

4. Items surplus will be offered for auction/sale, monies being passed to the RLC Association

Examples are:

1. All silver, paintings and medals
2. Desks, seats, clocks etc
3. Prints, crockery & cutlery, wall plaques, EP&S trophies etc

An auction will be held at the Pioneer Weekend in 2014 at Bicester. Items for auction will be advertised on the RPCA Website and if personnel are unable to attend then sealed bids are acceptable. In the case of crockery and cutlery single place settings will be sold.

Plaques and minor items will be direct sales from a table top. All photos will be scanned for the archives before the sale.

#### ITEM 7. COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

9. Col A Barnes gave the following report:

It is customary for the Chairman of the Council to give a report, so:

My thanks to Colonels Clouston and Parry for their very comprehensive reports on each of the Unit's activities over the past year, as always, both Regiments have had a very busy time – and the demand for Pioneer support continues to be almost ubiquitous - which makes it all the more challenging to understand the sad news that both Regiments are soon to be disbanded and the Pioneer CEG removed from the Army Orbat.

I must also thank Col Dave Clouston for allowing the Association to once again

hold its Annual General Meeting and Reunion Weekend in his barracks and for 'inviting' over 340 Association members to stay over the weekend. I must also thank the RSM, WO1 Reg Lane, for allowing us to hold our AGM within his superbly appointed mess. It is obvious from the surroundings that this has become the spiritual "Home" of the Pioneers.

The marriage with the RLC which was made in 2006 continuous to be happy, harmonious and successful and the RPC Association continues to be well represented on the RLC Association Trust, RLC Benevolence, RLC Heritage and RLC Museum Committees. I must say that I, like my forming Corps counterparts find it impossible to see any problems at all with our relationship with the RLC and consider it quite simply, a totally positive relationship.

It is pleasing to have Major Bob Corby here again 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. This is vital work which thankfully will continue for all of us until far into the future and indeed, until there are no longer any 'past pioneers' in need of support.

I must also thank Maj Taff Teague for his description of the Pioneer Painting which is planning to be commissioned by the Association to mark the demise of the Pioneer Trade in the British Army. Taff has put in a great deal of thought, liaison and I should say, his soul into working up the plans – a truly committed effort – thank you Taff.

I must also place on record thanks to our out-going President, Brig HJ Hickman, who as I said, has tended his resignation after holding the post for some 18 years – a remarkable achievement. (The Chairman had previously announced that the Council had nominated Brig Charles Telfer as his replacement and was pleased to be able to report that he accepted).

In the past year, I have established two sub-committees to consider aspects of the future of the Pioneer Association. The first, the Property Working Group is to establish the extent of the Associations property holdings and to consider the distribution of all Association property. The second, the Strategy Working Group is to make recommendations on the future of Association gatherings, the function and purpose of the Association and the Council, as we move forward. My great thanks to all those who have been involved in those sub-committees and for you hard work.

I will ask the two Leaders to provide you with a very brief summary of their direction of travel, in a few minutes, after I have finished my report.

Almost finally, my thanks to the remainder of the Committee for all their commitment during the past year; and although I am wary of highlighting individuals, I must mark out, once again, Norman Brown and his son Paul for their fabulous Newsletters which are appreciated by all members. But a special acknowledgement to Norman for all his hard work and dedication in making this weekend the marvellous and 'mammoth' event that it is. Norman, thank you.

It is pleasing to see so many attending this year's Reunion; some travelling great distances: Mr Trainer has travelled from Canada, a number from Germany, Frank Lyle from Dublin and Mr Simm from Denmark and many from Scotland; including the 'far reaches', the North-East and the South-West. It is exceptionally pleasing to see once again our one In-

Pensioner Micky Hull here for the weekend, but also, here this year with his friend Mr Parry, another In-Pensioner. 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 afternoon on the Sports Field and tonight in the Scully Club and God Bless all your hang-overs tomorrow!

#### ITEM 8. GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

10. Mr N Brown gave the following report:

a. Accommodation – Once again we have had to accommodate a large number of personnel in St George's Barracks, this year we have had to supply beds for a record number of 350 persons. It would be appreciated if those staying in either Barracks would strip their beds prior to leaving.

b. 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 518 Sqn and his staff for organizing the weekend.

c. Membership. It is pleasing to report that the number of active members has increased in the last few years and is now standing at nearly 2,800 mark. Since we met last year 54 have joined the Association we have also during the year made contact with members who we lost touch with many years ago – the joys of Facebook!

d. 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 but we still received 29 returned from the April edition.

I recently received a message from an ex Pioneer who wanted to join the Association, I checked our records and noted that he had been a member since 1984. I told him the address we were sending the Newsletter to and he replied

that he had not lived there since 1986 – 27 years ago, a total of 54 Newsletters would have been sent to his old address and no-one informed us!

e. Cenotaph Parade. This year the Association has been allocated a total of 54 tickets after I complained that last year I had to turn people away because of a shortage of tickets. Although a number have already been allocated we now have spares – if you wish to attend please let me know and I will put you on the list. 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.

f. Photograph. Copies of the photograph just taken can be purchased at a cost of £5 and £7.50 each depending on size, unfortunately we have had to put the prices up because of the high cost of postage. 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.

g. 39/93 Club. This Club will be holding their next gathering at Fareham in Sep 13, any person requiring further information should contact the Club Secretary, Mr Les Rowley who is the old gentleman walking about with a stick, or see me and I will give you contact details.

h. 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 newsletters.

#### ITEM 9. ELECTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

11. In accordance with the Constitution one third of the Council must stand for re-election every year.

a. The following members were re-

elected: Col A Barnes, Col RF McDonald and Maj PJ Fleming

b. The following were elected to the Council: WO2 K Cheung

#### ITEM 10. ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEXT REUNION/AGM

12. The date of the next reunion/Annual General Meeting will be published in the next Newsletter and also on the internet when known. This year, as members are aware, we had to change our dates as the published dates clashed with the RLC Open Day.

#### ITEM 11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

13. A vote of thanks was proposed for the Corps of Drums who had performed magnificently at the Church Service this morning.

14. After Mr Burling requested details of the future of the Association "Colours", Maj Teague gave a history lesson on colours and standards which was appreciated by all attending.

15. It was proposed that a vote of thanks be recorded to Brig HJ Hickman for his work as both Chairman and President of the Association for over 23 years.

16. Mr P Collins stated that he had 6 vacancies for HGV Instructors in the Bordon area, anyone interested should contact him.

17. Lt Col A Parry stated that he had a recruiting stand for the Reserve Army, anyone interested should visit to ascertain the opportunities available.

18. Mr Fox reported that Mr K Smith had walked from Northampton to Bicester, a distance of 36 miles in aid of the Corps of Drums to enable them to buy equipment. He left Cosworth at 0400 hrs on 12 Jul and arrived at Bicester at approx. 1300 hrs.

19. There being no further business the meeting closed at 1300 hours.

**N BROWN**  
Secretary

#### THE FOLLOWING corrections should be made to the April 2013 Newsletter.

1. Page 65. Caption for photograph (bottom right)- The tall gentleman in the middle of middle row is of course Maj J Sievier, he wrote:

The April 2013 issue of The Pioneer is, as usual, first class. However, in the Group Photo published on Page 65 you have me as 'Major J B Rayner'. Now I know that John Rayner was a charming and delightful individual but he was not as good looking as me!! How the mistake could ever have been made is totally beyond me. I am certain that John will be equally horrified to see that he is masquerading as me albeit he is the net gainer!! I laughed when I saw/read it and was sad to read that John Porter, Ben Lawson, Ernie Greaves and Brian Pigg (Ex-206 Coy!!) had all passed away, good men one and all.

Re the photo: I was amused and not offended and I always wanted to be totally and utterly incognito.

I trust all is well. Regards and best wishes to you and 'one and all'

**Joe Sievier**

2. Page 65. 'Paddy' Tubridy served from 1956 – 1979. His wife Jenny wrote:

Thanks for including me on RPCA Pioneer Mag mailing list. Postie just delivered so turned to P65 to see Paddy's entry and was a bit disappointed that his 1964-1986 dates were drastically wrong. No doubt this will confuse a lot of his old comrades as there's bound to be several who would remember him from Horsley Hall (Training 1956 - 1957), Longmoor, Aldershot, Didcot, Northampton, Bicester, and West Moors so although I can't see how you can amend the wrong dates, now the mag has circulated, I thought you'd like to see his postings sheet to pop into your file as it seems that, somewhere in the RPCA records, his service dates have been entered wrong.

Just leaving for Pat's daughter and hubby's house in Aldershot as they'll be looking after me after my Day-Op on my leg tomorrow, for 2-3 days. At least I'll get some home-cooking as I've been existing on microwave meals since Paddy went 'cos I can't be bothered to cook properly!! Washed down with a brandy ? microwave

meals don't seem so bad after all!!

Thanks again for coming to say your farewells to Paddy, at his funeral. It was lovely to see you all there. All the best,  
**Jenny**

#### 23497428 SSgt PJ TUBRIDY

Feb 57 – 263 Coy RPC, Longmoor  
Late 57 – Attached Command Supply Depot (Aldershot)  
1960 – 405 Coy RPC Didcot  
1962 – Trg Instructor – RPC Trg Centre, Northampton  
1963 – 521 Coy RPC Bicester  
Late 1963 – School of Petroleum, West Moors (Detachment Commander)  
1967 – Aden Mansuur Prison as Prison Warden  
Late 1967 – 521 Coy RPC Nicester  
1969 – Mayaya – Commonwealth Forces  
1970 – 521 Coy RPC Bicester  
1970 – Mons Officer Cadet School, Aldershot  
1972 – 522 Coy RPC Dog Section Kineton (IC Dog Section and Camp Security)  
1977 – 206 Coy RPC Long Marston (Welfare Officer)

# Special yellow t-shirt



■ Bill Goode

Picture: RPCA Archive

**T**HE PHOTO was taken at the Throckmorton Air Show 2013 with all proceeds this year going to SSAFA Forces Help, Midland Air Ambulance, Royal British Legion, Army Benevolent Fund and the RAF Benevolent Fund.

The total figure raised at the show was £21,000.

It is well known that only one member

of the 39/93 was supposed to be the proud owner of a very special Yellow T Shirt, could there really be two?

**From either Bill Goode or Les Rowley**

*Ed note: from the photograph which one is it, they are both not the best looking, both quite old, both use walking sticks and both have a funny hat!*

## Proud privilege to serve the Corps and the Association

YOU ALL know of the reductions to the Armed Forces and, in particular, of those in size and roles of the Royal Logistic Corps which resulted in the decision to delete the Pioneer employment group from the Order of Battle. In the years to come this will change the way in which our Association evolves.

My concern is to ensure that we have in post as President someone younger than I, but having the best possible experience of stewardship, during changes which may be profound. After much thought I have decided, therefore, that the time has come for me to hand on to a successor the office of President, Royal Pioneer Corps Association.

Brigadier Telfer has agreed to succeed me and there is no one better qualified and experienced than he to look after our

Association interests in the years ahead. I wish him and you the very best of good fortune.

It has been my proud privilege to serve the Corps and the Association for almost six decades. Countless numbers among you have served loyally with me and I thank you all for your support which I have always felt so keenly. I am not forsaking my Pioneer heritage and will continue to be a part of our community, and help wherever I can, for as long as God allows.

My wife June joins me in sending to you all our very best wishes for success in all our Association and your individual endeavours.

**Brigadier H John Hickman CBE  
DAPL 1985 -1989**

**Chairman RPC Association 1990 – 1996  
President RPC Association 1996 -2013**

## the Pioneer

■ **CHEERS**  
Norman Brown and the gang brilliant weekend thanks – **Al Batch**

■ **THANKYOU** to Norman Brown and all that helped to organise yet another wonderful weekend - had a truly amazing time  
**Angela Stevenson**

■ **HEAR HEAR,** I say...!! What a bloody good day :-).R&G Many Thanks.  
**Jim Reeves**

■ **GREAT PNR** weekend a credit to everyone helped set it up.  
**Wayne Hayward**

■ **NOW** I've been to the first one since I left 19 years ago I will defo be there next year.  
**Gary English**

■ **GREAT** weekend Norman a credit to you and everyone who helped set it up.  
**Mark Copeland**

■ **THANKS** Norman, for your at times, bloody hot and sweaty work, well done mate.  
**Peter Wegg**

■ **THANKS** Norman and all for a great weekend, meet many old friends again.hope there another one next year. Cheers all.  
**Ian Staniforth**

■ A big thank you to Norman and all of 23 for putting on a great weekend.  
**Jim Winters**

■ **HI** Norman, The Newsletter was brilliant once again, you and Paul work very hard to produce such good reading and good photos, keep up the good work. Will see you at Corps Weekend.  
**Billy Nelson**

■ 23 Pioneer Regt and all who helped with the reunion weekend a big thank you, again it was a fantastic weekend, and still i meet people whom I've served with and not seen for many years. thanks again  
**Tony Simm, Denmark**

■ **FIRST** time for me I have never been to anything as great as the corps weekend had the best time and met some great people xx  
**Katherine Moore**

■ **HELL** of a job Norman, its men like you that make it happen and bring loads of joy and happiness to Pioneers like myself, thanks again .  
**Leroy Brown**

■ **HI** Norman Thank you for a brilliant weekend.  
**John Kear**



come on, write in or email us...

## 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



# Offered to buy the bottle

**J**UST THOUGHT I had to drop you a line to say I really enjoyed the reunion weekend and very many thanks for all your efforts. I know it is a job you do well and it is through your efforts that the reunion weekend survives. Once again many thanks and I will see you next year, providing I am still fit and well.

It was nice to see old comrades, and "chew the cud", and talk of all our memories, both bad and good. To digest the news, and feel the pain. The lot of "pioneers", has changed once again.

It was decided, on some "MOD" floor, that after 70 years "Pioneers" would be no more. It was sad to see, and sad to say. That the role of "Pioneers", has changed this way.

As a "Pioneer", I will always remember, at various times of the year, such as November, what was achieved, in the years past, they will not take my memories, they will always last.

So I say to all "Pioneers" here and now, we must remember all "Pioneers" somehow. Try and get together and have our say, and keep our memories alive in some way.

God Bless all "Pioneers" everywhere.  
**Denis McKeown**

His daughter Janet added:

Thank you so much for putting on such a good reunion weekend. My dad really enjoyed himself, he was so pleased to see so many people he knew and to catch up with people he saw last year. My mum

and I also enjoyed ourselves as well. It's always nice to listen to stories about my dad and to put faces to the names he has mentioned over the years.

To me it was such an honour to meet so many nice people and to listen to their experiences.

It was particularly lovely to meet 2 gentlemen who served in the Second World War. I think we owe a debt of gratitude to people like that, without them we wouldn't have the freedoms we have today. It was such an honour to sit and chat with them.

I don't know if you know this gentleman that I am about to tell you about but if you do please pass on my thanks. My parents and I were in the Sgt's Mess and my dad tried to order a glass of port and lemon and he was told if he wanted that he would have to buy the bottle, a nice gentleman offered to buy the bottle and give my mum some, it was really lovely for him to do something like that. I didn't catch his name but I did see him serving food at breakfast on Sunday morning, he was in uniform behind the food counter. Dad did thank him but I would also like to thank him to if you know who I mean.

The food was great as well, I really enjoyed it.

We were really lucky with the weather as well this year, what a change from last year.

Once again thank you Norman, your efforts are greatly appreciated.  
**Janet - Marie McKeown**

# No complaints

ONCE AGAIN thank you and all those that were responsible for the very great effort that made those that attended enjoy a fabulous Pioneer Reunion.

No doubt there will be those that felt let down regarding their own personal complaints but we all must remember the days have gone when you were there all the week or organise everything, after all we are Pioneers and we have come this far facing adversity that has made us what we are today.

Thank you once again, leave with those immortal words, "Any Complaints?" NO SIR. Labor Omnia Vincit,  
**Bill Goode, Chairman 39/93 Group**

# 98 years!

THANKYOU FOR receipt of the Magazine which might have been assisted by Mr Joslin of South Benfleet who informed you of my new address.

We were together on the Faroe Islands in 1942/43 and have remained in contact as friends since demobilization, we are both aged 98. I have been back to the Faroes and I have kept up correspondence regularly during these many years.  
**PF Cramer - 228 Coy**

# Gentleman

I'M GUTTED to hear Staff Tubridy passed away. What a gentleman, Pioneer Proud and a good father figure to me at 206 ! I have decided to crack open a bottle of malt whiskey and toast respects to his family. BOTTOMS UP! I would also like to take the have a crack at the mouse? Back of cover cartoon, underneath soldiers left boot. If I win please donate any prize to any childrens hospital fund regards

**Thomas Cherry.**

# Old and bold

AGAIN A fantastic weekend sorry I did not see it through. However I did make it down to the arena in the morning before I had to go to say goodbye to as many comrades I could find, but I could not make it round to your tent.

I stood on the side line and it reminded me of 30 years ago when the Corps weekend was a big family occasion and last year and this year had that feeling.

I have said to you so many times you will not please everyone, the next person who has a trivial complaint just give them the choice of organising the event next year or volunteer to sit on the committee.

The CO and RSM of the Regiment also deserve congratulation, the soldiers were well turned out and so helpful I was proud to be part of the weekend. Please let me know when the auction will be, and keep Simpson estate in mind I'm going to speak to them if they would like anything.

It was really nice to see so many old and bold who I had not seen for many years, you could have had parade manned exclusively by ex WO 1's. Anyway once again well done keep up the good work.  
**Tom Appleyard**

# Massive thanks to you all

MASSIVE THANKS to you all for your hard work done this year in making the Pioneer Reunion Weekend such an outstanding event with over 650 veterans attending making the event memorable.

I would also like to say a thank you too:

To the Bicester community, for honouring the Pioneers with the naming of Pioneer Square, the £70m regeneration in Bicester Town Centre will provide a quality vibrant shopping experience linked to the existing busy High Street, keeping the heart and spirit of the Pioneers firmly within the Bicester community.

To Sarah Jane Ward and her team of chefs for the outstanding food provided Friday evening Saturday afternoon and Saturday evening. I was so impressed with Sarah for attending the evening function till

the wee hours of Friday and supporting her team of chefs at every sitting. "Well done".

To all the serving members of the Regiment for making the veterans and their guests feel welcome and part of the Pioneer family.

To all the veterans that attended some travelling from as far as Canada, To Reg Lane for keeping us all safe during the weekend, and too all others involved in making the event such a fantastic and memorable weekend.

One very special thank you to Kelvin Smith for walking 38 miles to raise funds for the re-formed Pioneer Corps of Drums who made the memorial parade and march past swagger with pride.

See you all next year  
**Glen Rosser**

# Mates rates for Pioneers!

JAYNE AND I have taken over an existing business hence the name "Tony's".

We have been busy with a house move and the business so have been unable to attend a Reunion recently.

I enjoy a good read of The Pioneer to catch up on what's happening. Well done Norman, you put in an exceptional effort, thank you.

Anyone visiting the Highlands are more

than welcome to pop in for a bite to eat. Pioneers can enjoy mates rates, we are 22 miles further North than Inverness, the finest sandwich bar in the highlands.

Yours Aye  
**Martin and Jayne Caldwell**

*Ed Note: Address is, Tony's Sandwich Bar, 72 High St, Alness, IV17 0SG - mates rates for Pioneers!*

# No other unit in the RLC can replace the Pioneers

THANKS FOR a great weekend and what a turnout!!

As I looked around the WOs/Sgt Mess on Saturday night I saw some of the most professional soldiers and veterans it was my pleasure to work with.

Their professionalism and quality stands out, their ability to soldier is second to none here we have/had soldiers who would deploy anywhere and do almost any task given to a very high standard.

I found it hard to see why 23 Pioneer Regt is to be disbanded but thought that at least 168 Pioneer Regt would keep the Pioneer ethos alive, but no it seems that those in high places see no need for any Pioneers what so ever.

Was it the Army who got rid of the Regiment's or was it that the RLC did not fight hard enough to keep them?

I think I know, there always were a few in the RLC who did not understand that Military Manpower is a logistic capability that will always be needed.

Where else will a Commander find soldiers who can work at Road, Rail, Sea and Air Heads or who can Build Camps or provide Defence to HQs.

Where all the soldiers are fully trained in logistic, most with Artisan or Assault Pioneer skills and then others with even more specialist skills.

No Infantry Battalion has that versatility nor ever will have and no other Unit in the RLC can replace the Pioneers.

Who ever made the decision to remove the Pioneers from the Army will have to live with that, but time will tell and the need for a Unit as unique as the Pioneers will I am sure once again be needed.

**J A Coast**

# We enjoyed ourselves

NOW THAT Bill Sears and I have recuperated from all the handshakes, back taps and well does we have a chance to write to you and say "We enjoyed ourselves".

We think it was the best for a long time. The organisation was excellent. May we also thank the Commanding Officer for granting us permission to use the Barracks for our Reunion Weekend.

The 600 or so persons who flocked down to the Gala Fete in the afternoon were determined that Bill and I enjoyed ourselves. The veterans who were on parade at the service marched in step and were ably led by the new Corps of Drums. Thank you Norman for giving me the honour of laying the wreath on behalf of our comrades who were left behind on the battlefields. Looking forward to our next reunion when we will all meet again.

Bye for now.  
**George Pringle**

# Beimullet



■ Graves of two Pioneers in a little town called Beimullet, Southern Ireland Picture: RPCA Archive

I HAVE recently returned home from a holiday on the west coast of Southern Ireland, a little town called Beimullet.

During my visit I came across an old church (as you can see by the photograph). I noticed a very tidy area, so as I am nosey, I went to explore and discovered it was a small graveyard with 14 reasonably new grave stones.

As I was having a look around I noticed that 2 of the grave stones were Pioneer Corps.

The reason behind me sending you these photographs is because if any relations belonging to these two soldiers are not aware of the burial ground of their loved ones, you can pass on my telephone number and I will inform them where Beimullet is:

*Ed Note: 13045085 William Hulme (DOB 1 Mar 13) enlisted at Manchester and joined 5 Centre for training on 27 Jun 40, he was then posted to 15 Coy. The CWGC gives the following information "Son of William and Annie Hulme of Patricroft, Lincs. Buried at Kilcommon Erris Church of Ireland Church Grave 7.*

*13045397 John Halliwell Warham (DOB 8 Oct 13) enlisted at Manchester and joined 5 Centre for training on 27 Jun 40, he was then posted to 15 Coy. The CWGC gives the following information "Son of John Halliwell and Mary Morris Warham of Liverpool, husband of Alice*

*Warham of Walton. Buried at Kilcommon Erris Church of Ireland Church Grave 9*

*Both men lost their lives when the ship SS Mohamed Ali El-Kebir was torpedoed by U Boat U-38 about 250 miles west of Malin Head and sank. The ships Gladiolus and Mallow who were in the neighbourhood were ordered to assist and four destroyers which were in a position about 150 miles further west were also dispatched. The destroyer Griffin alone saved about 740 men, including 2 naval officers and 59 ratings, 20 army officers and 505 other ranks, leaving 120 presumed lost. The Mohamed Ali El-Kebir, 7527 tons, was carrying 732 naval and military details, supplies and equipment from Avonmouth to Gibraltar.*

*The following is an extract from the war diary of 15 Company in which both men served:*

*5 Aug 40 - Embarks at BRISTOL on "Mohamed Ali el Kebir" for EGYPT*

*7 Aug 40 - Troopship torpedoed by enemy at 2045 hours. There is a heavy swell and a few men are injured or killed by rafts and wreckage crashing against the ship's sides. The major part of 15 Coy manage to escape and are picked up by HMS Griffin and taken to GRENOCK where they arrive on 9 Aug 40. On roll call 30 men missing (casualties)*

*8 Sep 40 - Coy having reformed leaves 5 Centre at HUYTON and proceeds to NEWCASTLE to join 34 Group.*

# Pioneer Specialists

## Recommended Pioneer Service Providers



### BELFAST

**DOUGIE DURRANT**  
Northern Ireland Bodyguard,  
Surveillance and Survival Service  
nibsss@btinternet.com

### BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

**THE LOST SOCK LAUNDRETTE**  
12 Parton Rd, Aylesbury  
01296 337794

### THE CODFATHER FISH AND CHIPS

2 Jackson Rd, Aylesbury  
01296 433022

### DERBYSHIRE

**BLACK HORSE INN**  
Great Pub. Recommended.  
Hulland Ward, Ashbourne,  
01335 370206

### EAST YORKSHIRE

**MARTIN PALMER FLOORS**  
Design/manufacture of Mezzanine  
Floors and stainless steel  
fabricators.  
07921488460  
martin@mezzfloorhull.co.uk

### GREATER MANCHESTER

**MARK BURNETT TILING,  
PLASTERING & KITCHENS**  
markymark@hotmail.co.uk  
07592 387578

### ISLE OF MAN

**JOHN HAY LAKESIDE CAFE**  
Mooragh Park, Ramsey, IOM  
Ask John or Sara to tell a war story  
and get 20% discount of food bill.

### LINCOLNSHIRE

**MANDY CLARKE FLORIST**  
Stamford Garden Centre,  
Gt Casterton, Stamford, Lincs.

### DAVE SALTER PLUMBER

Grantham  
07551 428233  
salter290@hotmail.com

### LG GAS AND HEATING SERVICES

Lee Gayton, 157 Queensway,  
Grantham, Lincs  
01476 405702/07808 530931

### NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

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Northamptonshire  
07733 187177  
andy\_croft33@yahoo.co.uk

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All promotional material such as  
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t-shirts, leaflets etc.  
132 Wellingborough Rd,  
Northampton.  
07806 094838

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07806 094838

#### J BENNETT PICTURE FRAMING

email: johnbennett237@  
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#### NICK THE ELECTRICIAN

07968 981110

#### STEVE PLUMBING & CORGI GAS

#### REGISTERED, BATHROOMS /

#### KITCHENS

07771 967592

#### TERRY WARREN HEALTH &

#### SAFETY CONSULTANCY UK

01280 705723

infor@safetraining.co.uk

### SCOTLAND

#### TONY'S SANDWICH BAR

72 High St, Alness, IV17 0SG

Mates rates for Pioneers!

If you have a  
business or a recommendation  
then send it in !

# Car Stickers

We have just produced some great looking Pioneer Car Window  
Vinyls. Currently we have done 5 different designs which are  
around 75mm square in size.

1 vinyl is £1 | 2 vinyls £1.75 | 3 vinyls £2.50 | 4 vinyls £3.00 | all 5 are £3.50

Add 50p for postage per order. All profits go to the Association.



Sticker 1



Sticker 2



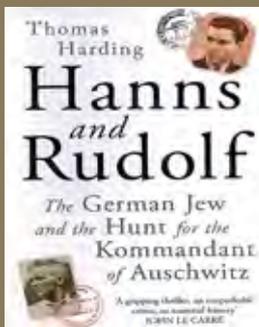
Sticker 3



Sticker 4



Sticker 5



# The German Jew and the hunt for the Kommandant of Auschwitz

Review: Norman Brown  
Picture: Supplied

**H**ANS ALEXANDER was the son of a prosperous German family who fled Berlin for London in 1932.

Rudolf Hoss was a farmer and soldier who became the Kommandant of Auschwitz Concentration Camp and oversaw the deaths of over a million men, women and children (Ed note: during his interrogation he admitted killing over two and a half million).

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the first British War Crimes Investigation Team is assembled to hunt down the senior Nazi officials responsible for some of the greatest atrocities the world has ever seen. Lieutenant Hanns Alexander in one of the lead investigations; Rudolf Hoss his most elusive target.

In "Hanns and Rudolf", Thomas Harding reveals for the first time the full, exhilarating account of Hoss' capture, and of two lives that diverged, and intersected, in an astonishing way. Moving from the Middle-Eastern campaigns of the First

World War to bohemian Berlin in the 1920s; from the horror of the concentration camps to the trials of Belsen and Nuremberg, it is both a gripping, moving and deeply felt work of history, and the story of a remarkable quest for justice.

(Ed note: Hanns Herman Alexander enlisted on 24 Jan 40 and joined 3 Centre Pioneer Corps, Richborough, Kent for training. His initial service number was 13800976. His brother Paul also enlisted at the same time and was given service number 13800986. (Service numbers prefixed "1380" indicated that they were Aliens). They were both commissioned on 25 Feb 43 and were given service numbers 264280 and 264281.

On completion of training they were both posted to 93 (Alien) Company Pioneer Corps. This Company was sent to France as part of the BEF on 11 May 40 and returned on 17 May 40. This Company was the first Alien Company to work in London during the Blitz).

The following are two extracts from the book:

At Richborough they were housed in

dilapidated barracks that let in snow through the holes in the roofs, the Pioneers jokingly called the place 'Anglo-Sachsenhausen', after the Berlin camp in which some of them had recently been held.

The toilets were equally basic, housed in a long line of sheds joined together with a gully that ran from one end to the other with water flowing through it. A favourite prank was to light a newspaper at one end and let it float along toasting unwary behinds as it went.

Hans sent a quick note to his parents, it was written on Pioneer Corps stationery, with its emblem – a crown, a pickaxe, a shovel and a gun – embossed on the top, underneath which was stamped the Corps motto 'Labor Omnia Vincit' (work conquers all) – eerily similar to the slogan 'Arbeit Macht Frei' (work sets you free) – that hung above the gates at Auschwitz.

**HANNS AND RUDOLF - THE GERMAN JEW AND THE HUNT FOR THE KOMMANDANT OF AUSCHWITZ**

By Thomas Harding  
978-0-434-02236-6

# Lincolnshire Airfields

Review: Norman Brown  
Picture: Supplied

**A**T THE height of the Second World War, Lincolnshire had no few than 46 operational airfields, all but nine built since 1939.

The build up of the RAF air offensive after 1940 and the arrival of squadrons from America, Australia, Canada and Poland, meant that by early in 1945 in Lincolnshire alone, there were several thousand aircraft and 80,000 personnel.

In this book, each airfield is described and details of its wartime function given. Also highlighted are the many and varied aircraft that comprised the operational units.

Numbered among them are the Lancaster, Manchester, Hampden, Wellington, Hurricane, Spitfire and

Beaufighter.

These, and the young airmen who flew them, made an immense contribution to the final defeat of the Third Reich, as Allied bombers and fighters, flew increasingly larger raids across the North Sea and into the dangerous, smoke-filled skies of occupied Europe.

Patrick Otter's action-packed book which contains much new material and many previously unpublished photographs will appeal equally to aviation enthusiasts and to those who remember or have heard about those exciting and terrifying days when the skies over Lincolnshire never ceased to throb with the drone of departing and returning aircraft.

(Ed note: Pioneer Corps personnel worked at many of these airfields during WW2 and helped many to change from grass run-ways to hard run-ways. Many of

these airfields were transferred from the RAF use to Army use after WW2, an example of this is Grantham (where 168 Pioneer Regiment are currently based (until disbandment)).

RAF Grantham was one of the few First World War airfields, although for the first eleven years of its life it was known as RAF Spittlegate and renamed RAF Grantham in 1928. It was re-named in 1944, this time becoming RAF Spitalgate – the change in spelling from the original 'Spittlegate' being attributed to an Air Ministry typing error!

It retained this name until 1975 when it was handed over to the Army as a Royal Corps of Transport Territorial Army depot).

**LINCOLNSHIRE AIRFIELDS IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR**

By Patrick Otter  
1-85306-424-6

# Last Post

It is with sadness to report the following deaths

**BERESFORD WILLIAM MOWBRAY (14901557)**  
14 Mar 13 Wirksworth, Derby  
Aged 90. Served 2 Jan 45 - 5 Nov 47

**MARKS PETER (22193687)**  
Northampton (Aged 82) 30 Mar 13.  
Served 1951 - 1955 was Mess Manager,  
Sgts Mess Simpson Barracks for many years.

**MICHELSON PAUL LOUIS (13041458 AND 220768)**  
Huddersfield (Aged 90) 11 Aug 12.  
Served 26 Aug 40 until Jan 46.  
Commissioned on 22 Dec 41 and served in  
Africa, Normandy, Belgium, Holland and  
Germany. Was Adjutant of 80 and 60  
Group Headquarters.

**EVANS ALAN EX CPL (24046043)**  
Tamworth (Aged 64) 18 Jan 13.  
Served Jun 67 - 28 Nov 78).

**THOMPSON CHARLES ERIC ROBERT (BOB) EX CPL (23317188)**  
Gotham, Noits 14 Nov 12  
Aged 75. Served Jun 56 - Oct 59. A regular  
attender at Reunion Weekends and Army v  
Navy.

**HILL HJ (MAJ RETD) (303621)**  
Shifnal, Shropshire 27 Dec 12  
Aged 92. Served 1941-45  
in 99 Coy and 956 PCLU. Joined the  
Association on 16 Nov 46 - the 48th person  
to join.

**LUKE WILFRED (EX PTE) (13032343)**  
Aberfoyle 18 Aug 12  
Aged 95. Served from 20 Jun 40 - 29 Mar  
46

**KIRK, THOMAS (EX PTE) (24796615)**  
Glasgow 16 May 13  
Aged 55. Served with 102 Sqn, 168 Pnr  
Regt RLC from 1988.

**CHADNEY GLYN JAMES (EX PTE) (22140504)**  
Malvern, Worcs. Aged 81.  
Served from 1951 - 1954.

**MEARS ERNEST WILFRED (EX PTE) (7047891)**  
Norwich 2012  
Aged 90. Enlisted into Irish Fusiliers and  
transferred to Pioneer Corps on 25 Jun 42  
and served until 4 Feb 47. D Day Veteran  
(see website <http://tinyurl.com/qc4pgt8>)

**HOODLESS JOHN THOMAS EX PTE (23533759)**  
2 Jul 13. Weymouth  
Served 1957-1960.

**PRIDDLE DERAK (EX PTE) (22705737)**  
16 Jul 13. Alton, Hants.  
Served in 251 Coy from 1952-55

**SCOTT ROY (EX PTE) (23864136)**  
17 Aug 31. Cheltenham.  
Aged 71. Served 1961 - 1967. (Served in  
Aden with 518 Coy RPC).

The following appeared in the  
Cheltenham Echo on 21 Aug 13:  
Joe Lane wrote that he was a true  
gentleman who always put his family first.  
He was a staunch family man who carried  
the standard for Gloucestershire's Aden  
Veterans with pride. Fond tributes have  
been paid to Roy Scott, who collapsed and

died after suffering a heart attack following  
Cheltenham Town's match against Plymouth  
Argyle on Saturday.

The 71-year-old from Rowanfield, was  
standard bearer for the county branch of  
The Aden Veterans Association since 2009 -  
attending countless repatriation ceremonies  
at Royal Wootton Bassett.

He was also a passionate supporter of  
Cheltenham Town Football Club and a  
regular face on the terraces at Whaddon  
Road for the past 40 years.

Those who knew him best say he was a  
"true gentleman" who always put family  
first.

Hosie Scott, Roy's wife of 47 years  
said, "He loved being standard bearer  
for the Aden Veterans. He went to all  
the repatriation ceremonies - come rain  
or shine he would always go if he was  
able to. I think he felt those who fought  
in Aden were not recognised as they  
should have been so he wanted to do his  
bit."

Born in Yorkshire in 1941, Roy served  
in Aden from 1963 to 1965 before  
embarking on a career in engineering.

He married Josie in 1966 after their  
eyes "met across a crowded room" and  
the couple moved south to Cheltenham  
where they settled down.

They have two daughters, Angela and  
Alison, and four grandchildren, Abi 19,  
Alice 15, Esme 11 and George 9, Hosie  
added, "Family always came first for Roy. He  
was a true gentleman.

He was always smiling and never had a  
bad word to say about anyone."

Roy was honoured for his work with the  
Aden Veterans when he was invited to  
Buckingham Palace in 2010.

Chris Blkack, county branch secretary,  
spoke warmly of his work with the  
organisation. "Roy was a very loyal member  
who did a lot to develop our branch," he  
said. "His smile was infectious and would  
always cheer up those who were around  
him."

Roy died after suffering a heart attack  
outside the Abbey Business Stadium on  
Saturday. Friends said he died doing  
something he loved. A club spokesman sent  
sympathies to the family, saying Roy would  
be much missed at matches.

**MCCORMICK DARREN ANTHONY EX CPL (23971365)**  
6 Sep 13. Salford.  
Aged 67. Tony attended the Reunion  
Weekend in July.

**PUGH GEORGE (EX SGT) (24398942)**  
23 Jul 13 Luton.  
Served 1977 - 1989.

His daughter posted the following on  
Facebook:

On behalf of George Pugh's family may I  
say a massive thank you to those who  
attended dad's funeral today and thanks for  
the kind words and support of those who  
weren't able to make it. Dad would have  
been honoured by the turn out and to know  
he was so well thought of and respected is  
fantastic.

He was very much loved and will be  
sadly missed by all who knew him but  
especially his children. He was a great man



■ Bob Thompson

Picture: RPCA Archive

■ George Pugh

Picture: RPCA Archive

for sure, we grew up thinking everyone had  
a hero for a dad, but ours truly was. Dad  
was kind, intelligent, witty and dedicated to  
everything he did and he seems to have  
made an impression on everyone he met.  
Gone but never to be forgotten, RIP dad x

Frank and Kerry Nichol posted the  
following on Facebook: Kerry and I  
attended George Pugh's funeral today.  
George was an awesome soldier, he was an  
awesome Police Officer but more  
importantly one of his daughters mentioned  
that he was an awesome dad....priceless.

Mr Tom Appleyard wrote:

George Pugh was one of the original  
Corporals who was selected to join the  
formation of two reformed companies  
designated 144 and 70 Companies to take  
over an infantry based role in BAOR, over  
200 soldiers mustered at Bicester and as the  
role was an infantry one the companies  
went through a 4 month training period at  
Bicester and Kiwi Barracks Bulford. George  
attended a Junior Brecon course, one of the  
most demanding both physical and mental  
courses in the Army and passed the course  
with flying colours.

In 1979 the companies deployed to  
Muster where it underwent a further year of  
training before taking over from the  
Gloucester Regiment, it was during this  
period that George's unique skills came to  
light, he was the best OP and stage two  
trench construction soldier I had ever come  
across, once underground it was very  
difficult to spot his position.

To reinforce his skills, it was during a  
visit in the field by an American and

English 2 star general, as normal they were doing the round robin we had two standing patrols out and an OP, where is the OP the British General asked, at which George opened the entrance to the OP which was no more than 2 feet away from the visitors feet, they went away very impressed.

As a section commander his men were his only concern and he always looked after his section, he lead from the front and valued the traditions which made the army the best in the world. Considering he was not badged infantry, he would have stacked up against any infantry section commander. He was a terrible shot, however this did not stop him claiming to have shot down a star fighter during a range day; on the range at the time there was at least 8 GPMG on the point wasting a lot of tax payers money when a star fighter in the distance flying very low over the danger zone had smoke streaming from its tail, it was only when the company returned to camp they found out a star fighter had gone down, George was not the only one in the Company who claimed a kill. He left the forces and started a new carrier in the Police force in Luton.

To conclude, it was soldiers like George who over hundreds of years put the Great in Great Britain, He will be sadly missed. I'm Glad that I'd had a beer with him last year..

**SMILLIE JOSEPH (JOE) EX W01 (RSM) (24137081)**

**10 Sep 13. Achility, Ross-shire.**

Served from 1968 - 1990. Joe was commissioned into the Corps but found it was not to his liking and decided to leave the army and return to his native Scotland.



■ George Pugh briefing a visiting officer

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Joe Smillie rear right

Picture: RPCA Archive



■ Joe at this years Reunion

Picture: Paul Brown



■ Joe Smillie whilst Recruit Training Sergeant

Picture: RPCA Archive



# And finally...

Report: Norman Brown  
Picture: Norman Brown

**T**HIS IS Army policy all begins... Start with a cage containing five apes. In the cage, hang a banana on a string and put stairs under it. Before long, an ape will go to the stairs and start to climb towards the Banana.

As soon as he touches the stairs, spray all of the apes with cold water. After a while, another ape makes an attempt with the same result - all the apes are sprayed with cold water.

Continue until, when another ape tries to climb the stairs, the other apes try to prevent it.

Now, turn off the cold water.

Now, remove one ape from the cage and replace it with a new one. The new ape sees the banana and wants to climb the stairs. To his horror, all of the other apes attack him. After another attempt and attack, he knows that if he tries to climb the stairs, he will be assaulted.

Next, remove another of the original five apes and replace it with a new one. The newcomer goes to the stairs and is attacked. The previous newcomer takes part in the punishment with enthusiasm.

Again, replace a third original ape with a new one. The new one makes it to the

stairs and is attacked as well. Two of the four apes that beat him have no idea why they were not permitted to climb the stairs, or why they are participating in the beating of the newest ape.

After replacing the fourth and fifth original apes, all the apes which have been sprayed with cold water have been replaced. Nevertheless, no ape ever again approaches the stairs. Why not?

"Because that's the way it's always been around here."

That's how Army policy begins...

**A**MAN doing market research for the Vaseline Company knocked at the door of a married quarter and was greeted by a young woman with three small children running around at her feet.

"I'm doing some research for Vaseline. Have you ever used the product?"

She said, "Yes. My husband and I use it all the time."

"If you don't mind my asking," he said, "what do you use it for?"

"We use it for sex," she said.

The researcher was a little taken aback. "Usually people lie to me and say they use it on a child's bicycle chain or to help with a gate hinge. But, in fact, I know that most people do use it for sex. I admire you for your honesty. Since you've been so frank so

## Army Policy, Vaseline, Reggie, Bunking Down and Street Corners...

far, can you tell me exactly HOW you use it for sex?"

The woman said, "I don't mind telling you at all."

My husband and I put it on the doorknob and it keeps the kids out."

**W**HEN REG had passed the enlistment physical he was asked by the doctor, "Why do you want to join the Army?" "My father said it'd be a good idea, sir." "Oh? And what does your father do?" "He's in the Navy, sir."

**T**HE RSM in training: When little Reggie was on basic training he was advised to act tough.

"That's the only way to command respect in the Army," his friends said.

So Reggie did his best to carry out the advice. He swaggered all around camp, bragging, blustering and talking out of the corner of his mouth.

"Show me a sergeant and I'll show you a dope," Reggie shouted.

No sooner had he spoken than a brawny, battle-hardened figure appeared.

"I am a sergeant!" he bellowed.

"I am a dope," whispered Reggie.

**R**EG AS RSM at his first dinner night in the Mess as Presiding Member asks the PMC to pass the chocolate pudding. No way answers the PMC. Whyever not? asks Reg. The PMC replies that it's against regulations to help another soldier to desert.

**A**PLATOON Sergeant and the RSM were bunking down in the field for the night whilst on Ex Complete Pioneer. The Platoon Sergeant looks up and says, "When you see all the stars in the sky, what do you think, sir?" The RSM replies, "Well, I think of how insignificant we really are in the universe, how small a piece of such a grand design. I can't help but wonder if what we do truly means anything or makes any difference. Why? What do you think of Sergeant?" "I think somebody stole the damn tent."

**O**N THE recent Ex Complete Pioneer the rifle range was cancelled for the second year in a row. However, the physical tests went ahead as planned. One soldier mused, "Does it bother anyone else that the Army doesn't seem to care how well we can shoot, but they are extremely interested in how fast we can run?" ■



**"My Dad, said, join the Army and stop hanging about on street corners."**

## Coming up in the next newsletter ...

- Forthcoming events
- Your stories
- Your Letters
- Photo Gallery
- News
- Details of Disbandment Parade and Reunion Weekend
- Confessions of a Pioneer
- Reviews
- And much more!



# Association Shop



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



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

◀ **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**



▲ **Cufflinks**  
new badge  
**£5**



▲ **Cufflinks**  
bronze  
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▲ **Tie Pin**  
lovely  
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▲ **Tie Pin**  
lovely  
**£2.00**



▲ **Wall Shields**  
hand painted  
**£20**



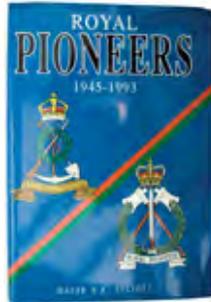
◀ **Pioneer  
Mug**  
Drinks taste  
better out of  
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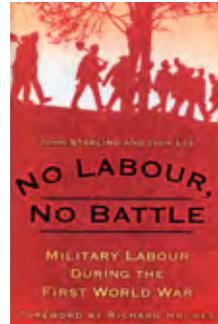
▲ **Wall Shields**  
85-93 badge  
**£20**



◀ **Blazer  
Badge**  
silk & wire  
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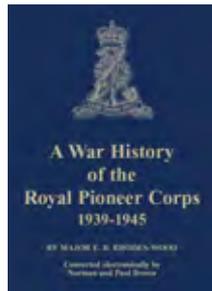
◀ **"Royal Pioneers  
1945-1993"**  
by Major Bill Elliott  
  
The Post-War History of  
the Corps was written by  
Major Bill Elliott, who  
generously donated his  
work and rights entirely  
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May 1993 and is on sale  
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No Battle"**  
Military Labour  
during the first  
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A new addition to the  
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◀ **Blazer  
Badge**  
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Active  
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Top quality.  
Available in  
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Green and a  
women's cut  
Electric Pink!  
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Badge**  
silk & wire  
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Statue**  
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