

THE POMPADOURS

Belfast, November 1986 — March 1987







Lieutenant Colonel A Behagg MBE, The Commanding Officer.

Commanding Officer's Foreword

“The Pompadours in Belfast” is a souvenir brochure to commemorate the Battalion's tour in West Belfast between November 1986 and March 1987. The photographs and articles selected were chosen from many submitted for this publication because they best show and explain what we did in Northern Ireland.

During the time we were in West Belfast we completed well over 3,500 foot patrols, and drove over 350,000 miles in our armoured vehicles. We encountered shootings, rocket attack, mortars and major crowd control problems. We found and dealt with radio controlled bombs, command wire bombs, proxy bombs, blast bombs, hoax bombs, suspect cars and “come ons”. We stood for hundreds of hours on cordon positions dealing with numerous incidents during the 18 weeks of the tour. Daily we faced the abuse and anger of the local population, and the threat of the terrorist.

We had a busy tour. The level of terrorist activity in Belfast was greater during our time there than it had been for many years. Throughout all this we have stuck to our task of supporting the RUC in the defeat of terrorism with a skill, determination, toughness and resolution that are the hallmarks of a professional soldier. Everyone worked long exacting hours, in difficult conditions and yet somehow that irrepresible sense of humour that characterises the Pompadours has always shone through.

Without doubt this was a successful tour. That it has been so has been due to the effort everyone has put into the tasks despite the danger and hardships that we faced daily on the streets of Belfast. All who took part whether in a foot patrol, an Ops Room, or in an administrative job in Echelon can be rightly proud of a job well done. Neither should we forget the excellent work done back in Minden by the Rear Party in support of our wives and families.

I hope that this booklet will tell the story of our tour, not a blow by blow account but an impression of life in Belfast for an Infantryman on an Op BANNER tour.

TRAINING FOR NORTHERN IRELAND



The start of it all — teams of soldiers were seen practising basic patrolling techniques all over camp substituting APCs for street corners.



Platoons quickly progressed and before long were practising riot drills on the sports pitches.

A considerable part of the success of any tour in Northern Ireland is always based on the training that is done before deployment. After over 17 years experience in the Province there is now a tried and tested training package that is designed to assist the Battalion in converting from its role as mechanised infantry in BAOR to that of counter terrorism in Belfast.

The Pompadours training package initially began in early July, when the Battalion's greatly enlarged Intelligence Cell began its specialist training at Ashford in UK and culminated in a 3 week exercise in "Tin City" at Sennelager, in late October. Between July and October a lot of work went into training the Battalion for its new role.

Training for Belfast began in earnest however when the Battalion returned from Summer block leave in late August. At this time the major reorganisation of the Battalion onto the Northern Ireland orbat was completed — A company was reduced to 2 platoons, while B and C companies expanded taking in the Milan and Mortar platoons respectively. Heavy Weapons company was temporarily disbanded.



We never had the opportunity to use snatch squads during our tour, but they were practised. Lt Wormwald is seen leading his own Snatch Squad.



Getting Operations Rooms right took as much practice as anything else. Company Offices filled up with Maps Radios and Platoon Commanders running small exercises.



Exercise Pompadour Patrol was the demanding two day climax to our 'In Camp' training. We used every single barracks in Minden as Estates in which incidents were staged.

The main training package was about 10 weeks long and was carried out under the guidance of the Northern Ireland Training and Advisory Team (NITAT). This started with a week of lectures and demonstrations to the Battalion to give everyone an insight into the background to the conflict and to lay down the guidelines for training.

Following this week, company commanders had five weeks to train their companies in Minden. During this time Elizabeth Barracks was full of criss-crossing multiple patrols, who when they were not developing and then practising the skills of team and multiple patrolling, were busy learning about the intricacies of ECM drills, search techniques, arrest procedures, riot control and just about everything else essential for the tour. Superimposed on the company level training was a series of TEWTs and exercises run by Battalion HQ. The training came together on Exercise Pompadour Patrol, a 2 day company level exercise set up within the various barrack complexes of Minden Garrison. This was an excellent exercise and stood all companies in good stead for the final training at Sennelager.

The Battalion deployed to Sennelager mid October. There we utilised the purpose-built range facilities, the excellent "Tin City" and of course the knowledge of the NITAT staff. The 3 weeks we spent at Sennelager, and in particular the time spent in the Tin City, allowed time for all the companies to perfect their training and the realistic training environment enabled each company to practise the whole range of urban skills, from patrol techniques, through reaction to a contact to riot control.

The training package was progressive, demanding and well conceived. Throughout the training period the Battalion seemed to be infected with enthusiasm. Many of the skills that we had developed whilst in BAOR were simply given a new direction. On the other hand some of the new skills we had to develop made a refreshing change from those associated with mechanised warfare. In addition, many would say thankfully, the pleasure of looking after the Battalions's vehicle fleet passed to the Rear Party and the "Care and Maintenance Teams".

The way in which we quickly settled into our role as the Belfast Roulement Battalion, and dealt effectively with operations soon after our arrival, was evidence of the high quality of our training and the depth to which we were prepared for life in Belfast.



NITAT used demonstrations of the effectiveness of explosives at the start of their package. This explosion is a mere 2 pound charge detonating under a car.



The week spent in Killymurphy (Tin City) was the highlight of the NITAT package. Most of the 'civilians' came from 2 Queens and were as realistic as possible.



The riots in Killymurphy were one of the highpoints in a company's week. Each company experienced three riots all of which were realistic and, at times, painful. Base lines of this scale have not been seen in Belfast for some time and we did not have cause to use them. A few baton rounds were fired to counter localised aggro but most of the large marches take place in the summer.



THE RIOTS



BELFAST





The Battalion deployed to Belfast on 10 November 1986 and handed over command on 25 March 1987. For 4½ months the Pompadours were the Belfast Roulement Battalion (or BRB) with responsibility for all of West and most of North Belfast.

As the Belfast Roulement Battalion we were deployed into three Company locations at Girdwood Park, North Howard Street Mill and Fort Whiterock. Echelon was at Musgrave Park Hospital and Tactical Headquarters which started the tour in RUC Springfield Road, moved in January to a new complex at North Howard Street Mill. Each company had a different organisation as the ground, the tribal mix of the population (ie Catholics and Protestants) and the way in which the RUC operated in the 2 police divisions, B and D, in our area combined to ensure that each company area had a unique character.

A Company shared Girdwood Park with 7/10 UDR, a TA Engineer regiment and the Belfast ATO teams. The company operated in support of the 3 southern sub division of the RUC D Division which was in the predominantly Protestant North Belfast, but also contained within it Catholic enclaves such the Ardoyne, New Lodge and Unity Flats. A Company was organised into 2 platoons: one platoon provided patrol support to the RUC, both on foot and in vehicles, the other manned the Funeral Parlour and Templar House Ops, escorted the ATO teams and an RUC mobile patrol and guarded Girdwood. The platoons rotated tasks every three days.

The enlarged B Company of some 200 men was based at North Howard Street Mill and operated in support of the Grosvenor Road sub-division of the RUC's B Division. B Company's patch was a hard Republican area containing estates such as Divis, Ballymurphy, Falls, Clonard and Beechmounts, emotive names that have been in the news since 1969. The company was organised into 4 Platoons. These platoons provided foot and mobile patrol support to the RUC, operating from the RUC stations at Grosvenor Road, Springfield Road and New Barnsley. The fourth platoon manned the Broadway Tower OP and guarded North Howard Street Mill. In addition B Company had two sergeants and two teams from the Reconnaissance Platoon to man the Divis OP, at the top of the Divis Tower block.

OPERATIONAL OVERVIEW



THE BRICK

“The Brick” is the term given to the smallest independent unit of soldiers used in Northern Ireland. The term independent is used rather loosely as a brick is rarely ever required to operate on its own in an urban environment, even though it is capable of it. Bricks generally operate in groups of four or more when the sub unit is then known as a “multiple”.

The brick comprises of four men, three private soldiers with a JNCO in command. This is the minimum number that can operate effectively, covering all arcs and carrying the weapons and equipment essential to the soldier in Belfast today.

Because of the two major threats that we face, namely the shoot and the bomb, the brick operates well spaced out so that the chance of an entire brick getting either injured or killed by one attack is slight. If, for example, in a shooting incident the terrorist wounds one man then one other will attend to the casualty leaving the other two free to fight the terrorist.

The equipment the brick carries is unique to this phase of war. Each commander carries a secure radio linking him both to the multiple commander and to his own Company and Battalion Ops rooms. Each soldier carries his own personal weapon — the 7.62 mm SLR which is loaded but not made ready, and 2 magazines of 18 rounds. This is the basic protection against the terrorist and provides security when patrolling the streets. Each soldier will also wear body armour in the form of an INIBA jacket underneath his combat jacket. The INIBA has armour plates mounted over the heart on the chest and back and gives a high level of protection against small arms fire.

Each brick also carries one baton gun which fires a heavy plastic bullet essential in crowd control. The only soldier in the brick to have webbing is the baton gunner who uses it to carry his ammunition. The brick will also have a dictaphone on which lots of minor detail can be collected during the patrol and easily recorded. This saves stopping every few yards to write in a note book. The brick will also be equipped with a variety of Electronic Countermeasures (ECM) equipment or “bomb stoppers”, — these are highly classified equipments and valuable weapons in the war against the terrorist bomber.

As we have found out during our tour the spectrum of jobs a brick is asked to perform is immense. In no other theatre will four men live and work together so closely for so long and gain such valuable experience.

THE MULTIPLE PATROL

The multiple patrol in Belfast is the standard method of patrolling the city.

The multiple patrol normally consists of four, but sometimes five, bricks commanded by a multiple commander who will be either the Platoon Commander or Sergeant. The multiple may also be supported by vehicles or mobiles which consist of pairs of bricks mounted in two APVs, the Army's new V8 armoured Landrover. It is the multiple commander's job to control the bricks on the ground and devise schemes, tactics and ploys that will both deter the terrorist from attacking the patrol and kill him if he should risk making an attack.

The multiple patrol always operates with at least one, and generally two RUC constables. It is with the assistance of this patrol that the RUC are able to police their neighbourhood beats and bring a measure of normal law and order to the streets. The multiple's mission is always "to support and protect the RUC" by preventing terrorists from murdering or maiming policemen.

The multiple is divided into the primary brick and satellite bricks. The primary brick is the hub of the multiple and will provide close protection for both the commander and the RUC constables. This brick will closely follow the policemen's every move. The satellite bricks move some distance from the primary brick giving depth protection to the primary brick and doing the main job of deterrence by cutting off any terrorist escape routes.

Good multiple patrolling ensures the survival of both soldiers and police enabling the RUC to move freely round their beat and restore normal policing, in Belfast.



Half of a Brick lurk in a dark alleyway.



A Multiple Patrol from Milan Platoon, B Company.



A COMPANY

A Company's Tactical Area of Responsibility (TAOR) was North Belfast where they operated in support of RUC D Division. The TAOR consisted of the hard line Republican areas of the Ardoyne, New Lodge, Unity and Cliftonville and the Protestant areas of the Shankill, Ballysillan, Tiger Bay and Tyndales. When this TAOR is first seen on a tribal map of Belfast it looks like a patchwork quilt of green and orange.

The vast contrast in the type of areas within North Belfast gave A Company many problems that were not experienced elsewhere in the city. During a patrol soldiers could continually slip from "friendly" Protestant areas into one of the more intollerant Republican estates with the ever present threat from the terrorist. The problems of patrolling and policing the interface between the two sectarian communities was unique to A Company. This was a demanding and challenging task and one requiring a high level of discipline and expertise. In some places the dividing line between Protestant and Catholic areas was the white line down the centre of a road.



Pte Hope pauses during a patrol whilst normal life goes on.

A Company was the smallest Company in the Battalion and consisted of two platoons each of seven bricks with a few supporting elements. The company was based in Girdwood Camp, the most spacious of all the company locations and one which was shared with a host of other small units including ATO and his team. The platoons alternated in the duty cycle between patrols platoon and a general duties platoon that manned the Funeral Parlour and Templar House observation posts as well as doing guards and escorts.



Major Otter who became well known in North Belfast.



The OC with his Rover Crew in Girdwood Camp.



The ranks of every company were swelled by attachments from outside units — such as Driver Cochrane from 4 Division Transport Regiment.



“A” Company struck up an excellent relationship with their RUC.

Throughout the tour most of the operational problems were created by inter sectarian violence across the interfaces. These have ranged from a few stones thrown by drunks, through attempted murders and shootings to large scale operations to assist the RUC with the control of marches. Indeed within 5 days of arriving in Belfast A Company was fully committed to assisting the RUC with the large scale anti Anglo-Irish Agreement demonstration on 15th November.

The Company also dealt with and arrested several petrol bombers; had a proxy bomb at RUC North Queen Street Station; had to contend with many sophisticated bomb hoaxes and several suspicious cars the majority of which involved ATO clearing the vehicle in a company sized operation. The A Company TAOR was never quiet.

Even the "daily routine patrols" have varied immensely in character from the "high profile" prevention of sectarian attacks on Church congregations to lurking in the shadows waiting to intercept inter sectarian attackers.

It was a lot of hard work for the men of A Company often taxing both their military skills and mental ability to the full. With such a small Company a single patrol or VCP operation virtually emptied the camp with every available man sent onto the streets. Many visitors to Girdwood have had to contend with a mere handful of people left to talk to, and lots of otherwise empty blocks.

Despite the difficulties and hard work it was an enjoyable challenge and all the soldiers have tackled the task with, hard graft professionalism, and still retained a sense of humour.





A Company assisted the RUC with all the big marches in West Belfast.



VCPs were a part of A Company's life. Check points were conducted on everything from minor back roads to three lane motorways. Cpl Mackness is seen checking the details of a commercial van.



Observation of inter sectarian devides was both covert and overt. Sgt Demeyer is seen on a roof top (below) whilst, in another area, Templar House Observation Post is manned continuously, observing throughout both day and night (above).





C/Sgt Rouse prints the A Company motiffe onto a wall.



Whatever the conditions we always managed to keep our sense of humour and raise a smile.



A mixture of Pompadours, Royal Army Medical Corps and Royal Corps of Transport went to make up the "Body Snatchers" — The Medical Crash Out Team.

B COMPANY

On the reorganisation for Northern Ireland in late August 1986 B Company was transformed from its mechanised BAOR establishment into a huge 210 men plus Belfast orientated organisation. Posted in from Heavy Weapons Company was the Milan Platoon, the Recce Platoon and WO2 Beaumont with his newly formed intelligence cell. This gave us a basic structure of four rifle platoons of nine bricks each, a Divis Tower observation post team of two bricks and two senior NCOs and an Int Cell.

As was to be expected B Company threw themselves, body and soul, into the training both in camp and at Sennelager and before long this greatly enlarged company was working as a close knit team. Following the training the first elements of the company moved to Belfast on the 4 November 1986 ready to take over from 45 Commando Royal Marines. On arrival B Company were confronted with their first major problems of the tour in that the entire company TAOR was completely out of bounds to foot patrols. Whilst 45 Commando made every effort to give us a thorough handover they were however unable to show the company the areas that really mattered; the back alleys and side streets of the housing estates in the company's newly acquired TAOR. However this lack of local knowledge was soon overcome once the company settled in and the areas were brought back in bounds again.

The B Company TAOR was situated in the Grosvenor Road sub division of RUC B Division. It included some of the most extreme Republican areas in Northern Ireland — the Divis Flats, the Clonards, the Lower Falls, Beechmounts, New Barnsley and the Ballymurphy estates. This area had always been the very heartland of the Republican movement and had never been an easy area in which to soldier.

The 210 men of the Company were based in North Howard Street Mill, an old 3 storey converted Victorian flax mill building which is today a maze of corridors, passage ways, rooms and stairs. Throughout the tour it has been continually renovated and there has been a constant stream of builders modernising and improving the facilities. This was not without its disadvantages as the builders brought with them, noise, dust and chaos and B Company had to live doubled up in accommodation whilst work took place to improve the existing living conditions.





Pte Batten and L/Cpl Barnes on patrol in 'The Reservation'.



Not everyone was hostile. Children under 10 years of age often showed a friendly interest in soldiers — especially when on cordons. Here Lt Blakeney-Edwards converses with some young girls.



The new OC, Major Chisnall took over from Major Duthoit at the beginning of February.



The 'Old' OC Major Duthoit with CSM Twell at the bottom of Leeson Street.



The B Company Rover Group with Major Duthoit and Captain Eke in the centre.



A sense of humour is vital and all our soldiers managed to keep smiling throughout the tour. Some old ladies appreciated a chatty young soldier who would stop and pass the time of day. Pte Flannagan (left) and Cpl Bricklebank (above) see the lighter side of life.

The Company itself had a complex duty cycle revolving around foot patrols from the three RUC stations in the TAOR, Springfield Road, Grosvenor Road and New Barnsley. Of the four platoons two worked on a 24 hrs patrol cycle from the three RUC police stations providing all the patrols the RUC required. The third platoon was dedicated to mobile support and military escort duties whilst the fourth was dedicated to guards, more military escorts and to the Broadway Tower observation post. Every 5 days the platoons changed their role.

B Company had a busy and demanding tour. From the start there was a great deal of activity but the intensity of operations increased from mid December as the local Provisional IRA terrorist organisations intensified their efforts. The speciality of the Provisional IRA in the B company TAOR was the improvised explosive device (or IED). These bombs were either command wire initiated or radio controlled and they became more sophisticated as the tour progressed. Often such a device was accompanied by a set up sniper shoot against soldiers in the covering cordon. Despite this B Company proved more than a match for the IRA and scored some notable successes.





L/Cpl Glynn — Milan Platoon



SATURDAY NIGHT, SUNDAY MORNING

Impressions of a Soldier in North Howard Street Mill

"Time flies past so quickly here in North Howard Street that it becomes genuinely difficult to remember which day of the week it is, even less the date. The only difference between any Monday and any Sunday is the activity of the natives, and even that doesn't change much". One soldier was heard to remark that he knew it was Sunday because he could smell roast lunch and the children threw empty vodka bottles at him on Springhill Avenue.

"The only exceptions to this routine passage of time are Saturday nights. All the soldiers know exactly when Saturday night is coming up and look forward to it. Those who patrol the Falls Road between 2200 hrs and 0200 hrs are considered lucky as they are the ones that will come back with war stories. At the quietest of times a patrol will attract abuse and stones from the yobs permanently based outside Bell's Taxis or the corner of St Judes and Cullingtree in the Divis. Given a generous dole cheque on Thursdays the same yobs will become brave with drink on Saturday night and take on the odd soldier who happens by in a patrol. Far from being "scared off" or intimidated by this, our soldiers will often enjoy the adrenalin produced by a good stoning.

"Having finished with the drunks on the Falls Road a patrol will sometimes slip through a dark Dunville Park on its way back to Grosvenor Road RUC station. Dunville Park attracts really bad down and out alcoholics and collapsed glue sniffers as it is very dark and quiet at night. Soldiers may have to walk around bodies and avoid small groups of young lads obviously insane with glue fumes. They are, by this time of night, incapable of hurling abuse or even speaking English. One decrepid man who walks the area, often with his trousers around his knees, is the last of a group of four of his kind. The other three have died in recent months and, judging by appearances, he will soon follow. The RUC shrug their shoulders, they've arrested him and hospitalized him countless times but he's back in the same state the following week.

"Another feature of a Saturday night is the ritual stealing of cars, almost always brand new, and destroying them in the Clonards or the Divis wells. It is not uncommon for a patrol to come across a lovely new Astra or Escort that has been stripped, crashed and set on fire by glue sniffing twelve-year-olds. Sometimes the cars are



The Divis Tower crew watched everything that happened in the flats complex 24 hours a day throughout the tour. Half the crew were in the observation post at any one time with the other half spending a fortnight on foot patrols. Seen here is Sgt Ritchie with Pte Wing, Cpl Simmons, Pte Defossey and Pte Atkinson.





C/Sgt Hillier about to take his Multiple into the Divis Flats with Brigadier Wheeler.

not even robbed, they are just ripped up, windows smashed and then burnt out. So many new cars meet this fate that car insurance in Belfast is the highest in the United Kingdom.

“On a Sunday morning the only evidence of a good Saturday night is the occasional scorched wreck of a car, piles of broken glass from bottles thrown scattered across the road, glue sniffers, paper bags collecting in corners and the odd pile of vomit.

“Virtually every window in the area is now protected by a heavy wire mesh. People in West Belfast live their lives looking out through wire grills, over barbed wire and through massive, spiked railings. Where else would people cement broken glass into the tops of all their six-foot-high garden walls and keep huge, untamed alsation dogs loose in their gardens.

“On Sunday morning the bleary locals trudge to one of the many Catholic Churches and cleanse their souls. Some (a few) are becoming quite friendly. Little old ladies will often stop for a quick chat with a young soldier. The vast majority of normal people will go about their normal Sunday morning business. The yobs of Saturday night are all still in bed sleeping it off, penniless again until dole day next Thursday.

“By Sunday afternoon, in the Mill, we have forgotten which day it is and get on with the rest of the week”.

C COMPANY

C Company's internal structure, rather like B Company, was changed considerably for Northern Ireland in order to take on the task of supporting the RUC in the Woodbourne sub division of RUC D Division in the southern third of the Belfast Roulements Battalion's TAOR. The company took under its wing the Mortar platoon to make up the fourth rifle platoon. Also C Company like the others received a number of attachments from units as diverse as the 4/7 Dragoon Guards and 4 Armoured Division Transport Regiment. At the end of the day the company was over 210 men strong, vieing with B Company as the largest sub unit in the Battalion.

C Company was based at Fort Whiterock a purpose built steel fortress with a 400 m, rectangular perimeter that stood on the edge of West Belfast on the lower slopes of the Divis Mountains. Any visitor, having first been to Girdwood or North Howard Street in the depths of the city, immediately got an impression of space, clean air and views when he arrived at Fort Whiterock. The Divis Mountains soar behind the camp which looked down into the Belfast basin. The Fort itself is similar in design to those of the American Indian Wars with high towers at each corner and low buildings inside the stockade.



Pte Peters during a patrol



Outside the Milltown Cemetery — opposite RUC Andersonstown

Having taken over from the Royal Marines with none of the Out of Bounds restrictions suffered in other parts of the Battalion the company quickly fell into the pattern of its five day duty cycle. Of the four platoons two were dedicated to patrols for the two RUC stations at Woodbourne and Andersonstown. The Woodbourne platoon lived for 5 days at RUC Woodbourne which was a self contained patrol base with the platoon mounting patrols from the station itself. The second platoon spent five days in Fort Whiterock patrolling the RUC Andersonstown area. The third platoon was dedicated to quick reaction forces and patrol mobile support whilst the fourth platoon guarded the camp and provided military escorts for RUC mobile patrols.

The TAOR itself was unique. It consisted of the newest housing in Belfast and stretched from the 1950/60s housing estates of Turf Lodge and Andersonstown in the east via the Lenadoon to the newly constructed housing schemes in the Poleglass and Woodside. These latter two areas probably offered the best subsidised housing schemes in Europe and the contrast with the housing in the Beechmounts or Clonards in B Company's TAOR has to be seen to be understood. Generally the standard of housing throughout the area was high; there were even some areas that were quite attractive. However the many wide streets and open spaces posed particular problems for foot patrols as the wide views *made sniping easy*. To overcome this C Company developed and perfected the intimate support of footpatrols with vehicles. Each patrol always worked closely with two and sometimes four APVs in order to give added protection on the ground from the terrorist.

C Company's TAOR was a large and rambling one to patrol and police, and from the start they were always busy. After the turn of the New Year however activity intensified and while the terrorists in the area were more than capable of any activity the main threats against C Company remained the mortar bomb and the sniper. Good patrolling kept both in check.

Among the many successes two are worth special note. In January the company was instrumental in stopping a 450 lb proxy bomb in a van en route from the city centre and in February a patrol from the Mortar Platoon captured two Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) terrorists red handed armed with a hand gun.

This was a difficult and demanding tour for C Company but a rewarding and satisfying one.



Nine Platoon Command Team chat to Major General Ward-Booth OBE.



An eight platoon Multiple unloading at the end of a patrol



C/Sgt Brett of the Mortar Platoon in the Home for Retired Terrorists. C Company spent many hours in the Milltown Cemetery cordoning terrorist funerals



Cpl Trainer outside a shop front.



L/Cpl Humphreys pauses on a street corner.



2Lt Gowdy chats to the new commander 11 Armoured Brigade — Brigadier J J J Phipps.



Cpl Beagley with Pte Cane pause during a patrol.



The Commanding Officer talks to Chief Inspector Sillery during the Mackies Car Bomb incident.



The Commanding Officer held full conferences every Sunday and 'Inner Cabinet' meetings on Thursdays.

TACTICAL HEADQUARTERS



The Ops Team in the new North Howard Street Ops Room.



The Commanding Officers Rover Group in the Twinbrooks.



Stick 'em up Mister.



Alph-Whisky was the call sign of the City Flight Gazelle Helicopter. They flew a routine four and a half hours daily giving patrols top cover, doing mortar base plate checks of all the bases and assisting with reces. They were also on call 24 hours a day, taking about 4 minutes to scramble for an incident. They were notable for being helpful, cheerful and never complaining.



Cpl Phillips the Ops Room Manager and Chief Signaller in the old Ops Room at RUC Springfield Road.



WO2 Butts — originally the RSWO who became the RSO when Captain Wilde departed.

The administrative support or Echelon for the Battalion was located in a small base next to Musgrave Park Hospital. The camp itself consisted of a number of pre-fabricated buildings or porta cabins each of which was surrounded by a blast wall to provide protection in the event of a mortar attack. The base was just outside the Battalions TAOR, but located close to the Westlink motorway for easy access.

From this location the majority of Headquarter Company provided essential support for the remainder of the Battalion. This support consisted of maintaining a regular supply of rations, petrol, stores and equipment and, importantly, mail. These functions were carried out by the Quartermasters Department, the Mechanical Transport Platoon, the Pay Office and the REME LAD which repaired and maintained our large vehicle fleet.

One of the most important tasks for the soldiers at Musgrave Park was the provision of the Armoured Escort Service or "Taxi Pig". This consisted of two bricks in two APVs. The Armoured Escort Service visited every location at least once a day delivering mail, rations and personnel as required. They were kept extremely busy during the tour and each of the two vehicles averaged 15,000 miles.

The soldiers based at Echelon were also required to provide a guard for the Echelon and also to assist either the Military Wing of the Hospital, or the warders and police guarding prisoners undergoing medical treatment.

The soldiers at Echelon fulfil a vital function. Although not in the "front line" the support they provide guaranteed that the soldiers on the ground could perform their duties with maximum efficiency.

Throughout Echelon provided excellent service that was second to none.



ECHELON



Brigadier J J J Phipps visits the Quartermasters Department.

R + R — IMPRESSIONS OF A SOLDIER

“I began my R + R on the 9th January and was back in Belfast on the 14th January ready to start work. I flew out from Aldergrove at 0745 hrs on a Friday and arrived back at 2040 hrs the following Wednesday. This effectively gave me five nights in UK.

“Before the actual day of leaving I, like countless others, had spent many lovely hours dreaming of my R + R. I kept thinking of all the wonderful, self indulgent things I can do, taste, hear, see, smell and touch whilst out of Belfast. All those ordinary, every day luxuries that are denied to us over here — a pint of draught beer, civilian clothes, walking amongst civilians, a room with no telephone or radio, normal sleeping hours, etc. etc. etc. But most of all, more than anything else . . . seeing my wife and children after 3 months away.

“When the wheels of the DC 9 left the tarmac at Aldergrove the entire plane-full of soldiers breathed an enormous sigh of relief (enough to ruin the pressurization) and visibly settled in their seats. In less than 30 seconds, or so it seemed, we were approaching a bleak but welcoming Heathrow in the land of sanity and all things good.

“The details of my R + R I will keep to myself but suffice to say it was the best five days I have had for a good long time. It had everything a man could wish for!

“Within a twinkling of an eye I was back at Heathrow sitting in the departure lounge ready (or not ready, but grudgingly present) to travel back to Belfast. I am convinced I was conned — my five days seemed more like a few short hours. My wife had gone her snuffly, watery eyed way back to the car and I had departed all round shouldered to the newspaper stand, to buy a paper and wait for the return flight to Northern Ireland.

“Back in Belfast it seemed as if my R + R had never happened. The only trace was the slight spring in my step and a hint of perfume on my jersey. On settling into my post R + R blues (similar to manic depression) I could do naught but think of block leave and the end of tour. This cloud lifted after a few days but the memory of my R + R kept me going until the end of the tour with ease. Boy, what a good time I had!

“What a great institution R and R is”.



WRAC Chefs cooked the food at Musgrave Park



The Armoured Escort Service provided the vital administration runs to all the company locations.



THE INCIDENTS



ATO used his wheelbarrow to clear dozens of suspicious cars.



The first big find of the Tour — C Company dealt with this van which contained 450 pounds of high quality explosives.

- 9 Nov Hoax car bomb — A Coy.
- 11 Nov Find 9 mm Pistol — A Coy.
- 14 Nov Hoax device — A Coy.
- 15 Nov
 1. 10 shots fired at RUC Hotspur on Shankill Rd.
 2. Bomb North Queen St device cleared by ATO.
- 16 Nov Hoax device Crumlin Rd cleared by ATO.
- 17 Nov Hoax device in Orient Bar Springfield Rd — cleared by ATO.
- 18 Nov Punishment shooting.
- 22 Nov 2 devices planted in Rock Bar — dealt with by ATO.
- 23 Nov Punishment shooting.
- 29 Nov House take over 26 Riverdale Park North.
- 30 Nov Blast bomb thrown into sangar Queen St — shots fired by escaping gunmen. Follow up aided by Divis Tower OP.

- 3 Dec Punishment shooting.
- 10 Dec IED found on railway line near Finaghy Road Stn.
- 13 Dec 1st baton round fired on Kelly's corner.
- 14 Dec Hoax device GAA Club.
- 16 Dec 800 lb Proxy bomb Lisburn Rd RUC Station, made up in St James area.
- 16 Dec Punishment shooting.
- 21 Dec Punishment shooting.
- 22 Dec Punishment shooting.
- 23 Dec
 1. Punishment shooting.
 2. 24 INLA prisoners released.
- 29 Dec Punishment shooting (RC).
Punishment shooting (PROT).
- 1 Jan Punishment shooting in Rock Bar.
- 4 Jan Find of hide with CB antenna, Thomson MG Mag — C Coy.

DIARY OF EVENTS

- 5 Jan PIRA house take over 252 Springfield Rd.
- 6 Jan Hoax bomb London St.
- 8 Jan Punishment shooting.
- 11 Jan Suspect car bomb cleared by ATO — Antrim Rd.
- 12 Jan PIRA house take over 5 Glenwood Crescent.
Find — 450 lbs explosives found inside van — C Coy.
- 14 Jan
 1. Youth jumped to his death in Divis Flats.
 2. 1 x Hoax IED outside Springfield Rd RUC Station — cleared by ATO.
 3. Punishment shooting.
- 18 Jan Find of 140 lbs explosive in Poleglass — C Coy.
- 20 Jan
 1. Punishment shooting.
 2. Murder of J J O'Reilly and T Power (INLA).
- 21 Jan
 1. PIRA house take over 17 Aspen Park.
 2. Punishment shooting.
- 23 Jan INLA funeral — J J O'Reilly and T Power.
- 27 Jan Hoax bomb 646 Springfield Rd.
- 28 Jan
 1. Punishment shooting.
 2. Punishment shooting.
- 30 Jan
 1. Emmanuel Gargan shot — INLA feud.
 2. Bombing of city centre 400 lbs car bomb.
 3. Bombing of Ambassador Hotel — ATO and A Coy tasked.
 4. Bombing of Mackies Factory.
- 31 Jan
 1. Car bomb containing 65 lbs of explosives cleared by ATO. Part of Mackies come on on 30 Jan.
- 1 Feb
 1. Hoax devices in Andersonstown Leisure Centre.
 2. Punishment shooting.
- 2 Feb 3 x suspect cars cleared by ATO.
- 3 Feb Punishment shooting.
- 4 Feb
 1. Blast bomb thrown into RUC Springfield Rd.
 2. Mortar attack RUC Dunmurry.

- 5 Feb
 1. Weapon find (.38 Smith and Wesson) and 2 x INLA players arrested — Pte Gascoine promoted in the field.
 2. Punishment shooting (Prot).
- 6 Feb 12 x incendiary devices planted in Park Centre. Cleared by B Coy and ATO.
- 7 Feb
 1. 2 x gunmen engaged with 2 rounds by Pte Cook, Milan Pl.
 2. 5 x Baton rounds fired on Falls/Springfield Rd.
 3. Punishment shooting.
- 8 Feb Ammo find 12 x .38 pistol rounds found.
- 9 Feb Punishment shooting.
- 10 Feb Suspect car cleared by ATO.
- 12 Feb
 1. Find of 1 x Mk 10 mortar tube in New Barnsley Crescent — B Coy.
 2. Punishment shooting.
 3. Shoot at RUC Woodbourne — 20 x HV shots + 1 x IPG from passing car.
 4. PIRA house takeover of Nos 1 and 6 Glasvey Drive.
- 13 Feb Find of IPG round (blind) used in the Woodbourne attack.
- 14 Feb
 1. PIRA telephone calls to BBC reporting abandoned bomb in Mullholland Terrace, Falls Rd.
 2. Firing point for Mulholland Terrace device found.
- 15 Feb Cordon and clearance operation — Mullholland Terrace. Find of claymore device including 2 lbs of explosives and 5 lbs of ball bearings — B Coy.
- 16 Feb
 1. Suspect device planted outside Safeways, Springfield Rd, — cleared by ATO and B Coy.
 2. 3 x HV shots at cordon for clearance of Safeways Device.
 3. Hoax device Crumlin Rd — ATO cleared.
- 17 Feb Punishment shooting.
- 17 Feb Michael Kearney murdered in Ballymurphy — INLA feud.
- 19 Feb Find of Pistol.
- 20 Feb
 1. Blast Bomb found on fence of Springfield Road.
 2. Punishment shooting.

- 21 Feb 1. 2 x PIRA house takeovers.
2. Michael Kearney's Funeral.
3. 10 - 15 HV Automatic Shots fired at Cpl **Simmon's** Brick on the Falls Road.
- 22 Feb 1. PIRA house takeover 24 Heathfield Park.
2. Punishment shooting.
- 23 Feb Punishment beating.
- 25 Feb Find of handgrenade — A Coy.
- 27 Feb 3 Hoax Bombs — A Coy.
- 1 Mar 1. Punishment shooting.
2. Hoax device 646 (Laundry) Springfield Road.
- 3 Mar INLA punishment shooting Stewartstown Road. 5 - 6
shotsfired at cordon — C Coy.
- 6 Mar 1. Multiple hoax bombs North Belfast — A Coy.
2. Bomb explosion Clonard Street. Pte Brady injured
— B Coy.
- 7 Mar 1. Find of bomb in telegraph pole Ballymurphy — B Coy.
2. Ammunition find Ballymurphy — B Coy.
3. 2 x hoax devices North Belfast — A Coy.
- 10 Mar Bomb explosion Ardoyne shops. RUC Constable **Nesbitt**
killed — A Coy.
- 12 Mar Major search Divis flats — 70 rounds of ammunition
found.
- 13 Mar 1. City centre bombs.
2. Hoax proxy bomb New Barnsley Police Station
— B Coy.
3. Hoax proxy bomb North Howard Street Mill — A
and B Coys.
4. Hoax bomb Park Centre — B Coy.
5. Hoax proxy bomb Andersonstown Police Station —
C Coy.
- 14 Mar 1. 40 rds fired at mobile patrol Monagh Bypass —
C Coy.
2. Murder of Gerard Steenson INLA.
- 15 Mar Weapons find Divis — B Coy.
- 16 Mar Ammunition find Tyndale — A Coy.
- 17 Mar Funeral Gerard Steenson INLA.





The Mackies Car Bomb Incident

On 30 January two armed men placed a holdall of explosives on a windowsill outside Mackies Factory on Springfield Road, in an obvious attempt to draw us into the area. After much consideration it was decided not to go anywhere near the device.

The following day a suspicious car was reported in what would have been a good cordon position for our soldiers. After several controlled explosions (top left) ATO cleared the car and found a very sophisticated bomb in the boot containing 65 pounds of explosives (bottom left).

Once ATO had finished all the Police Agencies moved in to look at the remains of a brand new Meastro (top).

FOR THE IMMEDIATE ATTENTION OF SENIOR OFFICERS ON DUTY

B3C RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING TELEX FROM REP. PRESS CENTRE AT 1253 HOURS 14.2.87.
FROM BELFAST BRIGADE IRA. LAST NIGHT VOLUNTEERS WERE FORCED TO ABANDON AN OPERATION DURING PREPARATION OF A BOMB ATTACK AGAINST CROWN FORCES. EXPLOSIVES ARE IN A DERELICT HOUSE, MULHOLLAND TERRACE, FALLS ROAD. TO ENSURE SAFETY OF CIVILIANS IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY, WE ISSUED A WARNING THROUGH MEDIA LAST NIGHT, SOME OF WHICH REPORTED THE WARNING. AT THE TIME OF ISSUING THIS PRESENT WARNING NO ATTEMPT AT EVACUATION OF THE AREA HAS BEEN MADE BY CROWN FORCES. WE KNOW THAT THE AREA IS UNDER SURVEILLANCE OTHERWISE WE WOULD REMOVE THE EXPLOSIVES OURSELVES. WE WOULD ASK THE PEOPLE OF MULHOLLAND TERRACE TO LEAVE THEIR HOMES AND FORCE THE HAND OF THE RUC AND BRITISH ARMY.



ATO walks back having defused the device.



The Falls Road Claymore

On the 14 February PIRA informed the RUC that a device had been planted in a derelict in Mullholland Terrace. (See message above left). After a long cordon and search operation a Claymore type device containing 2 pounds of commercial explosives and 5 pounds of steel ball bearings (above) was defused. Had this device been detonated it would have killed any soldiers in the area and also ripped into the Childrens Ward of the Hospital opposite.



VISITORS



The Prime Minister visited Girdwood and spent some time talking to the men of A Company.

13 Nov Comd 39 Bde initial visit — Brigadier I L Freer OBE.

- 18 Nov 1. Comd 39 Bde — Brigadier I L Freer OBE.
2. Mr Mike Allen — SSVC TV.



Brigadier Wheeler discusses a problem with WO2 Luckman during the NITAT package at Sennelager.

- 19 Nov CO 1 KINGS OWN BORDER.
- 20 Nov 1. Commander Land Forces N Ireland — Major General A S Jeapes OBE.
2. Local press reporters from Colchester Evening Gazette, Leicester Mercury and Bedfordshire Times.
- 27 Nov Comd 1 (BR) Corps — General Sir Brian Kenny KCB OBE.
- 28 Nov Comd Comms N Ireland — Lieutenant Colonel M Roberts.
- 1 Dec BBC Radio Essex.
- 2 Dec Radio Chiltern and Radio Orwell.
- 3 Dec Comd 4 Armd Div — Maj General M F Hobbs CBE.
- 4 Dec CO 1 DWR.
- 7 Dec SSVV TV film crew.
- 10 Dec GOC N Ireland — Lieutenant General Sir Robert Pascoe KCB OBE.
- 12 Dec 1 QLR initial recce.
- 17 Dec BFBS radio CSE show.
- 19 Dec Regimental Band.
- 23 Dec The Prime Minister — Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP.
- 25 Dec Commander Land Forces N Ireland — Major General A S Jeapes OBE.
- 27 Dec Major Nick Kelsey 5 R ANGLIAN (V).
- 31 Dec Minister for the Armed Forces — Mr John Stanley MP.
- 8 Jan Chief of the General Staff — General Sir Nigel Bagnall GCB CVO MC ADC (GEN).
- 12 Jan NITAT (BAOR).
- 15 Jan 1. CO 1 ADTR.
2. Deputy Comd 39 Bde — Colonel J D Drummond.

- 16 Jan Comd Catering N Ireland — Lieutenant Colonel J J Bannister.
- 19 Jan Defence Correspondant of the Independant — Mark Urban.
- 20 Jan CSE show.
- 21 Jan Comd 11 Armd Bde — Brigadier J J J Phipps.
- 24 Jan 1 QLR Main Recce.
- 27 Jan GOC N Ireland — Lieutenant General Sir Robert Pascoe KCB.
- 30 Jan Mayor of Hertford — Councillor Sexton.
- 2 Feb Mayor of Chelmsford — Councillor Frost.
Essex Chronicle — Mrs Kathleen Corby.
- 3 Feb Commander Land Forces N Ireland — Major General A S Jeapes OBE.
- 4 Feb Comd NAAFI Brigadier (Retd) J W F Rucker.
- 5 Feb Mayor of Colchester-Councillor Bob Russel.
- 6 Feb Deputy Colonel of the Regiment — Major General A J Ward-Booth OBE — Farewell visit.
- 9 Feb Mayor of Bedford — Councillor Bill Astle.
- 10 Feb DUS for Civilian Management — Richard Hastie-Smith esq CB.
- 11 Feb MP for Colchester North — Sir Anthony Buck QC MP.
- 13 Feb Comd Sigs School of Infantry — Lieutenant Colonel Pearson.
- 14 Feb Mayor of Watford — Councillor Paul Harrison.
- 18 Feb Director Army Plans (Des) — Brigadier R N Wheeler OBE.
- 21 Feb 2LI Initial recce.
- 25 Feb Colonel of the Regiment — Lieutenant General Sir John Akehurst KCB CBE.
- 3 Mar Signals Officer in Chief Major General P D Alexander MBE.
- 4 Mar The High Sheriff of Essex — Mr David Keddie MBE.



The House of Lords Defence Committee in Killymurphy.



Major General Hobbs chats to WO2 Dolan.



The Quartermaster General meets Major Lacey.



The Commander Land Forces Northern Ireland was a frequent visitor. He always made a point of finding as many soldiers as possible and quizzing them on the yellow card.



Major General Ward-Booth talks to Lt Cpl Cooney in C Company Cookhouse. This was the Deputy Colonel of the Regiments last day in uniform.



The Chief of the General Staff with the Commanding Officer.



Sir Anthony Buck, QC, MP for Colchester North, with the Commanding Officer on top of the Divis Tower.



The Colonel of the Regiment with Major Lacey.



THE MAYORAL VISITS



HERTFORD



BEDFORD



COLCHESTER



CHELMSFORD



WATFORD



The Bandmaster. Mr. Byrne, finds time to foster community relations in the city centre

THE BAND IN BELFAST

The Band flew out to Belfast on flight 2204 from Gutersloh on 19 December. Having been met at Aldergrove by the Battalion Second in Command they moved to Musgrave Park which was to be the base for their stay. That evening they played their first engagement which was the Echelon carol service followed by a concert for the Officers Mess.

The following morning (Saturday) they were whisked into the centre of Belfast where they entertained the Christmas shoppers. A large crowd formed quite quickly and obviously enjoyed this unannounced concert. Having marched through the shopping precincts they were taken into the Mayor's Parlour and treated to a few pints of good Irish Guinness.

After lunch on the Saturday the Band moved to North Howard Street Mill where they performed two concerts for B Company followed by another show for the Sergeants Mess at Musgrave Park.

On the Sunday was the Battalion Carol Service at Fort Whiterock with another two concerts at lunch time in the cookhouse. After Fort Whiterock came Girdwood for A Company and RUC Springfield Road for TAC.

By Monday morning the short visit was over and the Band were on their way back to Minden.







3rd BATTALION (Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire & Essex)
THE ROYAL ANGLIAN REGIMENT
THE POMPADOURS