



08/08

ROYAL ANGLIAN NEWS

AUG 08

REGIMENTAL DAY

1. The Regimental Day will be held at the Imperial War Museum, Duxford, on Sunday 14 September. The programme for the Day will be as follows:

- 09 30 am Gates Open (entry via Gate 1)
- 10.30 am Regimental Association Annual General Meeting
- 11.00 am Muster for Drumhead Service
- 11.30 am Drumhead Service. Music by The Minden Band.
- 12.15 pm March Past
- 12.30 pm Bars, Kiosks and Stalls Open
- 13.00 pm Band Concert by The Royal Anglian Regiment Band
- 3.00 pm Beating Retreat
- 5.00 pm Bars and Stalls Close

APPOINTMENTS

2. RHQ has been informed of the following officer appointments:

- Maj MS Woodeson to SO2 Man Plans HQ 1 Mech Bde in Tidworth.
- Maj (LE) FA Ralph MBE to OC HQ Coy ITC Catterick

BATTALION ACTIVITIES

3. 1st Battalion

The Battalion dispersed for 4 weeks summer leave after celebrating a slightly advanced Minden Day on 24 July. They returned to work in the last week of August, hence there is not a great deal to report this month.

Battalion Headquarters attended a mini CAST in Warminster. The CAST staff talked through the '7 Questions' and Battalion Headquarters conducted a planning cycle with CAST staff assisting to refine the processes in slow time. This important run-out should

mean that the Headquarters is in good shape for CAST, CATT and TESEX in the forthcoming months.

A and C companies have both welcomed new company commanders. Maj Smith has taken over from Maj Biddick commanding **A (Norfolk) Company** and Maj Davies has taken over command of **C (Essex) Company** from Maj Messenger. The companies have been preparing for the receipt of extra vehicles from the Whole Fleet Management pool to ensure that we have the correct number for the forthcoming TESEX.

Maj Barry and the Quartermaster have conducted their initial recce of Kosovo for the **D (Cambridgeshire) Company** deployment from mid-March next year. This will allow Maj Barry to plan his training and selection cadres before heading down to OPTAG in October and November.

Next month will be very busy for the Battalion. Battalion Headquarters will be tested at CAST and CATT in consecutive weeks and the companies will be continuing their preparation for TESEX. The Viking Rugby Club will also be conducting a tour of East Anglia, with matches in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire.

4. 2nd Battalion

FROM THE COMMANDING OFFICER

This edition of the Newsletter falls neatly at the mid-tour point for the vast majority of Poachers. As we approach the 'downhill slope' it is a great opportunity for us to reflect of what we have achieved over the last 3 months. 52 Brigade, the Iraqi Army unit that we are MiTTing, have changed and improved markedly. They are now conducting considered and effective operations and their Jundi all now imitate their Poacher mentors. Key milestones achieved in the last month include participation in complex search operations and the widespread use of aviation to cover the large Area of Operations.

As for what we are doing - well not much has changed on that score. The outlook in Iraq remains relentlessly positive. The Poachers are still doing a quite exceptional job. In all my time in the Army, and on all of the tours that that has brought, I cannot remember a feeling of making so much difference. It is a real shame that the media haven't really caught on to this because there is a great story to tell here - the British Army at its best helping a proud Nation to grow again. Unfortunately, as we all know, good news does not necessarily make good news. I see the soldiers grafting every day in pretty unforgiving conditions, but always with a smile on their faces and always with an eye on how to make things even better.

A (Lincolnshire) Company continue to do an excellent job up in Bagdad; the Battalion 2IC and Quartermaster have both recently visited and brought back glowing reports. Recently the senior British General in Iraq, who is based in Baghdad, told me that they were "doing me proud"; so praise indeed. **B (Leicestershire) Company** continues to live and work alongside the Iraqis, making a difference quite literally every minute of the day. **C (Northamptonshire and Rutland) Company** have developed their role training the Iraqis far further than I think anyone thought possible and **D (Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire) Company** - well they have become so good at hiding behind things I cannot tell you how well they are doing! The **HQ Company** soldiers are also doing what

they always seem to do, looking after us magnificently with minimal fuss and never seeking the limelight.

It definitely feels as if we are entering a new phase of the tour now. The weather is changing and cannot make its mind up at the moment; not knowing if it wants to be very hot and dry, hot and wet, or just hot; but there is a sense that the worst of the summer is now coming to an end. The various targets we have been set to achieve are suddenly looming very large and, unbelievably, planning for handing over to the next unit is in full swing. It isn't quite time to be looking forward to the end of the tour and what is to follow, but I shall be including that in the newsletters to come.

HQ Company

The men and women of HQ Company continue to strive to keep the companies on the ground administered, supplied and communicating. The incorporation of personnel from the SCOTS DG, 9/12L and 4 SCOTS into the mass of the HQ UK MiTT Gp has been a success, with greater effects achieved from our limited manpower.

Key events over the last month have been the closing of the Poacher's cookhouse and the opening of the enormous hardened cookhouses across the road from the camp. The Regimental Catering Warrant Officer, WO2 Thornton, has taken on the mammoth task of being in charge of two of these facilities. Once again she has achieved this without issue or complaint.

A (Lincolnshire) Company

A (Lincolnshire) Company remains in Baghdad as the Protection Force (PROFOR), continuing its tasks of guards and escort patrols in support of the Senior British Military Representative-Iraq (SBMR-I).

There have been no major incidents to report since the last Newsletter, with the exception of several further warning shots being fired by our top cover sentries to enforce the exclusion zone around the patrols in this high threat environment. The operational tempo varies from week to week and depends very much on SBMR-I's diary. However at the half-way point of Op TELIC 12, it is worth noting that A Company has now conducted nearly as many patrols into the Red Zone of Baghdad (excluding Route Irish) as the previous Battle Group conducted in the whole of Op TELIC 11. These have included recent visits to new destinations such as civilian prisons in Northern Baghdad, which SBMR-I has been visiting as part of his remit to advise the Government of Iraq on implementing the Rule of Law.

A Company ended last month with its own Talavera Day celebrations on 27 July. This was an alcohol free affair, but almost the entire Company was able to stand down for a few hours while the sangars were handed over to members of the Baghdad Support Unit. This enabled a rare opportunity for the Company to participate in swimming at the US Liberty Pool, followed by an Inter-Platoon Volleyball Competition and a BBQ. The only members of the Company still operationally tasked were some of the 1-Star Escort Team who occupy a multi-storey office block out in the Red Zone, providing close protection for a British Brigadier working there.

On 3 Aug, Sgt Hume led the Company's last Snatch patrol. This is a landmark as it was also potentially the last time that Snatch will be used in the whole of Iraq as the main patrol vehicle. Half of the Company's outdated (and much maligned) Snatch fleet has now been replaced by the newer Vector; this is an armoured 6 x 6 Pinzgauer vehicle with greater capacity, cross country mobility and a slightly improved level of armour protection compared to Snatch. Fitted with two swing mounted GPMGs, it also provides greater firepower should this be required and it certainly looks the part on patrol, prompting many interested questions from our US colleagues. A few equipment support issues aside, Vector provides a welcome increase in capability for our patrols, although Snatch has not gone for good and has since been used on patrol a few times to stand in for individual Vector vehicles.

With the R&R programme now having picked up, manning has been tight and those left behind have been stepping up (or down in the case of Coy HQ) to ensure that patrols can continue with no reduction in capability. At this point in previous tours there would be a relief in place occurring between PROFOR companies; however the decision was made to keep A Company in Baghdad for the whole 6 months; this means that the Company is fully up to speed on the local situation and ready for another 3 months of providing protection and freedom of movement to SBMR-I.

B (Leicestershire) Company

B (Leicestershire) Company have completed another hot and testing 4 weeks in Iraq, with temperatures rumoured to have hit 60 degrees Celsius on some occasions. Everyone has now grown accustomed to operating in these harsh conditions and the acceptance that you will be hot and sweaty for 6 months is necessary to preserve your own sanity. As an added bonus, a 180 degree shift in the wind direction has recently brought us humidity levels that a sauna would be jealous of!

These challenging conditions have, however, been met head on by the men of B Company in true Poacher style and everyone has excelled in performing their duties. An overview of the Company's exploits is difficult to summarise in so few words, so more detail is shown below.

Company Headquarters

The OC, Maj Pete Smith, is still on R and R, much to the relief of 5 Platoon who normally have to pamper to his every need on a daily basis. The Platoon looks forward to his return and his tales of intrepid travel around Thailand.

Meanwhile, holding the fort at the COB, CSgt Paul Groom has been putting up with the requests for kit and equipment being put in by the platoons out on the ground. His little helpers, Cpl Morgan, Ptes McIntyre, Inchley and Walker, have also been grafting hard. The nature of this tour has made it particularly hard on the stores side of life, but with 3 platoons spread over 100kms, CSgt Groom is performing admirably and 'magics' up some bits of kit when you'd least expect them. The outstations are starting to receive fresh food now after 3 months of ORP and morale has risen accordingly.

4 Platoon

Al Qurnah, approximately 80km North of Al Basrah, is Iraq's fourth most popular tourist destination (according to the 1912 edition of Lonely Planet's guide to Mesopotamia); and 4 Platoon have been enjoying everything that it has to offer within the confines of their camp. Well established, they have been working hard to improve the living conditions for the people of Al Qurnah. One huge project has been completed in the form of cleaning up the dirty streets surrounding the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. Run over a 2 week period, and driven largely by the Iraqi Army and local leaders, it has seen the employment of approximately 4300 people and has paid US\$700,000 into the local economy. After seeing some pretty impressive improvements, the only fear is that after having paid so many people in 100 dollar bills, there will now be no loose change available in Al Qurnah for the next year or so!

Real progress is continually being made by the 4th Bn of the 52nd IA Bde, who continue to provide security for the residents of Al Qurnah and Al Madinah to the West. The history of this area is fascinating as it is the site of repeated sieges and defences over the last 100 years (by the British, the Americans and the Iranians) and some staggering attacks. 25 years ago, this key terrain was fought over in a series of bloody battles which utilised chemical and biological weapons. The legacy is still visible and 4 Platoon have been steadily contributing toward improving the area.

5 Platoon

The 5 Platoon camp has a very friendly feel to it. Open plan and based upon a renovation idea developed by Anneka Rice, walking anti-clockwise from the accommodation around the camp results in a quick gym session, followed by a shower, before a quick bite to eat, then work. Initially an Iraqi Army camp, it was damaged by shelling in 1991 and then became makeshift stables for a platoon of cows. More recently, it has become the home of the 3rd Bn of the 52 IA Bde and 5 Platoon.

The Platoon has continued to be the hub of many operations in the North of Basra City. Located in one of the key locations in the city, 5 Platoon have conducted joint patrols with their IA Battalion and with the Fusiliers. This has included many complex operations with different units and many foot patrols around the North of the City with their IA counterparts.

6 Platoon

6 Platoon have had the hardest of the tour so far. From the very beginning they had a difficult Iraqi Army unit to work with - the 2nd Bn of 52 Bde (2/52) - but they worked hard in austere conditions to achieve their tasks. After a third of the tour, they were pulled from this and away from the Brigade that 4 and 5 Platoons were still working with and moved into the City. After a brief period of time, they were re-tasked once again. As this newsletter is written, 6 Platoon are working with their third unit - 1/26 - based in the once notorious Shia Flats, on the western outskirts of Basra City. They have consistently shown remarkable fortitude and a positive attitude, with the patience of a group of saints.

Now residing in a school that will soon welcome the return of its students in a few weeks, 6 Platoon have taken over the reins from an American Marine Corps unit who are returning to America after a 15 month tour! On the plus side, some of the kit that has been left

behind by the outgoing unit has made the eyes of the kit orientated deviants light up. Led by Lt George Wyndham, whose prolific kit purchasing is only beaten by that of LCpl Roffee, the small boxes of American kit and food will doubtlessly provide hours of interest.

C (Northamptonshire and Rutland) Company

C (Northamptonshire and Rutland) Company has again had a busy and varied month. 7 and 8 platoons and Company HQ, based in the Divisional Training Centre (DTC) in Shaibah, have continued to train the Iraqi Army and also develop the facilities and capabilities of the logistics and engineer units based here. In addition, 2 and 9 platoons continue to perform to the highest level in Basra; they are now working alongside the COs of 4 SCOTS and 9/12L respectively and are both MiTTing Iraqi Bns.

The R&R plot has really kicked in this month (indeed, I was fortunate to have a fantastic 12 days with my family in Germany during August). So those soldiers left at the DTC have had to shoulder the burden of extra duties - but morale has remained high

Training continued apace this month with the completion of the Special Operations Company Course, the Medical Specialist Qualification Course (which was of 5 weeks duration), the 50 IA Brigade Military Operations in the Urban Terrain Training and the Sniper Course (completed 1 Sep). Further, we have had the long awaited start of the 'Train the Trainer' (T3) course, continuation of Driver & Maintenance training and courses for the IA Engr Regt & Location Command unit. The Iraqi Army's approach to training continues to improve; indicative of this is the level of the senior guests at the 3 graduations this month: Major General Aziz (Commander 14th IA Division) and Staff-Brigadier Bassim twice (Deputy Commander 14 Div) twice. Moreover, the 14th Division have also sent us 13 soldiers to be trained as instructors (T3) to eventually takeover training in the DTC in the longer term. The aspiration, and what we are working towards, is for the British Company at the DTC to work in support of an IA DTC Commander, but this is unlikely during our time. Nevertheless, we continue to make great strides forward.

With the end of the Spec Ops course, we lost the 4 SCOTS Company minus from our location. I believe they enjoyed their stay (we enjoyed them guarding their Camp DOUGLAS rather than us) and we will miss the transportation link to the COB that they kindly provided with their Warrior vehicles. We are due to get a Coalition Police Advisory Training Team in the DTC in the near future; they will link in with the Iraqi Police and Border Enforcement Training Establishment at Shaibah and also, fingers-crossed, take on the DOUGLAS guard from us.

We have tried to keep the links with 9 and 2 platoons in the City, although communications are not great. They continue to perform to a high level. The continuing generally quiet time in the City is due to the increasing effectiveness of the IA; 9 and 2 platoons can be proud of their efforts as MiTTs - they have certainly been widely praised. They say 'a change is as good as a rest' - so we have rotated a number of the soldiers between these platoons and the DTC. Currently, it looks as though all have enjoyed the change.

The soldiers have worked tirelessly to improve security at Camp STEELBACK at the DTC. With the assistance of some British and Iraqi Engineers we have moved sangars, built a sangar and filled Hescos in various places to improve security. Unfortunately, in late July, our allies, who are based in a compound next to us, had a robbery. The Company, and in-

particular CSM Dyson, have since worked tirelessly to help them improve their security arrangements, but it certainly brought some unwanted excitement at 3AM in the morning.

It is not all work, work, work. C Company at the DTC has not forgotten that we like to do 'a lot of work for chaaaaaararity' (sic). Although we are in a small outstation, we have raised a further \$260 for The Poachers' Memorial Fund by donations for the wristbands and collected \$139 on Talavera Day for the same cause. C Company would also like to pass on their congratulations to the Battalion's toddlers; we understand they raised well in excess of 500 Euros on the recent Barnados' Big Toddle. Additionally, we are now raising money for WO2 Tilley's charity bomb-disposal be-suited 3-peaks challenge. CSM Donovan kindly passed this on and we shall endeavour to do our best for this member of the Northamptonshire Regiment Association (the charity link for those interested is: www.justgiving.com/bombsuitchallenge). The money is to help pay for a Blesma rehab skiing event. It would not surprise me if our Pte O'Connor is one of those attending.

We continue to be thankful for the cards and parcels and email messages from our friends and family. The post is always eagerly awaited on the supply links from the COB. In addition, we have been very lucky and humbled to receive mail from supporting strangers. One of the platoons in the city received bags of parcels in response to letters to various establishments and magazines. Moreover, we have received unsolicited parcels from a Brownies group in Bristol and the Horncastle and District RBL. They have been very gratefully received and have certainly helped maintain morale. We have also received some postcards from the UWO showing some of the visits the families have conducted from Celle.

We have had a few personnel changes. Capt Hawes has moved on to MiTT an IA Battalion in 52 Brigade with the Commanding Officer, with CSgt Brown stepping up to the mark as Operations CSgt. We have said goodbye and good luck to LCpl Brown and Cpl Green as they have left to attend SCBC and also to Ptes Adams, Walmsley and Fairbrother who are on the Fire Team Commanders' Cadre (these three will return before the end of tour). Unfortunately, Cpl Birkin did not recover from his wrist injury in time for SCBC but he should, Insha'Allah, attend another course in early 2009. However, many congratulations do go to him and his wife on their marriage in the middle of the month. Additionally, congratulations go to CSgt Booth and his wife, Katie, on the birth of their son – he will not return to Iraq as he is due to go on his Mortar Platoon Commanders' course in the near future.

All our families and friends are again thanked for their continuing support; it obviously makes our job here that bit easier. All the soldiers are working hard and will continue to do so until they see you at the end of tour (or for some, on R&R).

D (Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire) Company

August has been a challenging month for the three elements of D Coy: the Brigade Reconnaissance and Surveillance Company (BSC), the Armageddon Platoon and the multiples with the MiTTs. The latter continue to do excellent work, which is covered elsewhere in this Newsletter. The Armageddon Platoon has contributed directly to interdiction operations that have removed irreconcilables from South Iraq. This has helped sustain the more permissive environment which permits the MiTTs to provide their training support to the Iraqi Army.

The BSC has continued to bounce around Southern Iraq enhancing the Brigade's understanding of the battle space, disrupting lethal aid movement and helping to counter the IDF threat through covert operations. The challenges posed by the environment make this role, in which soldiers routinely carry 80+lbs, extremely hard work. We continue to prosper as a Joint Company with the 35 excellent officers and soldiers we have from the 9/12 Lancers.

A number of D Coy/BSC soldiers received very upsetting news regarding loved ones in the last few weeks. Our full support and sympathy is with them at this time.

5. 3rd Battalion

August started with the annual Minden Day celebrations at The Keep, which seem to get bigger each year. In addition to the Colour Party, HQ Coy turned out a marching contingent alongside the 1 R ANGLIAN soldiers.

In mid August, all 5 companies conducted a Level 2 Adventurous Training weekend. These included hill walking, rock climbing, canoeing and caving and were conducted from Cornwall to the Lakes. This summer activity has laid a good foundation for next years' Peru Trip, which is being feverishly planned by the Adjutant and Padre.

The Battalion deployed small training teams to Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Lincolnshire and Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland ACF camps over the last 6 weeks. These teams have normally deployed for 3 - 4 days and have either run ranges or taught field craft to the senior cadets. These deployments have been mutually beneficial to both units and are evidence of the strengthening links between the organisations within the Regimental family.

The key training event for August was the Commanders' Battlefield Study to Arnhem at the end of the month. This Study saw 38 commanders deploy in order to investigate Urban Operations. The trip was enhanced by the Battalion inviting 2 veterans from Leicester - Mr Frank Clerk and Mr Eric Buckley - and a local Dutchman, Mr Daniel Viergever, who had been a boy during the battle. In addition, WO1 Hamilton, the RSM of Norfolk ACF also attended. The Study saw Company syndicates undertake 3 planning sessions using modern weapons and techniques, before a Guide gave a feel for what really happened during the Battle. Although many had a late finish home on the Sunday night, 0300 hrs for some, it was generally accepted to have been an excellent training opportunity.

The Battalion now has a new 2IC, with Maj Nick Sutherland in the chair and Maj Mark Bevin taking over from him as OC C Coy. Sgts Jeffree and Shaw were promoted to CSgt and appointed as 2IC Machine Guns and Anti Tank/Recce PIs. The Battalion also had 10 successful passes at Recruit Phase 1 Training and another 20 recruits passing their TAFS and starting Phase 1 Training in August.

As August ends, all eyes are firmly fixed on Annual Camp, which will take place at the end of September; it is the final element of our COIN training period.