



02/09

## ROYAL ANGLIAN NEWS

FEB 09

### HONOURS AND AWARDS

1. The Regiment is delighted to announce and congratulates Maj OCC Brown for his award of a QCVS whilst serving as COS HQ 4 Mech Bde in Iraq, published on 6 Mar 09 in the Armed Forces Op Awards List 32.

### CONVERSION OF COMMISSION

2. The Regiment is pleased to announce and congratulates the following officers for being selected for conversion of commission:

- Capt APT Wilde has been selected for conversion of commission from IRC to Reg C wef 12 Mar 09.
- Maj DJ Stefanetti MBE has been selected for conversion of commission from IRC to Reg C (LE) wef 12 Mar 09.

### BATTALION ACTIVITIES

#### 3. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion

With the Vikings spending a week on stand down before taking over the Spearhead Land Element (SLE) in March, February was a particularly short month. Nevertheless the Battalion completed some important training events to prepare for the assumption of this commitment.

The Battalion Skills Competition was the first major event of the month. In thick snow, the platoons undertook a challenging patrol competition over the nights of 4 and 5 Feb 09. Over the course of approximately 30-35 km, the platoons were tested at seven separate stands including fitness, intelligence gathering and search, signals, mine clearance, initiative and command and control. Points were scored per stand as well as for the overall time taken to complete the competition. All platoons performed well considering the added pressure from the weather but, in the end, Lt Granell led the ISTAR Platoon (comprising of Recce and Sniper elements) to victory.

A and B companies then dusted themselves down and headed to Copehill Down Village where they conducted Public Order Training. After petrol bomb inoculation, the platoons conducted Platoon Training for 24hrs followed by Battle Exercises for a further 24hr period. Civpop arrived in the form of a troublesome-looking D (Cambridgeshire) Coy and the companies were put through their paces before being successfully validated.

Ex First Flight was conducted to check the Battalion's readiness to deploy worldwide at short notice and involved moving the whole Battalion to South Cerney. The exercise went well and the Battalion received a good report from both the umpires from 12 Bde and JFHQ; the objectives were achieved and the CO confirmed that the Battle Group was ready to deploy. BGHQ also conducted an operational planning cycle at South Cerney which highlighted the different nature of

possible SLE deployments. Other preparation for SLE has included the takeover of vehicles and radios from Edinburgh by the QM's Department and CIS Platoon.

After leave, B (Suffolk) Company led a Permanent Range Team commitment to 12 Bde Live Fire Tactical Training (LFTT) at Lydd & Hythe. The Training Officer, Capt Olivier, facilitated this by running a range authorization cadre, thus increasing the numbers of qualified JNCOs available to support the LFTT.

C (Essex) Company have recently completed the arduous 7 week Surveillance Reconnaissance Course, achieving an excellent grade and report. The course, which prepared them for their future role as the British Surveillance Company in Kosovo, culminated in a nine day exercise. All of the advanced surveillance and reconnaissance skills taught during the course were tested during the exercise, as well as the Company's resistance to prolonged exposure to sub-zero conditions! Having gathered sufficient intelligence on the 'exercise criminals', C (Essex) Company were able to conduct a dramatic, reactive operation resulting in a number of arrests and the discovery of large quantities of illegal weapons; so a successful operation. The penultimate night at Lydd was spent in the infamous SR Bar, where Team 1, led by Cpl Farrugia, and Team 11, led by Cpl Watson, were deemed Best Team and Fittest Team respectively. The Company is currently preparing to depart on 2 weeks pre-deployment leave and will start deploying to Theatre in mid-March.

Amongst the hard work, a little time has been found for play and the eagle-eyed observers of the Six Nations may have noticed Minden-flashed soldiers acting as flag carriers at Twickenham, standing behind the England team during the National Anthems.

**Afternote:** C (Essex) Company's deployment to Kosovo has been cancelled.

#### 4. **2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion**

This month the Poachers have been busy enjoying an unprecedented period of time in Germany; with time to rest, relax and begin the long process of training at the lowest level to ensure that the building blocks of the Battalion are strong, prior to our Collective Training later in the year. Key events in the month have been the departure of Lieutenant Colonel Simon Brown and the arrival of the new Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Wooddisse and his family, to begin their life in Germany. The new Commanding Officer has hit the ground running, or at least marching, leading the Battalion on its series of Freedom Parades in the UK.

Apart from their commitments in the UK to reinforce their links to the community, the Poachers have been busy training, planning adventure training and conducting routine Battalion in camp life. In this edition you will hear how a small team of Poachers took on the might of the Royal Marines in the Commando Speed March in Scotland, read a report on the first of the UK based Homecoming Parades and learn how the retraining of D (Fire Support) Company is going in preparation for their deployment to the Falklands.

#### **Commando Speed March**

After a calorie filled manoeuvre from Germany to the Scottish Highlands, the Poachers' Speed March Team arrived in Spean Bridge. The Speed March is a replication of the Commando Selection process used during World War Two. After completing Phase 1 Training, the top recruits were put on a train bound for Scotland. On arrival at Spean Bridge they were given a kit bag (35lbs) and told to 'Speed March' to Achnacarry Castle (Commando Training Depot used during the war). The 7 mile journey starts with a 200ft hill climb up to the location where the Commando Memorial now stands. From there the road undulates down to Gairloch. The bridge over the Loch marks the half way and the start of a 100ft climb into the Forest. The remaining 3 miles is fairly straightforward, until the final hill rise up to the gate at Achnacarry Castle. One hour after setting

off the gate would close. All those who didn't make it in the hour were sent back to the train and then on to a regular Infantry unit.

With the absence of D Company and the Company Boxers, many of the regular Battalion super-athletes were unavailable. This gave a lot new lads the chance to come forward and volunteer themselves for an arduous event. Training had been sporadic and limited due to Company Ranges, but nevertheless all 12 runners were suitably prepared for the run. There were 350 runners altogether, coming from 28 military teams. The mass start was chaotic, but everyone got away OK. As we reached the summit of the first hill we were hit with a barrage of wind and rain, but this failed to deter the runners. Bad weather continued, but so did the runners, with all 12 putting in a good finish.

LCpl 'Tats' Taylor came in 5<sup>th</sup> (52 minutes), pipped to the post by semi-pro runners from RLC HQ. Captain Jeff Bennett-Madge finished at 56 minutes, followed by myself and Pte Saul Scott who missed the hour mark by 50 seconds. LCpl 'Barry' Tanner came in at 1hr 04min to complete the Top 5 required for the team average. LCpl 'Smudger' Smith and privates Clark, Routledge, Sunman, Brotheridge, Weymouth and Smith (A Company) also finished the race in respectable times.

The Prize Giving was held after a formal meal in Fort William. For many of the private soldiers this was the first time they had worn a tie since school or passing out, so some felt uncomfortable about appearing so smart in public. Nevertheless, they definitely enjoyed themselves and it was an experience they won't forget. The team rankings were dominated by PARA and Commando units, however we finished in the top half and got a good mention in the speeches. 7 RHA won the event (having entered a 40 man team) and 2 PARA came in second. But we have now learnt exactly how the event works, so with the inclusion of some more Battalion fitness monsters and extra training, we could make a challenge for the title next year.

### **Poachers on Parade**

During the week of the 9<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> March, the Poachers have been back in their recruiting areas, marking their successful return from Operations, with four parades through the towns and cities of the East Midlands. As many readers of the Regimental Newsletter will be aware, the parades attracted huge support from our counties and the Regimental community. There was, of course, a small protest in Luton, but those few voices were drowned out by the incredible support, whilst the Public reaction to the Poachers on parade over the following two days was quite extraordinary.

### **Training the Specialists – Fire Support Company and the Signals Platoon train the next generation**

This month D (Fire Support) Company has begun the long process of training the next generation of Mortar, Reconnaissance, Anti-Tank and Machinegun platoons soldiers. The complicated process has begun with the selection of soldiers from the rifle companies prior to 6 weeks of arduous training across the Hohne Garrison and in the UK.

The Anti-Tank Platoon has recently deployed to Nook Camp on the edge of Salisbury Plain to take advantage of the extensive training facilities that exist on the Plain. The Machinegun Platoon has just completed a rewarding week of Machinegun marksmanship training on Sennelager ranges; whilst the Recce Platoon are rumoured to be hiding in a variety of foliage across the training area in Hohne and the fields surrounding Celle. Finally the Mortar Platoon are familiarising themselves with the procedures of their new sections prior to live firing in the Falkland Islands in May. Whilst not part of D (Fire Support) Company, the Signals Platoon are also coming to the end of a complex 6 weeks of training for the next generation of Signallers from across the Battalion; as the Platoon keep on reminding their counterparts in the rest of the Battalion - "no comms no bombs!"

## 5. 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion

February has seen a busy Cadre period. The Support Weapons platoons are now ready to deploy with the Poachers in March, 12 men passed their Combat Signallers Cadre and 4 men converted to drive military vehicles. In addition, the rifle platoons have completed Weapon Handling Tests on GPMG, LMG, UGL and Pistol.

On the Offensive Operations side, a Battle Group planning day was held on 14 Feb, in order to conduct an estimate, war-game the plan and produce an Op Order for Ex STEELBACK ASSAULT II on Salisbury Plain at the end of the month. The planning was led by the Bn 2IC, Maj Sutherland, with the Ops Offr, Capt Coulson, pulling together a detailed Op Order. Ex STEELBACK ASSAULT II should be an outstanding FTX, with over 100 attachments to the Battalion from other Brigade units.

The Battalion was honoured to have Mr Martin Bell present Iraq Medals at Duxford on Sunday 15 February, to those who deployed with the Poachers on Op TELIC 12. The medals were presented to 8 of the 24 soldiers, however 16 soldiers and their families attended the event taking the total present to around 90. The event consisted of a Thanksgiving Service, conducted by the ex-Poachers Padre, Robin Richardson, which was followed by a presentation on the tour by the CO, with personal reflections from Cpl Roach, Pte Johnson and Pte Collins. The event was enjoyed by all and received some good media coverage.

The CO, Trg Maj and QM went on a recce to Texas, in order to organise the exchange with the Texas Army National Guard in July. The host unit, 3-144 Infantry, recruits from Dallas and are similar in many ways to the Steelbacks in their approach to training and enjoyment. The exchange will take place primarily in Fort Hood and will involve Desert Training, Urban Ops and range work, with R&R in St Antonio. The CO will tour all Coys in Mar/Apr, in order to give a detailed brief on what training will be conducted during the first leg in Texas and the second leg on Salisbury Plain in Sep.

On 19 Feb, A (Norfolk & Suffolk) Coy organised a dinner for Norfolk employers, as part of the SaBRE outreach programme. The dinner was attended by CGS, the Lord Lieutenant and the Brigade Comd, in addition to members of the TA in Norfolk and, of course, local employers. Cpl Baker gave an excellent brief on his time in Afghanistan with the Vikings' Mortar Platoon. All at A Coy, especially Capt Tam Steele, were congratulated by CGS for a job well done.

The Battalion has also found time to run an Inter Coy Rugby 7s Competition at Grantham, with Sgt Wallis taking on the organisation of the day. It was an enjoyable event and, despite a fierce fought competition, no one was injured....too badly. The winners of the event were B (Lincolnshire) Coy. Following prizegiving, 15 men were selected as the basis for a Battalion Squad to enter the Brigade Competition in April and then possibly onto the Akrotiri 10s, in Cyprus, in the summer.

The next major event for the Battalion is Ex STEELBACK ASSAULT II on SPTA at the end of the Month, which will conclude the Offensive Ops period. The focus will then switch to Urban Ops until Oct. The other key training events in Mar will be the Support Weapon Cadres with the Poachers and the Bde MATT (Military Skills Competition rehearsal) weekend at the end of the month.