



02/12

ROYAL ANGLIAN NEWS

FEB 12

## APPOINTMENTS

1. Regimental Headquarters has been informed of the following officer posting:

Lt Col (Col 12) RW Wooddisse MBE MC from HCSC to Assistant Head Joint Warfare, Joint Capability, wef Apr 12.

2. 1<sup>ST</sup> BATTALION

The long road that is Mission Specific Training (MST) has finally reached its end this month with the MST Field Training Exercise (FTX) on Salisbury Plain – an exercise of considerable size and scope involving some 8,000 personnel, including a contingent from the Jordanian Armed Forces acting as a partnered force. As I look back over the past eight months, it is evident that the training programme, whilst not without its frustrations and challenges, has made for an impressive and reassuring end product. The Battalion is ready and, I would contend, after a far more refined and well-resourced training progression, in a much better position prior to deployment than we have been for any of our other recent operational tours. The skills have been honed, the teams gelled and the lessons learned. Anticipation is high and the overriding feeling is one of eagerness to get stuck into the job. When we hit the start line later this month, having benefitted from the final polish added by RSOI, all of our Vikings will be able to look at themselves and each other and take confidence from the levels of preparedness that both individually and collectively have been attained.

However, whilst we can look positively on what has been achieved and draw strength from the mantra of 'train hard, fight easy', the Battalion is of course acutely aware that there is a long road ahead and the test is yet to come. Much of the readership of this newsletter will have seen the coverage of what has been a difficult month for the campaign. Reports at Combined Force (CF) level from our predecessors have reassuringly suggested that there has been little change in their day to day business and the attitudes encountered. Notwithstanding this, *vigilance* will be the watchword in the early days of the tour, especially as the temperatures steadily rise and the traditional 'summer fighting season' gets under way. Suppressing this upsurge and breaking the cycle of violence will be one of our first and foremost priorities.

The deployment over the coming month will see some 520 Vikings, the bulk of the Battalion, deploy to form the core of CF Nad-e-Ali; however, we will of course be leaving behind a significant rear party in Bulford under the care of Major Phill Blanchfield. Their job will be just as challenging, albeit very different in nature, as those deployed. I am reassured by the knowledge that the Regimental Family will pull together, as it always does, to assist in the difficult times that may lie ahead. Not all Regiments are in such a fortunate position.

Finally I would wish to say thank you for all of the kind farewells and best wishes that have been very gratefully received. As the chapters unfold over the coming months, we will endeavour to keep the updates flowing, either by this means or through one of the Viking websites (ArmyNet, Facebook or the MOD internet site).

### 3. 2<sup>ND</sup> BATTALION

February has gone by quickly for the Battalion as the early stages of preparing for our Unit Move and the long road towards readiness for training in Kenya begin to see tangible results. Not a single company has been left out of the wide range of exercises, shoots, courses and recces which have taken place over the last month.

The role of Operations 1 Company has been taken over by A Company who are now rotating their soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers through the guard duties at the various sites across the island. With Major Rupert Whitham attached to D Company for their deployment to the Falklands next month, the Company welcomed Captain James Robinson as their acting Officer Commanding at a lively and energetic party held in the Poachers' Beach Bar.

B Company has embarked on an ambitious and thorough package of infantry skills training called Exercise Progressive Tiger. The sections and platoons have been seen deploying week after week, both day and night, to hone their skills in navigation, reconnaissance and fighting the enemy. This will pave the way to next month's training which will have them deployed to the western side of the island for week-long platoon level exercises.

C Company has been involved with assisting in the field trials of a new design of light-weight collapsible ladder intended for use on the front line. The men enthusiastically put the equipment through its paces in all the ways which it would be on operations; they considered the trials a great success by unequivocally showing that the ladders were by no means fit for purpose. Better to discover that here than in Afghanistan and, after thanking the Company, the design team returned to the UK and the drawing-board!

D Company has now completed the last of their pre-deployment preparations for their tour of the Falkland Islands next month and are enjoying a period of leave with their friends and families. The first flight left on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February on the long route to the Falkland Islands, via the UK and Ascension Islands, where the men benefitted from a stop over and their last taste of tropical sun before continuing to RAF Mount Pleasant.

Headquarters Company have been readying themselves for the challenges of planning, directing and sustaining the Battalion's upcoming exercises, with lessons on the computer-based communications that they will be using in Kenya. While these lessons have been classroom-based, practical work has not stopped and the MT Platoon continues to run excellent Landrover driving courses for the soldiers in all the companies.

Battalion sporting life continues to enjoy great success with the Poachers Football Team winning against Ayios Nikolias. In a match that went into extra time the winning goals were scored by LCpl Lusha and Cpl Daniel.

Families and soldiers alike continue to eagerly anticipate the Unit Move to Cottesmore and the Commanding Officer led a second recce to our new home with a party of wives accompanying him to see the place for themselves. While the offices in camp may need some work, the accommodation was widely regarded as more than satisfactory for both the single soldiers and the married families; and the party returned to Cyprus reassured and confident that a happy home awaits us in Cottesmore.

### 4. 3<sup>RD</sup> BATTALION

For the Steelbacks the month of February has flown by - even with the extra day. The Bn has been deep in close battle activity that has included mobilisation for Op OLYMPICS, planning for the ADX at the end of September, recruiting and a hectic schedule of community engagement. Against all this, the pace of change in Reserve Forces ahead of the Army Future Force announcements (Apr/May) and Future Reserves Study has been relentless; in many areas there has already been

lasting change and with much more to come too – Carpe Diem in every way...

### **Operations:**

The cohort supplied to the Vikings finished their final HERRICK MST this month and are currently relaxing on well earned pre-deployment leave. Already in theatre, CSgt Chambers has reported back from his role as CSgt Instructor at the Afghan Officer Training Academy (aka 'Sandhurst in the Sand'). This is significant in many ways, not least because such a high profile role would not have been open to a Reservist in the past; it also signposts the wider employment options as Reserve and Regular components become increasingly integrated.

You'll have seen the Secretary of State's announcement with respect to the significant military assistance to this year's Olympics. As the national main effort for 2012, this is a 'must do' task across Defence and we are playing a significant part in the Army Reserve contribution. Tasked to provide two cohorts, for one and three months respectively, we are now spearheading the mobilisation effort not only for 49 Bde but, in the case of the 3 month tasking, the Reserve in general; and as it stands there are over 80 volunteers lined up to take part in tasks ranging from venue security to police liaison. A number of the 'Op Olympics' sub-units have now been placed under Steelback command and the appetite amongst the Bn for a place on the task has been nothing short of outstanding.

### **Training:**

At company level, CT-1 basic skills (the Big Six (marksmanship, fitness/robustness, fieldcraft, command & control, battlefield first aid and navigation)) have been the order of the day, with the sub units pushing hard to ensure that their platoons and sections are fully prepared for the Bn exercise in early March.

This month also saw the ADX initial recce to a cold and snowy Sennelager, providing depth to the planning of what is shaping up to be a benchmark overseas training exercise for the Reserve. The Bn is determined to provide the most realistic and demanding training at all levels and for all volunteers. This dovetails into the drive across the Army to improve the capability of the Reserve by allowing soldiers access to quality training opportunities on a par with that of their Regular counterparts. Post 2015, when the Army embarks on a new formation readiness cycle, Reserve forces will be increasingly teamed with Regulars to conduct demanding training as a prelude to being held at readiness as an integrated force.

As continuation of our close links, Maj Chris Wright (QM) deployed on a once in a lifetime opportunity to 'help' the Bermuda Regiment with all matters G4. He was last seen at Heathrow in loud shirt and shorts promising to send the Regimental Secretary a postcard.....we'll see!

### **People**

We welcome WO1 (RSM) Hopkin as the new RSM; WO1 (RSM) RSM Main saw the final month of his appointment pass-by in fitting fashion, kite surfing on Ex Canary Gold in the Canary Islands! In all seriousness, I am sure I speak for all when I thank him for his quite excellent service to the Battalion and wish him all the very best in his new life as Captain Kev Main, 2IC Rear Ops Group, with the Vikings.

The 12 February marked the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of Singapore and the Adjutant was fortunate to represent The Regiment at the Service of Remembrance for the Far East Prisoner of War Association. On a bright but bitterly cold Sunday morning the gathering of so many members of the antecedent Regiments in Ely Cathedral was a genuinely humbling and moving event. Other Community Engagement activity has seen the ongoing coordination of Community Covenant pledges at County Council level in Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex, as well as media outreach by the companies.