



# OLD COMRADES ASSOCIATION 22<sup>nd</sup> REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY



August 2002

## Apologies

I had intended to produce a May Newsletter, but in April I was made redundant, it wasn't unexpected, as supervisor I had assisted in the laying off of most of my staff, but it still was a shock when I was told that my turn had come.

At 55 it becomes increasingly difficult to find a job that fulfils my two main criteria, Money to pay the bills and being able to go home at night happy with my work and looking forward to the next day's work.

Happily I have found such a job, though it came at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour after 6 weeks of searching, interviews where it was plain from the start that they were looking for someone quite a bit younger, that experience did not count.

I now work for Victim Support, as a Coordinator for Witness Service; I manage two teams of volunteers in two Magistrates Courts who look after witnesses who may be appearing in court for the first time in their lives.

So now I am working, I can now get down to some of the things that have fallen by the wayside, this newsletter being one of them.

## Membership

Although I have had a good response from members sending in their questionnaires, there are still a significant number who have not responded.

***I will be enclosing a personal letter to them when they receive this newsletter.***

But this is the last chance; we cannot afford to fund those who do not pay their subscription.

However we can afford to fund those that cannot pay thanks to those many of you who sent a donation with their subscription.

Thank You.

## Membership List

I have received many requests for the membership list to be issued but I need permission before I can divulge names and addresses, so again there is a bit of paper to send back to me to say that you have no objection to me issuing your details to other OCA members.

**If you don't give me that permission then your name will not be listed**

## Battery Shops

I have enclosed at the rear of this newsletter a list of items that can be purchased from each of the Battery shops.

There is an order form and list of addresses.

## Contributions from Members

I have been completely underwhelmed by member's contributions.

This is a great pity, as I know from experience that there are some very good stories out there.

Please don't be put off by thinking that your story is not up to much, or you wouldn't like your name attached.

All stories are considered and if you don't want your name attached, then it won't be.

But get those stories in.

They always say lead by example, so I have included in this edition a couple of stories from my past.

## Tampin Tales

During The Regiments tour of Malaya, we were based in a small town called Tampin, about 5 Miles North of the local hotspot of Mallaca. The British Forces at that time were very much into 'Hearts and Minds', carrying out work to improve the local community.

Now as you left the camp you could not miss Mount Everest on the other side of the main road, well not quite Everest, more like a small Mountain, well alright, a big hill, but it felt like Everest when climbing it, which quite a few of us did, particularly at the weekend when there was much else to do. Once at the top you could rest with a Gurkha Signals detachment that would give you pint pots filled to the brim with tea.

However the main point of this tale is that it was decided to build a swimming pool for the local community at the base of the hill, it was to be fed by a stream that came down the hill and then ran along the road. Well it was a change from normal duties, and within what seemed a very short time it was finished the outlet for the water were some rigid tow bars that had been built into the end wall at different levels and by removing the eyelets at the

end, the water level could be regulated.

There was quite a ceremony with members of the Regiment and the local populace diving in and having a good time as the pool was formally handed over to the local community.

A week later I wondered down to the pool to see it in full use by the local women, washing their clothes in it. From being a local amenity it became the local launderette.

One other memory of Tampin is of being on guard duty on a Sunday and instructed on my second stag to tour the perimeter "as it's not been done for some time" it took me over three hours and I got a rollicking for slacking off somewhere, the fact that parts of the perimeter were like primary jungle cut no ice.

Does anybody remember Khan, the camp 'Char Wallah' who would wake you up in the morning by filling your mug with tea from a five-gallon kettle. He always promoted you, so if you were a Gunner he would wake you with 'Good Morning Bombardier' and when you came in from a night out on the town would be there sitting on the veranda of one of the accommodation blocks cooking egg banjo's for those who needed something to hold the beer down.

He would also lend money to the one or two of us that were always short of money (that meant most of the Regiment under the rank of Sergeant) and on pay parade he would be there with his book calling out the names of debtors, "Gunner Mickey Mouse, Bombardier Speedy Gonzales" and so on. It was here that I learned what an optimist was.

## Changi Chat

*While reminiscing about Tampin, my thoughts were drawn back to when I joined the Regiment in November 1964 and was lucky enough to be posted to Louisburg Battery, Echo Sub which was based on Changi Beach during the Confrontation with Indonesia.*

*My memory is fading but I think that Bdr Mick Mann was in the sub, I think it was he that sent me to Mel Archer the Sub No. 1 for a long weight for the Number 1 Burner; it took half an hour before the penny dropped.*

*My first proper job was sitting in the Sanger command post, having a 'Telephone Type F' pointed out to me and told if that rings, call me. That was my introduction to the heady world of 'Signals', which I much preferred to being a Gun No. though to digress, there is no finer sight than a Regimental Night Shoot at Todendorf (any photo's appreciated, to show the 'Rapier boy's (and girls, sorry, nearly forgot) what their missing).*

*If you have read 'Virgin Soldier' then I have to admit, it came very close to what life was like, and unfortunately many stories cannot be put into print, (but if you have one, let me have it and we may be able to do something.)*

*There were a few times when we went to 'Alert Zero, Weapons Free', but in the main there was a daily routine of learning how the Bofors, FCE 7 Radar and the 27 1/2 KVA generator all worked, more importantly how they were kept clean.*

*But, occasionally there would be a patrol to carry out on the neighbouring islands of Paulau Tekong and Ubin, we would be*

*taken out by launch and then weighed down with supplies make our way to the opposite side, spend the night under the stars and then next day, walk back for a trip back to Singapore.*

*I remember one of the islands still had the infamous Gun Emplacements, and it was here that, at night having spotted a light a few yards from the beach, we were deployed, the holder of the light was ordered to pull in to the beach and when he refused we were ordered to 'Make Ready', the sound of half a dozen rifle bolts being pulled back and let go certainly put a spring into the step of the fisherman, who couldn't get to shore quick enough.*

*Another patrol we had to do was to assist the Marine Police in their patrols around the coastal waters of Singapore, but as you went on board their vessel you were pushed below given a cup of tea or cocoa and told "anything happens, we wake you up", the launch had a bren mounted on a swivel on top of the cabin, and one story that went the rounds was that they intercepted a small vessel that did not respond to their orders, so the policeman reached to cock the bren so they could fire warning shots, only to find it rusted solid, the soldiers were then woken up and they fired the warning shots which the vessels occupants took heed to.*

## Hubbelrath Horrors

*On completion of the Singapore tour the Regiment moved back to its home base in Hubbelrath, Dusseldorf in what was then West Germany. This was going to be my first taste of proper soldering. (What?) Of course I mean Bulled Boots and Pressed Number two's for Guard Duty, guarding the camp with a pick*

helve, (never did find out how to load one) and having to be inspected and book out before leaving camp to savour the delights of the Alt Statd, and of course having to be booked back in by 23.00, this was no problem you just sent the taxi round to the Sgts Mess gate and went back down town, well some did, not me though, I was a good boy! (Who said wimp?)

One of the joy's of guard duties was having to guard the cookhouse, I'm not saying the food was bad but one of the few times people eat the food from there was when they came back from town ever so slightly inebriated, (Well our soldiers never got drunk), they then discovered that with a belly full of beer they then developed a taste for cookhouse food and broke in to take what had been left out by the cooks. So the cookhouse guard was born, at first it wasn't too bad the hotplates being warm from the day's use made a good bed, this of course, provided you didn't mind waking up covered in cockroaches.

I remember a story about Paddy ?? who having missed the last bus and not being able to afford a taxi walked up the long hill from Dusseldorf into the camp, well, walked is probably a bit of a loose word to describe his perambulatory movements. As the story went, he came across a German lying on the pavement and became annoyed at the fact that he a soldier of the Crown could be on his feet while drunk and this German was apparently sleeping off his night out, so he tried to wake up the German by kicking him. Unfortunately the Polizei spotted him, even more unfortunately the German was dead from a heart attack.

One comfort that Paddy could draw from all of this after his night in a German cell was that

his own bed didn't need making.

## Kuching Kapers

During the time the Regiment was in Tampin, Louisburg Battery were posted to Kuching in Borneo to take over from (I think) 16 Regiment, my sub, 'H sub' were based on an old Japanese airstrip, we were on top of a hill where the airstrip control tower had been built, The sub command post was in a Sanger that had been built on top of this some 20 foot high control tower, and was reached by two sets of shaky wooden steps.

One of my first duties as sub signaller was to take over the equipment in the command post, so I climbed the steps very carefully and as my head cleared the top I was treated to the view of the signaller I am taking over from, he was smiling widely, and holding a grenade, he looked at me, then at the grenade, then finally at me before pulling the pin and rolled it over the floor in my direction. As I picked myself up from the ground and hearing no bang, went slowly back up to find him re-assembling the grenade, he gently pointed out that none of the grenades had fuses in them so I was quite safe, (apart from, apparently, the madness that infected people after a six month tour.)

I remember that all the stores were in the cellar of the tower and could be reached by going down some 8 or 9 steps, two of the sub, Paddy Deveroux and Farmer Browning, used to amuse themselves by putting a Bofors wheel on each shoulder and racing each other, seeing how many times they could run up and down the steps.

Again, like our time in Singapore routine duties were broken by having the odd patrol to carry out, this entailed

getting dressed in full OG's (anyone know what OG stood for?) complete with rifle, ammunition and machete, we then had to parade in front of the native Ibo tracker who would accompany us into the jungle and then as he came up to us to make sure we didn't smell of anything that could be foreign in the jungle (and therefore pinpoint our position to any nasties) and listen as we jumped up and down to ensure we didn't rattle.



**Gunner Nobby Hall and Sgt Ken Marks ready for the Jungle Patrol**

**From H Sub, the command post is on top of the tower behind us**

I only have a few memories of these patrols, one is of hacking our way through fairly thick jungle to come to a clearing with no obvious way in or out and finding a native dwelling with the occupant selling Coca-Cola which was stored on a huge block of ice.

Another is when someone in the patrol walked into a hornets nest and half the patrol dropped their rifles into the mud trying to get away, and finally on a patrol where we were walking in a river that was about three foot deep and when we got out had to spend a little time clearing leaches from our bodies. Competitions to see who had the biggest one took on a different meaning that day.

*Anyway that's enough for now if you like these rambling's let me know and I will score some more, and please, let me have some of your own, there are many good stories of life in the Regiment, and it's the stories that bring Regimental History alive, more than the pictures do, so let me have some!*

*Dig into your memories and get them to me,*

## **St Davids Day**

On the last St David's Day a number of members from the OCA stood at the side of a very windswept, cold and sometimes damp square, (is there any other) and watched as the Regiment marched on, old memories were awakened and made some of us wish that we could be there on the square as well.



For some of us with very long memories it was a nice change



to see a goat as mascot, instead of the Honey Bear that used to be.

Again for those of us with those long memories, a parade is not quite the same without the long barrels of the 40/70 Bofors, though we must admit the Rapier is more efficient.

After the parade, we all retired to the Sgts Mess for a well deserved hot cup of tea, after which a nostalgic walk (for some) downtown in Kirton. Then it was off for a lie down to prepare the body for the evening to come.

It was a superb dinner night, with some of the traditions still there, new members of the mess having to stand and eat a leak. (If they were lucky, it was a small one).



Some did struggle, but all finished.



The night finished in the early hours, with some of us old one's slipping away, to leave the younger ones to party on.

## Reunion

If there is one word that causes your secretary to have palpitations, it is 'REUNION'.

The venue, the accommodation, the meal, the after dinner entertainment. To find a venue that gives all this for a good price per head is any secretaries holy grail.

There are of course plenty of hotels out there that would be ideal and so I am asking all members who would like a reunion to look at hotels in your area and let me know if you consider any to be good enough.

It would be fantastic to be able to hold a national reunion but is probably more realistic to hold several regional ones.

However get round those hotels, the information you need is there will be a minimum of 80 (that is 40 members with wives or friends) (yes I am guessing, but you need to give a figure to the hotel). We need price per head for overnight B & B accommodation that includes a 3-course meal in the evening.

There have been many conversations about a reunion, with people being careful not to say anything that would mean them getting involved. But let us all get involved, visit hotels you think are suitable and get back to me!!!

### Wives Club

Your secretary has been castigated, nay, abused, and from the most gentlest of species, the wives.

They want to know why the OCA only has members who have served in the Regiment, what about the wives they say. I can hear some of your replies as I type, and as I want to live

for a few more years I won't put them down here.

But seriously they do have a point. They have endured many trials and tribulations alongside their men, and been as loyal to the Regiment as any serving soldier.

Some are, sadly, on their own, for many reasons and the OCA would be a good place for them to catch up with their friends.

So first give this copy to your wife to read, if she or you know of any wives out there, on their own or not, get them to contact me and I will send them a copy of this newsletter.

But, now the crunch question, should wives be admitted to the OCA as full members, as associate members or not at all?

We do not have meetings where items like this, can be decided, so let me know. The majority decision will determine the answer.

## Sunday Lunch Club

Is alive and well in the South, but I have had no reports of it anywhere else. If you have started one please let me know.

To remind you, Sunday lunches are usually a good value meal with an excellent choice of venue.

Contact any OCA member who is near you invite them to Sunday lunch with their wives or partners, you each pay for your own meal. Sit back and enjoy one of the best Sunday afternoons to be had anywhere.