



The Welsh Gunners

OLD COMRADES ASSOCIATION

22nd REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY

December 2001

Christmas Greetings

Special Christmas and New Year greetings to the Commanding Officer and all ranks of the Regiment. and of course to all members of the Old Comrades Association wherever you are

New Secretary

Yes! At long last a volunteer has come forward to take on the job of secretary of this OCA.

It is Mike Hall, formerly known as Sgt Nobby Hall, who served with 53, 42 and HQ Batteries during his time with the Regiment. A service that started in November 1964 and ended with a posting to RSA in Dec 1980

Subscriptions

Unfortunately running an organisation like ours does not come cheap; producing Newsletters for over 230 members is expensive.

Subscriptions have not been collected for some time and so now we will be building up the coffers again.

The annual subscriptions are still set at £1 per annum but we are asking you to pay it in 5-year periods.

We are also asking that those who can afford it to make an extra donation. Perhaps an extra £5.

This will help place the association on a sound financial footing.

Cheques to be made out to **22 Regiment RA OCA** and sent to:

Mike Hall
30 Pares Close
Woking
Surrey
GU21 4QN

Newsletters

Because of a number of reasons, there have been few newsletters over the previous years. But I hope to be able to produce at least two each year in the future.

The general idea for newsletters is that they should inform and entertain, but of course that will depend on its subscribers. I hope that you the member will be writing to the editor with your stories or articles. The content of a newsletter doesn't appear by magic, someone has to write it. What are needed are your war stories, funny incidents, places you have been etc. So dig out those memories from the dusty corners of your mind, put them to paper and send them to the editor.

I will of course be in close contact with the Regiment and where possible be reporting on events. I would hope that there would be occasions when members from the OCA will be able to meet with elements from the Regiment, such as the

Recruiting Team, the Kape Team and other public displays.

Suggestions

We would like to know what you would like to see the OCA doing in the future.

In fact you will see a space on the subscription form that is included with this newsletter for that purpose.

If you have an idea please let us have it.

But do not suggest anything that you are not prepared to work towards.

The Post of Chairman is vacant and if there is a willing volunteer please let me know.

Reunion

Yes, that old chestnut, but everyone that I have spoken to, has said that it would be a good thing to do.

No question then, except for when, where and most important, how much.

So, with the questionnaire enclosed with this newsletter are some questions that will give the organisers a good idea on numbers of members who are serious about attending a reunion.

When filling out the questionnaire you can choose between regional or national

reunions, or you can select both to be taken alternately.

Let us Know Sunday Lunch Club

Thoughts on the reunion started an idea that has some merit and is proving successful in the South.

Call someone who is on the membership list and lives close by. Arrange to meet at a pub or restaurant for Sunday Lunch.

This is usually a very good value meal, made even better by having it in good company.

Repeat as and when.

If you need any help or advice, or if you have had such a meeting then phone me on **01483 858 794**

Or e-mail me at **mike@hall220.demon.co.uk**
Or you can write to me at **30 Pares Close, Horsell, Woking, Surrey. GU21 4QN**

Apologies

The membership list that I am working from is an old one and so if you know someone who should be receiving this newsletter and isn't please let me know and I will contact them.

Alternatively, if you know of someone who served with the Regiment and is not a member send their details to me and I will contact them.

Web Site

22 OCA has a space on the Royal Artillery Association web site.

This is a good opportunity to create a history of the Regiment that is accessible to all. So if you have access to e-mail and a scanner,

e-mail your photos to me with the story behind them and I will post them onto the site.

Or just send your stories about life in the Regiment and they will be added to the history.

22 OCA can be found at <http://www.raa.uk.com>, once there click on OCA then 22 Regiment. If you have any comments please pass them onto me

E-Mail

While talking of things technical, if you do have access to e-mail then please let the editor know on the questionnaire. This will reduce postal charges significantly as future newsletters can be sent to in this way. Plus you will have the added bonus of receiving yours first.

The Regiment

I am waiting for the publication of this year's Regimental Journal, so cannot update you on Regimental activities for this year, but I do have the journal for 1999/2000, and have reproduced some of it's articles below. They all centre around the time the Regiment spent on a United Nations tour of Cyprus

I have concentrated on the Battery's but there were others who deserve a mention, such as Workshops REME, RLC Stores Troop, The Regimental Recruiting Team, The Choir of the Welsh Gunners and the many sporting achievements of the Regiment.

I hope to be able to produce two of these Newsletters each year, and hope that the next one will contain some up to date information on the Regiment.

53 (Louisburg) Battery

Following the successful Ops Coy tour in 1997 it was decided that rather than spend the final summer of the millennium in Cyprus on OP TOSCA, 53 (Louisburg) Bty and an attached multiple from 35 Bty would train for a NI tour with 7 Para RHA.

Led in true Louisburg form by Major Barry Jenkins, the Battery moved to Aldershot for a summer during which it would acquit itself well amongst its airborne colleagues. The Battery had its first contact with its new Regiment at the Commanders' Cadre at Sandhurst. This proved to be an extremely informative package that would stand both the 'hats' and the Louisburgers in good stead for the months ahead.

This phase served to prepare the Battery for the forthcoming training and 'Tin City' and was mainly focussed around the local married accommodation. With the exception of the occasional 'what's happening, has there been a bomb'? The residents of the married quarters remained remarkably nonchalant to the patrolling.

The Battery returned to Kirton prior to CPTA to witness the morale boosting deployment of the Regiment to Cyprus! Following this incident, the Battery moved to Kent and attacked the training with an infectious zeal and an unmatched professionalism. Even when beaten black and blue by rioting mobs or patrolling the streets of Tin City under the watchful eyes of "Big Brother", these characteristics were never to wane.

The culmination of the training was a rural riot in which as well as the usual Somme-like potato barrage; an

ungentlemanly cad chose to cover Major Jenkins with flour. This gave him an almost godly appearance, which inspired the Battery to quickly find, fix and strike at the Civpop and quell the situation..

On completion of the training, the Battery did not deploy to NI and had to remain in Aldershot on 24 hours notice to move. This was a disappointment after the hard work invested over the previous 4 months.

42 (Alem Hamza) Battery

42 Bty has, without doubt, had an interesting year. The most obvious being the OP TOSCA tour in Cyprus, and all the associated training for it. This began in April when the Regiment started its low level training to ensure all soldiers would be ready to deal with the rigours of the forthcoming tour.

The training started with the UNTAT package, moved onto sub-unit training before culminating in the final Regimental exercise on the Catterick training area, after a successful exercise the Battery then departed on leave prior to deploying in early June 1999.

Having said that the Cyprus tour has taken up so much time, the Battery did have a full year prior to the tour. Looking back over the preceding year the Battery can be seen deploying its members on a variety of exercises both in the UK and abroad. The main exercise was Ex CENTAUR'S CHARGE, which saw the Battery deploying as part of the Regiment on the 7 AD Brigade exercise based in the south of the country. This exercise also saw three TA AD Regiments deploying with the Brigade's troops for their annual NAA test weekend.

The Battery also deployed members to Ex ROVING SANDS on the White Sands missile range in El Paso, Texas. Due to a slight problem with the ship carrying the equipment and vehicles over to the States (it began to sink) only personnel were integrated into the American Batteries. This saw them deployed as liaison teams, Patriot command post crews and enemy. All came back with unbelievable stories, which they were only too happy to tell for the price of a beer.

During the summer the Battery swapped one type of green kit for another. This time it was fire fighting in Essex with the infamous Green Goddesses. This saw soldiers standing in for the striking firemen, reacting to emergency calls and doing their utmost to prevent fire destroying lives and properties. The Battery manned six tenders in three different locations and was led by the hand to each incident by the local police force. These "blue light" runs look on television to be exciting,, but when in a Green Goddess they can be a trifle embarrassing, doing all of 40mph. Still it was time in a fresh environment, doing an essential job that was truly appreciated by the local residents.

September saw the Battery deploying to carry out the role of CIVPOP for 16 Regiment's Northern Ireland training. Here was the opportunity to experience the opposite side of the coin. The boys and girls took great delight in handling out abuse to the unit being exercised, while at the same time exercising some dodgy Irish accents. Both the abuse and the accents were really appreciated by 16 Regiment's personnel, especially by those provided by 22 Regiment to help fill their ORBAT.

The last main exercises of the year prior to deployment were the Missile Practise Camp in the Hebrides and an ATD camp in Tenby. The Hebrides in February produced predictable weather with horizontal hail and snow doing its best to prevent firing, but eventually all the missiles was fired and the Battery was tested on its technical and tactical deployments. The ATD camp saw the Battery saying goodbye to the BC, Maj Duhig, as well as completing all their ATD training before returning to Easter leave and the beginning of the Cyprus training.

35 Battery RA

35 Battery has one of its most busy and diverse years. It was thought that come March 1999, the Bty would cease to exist for 8 months and reform at Christmas. What happened in reality was that the Bty did indeed split up , but it certainly did not cease to exist. Soldiers flew the 35 Bty RA flag with pride in Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Aldershot and back home in Kirton in Lindsey. When the Bty reformed in December it was much more experienced than at the start of the year.

1999 began with a build up to the annual firing camp in the Hebrides. When all the pre-firing training was complete, the long haul to Benbecula began. As we sat in our vehicles on the quayside at Uig, looking at the winter gales, the likelihood of actually firing was getting slimmer and slimmer. The weather did clear though, and 35 Bty began to send missiles down range with awesome efficiency. The result was one of Regiment's most successful firing camps to date. All 6 kits fired and 7 Radar Trackers were proved. The only cure after The Bty's celebrations, on completion of firing, was a trip in Stinky Bay.

The entire Bty 'opted' for the early morning dip, which, in March, was freezing.

Once the Hebrides was completed, members of the Bty went their separate ways to help out the Regiment in his busy year. What could follow now is a photocopy of all the other articles in this magazine, as 35 Bty were everywhere. While others were suffering the 50°C heat of Cyprus, C Troop was formed and prepared for an operational tour to Northern Ireland. C Troop was composed mostly of 35 Bty RA soldiers and was attached with 53 (Louisburg) Battery RA to 7 RHA. The Troop underwent the full NI training package that, for some was a refresher. The deployment was eventually a shadow tour, although the soldiers maintained excellent readiness throughout.

The Bty's reformation at the end of the year was made all the more simple thanks to the hard work of the 35 Bty Rear Party who put in a lot of hard work to ensure the equipment was maintained.

With the millennium come and gone, 35 Bty RA is now well and truly back together. The year 2000 looks to be an exciting time, with plenty of opportunity for individual training and sport. Next on the agenda, is Ex Roving Sands in the USA.

20 Commando Battery

The Commando Air Defence Group, consisting of the Rapiers of 20 Cdo Bty RA, the VSHORAD assets of the Air Defence troop Royal Marines and the Stingers of the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps, make a potent and capable force. The BC 20 Cdo Bty commands these combined Air Defence assets. The ADG had formed the basis of the training

over the last twelve months before the emphasis changed prior to the Op Tosca deployment.

The Bty deployed to Cyprus under the command of the Dutch Bty at Irish Bridge, whilst the more gentle members of the Bty formed the MFR at the UNPA.

The MFR troop was forced to deal with multiple language barriers given that they were intimately involved (on a professional level) with Dutch, Hungarian, and Argentinean troops.. But by a process of discussion, banter and bargaining, the MFR managed to get most things done. Several soldiers gave up their precious spare time to work hard at achieving lifeguard qualifications. This enabled them to dedicate their free time to watching over those who were lucky enough to have the time to take advantage of the UN pool!

All in all 1999 has been a highly successful year with a lot of Battery involvement in Regimental activities. Let us look forward to more of the same throughout the next millennium.

15 (HQ) Battery

January saw the year begin as it had finished, still running the Basic Fitness Test work off all the mince pies from Christmas. Work started in a serious fashion with preparation for the annual Periodic REME Inspection (PRE) which seemed to arrive ever more quickly. The remainder of January saw the QM's departments preparing for the logistic Support Inspection as well as assisting the remainder of the Regiment to present itself for the PRE inspections.

February arrived and the Battery departed for the Royal

Artillery Range Hebrides with 42 (Alem Hamza) Battery and carried out a successful firing camp providing communication and command and control to the firing Battery. Towards the end of the month saw the first of many orbat conferences for the forthcoming UN Cyprus tour.

March started as every March does, with a St David's Day parade, however due to inclement weather the parade had to be held in 53 Battery garages.

April saw the Regiment receive into its family a Dutch contingent that will support the UN tour of Cyprus. The Battery wasted no time ensuring the new members were introduced into the intricacies of the relevant Messes, which in the Sgts' Mess meant that a good old curry supper seemed to be the beginning of an excellent partnership between the two nations.

May saw the historic opening of the Welsh Parliament, which allowed the Battery to opportunity of sending some soldiers to Cardiff to witness this auspicious occasion. The Battery deployed on the Commanding Officers Test Exercise in Catterick, which finalised the busy training programme that had been in hand prior to departure to Cyprus.

June saw the advanced party and main bodies deploy to Cyprus and thus began the close working relationship of the Regiment and the United Nations.

July was a good sociable month marking the beginning of the R7R period and also the arrival of the CSE show to Ledra Palace Hotel which bought with them the Stranglers. There were still a few older members of the Battery that were able to teach

the younger how to pogo. For those of you who are too young to know what this dance step involves, it's simple; stage one, stand up, stage two, jump in the air and wave your head and arms around like a demented baboon.

August saw the Battery dine out the Australian Civilian Police. Also this month saw the largest event to take place apart from the UN Open Day, the Regimental Cocktail Party. Once again the Battery were very much the background staff and they worked tirelessly to get all the areas inside and outside the Ledra Palace Hotel to look respectable.

September/October seemed to be the months for a continuous stream of visitors coming and going. It must be said that in months, some of the Battery's departments such as the MT, the JOC, the poor VM's and of course not forgetting the RAO's department were working flat out in their own respective jobs but also having to carry out many other tasks during the day and evenings.

During November, the Battery attended a Remembrance Sunday ceremony at Waynes Keep in respect of fallen comrades. In addition the UN medal parade took place in which it can be said that all those taking part in the parade did an outstanding job in their drill, bearing and turnout.

December saw the Regiment return to England after successfully completing an outstanding UN tour of Cyprus. The Battery had a couple of weeks to sort out any outstanding administrative issues before departing for a well deserved five week post tour leave period, made all the more special by the millennium celebrations.

QM's Department

There was no shortage of volunteers from both QM's departments at Kirton for the Regiments deployment to Cyprus on OP TOSCA. The dates were just right – out in May and back by Christmas – for six months in the sun and the easiest medal a British Soldier could “earn” into the bargain!

Now everyone knows about Cyprus. A couple of hours work in the morning, a siesta after lunch, followed by sunny afternoons lazing by the pool or beach with a constant flow of ice cold Brandy Sours in preparation for an “all nighter” in downtown Nicosia, Ayia Napa or Limassol. With weekends to recover, or sample the local culture, what more could anyone want.

STOP!...REWIND!...REMOVE DREAM CASSETTE!...INSERT “REALITY”!!!

Reveille at Oh my God 0'Clock, PT in the Buffer Zone before breakfast, work from 8 to 5 in temperatures off the thermometer (wearing nice blue T-Shirts in case it gets cold), the two can rule, everywhere that anyone might want to go, Out of Bounds, work half the day on Saturday and Church Parade every Sunday.

Wore was to come as it slowly became apparent that the URR (UN Roulement Regiment) was actually a code for BRITCON fatigue party. Remarkably, the crew remained cheerful as they toiled in the baking sun preparing for events, such as the Cocktail Party, the Medal Parade, UN Open Day, Remembrance Day, endless visits with countless honour guards and a host of soirees in between the operational work, and some rugby. There were other minor problems too; undrinkable water, dodgy

electrics, environmental health (HA!) inspection, no air-conditioning, no hot water upstairs in the lavish (in name at east) Ledra Palace Hotel, clothes that came back from the laundry smelling worse than when they were put in, insects the size of small helicopters, Mullahs wailing from minarets umpteen times a day and the fact that every day was Groundhog Day.

But I shouldn't moan too much and give a false impression. There were some high spots for everyone; a marvellous CSE show featuring the Stranglers, R and R, adventure training at Dhekelia, the odd day on the beach, the rugby World Cup, cheap cigarettes, LTV after midnight, TAS time (training, administration and stand-down, (apparently)), as much rugby, football, volleyball and tug-of-war as you like and three free meals a day.

Yes, looking back, I have to admit it wasn't so bad after all, and that I have in fact heavily exaggerated the hardships – I lied about the Church Parades.