



04/08

ROYAL ANGLIAN NEWS

APR 08

It is with deep regret that we record the death of Pte Scott Mugridge of B (Leicestershire) Company, 2nd Battalion, on Mon 14 Apr 2008. Pte Mugridge was killed in a training accident at Hohenfelds in Bavaria. His funeral, with full military honours, was held in Luton on 25 Apr 2008. We extend our deepest sympathy to his family and also to his comrades in The Poachers.

BATTALION ACTIVITIES

1. 1st Battalion

April has been dominated with the two weeks Easter leave, taken slightly later than the rest of the Brigade to fit in with Surrey school holidays. The week before leave the Potential NCO Cadre finished, after an arduous exercise in Brecon, which saw them battle through the snow and complete the infamous "Fan Dance". The final week had them completing the Command Leadership Training - instructing the students on the responsibilities of a JNCO in camp. Thursday was the final Pass Off Parade, which saw 9 students promote. Congratulations to LCpl Freeman for winning best student.

After leave the focus has shifted back to Public Order, with the Battalion deploying to Ballykinler for the 38 Brigade Validation Exercise. Since February the ORBATs have changed significantly, so the companies spent a few days running through the basic drills on the Parade Square and in the village at Longmoor. It was a good run out, and focussed everybody's minds before EX CELTIC AVENGER, which will start after the May Bank Holiday. D Company, who are backfilling the companies for Public Order, deployed onto their concentration on Salisbury Plain. It was a good opportunity for the support platoons to shake out and conduct some independent training before coming together for some collective serials.

The Battalion hosted the Armed Forces Pay Review Board at the end of the month. After a morning of briefings and a look at the camp the afternoon was spent in discussion with groups from every rank, including an opportunity to speak to some wives. The visit was successful and the board members were certainly given some food for thought.

The QM and RCWO have been busy preparing the Battalion for Pay As You Dine, which comes into effect on 1 May 08. The contracts have now been signed and all ranks have received the required briefs. Next month will hopefully run smoothly and there will not be any change in the quality of food served.

A (Norfolk) Company

The men of 'The Fighting Ninth' have been continuing the hard work towards getting trained and qualified on Bulldog whilst maintaining our Public Order readiness. The training was interrupted by 2 weeks leave, which afforded the men of the Company time to rest, recharge the batteries and above all refocus on the tasks ahead.

It has been a necessarily fragmented period. As well as the Bulldog and Public Order priorities, the men have provided enemy for Junior Brecon, helped host the Armed Forces Pay Review Body, and enjoyed one of the final rounds of the CO's PT! Two weeks away in Ballykinler now looms in the form of Ex CELTIC AVENGER. The trip over the water will bring back many memories for the old and bold; it seems strange how the conflict that took up so much of our early years of service is now an 'unknown' to the majority of the younger troops.

In the last few weeks A (Norfolk) Company has had the pleasure to welcome 2Lt Atkins who joins us for a few weeks before he heads to Brecon to complete the Platoon Commanders Battle Course. Sgt Love will shortly take over from CSgt Hartland as the CQMS and Sgt Thorne has arrived to replace Sgt 'Larry' Holmes as PI Sgt Almanza PI. Sgt Holmes will still remain OPCON though, as he is off to recruit at Norwich AFCO; we wish him all the best and hope the post brings him and the family some well earned stability.

Finally, we noted that 13 Apr was the anniversary of the death of Pte Chris Gray – killed in action in Nowzad. That day will always be remembered by the men in the Coy Gp who were involved in the battle on that day – he will not be forgotten. The Coy is commissioning the 'Gray-Bonner Cup' which will remember the fallen in a positive way; it will be presented to the best soldier in the Coy each year.

B (Suffolk) Company

The opening days of April saw a large proportion of the company deployed on various courses. The urgent requirement to train drivers and commanders for Bulldog, coupled with the normal allocation of troops to B Cat driving courses, storeman courses and NCO cadres (to name but a few), placed us under some strain; but the training programme continued, somewhat fluidly, until conclusion, at which time those who completed the JNCO cadre paraded before the Battalion and a number of guests. It was an occasion for celebration and the Officers', Sergeants' and Corporals' Messes were all opened.

Following a very gratifying two weeks leave, B (Suffolk) Company hit the ground running. Ex INDOMITABLE VIKING began on 21 April 08, with the Company, now at little more than platoon strength (with those attending various courses taken out of the equation), deploying out on to the back training area, prepared for four days and three nights of low-level, conventional training. It was really the first, non-theatre specific, war-fighting training we had conducted since well before Op HERRICK 6. The aim was to revise the basic skills and drills, as taught in Catterick and Brecon, whilst maintaining those lessons we had learnt in Afghanistan. The Company spent the first two days conducting such skills as setting up a harbour, patrolling, ambushes and recce patrols. Although the re-adjustment from the tactics used on tour to those taught in the UK was needling for some, it was an excellent chance to practice those core skills that are the basis of the

infantryman's arsenal. Besides, the fact that Gurkha chefs were conducting their own exercise nearby meant that ration pack meals were nicely subsidised by the odd curry! The last two days saw the Platoon working up to and preparing a platoon attack, which unhappily coincided with a vicious thunder storm. It went well and the troops returned to camp to enjoy the CO's PT the following morning.

The following week saw a change in direction as far as training was concerned. We ramped down from war-fighting, to Public Order, deploying to Longmoor on Ex VIKING SKIRMISH, in the early hours of Monday morning. This was to be the Company's refresher training for CELTIC AVENGER, our rapidly approaching Public Order Mission Rehearsal Exercise. In addition to rehearsing, many of the platoon commanders found themselves re-teaching material to new arrivals from Catterick and integrating our new officers into the exercise. Monday evening saw the first of our Battle Exercises, as the platoons opposed each other, from one street to another, in a variety of scenarios, in dwindling light. Training was hard but useful, with many coming away with cuts and bruises and a number of key lessons revised and remembered. A simulated parade took place on the following day, with the platoons required to block the route of a march and deal with the ensuing havoc. The scenarios tested the commanders and the men, who appeared to benefit from the short but intensive exercise.

C (Essex) Company

As with the whole of the Battalion, we have been busy with Bulldog conversion. LCpls Kerrin, Aldridge and Lake have done a fantastic job of teaching our drivers and commanders everything they need to know about the vehicles.

Towards the end of the month the Company deployed for a two day Public Order exercise in Longmoor village. With many of the Officers and NCOs away on Bulldog and other courses, the Company could only field two platoons. After initial refresher training the platoons had a lot of opportunity to practice against each other. One of the platoons would act as civ pop whilst the other had to deal with a very fast paced Public Order serial, planned by the OC and CSM with no lack of imagination

This month we say goodbye to the Company Sergeant Major, W02 Pete Ramm, and thank him for his hard work and dedication to C (Essex) Company. We wish him all the best in the future. As one CSM leaves, we welcome WO2 Clark to the Company. We also welcome Sgt Lilley (9 pl) and Sgt Brookes (11 pl), the two new platoon sergeants, into the Company and wish LCpl Howe all the best of luck on Junior Brecon. We also congratulate the following soldiers who passed the JNCO cadre and have either picked up or are awaiting promotion to LCpl:

Pte Gibbs
Pte Wright
Pte Jones
Pte Cooper
Pte Cumberbatch

D (Cambridgeshire) Company

D Company's Potential JNCOs returned to the Company after completing the NCO cadre at the end of March. All will be promoted in due course, which is excellent news for D Company. Well done to LCpl Freeman for his outstanding achievement in coming top of the cadre.

April has been a very busy month for the Company, with all platoons conducting their own training before a 2 week Company Concentration on Salisbury Plain. Recce have continued training their new members with the skills they will require in the future; this has concentrated on the instruction on BGTI and the L37 co-ax machine gun. Their D&M instructors have remained busy training the extra CVR(T) drivers and commanders that are required with the change in role.

The other three platoons conducted training away from camp. Drums Platoon, who had until April been concentrating on their drumming role, with a noticeable improvement, went to Otterburn to conduct their mandatory annual firing tests. This was the first opportunity to fire since Afghanistan and it was enjoyed by all, especially the new members of the Platoon. Anti Tanks moved complete to the Anti Tank Wing at Support Weapons School Warminster to conduct dry training. Capt Ormiston asked if there were any live missiles they could fire, but it was decided that the Platoon probably had enough firing experience from last year. Mortars spent two weeks on Salisbury Plain firing in partnership with 28/142 Bty, the Battle Group Artillery Battery.

The Company deployed the day after leave to Salisbury for the Concentration. The platoons conducted their own training initially, concentrating on low level tactics and skills. They also conducted MATTs training, including the BCFT. Towards the end of the exercise the Company came together and completed some collective training. It was a good opportunity to focus everybody's minds and find some best practice in the way the Company can support Battle Group operations.

Headquarter Company

It has been a relatively quiet month for HQ Company. The REME and CIS PI have been working to get the Bulldogs ready for CT1 level training at the end of May. All departments of the Company assisted the Potential NCO Cadre when it deployed to Brecon; the REME were particularly busy fixing land rovers as the cadre seemed cursed and every vehicle they had broke down.

The focus for the Quartermaster's Department has been the deployment to Northern Ireland. The plan is to conduct plenty of training in the background and so all resources need to be taken with us. The QM(T) had an ECI pre-inspection, which gave all departments a few points to improve on for the main inspection in October. The chefs have been completing the transition to Pay As You Dine, which goes live on 1 May 08. All ranks have received briefs and everybody should know what to expect; hopefully it should be a seamless transition.

Yet again the Company will be providing the CIVPOP for the companies to control; after Lydd in February there are a few scores to settle, so the Companies should beware.

2. 2nd Battalion

It is with deep regret that we start this month's Newsletter with the tragic news of the death of Pte Scott Mugridge of B Company, killed during a training accident in Bavaria on the mission rehearsal exercise in preparation for our pending tour of Iraq. The Battalion sends its deepest condolences to the family of Scott at this very difficult time. We would also like to thank everybody involved in the assistance and preparation for Scott's funeral in Luton. A number of others were also injured in the accident and we wish them all a speedy recovery. Though a tragic day, the courage and bravery that a number of the Battalion and supporting staff (including the American and German medical authorities) showed in reacting to this incident is most worthy of note.

April has been exclusively dedicated to the mission rehearsal exercise for Op Telic 12 and the final preparations for deployment. Each of the companies, less D Company, deployed for at least a two week period to conduct live fire training and a mission rehearsal exercise under the watchful eye of the Land Warfare Centre and AITAT training group.

For the 2 R ANGLIAN Battle Group, consisting of our B Company and X Company from 1 RRF, the exercise in Bavaria began with a four day live fire range package. The facilities at the Joint Mounting Readiness Centre are simply world class, giving soldiers the opportunity to live fire in some of the most realistic environments possible, before the actual deployment. These ranges included live fire CQB inside buildings, top cover shoots and extensive ranges for our heavy weapons.

The highlight of the four day package was a day and night live strike attack. This attack complete with battlefield casualties and role play insurgents was an excellent opportunity for the companies and Battle Group HQ to practise the kind of operations they may have to conduct in Iraq very soon.

The four day mission rehearsal exercise was similar to the training that we had conducted in Sennelager last month. A large section of the American camp was converted to simulate the Contingency Operating Base (COB) and B Company lived in a camp to represent their likely deployment to the port town of Umr Qusar.

The Battle Group was faced with a number of complex missions and tasks, a number of which required close liaison with 2 LSR. It also allowed us the opportunity to fully integrate with Bde HQ and understand the full range of assets that they have available to them. We also hosted a number of media visits from both simulated press and The Leicester Mercury and Central TV. The exercise was judged a success and the Battle Group is now fully prepared for operations in Iraq this summer.

A Coy and C Coy deployed later to the exercise with the SCOTS DG Battle Group. A Company completed a bespoke training package in preparation for their Protection Force task in Baghdad. The Company concentrated on the skills and procedures they would need to employ when guarding and escorting VIPs. C Company on the other hand completed a very similar package to what we had completed during the previous weeks. They practised the cultural and military complexities of embedding soldiers with the Iraqi Security Forces, the task they are likely to fulfil on this tour.

In the UK D Company continue on their course at Lydd and Hythe and will be the Brigade Surveillance Company in Iraq. All the reports so far are of a difficult and challenging yet highly rewarding course that concentrates and practices the core soldiering skills needed for the Company to operate this summer. However, on a recent weekend off a number of the Company were spotted sporting rather good suntans, blamed on the windswept beeches of southern England!

Back in the camp the focus has been on the administration required to deploy on a six month tour. The packing up of rooms, the Unit Admin Office producing the mountains of paperwork required and the QM Department preparing our sea/ air freight. Long hours have been invested by all to ensure that our deployment will be a smooth and successful one.

At the end of the month we welcomed the Regimental Secretary and the Colonel of the Regiment to Celle. The visit was an opportunity to wish the soldiers, officers and families good luck for the forthcoming tour. The visit included a successful dinner night in the Officers' Mess and a number of other activities including dropping into the Welfare Centre to meet some of the wives and their children.

3. 3rd Battalion

In April the Battalion began its COIN training period which will conclude with Annual Camp in September. The first weekend on 4 - 6 April, Ex STEELBACK ENFORCER I, saw the commanders deploy to a snowy Swynnerton to undergo a Train the Trainer (T3) package, which was based on the recent Poacher's OPTAG training. This training was visited by GOC 5th Division, who was impressed with both the training and his discussions with Battalion officers and SNCOs. Whilst the commanders were away, the junior ranks were coming to terms with UGL and LMG, kindly lent to the Battalion by The Vikings.

The T3 weekend was followed by a cascade training weekend on 18-20 April. A, E and HQ companies deployed to STANTA, with B and C companies back at Swynnerton. Here the Chain of Command had a chance to teach the new skills acquired to their companies. This training will be reinforced in early June, when the Battalion deploys to CPTA, in order to conduct eight of the best COIN ranges on Ex STEELBACK ENFORCER II.

On 19 April, 10 men under WOII Fuller and Sgt Watson deployed to Jamaica for 2 weeks on the Bermuda Regiment Annual Camp. There they will be conducting tactical training and low level live firing, before having R&R in Montego Bay. The Battalion will host a contingent from the Bermuda Regiment, including their RSM (des), to Camp in Sennybridge in September. Many thanks should go to Maj Andy Price, who is currently the Staff Officer in Bermuda, for making this exchange happen at short notice this year.

2008 is the Centenary of the TA and the Battalion has 19 events to either organise or attend from April to November. These are mainly county level events, but there are a number of Regional and National events that the Battalion must support. Captains Steel and Coulson and a selection of soldiers attended the launch of TA 100 with East Anglian and East Midland MPs at the Houses of Parliament on 1 April. Members of C (Leicestershire and Northamptonshire) Company also attended a reception in Leicester on 15 April.

On 27 April the last batch of Battalion trained Phase 1 Recruits completed their training. Battalion flashes were presented to 19 soldiers following completion of their CFT on a blistering hot morning. Some of these will be deploying to CIC almost immediately, with others going in the summer. The new system will see all recruits conducting CMSR at the Regional Training Centre, before receiving 3 weekends of Infantry Training in the Battalion, prior to CIC.

On the sporting front, the Battalion came second in the 5th Division Orienteering Competition on a warm day at Bassingbourn. The team consisted of the CO, QM, Adjt, RSM, Lt Jacobs and WO2 Coupe. The winning team was Cambridge UOTC, who were at least half the age of the Battalion team. In addition to the team prize, Lt Jacobs was the individual Under 25 Runner-up and WO2 Coupe was the M35 Runner-up.

May will see the Battalion take part in the 49 (East) Bde Concentration at STANTA, which will include an Inter Company Patrol Competition.