



05/08

## ROYAL ANGLIAN NEWS

MAY 08

### PROMOTIONS

1. The Regiment is delighted to note the following promotion:
  - Lt Col SW Carver DSO to become Colonel in 2009

### FORTHCOMING RETIREMENTS

2. RHQ has been informed of the following officer retirements:
  - Major IRM Hall wef 19.08.08
  - A/Major DM Hazelwood wef 05.05.08
  - Captain DW Turner wef 02.10.08
  - Captain AN Wolstenholme wef 29.09.08

We wish them all well and thank them for their valuable and loyal service to The Regiment

### BATTALION ACTIVITIES

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

This month saw the Battalion conduct EX CELTIC AVENGER at Ballykinler Training Centre, Northern Ireland. This was the 38 Brigade Public Order Validation Exercise for the Battalion. The Battalion moved en masse to Ballykinler, via Stranraer and the ferry to Belfast, for a two week stay. The companies had a few days to run through the mandatory briefings and conduct some low level drills, before entering the Village with a live civpop. Again, HQ Company provided the opposition and had a few scores to settle after the previous outing in Rype Village, Lydd. After a series of Platoon Level exercises, the companies each had 24hrs of battle procedure, including a covert recce through the Village. They then had three serials to complete for their formal assessment. Initially each Company had to enable a parade to march through the Village without disruption. This involved the use of engineer assets and liaison with the PSNI. After successfully extracting from the Village, they had to conduct a separation operation between the two factions. Finally, in support of the PSNI, the companies had to clear a group of protestors from the Village.

Throughout the exercises, the Command and Control was thoroughly tested, especially when moving platoons simultaneously. All ranks were also put under pressure by a very aggressive crowd, ably led by Maj Hall, who used all of his experience to cause as many problems as possible. This included charging an entire PSNI TCG single-handed after they had boxed him into a corner. All three companies passed the validation and are

therefore fit to deploy, if necessary, over the summer. Despite this there is still room for improvement and the companies will continue to practice their drills and skills.

The Battalion did not waste the extensive range facilities at Ballykinler. HQ Company took the opportunity to put the majority of the Company through the APWT. The rifle companies also passed the APWT and conducted the Para Cup March and Shoot competition, which A Company won.

Upon returning to Pirbright, the focus switched to preparations for CT1 training, which took place on SPTA in the last week of May. This was the first exercise using BULLDOG. The aim was to familiarise the platoons with the vehicles, to practice loading the vehicles and to practice embussing and debussing drills. This should be a good platform from which to move up to CT2 training in June and July.

### **A (Norfolk) Company**

May was an important month for A (Norfolk) Company. The main effort for the month was to be validated by Commander 38 Brigade in Public Order on EX CELTIC AVENGER. However, BULLDOG driver and commander training continued in earnest, as our first mechanised exercise as a Company since 2006 is fast approaching.

EX CELTIC AVENGER, run at Ballykinler Camp in Northern Ireland, involved a 5 day Public Order package followed by a period of ranges and physical training. Initially, long days and nights in Beeston Training Village focused on low-level drills and sought to get the newer members of the Company, who had no previous experience of Public Order, up to standard. The weather was excellent throughout the fortnight and wearing thermals and 'Robocop' kit for protection from projectiles and flames, while being menaced by a very motivated Headquarters Company, was extremely hot work. The Platoon Level training sought to rehearse all the drills required for effective Public Order control. 1 (Almanza) Platoon learnt a particularly important lesson in community relations when they beat a civic leader who was attempting to negotiate a de-escalation in crowd violence. The lesson was heeded and Lieutenant Nick Denning's negotiation of a settlement with boisterous Republican rioters was a notable strong point on the Validation Exercise.

With the Public Order phase complete, the exercise took on a more relaxed feel. Ranges, runs on the beach and a chance to relax in the evenings, were deserved rewards for the soldiers.

The culmination of the fortnight was a magnificent overall victory for 'The Fighting Ninth' in the Battalion March and Shoot competition. The Company swept the board with Private Ward winning best soldier, Corporal Dunning winning best Corporal, Sergeant Love winning best individual and Corporal Van Der Merwe and Privates Marans, Gooch and Roller winning best fire-team.

EX CELTIC AVENGER was another success for A (Norfolk) Company and was an excellent chance for a new Command Team to get to know each other and their men. With Platoon Level training and the introduction of BULLDOG armoured vehicles just around the corner, the build up for the next operational deployment is well under way.

The month was capped off by victory in the Inter Company Athletics Competition. The boxing team have now come together for 6 weeks of intensive training and are hungry to further our recent successes next month.

### **B (Suffolk) Company**

The Company deployed with the remainder of the Battalion to Northern Ireland for EX CELTIC AVENGER. After a long coach journey the Company arrived en masse at Ballykinler Training Centre, the SNCOs shuddering at the memories of life in a base line, both in the Village and on the streets. The initial couple of days consisted of mandatory briefings and plenty of time for the platoons to rehearse their low level drills. After some more advice from the Northern Ireland Training Support Battalion, drills were slightly amended before going up against a live opposition in the form of HQ Company.

When the Company did get into the village the serials were initially low key with the crowds being louder than violent. This changed when the Company went through the Validation Exercise. Under the watchful eye of the Brigade Commander and CO, the Company went through a number of serials, beginning with escorting a funeral parade, led by the Padre, which surprised a few soldiers. After a relatively peaceful parade, the situation escalated which required a dispersal of the factions. The exercise culminated in a clearance of the Village. The Company maintained its fast and aggressive attitude to ensure the crowds did not get an opportunity to regroup, while maintaining the control of three independent platoons. All ranks were fully tested throughout the exercise and, after six hours, were exhausted but pleased that we had reached the required standard.

Training did not stop there; the Company zeroed and passed the APWT, before participating in the Para Cup Competition. Despite not winning the competition, it has left the Company ready to conduct LFTT in the autumn.

The second half of the month was spent preparing for and deploying on CT1 training. The 4 vehicles were signed off the MT and those trained ensured that they were ready to deploy in the final week of May. This is the first exercise working towards TESEX in October, and the first with BULLDOG. We concentrated on the very basics, as the majority of the Company had not seen a BULLDOG before. A lot of time was spent familiarising the soldiers with the vehicles, especially the safety aspects. With only 4 vehicles, only one platoon could use them at any time, so the remainder spent their time revising low level drills that may have become a bit rusty since returning from Afghanistan.

### **C (Essex) Company**

May began with the three rifle companies of the Battalion travelling out to Ballykinler to complete their Public Order training, with EX CELTIC AVENGER as the confirmatory exercise. C Company deployed fully manned, back filled from D Company.

All three companies had to rotate through the exercise and C Company were last, giving the platoons enough time to conduct a good amount of refresher and build up training. It was a very good initiation for the two new platoon commanders, 2Lt Thomas of 9 Platoon and 2Lt Granell of 10 Platoon, who quickly got into the swing of things. A number of new drills passed on by the Royal Irish Directing Staff proved to be very useful when confronting a crowd of uncontrollable 'squaddies' trying to overrun your baseline. The

Training Village in Ballykinler is purpose built to make training for Public Order as realistic as possible, allowing all participants to watch the training on videos afterwards. Useful lessons were learnt and detailed feedback could be given very quickly with the scenarios still fresh in the mind.

When not training in the Village the Company did a lot of range work and took part in a Battalion March and Shoot. All the C Company teams did pretty well but A Company came away with the best score. The weather over the eight days was excellent and burnt faces were the norm.

EX CELTIC AVENGER was a success; not only did C Company pass the assessment and gain the tick in the box required to stand by to support the PSNI in the summer, but it also proved that as a Company we are well and truly ready to do the business if called on.

On return to the UK, 30 members of the Company were able to attend a function at the House of Lords on invitation from Lord Harrington, the Essex Association and the Royal British Legion. At the function it was announced that the Essex Association has decided to fund an annual cash prize of £2500 to a soldier within the Battalion; the exact criteria of choosing the candidate is still to be decided.

The month ended with an Inter-Company Athletics Competition at the Army Athletics Track in Aldershot. LCpl Watson was able to field a very strong team with all members doing extremely well, ultimately winning a second place for the Company. Special mention must be made of OC C (Essex) Company, as 'Angry Phil' stormed through the 3000m Steeplechase into first place, spurred on by the shouts of his men.

### **D (Cambridgeshire) Company**

D (Cambridgeshire) Company has been engaging in several diverse training activities this month from Brecon to Northern Ireland.

The Sniper Platoon has been split, with half attending the Basic Sniping Course in Brecon and half training as the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Competition Shooting Team. This will bode well for the future of the Sniper Platoon as we further develop their shooting and stalking skills. The Reconnaissance Platoon, on the other hand, has been putting the CVR(T) crews through their paces on the AFV ranges at Lulworth.

The remainder of the Company enjoyed the unexpectedly good weather in Ballykinler, Northern Ireland. D Company were pleased to be able to support the Battalion's Public Order training and test exercise, Ex CELTIC AVENGER, either as exercising troops or CIVPOP.

Apart from a couple of unfortunate individuals who received minor injuries, the two weeks spent in Northern Ireland were very pleasant, with ample opportunity for a round of golf or a dip in the pool. Certainly one could be forgiven for forgetting that it had only recently ceased to be an operational tour. Ballykinler also has an excellent set of static ranges, which we used to full advantage, getting the whole Company through both the APWT and Fire Team Assessment (Para Cup).

## **Headquarter Company**

The majority of the Company deployed with the Battalion to support EX CELTIC AVENGER. The civpop were only required for the latter half of the exercise, so the Company used the time to perform MATTs, including the APWT and Military Swimming Test. It is rare to have the Company in one place to complete this training, so the opportunity was not wasted. When the time came to act as civpop, those involved really got stuck in and maintained a very aggressive mentality throughout four gruelling days - rioting is hard work! All ranks came out to assist including the Battalion 2IC, Major Calder, who cut a fine dash as a gentleman rioter.

The remainder of the Company were preparing for the Board of Officers, which is always a huge task, only made easier by the preparation beforehand. Under the watchful eye of the Quartermaster and RQMSs, all accounts were checked and the results are being sifted through now.

With the majority of departments conducting the Board, or preparing for CT1 training, it was a weakened team that took part in the Inter Company Athletics Competition and, despite some gutsy performances, the Company came last. However, there are still several events left, so the overall competition is not beyond our grasp.

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

The Battalion, after a long period of deployment, due to the many working parts and timelines we had, are now firmly in Theatre. All the companies have now passed through an excellent RSOI which was useful in a number of ways. Firstly it allowed us to start to adapt to the hot climate - something that was very difficult to replicate in the winter German exercises! Secondly it facilitated some last minute revision of training and techniques, including a final zeroing of weapons and a chance for all weapon systems to be fired. Thirdly it ensured a period of rest before the inevitable fast tempo of the tour began.

The journey into Iraq was a short plane ride from Kuwait to the Contingency Operating Base (COB) at Basra City International Airport. The base has changed significantly since we were last here 18 months ago, but not enough for the Battalion not to recognise some of the distinctive features, most notably for some, the Subway Take-away Bar and NAAFI complex where one can play pool and relax with an ice cool milkshake.

Once the living area is established, the focus of course immediately changes to the job. During the latter part of our training the mission we would undertake changed. The central focus is now firmly on the continued training and mentoring of the Iraqi Army in the Basra Region. The emphasis since Provisional Iraqi Control last year is concentrated on the Iraqis providing their own solutions to problems and missions. The purpose of the Poachers (and the rest of the British Army) is to support this and to provide resources if required. The Battalion is split into small teams to carry out this task, with subject matter experts in all disciplines, ranging from combat operations and engineering, to logistics and re-supply. The key to the mentoring is to strike a trusting and professional relationship with your Iraqi counter-part, often helped by the cultural and language training that we have undertaken during our pre-deployment exercises.

The MiTT (Military Training Team) concept of embedded troops living side by side with their Iraqi counterparts for long periods of time is a new one for MND(SE). As a result, it has seen us establish a new sub unit for 7 Brigade with elements from 2 R ANGLIAN, SCOTS DG, 4 SCOTS and the 9/12 LANCERS, all working together in a joint and brand new Headquarters. The challenges and timelines to do this have been interesting, but the dust is slowly beginning to settle.

**A (Lincolnshire) Company** have settled in quickly in Baghdad. The job here is to provide the guard and protection for the British personnel who operate from the Green Zone. This critical task will demand a high level of professionalism and will rely heavily on the core Infantry skills that the Company has concentrated on during their training.

Those members of **B (Leicestershire) Company** and the CO's Rover Group barely had time to drop their bags off before they were preparing their vehicles to go out of the gate on their first task. Today saw almost all of B Company and the CO's Rover Group deploy in their MASTIFF vehicles for a number of days to commence the mentoring of their Iraqi Army counterparts. They will live and work alongside the Iraqis until they are required to return to camp for re-supply. Initially this will probably only be a couple of days, but they may deploy for much longer periods in the future.

**C (Northamptonshire) Company**, working with the SCOTS DG, have also started to arrive over the last couple of days. Their first platoons have moved to the Divisional Training Centre at the old Shaiba Logistics Base to begin their task of mentoring and training the Iraqi Army. Most of **D (Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire) Company** have also now arrived and are busy taking on the responsibilities of the Divisional Surveillance Company with much gusto and enthusiasm.

The next six months will be hugely challenging for the Battalion, but we feel we are well trained and up to the task.

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

May started with a very happy event for the Battalion - the Wedding of the Adjutant Capt Paul Steel; it concluded with a rather sadder one - with Capt Paul Thurston's retirement. The Battalion however wishes both of them the best luck in their new lives.

The key event for the Battalion in May was the 49 (E) Bde Concentration, which took place on STANTA over the period 9 – 18 May. The first weekend, 9 – 11 May, was a MATTs Training Weekend which, although administrated by the Battalion, was only attended by a small number of our personnel. The Permanent Staff then conducted their MATTs Training on the Monday and Tuesday, an unusual experience for a team used to training other people. The final weekend was the Bde Military Skills Competition, which consisted of MATTs based stands on Day 1 and a March and Shoot on Day 2. The Battalion entered 6 teams, one per company, plus the CO's Team (a guest entry for Day 1 only). Congratulations go to the A Company Team which won Day 1 and came 2<sup>nd</sup> overall, and to the E Company Team which won Day 2 and came 3<sup>rd</sup> overall. HQ Company also did well to come in overall 7<sup>th</sup> place.

Following the Promotion Board in April, a number of people were promoted in May. They are, WO2s Beard and Thompson, CSgt Duffy, SSgt Cooke, Sgt Seely and Cpls Field and Breese.

Leicester held its annual dinner to honour the Colonel of the Royal Anglian Regiment on 12<sup>th</sup> May. Amongst a total of around 24 guests from The Regiment, including General McColl, the Battalion was represented by Maj Nick Sutherland and Capt Ty Smith from C (Leicestershire and Northamptonshire) Coy. The month concluded with The Regiment's Annual Representation event which this year was held in Essex on the 31<sup>st</sup> May. This was held at a country house near Chelmsford and was attended by around 100 VIPs from the County. Following initial drinks, the guests were treated to an outstanding Beating Retreat performed by The Royal Anglian Regiment Band, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Corps of Drums and the Band of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion The Malay Regiment, who are visiting the UK to conduct Public Duties in London. The guests then received a presentation from Maj Phil Messenger, OC (Essex) Coy 1 R ANGLIAN, on last years' Afghanistan Tour. The event was a success for The Regiment and thanks have been expressed to the members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion who had put so much effort into organising it, especially Capts Devitt and Thurston.

Early June will see the Battalion committed to TA 100 Celebrations in Norfolk, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire, before returning to COIN Training and a full weekend of shooting at CPTA.

**Enclosure:**

1. Diary Dates for the remainder of 2008 are enclosed as a separate attachment