



10/08

## ROYAL ANGLIAN NEWS

OCT 08

### **APPOINTMENTS**

1. RHQ has been informed of the following officer appointments:
  - Maj GB Foden from ICSC (L) to SO2 G2 ISTAR HQ 12 Mech Bde wef May 09
  - Maj J Hancock from ICSC (L) to SO2 Simulation HQ LWCTG(G) wef Aug 09
  - Maj MA Dingle from ICSC (L) to SO2 Trg Strat HQ Fd Army wef May 09
  - Maj MC Melia from ICSC (L) to SO2 ABW/AM Air Warfare Centre wef Aug 09
  - Maj DH James-Roll from ICSC (L) to SO2 G3 O&D RMAS wef May 09
  - Maj A Biggs from ICSC (L) to DSSO JSYCC Ops Offr wef Aug 09
  - Maj PC Moxey from ICSC (L) to SO2 CT Coord Main Building wef Aug 09

### **BATTALION ACTIVITIES**

#### 2. **1<sup>st</sup> Battalion**

The Battalion deployed onto Salisbury Plain for three weeks during October. This was not a full TESEX, but the capstone exercise for the Battalion's conversion to Bulldog. The aim was to provide company groups the opportunity to gain more experience and confidence in the tactical use of Bulldog and to develop experience of operating at the Battle Group level.

Following the introduction of Whole Fleet Management (WFM), this was the first time that the Battalion had the full allocation of tracked vehicles in one place at the same time. As a result the exercise started slowly, running through moving tactically by day and night and developing SOPs for attacks and obstacle crossings. The integration of the Medium Armour (MA) Squadron from the KRH and the rifle companies continued, building on the foundations that were started at CATT. This brought the Battle Group up to a good base level from which to start the training organised by the Field Training Group (FTG).

After a day of briefs and TES kit issues, the Battle Group conducted a week of Company Level Battle Exercises, concentrating on urban operations, advance to contacts and a contemporary operating environment scenario. The companies and Squadron gained real benefit from these exercises, growing more accustomed to the use of Bulldog and the attached arms within the Battle Group. BGHQ spent the week conducting planning cycles - this was the first time a more contemporary set of problems had been introduced, so it required a shift of focus from GENFORCE to insurgents and the effects we wished to have on the local population. Influence and "soft effects" played a much larger part in the planning during those exercises.

The assets available to the Battle Group included a Fire Support Team (FST) per Company. However, due to the Artillery Battery preparing for pre deployment training, we had 2 FOO parties from the Dutch Army and one FOO party from the German Army. This was a great opportunity to develop relations and work in a multi national environment. This highlighted a few issues with communications and equipment compatibility, but these were all worked through and the experience gained from working with them can only help in any future operations. An Air Defence Troop was also attached: this provided point defence for important assets such as obstacles and headquarters. The Stormer also has a very good thermal sight which was used very effectively in the ISTAR screen, with 2 Stormers attached during each mission. For the echelons there was a section of RMP and a Medical Section to bolster the RAP.

The exercise concluded with a series of Battle Group level missions – Ex SHARK. This started with an Advance to Contact and Battle Group Attack, followed by Battle Group co-ordinated Company Group raids on pockets of enemy forces and finally an attack onto Copehill Down Village. For BGHQ the planning cycles were fast and furious, allowing the companies time for battle procedure. Each mission was very different in nature and required regular regrouping of the company groups to ensure they could achieve the required mission. After each mission there was a thorough After Action Review. This was especially useful, giving the commanders valuable feedback and identifying strengths and weaknesses.

Overall TESEX was successful for the Battalion. The integration of the attached arms improved throughout the three weeks, especially the use of the MA Sqn and the FSTs. The experience of using Bulldog in those three weeks has laid a solid foundation on which the Battalion can build upon to prepare for operations during 2009.

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

October was all about Salisbury Plain and TESEX. On a Company level this was the first major exercise with the Battalion for the Company Commander and all three platoon commanders, with new appointments all the way through the Company after the recent Section Commanders' Battle Course and JNCO cadres. So all were keen to prove their platoons were on the ball.

With deployment to Salisbury on Monday 6 October, the previous week meant frantic work on the Bulldog vehicles we would be using on the Plain. Cpl Hazell and CSgt Love ensured that the time consuming maintenance and equipment checks were carried out and, most importantly, ensured that the issued boiling vessels were in good order to provide for morale when the weather inevitably turned.

The early period of the exercise centred on vehicle commanders and drivers working on Battalion level moves, such as obstacle crossings, to ensure the basic drills were understood. This proved to be useful as while hatches are down the field of view for both driver and commander is very limited, leading to the potential for confusion, especially at night. It was at times frustrating for the soldiers, as the majority of their time was spent sitting in the back of the Bulldogs as they bumped through obstacles and Battle Group attacks. After this stage however, the companies were put through their paces on Battle Exercises run by FTG. The Battle Exercises (BEs) were challenging and up to date with current theatres of operations. First for the 'Fighting Ninth' was the Advance to Contact;

from there it was the COIN and Key Leadership Engagement (KLE) in Imber village. The final stand was the FIBUA BE run in Copehill Down. Although busy, the BE phase was great for everyone to get on the ground in some quite demanding situations and they all performed well. A period of about 4 hours in Westdown Camp after every BE (about 36 hours long) helped to keep people fresh and enthusiastic. The BEs were well run and, with an After Action Review after each one, they proved to be very beneficial. It was interesting to see how the platoons moved, with the GPS in the TES kit giving the position of all individuals at all times. The video clips and radio transmission recordings were also a great learning tool as they highlighted the good and bad points from across the Company. All in all the feed back for A Company was very good and it was clear that all members of the Company were working hard and performing to a high standard.

The exercise slowed down a lot when it stepped up to Battle Group level and the time between each mission allowed for thorough battle preparation and meant the men were well rested when it came to operating on the ground. This again proved to be a success and it was a noticeable change from normal blank firing because everyone wants to avoid the electronic voice detailing how death or serious injury had been inflicted. The final Battle Group attack on Copehill Down village was as frantic as usual and, despite the enemy doing a good job of being a nuisance, the attack finished at about midnight on Wednesday. No rest though as all vehicles and kit were cleaned and checked to meet the early morning deadlines. Apart from a few lumps and bumps on the Bulldogs, all were handed over in good condition.

Finally, congratulations to LCpl Fish for gaining a distinction on the Section Commanders' Battle Course.

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

The past month has been packed full of training. The Company deployed on WESSEX WARRIOR (TESEX in everything but name) from 6 to 24 October. This was a real baptism for the Bulldogs, having previously deployed for no more than a few days at a time. Following TESEX, came a gruelling rehabilitation of the vehicles, in preparation for rapid handovers to other units, which saw the Company lose more sleep than on the exercise itself. The remainder of the time has been spent in preparation for Ex REIVER ACE, the Brigade-led live firing exercise, with all of us keeping half an eye on the dropping temperature as the charms of Otterburn draw closer.

WESSEX WARRIOR was an interesting experience, allowing the Company to give the Bulldogs a proper trial in a more intense and frequently varied environment. The exercises began with the Company's own low level training, concentrating on OBUA, FIWAF and contact drills, in addition to tactical movement with the vehicles. These basic stages were key, as since CT1 and 2, there had been a number of new arrivals to the Company, many of whom had barely seen the vehicles or been on exercise with the Company. The Company's section comds wasted little time in drilling key skills into their platoons, passing on relevant and recent experiences.

The second main phase was that of the BEs. The three Battle Exercises focussed on OBUA, a 36hr mechanised Advance to Contact and the Contemporary Operating Environment. The OBUA exercise, MANDALAY, went very well. Having trained frequently in Pirbright's skills house to maintain those lessons learnt on HERRICK, the troops were

generally well prepared, swiftly overcoming the enemy in defence. OSPREY, the Advance to Contact was quite a learning experience. It gave us the opportunity to work alongside the KRH's MA Squadron (Warrior), who provided us with fire support and close support 'tanks'. The two OCs got along very well and this dynamic was apparent throughout. As we converged on the Company Group Assembly Area it became quickly clear that our Company Group was becoming more of a Battle Group. More and more assets rolled into the confines of Brazen Bottom Farm, including half the Recce Platoon, half a squadron of Warrior, Engineers, REME, Air Defence and Javelin – this left some of Company Headquarters slightly giddy at the prospect of manoeuvring this behemoth whilst still maintaining cohesion and comms, not least while getting out of the COTEC danger area. As it was, it proved a valuable period of training. The COE exercise, SAILFISH, was a new experience for many of the soldiers: D-1 saw the basics of 5 and 20s and other key COIN skills being divulged to the newer members of the Company. SAILFISH was the opening in a trend of asymmetric attacks, which complicated operations and encouraged a high level of situational awareness across all ranks.

Exercise SHARK was our final phase. Four days and three missions opened with our Company Group Advance to Contact. Working side by side with C Sqn KRH, we cleared and assaulted our way halfway across the Plain. The troops mounted an aggressive offence, supported by armour and guided by recce, rapidly destroying the enemy within their trenches and chasing down a few stragglers through the woods. Mission 2 took the form of a Company Raid, resulting in our clearance of Smith's Plantation, a large objective that proved a challenge in terms of coordination and control but which was cleared, despite threatening to swallow the Company. B Company then mounted a rapid assault onto Tilshead Farm, closing with the enemy under cover of CAS, 81mm, Jav and GPMG. The few surviving enemy were put to the bayonet by the platoons. The final operation was an OBUA Assault into Copehill Down. Following a successful investment by ISTAR and deception by A Company, B Company provided the break in. Immediately after a surgical strike into enemy strong points by GMLRS, the platoons echeloned up Middle Barn Close destroying the sparse resistance. As the Company reached its LOE and with C Company preparing for FPOL, the comms went dead. We reverted to runners and linkmen as the Battle Group struggled to overcome the issues that developed when every net, from Battle Group to PRR, became white noise. This lasted for about 50mins but only slightly slowed momentum within the village as we continued to clear alongside C Company and until ENDEX was called.

Since the exercise, sights have been switched onto new targets. With both the Bulldog rehabilitation and Ex REIVER ACE vying for position of prominence and sucking up the Company's manpower. The Pensions Appeal Tribunal has added a further requirement for the Company to man a number of stands and facilitate the visit by 120 high profile civilians, in what is undoubtedly a very important, but unfortunately timed, event. Following on from Ex REIVER ACE, the next high priority objective is the Battalion's ECI, which will see further hours spent in the armoury and Bulldog sheds bringing all the Company's holdings up to the required standard.

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

This month, along with the rest of the Battalion, C (Essex) Company has focused on the build up and conduct of TESEX. For many it was a new experience and helped to cement the transition from Saxon to Bulldog. The biggest challenge for the Company was the

readjustment of time and manpower that was required at the vehicle park getting the Bulldogs ready for exercise.

Deploying onto TESEX, the first week was spent dealing with teething problems and familiarizing the troops with the vehicles and TES equipment. It included developing a number of SOPs that would be used throughout the following weeks. During the second week we conducted three Company Level Battle Exercises, the first focusing on a contemporary operating environment in and around Imber village. The operations we had to conduct tested the troops in unconventional "three block warfare". An example of this was when the Company moved in to secure a Key Leader Engagement meeting. Although during the meeting there was no disturbance, once the meeting finished the security forces were ambushed in place and forced to flick from a hearts and minds operation to anti ambush drills. With the successful completion of this first Battle Exercise, we moved to Copehill Down Village to undertake OBUA operations, which consisted of two deliberate operations to secure a number of streets. Finally we moved on to more conventional operations in a rural environment.

For the final week we rejoined the Battle Group and conducted a mixture of urban, rural and hasty operations. The pinnacle of this saw a Battle Group attack into Copehill Down at night. A key characteristic which this lengthy battle demonstrated was the Company's ability to be flexible. The previous 24 hours had been spent in planning for the operation; however, due to no plan surviving contact, everything changed on route to the objective - twice. However, in true Viking style the Company acted professionally and adapted its plan on the move. Overall TESEX provided the soldiers with a welcome release from barrack life, with ENDEX providing a defined line for the Company to switch our focus towards future operations.

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

Finally, the exercise that we had all been training for since Christmas leave, TESEX, was upon us. Luckily TESEX was an abridged version culminating in Ex SHARK and not including the final, formal Test Exercise.

Training in the build up missions went well with the ISTAR Group polishing their performance under OC ISTAR, Maj Chris Barry. These last checks of their ability really paid off on the three Ex SHARK missions. Ex PIKE was a specific ISTAR BE, which involved BGHQ conducting a planning cycle and the ISTAR Group conducting the mission. It involved an obstacle crossing and then the find function and setting the conditions for a Battle Group attack on an enemy position. This was a good opportunity to shake out with some live enemy before Ex SHARK, and gave the ISTAR Group some valuable feedback before the main event. The RSO has to be commended for his acting skills while pretending to be BGHQ and all the sub units in what essentially turned into a CPX once the notional companies crossed the Line of Departure.

The capabilities of the ISTAR Group improved dramatically when a pair of Stormer Air Defence vehicles was attached to the group. The thermal sight, designed for searching for aircraft, exceeded anything the Battalion had organically at our disposal and gave an extra dimension to the deeper find.

Ex SHARK saw differing missions for the ISTAR Group. In the Advance to Contact they conducted the normal find function, which included an obstacle crossing and setting the conditions for company attacks. This included an aggressive attitude pushing hard on the enemy withdrawing forces, and locating FUPs and fire support locations for the Company / Squadron Groups. The subsequent mission involved company group attacks on to specific objectives. For this the ISTAR Group was split and recce vehicles and snipers were attached to each Company. This gave them a better find capability and the CVR(T) could be used in the close support role if required. The task for the final mission was to destroy as much of the enemy and insurgent forces outside the village. They were extremely successful in this and had caused serious attrition of the enemy before the rifle companies broke into the village.

The FSGs were attached to each Rifle Company. This gave the Company the anti tank and ISTAR capability of the Javelin and CLU as well as the extra fire support of a section of GPMG SF. They integrated well with the companies and soon became a key asset for the company commanders. The additional firepower they provided was a definite battle winner.

All D Company soldiers performed extremely well on TESEX, either as the ISTAR Group or as an FSG. They worked hard and provided a very high standard to the rest of the Battle Group. The training and integration of these assets at an early stage in the training year produced excellent results.

### **Headquarter Company**

The majority of HQ Company deployed on TESEX with the remainder of the Battalion. A small percentage had to remain in Pirbright to provide the required security and life support functions.

During TESEX both A1 and A2 Echelons deployed and were used and tested as much as the Fighting Echelon. They quickly became used to the demand for REME assets and spares required to maintain the Battle Group and keep it on the road. The REME fitter sections worked tirelessly to ensure key equipment was kept task worthy, and achieved this throughout.

A1 conducted its own training during the BE phase of the exercise, conducting rolling replens and convoy moves as well as providing the companies with real time G4 support. They were fully supported by A2, who remained in Westdown Camp. The RAP and Med Section spent little time with A1 and were generally attached to the rifle companies. This meant that it was quicker getting the casualties to the RAP, as well as providing some intimate protection. The only issue with the Med Section was the fact that they were mainly wheeled and so had to wait for infill decking on any bridges that were used to cross obstacles.

As ever Headquarter Company worked extremely hard behind the scenes to ensure the Battle Group and the rifle companies had exactly what they needed to achieve their mission. The focus has now shifted to the refurbishment of the vehicle fleet, ensuring that they are in good order before they are handed back to the units they were borrowed from, or to the WFM pool.

### 3. 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion

#### **FROM THE COMMANDING OFFICER**

This will be the last Poachers' contribution to the Newsletter from TELIC 12; the tour has seen many achievements from Poachers all over Iraq. Encouragingly we have finally begun to see the long awaited 'Armoured Fist' flash of 20 Armoured Brigade wandering around camp; a sign both of our impending return and the great deal of work to do to set them up for their tour. This edition of the newsletter should give you a flavour of the continuing work and pace of change out here.

As the last newsletter written from Iraq I wanted to take stock of all that has gone on but just find it impossible to really sum up succinctly exactly what has gone on - so much has happened. I have never known a tour to go so quickly, so perhaps that is indicative of just how busy things have been. For every Poacher their experiences will be different. I visited A Company up in Baghdad recently and was really struck by just how different their experience has been to those of us down in the South. Working in such a huge city, amongst so many Americans, has been a real test of their professionalism and resolve. I was really proud of how well they are doing. Relieved as well as they have mounted quite some publicity campaign up there, and I don't think anybody who meets them is left in any doubt about the fact they are Poachers! I am sure that the variety of experiences the guys have had out here will lead to a fair amount of banter and leg pulling, but having seen everyone in action, and experienced much myself, I can see that everybody has got the balance between what is good about their jobs, and what is bad about their jobs, almost exactly the same. Of course the RSM has had the toughest tour of all, but only because he has to share a room with me!

The tour has been unconventional in every sense; it has been a shame that the RSM and I have not had as much contact with the rest of the soldiers as we would have liked, but that has been the product of the work required. Within the constraints of the unconventional and constantly changing environment in which we work, Poachers at all levels have been models of flexibility. Their dedication to the task at hand at such a critical time in the development of Iraq has been exceptional. All of the Poachers who, like me, have had the privilege of working in close proximity with the Iraqi Army, have expanded their cultural horizons hugely. The Iraqis are a warm, friendly and hospitable people, who have a deep seated affection for the British, the British Army in particular. I have made some very close personal friends, seen some amazing things and eaten some quite remarkable food, and not all of it good remarkable! So even at this stage, with a little while still to go, I would say mission accomplished to the Poachers. We look forward to seeing the wider Regimental community on our return.

#### **Headquarter Company**

Headquarter Company has, as ever, soldiered away in the background ensuring that the huge logistical, communications and administration problem that is MITTING has been solved with as little impact on the soldiers on the ground as possible.

The Catering Department, led by WO2 Thornton, has re-rolled from working with civilians in the new hardened 'DFAC' (American word for cookhouse) buildings to an expeditionary footing. With chefs freed from working in the Contingency Operating Base (COB), Number 5 cook-sets are now seeing action all over the Basra Area of Operations. The plaudits

about the skills of the chefs stream in; what can be done with a 10 man ration pack is extraordinary.

The Quartermaster, Maj Danny Mackness, and his team continue to administrate their empire from their ever busy office. Recent success in the MiTT Group passing various inspections are a tribute to the quiet efficiency with which they go about their jobs. The Signals Platoon, like the QMs', have a huge problem to deal with in terms of scope and size. Communications throughout the area are now pretty good, 'difficult but workable' in the words of most of the MiTTs. In the environment in which we work that is praise indeed and a tribute to the long hours of systems engineering and playing with antennas throughout the area. The Company now looks forward to a great deal of work to get the Battalion back to Germany, followed by a well earned period of relaxation in the run up to Christmas.

### **A (Lincolnshire) Company**

Support to the British and Coalition effort in Baghdad has continued as usual with frantic peaks of activity and frustrating troughs of inactivity. With the platoons alternating between guards and patrols, there is at least been some variation in routine for the soldiers and, now that R&R is almost over, there is more manpower available which eases the burden of 'staggering on' somewhat. Although the guard duty is generally less exciting than patrols, protecting the UK Base and the residence of the Senior British Military Representative in Iraq is obviously of vital importance. This was brought home early in the month when Private Richardson in one of the sangars engaged an insurgent mortar team seen approaching the International Zone on the far banks of the River Tigris. The attack was foiled but unfortunately he was engaging at maximum range and the team got away.

This month the Company provided support to several VIPs including the Shadow Defence Secretary, Dr Liam Fox MP, and newly appointed Labour Defence Secretary, John Hutton MP. As well as providing backup road moves for the visits, the Company was involved in 'meet the troops' serials for both MPs. The latter visit saw much interest from several news agencies, with comprehensive coverage on ITN News, allowing the men of A (Lincolnshire) Company to puff out their chests for the girlfriends back home - definitely a highlight of the week!

More recently the Company has had the welcome presence of the CO and Lt Col Vincent, CO 3 R ANGLIAN. Upon arrival on the whistle-stop tour of Baghdad, Lt Col Browne and the Adjutant were afforded the opportunity to act as top cover sentries on a night time road move down Route IRISH into the Baghdad Support Unit. The following day both COs were shown around the sights of the International Zone, with close protection for their visit being provided by A Company's 1-Star Escort Team.

With A Company so literally detached from the remainder of the MiTT Group, the visit allowed the CO the opportunity to tell us first hand of the differing and unique complexities that each of the Poacher companies are facing during this deployment. Additionally, CO 3 R ANGLIAN was able to interview the eight TA attachments to the Company and see them in action; all, that is, except LCpl Mason who was deployed at the Ministry of the Interior building in the Red Zone. Unfortunately the helicopter request to visit his location by US Blackhawk fell through at the last minute. At nearly 11% of our strength in Baghdad, the

TA augmentees are an essential part of the Company and they are fully integrated at all levels.

With the Relief in Place now only weeks away, A Company is acutely aware that '*close*' to being home is not the same as '*being*' home! The arrival of 1 YORKS in Baghdad in a few weeks is sure to see the Company as busy as we ever have been; helping to hone the TTPs of the incoming PROFOR and pass on the corporate knowledge that has been accrued throughout the whole of Op TELIC 12 so far. At all levels Baghdad remains a complex environment in which to work; drills and skills are still being practiced and rehearsed on an almost daily basis and all are aware that now is not the time to relax. On the day of writing this article the Guard Platoon had to respond to two new types of incident and on both occasions the rear sangar sentry had to respond with warning shots showing that although the end of the tour is in sight, it is by no means over.

## **B (Leicestershire) Company**

### **3/52X Military Transition Team (MiTT)**

It has been a rewarding but frustrating month at Camp STABLES. At the same time as we are finally seeing some improvement in Iraqi Army (IA) infrastructure, the 'jundi' still seem to prefer the company of cows, which they allow through the front gate to browse on the piles of rubbish this army seems to produce – we definitely won't miss the flapping of plastic bags on the barbed wire. Relations are strong and this was recently proven when Cpl Stow (Vikings attached) and Lt Childs were given free reign to develop a QRF capability for the Bn.

On the personnel front, the 'Vikings' have been a breath of fresh air although their war stories are wearing a little thin – on the Poacher officers only – the boys love them! We have managed to send a few soldiers home early and their cheers could be heard in the stables from the COB as they mounted the C-130 out of Theatre. However, this was only possible because the security situation has improved to such a degree that the MiTT now routinely travels with the Iraqis and keeps the MASTIFF on standby. The UK footprint is certainly the lowest it has been since we withdrew from the City and 20 Bde will hopefully find a situation where they can turn more towards the training and development of the IA.

We are now definitely on the downward slope and looking forward to some solid brick walls, hot water and decent food (although it is incredible what Cpl Turnbull has produced from 10 man ration packs and some fresh produce). COB CSgt Asker is still finding any excuse under the sun to stay in his nice comfortable COB Stonehenge, the CSM is showing remarkable levels of patience, Lt Childs has finally broken under the pressure of his IA officer friends demanding he gives them everything and the OC is spending increasing amounts of time idling away in the IA CO's office - so no change from the last 5 months then.

We are all looking forward to coming home and send our best wishes to family and friends. We will leave with a real sense of achievement in having contributed to the strategic success of Op TELIC 12.

## **4/52X MiTT**

4/52X MiTT continue to develop the capacity and operational effectiveness of 4/52X IA. During the month of October two ops were of note. With the steady development of the Iraqi Air Force (IAF), the ability arose for 4/52 to conduct Eagle VCPs into the marshland to the east of Al Qurnah, an area identified as being rife with smuggling and the movement of lethal aid from Iran. The concept of joint IA and IAF operations was an enormous leap in capability for the ISF and something that could only have been imagined 5 months ago. For most members of the IA Battalion, this would be the first encounter they had had with helicopter operations. Due to IAF constraints, initial dry training was conducted on a British Merlin Helicopter at CIMIC House. This gave the 4/52 MiTT instructors valuable time to familiarise and rehearse the IA Jundi with the mounting, dismounting and actions in the helicopter. All Jundi that received the training were notably keen and took on the new skill set extremely well. Conditions had therefore been established to conduct an IA Eagle VCP op in the marshlands when, early in the morning, the sound of two IAF helicopters could be heard in the distance. The IAF pilots are 'interesting' in their flying style - not dangerous, but you could quite clearly see the difference between British and Iraqi helicopter pilots. The Jundi were stacked in their chinks, ready to mount and conduct the op. The Jundi boarded and the op ensued, landing at four pre-designated VCP locations. All were conducted as rehearsed and the op was deemed as a great success. Even the 52 Brigade Commander was extremely pleased.

The second activity of note for the MiTT was to design and construct a Field Firing Area in the vicinity of Al Qurnah. With this asset, the MiTT have the ability to familiarise and demonstrate to 4/52 IA the setting up and conduct of a range day. The day started with a fire power demonstration with the 51mm Mortar, GPMG and HMG, firing onto point targets at various distances, demonstrating the large amount of firepower the MiTT hold. The Commander of 4/52 IA was particularly pleased to fire the 51mm Mortar HE himself.

The day continued with details of four Jundi being paired with a British soldier. A very simple but effective exercise was for each soldier to fire their own weapon system at a Fig 11 from 25m. After five rounds each, the pair would inspect the target and the British soldier would contrast his skills with his IA counterpart. They would then return to the firing point and repeat the exercise, but this time switch weapon systems. Hopefully the Brit would remain the better shot, even with an AK 47; thus marksmanship principles would lodge with the Iraqis. The morning finished with a falling plate competition. Four Brits verses four Jundi. The competition was cheered on by both sides and had a great atmosphere. Many rounds later (some on automatic) the competition finished with the Brits winning by one plate. The morning was a real success and demonstrated to the Commander 4/52 the importance of conducting range days such as these to improve all aspects of weapons training and skills.

## **C (Northamptonshire and Rutland) Company**

October has been the busiest month of the tour so far by some distance. After the relative calm of Ramadan, and in addition to operational commitments, the training programme has really kicked in. We have been conducting training for about 250 soldiers from 2 Commando companies, mentoring our previously trained IA instructors, run 4 different Train-the-Trainer packages (Infantry, Driver, Engineer, and Medical) with the assistance of the IA instructors, trained 22 officers on a Development Course, and helped support other

Engineer, Vehicle Maintenance, and Fire Fighting courses. The real bonus has been the continuing success of the IA instructors. For the first time they have conducted a whole day's training with the Commando Company with only some minor prompting; this bodes well for the future. The top student on the latest T3 Course is a very promising instructor and, most importantly, has the abilities to take on some of the tasks of the Training Officer.

There have been a number of changes in personnel with Cpl Rawdon taking a section to help protect and train with the IA MTR MiTT at Camp Meera. In return we have received 7 soldiers from the RHA plus 2 officers. In the daily 'Prayers' we have so many different cap badges - Poachers, SCOTS DG, RHA, RA, 4 SCOTS, RLC, RE, REME, RAMC plus US MPRI Contractors, MAST, US Army and US Police. Suffice it to say there are more attachments than Poachers and it has been interesting having such an eclectic group.

We have had more visits than you can shake a stick at. The GOC, General Salmon, kicked off the visits early in the month, bringing along a stream of visitors in his wake. The Brigade Commander has visited 3 times (he intends to make it 4 as he wishes to take part in the charity event) and we have had visits from Commanding Officers, 2 other Brigadiers, an Ambassador and numerous Iraqi experts, looking at the Shaibah relevant aspects of the Joint Iraqi Campaign Plan. We have also had the usual mix of Iraqi Generals and other IA senior officers visit our training. As the end of the month approaches, we have been honoured by the visit of the Colonel-in-Chief, the Duke of Gloucester. He was able to chat to the C Company soldiers, visit the training, and see the C Company Rides Home event in the gym – at the time of writing this all is going to plan and generous donations continue to pour in.

We have also had a number of media visits. The Northamptonshire Chronicle and Echo kicked it off with the 'Poachers' Spokesman', 2Lt Adam Mackness, enjoying the headline of 'We're at War'. He didn't say that...honest! The Senior NCOs have also got in on the act with an article focussing on Sgts Dave Knight and Lee Vendyback. There has also been some very good press coverage in the local media following a Press Day on 20 October.

We have seen a few departures this month with Sgt James and Cpl Stow moving back to Celle and WO2 Wicks returning to Germany in preparation for his posting to Cyprus. We have also said goodbye to the 2IC, Major Padam Limbu, after nearly 30 years of service in the Army. He has been a credit to the Gurkhas and we wish him well in his next career.. Finally, CSgt 'I'm 30...but only just' Greenhill has taken over as Trg WO with his usual gusto.

C Company soldiers continue to be in the middle of progress with the Iraqi Army. As you read this there will be about a month left of the tour – your letters, e-blueys, parcels, and messages of support have been critical to the morale here and will continue to be so until we are back in Celle. Thank you.

## **D (Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire) Company**

The Brigade Reconnaissance and Surveillance Company has continued to make an important contribution to the MND(SE) effort to entrench and expand the secure environment, within which the MiTTs develop Iraqi military capability and the civil reconstruction teams do their work. We have been busy around Basra and on the

borders. Now that the weather has cooled to a chilly 35 degrees, we are able to invest target areas for longer than has been possible up to this point.

The Armageddon Platoon continues to give sterling support to Task Force Spartan and will be nearing the end of their tour when you read this update. Unfortunately, Privates Brooks and Alder were medically evacuated from Theatre following an accident in training. Both should be back on their feet in time for Christmas and we wish them a speedy recovery.

Away from operations the Company has done its best to enjoy the available downtime. On 20 Oct we created a makeshift cricket square on the dirt pitch generally used for football. We were assisted by some strips of carpet and an imaginative Bengali contractor! After a series of pool games the OC's team, consisting of CSgt George, Cpl Faversham, a small band of determined men (and an Indian ringer) smashed CSgt Graham's team into submission.

#### 4. **3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion**

The key event in October was Annual Camp, which concluded in the first week of the month. There have however been a number of other events, mainly centred on recruiting, that have occurred.

Annual Camp was held at Sennybridge from late September to early October. Unusually the weather was warm and dry for the first week, which consisted of Company Level COIN Training and Stage 5 Ranges going up to Platoon Attack level. The addition of the Bermudian RSM (designate) and 14 JNCOs, along with Lt John Gates from the Maine National Guard, added an international flavour to the training. The Colonel-in-Chief visited the Battalion during the ranges and spent a long day talking to the majority of the 200 soldiers deployed. GOC 5<sup>th</sup> Division also visited training at the end of the week and also had an informal dinner with the Battalion's Field Officers.

Following a hard week, the Battalion had a Regimental Weekend. Saturday saw a tab up Pen-y-Fan followed by the RSM leading the Battalion on R&R in Cardiff. The officers held a Mess Dinner, at which Brigadier Tony Calder was dined out as Deputy Colonel of the Regiment. On Sunday the Battalion held a Drumhead Service, which was followed by Inter Company Sports and a BBQ, which saw the launch of the new Battalion "Steelback Ale" from the Red Rat Brewery.

The second week of Camp was based on an OPTAG Mission Rehearsal Exercise (MRX) and saw the Battalion occupy 2 x Forward Operating Bases in Training Area Farms 2 and 9 and, once the cattle grid was crossed, the wet weather set in. Following 24 hours intensive patrolling, a series of Company and Battalion Ops were conducted including Public Order, Search, IED, Reactive and Arrest Ops. The MRX culminated in a Live Firing Battalion Attack on D Range, during which everyone was up to their waist in a cold river.

In addition to COIN, both a Recruit and a PNCO Cadre were conducted. The Phase 1 Recruit Cadre, conducted by Captain Mark Brazier and the RRTT staff, saw 24 soldiers pass their training and some go directly to Catterick for a further 2 weeks CIC. 22 soldiers started the PNCO Cadre, which was run by Captain Drew Jardine. Of these 16 were promoted on the final day of Camp and 2 received deferred passes until December.

Ex STEELBACK CADET is a cadet focused exercise run by the Battalion for cadets in The Regiment's catchment area. This year the exercise was open to CCF as well as ACF detachments. Around 300 cadets were expected, but only 174 cadets and 34 Adult Instructors actually arrived. Those that could make it however had a good weekend on which they took part on 4 stands: GPMG/LSW Live Firing, a Section Attack Circuit, a Support Weapon Stand and an Army Recruiting Team/Regular Army brief. On Saturday night the cadets conducted a patrolling exercise, whilst some of our Lords Lieutenants and Cadet Commandants had a brief and reception hosted by the Colonel Julian Lacey, the new 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Deputy Colonel of the Regiment. All those that took part in the exercise received a badge, which consisted of the Regimental Cap Badge and the words "Ex STEELBACK CADET 2008".

The Battalion also did well at Catterick this month, with 11 out of 14 soldiers passing Phase 2 training with, as mentioned above, some going direct from Camp, thereby doing a solid month of training. In addition, 8 new TA Sponsored Officers (TASOs) were selected from the East Midland UOTC intake. These bring the total sponsored there to 11 cap badged Potential Officers, Officer Cadets and 2Lts.

At the end of the month the CO visited Iraq in order to brief and interview the 24 soldiers deployed with the Poachers. This was a hectic but extremely useful trip for the CO, who was well received by all those he spoke to. Most of the 24 are coming back to the Battalion after the tour and, following POTL, will be presented with their medals at an event to be held on 15 February.

For the period up to Christmas, the Battalion is concentrating on UK Ops. The next main events are Remembrance Weekend and Ex POLAR RESILIENCE 08, which is the 49 (E) Bde main UK Ops CPX which will also be a MOBEX for the Battalion.