



11/10

ROYAL ANGLIAN NEWS

NOV 10

## **BATTALION ACTIVITIES**

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

November saw the Battalion focused on the basics of soldiering at all levels with the rifle companies conducting Level 1 (section and platoon) training on Thetford Training Area in Norfolk. All 3 rifle companies have seen new commanders and soldiers arrive since our return from Op HERRICK 11 and so this exercise gave the platoons a chance to shake out with their new ORBATs. They practiced the fundamentals of manoeuvre, tactics, navigation and administration; and then the companies' shooting was thoroughly tested, during transition to live fire tactical training on the ranges at Hythe, in Kent.

D Company is the home of the Battalion's support weapons: Machine Gun, Javelin (Anti-Tank), Mortar, Recce and Sniper platoons. Once a soldier has gained some experience in a rifle company they may be selected to join D Company by passing a selection cadre. The selection cadres this year were held during November on Salisbury Plain where the weather added an extra dimension to the various OP, navigation and weapons skills tests.

Battalion HQ also had several run outs, practising planning and the use of the newly updated Bowman computers. New procedures and best practices were developed and those newly arrived in the HQ got the chance to settle in prior to the Battalion HQ being tested at the Command and Staff Trainer (CAST) in January. 12 Brigade HQ also ran training for the Battalion Staff with Exercise ACES FOUNDATION. This revised all the battalions in the Bde in a conventional military scenario, thus reminding the audience that Afghanistan and Counter Insurgency is only one part of the military skills set. This was followed by a demonstration of a Hasty Armoured Obstacle Crossing by the King's Royal Hussars Battlegroup. This brought home the speed and capability that an armoured force has and how rehearsal of simple drills is key to maximising momentum and surprise.

In sports, 1 R ANGLIAN FC continued its success with a 2 - 2 draw with the Coldstream Guards and a 5-1 thrashing of 10 Bn REME. The last Personal Fitness Tests were finished and SSgt Waddell let the Battalion rediscover the joys of stretcher races around the back area.

Remembrance Day was commemorated in the Battalion with a service around the 1 R ANGLIAN memorial in Elizabeth Barracks and at Bulford, in a 12 Brigade ceremony, where 60 soldiers represented The Regiment. As ever, it was a poignant day where fallen friends and comrades were remembered by all.

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

November has been a month of continued training for the Battalion, both on and off the Island, as the long impending deployment to Afghanistan finally took place. With B, C, D and HQ Company deploying, the majority of the Battalion spent up to three weeks in Afghanistan, completing the final training requirement for the Battalion to be ready to move from Cyprus at extremely short notice.

With all coys in Camp Bastion by the beginning of the month, the excellent training opportunities included Counter-IED lanes, live firing and up to date Op HERRICK tactics. As well as giving valuable refresher training to the coys, it provided the perfect opportunity for Support Weapons to live fire their heavy weapons, with Mortars, GMG, HMG and Snipers all using the ranges to fire up to a normal year's allocation of ammunition within the space of a few days.

The chance was also taken by the coys to visit deployed units from 16 Brigade - going out on patrol to familiarise themselves with both the ground and tactics. Visits to 2 SCOTS and Brigade HQ at Lashkar Gar offered a valuable insight into ongoing operations and gave a clear focus for training upon return to Cyprus.

With the rest of the Battalion deployed, A Coy took the opportunity to continue training in Cyprus in preparation for their departure to Jordan in December. Then, on the return of the Battalion from Afghanistan, training efforts were renewed after a well-earned long weekend.

On the sporting front, the Rugby Team continued to train hard for games in December and the Football Team were held to a draw by the UN from Nicosia. The Battalion Orienteering Team continued to compete in the Island League, with the Bn 2IC taking the winning time in his first race.

On the social side of life, the Battalion continues to enjoy everything Cyprus has to offer, with the prospect of PT on the beach, scuba and wakeboarding, all still very much on offer due to the unseasonal hot weather, showing temperatures still in the high twenties. It is still a novelty to be enjoying a BBQ, whilst listening to reports of the UK grinding to a halt due to snow.

In the coming month, A (Lincs) Coy will deploy to Jordan as part of a Counter-IED exercise and C (Northants) Coy will complete a week long exercise in Episkopi. The Battalion will also prepare itself for its first Christmas in Cyprus, with the unique possibility of turkey on the beach to look forward to.

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

November has seen no let up in the pace of life for the Steelbacks. Indeed, what with Op TOSCA looming ever closer on the radar, the ongoing VCDS-led Future Reserves 2020 Study and long term preparation for Op HERRICK 16 (April 2012), things are likely to remain just as intense for the foreseeable future. As always, we have conducted some quality training and soldiers from the Battalion have been at the forefront of a number of high profile activities, not least of which was the Battalion's significant contribution to Acts of Remembrance across the Regimental recruiting footprint.

In terms of training plans, this month has seen considerable change. Moving in a new post-SDSR direction, we are now far more focussed in getting basic soldiering skills absolutely right - but through imaginative execution. While Mission Specific Training provides 'Theatre Real' preparation prior to deployment on operations, there is a requirement to teach some 'new basics' and Ground Sign Awareness, Negotiation Training and Handling the Media are but some of the fundamental skills required both in the contemporary and future operating environments. Hand in hand and in line with wider Army procedures, and certainly more attuned to the current Defence climate, we have put a number of measures in place to better predict and manage our resource allocation and adhere to the Graduated Commitment Mechanism. In some respects, higher headquarters coordination and scrutiny has been long overdue; and there are some clear benefits, in terms of delivering a more uniform training progression across the Brigade, through a block-based 'Hybrid Foundation Training' (HFT) regime that is more aligned to delivering the Operational Requirement. Other related activity has included the re-vamp of our Recruiting and Training structures under the watchful eye of the RSM, Company-level individual skills training and work to implement HFT through a revised Forecast of Events.

Aside from routine training, preparation for Op TOSCA continues apace; we are now at the tipping point where planning switches to execution and, as a stark reminder, the first mobilisation letters

for Advance Party personnel will be issued before Christmas. The Mission Specific Training plan is now well advanced and will be cross-checked during next month's main recce, while the ORBAT continues to firm-up and personnel are progressing towards qualification in a number of disciplines, ranging from Swimming Pool Life Guard to Battle Group Planner. Our Regular counterparts will be heartened to learn that even for UN operations in Cyprus, driver training provides a significant burden – just ask the QM!!

We have also been busy on the Community Engagement (CE) front with Remembrance events very much at the fore of all activity. This year the Battalion contributed to events in Great Yarmouth (A Coy), Lincoln (B Coy), Leicester (C Coy), Chelmsford (E Coy), Bury St Edmunds (HQ Coy) and, of course, Duxford (CO, Bn HQ & Band). In addition the CO represented The Regiment at the dedication of the War Memorial at Carlton, Bedfordshire, and at the Beds & Herts Association service at Kempston, laying a wreath on behalf of the Colonel-in-Chief and all ranks and taking the salute. Other CE activity has included the usual round of briefings and updates along with the formal acceptance of a Benevolent Fund donation from RS Components in Corby.

And so, as we approach the final furlong of a challenging year, there is still much to do; next month will see some frenetic Op TOSCA work in order to deliver some much needed clear water after Christmas; and our newsletter contribution will include a reports on EX STEELBACK SPIRIT, the Battalion individual skills test exercise and the main recce to Cyprus