

No. 201
November 2020



THE RED HACKLE

1921 - 2020
100 YEARS OF REGIMENTAL HISTORY

A man with a beard, wearing a blue and red striped polo shirt and blue jeans, is seated in a motorized wheelchair. He is smiling and looking towards the right. A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a pink and white striped dress, stands next to him, also smiling and looking towards the right. They are in a bright room with large windows in the background. The wheelchair has a black frame and large grey wheels. The woman has her hands clasped in front of her.

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THE RED HACKLE

*The Chronicle of
The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment),
its successor The Black Watch,
3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland,
The Affiliated Regiments
and The Black Watch Association*



Private Paul Lowe was killed in Iraq in November 2004. His brothers always wanted to have a lasting memorial for Paul and so raised money to allow them to have a mural painted. It is in their home village of Kelty in Fife.

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Published for The Black Watch



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Editorial

We live in interesting times and much of the news in this edition has been affected by the Coronavirus pandemic. I have been editor for thirty editions and this will be my last, spanning a period of extraordinary change from 2005 to 2020. I hope that readers will not mind too much if I look back over the last fifteen years?

Before doing so, you may find it interesting to note that the first Red Hackle Magazine was produced in April 1921 and that the magazine continued to be published until July 1939. The Second World War intervened and there was a six year gap, the next edition being published in January 1946. Since then, the Magazine has been published every year with four, three, two or just one edition a year and so 2020 marks the 100th year of publication.

The 2005 editions recorded the 1st Battalion's deployment to Iraq on OP BRACKEN, the machinations surrounding the merger of the old Scottish Division Regiments into the Royal Regiment of Scotland and the deaths of five men who were killed in action in 2004; Sergeant Stuart Gray and Privates Kevin McHale, Paul Lowe, Scott McArdle and Pita Tukutukuwaqa. Lastly, in that year the Iraq Memorial in the grounds of Balhousie Castle was dedicated and those names are recorded at the home of the Regiment.

By 2006 the magazine recorded the final exploits of the 1st Battalion The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) and on the 28th of March 2006 the Regiment was no longer part of the Order of Battle of the British Army.

A new portrait of the Colonel-in-Chief was unveiled in 2007. Privates Scott Kennedy and Jamie Kerr were killed in action in Iraq and in the following year, a memorial was dedicated in the grounds of Balhousie Castle for the soldiers of The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland.

By 2008 the purchase of Balhousie Castle, enabled by a grant from the Association was on the horizon and the Heritage Appeal was launched in 2009. In the same year the Black Watch battalion deployed to Afghanistan and sadly Sergeants Sean Binnie and Gus Millar, Bombardier Craig Hobson and Privates Robert McLaren and Kevin Elliott were killed and Corporal Tam Mason died of his wounds.

The Heritage Appeal was very much alive in 2010 and in 2011 many of the responsibilities of the Regimental Trustees were passed to the Trustees of the Association. The Old Colours of the 1st Battalion were marched off parade in Edinburgh in the presence of Her Majesty The Queen and a dinner for surviving 2nd World War veterans was held in Perth.

By 2012 the Heritage Lottery Fund had given a grant of £778k to the Appeal Fund, the Black Watch Battalion were undertaking their second tour in Afghanistan and in June the Old Colours of the 1st Battalion The Black Watch and the 1st/51st Highland Volunteers were deconsecrated and laid up. The first volume of our Regimental history, "Highland Furies" was published and finally a dinner was held to mark the 60th anniversary of the Battle of the Hook.

Work began on the commissioning of a statue at Black Watch Corner in 2013 and in June the new Museum and extension to Balhousie Castle was opened. In May 2014 three hundred members of the Regimental family gathered in Ypres to attend a Service of Dedication of the statue at Black Watch Corner and in July the Duke of Rothesay officially opened the museum.

The Great War Memorial Wall was established in the grounds of Balhousie Castle in 2015 to mark the deaths of every Black Watch officer and soldier killed during the Great War and the Black Watch battalion deployed to Cyprus in support of the UN. Lastly in 2015, the Association held a Northern Ireland OP BANNER dinner to mark forty five years since the first deployment in 1970.

In 2016 the Castle hosted the hugely successful "Poppies: Weeping Window" and over 120,000 people visited the exhibition. The Regimental Trust and Wavell Appeal Funds were wound up and a dinner to honour our National Servicemen was held in Perth.

Volume two of the Regimental history "Fighting in the Front Line 1899 - 2006" was published in 2017. The magnificent statue of the Black Watch piper of the 51st Highland Division was installed in the Castle grounds and the memorial to the old Queens' Barracks was unveiled in Perth. A party also attended the unveiling of the memorial to the 6th Battalion at Monte Scalari in Tuscany.

The Black Watch battalion had deployed in the New Year of 2018 to Iraq in a security role. November marked the 100th anniversary of the end of the Great War and a large contingent of Black Watch veterans marched at the Cenotaph in London. The major event for 2019 was the 100th anniversary of the formation of the Association. A Kirk Service and lunch was held but events planned for 2020 have been cancelled due to the Coronavirus outbreak.

Over the last fifteen years the magazine has recorded the deaths of many old friends and comrades. The Association remains vibrant and relevant but like any voluntary organisation, relies heavily on a few people to make Branches operate effectively. Without the commitment of those volunteers and the small number of Association staff we would not be in the strong position that we now enjoy. I have been supported by many people and I offer my grateful thanks to them all but especially to Major Ronnie Proctor.

The Castle and Museum, supported by the Friends have taken great strides and have won many awards and accolades but they require more support from Black Watch men as volunteers. In years to come the Castle and Museum will be the lasting heritage to the service of many thousands of men who have served in the ranks of the Regiment and I would encourage you to support it.

There are some interesting articles in this edition, ranging from so far unpublished letters written by Major Sandy Leslie MC during the Second World War, a report on a Great War memorial near Crieff, a fascinating extract from the memoirs of Major General Neil McMicking when he served in Russia during the Revolution, two contemporary articles written by serving officers and lastly a report of the celebration of the liberation of Vught in October 1944.

The opinions expressed in the articles of the magazine are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policy and views, official or otherwise, of the Regimental Association or the MOD. This publication contains official information. It should be treated with discretion by the recipient.

"The Red Hackle" is published annually. Contributions large and small will always be welcome. They should be sent in electronically as a Word document and photographs should be sent as jpegs. All material should be sent to the Editor at admin.bwassociation@btconnect.com by 30 September.

To subscribe to the magazine please apply for details to the email address above.



Regimental News

FORECAST OF EVENTS 2021			DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
DATE	EVENT	LOCATION			
5 January	Fife Branch Red Hackle Day Breakfast	Fife	TBC	Royal Hospital Chelsea Founders Day	Chelsea
16 January	Edinburgh, Lothians' and Borders' Branch – Ceilidh Night	Ex Servicemen's Club, Leith	7 June	Officers' and Ladies' Lunch	Caledonian Club London
23 January	Angus Branch Burns Supper	Forfar	18 June	Black Watch Regimental Golf	Balbirnie Park
5 February	Dundee Branch Red Hackle Dinner	Dundee	18 June	Iraq War Memorial Dinner	Perth
6 February	Perth Branch Burns Supper	Perth	19 June	Regimental Reunion	Balhousesie Castle
18 February	Black Watch Curling v Lowlanders		26 June	Armed Forces Day	
27 February	Dundee Branch AGM	Dundee	14 August	Inter Branch Games Day	Details tbc
4 March	Black Watch Curling v Highlanders		14 August	Highland Branch BBQ	
11 March	Association Trustees' and Executive Committee Meeting	Perth	TBC	Perth Branch visit to Edinburgh Military Tattoo	Edinburgh Castle
14 March	Perth Branch AGM	Perth	5 September	Aberfeldy Muster	Aberfeldy
19 March	Fife Branch Rhine Crossing Dinner	Kirkcaldy	19 September	Fife Branch Alma Ladies' Lunch	
5 April	Angus Branch AGM	Forfar	2 October	Perth Branch Croix de Guerre Dinner	Perth
15 April	London Branch AGM	London	3 October	Dundee Branch Battle of Loos Church Parade	Dundee
24 April	Association AGM	Balhousesie Castle	29 October	Association Trustees' and Executive Committee Meetings	Balhousesie Castle
15 May	Edinburgh, Lothians' and Borders' Branch – Al Basrah Lunch	Apex Hotel Haymarket	29 October	Gathering Dinner	Perth
15 May	Highland Branch – Aberfeldy Dinner Night		6 November	Dundee Branch Laying of the Crosses	
TBC	The Not Forgotten Association Garden Party	London	11 November	Field of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey	London
			11 November	Dundee Branch Caird Park and City Centre Memorial Service	Dundee
			12 November	Balhousesie Castle Remembrance Service	Balhousesie Castle
			14 November	Cenotaph Parade	London
			14 November	Powrie Brae Memorial Service	Dundee
			18 November	London Branch Dinner	London
			4 December	Highland Branch Christmas Party	tbc
			18 December	Officers' Regimental Ball	Perth

CHANGE OF COMMAND - The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland

Lieutenant Colonel Graham Sefton will hand over command in the autumn of 2021 to Lieutenant Colonel Matty Hayton. Lieutenant Colonel Hayton was born and educated in Newcastle-

upon-Tyne, where he read Theoretical Physics at university and gained a Post Graduate Certificate in Education. He joined the Army in 2003, commissioning into The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment) and deployed as a Platoon Commander on operations in Southern Iraq in 2006.

As a Captain he worked as a Platoon Commander and Company Second-in-Command at the Infantry Training Centre before moving to The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland as the Regimental Signals Officer. In 2010 he deployed to Afghanistan in the police advisor role. Following this deployment, he was made the lead staff officer for Organisations and Deployments at 4 Mechanized Brigade, overseeing the preparation and generation of the Brigade for Op HERRICK 17 and the Olympics.

Promoting to Major in 2012, he completed the Battlespace Technology Course and Staff College before being posted to the Defence Scientific and Technology Laboratories as the Military Advisor for Combat Vehicles. In this job he was principal staff officer for the Warrior Capability Sustainment Programme, AJAX and Mechanised Infantry Vehicle projects as well as delivering technical support to the Army's Capability Audits and Future Force Development.

In 2015 he assumed command of B Company, The Highlanders, 4th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland. As a sub-unit commander, he recovered the Company from Germany and converted to Heavy Mechanised Infantry before deploying to Iraq on Op SHADER. Throughout the deployment he led a 220 strong sub-unit of British, US and Danish soldiers and marines protecting Al Assad Airbase.

Following sub-unit command, he was appointed as the Chief of Staff of 4 Infantry Brigade. During his time in post the Brigade was held at high readiness as the Joint Expeditionary Force Light Brigade HQ and deployed to Norway on Ex TRIDENT JUNCTURE, NATO's largest LIVEX in over 25 years. On completion of his time at 4 Infantry Brigade he moved to The Royal Lancers (Queen Elizabeths' Own), as the Second-in-Command, before promotion to Lieutenant Colonel in 2020.

He is married to Emma-Jayne and has three children, Daniel, Adam and Elizabeth.



Lieutenant Colonel Hayton



Pipe Major Alistair Duthie helped 100 year old Mr Fred Waters celebrate his 100th birthday during lockdown (Courtesy of DC Thomson Media)

CONGRATULATIONS HONOURS AND AWARDS THE QUEEN'S NEW YEAR HONOURS LIST 2020

To Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) R M Riddell on the award of the OBE for services to veterans.

To Captain Christopher Graham McRobbie, The Royal Regiment of Scotland on the award of the MBE.

To Peter Ronald Oliver Jones, British Consular Warden Livingstone, Zambia on the award of the MBE for services to UK/Zambia relations.

CONGRATULATIONS HONOURS AND AWARDS THE QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS LIST 2020

To Lieutenant Colonel A V Cooper MBE on the award of the OBE.

To Philip Horwood on the award of the MBE for services to the Scottish Parliament.

CONGRATULATIONS – PROMOTION

To Colonel R S J Hedderwick on his promotion to Colonel. He is currently DACOS Standing Joint Command (UK).

CONGRATULATIONS – COMMISSIONING

To WO1 (RSM) Pedder, RSM of The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland on his selection for commissioning.

CONGRATULATIONS – COMMAND APPOINTMENTS

To Lt Col Steven Dallard – on his selection for command of CO HQATFC (Adventurous Training Foundation Centre), Upavon.

To Lt Col John Bailey on his selection for command of City of Edinburgh UOTC.



On 31st of January Major George Grant MBE MM celebrated his 100th birthday in Dundee. He was joined by members of the Association (Major Ronnie Proctor, Mr Willie Barr, Pipe Major Peter Snaddon, Major Colin Gray and Joe Barton) and was presented with a cake. He served in the 6th Battalion earning his MM during the fighting at Monte Casino



On Wednesday 4 December, a cheque for £240 was presented to the Black Watch Association by Mr Blair Moffat of the Fife Sons of Struth Football Academy for boys and girls, which is based in Cowdenbeath. Members of B Company, The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland are in the background; left to right is Mr Blair Moffat, Abe Moffat, Major Ronnie Proctor, Mr Tam Kippen and Black Watch veteran Neil Hobson



Major General Mike Riddell-Webster, Chairman of the Museum Trust, Mr Stephen Leckie Lord Lieutenant of Perth and Kinross, Mrs Anne Kinnes CEO, HRH The Duke of Kent and Mr Dennis Melloy Provost of Perth pictured during the visit of The Duke of Kent to Balhousie Castle on 30 October 2019



On Wednesday 20 November 2019 the new Lord Lieutenant of Angus, Mrs Pat Sawers and Stephen Leckie, the new Lord Lieutenant of Perth and Kinross came to Balhousie Castle to be briefed on the Association. Both have become Vice Presidents of the Association and Mrs Sawers took over as President of the Association in April 2020

THE GRAVE OF LANCE CORPORAL THAL

In April 1940, a draft of Rhodesians joined the 2nd Battalion, at a time when the battalion were to move from Palestine to Egypt. Italy entered the war on 10/11 June and in July 1940 the battalion were suddenly ordered to embark at Port Suez for an unknown destination. Orders changed and the battalion was diverted to Aden to await developments. By August they were sent to reinforce the 4,000 strong Somaliforce as the Force Reserve. By 17 August the battalion was holding a thinly defended area, in the two



mile wide defile of the Barkasan Gap, acting as a Rear Guard whilst the Royal Navy undertook an evacuation. With no machine guns and limited ammunition they held back a strong enemy force and at one stage Captain David Rose led a bayonet charge during which he was wounded in the shoulder.

The grave of LCpl Thal who was killed on 17 August 1940 is in the Hargeisa CWGC Cemetery and the image was supplied via a member of the HALO Trust working in the area. Basil Jack Thal was from Bulawayo in Southern Rhodesia.

The grave of Lance Corporal Thal in the Hargeisa CWGC Cemetery

EDITOR AND BATTALION SUB EDITOR

The Editor of the magazine is Lieutenant Colonel Roddy Riddell. This is the last edition that he will edit. The Battalion Sub Editor is Captain S Briggs.

CHRISTMAS CARD 2020



Painted by Lilian Cheviot, the print depicted was donated to the Museum in 1995. She was a well-known artist who specialised in painting dogs and animals. She exhibited in the period 1894-1924 and died in 1936. The cost of the card is 72p

7th BATTALION THE BLACK WATCH CROSSING THE RHINE

This March was written by Corporal James Muir of The Black Watch,

7TH BN THE BLACK WATCH CROSSING THE RHINE



COMPOSED BY CORPORAL JAMES MUIR, THE BLACK WATCH

PRESENTED IN MARCH 2015
TO MARK THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EVENT ON 23RD MARCH 1945

3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland to mark the 70th anniversary of the 7th Battalion's crossing of the Rhine on 23 March 1945. He played it at the Fife Branch Rhine Crossing Dinner in 2015

St Valery

Lieutenant Colonel D C Close attended the 80th Anniversary of the Surrender of the 51st Highland Division and wrote;

Standing in the sunshine, watching a thunderstorm roll along the cliffs towards the quaint fishing village of St Valery, it is hard to imagine the pressure under which Major General Victor Fortune and his staff had been working in May/June 1940.

Detached to the French IX Corps on 22 April 1940, the 51st Highland Division had taken up defensive positions on the Maginot Line to the south of the main elements of the British Expeditionary Force. IX Corps bore the brunt of the German Ardennes offensive but 51st Highland Division were largely unscathed and they pulled back to a defensive line along the Somme whilst the Germans pursued the BEF in the North. The miracle of the Dunkirk evacuation between 26 May and 4 June 1940, which caused significant relief in the UK, must have left the 51st Highland Division feeling very isolated, facing the might of the German Blitzkrieg.

The second German offensive, which started on 5 June, was focused on IX Corps and 51st Highland Division saw heavy fighting. Elements of the 154th Brigade were enveloped and the Division, along with the Corps, began a withdrawal towards Le Havre, where plans were in place to evacuate them to England. It was not to be, as Rommel's 7th Panzer Division cut the road to the coast in the West, whilst Lemelsen's 5th Panzer Division achieved the same to the East. IX Corps reoriented and began withdrawing to St Valery-en-Caux and Veules-les-Roses, two fishing villages with deep-water ports. A defensive perimeter was established and the Royal Navy drew up plans to evacuate them.

The night of 10 June proved unworkable as dense fog made the narrow ports unusable by larger ships. On the night of 11 June thirty boats managed to evacuate 4000 men from Veules-les-Roses before Rommel moved his artillery onto the coastal cliffs, sinking the French cargo ship P21 SS CERONS and effectively cutting off the escape route. With no supplies, no hospital and no hope of evacuation, Lt Gen Ihler surrendered IX Corps to Rommel at 09.30 on 12 June and Maj Gen Fortune surrendered 51st Highland Division one hour later. Whilst there were some incredible escape stories, for the majority of the Division (some 10,000 men), the

rest of the war would be spent as prisoners of war in Poland and Germany.

The story, however, did not end in 1940 and, on 1 September 1944, at the explicit order of Montgomery, the reconstituted 51st Highland Division liberated both towns, under the command of Maj Gen Tom Rennie, who had been Victor Fortune's Chief of Staff in 1940 and had escaped by bicycle South to Spain. The affinity felt for 51st Highland Division remains very strong in St Valery-en-Caux and Veules-les-Roses. Considerable preparation had been made by both towns for the 80th anniversary commemorations, however, despite the easing of coronavirus restrictions, travel from the UK was impossible and the ceremonies were limited to 15 official participants. The Military Attaché from Paris represented the Ambassador and I was honoured to be included "to ensure that there was at least one kilt on parade". Arriving in St Valery-en-Caux along the Avenue of the 51st Highland Division, adorned with saltires, it was clear that, despite restrictions, both towns were determined to mark the anniversary. On 11 June 2020 small services were held in both cemeteries, before a memorial service and wreath laying at the 51st Highland Division memorial on the cliffs outside St Valery. This was followed by a memorial service and wreath laying on 13 June in Veules-les-Roses. All were led by the local Mayor and attended by the Deputy (Member of Parliament). I was honoured to be able to lay wreaths on behalf of The Black Watch Association, The Royal Regiment of Scotland and 51st Infantry Brigade. The welcome, and gratitude, were extremely humbling and a reminder, if any were needed, that today's Scottish soldiers are standing on the shoulders of giants.



Lieutenant Colonel Campbell Close at the 51st Highland Division Memorial at St Valery marking the 80th anniversary of the surrender of the 51st Highland Division



Lieutenant Colonel Close in the Dr Tom Renouf Square

CURLING REPORT

The Black Watch curlers had a very successful 2019-2020 season as the following match reports show.

Match v The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders

On Thursday 7 November 2019 the Black Watch curlers gathered at the Peak Sports Centre in Stirling to play the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders for the Macrae Cup. The rinks were:

A Rink	B Rink
Jamie Montgomery	James Duncan Millar
Willie Henderson	Roddy Riddell
John Twine	Tim Carmichael
Hugh Rose	Peter Burnet

The Argylls struggled to find eight curlers and even with two "ringers" they could only muster seven on the ice but the match was played in good spirit. Despite losing the first end by five stones the A Rink fought back to win 10 – 5 whereas the B Rink had a tight match from the start, eventually losing on the last end 5 – 4. The Regiment retained the Macrae Cup winning 14 – 10 and reducing the deficit of losses since 1935. The Black Watch has now won the cup on twenty four occasions and the Argylls on forty nine.

Match v Lowlanders

On Thursday 28 February 2020 two teams from The Black Watch mustered at the Kinross ice rink to play against a composite team from the Lowlanders. The Royal Scots, Royal Highland Fusiliers and KOSB were all represented and the matches were played in a great spirit of friendship.

The Black Watch rinks had the following players;

A Rink	B Rink
Jamie Montgomery	Roddy Riddell
Alan McEwen	Hugh Rose
Tim Carmichael	Jon Twine
Peter Burnet	David Noble

The games ended up being rather one sided and the A Team won 10 – 4 and the B Team 10 – 1. David Noble as the lead on the B Team was on form and gave the other members of the team a firm base on which to build.

The match was followed by a soup and sandwich lunch.

Match v Highlanders

On Thursday 5 March 2020 the Black Watch fielded two rinks in the match against the Highlanders, a game the Black Watch had not won since 2016. Each rink played four ends against one of the opposition rinks before playing the remainder of the ends against the other rink. In a well fought match The Black Watch were the overall winners 18-12, thus the Regiment managed to win all its inter-regimental fixtures in the season.

A Rink	B Rink
Jamie Montgomery	James Duncan Millar
Will Henderson	Roddy Riddell
Jon Twine	Jamie Erskine
Bruce Osbourne	Peter Burnet

Highland and Lowland Brigades Curling Club matches

The Regiment also provided curlers for the Highland and Lowland Brigade Curling Club (HLBCC) matches. On 20 February 2020 Jamie Montgomery and Jamie Erskine curled for the HLBCC against the New Club and lost heavily. On 12 March 2020 Jamie Montgomery, Peter Burnet and Jamie Erskine curled for the HLBCC against the Royal Company of Archers. The match went down to the last stone in the last match to be completed and the Royal Company, for whom David Noble and Roddy Riddell curled, won 29-26.

Sadly, due to COVID-19 pandemic the HLBCC Bonspiel which was due to have taken place in Perth on 26 March 2020 was cancelled. The Black Watch were due to field 3 rinks and compete to retain the winners' trophy which one of the rinks had won in 2019.

2020-2021 Season

Looking ahead to the 2020-2021 season the following matches have been arranged:

Thursday 5 November 2020 – The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders

Thursday 18 February 2021- The Lowlanders

Thursday 4 March 2021 – The Highlanders

In addition, the provisional dates for the Highland and Lowland Brigades' Curling Club matches are as follows:

Thursday 18 March 2021- The Royal Company of Archers

Thursday 25 March 2021- The Highland and Lowland Brigades' Curling Club Bonspiel

Anyone who wishes to curl for The Black Watch should contact Jamie Erskine. Beginners are more than welcome as this is a sport which anyone can join in and play their part.

Finally, a huge thanks must go to the Regimental Association which very kindly supports the regimental curlers throughout the season. This support is very much appreciated.



The Black Watch retained the Macrae Cup for the second year in succession, defeating the Argylls 14-10



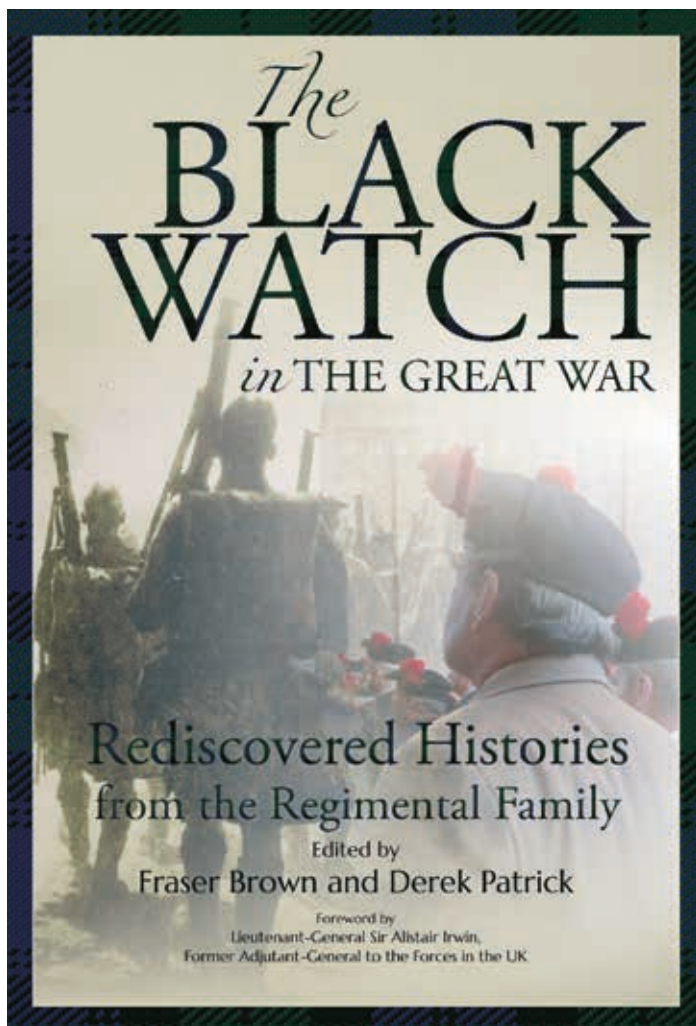
The successful Black Watch curlers photographed with the Highlanders curling team



The Chairman of The Black Watch Association presents the Commanding Officer of the Black Watch Battalion with framed copies of the obverse and reverse sides of the 100th anniversary commemoration medallion. Three copies were presented to be hung in Battalion HQ, the Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess and the Corporals' Mess



The people of Tuscany in Italy gathered in July 2020 to lay a wreath at the memorial to the 6th Battalion near Monte Scalari



The Black Watch in the Great War; Rediscovered Histories from the Regimental Family

By Dr Fraser Brown and Dr Derek Patrick.

During the First World War, The Black Watch provided 23 battalions as part of the British forces committed to that conflict. Tens of thousands of Black Watch soldiers served in Europe and the Middle East - over 8,000 died. The Regiment was awarded 69 Battle Honours and four Black Watch men received the Victoria Cross. The Black Watch in the Great War is a book written by those who have worn the Red Hackle, descendants of The Black Watch soldiers of 1914-18 and those connected to the Regiment. Edited by military historians Fraser Brown and Derek J Patrick, with a Foreword by Lieutenant General Sir Alistair Irwin, former Adjutant General, the book provides the reader with the lesser known Great War histories of this famous Scottish Regiment - including the 'Black Watch Men from Latin America', 'The Award of the Croix de Guerre to the 6th (Perthshire) Battalion', 'Survivors of Nonne Bosschen: the Last Battle of The First Battle of Ypres, 8-12 November 1914' and 'Combatant Ministers and Sons of the Manse', and many more. The book is priced at £15 but will be made available to members of The Black Watch Regimental Association and wider Regimental family at the discounted rate of £10 from The Black Watch Castle & Museum shop and directly from Tippermuir Books - <http://tippermuirbooks.co.uk/blackwatch>. Publication will be in mid to late November 2020.

(Profits from sales will go to The Black Watch Regimental Association)



Captain Richard Martin who served with the Black Watch Battalion is now a pilot in 3 Regiment Army Air Corps. He was recently flying his Apache in the Dundee area and decided to visit Powrie Brae

The Black Watch Museum and Friends of The Black Watch Castle and Museum

MUSEUM TRUSTEES

Chairman: Major General M L Riddell-Webster CBE DSO
Major General J M Cowan CBE DSO
Captain Angus Ferguson
Mr Graham Halstead
Mr George Hay
The Earl of Kinnoull
Captain Anthony Perriam
Mrs Elizabeth Roads
Dr Michael Taylor
Chief Executive: Mrs Anne Kinnes

Chairman's Introduction

Last year I wrote of a business that was really getting itself on its feet and for which the time had come to complete the basics and really start to focus our attention on the Museum itself, rather than the commercial operations which surrounded it; things were really beginning to take off. This projection continued into the early part of this year until COVID 19 hit us all.

Once the lockdown became enforced, the Castle and Museum had to be shut and remained so for some three months. During this time, we were forced to furlough the majority of the staff and, ultimately, we

have had to say goodbye to a very small number of staff, two of whom were only just on the point of joining us. That was the sad news. The good news was the fantastic way in which we have been supported by public monies. Substantial grants have been received from two schemes set up as a direct result of the pandemic and the Gannochy Trust has also very kindly contributed to covering the costs of an exhibition which we intend to run next year. That we have been successful in applying for and receiving these grants speaks volumes about the regard in which the Castle and Museum is held both locally and as a leading institution by government. There is no doubt that, despite the difficult effects of the pandemic, the grants and our recent reopening will see us through.

The Castle and Museum had a staggered reopening from the middle of July as the various elements of the museum, café and shop qualified under the regulations set down by the Scottish Government. Happily, by the end of the month, everything was fully operational once more. Reactions from our customers have been fantastic, with everyone involved keen to play a part in our regeneration. Many of our regulars have come flooding back, the good weather ensured that our outside areas were full and, with the advent of "Eat Out to Help Out" in August, that enthusiasm ensured a really good month for us all. Members of the "Friends of The Black Watch" have kindly been foregoing the discount to which membership entitles them. Nearly all



The Gift Shop extension – Black Watch Corner

our staff are now back off furlough and plans are afoot to reopen the Castle and Museum on at least six days a week. Doing so should ensure that our staff all get back to their full hours as soon as possible and we ensure as smooth a transition to normal working as possible. As we move towards the colder months, the Queen Mother Room will prove to be a real asset, allowing as it does for us to spread out and maintain the necessary safe distances inside, without a reduction in the number of places we are able to provide.

The time during lockdown has not been entirely wasted. Our curator and two archivists have kept working throughout and, whilst they have not had as much access to the museum and the archive as they would have wished, they have managed to link much of the work already done to the National Archive's search website. This means that if you happen to search for one of the catalogues already completed, the detail of what is held appears, in turn allowing our history to be more widely read and researched by anyone. This work and the cataloguing project remain an ongoing work stream.

Building plans already in hand before the lockdown were implemented. More obviously to the visitor, the small temporary exhibition space has now been incorporated into the shop, allowing a greater retail area and the establishment of our own "Black Watch Corner". Less obviously but of greater significance in terms of the operation of the café, the kitchen has been rearranged, allowing much more efficient operation. Originally, the plan had been to close the Castle and Museum to carry out these alterations but in the event, lockdown did that for us and so the alterations were made with minimum disruption.

So, what of the future? Clearly, we are in uncharted country. As I write, the end of the "Eat Out to Help Out" scheme does not seem to have had a dramatic effect on our finances. So, whilst the rest of the year is likely to be difficult, our projections show the Castle and Museum managing to remain a vibrant and flourishing part of Perth and the local economy. Threats, such as a second lockdown, loom on the horizon but we are all confident that the storm can be weathered, even if it means some of the progress that I was predicting a year ago, being delayed slightly. The Regiment has had to endure threats much worse than this pandemic in the past and I am convinced that, with the help of our amazing team in the Castle and Museum, that we will see this difficult period through.



The reopening of the Castle and Museum

FRIENDS OF THE BLACK WATCH

By Sarah Riddell-Webster

The Friends of The Black Watch Castle and Museum was formed ten years ago so I thought I would reflect on what the Friends have achieved during that time. At the start those who joined, on the whole, came from the Regimental 'family' with a desire to give ongoing support to the Castle and Museum. As we were 18 months away from reopening to the public, those early members of the Friends got little in return for the membership fee but that early support was vital and put us in a position to give help to the Museum when it was needed. Our first donation was used to purchase one of the large display cabinets in the newly refurbished museum.

Over time, the people becoming members have come from a much wider circle. As an organisation we have been able to give those people with a family connection, but who have not served with the Regiment themselves, an opportunity they would not otherwise have had, to feel

connected and give support to the Regiment. Although The Black Watch Association has long been in existence, membership of it has, of course, only ever been open to those who have served with The Black Watch. There are a great many people who have a very strong connection to the Regiment and who want to feel part of it and I am delighted that the Friends gives them that opportunity. Our members come from far and wide and 'lockdown' did not stop us gaining more. The reach of the internet saw us being joined by new members from both the USA and New Zealand.

Over the last ten years we have raised a little over £80,000 in membership fees. Every single penny of that and more has been passed to the Castle and Museum through donations or through indirect support by hiring rooms for events. We have run a cocktail party every year, except for in 2020 for the inevitable COVID reasons, which has paid for itself and given both members of the Regimental family and our new members the opportunity to meet and enjoy a social evening.

The Friends Events Committee have run a very comprehensive lecture programme for the last six years which has been extremely well supported. People have come from far and wide depending on the speaker or subject. Glasgow, Carlisle and St Andrews are just some of the areas from which we have drawn visitors. For many it has been the first time they have been to the Museum or even realised it existed. Two years ago, the lecture programme was handed over to the Castle and Museum from the Friends which means that all ticket money now goes directly to the Castle and Museum. The programme is still put together and hosted on the evening by the Friends. The reason for the change was to streamline administration and reduce a little of the burden on the volunteers that run the Friends. The subjects the lecture programme has covered and speakers we have been lucky enough to have since I last wrote for the Red Hackle have been as follows:

Chris Moon - 'I shouldn't be alive': The trials and tribulations of mine clearance.

Professor Gill Plain - 'War Stories: Four Ways of Writing the First World War'

Professor Evan Mawdsley - "World War II: Hitler's War?"

Diana Maxwell - Listen Up!: HMS Tarlair and How to Defeat the U Boats.

Sarah Sherlock - Ethiopia 1941: The First Victory of the Second World War

John Harding-Edgar - Next to Wellington: General Sir George Murray

Maj Gen (Retd) Mungo Melvin - Blitzkrieg: The Myth and the Reality

Sadly, in late March we had to suspend the lecture programme because of the COVID 19 restrictions. I very much hope that we will get it up and running again next year. Many of the speakers we have had to postpone have already expressed a wish to come and give their lecture once we are in business again.

It has been a very busy ten years, but very worthwhile and profitable. I am indebted firstly to the volunteers who have given so much of their time to the Management and Events committees and, secondly, to our very loyal membership. I am also extremely grateful to our members for forgoing their 10% discount in the cafe since it reopened in July to help The Black Watch Castle and Museum get back on its feet following the unprecedented three-month closure due to COVID 19.

Thank you to all of our members for making what we have achieved possible.

MUSEUM NEWS

By Stuart Kennedy, Curator

We started 2020 with our new exhibition 'Spoils and Souvenirs' which featured objects that Black Watch soldiers had brought back from overseas. Some were mementos of places visited, others heartfelt postcards from the trenches of World War 1 and evocative embroideries made by World War 2 Prisoners of War.

One key group of items had belonged to Captain Duncan Campbell. He enlisted with The Black Watch in 1899 and served in India and South Africa at the turn of the century. In 1905, he transferred to the West African Frontier Force and was stationed in Nigeria. During his time there, Campbell collected a large number of items which he brought back to Scotland. It is difficult to determine how these items were acquired. Objects such as the drums may have been produced for commercial means but equally they may have been domestic items, originally belonging to people living in West Africa.



Captain Campbell returned to The Black Watch in 1913 and was with the 2nd Battalion when they travelled to France in November 1914. Tragically, a shell exploded above his trench on 18 May 1915, killing him and four other men.

Despite the challenging time of lockdown, the Museum was still able to acquire new items for the collection. A large die was donated and it was used to make part of the form for the piper's plaid brooch. With the 42 at the bottom of the badge we can date it to have been in use before 1881 when the 42nd amalgamated with the 73rd (Perthshire) Regiment of Foot to form The Black Watch (Royal Highlanders). At this point the 42 was dropped from the brooch design.

Large dies like this are unusual to find. They were often melted down to be reused when the badge was out of date or simply to prevent them being taken by someone to make forgeries. The die itself was used by Kirkwoods in Edinburgh. The company still exists and has produced dies for over two centuries including the stamp for creating the seal for stamping the Great Seal of Scotland.

The project archive team have continued to document the story of Black Watch soldiers from 1900 - 1929. Over 2100 documents have now been scanned including letters, diaries, service records and scrapbooks. Among the material being catalogued are the collections of Lord Sempill and General Sir Arthur Wauchope. This national project is led by the Army Museums Ogilby Trust and supported by over one hundred Regimental museums. It will result in the scanned documents becoming publicly available and raising the profile of our collections.



Duncan Campbell (on left) and Captain Owen Lloyd served with the 1st Battalion in South Africa



The "Spoils and Souvenirs" exhibition held in early 2020



The Black Watch piper's plaid brooch "die"

Book Reviews



A VERY BRIEF WAR LEWIS ROBERTSON CUMMING THE BLACK WATCH AUGUST TO SEPTEMBER 1914

*By Lieutenant General
Sir Alistair Irwin KCB CBE*

This book may not appeal to those readers who enjoy the exciting Andy McNab style of British military derring-do. Thankfully however, as the author noted, there is a great deal more to this book than the short life and premature death of a brave young Scottish soldier. Set in the proper context of events at home and overseas this is perhaps the most

evocative and searingly convincing account of the war in its first few weeks, that I have yet encountered.

Underpinned by thorough and detailed research, with an easy and articulate narrative, it features a wealth of informative illustrations, specially commissioned maps and eye-witness statements, all of which combine to make this book both enjoyable and informative.

Whilst Major General A. G. Wauchope's three volume opus "A History of the Black Watch in the Great War, 1914-1918" (published in 1925) remains the standard reference text for readers wishing to read a detailed history of the roles played by particular Battalions of the Regiment throughout the conflict and does indeed record countless incidents and battles. 'A Very Brief War' is a book which conveys a fascinating and hitherto rather neglected aspect of most British Expeditionary Force soldiers' experience.

Simply put, this is the courage, dogged determination, endurance and admirable obedience of men who day after day, in entirely unknown country, in the face of overwhelming odds and considerable hardship and what must have appeared to them as confusing orders, did exactly what their senior commanders required of them; namely retreat mile after

dispiriting mile to survive to fight another day. The author succeeds in not making this marathon boring but quite awe inspiring; one cannot help but admire the sheer bloody mindedness of this vastly outnumbered army.

Beginning with two concise chapters introducing both the steps which led to the First World War and the reader to the life of Lewis Cumming, the real meat of the book begins with Chapter Three "A Battle of Bayonets: Aldershot to Mons". In the next 134 pages the author takes us with Lieutenant Cumming and his colleagues on their harrowing, exhausting and merciless slog through France and Belgium.

The contrast between 'A Very Brief War' and 'The Black Watch, A Record in Action' written by 'Scout' Joe Cassells (a book originally and confusingly published in 1918 and 1919 in three different countries under three different titles) is stark. Instead of Joe Cassell's racy, inaccurate, melodramatic propaganda, the author has written a thoughtful and perceptive book which convincingly portrays the heroism of men facing adversity. Moreover, the author's own extensive military experience is brought to bear with some interesting and thought-provoking analysis of the strategic opportunities taken and one major one possibly missed.

The denouement, which comes during the pouring rain and confusion of the Battle of the Aisne in September 1914, when these exhausted men eventually came face to face with the by now, retreating German Army, is told in painful and perceptive detail.

There then follows a wealth of supplementary appendices explaining amongst other matters the important documentary sources used and a record of service of the 26 Officers of the First Battalion Black Watch who went to War in August 1914.

In short this is a book far above the ordinary stamp of military publications and one which will reward any reader fortunate enough to procure a copy. Apart from its intrinsic merits it is also worth noting that the first edition runs to only 150 copies and that proceeds from sales shall be donated to The Black Watch Museum Trust.

The book is available from The Black Watch Museum Shop or author at £30 plus P&P.

Correspondence

Gorse Cottage
Oxted Green

Dear Editor

I was interested to read the article in the 2019 issue of the Red Hackle by Victoria Schofield about Second Lieutenant Archibald William Robertson Don, who died aged 25, the moreso as we used to live near some of the Don family in Angus.



The headstone of Second Lieutenant Archibald Don in the Lembet Road Cemetery

Victoria mentions his brother, Lieutenant Robert (Robin) Macpherson Don, and I thought your readers might be interested to know that the inscription on Archibald Don's gravestone in the Lembet Road cemetery in Salonika (now Thessaloniki) refers to the brother: 'Also in memory of his brother R.M. Don who fell on Doiran Front 1917. In God's love united.'

As Victoria also says, the brother, Lieutenant Robert (Robin) Macpherson Don, was killed in action between 8th and 9th May 1917, while also serving with the 10th Battalion, Black Watch.

According to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission records, their parents were Robert Bogle Don, LL.D, J.P., and Lucy Flora Don (née Campbell) who lived at Warren House, Farnham Common, Bucks.

There are eighteen other Black Watch soldiers buried in the same cemetery as Archibald, all of whom except one, were also serving with the 10th Battalion; the other man was serving with the 13th battalion.

There are sixty one other Black Watch names recorded on the Doiran Memorial with that of Robert. One of them was serving with the 3rd Battalion, one with the 13th Battalion and the rest with the 10th Battalion. Like Robert Don, the vast majority of them were killed on 8th/9th May during the 1917 Battle of Doiran.

While on holiday in the area earlier in the year with some members of my family, we visited the Lembet Road cemetery and paid our respects. Although the cemetery is in the middle of the city, it is interesting as it is the largest military cemetery in Greece and also contains Serbian, French and Italian graves with their own distinctive gravestones. The site was founded by a Serb veteran, Savo Mihailovic, who never left the memorial, guarding it until he

died in 1928. His son, Djure Mihailovic took over from his father until he died in 1961 and both are buried in the cemetery. Djure's son, Djordje Mihailovic, is now the keeper of the site. The Greek authorities banned further burials in the cemetery but an exception has been made for Djordje who, by special decree, will one day be the last Serb to be interred there.

We also visited the Doiran Memorial, where Robert's name is recorded. The memorial is north of Thessaloniki, in the most beautiful setting, overlooking Doiran Lake. Both the Lembet Road cemetery and the Doiran Memorial are very moving and well worth a visit.

Yours sincerely
Iain Adams-Cairns

Ruthin
Denbighshire

Dear Editor

"42nd HILL": A BLACK WATCH FOOTPRINT IN SOUTH AFRICA

While holidaying in the Drakensberg Mountains of South Africa earlier this year, I was intrigued to find that the airfield of the little town of Harrismith was on "42nd Hill". I left the rest of the party by the pool for a day and took our hire car and a packet of sandwiches on a 300 mile round trip to see what I could discover.

I found 42nd Hill on the road north from Harrismith to Johannesburg. It is a flat topped feature one mile north of the town and is today covered by a corrugated iron shanty town of surpassing ugliness; presumably attracting settlers for the same reasons of healthy, cool air and available water that made the 2nd Battalion The Black Watch choose it for a camping ground in 1900. It was only as I returned to the little town of Harrismith that I saw in my rear view mirror the legend "42nd" delineated on the forward slope of the hill in what had once been whitewashed boulders. Clearly, even in the dying throes of the Anglo-Boer War, the old Army adage of "If it moves, salute it; if it doesn't, paint it white" was finding work for idle hands.

By the summer of 1900 the Highland Brigade had recovered from the disastrous battle of Magersfontein (11 December 1899) under the leadership of General Hector MacDonald (who had famously begun his career as a private in the Gordon Highlanders) and who had taken over the Brigade from General Wauchope of The Black Watch, killed in the battle. The string of that and other disasters under the leadership of Sir Redvers Buller had been redeemed by the methodical generalship and heavy reinforcements brought to South Africa, by Lord Roberts. Having relieved Ladysmith, Kimberley and Mafeking and entered the Boer capital of Pretoria, Roberts declared the war won and began to think of returning to England, leaving the mopping up of the Boer commandos to his successor, Lord Kitchener. Unfortunately, some 30,000 Boers, who cared nothing for towns or cities, were still out on commando and Kitchener had a fight on his hands.

By July 1900 General Hunter had about 8,000 Boers trapped in a ring of mountains against the Basutoland frontier. There were only five ways across the mountains that could allow passage for the Boer trek wagons. The General had accordingly split his forces into five columns, three simply to block their passes and two to force Slabbert's Nek and Retief's Nek respectively in active pursuit of a Boer surrender. The Highland Brigade was assigned Retief's Nek, and, being a Scot himself, General Hunter accompanied them.

The Highlanders had been marching back and forth across the veldt for weeks in the campaign that inspired that wonderful poem of Kipling's that must resonate with anyone who has ever been in the centre of a marching column.



Part of the Doiran Memorial with a view over the lake

“We’re foot - slog - slog - slog - sloggin’ over Africa -
Foot - foot - foot - foot - sloggin’ over Africa -
(Boots - boots - boots - boots - movin’ up and down again!)
There’s no discharge in the war!

“Seven - six - eleven - five - nine-an’-twenty mile to-day -
Four - eleven - seventeen - thirty-two the day before -
(Boots - boots - boots - boots - movin’ up and down again!)
There’s no discharge in the war! ... ”¹

They would have been thrilled, and not a little homesick, to see the mountains. But mountains meant defensible positions for Boer sharpshooters, unlike the featureless veldt. A locally recruited officer of Rimington’s Tigers, who provided the cavalry screen for the Highland Brigade, explained with justifiable cynicism “We always serve out extra ammunition when we come to a pretty bit of scenery.”²

The attacks on the two passes were launched just after dawn on 23 July. Slabbert’s Nek was not held. Retief’s Nek was. The Highland Brigade attacked two Battalions up and it cost the Black Watch and the Seaforth Highlanders a day and a half and 86 casualties to force the pass.

Having parked the car, in the hope that my holiday companions were not counting on it for an early evening foray, I scrambled up the kopje on the left of the pass, the one that was the Black Watch’s objective, and could easily see why. The gentle slopes below offer no cover for attacking troops, even though, profiting from the bitter lessons of Magersfontein, they would have been spread out in skirmishing order from the outset. The pass might have been held for ever had the Boers not been looking over their shoulders and thinking wistfully of giving up and going home. Once he had secured the passes, Hunter took the surrender of 4,314 men, including three generals.

The Highland Brigade entered Harrismith on 4 August and formally took possession of the town, which was situated in what had been the Orange Free State. Rail communications were re-established with Natal from which the troops henceforth drew

their supplies. It was now that the Black Watch camped on 42nd Hill,³ until moving to Ladybrand in the middle of September to help to build and garrison chains of blockhouses and take part in occasional sweeps to try and pin the Boer commandos against them.

It was a strategy that took a lot of troops. Soon there were 200,000 men, of whom 140,000 were regulars, employed in chasing the last 20,000 Boers,⁴ including the 1st Battalion The Black Watch, who came out from India at the end of 1901. They met up with the 2nd Battalion in December, coincidentally at Harrismith, on that unique occasion commemorated in the photograph that always hung (and I trust still does) in the Officers’ Mess.

What I cannot discover is whether the whitewashed stones were placed on 42nd Hill on that occasion or during the 2nd Battalion’s earlier stay. No doubt some reader of this magazine will be able to enlighten me. More importantly, if some travel-hungry young officer is planning a battlefield tour/adventure training expedition to South Africa any time soon, perhaps he should take a dozen gallons of whitewash with him and seek the permission of the township to restore the white-washed stones of 42nd Hill to their former glory.

Yours sincerely
Col (Retd) David Thornycroft OBE

PS. It was another two years before the 2nd Battalion was able to leave South Africa - but not to return home. The SS Ionian took them straight from Point Natal in October 1902 to Bombay, and the Battalion was to serve in India for the next 12 years. Mathematicians will be quick to see that home was not an option then either. The 2nd Battalion landed at Marseille in October 1914 as part of the 7th (Meerut) Division and made its weary way up to the Western Front and then out to Mesopotamia and the Middle East. The Battalion was not to see Scotland again until 1919, fully twenty years since their eagerly anticipated departure for South Africa. Well, as another familiar Army adage goes: “If you can’t take a joke....”



The road to 42nd Hill



The whitewashed stones on 42nd Hill are in need of a working party to cut back scrub and repaint the stones

FOOTNOTES:

1 Rudyard Kipling The Five Nations 1903 | 2 Thomas Pakenham The Boer War 1991 | 3 Journal of the South African Military History Society Vol 8 No 1 June 1989

4 Field Marshal Lord Carver The National Army Museum Book of the Boer War 1999



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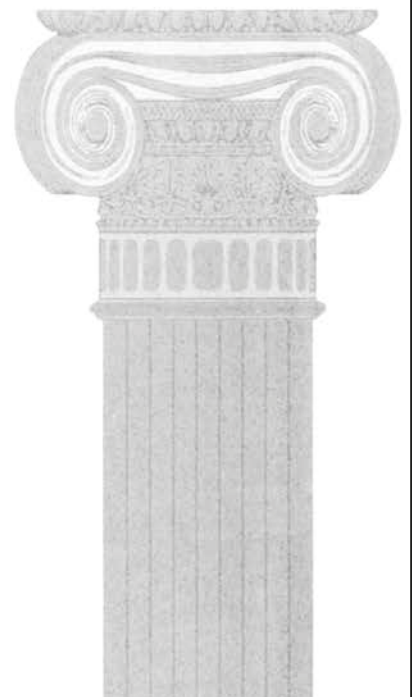
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Obituaries

THE REVEREND DONALD BEATON

Three officers remember Donald Beaton:

Andrew Hamilton: Donald Beaton was our padre in Minden in the late 1960s. He retired to Skye, where he was brought up and sadly I never saw him again. In fact, I did not know he had died until Norman Drummond told me that he had died in 2017, after a long battle against dementia.

I immediately wrote to his daughter, to lament his passing and got a lovely letter back; "The Black Watch always had a very special place in his heart and I remember asking a friend of my husband, the late Alasdair Loudon, if he knew my father and instantly he said, "Ah, the climbing padre". It gave Daddy great pleasure when I told him."

Donald was without doubt one of the most delightful people I have ever met. He was also one of the best Ministers of the Kirk I have ever had the pleasure of listening to. Even though it is over 50 years ago, I can remember one or two of his sermons as if it were yesterday. They were compelling and really got you thinking. One was on the subject of "let he who is without sin cast the first stone." Donald had a passionate delivery – he threw everything into it. I can see him now thumping the lectern and practically shouting, "Jesus Christ was a man who always saw the best in his fellow men, rich or poor, saint or sinner. He never judged anyone and nor should we."

His lovely west highland accent was like a babbling brook – you could listen to him all day. Another was on the dangers of lust and licentiousness looking directly at the front row of the Kirk lined with subalterns just back from a week-end in Hamburg. He spared no one, comparing our (imagined!) exploits to the end of the Roman Empire and the wholesale collapse of civilisation. He was deadly serious!

Donald enjoyed a dram, especially with his great friend, Colin Campbell. They would talk for hours swapping funny and irreverent stories. You could talk to Donald about anything. He was a passionate ambassador for Christianity without ever being sanctimonious. When Donald laughed – often on learning of a young officer's stupidity - his shoulders would shake as he dissolved into fits of laughter – we gave him plenty of excuses. How we loved our padre!

Edward de Broë-Ferguson: Donald was a mountaineer of some distinction and he regularly organised regimental parties of all ranks to join him. Anything seemed better than camp routine, guards and RSM's parades. The unwary volunteer was all too often taken by surprise. Donald once said to me: "I find that when you hold someone at the end of a rope it is relatively easy to extract a promise to attend chapel!"

Donald Wilson: I climbed with Donald Beaton in the period from 1969 - 1971. Sometimes it was all rather shambolic, such as an attempt to get B Company up The Cobbler in Argyll in thick mist and pouring rain but we also had some wonderful sessions, particularly in the Cuillin Hills on Skye and in the High Atlas mountains in Morocco, mounted from Gibraltar in 1969. We climbed Jebel Toubkal (13,671'), the highest mountain in North Africa and several other of the main peaks in the range. Another High Atlas expedition was mounted in 1971 by Donald and Nigel Lithgow.

His enthusiasm and constantly cheerful leadership was genuinely inspiring when in the hills. He turned a number of Jocks into



pretty useful climbers and certainly nurtured my own interest and ambition to become a competent mountaineer. My best day with him was on Skye in 1970 when he and I completed about half the main Cuillin ridge traverse on a blazing hot July day – that particular climb remains a special memory. I recalled it vividly only last month when I visited Loch Coruisk in the heart of the Cuillins with a party of friends on a similar lovely day to that one 50 years ago.

Donald Beaton was wonderful company and a true friend; I wish I had been able to spend more time with him.

AN Hamilton, EN de Broë-Ferguson, DR Wilson

LIEUTENANT COLONEL ROY BIGNELL

Roy Bignell enlisted into the Army as a Regular soldier in February 1946 and served with the 1st Battalion in Duisburg, Berlin and Buxtehude and with the 2nd Battalion in Colchester. He was then commissioned into the Intelligence Corps in March 1953.

Whilst serving with The Black Watch he undertook parachute training, his Senior Instructor's Course at Hythe and was a Sergeant Instructor of Musketry. He was a talented shot and in July 1951 the Red Hackle Magazine recorded that he obtained the highest individual score in the rifle and Sten Gun competitions and that he had attended a Mines, Explosives and Sabotage Warfare Course whilst in Berlin. In January 1952, the magazine records his promotion to Sergeant and marriage but by July he had been posted to the Depot in Perth where he was part of the Depot shooting team. Later that year he had joined the reformed 2nd Battalion in Colchester.

He then left Colchester and was commissioned.

During his commissioned service he was posted to Libya and BAOR and he worked in counter intelligence in Berlin during the period that the Berlin Wall was erected. A posting to HQ Middle East Command in Aden in 1966/67 and a posting in the MOD were his last appointments.

He worked in the business world in London before moving to Perth to work for Matthew Gloag as an export director.

He was a great family man who enjoyed classical music and fishing.

R M Riddell

COLONEL IAN RANALD CRITCHLEY OBE

Ian Critchley was born in Sialkot, in the Punjab on the 7th of February 1926 as his father was serving in the Indian Army. As with many boys of that era, he was sent to school in England as a very young boy. After Prep School, he attended Wellington College where he was a fine athlete. He was an elegant, athletic six-footer and he remained so throughout his life despite his love of the extra spoonful of sugar in his hot drinks and anything chocolatey!

He first enlisted into the Black Watch in 1943. He was commissioned in June 1944 from 163 OCTU at Morecombe. By 1945 he was serving with the 7th Battalion in North West Europe and he took part in the Rhine Crossing where his platoon (11 Platoon



of B Company) was the first across the river. Aged 19 at the time of the battle, he was one of the last survivors of those Black Watch men who had served in the Second World War and he was present at many reunions and commemorations. For this reason but more for his own sake, he was always a popular figure among his juniors and the younger generations. In recent years, he had enjoyed attending the Association events and the lectures at Balhousie Castle.

After the War in Europe ended, he joined the 4th Battalion in Swansea for service in the Far East but after VJ Day, the battalion was moved to Palestine to join the force which was then involved in fighting Jewish terrorists. He was appointed IO but the Battalion was disbanded in December 1945 and he was next posted to the 1st Hertfordshire Regiment and again appointed IO. 1 Herts were also in Palestine as part of the 6th Airborne Division. In September 1946 he re-joined the Regiment, moving to the 2nd Battalion in India. This battalion was a parachute battalion in the Indian Airborne Division but it had upset senior airborne officers by declining to change its bonnets and Red Hackles for an airborne "Cherry Berry". He was present during all the troubles arising from Partition and, when the British Army finally left Pakistan, he was in the Colour Party for the battalion's final march out of the country and on to the ship. This was the first of many occasions when he carried the Colour on a ceremonial parade. He was always immaculately turned out and was very smart and upright on parade and so he was often selected for prominent duties.

This continued in later life during his 37 years' service in the Royal Company of Archers when he paraded at Holyrood and other Royal occasions.

From Pakistan he came home with the Cadre of the 2nd Battalion after it was condemned to 'suspended animation' and returned to the UK. By 1948 he and a bunch of rowdy 2nd Battalion companions joined the 1st Battalion in Duisburg. There, his never to be forgotten car, the "Bogle" (an Austin 7 which was known at the time as a "Baby Austin"), joined the party and frequently rattled them down the road to Dusseldorf or Paris.

When the Battalion moved to Berlin in 1950, Ian achieved fame by getting himself and his fiancée, Bruce Hamilton's sister, arrested by the Russians whilst on a picnic on an island in the Havelsee. However, this in no way stunted his career or his prospects and by 1951 he was happily married and serving as the Intelligence Officer and, later, the Motor Transport Officer. It was as the MTO that he went to war in Korea in 1952, later becoming Second – in – Command of C Company. It was in this appointment that he hit the front page of a national newspaper, pictured calling the roll of his Company after the Battle of the Hook.

He left Korea to become the Adjutant of the 4/5th Battalion in Dundee. After two years there, he re-joined the 1st Battalion in Crail and then Berlin, serving as the Adjutant and later as a Company Commander. This was the first of two occasions when I took over from Ian and found him to be a highly organised and efficient operator. I had no difficulty in taking his place as everything had been so well prepared. The same thing happened fourteen years later when I succeeded him as the CO of the 51st Highland Volunteers in Perth; once again the handover was beautifully prepared and I was launched into a very friendly and smooth-running set-up. 51 Highland was raised by Ian out of twelve TA units: two Black Watch, two Seaforth, one Cameron, two Gordons, two Argyll, The London Scottish, The Liverpool Scottish and The Lovat Scouts. A remarkable feat: he looked after drill halls from London to Lerwick and ended up with eleven companies under his command. For this he was awarded and richly deserved the OBE and in the midst of it all suffered an horrific head-on collision on the road up to the Aviemore ski-slopes which put him in hospital for several months.

After he attended the Staff College in 1959, Ian became the Brigade Major of 152 (Highland) Brigade in Inverness. He continued his later career in various staff appointments including two at the Ecole Supérieure de Guerre in Paris, first as a student and later as a member of the Directing Staff.

He was Deputy Commander of 3 Brigade in Northern Ireland during the Troubles; the Brigade Headquarters was billeted in a knicker factory and, when the Army vacated it, Ian was presented with a ceremonial pair of long johns which adorned his medal case for ever afterwards.

Later he was the Chief of Staff of the British Military Government

in Berlin. Whilst there he displayed his love of a good party attending a Welsh Guards fancy dress party, dressed as the punk rocker Johnny Rotten, complete with string vest, waistcoat, skin tight jeans, random clusters of nappy pins and dishevelled hair. The Welsh Guards awarded him the prize for "being the officer most like himself".

Other jobs included training and recruiting appointments in the Ministry of Defence and at HQ Scotland.

After retiring in 1978 he worked for Marconi Space and Defence Systems in Fife for eight years.

Ian and Pinks had four children: Anna, Bruce, Jules and Adrian. Bruce who died in 2017 served with the 1st Battalion from 1973 – 1980.

All those who served with Ian Critchley throughout his varied and distinguished career will remember him as a staunch companion, warm-hearted and dependable in all circumstances. He was a stickler for smartness and correctness and we have lost an amiable, gracious and respected friend.

W D Arbuthnott

VISCOUNT MALCOLM DAVIDSON

Malcolm Davidson was commissioned as a National Service officer in 1954, joining the 2nd Battalion as they deployed to British Guiana. During this tour, the battalion were advised that they were to be placed in suspended animation but under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Bradford they made the most of their posting. Training, expeditions into the interior as well as rugby tours were all undertaken and Malcolm travelled to Jamaica for a month to stay with a family member. The Red Hackle Magazine of July 1955 recorded that he got there at the overall cost of one shilling, travelling by banana boat. He then left the Army in the Autumn of that year.

He went up to Cambridge and read Archaeology and Anthropology. His first job post university was working for Taylor Woodrow but that was not to his taste and he was for a short time the stand in Director of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, a stint that led to an interest in the Arab world.

On moving back to the UK, he became an antique dealer and one friend suggested that he was ideally qualified. His knowledge of this field was deep and wide and he had an exceptionally good eye for quality but perhaps financial gain was too low a priority.

He married in 1970, his wife Ann coming from an Anglo – Argentinian family. In the 1980s, he took on the Chairmanship of the Travellers Club in difficult times and saved it from possible extinction. They moved to Spain and Malcolm was the Sotheby's representative in the region as well as in North Africa.

Ann sadly died of cancer in 2012, leaving Malcolm with a stepson and daughter and a son and daughter of their marriage. In 2012 he succeeded to the Viscountancy when his brother Andrew died. Malcolm died aged 83, on 27 September 2019. In a tribute at his service he was described as a man of generous spirit, with a gift for life and friendship.

In recent years he had attended the London lunch on a regular basis.

R M Riddell

CAPTAIN RONALD GUILD

Ronald Guild was born in Edinburgh and was educated at Cargilfield and Glenalmond. He died aged 98 on 29 December 2019.

He was commissioned into the Regiment in 1941 and then in 1942 he was attached to the Indian Army (Frontier Force Rifles), serving as far apart as the Afghan border and



Thailand until the end of the war. He then took up his place at Oxford to read PPE.

He taught at Fettes College in Edinburgh for thirty years. In 2008 he published a book called "Own Tales" and came to Balhousie Castle to present a copy to the Museum. It contains interesting insights into the old Indian Army and was reviewed in the April 2008 Red Hackle Magazine.

He was a keen artist and lover of nature. He stood unsuccessfully for the (old) Scottish Liberal Party at both local and national levels.

R M Riddell

COLONEL ROBERT GURDON

Robert Gurdon, whose father and brother had distinguished service in the Regiment, was commissioned in August 1952 and joined the 2nd Battalion in Germany later that year. Within six months he was selected to carry the Regimental Colour at the Queen's Coronation.

The 2nd of June 1953 was a memorable day, with all the Commonwealth countries taking part in a huge parade and march past which stretched for several miles. On returning to Earls Court that evening, where all the infantry battalions were bivouacking, the Colour Parties made haste to join the celebrations. However, the RSM insisted that the Colours could not be abandoned so Robert, as the junior officer, spent the night watching over them in Earls Court, much to his disappointment.

He continued to serve with the 2nd Battalion in Hublerath and Dortmund and then in British Guiana until July 1956 when he joined the First Battalion in Germany, and later in Cyprus, as Adjutant.

He attended Staff College in 1963, where he did exceptionally well, and which resulted in him being given one of the plum appointments as Brigade Major in Aden. At that time Robert was needed by the Battalion for service in Germany so his Staff appointment had to be put on hold until 1965 when he was posted to a less prestigious job in Singapore.

He attended Staff College in 1963, where he did exceptionally well, and which resulted in him being given one of the plum appointments as Brigade Major in Aden. At that time Robert was needed by the Battalion for service in Germany so his Staff appointment had to be put on hold until 1965 when he was posted to a less prestigious job in Singapore.

Later he was Chief Instructor of New College at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst where, as the Highland Brigade representative, he was invaluable in recruiting and mentoring future officers for the Regiment. This work continued after his retirement, when, in 1983, he became Schools Liaison Officer in Scotland and was once again responsible for encouraging an outstanding group of young officers to join the Regiment.

In 1974, he assumed command of the 51st (Highland) Volunteers. One of his most memorable duties there was to host the Queen Mother when she opened the new Queen's Barracks which then became the permanent headquarters for the Volunteers. There followed a tour as a member of the Directing Staff at the National Defence College, after which he was Chief of Staff Scotland from 1979 to 1983.

In 1992 The Black Watch was looking for a Regimental Secretary and, although this involved an unwelcome commute from Edinburgh to Perth, Robert felt it his duty to take up the appointment. He was an ideal solution, as someone who had a particularly deep knowledge and love of the Regiment and the marked ability to get on with everybody he met.

Robert was a very special person. He was a man of great charm, intelligence and sense of fun, a valued friend, who was gregarious and always good company. He was a natural games player and much enjoyed shooting and golf at Muirfield, where he sometimes allowed a rather indifferent performer to play with him. He married Ann in 1956 and had two children, a son Mark and a daughter, Amanda, who sadly died in her twenties.

He will be greatly missed by his many friends and the whole

Black Watch family.

A L Watson

Some Officers in the Regiment one got to know really well and I first met Robert in 1958, 62 years ago, when he was in charge of the 1st Battalion Advance Party from Berlin to Redford Barracks in Edinburgh. There were only two of us officers and Robert was much concerned with allocating space to each Company but even more concerned about his wife Ann producing their first child which was due any minute!

We were accommodated in the Redford Cavalry Barracks which had a vast Officers' Mess with a huge hall and staircase up to all the bedrooms. The phone kept ringing and Major Gurdon leapt to the one and only machine in the Front Hall of the Mess at that time. There were a few false alarms until finally, I answered the phone and was told, in no uncertain certain terms, that Major Gurdon was required to answer. Well young Mark Gurdon had arrived and despite just the two of us being in the Mess, Robert shouted out in that vast hall with glee, "it's a boy, it's a boy".

Later, Robert was in my Syndicate Shoot which I took from the Earl of Mansfield at Scone for some 52 years, when my father died in 1981. Robert was with us for 35 years from 1976 until the Syndicate packed up in 2011. He loved the shooting and was a fairly good shot. Some of us in the Syndicate were easily able to work out from his visage if the "Colonel" had had a bad drive but equally no one loved those days more than when for instance, he was asked to walk up a burn at Logiealmond and most of the birds flew back down over his head and he and the keeper picked up 16 pheasants.

I also remember Robert saving a minor crisis in the Highland Brigade Golfing Society; Lieutenant Colonel "Chew" MacLagan retired having been Secretary for many years and having run things very well. Finding a successor from the Highlands was going to be difficult until Robert volunteered and took on the task for some five years ensuring the continued smooth running of the Society and uninterrupted great golf for all who took part.

C B Innes

MAJOR IAN MACRAE

Ian Macrae died on 13th May this year, aged 83. He was the son of Major Ian Macrae, MC, TD who served with the 6th/7th Battalion from 1926-1939 before serving with the 6th Battalion during the Second World War. He was wounded in Tunisia in 1943. He finally retired after the war and farmed at Mayfield and Innergask farms, on the Dupplin Estate near Perth.

Like his father, Ian was educated at Trinity College, Glenalmond and joined the 6th/7th Battalion and was almost immediately called up for National Service, where he did his basic training at Queens' Barracks in Perth. He then went on to Eaton Hall, from where he was commissioned in January 1956 and joined the 1st Battalion, then stationed in Berlin. Posted to Don Company, then commanded by Major Bruce Fortune MC, Ian handed over his platoon to me when he left the Battalion. He never ceased to recall his NS days which he thoroughly enjoyed and he became a keen regimental supporter locally. On finishing National Service, he returned home to join his father on the two farms and to also rejoin the 6th/7th Battalion with A Company in Crief, to finish his Reserve Service. In 1958 he carried one of the Colours of the Battalion at the Holyrood Palace Parade to mark the 50th Anniversary of the formation of the TA in 1908.

After his father's death, Ian and his wife Christine, to whom he was married for almost 60 years, bought Dunbog Farm, near



Newburgh in Fife in 1967. Dunbog was a thousand acre arable property and Ian became a leading light in Fife farming circles, being a founder member of the East of Fife Growers Group, a large co-operative of vegetable producers which was started in 1987 and still flourishes today, growing peas, broccoli, cauliflowers and lettuces.

In 1994, Ian retired and the family home moved to nearby Johnstone Farmhouse, Dunbog. Ian was a keen golfer and a Member of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club for many years. He was also a good fisherman and shot and ran a small syndicate shoot at Dunbog Farm. He was a great family man and much enjoyed visits from his two sons and two daughters and their families. I knew Ian all my life but I shall remember him particularly as a very kind host and a man with a glorious open smile, open to one and all.

C B Innes

MAJOR MALCOLM MACGILLIVRAY

Malcolm MacGillivray was born in Dar es Salaam, Tanganyika as it was then, now Tanzania on 18 April 1937 and died in Inverness on 13th December 2019, aged 82, after a short but stoic battle with cancer. His life was a repertoire of interesting and sometimes extraordinary experiences, in the military, the private security business in Africa and then as a manager, factor and farmer in the Highlands of Scotland. He married Bridget Campbell and they had two children Claire and Angus, and when widowed in 1995 he was lucky enough to find happiness for over 20 years with Emma Murray.

He initially trained for National Service and was commissioned into The Black Watch on the 20th December 1957 and served with the 1st Battalion until 1964. He joined at Queens' Barracks in Perth and in Cyprus commanded the mortar platoon. This was followed by Warminster as part of the demonstration battalion. He was a natural sportsman and a highly able tactician. He represented the battalion in athletics, fencing, cross country skiing and qualified for the British pentathlon team. He excelled in astronavigation with the recee platoon on exercise in Libya. Another of his sporting passions was climbing and one year guided Colonel Kemmis-Betty and a Navy commander in the Austrian Alps. He then served with 22 SAS, commanding A Squadron until he retired in 1967.

Between 1967 and 1972 he worked in Africa as a security consultant, then setting up his own firm advising presidents in Uganda, Zambia and Sierra Leone during turbulent times.

He moved to the highlands of Scotland with his young family, initially as a shepherd to learn the ropes and then as a manager and factor of an estate. He moved to his own farm in 1982 in Dornoch, diversifying into golf and fishing, using his ingenuity in building and carpentry. He remained active until the last. He supported the Agricultural Training Scheme and the Royal British Legion as a volunteer and he found immense pleasure and satisfaction teaching young people to fly fish.

AD MacGillivray

Those in the Regiment who knew him well admired him greatly, for he was really a one-off. Whilst we did not serve together for very long, I do recall one story from our time together.

In Knook Camp in about 1962, when I was with the Demonstration Platoon at Netheravon, I was more or less told that I had to attend the next Guest Night in the 1 BW Officers' Mess at Knook Camp, near Warminster. I drove over and was given a bed in the Officers' Mess, which turned out to be a good thing for I enjoyed my evening rather too much.

Next morning, at breakfast, I was horrified to see Malcolm eating raw meat which he had specially ordered from the Mess Cooks. "Why, said I?" "Oh well, said Malcolm, I am off on the SAS course very soon and I must be prepared to eat any raw meat for



that is all I may be able to live on whilst out on patrols".

When he retired, he ran a very good small mixed farming enterprise consisting of farming arable land, managing a fish farm and also making and running a nine-hole golf course at Darrochfin Farm, near Dornoch. He was well known and much admired in the local community and his Thanksgiving Service, held in Dornoch Cathedral on 15th February this year was very well attended.

C B Innes

MAJOR TONY MOORE

Major Tony Moore (RAPC) died in April 2020. He was the Regimental Paymaster of 1BW from 1966 to 1969 serving in Minden including the UN Peace Keeping Tour in Cyprus (1966-1967) and Kirknewton from 1968-1969. He was a great tennis player and was Secretary of the Army Lawn Tennis Association for a great number of years.

WILLIAM CRAIK

Bill Craik (known as Ozzie) died in Salisbury Hospital on the 21st of June after a period of ill health which had dogged him for the past few years. He was born and brought up in Kirkcaldy but moved with his family to Australia when he was a boy, settling in the outskirts of Sydney. When he was old enough he entered into an apprenticeship to become a painter and decorator working with his father. Bill enjoyed life in Australia however his parents wished to return to Scotland and he had no option than to return with them due to his age which excluded him from remaining there on his own.

On his return to Scotland he joined The Black Watch and after completing basic training at the Queens' Barracks Perth he joined the 1st Battalion at Redford Barracks prior to its departure to Cyprus in 1958.

Because Bill still spoke with a pronounced Australian accent he was soon given the nickname "Ozzie".

After a spell in a Rifle Company he was selected to take part in a Medium Machine Gun (MMG) Cadre and then joined the MMG Platoon until its disbandment but he remained in Support Company by transferring to the Anti-Tank Platoon. Bill was a good soldier who was fit, smart and used his initiative when required to do so. He successfully completed an NCOs' Cadre and by the end of his service he was promoted to full Corporal. Serving in Edinburgh and Cyprus with a detached tour in Libya, he then returned to the UK with the Battalion to serve at Knook Camp outside Warminster where the Battalion was deployed as Infantry Demonstration Battalion.

It was during this time that Bill met Gillian who lived in Wilton some fifteen miles from Knook Camp and he often was seen entering the camp in the small hours before reveille, foot sore and weary after missing the last bus from Salisbury to Warminster. They married and spent 57 happy years together.

Moving with the battalion to Minden in 1964 Bill decided to leave the Army on the completion of his engagement and returned to Wiltshire where he resumed his trade as a painter and decorator first working for a firm but then as a self-employed tradesman. During this time they raised their family of daughter Nikki and sons Dean and Darren.

The wanderlust was still in Bill's blood and in 2006 he and Gillian decided to move to the warmer and sunnier climes of Spain where they spent 13 years until their return through Bill's ill health in 2019.

He was really proud to have served in the Regiment and although he never managed to come north of the border and meet up with old friends, he kept in touch with the Association through regular and often lengthy calls to the Association Secretary.

He was a great family man who thoroughly enjoyed his time in the Regiment and is sadly missed by all who knew him.

R J W Proctor



DOUGLAS DARGIE

Douglas Dargie was born on the 11th of November 1938 in Watson Street, Dundee and died on the 12th of January 2020, aged 81. Doug was the youngest of a large family and was educated at Stobswell School where he did well. On leaving school he decided to join the Army, hankering for the adventure and travel which was on offer to the young men of the day.



After completing training at Queens' Barracks, Doug joined the 1st Battalion The Black Watch which was stationed in Berlin. He then moved with the Battalion to Edinburgh and then to Cyprus towards the end of the EOKA campaign. He was employed in the MT platoon under the watchful eye of Captain "Digger" Dickson the Motor Transport Officer. Doug also served under CSM Dennis Giles during his time in a Rifle Company and again when Dennis became RSM. In 1958 he and Margaret were married and he decided to leave the Army after the battalion had returned to UK as the Infantry Demonstration Battalion.

Doug and Margaret settled down in Dundee and began a family. They moved to Corby where he found employment in the steel industry, then later as an HGV mechanic and later working for BT. In 2000 they decided to return to Scotland and settled in Carnoustie.

He was very proud of his time with the Regiment and became one of the early members of the then newly formed Angus Branch in 1999. Douglas was amazed and left speechless when he was asked by the then Branch Secretary to complete the enrolment form as it was none other than his old CSM and RSM, Dennis Giles. Needless to say they both had a good catch up at the end of the meeting.

Doug was a great supporter of the Branch and attended meetings whenever he could. He was popular with all Branch members and is missed by all those who knew him.

R J W Proctor

DAN DEWAR

Dan Dewar one of our Second World War veterans died on the 21st of June aged 97. His funeral took place on the 30th of June where a small guard consisting of the Angus Branch Standard Bearer and Black Watch Association members lined the route in Alyth and again at Perth Crematorium conforming to the current Covid - 19 regulations.

Dan was born, grew up and was educated in Alyth and on leaving school he served his time with a local joinery firm to become a carpenter. By 1942 he had enlisted into The Black Watch and much later he gives an account of his wartime service shown below.



"I joined The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) at Queens' Barracks, Perth on the 12th of February 1942. I served with the 5th Battalion in the Highland Division, with the 8th Army in the Desert and Sicily in 1942/ 1943. Two weeks before D Day I was hit rather severely with malaria, thus missing D Day; and losing the 5th Battalion and all of my much loved mates.

I was discharged from Bridge of Earn Hospital, looking like someone from Belsen and was then sent straight to Burma. I was attached to the 2nd KOSB which was a fine battalion where I became a Sergeant and had to just like it or lump it!

The hardest part about being in the Far East was that we fought on for three months after the war in Europe was over."

Dan went on to say in his letter that "I am still in The Black Watch and will be until my dying day. I am proud to have served

in the 5th Battalion and the famous 51st Highland Division. Dan wrote the letter ten years ago when he was 87 years old and finishes by saying that he has "no complaints".

After the war Dan returned to Alyth and his trade and like so many craftsmen of his time was recruited to become a technical teacher and after successfully completing a teacher training course he set off on a new career which took him to Lanarkshire where he eventually became head of the technical teaching department. He met and married Mary Brownlie and later began a family consisting of daughter Helen and son Jim. Sadly, Mary died after they had been married for ten years. Dan later married his second wife Joy who sadly predeceased him in 2017.

During 2005 Dan attended the 60th Anniversary Dinner commemorating the end of the Second World War which was organised by the Association in the Lovat Hotel, Perth which he enjoyed immensely. He also attended other Regimental functions and events and was a member of the Angus Branch.

He was a "weel kent man" within the local community and had the great gift of being able to observe what was going on in the community and beyond and being able to commit this to verse, much of which was often published in the local press and indeed in this journal.

He was a caring person who thought of others and will be missed by his children, grandchildren and greatgrandchildren and all those who had the pleasure of rubbing shoulders with him.

R J W Proctor

IAN DUFF

Ian Duff was my Batman at Queens' Barracks in Perth and then, when our Depot closed, he came with me to the then Joint Depot of The Black Watch and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders at Stirling Castle. He was a very local Perth man, raised in Huntingtower, though he lived almost all his life after retirement in nearby Pitcairngreen. Educated at Perth Academy, he was called up for National Service which he completed at the Depot. After Stirling, he went out to join the 1st Battalion in Berlin prior to retirement from the Army before serving an apprenticeship as an electrician.



He spent many spells at sea working with the Cunard Shipping Line and later closer to home with National Standard before working for 20 years on the North Sea Rigs with a team of technicians who became lifelong friends. It was on shore leave in Liverpool that he met his future wife Pauline and there soon followed their two sons Angus and Malcolm. On retirement he took up clay-pigeon shooting and fishing and loved his dogs and long walks in the neighbourhood.

Ian was twice awarded commendations for saving lives and this bravery helped him endure Parkinsons for some years before he died earlier this year.

He was a tall and fit recruit at the Depot and became a very good Batman, though at Stirling Castle I returned to my room mid-morning to find him emptying a dustpan out of the window! Apprehending him, he said "Oh Sir, I generally do that; you should see where it all goes". I had often looked out of my bedroom window, which was in the Governor's Quarters in the Castle and had a grand view down the Carse towards Aberfoyle, but I had not perhaps looked directly down the Castle walls which were at least 150 foot high. I had a look and found that all my rubbish was dropping into a wood nowhere near anybody - so no harm was done - though Ian Duff's throwaway habit stopped.

C B Innes

HAROLD DUNN

Harold Dunn died on 26th February 2020 aged 87; he was predeceased by his wife Jean.

Harold enlisted into The Black Watch in the early 1950s and after completing basic training joined the 1st Battalion in Crail

prior to its departure to Korea.

As a young drummer in the Pipes and Drums, Harold was involved in the Battle of The Hook in November 1952 where he sustained a wound to his leg. Although this sometimes bothered him in later life, he was very stoic and continued with his military duties and completed his engagement.

Returning home to the North East of England he found employment and married Jean and they both settled down and began a family. In 1962 he was contacted by the then Drum Major of the Pipes and Drums of the 1st Battalion, Roy Dear whom Harold had served under in Korea. The Drum Major asked him to re-enlist and take part in the forthcoming North American tour the following year. Harold jumped at the chance and soon found himself at the combined Black Watch and Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders Depot at Stirling Castle where he underwent another course of basic training which brought him up to date with the modern weapon systems and other changes which had been brought in since his previous service.

Harold joined the 1st Battalion at Knook Camp, near Warminster and after a period of "Draft Training" finally settled in with the Pipes and Drums and was soon involved in the rehearsals for the forthcoming tour of the United States and Canada. The highlight of this training period was Beating Retreat by the combined Pipes and Drums and Regimental Bands of the 1st, 4th/5th and 6th/7th Battalions held at Devizes.

This was the last time that the massed bands of all three battalions of the Regiment would play together and Harold felt that he was there making history.

The tour of North America was a great success and Harold played in the well known charity concert on the White House Lawn some weeks prior to the assassination of US President John F Kennedy.

On return to Warminster and a period of leave, Harold along with the remainder of the Battalion began to pack and prepare for the move to Minden, West Germany as part of the British Army of The Rhine. Harold had completed an NCO's Cadre by this time and was now on the promotion ladder. The Pipes and Drums were initially deployed as the Defence Platoon for Battalion Headquarters in the field and later were employed as a Rifle Platoon in D Company as part of an AFV 432 equipped mechanised battalion so as a Junior NCO he not only had to master the skills of being a drummer and drumming instructor but also the skills of a Rifle Company Section Commander.

His bearing, turnout and proficiency both as drummer and highland dancer who had the ability to pass these skills onto younger members of the band was soon recognised and he eventually took over the appointment of Drum Major. He later moved to become the Medical Centre Sergeant in Hong Kong prior to the completion of his service.

Returning to the North East of England once more, Harold became involved in the Newcastle Branch of The Black Watch Association where he eventually became Chairman, a post which he held until ill health prevented his continuance. He was also a long serving member of the Association Welfare Committee and travelled from Newcastle by train to attend monthly meetings.

Harold was very proud of his service with the Regiment and those in the Newcastle Branch have lost a stalwart member who will be sadly missed.

R J W Proctor

MALCOLM DUNN

Malcolm Dunn, the brother of Harold Dunn whose obituary is also shown in this edition of the Magazine, died on 5th June aged 83.



Malcolm served in the 1st Battalion in Berlin during the mid-1950s and took part in the combined Pipes and Drums Regimental Band tour of North America in 1957. He was a piper and an accomplished highland dancer.

On completing his service, he returned to the North East of England.

He joined the Tyneside Scottish TA which is affiliated to The Black Watch and fitted in very well. He soon proved to be a valuable member of the Tyneside Scottish Pipes and Drums both as a Corporal Piper and highland dancer who had the ability and temperament to teach and coach those who wished to become members of the band.

Malcolm soon joined the Newcastle Branch of The Black Watch Association and his sharp brain and excellent administrative skills made him an ideal candidate for the appointment of Branch Secretary, a position that he held for a great number of years. Attending every AGM in Perth he was known to ask pertinent questions about the accounts and other items on the agenda.

He also came north, sometimes accompanied by his brother Harold, to attend the annual Reunion and the biennial Muster at Aberfeldy, with a minibus full of Newcastle Branch members.

He was also very concerned for the welfare of the Newcastle Branch Members and spent much of his own time visiting members and widows to ensure that anyone that he knew required help got it as soon as possible.

He was a quiet man who worked tirelessly for the members of his Branch and the Association and he will be sadly missed by his family and those who had the pleasure of knowing him.

R J W Proctor

BRYAN ELLIOT

Bryan Elliot died on 11th June 2020; members of the Edinburgh, Lothians' and Borders' Branch of the Association lined the route at Morton Hall Crematorium on the day of his funeral.

Bryan joined the Regiment in 1958 and after completing basic training joined the 1st Battalion at Redford Barracks prior to the battalion's move to Cyprus.

He was initially posted to Charlie Company before joining the Regimental Band and a year later he was selected to attend a course at the Army School of Music at Kneller Hall. After successfully completing the course he returned to the battalion. Later he was posted to the Highland Brigade Junior Bandsman's Unit at Fort George as an instructor.

After eighteen months at Fort George he returned to the 1st Battalion at Warminster to take part in the combined Pipes and Drums and Regimental Band tour of United States and Canada in the autumn of 1963.

In 1964, at the end of his six year engagement, Bryan moved back to Scotland to be demobilised at the recently opened Highland Brigade Training Depot, Bridge of Don, Aberdeen. He was reunited with his wife Jean whom he married in January 1963.



Bryan and Jean had forty-nine years of happy marriage prior to Jean's death in 2012. They had one daughter, Fiona and two grandchildren, James and Ruby who were always the apple of their granddad's eye.

Bryan was employed initially with the Royal Mail as a postman then as an engineer with a local firm before spending the remaining seventeen years of his working life with the NHS at the Princess Margaret Rose hospital in Edinburgh, making prosthetic limbs for disabled people. He felt this work gave him a great insight and perspective of the life of others less fortunate than himself.

A long time and active member of the Association, Bryan joined the Edinburgh and Lothians' Branch when it was formed and regularly attended meetings and events. His other hobbies and interests included listening to classical and jazz music, woodturning and supporting his beloved Hibernian Football Club through thick and thin.

A great family man, he always believed that his time spent in The Black Watch gave him a sense of purpose for later life. Bryan was a true gentleman and always tried his best to be a good soldier long after he left the Regiment.

R J W Proctor

DAVID JOHN FARR

David was born in Kirkcaldy on the 5th February and died on the 11th March 2020. After schooling in Kirkcaldy, he tried many forms of employment but could settle for none. It was 1969, he decided to join The Black Watch and at last felt he had found a job to his liking.

During his time with the Battalion he served in Hong Kong and enjoyed his mini tours to Fiji and New Zealand. UK was also part of his service and with that the deployment to Northern Ireland among other soldierly duties he had to perform. On demob it was back to Kirkcaldy and eventually Glenrothes where he took up employment with T.K. Valve, Andrew Antenna and lastly with Havelock where he remained until retiring in 2011.

Unfortunately David's health deteriorated to the point he required a triple heart bypass in 2015. Although in poor health, it never stopped him from being the life and soul of the family get togethers and was always seen with a smile and a keen sense of humour.

The family were grateful when the Fife Branch members performed the duty of coffin bearers. David has left a lasting legacy of happiness to his family and many friends in The Black Watch.

R M Scott

JAKE GAULD

Jake or "White Noise" as he was affectionately known, came to my attention in Colchester when I had started my service with the 1st Battalion.

He was ahead of me in service, having been to Hong Kong. As a very young soldier, I saw him as the "stand out" Jock in the Anti - Tank Platoon (Vigilant) who were seen as the old sweats.

His mop of red hair and a pair of specs that turned a darker shade when it was sunny was what caught my initial attention! You heard Jake before you saw him and that was one of his likeable traits; he was confident and did speak in a louder volume than most.

He seemed to be forever in Support Company and he excelled in that environment whether firing the 120 mm Wombat or when we became Armoured Infantry and the platoon evolved into their new role as the Milan Platoon, still the tank busters but with better capabilities. They were, as we all were, at a different level of professional expertise in West Germany.

Tours of Northern Ireland still occurred and it was when I was



Company Sergeant Major of Delta (Golden Don) Company in Ballykinler in 1989/90 at Abercorn Barracks, Jake took over the position of Company Quarter Master Sergeant - "the Quarty". He excelled in this role and was a breath of fresh air in Company Headquarters, quickly getting to grips with the tricky logistical support, sometimes to multiple locations.

One of those Company Deployments was to Rathfriland and we shared a bunk. This was our war, or as close as we were going to get, due to our service time slot before Iraq and Afghanistan, however be in no doubt that I would have gone to war at anytime and anywhere with Jake Gauld by my side.

The Company Commander in Ballykinler was Roddy Riddell, and we were recently exchanging messages regarding Jake. The Colonel had known him well in the Anti-Tank Platoon in the late 70s and he said to me that he was a likeable and dependable soldier who worked hard and got a job done without making a fuss. A story that summed up Jake took place during the first tour of Ballykinler. Lieutenant Riddell was the Anti - Tank Platoon Commander and Jake was a Lance Corporal in his patrol. Whilst returning to the base in Middletown having been out on a mobile patrol, Jake was tasked with ensuring that the punctured spare tyre and wheel were repaired prior to the next mobile patrol. Later when asked whether the puncture had been repaired, Jake replied "Yes Sir, all fixed". On further enquiry from his Platoon Commander, Jake replied he had swapped it with a wheel off an Artillery Land Rover!

I was saddened to hear that Jake had died almost a year after we had the honour of both being in the same bearer party for Geordie Ross, another old friend.

WD Whytock

Jack Gauld, who was often known as Jake, died suddenly at home on the morning of Wednesday 15th April 2020. I have had the pleasure of knowing him since the early 70's. He was well liked in the battalion and was larger and louder than life.

He was a multi-talented soldier who spent a great deal of his service in the Anti-Tank Platoon. He was a Support Company stalwart with the appointment of CSM of the Savages being one of many proud moments, serving alongside and supporting the OC, Major Johnny Monteith.

A battalion posting to Hong Kong in 1992 resulted in him taking over the role as TQMS, a task in which he excelled, due to his attention to detail, his commitment and most of all, his outstanding work ethic.

After leaving the Forces, he had a number of jobs before being offered an Operations Manager post with Profile Security Services, where he teamed up with a number of former comrades, including Geordie Ross, Arty Keith and Bill Nicholson. His military skills and organisational ability stood him in good stead. He immediately fitted in becoming a valued member of the team.

He carved out a career in the security industry and for the last few years he was the Operations Manager for Red Hackle Security Services. His expertise in the International Shipping and Port Shipping business became his forte. He was well known round the ports of Lerwick, Rosyth, Leith, Aberdeen and Peterhead. He was also a popular figure at the security checkpoint at the Montrose

Port Authority, where he controlled the entry points and was a reserve officer in Port Control.

Jake was one of the hardest working, helpful and likeable person that I have had the great pleasure of knowing. He had a heart of gold, being well respected by his subordinates, seniors and peers. He will be sadly missed.

Jake is survived by his wife Sheenagh, his daughters Hannah and Gemma and a very recent addition to the family, baby Jack.

A D Keith

ROBERT HUNTER

Robert Hunter (24233117) died on the 2nd of January 2020 aged 68. He joined the 1st Battalion in 1969 and undertook training in Malaya. At that stage he was in the Recce/Demo Platoon. He also deployed on all the early tours of Northern Ireland, as well as the two year posting in Hong Kong and the first Ballykinler tour. He left the Army as a Corporal in 1978 but he made lifelong friends whilst serving, such as Norman Kyle and John Dackers. He and John joined on the same day and were separated by one digit of a difference in their Army Numbers.

Major Ronnie Proctor remembers him as a quiet but effective soldier.

He settled in Alloa and married Margaret, building up a very successful cleaning business. He enjoyed playing bowls and was a very active committee member of his local Legion.



R M Riddell

JOHN HUTCHISON

John Hutchison died very suddenly of a heart attack at his home on Christmas Day 2019 aged 78. His funeral was held on the 8th of January 2020 in Dundee.

He was born and brought up in Dundee and joined the RAF. After completing a short engagement, he returned to his native city and in 1958 married Helen his childhood sweetheart. They had 61 happy years together with 5 children, numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren.

John felt that he missed the Service life after he had left the RAF and soon joined A Company 4th/5th Black Watch at Bell Street and later Rodd Road Drill Halls. He really enjoyed life as a TA soldier and somehow managed to blend his civilian employment with Dundee City Council, with his family life, attending drill nights, weekend training and annual training camps with little problem.

On the reorganisation of the TA in 1967 he became part of the new TA Volunteer Battalion which comprised of 11 Companies which were formed from the antecedent battalions of the 51st Highland Division with the London Scottish and Liverpool Scottish added to the mix.

A Company 4th/5th BW became A (Black Watch) Company, 51st Highland Volunteers and John due to his good attendance and hard work was selected to become part of the "Ever Ready" force which was a group of the best members of the battalion which stretched from Orkney and Shetland in the far north to London and Liverpool in the South.

The Ever Readies remained at short notice to move to supplement the Regular Army mainly in Germany. His enthusiasm and professionalism were soon noticed by his superiors and by 1969 he was a member of the Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess. He felt that life as an infantryman was beginning to be too physically demanding and having reached the rank of Colour Sergeant, he



decided that he should retire from the infantry. He then joined 117 Squadron Royal Engineers which shared the Drill Hall at Rodd Road.

Two of John's sons followed in their father's footsteps; John (junior) served for a lengthy period with A Company and Billy his younger brother enlisted into 1/51 Highland and later trained as a chef, reaching SNCO rank.

John was one of life's gentlemen who was a dedicated husband, parent and loyal member of the Regiment.

R J W Proctor

SEAN KENNY

Sean Kenny died at his home in Kinross on the 9th of June 2020 aged 51 and was buried at Cleish Cemetery on the 22nd June.

Sean was a member of a family of four brothers and four sisters and he with his brother Steven and the late Kevin served in The Black Watch at the same time. Sean had not been in the best of health for some time but was never one to feel sorry for himself and got on with life in his cheery and indomitable way.

Attending Cleish Primary and then Kinross Secondary School Sean followed in his elder brothers' footsteps and joined the Regiment.

He quickly settled down to army life earning a reputation as a very fit and keen young soldier and on successfully completing three months basic training at the Scottish Division Depot Glencorse was soon off to join his brothers who were serving in the 1st Battalion in Werl, West Germany.

During Sean's training it was noticed that like his elder brother Kevin, he was a natural marksman who proved to have a unique composure when firing all types of small arms. His short and wiry frame, coupled with his fitness made him a candidate to become a member of the Regimental Shooting Team which was made up of the best shots in the battalion who qualified to compete at the annual Regular Army Skill at Arms Meeting at Bisley. Needless to say, he was taken into the team and after learning much from the more experienced members he became a regular and reliable member.

Serving on his first operational tour with the battalion in South Armagh Sean was in his element as he used all his shooting training, field craft skills and fitness to make him a sound and reliable member of his platoon. He enjoyed serving in Berlin however he decided that it was time to return to civilian life.

He was a likeable and cheery man who was popular and well known.

R J W Proctor

WO2 EDDIE KULIK

Eddie Kulik joined the TA in 1970 at the age of twenty-three. He rose steadily through the ranks with 1/51 Highland serving in HQ Company. He was at various times Provo Sergeant with the Regimental Police, the Colour Sergeant in charge of Recruit Training, CQMS, Company Sergeant Major and finally RQMS for two years.

He later took detached duties with Tayforth University Officer Training Corps where he was the 'Coach' with Captain Colin (CJ) Johnston and was instrumental in the great success of the shooting team, which in 1994 at the Army in Scotland Skill At Arms Meeting and Bisley, won prestigious trophies and medals.



When Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother presented the New Colours to a very proud 1st Battalion 51st Highland Volunteers on the North Inch in Perth on 4th July 1986, Eddie was privileged to be in the Colour Party. He was immensely proud of his duties that day and of meeting the Queen Mother. On previous occasions he had had the honour to meet members of the Royal Family including Her Majesty The Queen, The Duke of Edinburgh, The Princess Royal and The Duke of Rothesay.

Eddie gained numerous qualifications and awards, holding the Double Bar for Long Service and the TA Efficiency Medal. At a ceremony in Dundee City Chambers in 1995, he was presented with the highest accolade for meritorious service, the Lord Lieutenant's Award.

His long service in the TA saw him deploy to West Germany and Cyprus as well as undertaking training all over the United Kingdom.

Eddie retired after 30 years but continued his strong connection with the Association. For many years, he laid the wreath on behalf of the Association at the Polish Remembrance Day Parade in Perth.

Eddie died aged 72, on 10th December 2019, whilst on holiday in Spain.

Eddie's popularity was acknowledged by the numerous 'blue bonnets' on show and the many Black Watch representatives who attended his funeral in January.

Greg MacGillivray

WO2 (CSM) BRUCE LOW

On the 22nd July 2020 whilst driving from St Andrews to his home in the village of Boarhills, Bruce was involved in a road traffic accident which resulted in him being admitted to Ninewells Hospital, Dundee. On Saturday the 25th July 2020 Bruce died of the injuries he sustained from the accident. At the time of his death, Bruce was surrounded by his loving family, Nancy his wife, their two sons Kevin and Keith and granddaughters Rebecca and Kirsten.

Bruce was born on the 1st of January 1942 at Balbeuchly Farm Aucterhouse, near Dundee. He was the second child of eight children and had four brothers and three sisters.

In 1944 the family moved to Kirkinch Farm, Meigle Perthshire and in 1946 the family finally settled in Kirkton of Nevay Farm which was more commonly known as the Newtyle Bulb Farm.

Bruce was educated at Eassie Primary School and then was a pupil at Newtyle Secondary School, leaving in the summer of 1957 to take up a position as an apprentice slater with Peter Drummond Slaters of Meigle in Perthshire. Bruce successfully completed his apprenticeship with this firm. A story from his former boss stated that they were working on a job at Kinpurney Castle and at lunchtime they had to return to the yard for more materials leaving a young Bruce to keep an eye on the site. To ensure that he would not get up to any mischief while they were away, they took the ladders down as a safety precaution. On their return to the job they found Bruce sitting on the top of the highest point of the castle roof and the ladders lying on the ground where they had left them. Was this the start of Bruce Low the future adventure training instructor?

Bruce enlisted on the 2nd of July 1964 at the Dundee Recruiting office. 22 years 214 days later he retired from the regiment having attained the rank of Warrant Officer Class Two. He served in Minden, Cyprus, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Belize, Werl, Canada and more locally Leuchars (Army Youth Team), Dundee and Kirkcaldy. His last post in the battalion was as CSM C (Fire Support) Company in Werl. He was then posted to K Company 1/51 Highland as the SPSI where he completed his service.

Bruce was a very accomplished mountaineer, hill walker and ski instructor.

Whilst serving with the Army Youth Team based at RAF



Leuchars, he met Nancy and they were married on the 12th of October 1968 in the village Church at Boarhills with the reception being held in the Peat Inn Hotel. Soon after this the family was increased to four when Kevin and Keith were born.

In 1986 Bruce and Nancy took up residence in the picturesque village of Boarhills four miles outside St Andrews on the A917 Crail road. Over the next thirty-four years the village and the village life would play an important role in his life especially the church and the village hall.

On being discharged Bruce was selected for employment at RAF Leuchars in the Mechanical Transport Section, a job that he excelled in. In June 2000 he was awarded the personal commendation of the Air Officer Commanding No1 Group. In the letter from Group Captain P A Coker OBE Station Commander Leuchars congratulating him, he wrote;

"This award recognises the outstanding contribution you have made during your 12 years in the Mechanical Transport Section at Royal Air Force Leuchars. Being an ex-serviceman, you have instilled the core values of the Service in the young airmen and women in the section, many of whom are new to the Royal Air Force. I know that they often seek out your advice and have the utmost respect for you. Your professionalism, self-sacrifice and dedication are a fine example to all and reflects the finest traditions of the Service. You richly deserve this award and while saluting your achievements, please accept my sincere thanks and again my heartfelt congratulations."

Bruce retired from Leuchars in 2010.

Bruce loved the village of Boarhills and the surrounding area that he had made his home with Nancy. He dedicated so much of his time and energy to the local community. He was a regular member of the Boarhills Church. The last few months with the COVID 19 lockdown in place Bruce and Nancy spent more precious time together due to having to isolate. Possibly the longest time together in their 52 years of marriage. Bruce had a heart of gold and was a very generous husband, father, grandfather and he looked after his family well.

His greatest attribute was to give people his time and over the years he gave so many people a lot of his time. In the future, or in a quiet moment when you think of Bruce, just think of the great times you had, either serving with him, working with him, or just even knowing him. I have thought of Bruce recently and I am now coming to terms with the loss of a great friend of over 50 years.

On the 13th August 2020 at 1015 in the village hall the Rev. Marion Paton conducted a private funeral service for Bruce. At 1045 Bruce took his last patrol through the village, that he loved so much. The route was from the hall to the road junction passing through the Guard of Honour and Standards of the Black Watch Association. Turn left and down to the tattie barn. Turn around and then back through the village and on to the Boarhills Cemetery for the interment. The route was lined with Boarhills residents and former soldiers of The Black Watch who had served with Bruce, who wished to pay their last respects.

John A Jardine BEM

MARC MACFARLANE

Marc Macfarlane died on the 5th of February 2020 aged 35 at his home in Newtyle, Angus.

Marc, the son of Colin and Helen was born on the 15th of October 1984 and grew up in Newtyle in the Strathmore valley. He attended the primary school in Newtyle and then Secondary School in Monifieth. Always an outdoor lad he was very fit. On leaving school aged 16 he enlisted as a Junior Soldier and reported for duty to the Scottish Infantry Depot, Glencorse.

On completing his training, he joined the 1st Battalion who were serving at Fort George and then moved with the battalion to Fallingbommel. Later he was deployed to Iraq serving with B Company. A keen sportsman and cross-country runner, Marc enjoyed Army life. After returning to the UK with the battalion and serving at Warminster he decided to leave the Army in 2005 and returned to Newtyle to set up home



with his partner Lisa. The additions to the family of their daughters Amber and Amy, of whom he was very proud, made the family complete.

Straight away he gained employment working with local firms in the construction industry where his hard working ethic, reliability and personable character made him popular with his fellow employees and employers. His leadership and management skills which he had learnt in the Army made him an ideal candidate for a supervisor's role.

Marc was a popular character within the village. There was a very large turnout at his funeral on the 17th of February 2020 when many of his friends in Newtyle turned out to pay their respects.

R J W Proctor

ROBERT MURPHY

Robert (known as Rab) died on 20th January aged 79.

He joined the 1st Battalion at Warminster in November 1962 after a rather prolonged period at the combined Black Watch and Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders Depot at Stirling Castle which ensued after he had sustained a sports injury during basic training.

On arrival at Knook Camp, Rab and the remainder of the draft carried out a two week period of draft training prior to being dispatched to various companies in the battalion. Rab joined D Company which was then stationed at the School of Infantry in Warminster and separated from the bulk of the battalion.

Unlike most of those who made up the draft and were single, Rab was a married man with a young family and he was allocated a married quarter at Corsham which was some twenty miles from Warminster. The married quarters were converted WW2 wooden huts but although small and cramped the family were happy with their first Army home.

With the battalion moving to Minden, Rab moved to the Mortar Platoon where he spent a good part of his service and reached the rank of Corporal before moving to the world of recruiting as a recruiting Sergeant.

Rab returned to the battalion and was appointed WO's and Sgts' Mess Manager a post he retained for a number of years. He served with the battalion in Northern Ireland, on overseas exercises in Malta, Libya and Malaysia and tours in Cyprus, Gibraltar and Belize.

On retiring at the end of 22 years' service the family returned to Fife. He was a very keen bowler and helped organise Black Watch Association inter Branch bowling competitions on numerous occasions. He was a great family man and proud of his service with the Regiment and is sadly missed.

R J W Proctor

WO2 WILLIAM MUTCH

Willie Mutch who originally came from Carnoustie died on the 13th of October 2019. His funeral took place at Dundee Crematorium which was attended by many of those who served with him and by friends.

Willie joined the 1st Battalion at Redford Barracks prior to the battalion's departure to Cyprus in 1958 and eventually joined the MT Platoon, working in the FAMTO stores under Captain "Digger" Dickson who was then MTO. The platoon not only supplied the battalion's transport in Cyprus but also on overseas exercises and the detachment to Libya.

At the time that the battalion was posted to Warminster as Infantry Demonstration Battalion, Willie left the MT as a full Corporal and moved to B Company as a Rifle Section Commander in 7 Platoon.

Shortly after moving to Minden in West Germany in 1964, he was promoted to the rank of Sergeant and served at the Scottish Infantry Depot (Bridge of Don) as a Training Sergeant, training recruits for the Highland Brigade of the newly formed Scottish Division. Many recruits later commented that he was a very firm but fair Training Sergeant who expected the highest standards.

Returning to Minden, he was appointed Signals Platoon Colour Sergeant where his previous work in technical stores stood him



in good stead. He was responsible for accounting for hundreds of items of complex radio equipment and stores which were on charge to a mechanised battalion in BAOR. The tour in Minden also included a six month UN tour in Cyprus from November 1966 until May 1967.

Promoted to the rank of Warrant Officer Class Two, he served as SPSP with A (Black Watch) Company, 51st Highland at Rodd Road in Dundee before returning to the battalion in Colchester in 1974. After attending various courses he was deployed with the enlarged Intelligence Team in West Belfast. He was then appointed CSM of A (Grenadier) Company the following year and returned to West Belfast.

His experience in Intelligence matters in Northern Ireland led to him being appointed Intelligence Warrant Officer during the Battalion's first tour in Ballykinler from 1976 to 1978 which he carried out superbly. Before leaving Ballykinler and completion of his 22 year engagement he was selected to serve on the Long Service List, first as an Army Recruiter at the Army Careers Office at Rutland Square and then as Sergeant Major at Edinburgh Castle.

On leaving the Army he settled in the Edinburgh area where he lived for a number of years before moving north to live in sheltered accommodation in Broughty Ferry. He kept in touch with the Regiment through former Regimental colleagues.

R J W Proctor

HUGH MITCHELL PATERSON

Hugh was born in Kelty on the 21st March 1936 and died on the 4th of March 2020. Educated in both Kelty and Cowdenbeath, on leaving school he took up an apprenticeship in Radio/Television Engineering. Part way through his apprenticeship, Hugh was called up for National Service and much to the annoyance of his mother decided to cut short his employment and join up. Hugh was trained at Queens' Barracks in Squad No 68 and on passing out, he was told he would be posted to the Second Battalion and British Guyana. As happens in the Army, things were to change and he was sent to the 1st Battalion in Kenya. After a three-week journey by Troop Ship Hugh arrived in Kenya and was assigned to the Signal Platoon. On completion of the tour it was back to Crail and then on to Berlin.

Demobilisation was his next duty and he returned to Scotland to complete his apprenticeship, going on to manage his own successful business in Glenrothes.

Due to the virus only limited numbers were allowed to attend the funeral but the family, were happy to see Red Hackles on parade. Hugh will be missed by his family and many friends.

R M Scott



JOHN PATON

Jock Paton was born and brought up at the Sprott near Glamis and was always known as "Sproddy Jock" by his friends within and outwith the Army.

He died in the Strathmore Hospice, Forfar on the 21st July in his 87th year after a long and brave fight against prostate cancer.

He attended the local school at Glamis and he served his time as a brick layer before enlisting into the Regiment.

After completing basic training he found himself in the 1st Battalion and after a spell in a Rifle Company he joined the MT Platoon where he showed great aptitude for things mechanical. He soon gained promotion to full Corporal whilst the battalion was serving in Kenya. Moving with the battalion to Crail in 1955, Jock was selected to take part in the Royal Guard at Ballater and achieved the highlight of his time in the Army by being invited to dance with Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother,



at the Ghillie's Ball and according to Jock Her Majesty was delighted to dance with a neighbour from Glamis. He completed his engagement when the battalion was stationed in Berlin and despite being offered further promotion he decided to return to Glamis and his trade as a bricklayer at a time when good bricklayers were in short supply.

His time out of uniform was but short as he was recalled to the Colours as a Regular reservist during the Suez Crisis. This time he found himself in the Gordon Highlanders and after a period of refresher training, awaited deployment to Egypt but this never happened as the crisis was over before it really began.

Jock handed in his kit for the second and last time and returned to Glamis to once more take up his trade and former employment. He then married and started a family and moved to Coupar Angus. His last move was to Forfar where he finally settled down. Joining the Angus Branch of the Association on its formation in 1999, Jock was a great supporter and attended all Branch activities and meetings and initiated the Christmas Parcels for our senior pensioners and widows which still goes on to the present day. During our Royal Patron's last visit to Forfar in 2011 Jock reminded His Royal Highness of a prank which nearly went wrong during the 1955 Royal Guard. His Royal Highness was hiding from his parents and sister and had crept into a laundry basket which was en route to Aberdeen.

Whilst being tossed into the back of the three ton truck and after a muffled cry from the basket Jock opened it and found a pretty sheepish Prince Charles inside!! Needless to say that there was much laughter when the tale was recounted to His Royal Highness.

More recently ill health prevented him from attending functions and Branch meetings but he always ensured that he was kept up to date with events. Although he is sadly missed his character and enthusiasm for the Regiment remains with us.

R J W Proctor

ROY PETERS MM

Roy Peters joined the Black Watch in 1948 and later served with 22 SAS for most of his service. He was awarded the Military Medal for gallantry whilst serving with the SAS.

Roy died on the 6th of February 2020 aged 90 at Alsley Lodge Care Home. He was husband to the late Barbara and father to the late Gary and friend to Sylvia.

The funeral and burial took place St John's Church near Chorley where there was a large attendance of veterans of all Services with some ten veteran organisations' Standards on parade. A bugler and piper played the last post and lament at the graveside. Steve Nicolson, a former Corporal in the Regimental Band represented the Regimental Association and was one of the bearer party which was made up by veterans.

R J W Proctor



ANDREW POLLOCK

Andrew was born on the 15th of March 1949 and died in Victoria Hospital Kirkcaldy on the 18th of August 2020. He was educated in Dunfermline and on leaving school he took up an apprenticeship as a tiler earning him a skill that remained with him throughout his lifetime.

He then joined the Regiment and served in BAOR, UK, Belize and Hong Kong with mini tours of South Korea and New Zealand. Promoted to Corporal, he served in a Duty Company and then in the Quartermaster's Stores where he earned his nickname of "Padlocks". On demob he took up employment firstly in Rosyth Dockyard and then as a porter in Queen Margaret Hospital Dunfermline.

He was a keen fisherman and a good family man but sadly heart problems and then leukaemia took their toll. He put up a brave fight to the end.

He will be greatly missed by all who had the pleasure of knowing him.

R M Scott



WILLIAM WEBSTER ROBERTSON

Born on the 10th of October 1927 to Scottish parents, Bill as he was affectionately known whilst he was in the Army, was raised and educated in Port Glasgow and Middlesex.

He became a Fire Watch member and joined the City of London Cadet Force attached to the Royal Fusiliers and he was actively involved in Buzz bomb watching in the latter stages of the war.

In March 1945 he joined up and requested to serve with The Black Watch.

After completing basic training, he was sent to Sandhurst for officer training. Six weeks prior to commissioning his feet were injured during a field exercise and he was returned to the Regiment as physically unfit for an Infantry Commission.

He was held for a period in a holding unit before being posted to Germany to join the 1st Battalion. En route he passed through No 52 RHU and, as a result of some civilian unrest in Brussels, he and a number of fellow Black Watch troops were diverted from Duisberg to Brussels to assist in restoring order. A few days after his arrival, Bill was posted to Café Michele, a transit unit for troops coming in from France and other European countries en route to the UK or their units on the continent. Bill was involved in the administration ensuring that they were fed and cared for and he also arranged for their onward travel. He and his CO had rooms on the premises and he recalled that dealing with the local staff severely tested his schoolboy French.

Shortly afterwards he was posted to the 1st Battalion The Black Watch in Duisberg where time was spent on Regimental duties. He was among a number posted on to 'Operation Woodpecker', a unit employed to fell trees in the German forest in order to supply timber to the UK for repair work. They worked together with a Company from the Manchester Regiment, felling and dispatching many tons of timber a day.

In January 1948, Bill returned to Bielefeld rather than the Battalion because his demobilisation was only a few weeks away. Orderly office duties and dealing with the posting of personnel to their units kept him occupied until his return to York, to collect his demob suit and return to civilian life.

Bill married Maureen on 21 August 1948 and they became parents to five children, three sons and two daughters, during 65 wonderful years of marriage. Following Maureen's death in 2013,



Bill continued to reside in Suffolk where they had settled until he succumbed peacefully to complications brought on by dementia on 15 March this year. He continued to recall his army experiences and cherish his connection to The Black Watch until the very end.

Fiona Potter

R DAVID RODWELL L.D'H

David Greenwood Rodwell was born in Bradford in 1925 and joined The Black Watch in April 1943 undergoing his initial training at Queens' Barracks in Perth. He died aged 94 in November 2019.

His decision to enlist in The Black Watch was based on the recommendation of an associate and after the first sixteen weeks of training in Perth, he was posted to the 1st Battalion The Tyneside Scottish (Black Watch) who were stationed at Hamilton Racecourse.

He joined in time for the build up training to D Day.

The story of that training, the move to Thetford in Norfolk and then the final days before the invasion began, are told in Kevin Baverstock's book, "Breaking the Panzers".

The battalion landed on 11 June 1944 and prepared to capture the village of Rauray. On the 25th of June, the attack began and David was in the leading Company. Casualties were heavy and it was not until the 30th of June that the village and ridge were secured. A fierce German counter-attack was launched on 1st July and the Tyneside Scottish suffered many casualties, amongst them was David.

He did not recall any of his treatment until he woke up in the UK and he then spent many months in hospitals. He returned to service and with the war at an end, he was given a number of postings including guarding POWs in Scotland, as well as one to Egypt.

He was demobbed in 1948 and returned to Bradford. He met and married a childhood friend. Joan was a war widow and had a six-year-old daughter called Patricia and David brought her up as his own child. They also had a son called Michael who was born in 1957.

Joan sadly died in 1974 but David continued to live a full life, enjoying his garden and the great outdoors. He was awarded the Legion d' Honneur. He must have been one of the last remaining wartime Tyneside Jocks and we owe him and his generation a debt of gratitude.

R M Riddell

REV DAVID TAYLOR

The Reverend David Taylor died on Sunday the 10th of May aged 82. David carried out his National Service in the Regiment and then served in the 4th/5th Battalion in the 1950s, where as a piper and highland dancer, he performed at the Edinburgh Military Tattoo and danced solo for Her Majesty the Queen.

After leaving the Army, he worked with British Rail as a guard, then as a porter and then after a spell as a lorry driver and Special Constable, he entered the Ministry in 1988.

After his training he served in both Saughton Hall and Tillicoultry before joining the Dundee Congregational Church at Constitution Road, Dundee, giving pulpit supply for a number of years and standing in when a temporary vacancy occurred.



He was greatly involved in veterans' affairs both nationally and in the City of Dundee where he held the position of Royal British Legion, Dundee Branch, Chairman until his death and as Royal British Legion Chaplain, he led the Act of Remembrance at the Festival of Remembrance in the Caird Hall Dundee until he retired two years ago through ill health.

His support to veterans' organisations also included being Chaplain to the Dundee Branch of The Black Watch Association, leading the annual Remembrance Service at the Black Watch Memorial at Powrie Brae.

He was an active and prominent Freemason and latterly served the organisation as the Provincial Grand Chaplain of Forfarshire.

David is survived by Chrissy his wife of sixty-three years, their four children and their families.

R J W Proctor

THOMAS TRAYNER

Thomas Trayner (known as Tam) was born on the 24th of June 1941 in Dundee to Elizabeth and Eddie Trayner and sadly died after a short illness on 6 September 2020 aged 79.

Tam was the eldest of a family of six whose father Eddie had served in The Black Watch and the Parachute Regiment during WW2. He later became the Deputy Commandant of Angus and Dundee ACF.

Tam joined the Army in 1958 at the age of 17 and after completing training joined the 1st Battalion prior to its move to Cyprus at the end of that year. After a spell in a Rifle Company he moved to the Pipes and Drums where he was employed as a Highland Dancer and accompanied the Pipes and Drums on its various tours including the 1963 tour of the United States and North America where he was part of the Highland Dancing team who danced in front of President John F Kennedy, his wife Jackie, the first lady, their family and the guests who attended the charity event some weeks before the President was assassinated in Dallas, Texas.

Tam was always smart, well turned out and extremely fit and was selected to attend a Physical Training Instructor's course at Aldershot which he passed with flying colours. By now on the first rung of the promotion ladder he moved to the Gymnasium and became one of the Physical Training Instructors (PTIs) who were responsible for keeping the battalion physically fit. He was also a keen sportsman and very competent boxer and boxing coach. Squash was another of his favourite sports at which he excelled and would never admit defeat.

Being fond of, and taking part in outdoor pursuits and adventure training made Tam an ideal candidate to be appointed to the post of outdoor training pursuits Sergeant with the Army Youth Team based at St Leonards Bank, Perth towards the end of his 22 year engagement. At the end of his engagement he moved to Glencorse Barracks, the Scottish Division Depot where he ended his service. During his time in the Army he had served in Cyprus, Warminster, Minden, Kirknewton, Gibraltar, Northern Ireland, Colchester Catterick and Scotland and took part in overseas exercises in Malaysia and Libya.

In 1965 Tam married Sylvia in Minden and they were later proud parents of their only son Dean and settled down to married life in the Army which could often be trying. In later years, the family members however increased by a daughter-in-law and four grandchildren with a great grandchild due to be born this November, all of whom were his pride and joy.



On retiring from the Army, Tam settled down in Perth where he was involved in various, mainly self-employed jobs. He also returned to his once favourite hobby of fishing; whilst serving with the battalion he acquired the nickname "Tammy Troot" which was given to him by his fellow soldiers who often were the recipients of his fishing exploits which took place in different parts of the world. His pals often found a fish deposited at the bottom of their bed which had been obtained by Tam from local streams, fish farms or wherever he thought he could make a good catch.

Tam was a generous person by nature and would always go out of his way to help others, he involved himself in local activities to help members of the community. He was extremely proud of his service in the regiment and attended the annual reunion and other Regimental events. He had a heart of gold and was respected by all who knew him and much loved by his family.

R J W Proctor

The following deaths have also been recorded:

Liam Baillie died on 15 October 2019. He served in the 1st Battalion in Hong Kong (1993-95).

Harry Boag died on 4th May 2020. He served in A Company in Werl in the early 1980s.

Colin "Badger" Brock died on 10 March 2020. He trained at IJLB and then served in the 1st Battalion, being part of the shooting team that won the Regular Army Skill at Arms Meeting in the 1970s.

Robert Cartwright from Dundee died on 21 May 2020.

Ed Chassar died on 23 August 2020. He undertook his National Service with 2 BW in British Guiana and was a founder member of the Angus Branch.

Robert W (Billy) Clark died aged 82 in Caithness on 17 September 2019. Billy served in the 1st Battalion during the late 50's and early 60's. On demobilisation he returned to Thurso where

he worked with the Council Department for many years.

William Cochrane, known as Bill, died aged 85 on 8 March 2020. He served with the 2nd Battalion in British Guiana and then worked as a clerk assisting in the organisation of early Edinburgh Military Tattoos.

Lt Col I G C Cochrane-Dyet MRCVS. Iain Cochrane-Dyet died on 8th January 2018 aged 92. He was granted an Emergency Commission on 19 August 1944 and served with the 2nd Battalion in India.

David Harper was a TA soldier who served in K Company (1/51 Highland) in Kirkcaldy.

Frank Henderson who served in the mid-1960s, died on 4 January 2020. He was in the Mortar Platoon and MT.

James McArthur, who was known as Tosh died on 26th September, aged 73. Tosh was a great Regimental character who joined the 1st Battalion in Minden. He was also a stalwart member of the Fife Branch

WO2 Brian Moffat who served in the 1970s, 80s and 90s died in November 2019.

Raymond Mollinson, a member of the Dundee Branch died in February 2020.

James Pringle died aged 89 on 23 December 2019 in a nursing home in Crieff.

Alex Shaw who served in the 1st Battalion and in A Company 1/51 Highland died on 26 Mar 2020.

John Silver died aged 88 on 31 January 2020.

John Sutherland died aged 86 on 23 April 2020. He was a drummer in the 1st Battalion and then served in the 4th/5th Battalion. He was a member of the Dundee Branch and active in his support of The Royal British Legion Scotland.

Sergeant Allan Wade was a long-time member of the TA and Reserve Army; he served in Dundee. He died in October 2019. He was known as the "General".

Raymond Warren age 95 died on 30 April 2020.

A YEAR IN KABUL TRAINING THE AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY

By Colonel A M Philp

In June 2019 I deployed to Afghanistan for a 12 month tour as Director of the Ministerial Advisory Group – Defence (MAG-D) Training Team within the NATO RESOLUTE SUPPORT mission. This article provides a summary of the tasks, achievements and challenges, as well as some reflections on the experience of an extended tour that saw the start of a peace process and the impact of coronavirus.

MAG-D sits within the Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan (CSTC-A), a three-star (largely US) organization which leads the effort to Train, Advise and Assist the Afghan Security Institutions for Commander RESOLUTE SUPPORT. MAG-D is a multifunctional directorate that leads on all issues relating to the Afghan National Army (ANA) and liaises with other advisor organisations supporting related ministries and institutions such as the Ministry of Interior and Afghan National Police. It aims to improve the institutional viability of the ANA in order to provide sustainable security for Afghanistan. This has come into even sharper focus since the signing of the US-Taliban Agreement in February 2020 which may result in the drawdown of the NATO mission by May 2021.

The MAG-D Training Team's mission is to advise the ANA Unified Training, Education and Doctrine Command (UTEDC), its subordinate directorates and institutions, in order to set conditions for a self-sustaining institutional army training system. The end state is a Unified Training System where UTEDC is able to effectively direct, schedule, resource, deliver and adapt training to meet ANA requirements in terms of scale, performance, conditions and standards without reliance on external support. UTEDC is a three-star command created in August 2018 to bring together the previously disparate training and education institutions under one organisation, similar in principle to the US Training and Doctrine Command. Prior to UTEDC, ANA training lacked unity of effort and there was confusion over authority, as well as organisational and resource inefficiencies. The advisory effort has been to address these shortfalls by developing a more coherent Training and Education enterprise. My role within that had three main responsibilities: act as senior advisor to Commander UTEDC, Lt Gen Payenda; command and coordinate the teams within MAG-D Training which support the subordinate HQs, schools and academies within UTEDC; act as the coalition lead on ANA training issues within Op RESOLUTE SUPPORT.

UTEDC HQ runs the training operation, making the link between training policy within the Afghan MOD and delivery in the various schools and academies, by analysing, programming, resourcing and evaluating the training requirement. Subordinate to UTEDC HQ are two training delivery commands, each a two-star formation. The first of these is the Marshal Fahim National Defence University, responsible for all officer and SNCO training as well as doctrine development. The Defence University conducts initial officer training in both the National Military Academy (a four year course that includes military training and a bachelor degree based on the US West Point model) and the ANA Officer Academy (a one year military course very much based on the Sandhurst model and closely mentored by the UK). The War Academy (Staff College) runs professional development courses from Captain up to Major General and the ANA Sergeant Major's Academy runs SNCO courses from SSgt to WO1.

The second training delivery pillar is the Combined Arms Training Command (CATC), responsible for Phase 1 recruit training, Phase 2 trade training and Phase 3 career courses. Recruit training is delivered through the Basic Warrior course at the Kabul Military Training Centre. Phase 2 and 3 courses are delivered by four capability-based Branch Schools (Combat Arms, Combat Support,



Col Philp with his multinational Command Group from Croatia, Romania and Germany. They all had full heads of hair before working for me

Combat Service Support and General Service) that run specialist courses covering the full range of military disciplines from sniper to vehicle mechanic. CATC also provides the link between UTEDC and the Regional Military Training Centres which are located in the provinces and commanded by the Corps that make up the ANA Field Army. The Regional Centres enable Corps units to conduct annual individual sustainment and collective training without being wholly dependent on UTEDC courses which are mainly run in Kabul, and often inaccessible due to the operational situation, limited transport and adverse weather. CATC plays an important role in ensuring that training is standardised across Afghanistan so that the Army develops as a truly national force rather than a collection of independent fiefdoms and militias.

UTEDC achieved Initial Operating Capability in January 2019 with a target date of 1 December 2019 for Full Operating Capability. Therefore, this was one of the priority tasks for my first six months in post. We developed a campaign plan with the Afghans that identified lines of effort such as effective staff practices and procedures, Systems Approach to Training, training support etc, with objectives and conditions set against a timeline. These were assessed on a monthly basis so we could track progress and prioritise effort as necessary. It also meant that we could be objective about any shortfalls and devise a mitigation plan for remedial action. It was important that this was Afghan-owned and the final assessment lay with them, rather than being a process which was imposed and judged by the coalition. As a result, UTEDC achieved Full Operating Capability broadly as planned, despite many challenges which threatened to derail the process such as operational pressures, structural change, leadership gaps and corruption.

The next focus area was improving the standard of recruit training. It was clear from my arrival interview with Lt Gen Rainey, Commanding General CSTC-A, that despite the *raison d'être* of the mission being the long-term viability of Afghan institutions, his



Col Philp attending a UTEDC Command Group Meeting with the Deputy Advisor to MOD, BG Hank Taylor (US)



Brig Wheeler, Lt Gen Payenda, Col Philp and Maj Negru at a meeting in the Afghan MOD

main concern was the short-term ability of the ANA to maintain pressure on the Taliban and enable a peace process. There was an imperative to improve the quality and quantity of the recruit training pipeline, by revising training delivery and reducing wastage. This required an overhaul of the training programme based on lessons learned from the Corps to focus on battle-winning and life-saving skills, construction of a Battle Position on the training area to enable more realistic field training for defensive operations and an increase in the length of the course from 8 to 12 weeks. We also put a lot of effort into instructor development to ensure that the new syllabus was delivered to a higher standard and would be sustainable. Finally, we helped improve the lived experience for recruits by addressing the perennial ANA weaknesses of pay, infrastructure maintenance, logistic supply and services such as laundry and food. Failings in these support functions always detracted from training quality and contributed to high absence rates, thus requiring continuous sustained effort. I was fortunate to have some very dedicated G1 and G4 advisors from Denmark, Romania, Poland and the UK who worked tirelessly in these thankless areas and made a real difference.

By comparison, officer training took up far less of my time despite being an equally important institution for the long-term effectiveness of the ANA. The officer academies have been supported over the years by strong advisor teams predominantly from the UK, Australia, Germany and Turkey, so they operate fairly effectively albeit with a degree of redundancy in initial officer training capacity. The Defence University HQ has been somewhat neglected compared to its subordinate academies, acting as little more than a glorified Garrison HQ, and so this was a focus of more attention in order to build institutional viability. The UK Advisor Group supporting the ANA Officer Academy led by Brigadier Didi Wheeler (working to Commander British Forces Afghanistan rather than CSTC-A due to the UK's bilateral agreement with the Afghan Government) led much of the work on this, driving a Business Process Review for the HQ and encouraging the staff to improve pan-University coordination. Having a more senior British officer in a different chain of command leading a team which advised one of the subordinate academies in UTEDC could have been awkward, but I was lucky that Brigadier Didi was very easy to work with and an excellent source of advice. We both wanted the same outcomes for UTEDC and it proved to be a very good working relationship. (At least for me – I hope he would say the same!).

Of course, there have been numerous challenges and many of these remain. Our efforts to make improvements in the schools and academies have often been frustrated by systemic problems in the ANA which make progress difficult. There is a fear of responsibility and accountability that means decisions are usually referred up the chain of command – nearly everything requires an order signed by the Chief of the General Staff or Minister for Defence. This delays timely decision-making and stifles initiative, often exacerbated by corruption and nepotism. Logistic and administrative functions are inefficient and bureaucratic, with delays and shortages being common. For an army that is trying to modernise at the same time as fighting a war, the training pipeline is always caught between competing priorities of quantity and quality. Recruits are meant to attend trade courses after Basic Warrior Training but are often assigned direct to a Corps after the first 12 weeks due to operational

demand. Curtailing the training pipeline contributes to the vicious cycle of attrition in the Field Force as soldiers are less combat effective, more likely to become casualties and more likely to go absent. It is only fair to admit that not all the issues are on the Afghan side. Balancing national interests from NATO nations with campaign objectives caused me many headaches over the year, given the diverse nature of my team. It is a reality of coalition operations but an unwelcome distraction from the mission. Finally, of course, we also had to contend with corona virus. Many training institutions closed for several weeks and those that remained open were badly affected by low recruiting numbers and minimal staff manning, as well as increased pressure on already fragile logistic and medical capabilities.

Overall, however, the experience has been positive. A year away from family on operations is hard and not made any easier by all leave being cancelled in my last five months due to coronavirus movement restrictions. That said, modern communications softened the blow and I was able to have video calls with my family via WhatsApp most nights so we did not feel as separated from each other as we might have done. It is certainly a far cry from previous tours where the norm was a 20 minute phone call per week on a Satellite Phone (often disabled anyway due to Op MINIMISE) or the occasional 'bluey'. I was also lucky that I enjoyed the job and worked with a very good team of dedicated, professional and charming officers and NCOs from a diverse range of countries. It was a privilege to command them and although NATO may not be perfect, being part of a collective effort by so many nations working together is both reassuring and inspiring. Likewise, working closely with the Afghans was fascinating and much more enjoyable than many other jobs in HQ RESOLUTE SUPPORT, where pale-faced staff officers spend 16 hours a day in windowless offices producing spreadsheets and powerpoint slides. It is easy to paint the ANA as a disorganised, corrupt and bureaucratic organisation but whatever its failings, there are many brave, honest and competent people within it. The majority with whom I worked were warm, courteous, hospitable and trying to do their best for a country that has been at war nearly all their lives. There are many challenges still to be faced over the next few months and years but the ANA, supported by NATO, is improving all the time and provides some hope for a peaceful settlement.



March past of recruits graduating from KMTC

LOWER QUOIG CEMETERY IN THE PARISH OF MONZIEVAIRD AND STROWAN

By Lieutenant Colonel R M Riddell OBE

If you are travelling on the A85 between Crieff and Comrie there is a small cemetery on the right - hand side of the road beside Lower Quoig. It is tucked away behind some trees and a wall and it was the cemetery for the Parish of Monzievairst and Strowan.

The ground is well cared for and the cemetery includes a War Memorial to the men of the Parish who died or were killed during the Great War. The main photograph accompanying this article shows the view looking from West to East and on the western face of the memorial is a tablet commemorating the names of ten men connected to the Parish and on the eastern face is a tablet commemorating the names of eight men of The Black Watch who were connected to the Parish.

The Black Watch men are;

Capt PHLC Colquhoun MC

Cpl D Lawson

L/Cpl J Stothard

L/Cpl WR Donaldson

Sgnllr A Donaldson

Sgnllr DTJ Low

Pte A Morrison

Pte C Wilson

An email sent to the Colquhoun brothers (all serving officers of The Royal Regiment of Scotland) quickly revealed that they were not directly related to Captain Philip Hugh Lumsden Campbell Colquhoun but they knew of a relative who was a serving Royal Engineer. This led to various e mail exchanges with the wider family who provided a lot of useful information about his life.

I was also helped by Evelyn Bertie who works as a volunteer in the Museum and she used various sources to help provide additional information about each of the Black Watch men whose names are on the memorial.

Captain Campbell Colquhoun MC was born on the 9th September 1892 at Clathick, Crieff and was educated at Glenalmond College between 1905 and 1910. His family were cadets of the Colquhouns

of Luss. After leaving school he set about acquiring the knowledge to allow him to take up tea planting in India, eventually travelling to Assam in 1913. He came home after the declaration of war and received a commission in The Black Watch, starting his service in the 3rd Special Reserve Battalion. He was posted to the 1st Battalion in France in 1915 but on 18 May 1916 he was severely wounded by a gunshot wound to a lung whilst in the Calonne Sector.

After convalescing, he re-joined the Battalion and was awarded the MC for his actions during the attack on Vox Farm, Passchendaele (19 November 1917). The citation for the award was published on 25 April 1918. "For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. When some platoons of his Company lost their way during a relief, owing to heavy shell fire and the guides becoming casualties, he went out into a heavy barrage, found his platoons and guided each one to its position. Later when another Company Commander became a casualty, he took command of two Companies, reorganised his line and pushed forward posts to gain touch with the enemy. He showed great gallantry and initiative in reconnoitering routes and brought out his two Companies when relieved without a casualty."

He was Mentioned in Despatches in December 1917 and was appointed Machine Gun Instructor at the 2nd Army School in March 1918. He returned to the battalion in August 1918 and took command of B Company. He was killed in action on 19 September 1918, during an attack on the Hindenburg Line. The Battalion had been ordered forward to capture Fourmoy Alley and Sanson Trench on the high ground south of Ponruet. Captain Colquhoun was shot through the head by a sniper whilst explaining the attack to his Company officer. He is buried in Trefcon Cemetery. On his headstone is the inscription "IN QUIETNESS AND CONFIDENCE SHALL BE YOUR STRENGTH".

Whilst reading the memoirs of Major General Neil McMicking, he refers to a Company Commander known as "Cocky" Colquhoun. The entry in the memoirs says, "Cocky Colquhoun was a most lovable character who was killed in action in the last advance and within two months of the Armistice".



The Company Commanders of the 1st Battalion photographed in 1917. Captain Colquhoun is the officer on the left of the image

Corporal Duncan Lawson (Previous Regimental Number 3949, then S/40372) was a native of Balmuick Farm near Comrie. He enlisted in Perth. He was killed in action on 18 October 1918 serving with the 1st Battalion. This was during the attack on Wassigny. His parents James and Mary Lawson (nee MacDonald) lived at Contshill, Auchterarder and Duncan was buried in the Busigny Communal Cemetery Extension. His headstone carries the inscription "A SILENT THOUGHT A HIDDEN TEAR KEEPS YOUR MEMORY DEAR DUNCAN". Born in 1892 at Inveraray, Argyllshire he died aged 26.

Lance Corporal John Stothard (S/4429) enlisted on 5 September 1914 at Crieff and was killed in action serving with the 9th Battalion on 25 September 1915. He was aged 19. The battalion were taking part in the Battle of Loos. His name is recorded at the Loos Memorial. His parents William and Nicola Stothard (nee Rose) lived at Trowan Farm, Crieff.

Lance Corporal William R Donaldson (Previous Regimental Number 6273, then 202175) was born in Bucklyvie, Stirlingshire in 1897. He enlisted in Stirling and served in the 5th Battalion but died of wounds sustained whilst serving in the 4/5th Battalion. He died on 5 February 1918 aged 21. His rank is recorded at Corporal in the Wauchope history and his parents are recorded as living at Tower's Place, Causewayhead, Stirling.

Signaller Alexander Donaldson (Previous Regimental Number 6465, then 292620) was born in Monzievaird. He served with the 1st/6th Battalion and died of wounds aged 29, on 22 July 1918 during the operations in the Bois de Courton for which the 6th (Perthshire) Battalion were awarded the Croix de Guerre. He is buried in the Vertus Communal Cemetery. He was the son of Andrew and the late Margaret Donaldson of Monzievaird, Crieff and husband of Agnes Donaldson, 7, Belgrave Crescent Lane, Edinburgh.

Signaller Donald Dow (18820) died of his wounds on 28 March 1918 whilst serving with the 8th Battalion during the German Spring offensive. He was born in Salisbury and baptised on 1 December 1898 in Stroud, Gloucestershire. His father was a Police Constable who originally came from Comrie and Donald enlisted in Crieff.

Private Alexander Morrison (S/2995) is recorded in the Wauchope history as being killed in action on 27 September 1915 during the

Battle of Loos. He was serving with the 8th Battalion and his name is commemorated at the Loos Memorial. He was born at Monzievaird, Crieff, Perthshire, having enlisted 18 August 1914 in Perth aged 19 years and 11 days.

Private Gavin Wilson ((S/7159) was born in Crieff in 1893 and enlisted in the same town on 8 December 1914. He served with the 2nd Battalion in France deploying on 18 March 1915 and he died on 7 January 1916 during the Battle of Shaikh Saad two days after the battalion landed at Ali-el-Gharbi, fifty miles below Kut. He is commemorated on the Basrah Memorial.

Army Numbers. I have included the Army Numbers of the soldiers involved and thought that readers might be interested to know how regimental numbers were allocated;

Queen's Regulations for the Army, 1895 had stated: "The regimental series of numbers will commence with 1. The numbers will be given in sequence, according to the date of application. When the series approaches 9,999, application should be made to the Adjutant-General in sufficient time to obtain authority to commence a new series." The new King's Regulations of 1904 which permitted infantry regiments to number up to 19,999 came too late for The Black Watch which reached 9,999 in September 1904 and immediately started a new series from 1.

When Britain went to war in August 1914, men joining the new Service Battalions were issued with numbers from the same series that had, up until that point, been the sole preserve of the regiment's two regular battalions. The only difference between men enlisting for war-time service only and those enlisting as career soldiers, was that the former's numbers were *supposed* to be prefixed with the letter S/.

Evelyn Bertie a volunteer researcher has provided the following additional information on Army Numbers specifically pertaining to The Black Watch in the period after 1916; most of the information was taken from the Depot Roll Books. Whether this was 'official' or not or was a decision taken at a local level cannot be answered. Given the number of those dying in the First World War, the system needed simplifying and soldiers needed a unique identifier. Research has shown however that the possibility of soldiers with the same name and number was not that unusual.

ALLOCATION OF ARMY NUMBERS TO REGULAR AND TERRITORIAL BATTALIONS

BATTALIONS	NUMBERS
4 and 5 digit number systems retained for the Regular Battalions	
6 Digit number system created for the Territorial Battalions	
4th (City of Dundee) Battalion	200001-240000
5th (Angus) Battalion	240001-265000
6th (Perthshire) Battalion	265001-290000
7th (Fife) Battalion	290001-315000
13th Battalion (Formerly Scottish Horse)	315001-365000
Highland Cyclist Battalion	340001-365000
S/numbers. Traditionally this was given as the soldier had enlisted for the duration of the war, however it now appears that the Black Watch used the S number series to denote that the soldier had gone into one of the new Service or Labour Battalions, the 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Battalions	
8th formed August 1914, disbanded November 1919	
9th formed September 1914, disbanded May 1918	
10th formed September 1914, disbanded October 1918	

BATTALIONS	NUMBERS
11th formed November 1914, disbanded Spring 1920	
12th formed May 1916, disbanded May 1917	
3/numbering system, denoting the soldier's enlistment in the 3rd Battalion	
Allocated to 3rd Battalion 2/15054 dated 28/04/1915	10001-11000
Allocated to 3rd Battalion 18071	13100-13280
Allocated to 3rd Battalion	13479-13575
Allocated to 3rd Battalion	13597-13690
Allocated to 3rd Battalion	13900-14020
Allocated to 3rd Battalion transfers from Scottish Horse (235 Nos)	17158-17392
Allocated to 87 NCOs/ORs of 15th Divisional Cyclist Company transferred to 9th (S) Battalion The Black Watch. With effect from 17/05/1916 Authority Officer in Charge of Records No. 1 District Perth 13/06/1916	15919-16005
44 Nos transfers from 38th Battalion T. Res. To 2nd Battalion BW Application Officer in Charge of Records No 1 District dated 25/09/1916	17480-17523
100 Nos transfers from Argylls to 3rd Battalion BW application wire B 1279 OC 3rd BW dated 26/09/1916	17524-17623
8 Nos for 38th I Res. Battalion phone message from Officer in Charge of Records dated 26/09/1916	17624-17631
16 Nos transferred from RS Fusiliers to 3rd Battalion BW. Application wire OC 3rd Battalion BW dated 28/09/1916	17650-17665
Transfers from Seaforth Highlanders. Application Wire B1339 OC 3rd Battalion dated 13/10/1916	17840-17939
Allocated to 38th IR Battalion. Authority Officer in Charge of Records No 1 District dated 13/10/1916	17950-17994



The War Memorial at Lower Quoig



The names of Black Watch men from the Parish of Monzievaird

MAJOR GENERAL NEIL MCMICKING CB, CBE, DSO, MC, ORDER OF ST ANNE OF RUSSIA, 2ND CLASS WITH SWORDS

By Lieutenant Colonel R M Riddell OBE

Editor's Note:

In the November 2017 Red Hackle Magazine, Captain Owen Humphrys wrote an article about his grandfather serving in pre – revolutionary Russia as well as being Military Attaché in the Caucasus and visiting Soviet Army manoeuvres in 1936. His recollections were published in “Wavell in Russia” which was compiled from the Field Marshal’s “Recollections” and other family papers.

The following article highlights the service of another Black Watch Officer serving in Russia during the Revolution.

Major David McMicking has kindly allowed the Museum of The Black Watch to copy his father’s memoirs which cover a period of nearly thirty years from 1910. The memoirs are written in two volumes; the first he called “Recollections of my life in The Black Watch” and the second was called the “The Intermediate Years” when he decided to “fill in the gaps”. He wrote, “I so much enjoyed living again those years and remembering about friends of my youth that I decided to fill in the gaps when I was not serving with The Black Watch”.

He was commissioned in September 1913 and the Blue Book records that he was thrice wounded in France; he was promoted to Captain in March 1916 and became Adjutant of 1/6th GORDONS in May; he became GSO3 of the 24th Division in May 1917. He was then posted as Brigade Major of the 4th Tank Brigade in January 1918 and then GSO2 HQ Tank Corps in November 1918. After the Armistice he then volunteered to command tanks sent to South Russia in 1919. It is the latter aspect of his memoirs that I think will be of most interest to the readers and which are reproduced below.

“In January 1919 I got home leave again just six months after my last leave. On my return I wrote home to say that I might go to the Army of Occupation as General Haughey was trying to get me as his GSO2. Pay about £720 or to the home army where I would be a GSO3 or Bde Major pay £400-500 a year or to Regimental duty where the pay of a Captain was £270 a year. Leave was now cancelled except for those going up to the Army of Occupation, but demobilisation was going ahead fast. It was done on the principle of key men. If anyone on leave could get a firm to say he was a key man he got out at once. There was, of course, a lot of abuse of this method. My batman Baillie was demobilised in the beginning of February and my groom in the middle of February.

The Government had decided to support the White Armies in Russia which were fighting against the Bolsheviks. They were sending an expeditionary force to North Russia and military Missions to Admiral Kolchak in the East and to General Denikin in the South. The Mission to General Denikin (See Note 1) consisted of Lieut General Briggs in charge with a BGS and small personal staff, a Tank detachment, a Royal Flying Corps detachment and a Machine Gun detachment.

The tank detachment was being made up by volunteers from the Tank Corps in France. In command was a Major Hannay who understood he was going to get the temporary rank of Lieut Colonel. Two nights before it started I was dining with Colonel Uzielli the Colonel A&Q of the Tank Corps and the conversation turned to the Russian expedition which had only recruited 55 out of its 250 establishment. Jokingly I said that, if they were short, I would go as a Lance Corporal. I was then a Major GSO2 of the Tank Corps and thus quite a senior officer at Tank Corps HQ.

The following day, Hannay realising he would not be promoted said he was no longer a volunteer to go and at 12.30 pm the Deputy Director of the Tank Corps, General Karslake, sent for me. He was the General I had had a little trouble with because I would not wear a red hat! He said “Mac, I hear you want to go to Russia, you can go in command tomorrow. Would you like to?” I know I stood in front of his table for several seconds without answering and then came out with “Yes Sir”.



This caricature of Captain McMicking was drawn by a French officer whilst serving in France and Flanders

I was suffering from recurring boils as a result of having burnt the back of my hand with a primus stove. I was appointed officially in command that day and joined the detachment before it entrained at ERIN at 9.30 am next morning. The detachment consisted of 121 officers and 55 other ranks two officers having gone on in advance. Our stores were with us. MT and Tanks were being sent direct from elsewhere. Our train reached Havre the next day where I was taken to hospital to have a nail removed to cure a whitlow finger. I was escorted back on to our new train, an empty demobilisation train plying between TARANTO and HAVRE to bring back soldiers from the Egyptian Expeditionary Force for demobilisation. The result of this was that we had ample accommodation. A first and second class coach for the officers and a covered truck next door to use as a Mess. We went by Paris, MONDANE, Mt CENLIS tunnel, TURIN, BOLOGNA to Taranto, the train stopping for 2 or 3 hours every second day and for 2 or 3 minutes every hour or hour and a half.

We swapped cigarettes or tins of meat for eggs, oranges and chickens and on the 8th day reached Taranto, the weather getting warmer every day. The detachment embarked at once in H.M.T. Danube bound for Salonika and the stores in S.S. Roma bound for the Black Sea. I was made OC Troops and had two most spacious cabins at my disposal.

Only 25 Officers and a few other ranks were on board besides my detachment. On the 4th day we reached Salonika and proceeded to an extremely bad transit camp called Summer Hill Rest Camp. As a Field Officer I was ushered into a separate part of the Officers Mess, but soon managed to join my own officers. In their part of the Mess I remember a waiter and an officer – not ours – wanting to fight because the latter had taken too large a helping. Suchlike were some officers at the end of the '14-'18 war!

On the 4th day we embarked on H.M.T. Nile a sister ship of the Danube for Constantinople where G.H.Q. were situated. One day took us up the Dardanelles where wrecks of the "River Clyde" and "Bouvet" were visible among others. The "Bouvet" I had last seen when passing through Port Said going to the war.

After three days there and calling at G.H.Q. where I lunched with General Rycroft, the DAQMG and father of Judy Rycroft, we sailed for BATUM [in current day Georgia on the Black Sea]. Here we went to a rest camp one mile from the quay where one officer had to take turns in guarding a Turkish General who had been responsible for extensive Armenian massacres. He sketched well and gave his officer guards portraits of themselves: they in turn giving him bottles of brandy or other liqueurs.

The next day, with two other officers and 20 other ranks I went in a destroyer to NOVOROSSIIYSK as an advance party.

One day in the destroyer, which at times was doing 33 knots, took us up to NOVOROSSIIYSK [main Russian port on the Black Sea]. She was the "Druid" commanded by Comdr Peploe. In his cabin was an otter's pad which had been killed by "The Dumfriesshire".

Things at NOVOROSSIIYSK were very disorganised. There were 28 masts of Russian ships visible above water in the bay outside. These ships had been sunk by the Czarist officers rather than hand them on to the Bolsheviks. The harbour had dead men floating about in it which nobody bothered to remove. Public lavatories were in a disgusting state, everyone retiring about 2 feet short of where the previous user had retired and this went on right into the street. A ship's hold had been used as a public lavatory, also. The users sitting on the deck above!

At NOVOROSSIIYSK I met Captain Cazalet of the Tank Corps. He with another officer and 4 other ranks had been sent in advance. Cazalet's family had been very rich English merchants in Russia and he was a fluent Russian speaker. A charming person but he died of

peritonitis before leaving South Russia. Some said he was poisoned. The Tanks had arrived, 6 Mark V and 6 Whippets. They were getting them off their ship when our destroyer arrived. Cazalet had had much difficulty.

The Mark V weighed 35 tons. The only crane in the Black Sea which would lift more than 24 tons was at ODESSA. The navy sent there for it, but the Bolsheviks had captured the port before they arrived! Three French battleships had also mutinied and had to be escorted out of the Black Sea by our Navy!

A very sporting SNO (Senior Naval Officer) at NOVOROSSIIYSK decided to lift the Tanks out with the 24 ton cranes. If he had dropped one, all would have gone down. After lifting one or two the ship came up so much in the water they could not be lifted over the side. So the S.N.O. arranged for the ship to be listed towards the Quay, and the problem was solved!

The first tank off was put on a railway track and shunted up to the end of the siding. When they got the second off there was no sign of the first. The White Russians, in their keenness, had sent it off to the front and it took us weeks to get it back. From then on a British Guard was mounted on all tanks.

We left by train for EKATERINODAR (now KRASNODAR) the same night with one Mark V and one Whippet Tank attached to the train. General Denikin was most anxious to show tanks in EKATERINODAR to stimulate morale.

On the 9th April the day I arrived at NOVOROSSIIYSK the S.S. Roma arrived at BATUM with our stores. Tank stores were a very big item consisting of spare guns, tracks, sprockets etc. The Whippet which was then a fast cavalry tank carried Lewis guns only and weighed about 20 tons with a crew of 3. The Mark V might be a male tank with a two pounder each side. A female tank with Lewis guns only, or a Hermaphrodite with a 2 pounder on one side and Lewis guns on the other. The complement of Lewis Guns was sufficient to fire in all directions.

When we arrived in EKATERINODAR, I found the intention was we should live in our train in a siding the whole town being overcrowded. This appeared a nonsense to me and after making a great fuss, we were given a pavilion in a public park to live in. This was better and would certainly suffice temporarily.

I met Major Hewit of the Welsh Regiment who commanded the Machine Gun detachment and also Max Norman whom I had known at Eton and who was in the Gordons. He was, I think, on the staff of the Mission.

The situation was that the front was at ROSTON. There was not much fighting going on. It was more political and towns changed hands more by politics than by fighting. A major factor was the action of the Cossacks, commanded by a 27 year old Lieut General SHKURO [See Note 2]. They usually fought whoever came into their country whether Red Army or White Russians! So it was most important for Denikin to keep them sweet. They were certainly very anti-Bolshevik.

The British at the time had an expeditionary Force in the Caucasus, commanded by Major General Sir William Thomson late of the Seaforth's. They were fighting against the Georgians, whereas Denikin was allied to the Georgians. Thus we on paper were on the opposite side to the British 200 miles to our South! But this was only typical of the muddle in Russia at the time.

The Russian Tank Corps, waiting for our arrival, consisted of about 250 officers. A large number of them being Colonels. One of the Colonels had travelled with us in H.M.T. Nile with his wife. His wife was a Sergeant in a Cavalry Regiment and had two decorations. The Russian Tank Corps Commander would not have any Russian other ranks in the fighting part of his Corps for fear they might sabotage a tank.

They had arranged for 15 interpreters. Some were quite young boys who had had English governesses. One was a Pole and one was the son of General Romanofski, Denikin's Quartermaster General. The detachment was now concentrating. They had arrived in from different ships. Personnel, Tanks, Stores, M.T. which was typical of the times; but to have gone out properly organised, personnel from France and tanks from United Kingdom and tanks having to go round by sea would have been difficult.

Everybody was pleased about the arrival of Tanks and General Denikin was keen to have a demonstration of what they could do. This was arranged with thousands of the local inhabitants watching. We had



Major General Neil McMicking's Pipe Banner which was also used by his son Brigadier Thomas McMicking. The family motto is "Deeds not words"



A Whippet light tank

reconnoitred and found a suitable Tankodrome at the Kuban Motor Works. We soon got instructional classes going and we arranged for the Russian officers to guard the Tanks at night. But they were so keen they used to take the tanks out for extra instruction after we had returned to our billets and we finally had to mount a British Guard on them.

We had by now exhausted our British rations and had to feed on the country. The officers all fed at a restaurant, receiving £1 a day ration allowance which only just paid for sufficient food. The rate of the rouble varied from day to day and a rumour optimistic or pessimistic would send the rouble soaring or otherwise.

The youngest interpreter was dressed in drain pipe shorts: I should think about 13 years of age. Romanofski's son was very smart in a blue uniform with a flat hat. He used to salute me in all seriousness by gripping his hat at the back and lifting it from his forehead! When Romanofski came down to see us one day he said to his son "Colonel McMicking tells me you have not been doing very well". I had said nothing of the sort! He was a good boy and the boy replied "Well father you see Colonel McMicking wants me to translate whereas I want to fight in a tank". They called me Colonel because there was no rank of Major in the Russian Army. I saw and heard all this going on in Russian, but my Polish interpreter kept me up to date with what was being said.

Denikin's House which was in a row with other houses in the middle of EKATERINODAR was most impressive having two Cossack officers with drawn swords on sentry one on each side of the door. Denikin himself was not a strong man and this became quite evident when he came to visit us. Gen Briggs appeared to be very largely running his show.

Cazalet was a great help to me explaining Russian things and how the revolution had proceeded. Alexis, the Czar's Chief of Staff, had been the first commander of the White Army in the South then Kornilov and now Denikin.

The White Russians were charming people to meet and to have a party with, but they did not approve of such things as working or fighting after 6pm or on Sunday. At Easter they had a terrific party all based on the Greek Church's ideas. On the Thursday before Easter all food was cooked for the weekend. There was a terrific banquet that night and from then till Monday, one ate whatever was left of the food. On Saturday night we all went to church. Every Church was crowded. There are no seats in the Greek Church which means many more people can get in. We were all given a candle which was lit before midnight. At midnight, led by the Priest, the whole congregation go searching in all corners with their candles and then not having found Christ shout "Christ is risen" and rejoice. So it goes on and on Sunday morning when the greeting is "Christ is risen" instead of "Good Morning". Cazalet told me it was done to embrace any pretty girl in the street on Sunday morning saying "Christ is risen" and no offence would be taken.

Hewit in his enthusiasm had arranged early parades for his Machine Gun Corps (not at Easter!). He noticed one morning two of his Russian Officers, he had been dining with the night before, were absent. As he knew where they lived in an attic, he decided to go himself and sort them out and to give them a real rocket. When he got to their billet he found each of them in bed with a girl and in the same attic. He told

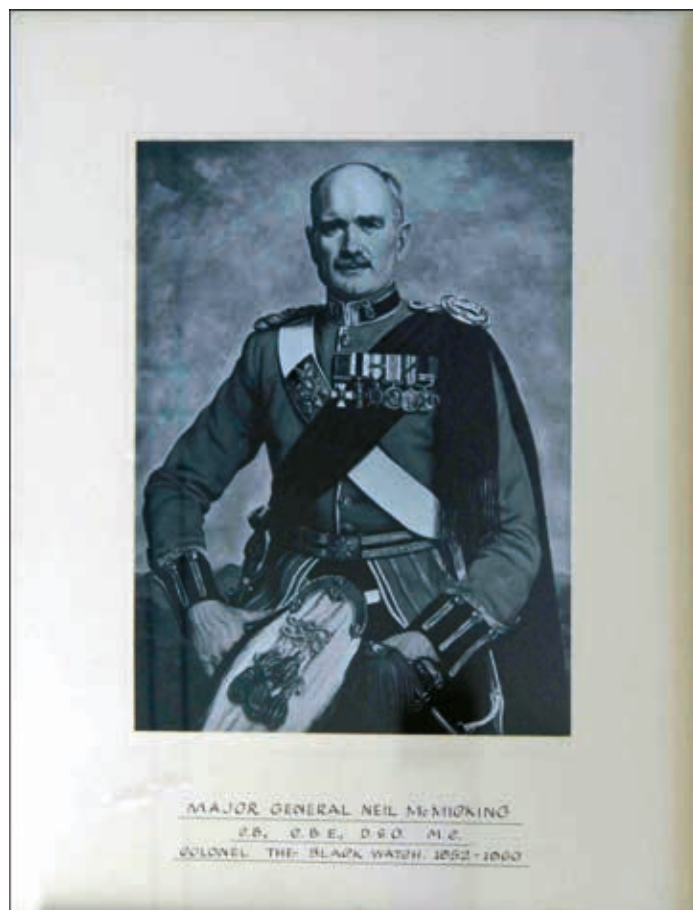
me he did not know what to do to them, especially as the only thing the Russian officers would do was to introduce him to their lady friends!

It was now starting to get hot. I had arranged in Constantinople to draw Indian drill clothing for the detachment and some of my officers had stolen two large boxes labelled "Hats, Australian" from a dump in Le Havre. These had been most conscientiously guarded throughout the voyage and how amid much excitement we opened them to find that the boxes were full of old ammunition boots being returned to the base for repair!

We managed to get some duck shooting in the marshes of the Kuban. One of our interpreters, an 18 year old boy, called "John" by us, arranged to take us. I had taken my own gun and 300 cartridges from France. We sometimes went out in the very early morning returning by 9 am for parade and certainly at least once for the day. We used canoes to get about the marshes and there were definite channels through which the canoes could be paddled. The close season does not appear to have worried us!

We went by lorry and had to cross a bridge on the R. Kuban where the railway also crossed. The base of the bridge was quite rotten and unsuitable for M.T. The first time we went we did the planks a certain amount of damage and the second time the front of the lorry went through the bridge, both front wheels being down. This was a somewhat awkward predicament, because no-one knew when the next train might come! So we posted officers to try to warn any on-coming train and two workshop officers got to work and jacked the lorry up sufficiently to proceed.

Throughout our journey eastwards nearly every letter I wrote, all carefully kept by my mother, stressed how delighted I was I had come. There was no exception. When I realised mails were going to take anything up to 3 months to arrive home then my conscience began to prick. In the meantime I had received no letters from home or from France and did not know how my parents had taken my going. I had been pretty ill with boils when I left and these, although they got temporarily better, got worse again. I had had both my arms in slings during the train journey to Taranto. Then in Ekaterinodar my boils started up again and I had to lie up. Fortunately there was a British doctor there, one Captain Hamilton R.A.M.C. He was only there because General Briggs had been sick when he was posted to Denikin's



General Neil McMicking as Colonel, The Black Watch

Army and he had taken a personal doctor with him.

Hamilton arranged for me to lie up in a house and to be looked after by some good lady who had nursing experience. In the next room to me was Mr Chaudler, the one-armed Times Military correspondent, who had Typhus. Typhus at that time was raging and so was Cholera. During lunch time every day there were a great number of funerals and Russians always parade their coffins, with lids off, through the streets. This was not a very good thing for morale.

On the 14th April, I got my first bunch of letters and one from my mother dated 22nd March. I then realised what a foul I had done to my parents. Why this hadn't dawned on me before I do not know. For 4 years they had been keyed up with everyone's sons all around them being killed and hoping against hope and praying that I would get through; and shortly after that prayer was answered I had gone away to another war merely because I couldn't settle down. My mother wrote most pluckily, but I could read her feelings in spite of her efforts to conceal them.

I was then in a very difficult situation. I had accepted command of this independent detachment. Could I apply to go home? This had always been understood when I accepted it at such short notice.

I could console myself with saying I had been and was not fit, that I had undertaken the job at a moment's notice which got everyone at Tank Corps and the War Office out of difficulties and that I had a suitable 2IC in Cazalet to take over, but ever since I have had a feeling that I should have stayed. I actually applied to come home the day after I received my mother's letter.

What I should have done I am still in doubt.

I came home with four other ranks of my detachment who had also applied to come. Sloop to Constantinople; small steamer through Corinth Canal to Taranto and then by Rapide through Rome to London. I was able to do a good deal for our detachment by going to the War Office and getting things sorted out for them there.

Denikin himself was about the only honest Russian Officer. Even his Quartermaster General sold or gave arms to the Bolsheviks. The extra tanks I applied for were sent out and they had 74 Tanks at one time.

Denikin's Army ill-led, half starved and badly clothed simply gave up and let the Bolsheviks walk over the 300 miles from Kursk to the sea, the few loyal officers were quite unable to compete with the thousands of deserters. The first four Sections of the Russian Tank Corps who were trained at Ekaterinodar fought well, but the rest were rabbits. The



Mark V tanks were deployed to support the White Russians during the Russian Revolution

remnants of the British Tank detachment were withdrawn to the Crimea with Wrangel [See note 3] a Cossack who had succeeded Denikin.

On my return to London I accepted an invitation from the Commanding Officer of the 42nd to go to India with him in August. General Haughey, Boyd Rochfort, Fitz Maurice and Hatton Hall had all written kind letters encouraging me to go to the British Army of the Rhine as a Brigade Major of one of the Tank Brigades, but the invitation to return to the Regiment was too attractive to refuse, besides the fact that The Black Watch wanted some of their pre war officers to help build the show up again on peace time basis".

NOTES:

(1) Anton Ivanovich Denikin (1872-1947) was a Russian general, politician and writer. He fought in the Russo-Japanese War, the First World War and the Russian Civil War.

(2) Andrei Grigoriyevich Shkuro (1887-1947) was a Lieutenant General in the White Army. In the Spring of 1918, he organised an anti-Bolshevik Cossack unit in the Caucasus. After officially joining Denikin's White Army, he became the commander of the Kuban Cossacks brigade. In 1941 he was one of the organisers of anti-Soviet Cossack units consisting of White émigrés and Soviet (mainly Cossack) prisoners of War in alliance with Nazi Germany. He was executed by Soviet authorities in 1947.

(3) Pyotr Nikolayevich Wrangel (1878-1928) was a Russian officer of Baltic German origin in the Imperial Russian Army and later commanding general of the anti-Bolshevik White Army in Southern Russia. In 1920 he left Russia and became a prominent exiled White émigré.

LIEUTENANT GEORGE FREDERICK DELMAR-WILLIAMSON

On 17 November 2019, a service was held in the churchyard at Leckhampton, near Cheltenham to commemorate the life of Lieutenant George Frederick Delmar-Williamson of The Black Watch and the Royal Air Force, who died in a flying accident in July 1918. The Regiment was represented by Lieutenant Colonel Mike Smith.

George was born in the last year of the 19th century. His father, Frederick, was a musician, with a teaching studio in New Bond Street but by 1909 the family had moved from Kensington to Cheltenham. Frederick with his wife, two daughters and young George lived in Lansdown Place but after the war the remaining family moved to Firs Brake in Moored Road, consolidating the link with Leckhampton.

George was sent to Glyngarth School in Douro Road, which was favoured as a preparatory school for the sons of the gentry and in 1913 he went to Cheltenham College as a day-boy until 1915.

Of the six hundred and seventy five Old Cheltonians who lost their lives in the First World War, George must have been among the youngest. He was only 17 when he entered Sandhurst. He was commissioned into The Black Watch in October 1916 and almost immediately he joined the Royal Flying Corps, at a time when the average life of a front-line pilot was very short.

He was highly commended for his photographic reconnaissance over France and Flanders but at some stage, a crash during take-off, left him badly concussed, after which he was invalided back to the United Kingdom for home defence duties. These duties were popularly known as "Zepp-strafting". He was then assessed as a first-class pilot and was appointed as a flying instructor in March 1918. Soon afterwards he was selected as a test pilot at a time when aviation was still at a

primitive stage. The aircraft type which he was testing, when he made his last flight was the R.E.8 two-seat reconnaissance and bomber biplane, nicknamed the 'Harry Tate' (rhyming slang with R.E.8) after a popular music hall entertainer. It had a reputation of being difficult to handle and had a poor safety record. Moreover, parachutes were not issued to air crew at that time. Tragically, the aircraft crashed when its wings collapsed and the two men died as it hit the ground. The date was 12 July 1918.

George's co-pilot was Captain Douglas Gabell, who was only 18 months his senior whilst at Cheltenham College.

The first part of his funeral service in July 1918 took place at Christ Church, where boys from Glyngarth School made up the choir and members of its Scout troop formed a Guard of Honour. The coffin, draped in the Union Jack, was carried by his fellow airmen. A contingent of Volunteers from the Gloucestershire Regiment followed the cortege on its way to the churchyard at Leckhampton for the last rites and burial. They then fired three volleys over the open grave.



The Gravestone of Lieutenant George Delmar-Williamson who died on 18 July 1918 when his aircraft crashed

In 1918 the family at least had the consolation of being able to bury their son on home soil. That was not the lot of many of the thirty four other men with Leckhampton connections who are named on the war memorial.

Editor's Note; I am grateful to a number of people who do not wish to be named but this short article is based on the address given at the service held in November 2019. The person who initiated the service only found the grave by chance and wanted to honour the memory of a young RAF pilot whose initial commission was in The Black Watch (Royal Highlanders).

Right: Lieutenant Colonel Mike Smith attended a service of commemoration for Lieutenant George Delmar-Williamson at Leckhampton near Cheltenham in November 2019



OP SHADER – February to September 2020

By Lieutenant Colonel D M Sheldrick

To prolong the inevitable return to a staff post on completion of my time in unit command, I volunteered to deploy as an individual augmentee on Op SHADER. I deliberately chose the role of SO1 Kurdish Region, Iraq (KRI) because it had been a while since I last served in the country (2004 with 1 BW), and because I was genuinely intrigued by the job description. Furthermore, a conversation with Lieutenant Colonel Campbell Close, who had previously served in the role when commanding 2 SCOTS on Op SHADER, convinced me that any job that consisted of drinking copious cups of tea and eating mountains of baklava with Peshmerga Generals, would make for an interesting time. He wasn't wrong.

The primary task of SO1 KRI was to provide UK representation in the Kurdish region within the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) that had been established in 2014/2015 to counter the threat from Daesh. The campaign – Operation INHERENT RESOLVE, focussed on the defeat of Daesh across Iraq and the Levant by direct action, as well as developing the capability of the host nation forces. By the time of my

deployment, only a few pockets of Daesh remained in the mountainous areas of northern Iraq and equally inconsequential parts of Syria. The indigenous forces were at a level of competency where they were effective enough to deal with the threat posed by Daesh and stop a major resurgence, with minimal support from the Coalition Task Force.

The secondary task of SO1 KRI was working within the Kurdistan Training and Coordination Centre (KTCC), an organisation responsible for training Kurdish Peshmerga forces in four locations spread throughout the Kurdish region. The official job title was 'Information and Engagement' which in essence acted as the 'fixer' for any issues arising from the four Training Centres for which the KTCC had responsibility. In addition, as the only native English speaker in a fifty two person multinational headquarters, the role attracted most of the planning and staff work requirements as well as feeding the needs of the higher headquarters.

From a training perspective the mission was going well. Having been established in January 2015, over 50,000 Peshmerga soldiers had completed training by January 2020. However, it had reached the stage where the Peshmerga were becoming reliant on the KTCC for training, rather than weaning themselves off the Coalition and taking responsibility for the provision of their own training. After five years of Coalition support, it was clear that they were capable of doing this; but they recognised the strategic benefit of maintaining a Coalition presence in the Kurdish region indefinitely through the training mission, as well as the practical utility of the Coalition to cut through red tape and bureaucracy. As the issue of reducing the reliance on Coalition forces was being mooted around the CJTF HQ, several events would affect the decision-making process and bring about change.

The approach of the CJTF has always been to treat Iraq as one country including the autonomous Kurdish region. The government in Baghdad is the ruling authority to which the CJTF is aligned but works in partnership with the Kurdish regional government, who are subordinate. Therefore, for reasons of balance and diplomacy, whatever was offered to federal Iraq by way of military support and assistance, would be offered to the Kurdish region on a slightly reduced scale. The combination of rocket attacks against Coalition bases and the targeting resupply convoys with IEDs by rogue militia groups operating in Iraq, the arrival of COVID-19 and the US-Iraq strategic talks expedited Operation INHERENT RESOLVE. The result was an adjustment of force posture and activities. Additionally, the Iraqi Security Forces didn't see the need for any further training apart from bespoke entities, which raised the question of why the Coalition were persisting in the Kurdish region.

Halfway through my time in Kurdistan, the KTCC received the order to step back from the direct delivery of training, promoting self-sufficiency amongst the Peshmerga, allowing the Coalition, in theory, to play more of a mentoring-type role. Frustratingly, whilst the plans to deliver this approach were being developed, COVID-19 stopped any



Lieutenant Colonel Matt Sheldrick in the Kurdish Region, Iraq, on the road between Erbil and Sulaymaniyah



The benefits of being part of a Coalition of nations – Italian cuisine



'Working lunch' courtesy of Brigadier General Omer, Commandant, Menila Training Centre, Kurdish region, Iraq

interaction with the Peshmerga who themselves were not able to train due to the restrictions of the pandemic. With the continuation of the attacks in Baghdad and the COVID situation throughout the country, the decision was made to drawdown the force footprint and cease the training mission. This released the Coalition troops delivering training back to their home nations, many of whom were subsequently re-tasked to support their national fight against COVID.

During my last month in theatre, the KTCC was re-designated to provide direct support to the Peshmerga Operations Centre, based in Erbil which was a positive sign for two reasons. Firstly, it meant that relations between the government of federal Iraq and the Kurdish region had improved to the extent by which both sides were looking to resume coordinated operations in the vicinity of the control line between Iraq and the Kurdish region. Relations had soured somewhat as a result of the Kurdish independence referendum in October 2017 whereby the Kurdish region voted unanimously in support of independence in an unofficial poll. Daesh capitalised in the absence of any military presence to the west of the control line, as Peshmerga forces were banned from crossing the line where they had traditionally operated and Iraqi forces were deployed elsewhere. Secondly, it further demonstrated the capability of the host nation forces to provide security unassisted. This offered proof that the thousands of troops who had benefitted from Coalition training were now capable of conducting

complex counter-Daesh operations with minimal Coalition support – one of the fundamental conditions to the drawing-down of the CJTF mission.

Lastly, from a personal point-of-view, this type of role helps to justify the many hours of study at Staff College and practical experience on operations and exercises over a twenty year career. Despite the restrictions of COVID, working with the Peshmerga within the context of a Coalition Task Force was a thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding experience. The Kurdish region is a highly complex and fascinating place to work in. When your neighbours are Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey (a NATO member who was deeply embroiled in their own fight against the Kurdish PKK) and the Kurdish population stretches across all of those borders, it is not surprising that getting things done on a mission like Operation INHERENT RESOLVE, isn't always straightforward. I shall look back upon my time in Kurdistan with fondness when at my desk in Army Headquarters.

MAJOR ALEXANDER WILLIAM LESLIE MC

Editor's Note: Those lines shown in brackets were added to the letters by David Leslie, Sandy's son.

Sandy Leslie was born in Johannesburg on 1st June 1919. His father, Charles Duff Leslie, who was born on The Black Isle, was a senior executive in one of the large gold mining companies in South Africa. On his father's retirement, when Sandy was three months old the family moved to their remote cattle ranching farm near Zwartkops in the Western Transvaal, as it was then known. Tragically, Charles Duff was killed in a train accident five months later.

For the first nine years of his life Sandy lived on the farm, a rugged outdoor upbringing which equipped him well for later military life. In between he went to prep school in Johannesburg. In 1927 Sandy's mother, Mea, married Major Neil Baillie-Hamilton of Cambusmore, near Callendar. He was a Black Watch officer and later commanded the 1st Battalion in India (1930 – 34). The family moved from South Africa to Scotland at that time and Sandy went to school in England. He did his senior schooling at Harrow where he had an illustrious career and was Head of Moretons. A lot of his childhood and young adult life was spent at Cambusmore.

He went up to Cambridge in 1938 and joined the Regiment in about August 1939 obviously having been encouraged to do so by his stepfather, Neil Baillie-Hamilton.

Sandy remained with The Black Watch as a regular officer until 1957. In 1952

he married Shirley in Gibraltar, where he was GSO2. They had three children, Sarah, David and Belinda all of whom were born in Scotland. In 1957 Sandy retired from the Army and returned to South Africa, the land of his birth. He pursued a career in business, primarily in the retail sector and lived in Cape Town until his death in 1979.

This series of extracts from letters he sent to his mother and sisters paints a picture of his early military career as well as his time at war in North Africa and North West Europe with the 5th Battalion The Black Watch.

It is an extraordinary record of his thoughts and feelings as the war progresses and his MC Citation is testament to a man of great courage.

6 April 1940 from Queens' Barracks. Letter to Jean;

It has been nice getting back to Perth although there are lots of new faces here and fresh people are coming and going every day. I still haven't any idea what is going to happen to me. I may be sent on this course at Sandhurst or I may go somewhere abroad.

I am Orderly Officer here today and have been rather busy. There is nobody in Barracks on a Saturday afternoon and one of the things I had to do was to get hold of six R.A.S.C. sergeants who had gone to a football match. This was much easier than it sounds and a placard sent round the ground at half time brought them all racing back.

26 June 1940 from Cairndale Hotel, Dumfries. Letter to Jean;

My visit to France and back you will probably hear from Mummy. It was a fearful rush and muddle, but with no heroics or excitements. (This was shortly after the Dunkirk evacuation which ended on 4th June). We were there for nearly a week, and had a number of air raids and a ship sunk next door to us in Cherbourg Harbour by a mine dropped from an aeroplane the night before. We were safe as a house all the time though and I enjoyed it all. It was like a vast Scout camp, sleeping in the woods round about and eating our food outside. Marching about with loaded rifles and an air raid in the distance every now and then gave us enough excitement to keep us going.

Now we are back again and nobody really knows what is going to happen to us. Meanwhile we sit here and try and get ourselves organised again. I am Adjutant of our 300 men and have to work very hard, harder than I have ever done before, but it is fun and I like it. The Army is very interesting and I find it most amusing too. There are a very good lot of both Officers and men with us and everything has been great fun. I only hope that we stay together.

All of this is rather an anti-climax to our great send off. We marched through Perth with the Pipes playing us down – the largest Black Watch draft to leave Perth. It was all very sad, and fine too, with the pipes playing “Highland Laddie” (the Regimental March) as we left the Station.

2 September 1940, from Queens’ Barracks. Letter to Jean;

Last Tuesday we had a very hilarious Guest Night in the Mess. We all had an excellent dinner and then danced reels. The Colonel (Lieut.Col. H.F.K. Wedderburn) was in great form and put any number of us on the floor with a very underhand trip while doing “Strip the Willow”. He had me on the ground, and as I was rather merry by that time and wasn’t thinking very hard, I did a tremendous heave when I came to him next and he went spinning across the room and fell to the ground. This was very naughty of me, but he took it awfully well. I felt a complete fool, but it made everyone roar with laughter. I went and apologised afterwards and all the Colonel said was that the throw was a new one to him and that he would remember it.

This letter seems to be taking a long time to write. We have just got back from an all-day march, about 20 miles. On the way we had a bayonet charge and were ambushed by another platoon. A lot of the men had sore feet, but on the whole they were very good.

Some of them have hardly ever walked in their lives, only wandered about the streets in the evening, and they find it a great strain.

18 September 1941. Letter to Peggy;

I have finished my job and very sorry I was to leave it too. I can tell you what it was now.

The King and Queen were up at Balmoral. The 5th Camerons were guarding them, and I was attached there so that I could go and fetch my Battalion (Bn.) and show them the ground in case of an attack. Actually my work was non-existent and I merely enjoyed myself.

I met and talked to both the King and Queen several times. They were absolutely charming and not at all difficult to talk to. In fact one might have been talking to anybody. The Queen came over and inspected this Bn. and I acted as her A.D.C. (Aide de Camp) which was great fun.

We will be moving out of this place in a few weeks and going, like Caesar’s Armies, into Winter Quarters. They are about 100 miles further north, but they can’t be any colder and damper than this place here.

My job has been changed. I am now no longer in the Courier Platoon, but am 2nd I.C. (In Command) of ‘A’ Company (Coy). I am pleased about this as the Couriers were not in my line of country at all, although I enjoyed them enormously.

(In June 1942 the Battalion, as part of the 51st Highland Division which included 1st, 5th and 7th Black Watch, sailed from Britain. Sandy was serving with the 5th Battalion.)

30 August 1942, written on Shephard’s Hotel, Cairo writing paper. Letter to Peggy;

We are going well in the Desert now and I rather like it. It isn’t nearly as bad as it is made out to be, although we are unlucky at the moment and are in camp with no water and plenty of flies. Yesterday I was in Cairo too and played an excellent game of cricket and had a bathe. A lovely weekend.

My job in the Bn. is a new one now. I am commanding the Anti Tank Guns and couldn’t ask for anything better.

22 October 1942. Letter to his mother;

I am writing you this letter just before a large battle which we are going to take part in. I am in a hole that I dug for myself waiting to set off and will be able to get this letter back before we start. By the time it reaches you all will be over, with, I am quite certain, a tremendous success.

Since I wrote to you last things have been very quiet and contented. We have been going on with our hard training and getting ourselves used to the desert which we have done very successfully. Sometimes troubles become almost too much, but by then it somehow seems to turn into rather a joke and I find that I can always have a good laugh at it all and think how nice it will be when we are really comfortable again. I am not sure that the first part of this letter will be censored, but I can see no useful information that it can give away as all will be over before anybody can see it. We have been waiting so long for this and now that it has really come it all seems just like another exercise except that there are more bangs and explosions going on round about. So far nearly all over I am glad to say.

It is getting very cold out here at nights and we will be getting into our battle dress soon.

28 October 1942. Letter to his mother;

Here is a letter to you straight from the battle. You will have heard a good deal about us from the wireless, and I hope the cable that I am going to send about my being safely out of it all will arrive long before this letter. We may go on for a long time yet though, you never can tell. The 51st (Highland) Division has lived up well to any reputation that it ever had, in fact it has done more than that, and this Bn. in particular has done wonderfully well. This whole war is a hellish business especially when you see your friends killed beside you and can do nothing about it, but apart from this and a number of very nasty moments, I have honestly enjoyed the whole battle.

Somebody has said that modern war is made up of long periods of intense boredom interspersed by short periods of intense fear. I have experienced the periods of fear up to a point, especially the first night when we advanced through a horrible defensive fire and the whole air was full of bursting shells and bullets for about an hour as we walked slowly along in the dark. This was very frightening, but I had a feeling that we just had to go on and that it was no good worrying. The boredom I haven’t experienced at all. I think that it is all wonderfully interesting and I have really had a great time making captured German guns work and picking up food and equipment that belonged to the enemy. It is all delightfully easy going. Anything that you see lying about you can have. I have a lovely German rifle now and have already done some good shooting with it, and knocked out an enemy armoured car in the dark. This gave me just the same thrill as knocking down a high pheasant or a stag. I have been wondering if I am very callous, but I don’t think so really.

We were piped right into the battle. One of our pipers was shot three times, but continued to pipe lying on his side until he was killed. He was found dead with his chanter in his mouth and the bag under his arm. (Piper Duncan McIntyre of ‘A’ Coy. who, after he was wounded, broke into the Regimental March ‘Hielan’ Laddie’ as the assault went in). It is this sort of thing, and there have been lots of them round me very much the same, that make the whole of this business worthwhile, and makes you realise that the glamour has not gone out of war.

It is getting very dark now and I can only just see the paper sitting on the edge of a very comfortable and secure hole that I have dug for myself. We dig continuously and I am feeling very fit and tough and well.

11 November 1942, El Daba, Egypt. Letter to Peggy;

This is written on Armistice Day, and most appropriate too, as the battle for us seems to be over at last. We are resting and refitting ourselves, and getting back to our normal duties just as though nothing had happened. I am sitting in a nice large German tent which I have all to myself and all round me are German tables and chairs. My Platoon functions largely in German transport, so altogether we have had a profitable time and are feeling rather pleased with ourselves.

It is lovely to be able to sit here in a large tent above ground and have nothing but nice friendly sounds going on round about you. The battle seems a very long way away, something that happened in the dim distance, and the impressions that seem to stay with me are a few moments of rather unpleasant fear, and hours of real enjoyment. Except when things were really unpleasantly close, which was quite often, the whole battle was tremendous fun, or I found it so anyway.

We are in rather a nice bit of desert now. There are bushes all over the place, and as we have had a little rain a few days ago they are quite a good looking sort of green. There are a few birds about too and they wake me up singing every morning. Very pleasant indeed, but I think that we will move off at any moment now.

16 November 1942, Fuka, Egypt. Letter to his mother;

We are all well and on the move again, but unfortunately a long way from the enemy, so that we travel about in more or less Peace Time conditions and would be very put out if we saw a German. We do everything in great comfort now and I carry my little tent about with me. It is an excellent affair 6 feet wide and about 10 feet long with a second layer of canvas that spreads out over the top and keeps the heat and the cold out. I am in it now writing by the light of a candle and sitting at a little table, which I also carry about, and in a camp chair.

You mustn’t imagine me being very hardy and uncomfortable any more, we are really in the lap of luxury and have a good stock of such things as beer and whisky. In fact we are a long way better off than we were for our first few months before we had ever seen a German.

Our moves are extremely interesting and we progress slowly across the desert cheered all the way by strings of burnt out German trucks, aeroplanes and guns. A most heartening sight. We are really too far behind to pick up things of much use. I am afraid that our ruling passion is now to pick up useful things that belonged to the enemy. You have no idea how satisfactory it is.

We have started sending men away on leave again.

10 December 1942. Letter to his mother;

I have been most unlucky and having managed to get right across the desert to the far side of Benghazi what would I do but get jaundice and have to be sent all the way back again. This is a complaint that everybody is getting here and we have been going down in batches with it during the last month. I got it at a most infuriating time as I had to come bumping my way right back to the Canal Area which took me 9 days. They moved us half way by ambulance, then by hospital ship from Tobruk and then by train to this New Zealand Hospital on the banks of the Canal. A really horrible journey especially as I was feeling far from well.

This illness is not really a bad one and I am quite all right now, but the first fortnight or so is most unpleasant. First of all you can’t eat anything, and worse

still everything seems to take on a very gloomy aspect indeed. I well understand now what it means to have a jaundiced outlook on life. All is well now though. I have been in this hospital just a day now and am really just about well again although still a bit yellow and weak on my legs. It seems that I will be here for about ten days and then go to a convalescent hospital for three weeks. This last I shall try and cut out and spend it getting back to the Bn. which I am afraid is going to be a long and very difficult job.

(On 25th January 1943 the 8th Army took occupation of Tripoli, Libya. There was an 8th Army Parade on 4th February in which the 5th Battalion took part. The salute was taken by the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, General Bernard Montgomery, Major General Douglas Wimberley and General Alan Brooke.)

23 February to 31 March 1943. Mareth Line. Letter to Jean;

You said you tried to imagine how we all lived. I don't think that you could ever do that. It is a most extraordinary life and at the moment we are in the middle of another battle, of quite a different sort to our big one (Alamein) and everything is going nicely. Our life is really one continuous move. We shift on average every three days and as soon as we arrive at a new place we all dig like beavers and make ourselves nice comfortable homes. Safety comes first and then comfort. We are very good at both by now and have learnt to pick out the soft bits to dig in. Our food and washing and sleeping is all very sketchy. For six days on end last week I was up until daylight. Eating has to be done at queer hours too sometimes.

In the advance to Tripoli I found myself sitting amongst some thorn bushes at 5 o'clock in the morning having marched all night, eating cold bully beef and biscuits and enjoying it too.

This odd form of life all seems quite ordinary and it is only when you start thinking how extraordinary it all is that you realise how different war is from anything else that one can do. The great thing is that all these odd happenings are shared by friends, and when things get a bit too much of a good thing we can at least all laugh at them together.

Goodbye, get yourself down to the Cape soon.

(Sandy was wounded during enemy shelling on the Mareth Line on 18th or 19th March 1943.)

Among other injuries his left leg was badly broken. He was evacuated and was in hospital in Egypt for some time before going home to South Africa to convalesce. He rejoined the Battalion in mid - October, some four months after the D-Day landings which took place in early June 1944.)

19th October 1944. Zonaveld, Holland. Letter to his mother;

I have got back to my Bn at last. I seem to have been trying to do this for so long that now, although I have been here for two days I can hardly believe that it is true. My journey out here was most successful and only took me four days. This is a record – the average time from England going through all the usual channels is about 6 weeks. The Americans flew me most of the way in three short stages. After that I came on North, by road, till I reached the Bn. It was all very easy and no questions were asked, except at one place where they were astounded to find that I had no papers, nor any authority to travel. However, I explained that I had been wounded and was trying to get back, and they took it for granted that I had been wounded in Normandy. There is an order out that all men wounded in Normandy will return to their units without delay – so all was well.

It has been really wonderful to be back here again for good. There is a good comforting feeling of being with your own people again, and not amongst ones that don't really bother much what happens to you. There are not many of the old originals left, but I know most of the new officers who have come here. At the moment I am 2nd. i/c to "B" Coy. The Company Commander is Charles Munro, who was at Harrow just before me and was a great friend of mine in Perth, so that is very nice. Gordon Smith-Cunninghame is here too. He and Thomas Drew and I used to share a room together in Moretons (Sandy's House at Harrow). Chick Thompson isn't commanding any more. He has gone back to England. The new C.O. is one Bill Bradford whom I know, and who is very nice indeed and gave me a great welcome. He has just won a D.S.O.; so I am amongst friends.

This is a new type of warfare to me, and most interesting.

Things are fairly quiet and we have our Coy. HQ in a farm. There is quite a lot of livestock about, including a huge bull called Ferdinand. One of our stretcher bearers looks after him, feeds and takes him for a walk every afternoon. The other animals are pigs, chickens and tame rabbits. The supply gets smaller every day and we live very well indeed.

It is very wet here and fairly cold, and all my preparations are coming in useful, the sheepskin coat is wonderful. At the moment it is 2.30 in the morning and I have just finished going round the Coy. posts. My primus stove is boiling water next to me, and I will be having some coffee in a few minutes out of one of your little bags. All these preparations have had to wait a long time, but it has been very well worthwhile.

28th October 1944 -During the Battles for Esch, Haaren, Loon Op Zand and Horst;

(censored)We have just had a very busy five days of continuous moves and attacks, and are now having a short rest which is doing us all a lot of good. So far the rest has been one good night's sleep. We are in a little village and everybody is under cover. Charles Munro and I are in the Post Office which doesn't function any more, and everyone else is in billets of some sort. Since this operation started we have been on the go all the time.

Everybody was getting very weary. It has been a series of small battles as far as we have been concerned. None of them very pleasant, but our casualties have been small, luckily.

The weather has been very much with us – no rain – I am afraid that we have blasted some of these villages about very badly, but the people are all magnificent. They come flocking back, to welcome us and find us places to go, in their houses. The few that speak English all say how wonderful it is to be free again and how they quite understand that it is necessary for us to knock their houses down. It is very pathetic. Small children and old women coming out of their shelters shaking all over. And one poor old fellow going into his burnt house and rescuing the only more or less undamaged thing, which was a small kitchen range

(censored)

Our fighting here has been most interesting. It is unlike anything I have done so far. To start with, we have been doing our attacks in daylight which I never did in Africa. Also the country is all enclosed, and we have been working with the tanks in close support, as we move, which gives one a great feeling of security and undoubtedly demoralises the enemy.

The digging is very bad. Most of the country seems to be below sea level, or anyway, only a foot or two above, and one strikes water very quickly indeed which makes life damp and unpleasant.

We arrived in this village yesterday, and were the first troops in. Very rapidly we were in a back area, with tanks and guns pouring down the road. I hope they leave us here for two days and give us time to get clean and reorganised. We will then be fit for anything. I have seen Thomas Rennie who was very much surprised that I had arrived at all. He asked after you, and sent his best wishes. This letter has been interrupted so many times, that I have a feeling it doesn't make sense.

(Major General Thomas Rennie was the commanding the 51st Highland Division and was killed in action on 24th March 1945 during the Rhine Crossings.)

1st November 1944 – Hertogenbosch;

(censored).....perhaps Jean will have been married on the date the war began, and have her first baby the day it ends. It seems as though we can hardly expect an end to it before then (April). We shall spend the winter bombing Germany and making life generally unpleasant for them, and then we will all go in and finish it in the Spring. It seems to have been going on for a very long time and I am afraid a lot of people are disappointed about it now. But I don't see how it could have been done any quicker, and I must say I never thought it would.

We have been hard at it since I wrote to you last and we are all in good form, only rather tired. At the moment we are holding the outskirts of a town out of which the Germans have been pushed. We will move on very soon I expect, but everything is wet and flooded and although the resistance is not very strong it is sufficient to hold us up a little at each place ...

(censored)

Tell Jean that I use my little pillow every time I can, and that it is wonderful. My sheepskin coat and primus stove are absolutely invaluable.

5th November 1944. Assault Crossing of Aftwaterings Canal and then Haarsteeg;

Since I wrote to you last we have had another battle, which is now happily and successfully over. It looked, at first, as though it might be a very unpleasant affair as it included an opposed river crossing in boats and a long advance afterwards.

Actually it all turned out very well and our casualties were amazingly small. The battle started at 4.30 in the morning after a couple of days of hard preparations (at Helvoirt), and went on until daylight today. Although the dangerous and fighting part of it was mostly over quite early on, it was a hard night though of marching and digging, and marching again, as it was really very cold indeed. The wind is blowing hard – and it looks as though the snow will be on us soon now. By morning our Bn. had got on at a great pace and had outrun everybody else, which meant that we had today to reorganise and rest – which we have managed to do, under cover, in this village. There are signs that we're going off for a short rest now. I hope this turns out to be right, as we have been hard at it for over a fortnight now – and have fought 4 major battles and a number of smaller ones.

Last night I had a stroke of luck – my fountain pen is on its last legs, and as I was walking up the road at one o'clock this morning to visit one of our forward platoons, a miserable German, much shaken by our gunfire popped out of a ditch and gave himself up. I got this fountain pen while I was going over him for weapons – and it seems to work very well. We have been taking quite a lot of these fellows whose morale is quite gone. But they seem to be backed up by a few good ones, who shoot their weapons in our direction and cause some trouble.

It is just beginning to rain again and we are luckily all under cover. We have been lucky in this. It hasn't rained much, and when it has, we have been all covered up somewhere.

11th November 1944 – Leende;

At the moment we have just had two idle days, which have been very welcome. I have been sleeping on a bed with sheets on it, which has been really wonderful. We have orders now, though, and we move tomorrow. This has been a really good billet. I came to fix it up for the Company and I find that my few words of Afrikaans are a great help. I remember words that I didn't think I

knew at all, and am expert at getting billets, rooms and beds.

20th November 1944 - At Roggell and Heythuijen after attacks over the Wessen and Zig (Uitwaterings) Canals - 12th to 21st November;

We have had a very hard time for the last week, or ten days – in fact, ever since the battle began, on Alamein Day. These last few days, though, have been the worst. The opposition gets stiffer, and the weather gets worse. We are just having two days in billets, but we have been very wet, and miserable – we are almost amphibious now, as, not only have we made three opposed canal crossings, and have been rained on a good deal, but we also walk about in half submerged fields and mud. It isn't really as bad as it sounds but altogether it is not very pleasant, and not nearly such fun as the Desert. Although our supplies of food, cigarettes, etc are much better here than ever they were out there which makes a great difference. Also we get our rum issue fairly often, which helps to keep us warm and in good heart.

I am commanding a Company ("B") now and should get my majority fairly soon, which will be nice. Isabel writes me lots of short letters and is sending me things like coffee and candles. It is wonderful getting letters and little parcels. Your letters have been coming to me much faster. The last one took under three weeks.

(censored) ...

23rd November 1944 – Helden Area;

(censored)... We are still very busy out here, but have been lucky for the last two days and have stayed in the same place. We are in fairly close contact, and get shelled a bit, but are not in danger of attack by day. This makes life a good deal easier. We sit in our holes at night, but come back into the houses and barns by day, to sleep. It has rained really hard all the time that we have been here, but the houses are dry and we have had time to make our operational holes watertight, so all is well with us. We have just had a rum issue too, which does us all a great deal of good. My gloves and sheepskin coat and the Primus stove are always with me, and are the envy of everybody in the Bn. I don't know which is the best of the three, but I think, on the whole, the Primus stove. It is a real joy to be able to have hot water to wash and shave in, and odd cups of coffee through the day; and in the night when you have to be awake.

I find that I don't go into battles with quite my old zest since I was wounded, but with a great deal more apprehension – however I think that this is far the more normal outlook of the two, and it doesn't worry me at all.

2nd December 1944 - "The Island", Zetten, Opheusden and Randwijk – 24th November to 4th December;

You will see from the top of this letter that I am a Major now, and commanding a Company ("B" Coy.), which is very nice, but hard work, especially these last 10 days when we have been very busy.

We have had a very unhappy week – two of my oldest friends, Charles Munro and Joe Wright have been killed, and Gordon Smith Cunninghame is missing – but we all hope only a P.O.W. This is a terrible loss to me, and to the Bn. too; and we are all feeling very sad about it. We have moved some distance off from where I wrote to you last. There is even more water here than there was there. It lies right on the ground and one can't dig at all. We build up breast works instead. There is a good deal of rain, but we manage to have our living quarters in houses which are some protection, although all of them are full of shellholes and they lack a good deal. If we have to fight we do it from our breast works. This is a very uncomfortable business ... (censored)

Each company is spending 4 days out of the line, as a rest cure, and we are in the middle of our 4 days now. I am having a small guest night here tonight – we are eating sucking pig and having our pipes playing to us. And I have just devised a very good cocktail of rum and apple juice, and sugar and milk. It is an excellent drink and should make us forget all our worries.

We are just off on a short route march, which we do every now and then to harden up our feet which get into very bad shape after being wet for long periods. My feet and legs have so far kept in perfect order, but I seem to be one of the few. I remember well how you always to say that my legs were like scaffolding poles, but it seems that our Maker did a better job on them than any of us realised.

5th December 1944 – Heeswijk. Letter to his mother;

We have just done another move – even more rapid than usual, as we are flooded out this time. The water, which was all round us, rose slowly for a few days and then very fast indeed and we had to move with all speed. We made it in very good order though. The devastation is worse in this part than anywhere I have been yet. There are no civilians at all, and every house more or less damaged. Some with only the roof off, but most of them with whole sides missing as well. Large numbers of dead animals everywhere – killed by shelling, and I am afraid that all those left will be drowned. We have managed to drive out some of them – but nobody will look after them now.

I have had a varied experience in this war, if nothing else – a campaign in the Desert where there was no water at all, and now we are being driven away by floods. A wet unpleasant business – but very interesting, for all that – luckily the weather hasn't been too cold ... We are in another farm area here, a very poor one this time. We generally manage to make ourselves very comfortable, but it has been quite hopeless here. I am moving the Coy. tomorrow to what looks like a better place, and I only hope that we shall be left there for a few days. We hardly ever sit: it would be very nice to stay somewhere long enough to get ourselves organised. There is always so much to do, and we can never do it, as we spend all our time moving and fighting.

7th December 1944 – Heeswijk. Letter to his mother;

This is my Christmas letter and all my love to you goes with it.

I can't think where I will be – we are having our party on New Year's Day in the old tradition.

We get some extra rations – and also some drink. We have saved up some rum, and whisky too, so it should be good. We must just hope we are not in a battle – but in some reasonable sort of place where the men can sit down at a table and enjoy the meal, and all that goes with it. This doesn't often happen, but a special effort is being made to get it this time.

We are in the same place as when I wrote my last letter. Every one of these farm houses is the same – the house and the byre are joined together, and the smell goes right through all the back areas of the house. I always manage to get into the front room – which is their best room and which they never use. They don't seem to mind us moving in at all – in fact they all welcome us. On the whole, I think they like it. It is something new, and they get some of our food and cigarettes. The men all sleep in the barns amongst the hay; but they soon find their way into the kitchens and you see huge gatherings of men, and all the vast family sitting round the stove, chatting away, although neither can understand a word the other is saying. All the people here are Roman Catholic and birth control doesn't enter into their calculations at all. Hitler and Mussolini could have taken a few very good tips from them.

This particular farm is much better than most as there are no young children. This is rare – and a pleasant relief as they are apt to smell vile and make a hellish noise as well. No snow yet, but it rains and rains. We are all dry and warm though. I was thinking how nice and simple life is here, when this, and a good meal is all that matters. Very pleasant really.

16th December 1944 – Heeswijk;

We are still in the same place – well settled in now. It looks as if we shall be here for Christmas, which will be good – and give us a chance to organise some sort of concert and dinner – we will have our party at Christmas, and not New Year as that is rather too long to hope to be left in peace (censored)

There has been a great improvement in the weather here. The rain has changed to frost.

No real snow yet – although we thought it had set in properly a few days ago. There is good hard frost and the mud is going away. I have found a pair of Norwegian skates that tie onto your boots – so I am all set up to do some skating.

This rest has done us all a lot of good. My Coy has had time to smarten up and get itself into shape. It is wonderful what a few hours of good hard drill, and a little spit and polish does. One always hears how much the men dislike it, but when they haven't done it for some time and they don't get too much, everybody enjoys it and they feel twice the men they were. My stove is still being a Godsend to us. We use it for heating the room all day and can make toast on it at the same time – and lots of coffee too. Isabel keeps sending me this. And I got a three pound tin from the Americans too, so we are very well off.

22nd December 1944 - Christmas in Urmond, Belgium;

We are in the middle of a long move now, which came on us without any warning at all.

We drove through the dark last night for 70 miles, which takes a long time in a big convoy on these roads. However it was a lovely night, and everything went well. We arrived in this place about 12 o'clock and will probably be moving on again today.

Our chances of a peaceful Christmas are rapidly melting away. This is a pity – we seemed to be settled in. Most of my Coy. were in two pubs last night, but this morning I have managed to spread them out a bit and we have evacuated the pubs – except for Coy. HQ. I am using a spare back room in one of them and have a room to sleep in upstairs.

Everybody here is eager to take in soldiers – I can't think why – but they are. Some of these houses that we didn't move into last night had spare rooms and this morning the owners came to me to say they could take some of us in. They will probably get a billeting fee afterwards, but even so they are all very kind.

A letter from you has just arrived answering mine written with a German pen (sent 5th November to South Africa so a good turnaround time). My letters must be going very quickly. I love getting yours and look forward to them just as much as you do to mine. You asked me to do a summary of the 5th year of War for your book – I will have a go at it, but without dates I will probably go wrong. I will send it on one of these letter cards

(censored).

I am longing to get the sleeves for my sheepskin coat. They will be a huge asset. It is the envy of everybody now. I shall have to guard it carefully when it is all complete.

27 December 1944;

Our Christmas celebrations are over now, and a very hectic time it has been – after a series of rapid moves it looked as though we would have a clear day at Christmas. We were comfortably settled in – our puddings had arrived from the Queen, who always gives them to us, so had the pork – and lots of drink. On Christmas Eve I decided to sing Carols to the Coy. and about 12 of us started off having had quite a lot to drink. We had lanterns and torches and also the Coy. Bugler and Piper. We only knew the words of three carols. "Hark the Herald Angels", "Good King Wenceslas" and "O come All Ye Faithful".

It was a great success, helped by the night which was frosty with nearly a full moon. Before we were finished nearly every man of the Coy. was out singing,

and a large crowd of civilians too. Each time we moved our beat the Bugle sounded the advance and the Piper played us along the road. It finished up with me dancing a Highland Fling and a sword dance in the street – everybody singing “Auld Lang Syne” and the Bugler playing the “Last Post”. A very good evening.

On Christmas Day we were all set up for a wonderful dinner. We had a Hall, tables and chairs borrowed from all the houses, also plates. Everybody was in tremendous spirits and we were sitting waiting for the C.O. to come round at 12.45 when an order came through that we were to move at 2.15. I told the Coy. about it – and we went straight on with the meal. The men all had two pints of beer and a double issue of rum, and cigars. The Sergeants and Officers carried the food round, and by special request I danced another Highland Fling. We finally managed to get off just in time, which was a miracle. Everybody was in a more than happy mood by then. Luckily we moved in transport, and the noise and singing was deafening for a time until everybody subsided into sleep. It was really a magnificent Christmas Party – and, but for the move, would have been better still.

We are waiting to be used against this German Offensive. Each move brings us a bit nearer.

It seems a pretty determined effort, but I am sure it will shorten the War considerably in the end. We shall be able to destroy the enemy in the open and it must make our final crossing of the Rhine very much easier. I haven't been able to write the 5th Year of the War yet – as you can see we have been very busy.

30 December 1944. Plaineveux. Letter to his mother;

I got another letter from you today(censored). You had just got my photograph. I am sorry about the moustache, but I have got so attached to it now and can't think what I would do without it. I am longing for the sleeves to arrive. Your first parcel of biltong came two days ago. It is in my haversack now. Everybody is getting used to me hauling it out and cutting off lumps, but very few are brave enough to try it.

I have two Canadian officers with me now. Both extremely nice, and will be very good I think. They are from the Canadian Black Watch and are very proud to be with us, which is a great thing. Alec Brodie (D.S.O. M.C.) is also here – you know him. He joined the 1st Bn. At Meerut (India), when Father Neil was commanding. He has had a chequered career and is here as a Captain now, which makes me seem slightly ridiculous. He is an odd fellow though – somewhat unbalanced, though a very brave man. He sends his regards to you.

We are hoping to be here for New Year and have another party ready for the men on Hogmanay, tomorrow. Also an Officer's party in the evening when we shall probably see in the New Year in great style. I hope we are left in peace this time to have our party –and also to recover. I didn't feel at all good for two days after our hasty move in the middle of our last effort.

We have Buzz bombs over and around us in a steady flow, but no damage caused – they are rather a joke at the moment.

4th January 1945. Dorinne;

The New Year has come in here with some very hard frosts. We did another move, by road, on New Year's Day; the roads were all ice – and very difficult to stay on. It wasn't a long move but irritating as it took us six hours to do 30 miles.

We are getting very good at settling ourselves into billets quickly, and packing up and moving on, at short notice. It looks as though we are going to be on the move again tomorrow.

Last night, after a day of thaw, we had four inches of snow. It looks wonderful outside. The snow is beautifully firm.

This part of the country is hilly with plenty of trees everywhere – a much better proposition in every way. It is good to see hills again.

We play Bridge here on these long evenings – I have got very keen. We used to play at Cambusmore and that started me off again – I have quite a fair grip of things now, and enjoy it tremendously. I never thought I would play with any pleasure, but it is different now and I find that your teaching at Zoute hasn't been forgotten.

7th January 1945. Petit Sommes. Letter to his mother:

I have just got your letter written when you had the news of Charles Munro's and Joe Wright's deaths (censored). Gordon Smith Cunninghame is a P.O.W., thank God. He broadcast a message to his Mother over the German news and we heard it. I felt somehow that all was well with him. He has always been a very lucky person. You also asked about Hugh Blair-Imrie and Rankin Andrew. They are both dead. Killed over here, early on in the fighting. It seems that the best are always the ones to go. It has happened here again and again, and it is terribly sad.

You mustn't imagine us in such awful discomfort and danger always. We often suffer from neither and have had quite a period of pretty fair comfort as well which you will see from my last few letters. (censored)

You do realise that my being a Major is only a temporary affair. I am bound to come down when the war is over – if not before. Promotions are very tricky affairs – however it is very nice while it lasts.

We are in quite a good place – with a nice warm stove. It is still freezing hard – much better than rain.

14 January 1945. Ardennes. Letter to his mother;

I have just added another experience to my fighting history. We have been fighting in deep snow, and it was most unpleasant while it lasted. It has been really cold - 35° of frost. We spent one night in slit trenches, without great coats or blankets and nothing to eat. It was, without any doubt, the most unpleasant

night I have ever had – it was so cold that it really hurt. All is well now, though, and our fighting seems to be over for a bit. We have really done very well and have completed our job, and are hoping they won't find us another for a bit.

I am in a beautiful warm room now, with the best stove I have found since I came to this country: and could stay here, quite comfortably, for a few years. We have had a lot of cases of mild frost bite round about the feet and legs, but so far I have had no ill effects. All my limbs are in excellent working order. This has been a great experience – and I wouldn't have missed it for anything.

I had two narrow escapes yesterday. One by a burst of machine gun fire, when I was lying in the snow. It went half over me – and half underneath me – and one, when quite a sizeable piece of shrapnel hit me right over the heart. It was stopped by your excellent sheepskin coat, and that cigarette tin I got in Cape Town. I have the piece in my pocket now. This is the second direct hit I have had out here with no damage.

My Coy. captured a German Armoured Car in this village, which is now going and being used by us. I got a small camera and a lovely polo necked pullover, and some dry socks out of it.

So I am all set up for some more snow. It is really quite good weather – the days are bright and sunny, even though they are very cold.

The country here is lovely too – all hills and woods, most of it just like a Christmas card.

Everybody is in very good fettle again – after a night's rest and some hot food. All we need now is a really hot bath, but I am afraid that this will have to wait for a bit.

– don't worry about me – all is well – and I am extremely happy

21st January 1945. Turnhout. Letter to his mother;

I am glad Alec managed to get to you for Christmas: Jean told me he was in Pretoria. It seemed very sad how the family was all split up. I am glad the two of you were together anyway.

We are in a very comfortable place here – quite a big town. We were brought here for a fortnight's rest and spent two days getting ourselves well established and comfortable.

Today we were all ready to set about enjoying life when we got orders for another move and are off tomorrow. Most annoying – but the battles are going so well everywhere that I am sure our keeping up the pressure is essential.

I am going to Brussels tomorrow morning for 48 hours leave. It is a wonderful place to be, by all accounts. Most of our Bn. has been there already. I have refused to go, up to date, as we have always been so busy, but I think that I will be back before anything unexpected turns up now. And I am looking forward to it very much.

When we moved up here we had another long convoy journey. I have got very well organized for these drives. My batman boils water on the move, squatting on the front seat of my Jeep while I drive. He puts the Primus stove in a large biscuit tin and holds a coffee pot on it. We then make coffee sent to me by Isabel. These drives are very cold, especially in a Jeep, which is all open, but with hot coffee and all my scarves, and sheepskin coats and gloves, I do very well indeed – and am the envy of everybody. The sleeves haven't arrived yet – I am hoping they will come any day now. They will make a great difference.

24th January 1945. Haaren. (Preparing for the Reichswald battles)

I came back from my 48 hours leave in Brussels yesterday evening. It was really wonderful.

I was in a beautiful hotel, taken over by the Army, and had a huge room with its own bathroom. The first thing I did was to jump into the bath. The first one I have been in since leaving England. It was real heaven.

Brussels itself is a wonderful town, although I am afraid that I hadn't time to see much of it, and didn't try very hard, anyway. The shops are full of all sorts of things – silk stockings, and scent, and furs and silk – all of them at the most appalling prices. It took my breath away – even though I had been expecting it.

I did most of my shopping at the Army Officers' Shop. A very good one, where things are quarter the price they are at home – I got a really heavy trench raincoat, with a Jaeger lining for three pounds. I wore it over the top of my sheepskin on the way back, and was really warm. I feel like a very inflated balloon when I have it all on, but the result is wonderful. I was put off buying presents by the tremendous prices, and the thought of the duty they would have to pay at the other end. There was heaps of drink too; luckily, in the hotel it was sold at Duty Free prices, but as soon as you went outside drinks cost about 8/6 a time, and champagne – not at all good - £10 a bottle.

I enjoyed myself more than I can say, and got back quite exhausted, but really very happy, after letting off steam in a very thorough way.

It is nearly a year since I left the farm now – it seems to have gone like a flash.

What wonderful news of the Russians. They are magnificent, but I feel that, except for East Prussia the Germans didn't intend to hold the ground. We shall soon know, when the advance gets held up.

1st February 1945. Letter to his mother;

Your parcels have suddenly come with a rush. Three in the last three days. ... (censored)

Then, yesterday evening, I came in late, and there were the sleeves for my coat. It was really a terrific thrill. I sat down and sewed them in right away, with all the excellent thread and needles you provided. I used the thread and not the wool, as I thought it would be better through the leather of the coat. The sleeves fit absolutely perfectly. The coat is really wonderful now. I have never been so pleased with anything; thank you very much.

Wrapped up with the sleeves was the biltong made out of the buck killed on

the Farm. This is far and away the best you have sent me yet. All the other is good – but this is quite different.

We are still in the same place. A record stay, and are feeling quite at home and settled. Last night we had a party, with some Canadian hospital nurses and also some Dutch girls from a large house near here. They brought some cousins and friends with them – about 50 of us altogether. It was a very good party and, amongst other things, we danced a Petronella and Strip the Willow, with the girls included. They picked it up at once – I have never seen anybody get such a quick grasp of things.

Two days ago a thaw set in here, and by this morning all the snow was gone and even the ice off the roads, and the mud is with us again, in full force. It is warm though – which is a real blessing.

The Russians seem to be getting better and better. It is really amazing. I am getting full of hopes that they may reach Berlin soon – I think it doubtful though and still think that even if they do, the war will not end until we have been able to break through their armies in the West as well.

However, we shall see. I feel that the end is well in sight now, at last. The war seems to have been going on so long, that although everybody talks about the end, it still seems rather like one's thought on Death – you know it's coming sometime, but you can't visualise it happening to you.

7th February 1945. Letter to his mother;

We are going to have a busy time again soon. We are all ready, and you will hear long before this letter reaches you what it is all about.

My company is in terrific shape. I don't think I ever told you that when I took it over it was rather in disgrace. Now, I am quite sure that it is far and away the best Coy. in the Bn. I am very proud of it. I am one officer short, but the others are excellent and have done very well indeed. We really have a good set of officers right through the Bn. It has always been the way, but we have been lucky in keeping up the standard in spite of the casualties.

It is still warm and damp here, although we haven't had very heavy rain. I hope it will stay like this for a bit – it is good weather to fight in. The cold had a strange effect on us all – we seemed to be frozen up physically and mentally. It was a terrible effort to get out and do anything.

I wonder if the Russians are going to get across the Oder – or whether they will have to have a big halt to reorganise – they have fought a great battle. What a terrific bombing Berlin is getting. The results must be appalling.

13th February 1945. The Reichswald and Gennep. Letter to his mother;

I haven't written to you for several days as we have been very busy fighting the War, and I have spent my first night in Germany. We have been hard at it for 6 days now, but are really in very good heart after a night's rest last night and another one to come tonight. It has been a very interesting battle, although not too pleasant. Our first attack, formed up in Holland, attacked into Germany, and ended up with one section of my Coy. back in Holland.

The next day we had to do another attack to get into Holland. We have been doing small encircling movements all the time and have disconcerted the enemy quite considerably, I think.

We have had a good haul of prisoners. Not bad sort of fellows on the whole. Mostly fairly well fed, and upstanding, with an amazingly mistaken idea that they are still winning the war – they won't believe that the Russians are on their way to Berlin, which is interesting.

My one and only night in Germany was not a very pleasant one – it was raining hard and we couldn't get any of our transport up. I had a fairly good hole dug into the side of a bank by two Germans that we captured, but I was never in it long as there was too much going on.

My Coy. was on the bridge that was the Germans' escape route, and there were small bodies of them wandering down all night and getting a rude shock when we shot at them.

We have crossed another river (River Niers), in boats, since then, and have established ourselves in a small town (It was always well known that when the first troops entered Gennep Sandy led "B" Coy. down one side of the main street and Major Graham Pilcher led "C" Coy. down the opposite side). I am in a Housing Estate at the moment, in a lovely warm room. As we are no longer the forward Bn. we can get a good night's sleep and so can the men.

I got a letter from you in the middle of all this – which was lovely (censored)

We are cut off from news at the moment, but have rumours that the Russians have started another big offensive on Berlin. Things on this front seem to be going well too. I wonder how much longer it will be now.

19th February 1945. Letter to his mother;

I got your letter two days ago, with the poem written by a Canadian. I loved it – it is very good I think and a lot of Canadians do feel like that. I wonder if any of the South Africans do? Some, I hope. We have been very busy indeed and are well into the enemy country now. It is good to see those German towns and villages knocked about. Even worse, I am glad to say, than those in Holland. The destruction is terrible – but whenever I begin to feel soft hearted I remind myself that all this war is their doing, and then everything is quite different.

We have had some quite hard battles, but nothing very bad, so far. It is a long slog, though, and the men get very tired. The battalion and my Coy. in particular has done wonderfully well. This isn't just an idle boast – it really is so. I feel very proud of them, and they really all are on the top of their form and full of the right sort of pride. Yesterday we attacked this town we are in now (Goch, where there was very fierce and prolonged fighting). We attacked in the middle of the night – and got in with hardly any trouble, taking them all rather in the back. My

Coy. captured a German half-track truck which goes beautifully. These are very good things, with front wheels and the rest of the tracks like a tank: just like a car to drive. I will use it for carrying my ammunition. Just as it was getting light, I was with my forward Platoon, when a little car came driving in and stopped 100 yards away. I sent some men round to get behind it but the Germans saw them, and turned the car round, and began to drive off. I let off several shots at them with a rifle, and they left the car and ran off. I have it now – a funny little thing – but quite comfortable, and seems to go fairly well. It will be most useful.

My Pipe Banner, which flies outside my Head Quarters wherever we go, looks very nice, but got torn in two by a shell blast this morning. But I am mending it up and it will really look all the better for the holes. We are cut off from the news of the rest of the war; I have a very hazy idea of where the Russians are and only know that they are still doing wonderfully well.

23 February 1945. Letter to his mother;

We have just finished what has been the stiffest and most successful battle (Battle for Goch) since I came to this Bn. It has been going on for the last four days. It has been a really tough fight – the Germans had no intention at all of going away and we had to hold off several counter attacks, as well as drive them off. Real hand to hand fighting. We have inflicted real losses on them.

This Bn. above all others has really been magnificent, and everybody is sending us messages of congratulations. Montgomery, before this offensive started, issued an Order of the Day, in which he quoted two lines of A Soldier's Prayer – I now have the rest of it. It is really magnificent – so simple. You can just picture the man sitting in his slit trench at night, with these thoughts coming into his head – just what everybody thinks, but so few can put it into words. The poem was written on a piece of paper, blowing about the Desert at El Agheila and I am sure that it must have been written by a New Zealander. I will mark the lines quoted by Montgomery. I have learnt it by heart now and like it even better than Kipling's Soldier's Prayer to Mithras.

3 March 1945. Letter to his mother;

Your letters have suddenly started coming to me as fast as mine go to you. Your last two have taken exactly 14 days each. This is wonderful. And I have had an answer from you to my writing of the 5th year of War, and also to the letter when I told you that the sleeves had arrived and how I had put them in. I am glad that you like the 5th Year of War so much. It is going to be much more fun writing the 6th and last year if Japan is really finished off by then.

I think there is a very good chance.

The sleeves in the sheepskin coat are still as good as ever. I bless them every day. I have had a photograph taken of me wearing it, standing by the captured German half-track, and I will send it to you when it comes out. I am just off to take some photographs of the war damage in this town, which should be interesting in time to come.

My M.C. has come through. I was told yesterday. Very nice.

(Whilst the Battalion remained in Goch several awards were announced including Major A.W. Leslie MC. This was for extreme bravery and inspirational leadership in action during the attack on Gennep.)



Major Sandy Leslie with the captured German half-track and his much loved sheepskin coat

8th March 1945. Thorn and Wessen, Holland. Letter to his mother;

We have moved again. Right out of Germany this time and away behind the fighting, which is very pleasant. I hope it will last a bit longer than some of our stays. We had a very early move, getting up at 3 o'clock, but it was a good one, and we arrived in plenty of time to get more or less settled in before dark. This village has been very much a front line one until a few days ago. Now the war is well away from it and most of the civilians are back.

Our mess is in a house that is unoccupied. It isn't too badly knocked about, but was in a terrible mess. Just like any other front line house one goes into. There is always glass all over the floor, all the cupboards and drawers have always been opened and tipped on to the floor, and there is dust and dirt

everywhere. We set to and cleaned it out, and managed to collect furniture from here and there. It is a bigger house than most and we have room to spread ourselves a bit.

Today we spent several hours collecting glass from other broken down houses. We have glass in all our windows now which is a great comfort. I have all our maps up on the wall too. We look most business-like – rather more like an Army Head Quarters than a Rifle Company Mess. The walls are covered and it is interesting to see all the battlefield, and how it stands in relation to other places we know. We have just heard, from a news flash, that the Americans are over the Rhine in strength at Cologne. I wonder if this is just another rumour. One hears so many. If it is true, it is a really magnificent effort and should make a difference to all our futures.

Did I never tell you about my Batman? I have had three now. Both the first two were quite nice, but rather dull fellows. I now have a very good one. His name is Chalmers and he comes from Aberdeenshire. He was a motor mechanic, which is very useful, and is altogether a most practical little man. He can cook, and looks after me wonderfully well.

He is a brave fellow too, and a good man to have around in a battle. He was a parachutist at one time and did 28 jumps before breaking his leg ... (censored)

All our clothes have been washed, and we have been able to take things out of kit bags and boxes for the first time for months. All nice and civilised. The Bn. Pipes & Drums beat Retreat here this afternoon. They are very good and large crowds turned out to watch them. We have our Piper and Drummer back with the Coy. now at last. They began functioning tonight. The Bugler playing the First & Last Posts, and both he and the Piper played Lights Out. Nice to hear. I wonder what the inhabitants think of it all.

I had a busy day today, acting as Civil Affairs Officer. Two companies are in this village and the Priest, who speaks a little English, brings all his troubles to me. He has lots of them, it seems. I have been able to help which is a good thing. The people are all, rather naturally, a bit disillusioned about soldiers and this helps to put us all on a better footing. They all like Scottish troops best, which is nice for us, and we do as much as possible to keep up this reputation. I have managed to get the village hall in exchange for all this help, and we now have it for Church parades, lectures and other functions.

The war news goes on being wonderful. The end is in sight now. As the Prime Minister said when he spoke to the Division last week, it only needs a good heave, all together, to finish it: I feel that the heave is on its way, and that it will be a good one.

18th March 1945. Letter to his mother;

Here is a photograph of me wearing my sheepskin coat, and standing by the German half-track I told you about. It was taken the day we finished our attack on Goch – our hardest battle so far. You can see the sheepskin coat with its sleeves in it, and how good it looks.

The half-track looks very battered, but we have had it painted up and straightened out since then. It looks quite spick and span now. (I hope the photograph travels safely in this letter card) (censored)

I always thought Blake wrote the poem about "I am the Master of My Fate". I have read a few other things of Henley's. I like the one to R.L.S. (Robert Louis Stevenson) too, but I don't like this resignation to death attitude very much. Personally I have no wish at all to die, but no fear of it either I don't think. I am sure that to die is nothing and, for the person concerned, may mean a much better existence; but for those who are left behind it is terrible. Don't feel tired of life, Mummy, we can't do without you.

I can tell you now where we were doing our fighting. We started off by attacking the Reichswald Forest. I am talking about this Bn. Then, after two other smaller attacks, took Gennep, then Goch, which meant three separate attacks, the middle one (just after which the photograph was taken) being the toughest. This Coy. was the first into both Gennep and Goch, and was one of the forward Coys. in the fierce battle. The first in is really the best, I think. We are rather good at it, and have made a name for ourselves by getting on to all our objectives in an amazing short time. We do it so fast that the enemy is quite bewildered, and it really makes life much easier.

21st March 1945. Marienbaum. Letter to his mother;

The two letters from you arrived on the same day. One written the last day of February wondering where I was then. I keep a little diary now, and on that day we were peacefully billeted in Goch, with our fighting over(censored)

I still like Milton, and can say large parts of it by heart. I like that bit about prayer too. I don't say my prayers enough and I always feel that it isn't fair to suddenly use God, and ask for something in an emergency and neglect him at other times. It is a vicious circle really, and I suppose I should do something about it.

We have just left our rather nice billets. They got nicer and nicer. Perhaps it was just because Spring is here. This last week has been wonderful. The sun has been shining and the cold is going out of the air. Our house, in that last place, had daffodils all over it that came out of our back garden. They flowered while we were there.

I have not told you yet the very sad news of Ian Molteno, although you might have heard it by now. Ian was killed in the Reichswald Forest, with the first Bn., two days after joining them from England. It was cruel bad luck. I hadn't seen him for ages; we were all so pleased that he was coming back to us, and looking forward to seeing him again, and then – almost as soon as the news that he had arrived, came the news of his death. His family are absolutely heartbroken. He has a wife and two small daughters too.

These tragedies happen every day. The Germans have a lot to answer for.

24th March 1945. River Rhine Crossing. Letter to his mother;

It is now 9 o'clock Saturday morning. Exactly 12 hours ago we crossed the Rhine. My Company was one of the leading ones, so I have the honour of being practically the first of the British Army to land on the other side.

By the time this reaches you, you will know all about the enormous scale of the whole thing.

It was a lovely moonlight night – warm and mild; I had seen the Rhine from about 200 yards away on Wednesday but even so it was a great thrill when we arrived there and saw it lit up in flashes as big tracer shells went across to mark our boundaries. We crossed without any sort of incident. It took us about four minutes to do the 600 yds. of water. My objective was about 500 yds. on the other side. We collected ourselves and took it at a high speed.

The artillery preparations had been on a gigantic scale, and was still going on (so it still is now) and there was very little chance of our being heard. We took our objective – a farm house and trenches and about 40 prisoners - with no trouble at all.

There will, I am sure, be more battles ahead, but the worst is probably over. I am very glad that it is. This sort of river crossing was a new operation to us, and the Rhine has always been a name to conjure with. We were all naturally a bit apprehensive, although very confident too. The weather is still glorious. The sun is out today. Everything looks lovely.

The guns are still banging away and there is smoke and dust mixed up with the morning mist, but the sky is as absolutely clear blue overhead, without a cloud of any sort.

This farm that we are in was intact when I looked at it three days ago. Now it is in ruins.

Over my head there is no ceiling or roof. We have cleaned out the room I am in, a little, and have a table and a chair in it that are more or less whole. We had to dig several large pieces of shrapnel out of the table. Now we shall have to wait for a few hours to see what shape the battle will take. There is every indication that it will be good, although the enemy is bound to collect himself a bit.

There isn't much more I can say – although there is much more I could tell you if I was allowed to. It is a great thing to belong to a Division as good as this one. We have done practically every kind of operation now – all with the same success – and are very proud of ourselves.

28 March 1945. Rees. Letter to his mother;

You will know far more about our doings in this battle than in any of the other ones, as this time the security seems to have been done away with. This is nice for us – and must be better still for you, to hear just who is doing what. You will know too that we have bumped into the only really organised effort that the Hun has made along the whole front. This is very bad luck. Although there is nothing really very fierce, it means that we – the Infantry – have to go battling along instead of just being able to follow in the wake of the tanks. I hope this day will come for us soon too. I have great hopes of the war ending soon – in about a fortnight. If it isn't over by then it will probably take another month, perhaps two. (The War in Europe ended on 8th May 1945 when Germany signed the complete and unconditional surrender to the Allied Forces in Europe).

My Company has had a fairly easy time. The night I wrote my last letter we did an attack that was quite brisk for a bit, but all was well in the end. Last night we did another – gentle, this time – and I got another car out of it. My last one (I think I told you) just stopped on us.

There was nothing we could do to make it go. This one is an Opel – the People's Car – that was running about in England before the war. It is nearly



The nose cone of the shell that struck Major Sandy Leslie would probably have killed him, if it had not been stopped by the silver cigarette case given to him on his 21st birthday

new, and apart from no windscreen it is in very good condition. We will get one of these soon. It has a few bullet holes in it, but all its lights, windscreen wipers, traffic indicators – everything in fact – work beautifully. A very good thing.

Our Bn. is rather in the rear by now. I am in a good house that has escaped the worst of the battering. There are civilians in it, but they hardly venture out of the cellar, and we have the whole house to ourselves.

My Company has now taken 129 prisoners since crossing – not a bad total.

5th April 1945 Isselburg. Letter to his mother;

We are on the move again. Following up the battle, although not taking a part in it again yet. The enemy are still plugging away, and holding things up. We really know very little of what is going on – we are not nearly so well up with news as you are. Everything moves so fast. Confusing rumours keep coming in. But we do know that everything still seems to be moving steadily – and well – in the right direction.

Yesterday we moved into a town in Germany that had just had our tanks through it, and nothing else. I arrived up first, with a few men, to make a reconnaissance of the place. It looked deserted and rather sinister. Not badly knocked about – most of the houses more or less untouched, the chickens in the coups still laying eggs. A huge woollen mill, with English machinery and spools of wool on all the looms still there. As if a giant hand had come down and stopped the engines and removed all the workers.

The civilians had all disappeared down cellars, and are gradually coming to light. Most of them now are working at putting down road blocks and repairing damage. They are all quite docile and eager to please. All the same one has to keep a wary eye on them as there have been instances of our soldiers being shot by these civilians – including women. I am living in an hotel. It is quite nice. A pub downstairs of the usual sort. My room is the Office with a nice stove and a sofa. Upstairs all the beds were made with blankets and clean sheets on them. I and my Coy. H.Q. – about 30 men slept in great luxury last night. I hope we may stay here for a day or two. There is a good piano in the bar. One of my signallers is playing it now. All the men are singing “Bonnie Mary of Argye”. A very nice set up.

I have a bigger and better car now. A Fiat. I got it yesterday 16 horse power, and it has only done 3000 miles. Left behind with no petrol, and quite undamaged. I have given the Opel to another Coy.

(Sandy was badly wounded eleven days after this letter was written. After 5th April the Battalion was involved in actions at Schuttorf, Ankum and Quakenbrücke as well as in the Wildeshausen and Dotlubegb area. It was here on the 16th April, three weeks before the end of the War in Europe, that Sandy was wounded while he was guiding a Valentine 17-pounder to where it could fire on an enemy SP Gun (Self Propelled Artillery Gun) which he had located earlier. The SP Gun then fired on them. His life was saved twice that day. The nose cap of the shell hit him in the right breast and would probably have killed him if it had not been stopped by the silver cigarette case given to him on his 21st birthday. He was also hit by shrapnel high up in the right leg and an artery burst. He stemmed the bleeding by shoving his thumbs into the wound. When he was taken from the battlefield both his thumbs were dislocated from the strain.

In the same action Major Graham Pilcher MC, O.C. “C” Coy., was also badly wounded by shellfire. The 48-hour battle had proved expensive to both “B” and “C” Coys. with their Company Commanders wounded and their active service ended. Sandy and Graham remained lifelong friends.)

MC CITATION

At dawn on the 11 Feb 45 Major Leslie was commanding the leading Company attacking the town of Gennep after a difficult river crossing. From the outset resistance was stiff and the attack was brought to a standstill. The strongpoint of the enemy resistance was a factory building near the bridge. Realising this, Major Leslie immediately organised a separate assault on this building and leading his men himself against intense and close range fire, stormed the enemy position and forced entry. The fighting was far from over in this building as the enemy resisted strongly in every part. Major Leslie was everywhere encouraging his men and assaulting room after room until all the enemy were killed or wounded. His complete disregard of danger and his courage and dash were magnificent. The capture of this factory was one of the turning points in the attack and enabled the rest of his Company to advance. Fierce fighting then broke out in the area of the hospital. The first attack failed to take it. Once again Major Leslie was on the spot at once and again lead a spirited assault on the enemy through a hail of M.G. fire and mortar bombs. The enemy were so overwhelmed by this attack that many of them ran away. Major Leslie charged after them with about 10 men through several blocks of houses and wiped out the lot. Major Leslie's devotion to duty in the face of intense and close enemy fire was an inspiration to his Company throughout this operation. His gallant example and complete disregard for his personal safety had a decisive effect on the result of the attack.



Major Sandy Leslie as a young officer

THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF THE TOWN OF VUGHT

Saturday 26th October 2019

By Major C B Innes

We are fortunate in this country never to have been invaded during World War II but for anyone in Europe who faced the Nazi invasion of the Low Countries and then France in 1940 it was a very painful period.

The Red Hackle Magazine was about to go for print in November last year just after an impressive ceremony took place in Vught to mark the 75th Anniversary of its Liberation by the British Army and in particular by the 7th Battalion The Black Watch, then commanded by my father-in-law, Lt Col Charles Frederick Cathcart of Pitcairnie, Newburgh, Fife.

Some description of Vught is necessary for it was an old town in the South of the Netherlands between Tilburg and Hertogenbosch. Overrun by the Nazis the population of Vught spent the war years as an occupied town. Today it is quite a thriving dormitory town, with a population of about 27,000 serving the cities of Antwerp, Tilburg, Breda and Hertogenbosch. Vught is well known for its high Church Tower, known as the Vughtse Toren, which gave a good view over the surrounding countryside. The Tower is still there, somewhat pitted by bullet holes from the war but very much the centre of religious activity.

The Battalion was part of 154 Infantry Brigade and they in turn were part of 12 Corps, led by Lieutenant General Neil Ritchie, a very well known Black Watch Officer. As the Allies began to press the German Army back towards the Rhine, the 7th Battalion were ordered to attack and relieve the town of Vught. This they did successfully and in 1944 the Jocks were delighted to discover that the Burgomeister of Vught had married a Scots girl from Perth before the War. The Jocks simply could not believe her Scots accent and her absolute delight at being relieved by a Highland Regiment even if it was a Fife Battalion!

Last year the people of Vught decided to make a big celebration of the 75th Anniversary of their Liberation in October 1944. Balhousie Castle had entertained the local Vught historian, Mr Wim Kievits and had given him as much information as possible about the Liberation from the 7th Battalion's point of view.

But the Regiment wanted someone with a real connection to the

events in 1944 and fortunately The Courier newspaper ran an article, seeking anyone with relatives who took part in the Liberation 75 years ago. This revealed Mr Roy Robertson, who was the son of the late Major C.D. "Chick" Robertson of the 7th Battalion who had actually entered the town on the day it was liberated. Chick Robertson had retained an old map of Vught that he had used at the time and his son had all his wartime medals which the Courier featured in an article on 21st June 2019.

Major Chick Robertson gained a Mention in Despatches for his gallantry at the time and later retired to Newport-on-Tay where he joined the Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art. There he taught art for some 30 years and he also paid a number of visits back to Vught on the anniversary of the Liberation each year.

Roy Robertson and his wife, Barbara, attended the 75th Liberation celebrations on 26th October 2019. Roy wore the kilt and had been trying to get the Burgomeister to wear a kilt as well but I think the City Chieftain's shape was such that Ronnie Proctor's store at Balhousie had no suitable size! The town arranged a short march route for the thousand or so spectators who had assembled in the town that day, stopping off at War Memorials, the Vughtse Toren and at the Nazi Concentration Camp outside the town, which troops from the 7th Battalion discovered as they pursued German soldiers out of the town. Then, all those present, gathered in the town square where tributes were paid to the gallant citizens who withstood the Nazi occupation and thanks were expressed to Mr Roy Robertson representing the 7th Battalion.

The Herzogenbusch Concentration Camp was one of the first discovered by British soldiers and they found most disturbing scenes of murder of men and women, some of which were carried out just as the British Army approached. The Concentration Camp was one of the very few manned by SS which were set up outside of Germany.

My father-in-law and his Battery Commander came up against a German patrol just as they entered Vught and they had to disperse them with their handguns and fortunately the patrol surrendered.

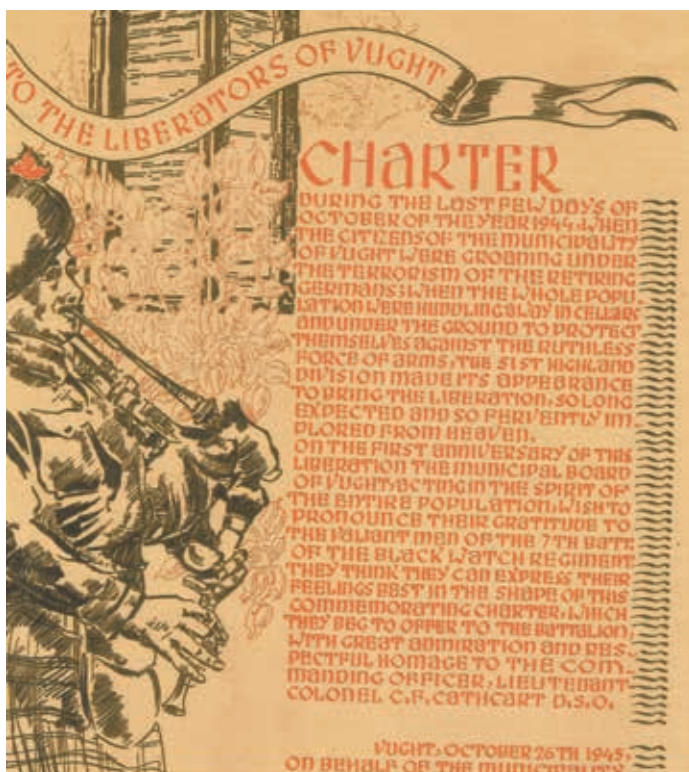
There is now a fine museum in the centre of Vught recording the Nazi occupation early in the War and the town's Liberation in 1944.

I have presented Lieutenant Colonel Charles Cathcart's very fine Certificate to the Museum. This was given to him and signed by the Burgomeister of Vught, and records again the gratitude of the people of Vught to the 7th Battalion The Black Watch.

What I think is so important for us to remember, is the reception that besieged people of Vught expressed when the 7th Battalion came marching in. In fact the Battalion were travelling in the new Kangaroo troop-carrying vehicles which were later to be used with such success at the Rhine Crossing. After four years of Nazi occupation this was really a moment for universal rejoicing and many a Jock was kissed by the town's women as they passed through the town and as men, women and children poured out to welcome their liberators.



Lieutenant Colonel C F Cathcart DSO who was CO of the 7th Battalion (August 1943 to April 1945) when Vught was liberated



A Charter signed by the Burgomaster of Vught 26 October 1945 one year after the liberation of the town

The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland



COMMANDING OFFICER'S FOREWORD

Commanding Officer:	Lieutenant Colonel GJ Sefton
Second-in-Command:	Major NP Colquhoun MBE Major D M Robertson (from July 2020)
Adjutant:	Captain J I I Ramsay
Operations Officer:	Captain N Hannay
Regimental Sergeant Major:	Warrant Officer Class 1 (RSM) M R Gray

In last year's Red Hackle, I wrote that the battalion was poised to take over as the lead UK contribution to NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (Land) (VJTF(L)), that we would subsequently deploy to Afghanistan in 2021, and that the future remained exciting. While the COVID-19 pandemic has changed many things across the world, the fullness of that forecast has in fact remained true.

Following a very successful run out on Ex WESSEX STORM, the battalion spent the remainder of the autumn focusing on Company level training, building on the hard won progress made so far in the year. Of particular note was Ex BLACKWATCH LEGIONAIRE, a five-day rotation in Whinny Hill working on urban skills. Few other experiences can match the adrenaline rush and motivation of being on the baseline during a riot and it was a valuable and competitive week of training. The arrival of winter weather at the Fort coincided with some Royal Marine Cold Weather instructors who delivered a few days of topical training.

A three week Christmas leave was exactly what was needed after an action packed year of training and before taking on the year long responsibility as the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (Land) (VJTF(L)) - held at five days' Notice To Move from 1st January 2020. The battalion and its vital attachments are now poised and ready to go anywhere in the world at the request of NATO. Having prepared hard in the previous year, the Battalion started January with the 'Fort George Festival of Fitness (and Fun)'. The Festival - billed as 'a month in a tracksuit' - was designed not just to take the opportunity to do two sessions of physical training every day but to give every soldier the chance to take part in a range of different sports. Everything from boxing to yoga, cycling to darts, and all points in between was on offer for the soldiers to try.

At the same time, soldiers from the battalion also took part in the full range of Army winter sports: the Nordic Ski team reached the Army and Tri-Service championships and the Alpine team won over 20 medals at the Infantry championships. There was further success at the Divisional championships and Lieutenant Hector Cowie and Corporal Matthews were selected to represent the Infantry at the Army championships. Members of the battalion also learnt to Telemark ski in Pralognan-la-Vanoise, while at the same time a team of four travelled to (and returned safely from) Saint Moritz to risk their lives on the Cresta Run.

In February, the Battalion Headquarters travelled to Poland to take part in a NATO Brigade-level exercise with our Polish Allies from 21st Podhale Rifle Brigade. Whilst it was certainly a learning experience for both sides as we adjusted to each other's ways and means of conducting business, the warmth of our hosts and the enthusiasm of all participating meant it was not only a thoroughly useful training event but also an enjoyable two weeks in a beautiful country.

As with the rest of the country, the battalion's activities in the last six months have been somewhat curtailed by the current pandemic. However, due to innovation and determination across all ranks (and not a little puzzling over, and cursing of, computers), we have largely been able to find ways to keep training so that the battalion is fit to fill its requirements as the VJTF, whilst still remaining compliant with COVID countermeasures. Not only have the Jocks been maintaining their fighting edge, they have also been heavily involved in helping with the MOD's support to civilian authorities in the guise of Op RESCRIPT. Whether it was being involved in running mobile testing units dotted all around the remotest parts of the Highlands, or providing liaison officers and advice as far afield as sunny north Wales, the Jocks were widely praised by their civilian counterparts for their professionalism

and cheerfulness.

The changes have been rung in Battalion Headquarters: Major Nick Colquhoun MBE has handed over as Battalion Second-in-Command to Maj Dave Robertson, moving 'upstairs' from Charlie (Fire Support) Company, and Warrant Officer Class 1 Marty Gray has taken over as Regimental Sergeant Major from Warrant Officer Class 1 (RSM) Kev Pedder, who must be congratulated for commissioning and moving to 1 Royal Irish as Motor Transport Officer. We've swapped one Nick for another as Captain Nick Hannay has taken over from Nick Coles as Battalion Operations Officer, freeing him to move on to be Assistant Military Assistant to the Deputy Chief of the General Staff. Captain Dave Spencer has joined the team as the Intelligence Officer earlier than expected, as his time in Egypt as 4 Brigade's Liaison Officer was unfortunately cut short by the pandemic.

As we head into the Autumn, the battalion has successfully demonstrated its readiness to 51 Brigade's Commander, undergoing a full five-day activation exercise before deploying en-masse south to Galloway Forest for a week's training. A visit by the outgoing Divisional Commander couldn't have been timed better, cementing the battalion's reputation as the most ready and highly trained unit in the entire Division. The Jocks can rightly be proud of how hard they have trained and how high a standard they hold themselves to. We remain poised, as the tip of the spear, for the UK's NATO war-fighting reaction force until year-end. Thereafter our current state of readiness will see us ready for whatever challenges 2021 may bring.



Soldiers of A Company conduct vehicle contact drills on Ex Galloway Hackle

THE OFFICERS' MESS

President of the Mess Committee:	Major EB Gorrie
Mess Secretary:	Captain C Howie

This period of our history will no doubt be one of its most extraordinary, a period when we have had to temporarily close it owing to the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent lockdowns. I can happily report that the Mess has now re-opened as of the summer, though there are several limitations which have been placed upon us.

Prior to the lockdown we were fortunate to run several events. It was with great pleasure that the Officer's Mess hosted a reunion in November, to mark the ten years since the return of the "Black Watch 3 SCOTS Battlegroup" from Op HERRICK 10. Twenty Eight officers sat down for dinner, representing over half of the battalion's officers and a considerable number of their attached Arms from the deployment, demonstrating the strength of the bond across the wider team. Also present were three soldiers who have been commissioned since the tour, including then RSM now Major Lawrie McDougall who read the roll of honour before we toasted absent friends. Lieutenant Colonel Graham Sefton, the Commanding Officer, joined as Brigadier Stephen Cartwright's guest and spoke of the lasting impression Op HERRICK 10 has left on the conscience of 3 SCOTS.

At the end of November, the Mess hosted a Fathers' Dinner Night. An annual event, it affords us the opportunity to thank our fathers for their support and perseverance over the years. It was an excellent evening and as always, our fathers left with an impression of what makes our Mess so unique; Highland hospitality remains at the core of our spirit.

Over the winter period Lieutenants Hector Cowie, Craig Barbour and JM Roberti competed for the Battalion in a series of winter alpine events. Such was Lt Cowie's success that he remained in the Alps for an extended period, competing for the Infantry. Captains Coles and Ramsay and Lieutenants Lewis and Smith competed in the annual Cresta Run in Switzerland.

We were fortunate to host a Ladies Dinner Night in February, which would be the last formal event held by the Mess prior to the enforced lockdown. Like the Fathers' Dinner Night, this evening allows us to thank our wives, partners and mothers for their continued and unwavering support.

As ever, there have been many comings and goings over the last twelve months. We bid farewell to Major Billy Garrick and Major Si Wright, who commence Staff College in the autumn. Major Rob Colquhoun, who has served the Battalion for many years, departed and assumes a role in the MOD. Captain Nick Coles departed as did Captains Scott Munro, Robbie Crook, Dan Macleod, Mick Gray, and Lieutenant Craig Barbour. We welcomed Major Dougie McCutcheon, Major Andy Magee and Major Mark Dobson. Captain Al McCormack joined as Training Officer, Captain David Spencer as Intelligence Officer and Lt Rory Walters. 2Lts Lachlan Broad, Sam Hayes, Stu Smith and Ben Dodson all joined us, having commissioned from RMAS and having completed their Platoon Commanders' Battle Course at Brecon.

Whilst the lockdown has led to a paucity of social events it has allowed us to focus on some improvements to the Mess, including sending some of our wonderful silver collection away for cleaning and repairs. The Mess fireplaces in the Ante and Public room have been re-opened and the first fires were recently lit of the winter period. We also hope to commission a new piece of art work to mark our continued presence in Fort George, thanks to a kind grant from Regimental Headquarters.



The 3 SCOTS Cresta Run team enjoying some winter sun by the St Moritz ice-rink (left to right) Lt Lewis, Capt Coles, Lt Smith and Capt Ramsay



The 3 SCOTS Battlegroup, OP HERRICK 10 Officers' reunion was held at Fort George on 1 November 2019



The Father's Dinner Night was held in late November 2019

WARRANT OFFICERS' AND SERGEANTS' MESS

Presiding Mess Member:	Warrant Officer Class (RSM) M R Gray
President of the Mess	Warrant Officer Class 2 (CSM)
Committee:	J Couper

Welcome to this year's update on the activities of the Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess. We hope this finds you all well during what has been an extraordinarily challenging year. The last twelve months has seen the WOs' and Sgts' Mess continue full steam ahead and it proudly remains the engine room for all the battalions' activities.

Operationally, for the remainder of 2020, the Mess remains at readiness as part of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force and the Joint Expeditionary Force whilst continuing to uphold ongoing UK commitments to Op VULCAN, Op TEMPERER and Op UNICORN.

As always, the door to the Mess continues to revolve with many farewells and the welcoming of new members to our team. The most notable of these has been the handover of the Regimental Sergeant Major from WO1 (RSM) Kev Pedder to WO1 (RSM) Marty Gray on his return from regimental duties at 2 SCOTS. WO1 Pedder sets sail for the Royal Irish Regiment and has commissioned as their Motor Transport Officer. We would like to thank him for all his hard work during the past two years and wish him all the best for the future.

The following promotions to WO2 saw WO2 (CSM) Duncan Blake taking over Bravo Company, WO2 (CSM) James McCarthy move into Charlie (Fire Support), WO2 (CSM) Paul Roadnight take over Delta (Light) Company and WO2 (CSM) Alan Bowe take over Headquarter Company on his return from Kenya. Other changes have seen WO2 (CSM) James Couper move from CSM Charlie Company to Alpha (Grenadier) Company; WO2 Ross Hunter move from CSM Bravo Company to Battalion Headquarters as Operations Warrant Officer. A big loss to the Mess was WO2 Eddie Nichol who made the transition to civvy street.

Whilst the operational functions of the Mess have continued at pace throughout the year it will be of no surprise that the social calendar has been somewhat pared back. We did however, prior to the national lockdown, manage to squeeze in a few cracking events.

First up was our Christmas function which was superbly organised by the Regimental Signals Warrant Officer, WO2 Chris Bonnar, and his team. This was a fantastically festive celebration that brought Mess

members and their guests together in the Crown Court Hotel in Inverness. A hearty feast was followed by an evening of dancing and festive fun.

Before parting on Christmas leave the Warrant Officers joined forces with the Officers' Mess in entertaining the "patch" with wildly out of tune carol singing whilst dressed in questionable Christmas jumpers! In keeping with tradition, the evening culminated in a few gratefully received whiskies hosted by the Commanding Officer.

The following day saw us serving the Jocks' lunch before the officers joined us in the Mess to reflect and celebrate with a few gins and some brilliantly thought out games. It is with great pride we can report the WO's and Sgts' Mess destroyed the Officers and dominated the night: no surprises there!



The Burns' Supper (from left to right), Sgt Ross, Sgt Muir, Sgt Fraser, Sgt Richardson, Sgt Brownless, Sgt Ahmed and Sgt King

Our final social event of the year was our Burns' Night celebration. This was a night that was crafted by WO2 (CSM) James Couper and his team of cronies. The Burns' supper saw Mess members and the invited Late Entry Officers being transported back in time, watching fantastic renditions from the life and works of Scotland's great national bard, Robert Burns. The evening showcased works of art including Tam O' Shanter, A Parcel of Rogues in a Nation and Tae a Toothache, as well as songs and clatter from Graham E Pearson.

The finale to a very busy and demanding year saw the battalion return to work under project PHOENIX, continue to navigate the complexities of COVID-19, resume normal jogging before beginning preparations for mission specific training for Op TORAL, Afghanistan in the spring of 2021.



The Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess Christmas Dinner was held at the Crown Court Hotel in Inverness

ALPHA COMPANY

Officer Commanding:	Major EB Gorrie
Second-in-Command:	Lieutenant R Lewis
Company Sergeant Major:	Warrant Officer Class 2 Robb/
Warrant Officer Class 2 Couper	
Company Quartermaster	
Sergeant:	Colour Sergeant Ritchie
OC 1 Platoon:	Lieutenant CJ Barbour/
	Lieutenant L Broad

Platoon Sergeant:
OC 2 Platoon:

Sergeant Paton
Lieutenant H Cowie/Lieutenant R Walters

Platoon Sergeant:
OC 3 Platoon:
Tech Sergeant:

Sergeant McFadden /Sgt Purse
Colour Sergeant Lockhart
Sergeant O'Gorman

The last 5 months have perhaps been the most unique in the history of Alpha (Grenadier) Company. The Coronavirus pandemic led to many of our training events being delayed and the Company was forced to work from home for six weeks; this brought with it many challenges, including how to maintain our readiness for our ongoing NATO Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) commitment, whilst living at home.

Prior to the lockdown, 2 Platoon (The Doomers) deployed to Oman on Ex JEBEL STORM in support of Balaklava Company. From 21 January to 2 March, the platoon conducted blank and live firing exercises, a series of platoon and Company tactical activities and during the bi-lateral phase of the exercise, trained alongside a Company from the Sultan of Oman's Parachute Battalion. The expeditionary nature of the exercise was a unique experience for the junior Jocks; for many this was their first overseas exercise and first time in the Middle East. On completion of the tactical phase of the exercise, the platoon conducted a short Adventurous Training package on the coast of Oman, which included Wadi walks whilst accommodated on the beach. Once in Muscat the platoon conducted a series of cultural visits, including the local markets and the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque.

Lieutenant Hector Cowie continued his excellent work on Ex FROSTED BLADE, competing with great success for both the Battalion and then the Infantry teams. The 3 SCOTS team took 20 medals, came second overall in the Infantry standings and Lieutenant Cowie was crowned Infantry Champion.

1 Platoon were involved in a series of short exercises in support of other unit activity, including providing an enemy force on Salisbury Plain in March.

The Coronavirus outbreak put a hold on our training plans for the second quarter of the year but throughout lockdown we maintained a battle rhythm from home, everyone conducting PT daily and undertaking lessons online. The OC and CSM undertook a 500km cycle challenge from their homes to raise money for the NHS Charities, the Jocks in the 24hrs leading up to the event having completed 10km each to set the distance for the OC and CSM.

We were hugely fortunate that the decision was taken early to return to work to maintain our readiness standards. Whilst time with families was hugely appreciated, all were increasingly missing the camaraderie of being in the Company. Bringing everyone back to train whilst maintaining social distancing has proven a challenge but inevitably the Jocks have adapted quickly to the 'new normal'.

We deployed to Kirkcudbright in May to conduct a weeklong live firing camp which was a welcome return to soldiering. In the lead up to summer leave, we also ran a series of patrol and shooting competitions, our focus being on improving our warfighting skills.

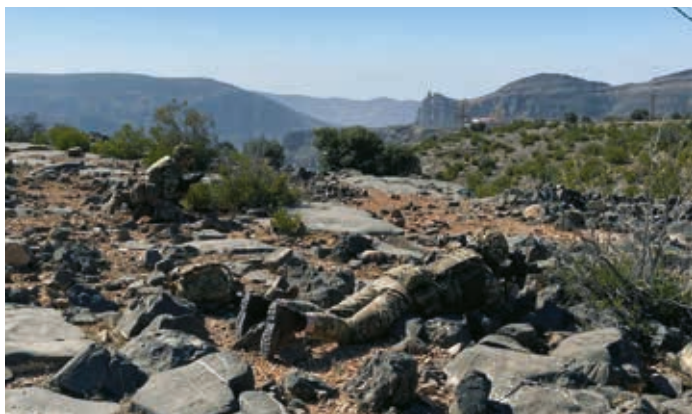
Since our return from the summer leave period in August, the Company has spent a week on a navigation exercise in the Pentland Hills and a week on the Barry Buddon ranges. Navigation remains a key skill for any soldier and the Pentland Hills offered a new challenge. Navigation was conducted by day and night, in pairs and up to section level.

The live firing package in Barry Buddon focussed on platoon attacks by day and night, close quarter marksmanship, pistol and bayonet ranges. We continually seek new ways to increase the challenge and complexity of our training serials. The platoon night attacks were conducted using our night vision devices with no additional illumination. Our aim is to increasingly replicate the conditions we would experience in combat.

Looking ahead to the next few months we have a series of exercises to look forward to, both here in Scotland and then on Salisbury Plain in November. This final period of the year is set to be as diverse and challenging as the first has been.

The Company has welcomed and said goodbye to several key personnel. WO2 Robb left the company to assume the role of Company Sergeant Major of Balaklava Company in Edinburgh. WO2 Couper moved from across the square as CSM Charlie Company, to take over from WO2 Robb. Sgt McFadden promoted to CSgt and has moved just across the Fort to become CQMS of B Company. Lieutenant Craig Barbour left Alpha Company to join 1 SCOTS as a Platoon

Commander, his position being filled by 2Lt Lachlan Broad. Lieutenant Rory Walters has arrived from Balaklava Company and will assume the role of 2 Platoon Commander from Lt Hector Cowie in September.



A Company undertook training in the Oman



Pte Meiklejohn suppressing an enemy position during Ex JEBEL STORM



Night firing on Fort George ranges



Alpha Company FOXHOUNDS deploying into the mud of Galloway Forest

BRavo COMPANY

Officer Commanding	Major RJ Colquhoun MBE (until June 2020) Major AJ Magee
Second-in-Command (until July 2020)	Lieutenant FAM Haigh
Company Sergeant Major	Lieutenant ERM Smith Warrant Officer Class 2 R Hunter (until July 2020) Warrant Officer Class 2 D Blake
Company Quartermaster Sergeant	Colour Sergeant B Smith (until July 2020) Colour Sergeant S McFadden
Officer Commanding 5 Platoon	Lieutenant SF Adkin (until December 2019) Second Lieutenant B Dodson
5 Platoon Sergeant	Sergeant S Connor (until June 2020) Sergeant G Lilley
Officer Commanding 6 Platoon	2nd Lieutenant S Smith (from August 2020) Sergeant K White (from August 2020)
6 Platoon Sergeant	Lieutenant ERM Smith (until June 2020) Second Lieutenant S Hayes
Officer Commanding 7 Platoon	Sergeant R Miller (until January 2020) Sergeant J Woodrow
7 Platoon Sergeant	

Bravo Company has had yet another busy year, curtailed by the global pandemic that has impacted us all. Beginning 2020 as the lead Light Mechanized Infantry Company within the 3 SCOTS Battlegroup held at high readiness for the NATO Response Force in 2020, the Company has maintained its high standards of training, execution and fighting capability.

Our end to 2019 however, was a busy one. With our confirmatory Battlegroup level exercise complete in September, we were afforded the time to conduct a range of training to both test and develop the Company's soldiers. In October, we undertook a Mental Resilience Training exercise in the Rothiemurchus Forest with a focus on mountainous navigation, survival training and elements of tracking and team building throughout. The week started with an overnight march through the Lairig Ghru in full bergen order, covering some 30 miles, with the odd excursion to the Devil's Point and an overnight stay in the Corrou bothy – a first for many! With feet recovering, the soldiers were educated in the art of bushcraft in the Glenmore forest. Private Reid of 7 Platoon displayed his handywork with knives, as well as christening the 'Black Watch Firelighter' (traditional, exhausting and only rarely effective!). Finally, with the more efficient bow-saw method, Sergeant Connor and Corporal Brogan made the first au naturel fire of the day. Lieutenant Adkin then put on a fine show of killing, cleaning and preparing a cornucopia for the dinner table, including the more or less successful dispatching of a small flock of chickens. With many of the soldiers having venison, goose and duck for the first time that night, washed down by a (free!) drink or two, we fell well rested into our beds at the end of the week.

With a rugged notch in our belts, we sought to test our Jocks in one of the most challenging and exciting military tasks we deliver: public order. With 'Riot Training Gear', many of our Jocks saw their first action on the Fort George parade square, with Lance Corporal Ramage excellently commanding the 'civilian population' to success against our early efforts. By the end of several days training, split lips, sore arms and a lot more confidence saw us deploy to North Yorkshire for Exercise Black Watch Legionnaire. Here, the men of Delta Company played the fractious and ever incompetent Police force under Sergeant Stewart, with some excellent role playing from the remainder. With patrolling, intelligence gathering and crowd control, the soldiers and officers of the Company were continually tested. A memorable final serial saw Corporals Carter and Bruce, with Lance Corporal Rakovac, as the 'base line' commanders and an impromptu arrival of the Commanding Officer. With the civilian population crying for his head, the Company's efforts succeeded in keeping unwanted attention from our newest Jock. To finish a productive year, we undertook a historical journey through famous Scottish battlefields and iconic sites as a reward to those who

had met the future readiness requirements for 2020. With Culloiden on our doorstep, Lieutenant Smith led an enthusiastic and well researched tour of the battlefield and a further tour of Fort George by the excellent staff of Historic Environment Scotland. Setting off for our home grounds, the Company left for Killiecrankie and Aberfeldy. Enjoying our short period of fame walking to the Black Watch Inn, we welcomed a drink in the warm confines our predecessors might have enjoyed in 1739. Next to Glamis Castle and the Powrie Brae monument in Dundee – of note was Corporal Bruce’s emotional presentation with the going down of the sun. Our week was completed by an excellent tour of Edinburgh Castle with Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Clark and an equally windswept trip about Stirling Castle. Overall, a well spent week reminding ourselves of the illustrious history of our own battalion, and the wider regiment, and an excellent way to round off a successful 2019. We began the year gently, with January hosting the Festival of Fitness – a whole month of sports, fitness education and developing our understanding of the ‘combat athlete’. With regular fitness events and a phased return to training after well earned Christmas leave, we ended the month with fitter, healthier and, importantly, relaxed soldiers. With the looming number of Opposition Forces (OPFOR) tasks coming, we were grateful for a well earned rest. Despite this 2nd Lieutenant Dodson, along with Privates Lyall, McDonald, Reid and Simmons decided that rest was not what they required and joined the battalion boxing camp instead. With their impressive efforts to lose Christmas’ ill-gained weight, their final bouts were to be cancelled in light of the ongoing pandemic.

In February, 5 Platoon deployed on Exercise Ares Wonder, supporting the demanding and complex Light Role Reconnaissance Commanders’ Course. Here, Sergeant Connor distinguished himself, as did the Platoon, earning a commendation from the Officer Commanding the Recce Division. Following a ‘shake out’ in a wintry and somewhat bleak exercise on our nearby Cawdor Estate, the Company set off for Salisbury Plain in March, this time to support the final exercise of the Company Commanders’ course. On familiar ground once more, the soldiers displayed the professionalism and tenacity for which they have become synonymous.

It was at this point that our plans were halted by COVID-19. Lieutenant Haigh’s Battalion ski-trip made it as far as Perth on their ill-fated dash for the ski slopes, aborted as the impending lockdown became inevitable. To minimise the risk to our soldiers and their families, we dispersed in late March. Despite this, our readiness commitment to NATO remains and the soldiers and officers of the Company have met this challenge readily. In a responsible and safe manner, we have successfully maintained our deployability through demanding range packages in Barry Buddon and Fort George and continued our soldiers’ education through distanced learning.

With the prospect of a return to normality, we look forward to ending 2020 on a high. Numerous interesting and challenging exercises will take place in the near future, including a deployment to the Galloway Forest, ranges in Otterburn and a change in focus for 2021 - looking ahead to deployment to Afghanistan. Within the Company, we have also seen

several promotions, with Corporals Gunn and Ramage promoting earlier in the year and with Privates Gray and McDowall, no doubt soon to ‘pick up’, after their strong performance on the Potential Non-Commissioned Officer Cadre.



*Ex BRAVO SHIELD
live firing at Barry
Buddon*



B Company Sharpshooter engages depth positions



B Company undertook a Section in Defence exercise



Major Andrew Magee passing on his direction and guidance prior to the night raid on Ex Galloway Hackle



*Pte Gray and
Pte White of
B Company
during Ex
Galloway
Hackle*

CHARLIE (FIRE SUPPORT) COMPANY

Officer Commanding: Major D M Robertson
Company Sergeant Major: Warrant Officer Class 2 J Couper/
Warrant Officer Class 2 J McCarthy
Second-in-Command: Lieutenant J-M Roberti
CQMS: Colour Sergeant P Roadnight/
Colour Sergeant T Meighan
Tech Sgt: Sgt R Rabonu / Sgt A Brown

As with the rest of the nation, the last twelve months have provided a unique set of challenges, not many of which were in the Forecast of Events! Following the success of Ex WESSEX STORM our sights were switched to final preparation to taking over our role in NATO's Very-high-readiness Joint Task Force (Land) (VJTF(L)). Hard work over the previous months meant there was not a huge amount to achieve to close the gap - being at readiness is the mindset the modern Jock has to sustain. This was typified by us sitting at 24hrs notice-to-move (NTM) in support of the Royal Lancers as the UK Standby Battalion from September to December 2019, whilst also on Ex Wessex Storm then preparing for the NATO role. The Savages came to within six hours of deploying to Yorkshire to repel the floods but were stood down as final packing was underway.

Late October saw many from the Company head off to the Cairngorms to complete some Mental Resilience training, based out of the excellent Norwegian Lodge on the banks of Loch Morlich, and completing a range of outdoor activities from hill walking to mountain biking and claypigeon shooting. The unexpected early arrival of winter saw conditions turn rather more challenging on the hills but, ultimately, delivering exactly the type of training needed as Jocks navigated up through the snow line over a 50km route, stopping off at a bothy overnight - much to the surprise of civilian walkers.

The Pipes and Drums were as busy as ever towards the end of the year, playing in Edinburgh for Remembrance Sunday amongst other commitments. As we rolled into 2020, the skillsets of our NCOs were once more in demand to support training across the UK and overseas. Being held at five days' NTM for NATO didn't stop a typical 25% of our workforce being deployed at any one time. January's inaugural "Fort George Festival of Fitness (and Fun)" gave the Jocks a month to blow out the cobwebs and undo the excesses of Christmas leave: a month of dedicated fitness and sport, with a view to improving overall mental and physical well-being was a cracking start to the year for those who remained in camp.

With the effects of the Coronavirus global pandemic affecting every aspect of life, it was inevitable that training for the Jocks would be impacted significantly. Troops dispersed home from late March; some isolating to support key workers in their immediate families. The platoons adapted with typical resilience, maintaining daily communications and adopting new ways of delivering training. However, vehicles cannot be kept on the road via Zoom, and Live Firing currency cannot be maintained on Strava, so when guard rotations came the Company's way, maximum use of in barracks training time was made. New practices were adopted in camp and on the ranges and control measures developed to comply with government guidance to keep the Jocks physically distanced and safe at work and in the lines. In the lead up to summer, the Machine Gun Platoon deployed to Warcop to conduct medium and heavy weapons ranges, both dismounted and mounted, and the Mortar Platoon travelled to Salisbury Plain to complete 81mm Mortar live fire training - an unexpected bonus as ammunition became available as courses and exercises ground to halt across the wider Army. Our VJTF(L) commitment remains extant and the Jocks have trained to ensure we are prepared, trained and ready to face whatever challenges come their way for the rest of 2020.

The Savages team has remained broadly stable in composition this year. Our Company Sergeant Major, WO2 Couper, now moves across the courtyard to Alpha Company, handing the reins over to WO2 'Loon' McCarthy on his welcome return to the Savages. WO2 Paul Roadnight hands over the CQMS role to CSgt Tam Meighan after a productive twelve months in post and promotion to CSM Delta Company. We wave goodbye to OC Mortars, Capt Dan MacLeod, off to sunnier climes on a six month posting to Jerusalem and Sgt 'Dinger' Bell leaves the Machine Gun Platoon for a not so sunny posting to 6 SCOTS. Sgt Rabonu and Sgt Brown have also both moved on. The Company Commander moves to Battalion Headquarters as Second-in-Command and we eagerly await the arrival of his replacement, Major Rob Illing. We thank them all for the significant contributions they have delivered in these unprecedented times.



Watch and Shoot during Ex Galloway Hackle

MACHINE GUN PLATOON

Platoon Commander: Lieutenant H W Atkinson-Clark
Platoon Sergeant: Sergeant S Bell

2020 has been an excellent year for the Machine Gun (MG) Platoon. At the start of the year we were divided. Sgt Bell took a MG section to Oman as part of Ex JEBEL STORM. All who took part in the month long exercise enjoyed the change of scenery, conducted valuable training and returned with a cracking tan. Meanwhile, another MG section led by Cpl Forsyth was sent to the milder climes of Wales in order to support a UK Special Forces exercise. They all gained some valuable experience working with dog units and learnt some incredible and valuable skills, including fast-roping and hostage rescue techniques - probably a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Lockdown provided an opportunity for the platoon to spend some much needed time at home with their loved ones and when we returned to Fort George at the beginning of June, we were straight back to our core business: operating machine guns and delivering devastating fire effect. The platoon deployed to Warcop for a three week range package during which we honed our skills with the General Purpose Machine Gun (Sustained Fire), Heavy Machine Gun and Grenade Machine Gun. We also conducted mounted shooting from our Husky protected mobility vehicles, re-honing skills last tested on Salisbury Plain in 2019. On return to Fort George, a platoon BBQ on the beach rounded off a good few weeks of training before a well deserved summer leave period.

After our return from leave we conducted some final live firing tactical training on the local ranges, before deploying 300 miles south to Galloway Forest on Exercise GALLOWAY HACKLE. We did so, having waved farewell to Sgt 'Dinger' Bell, who leaves us on a posting to 6 SCOTS. We thank him for all his hard work and enthusiasm over the last two years and wish him the best for his new role.

MORTAR PLATOON

Platoon Commander: Captain D MacLeod/
Lieutenant F Haigh
Second-in-Command: Warrant Officer Class 2 D Dempster

2020 has proved a challenging but productive year for the Mortar Platoon so far. The year began with the Fort George Festival of Fitness (and Fun); a month long drive improving personal fitness, health and well being awareness, adventurous training, and an introduction to new sports. A tough but rewarding month with many Jocks trying new sports and a marked improvement of fitness across the platoon. The transition to February saw the focus switch to vehicle maintenance and training, a key element of our ongoing contribution to NATO's Vanguard Joint Task Force.

The outbreak of COVID-19 resulted in the whole battalion conducting dispersed training. This posed a unique challenge but one which the Mortar Platoon rose to. An innovative training programme, leaning heavily on good self discipline and personal motivation, saw the platoon conducting online learning and individual physical training to ensure everybody maintained their deployability. On return to barracks for focussed training packages, a pioneering approach to live firing ensured social distancing was maintained throughout allowing the

platoon to conduct an exciting training package culminating with a fire team attack at night.

In June, the platoon returned from lockdown on a full time basis and a semblance of normality returned. A tough couple of weeks training with the mortar equipment proved incredibly useful prior to a platoon deployment to conduct a live fire package on Salisbury Plain. As ever, the ability to conduct live firing with the mortars proved incredibly popular with all members of the platoon. June also saw the departure of Sgt Steele who left to join the RAF Regiment. All members of the platoon would like to wish Sgt Steele all the best for the future and thank him for his hard work and dedication during his tenure.

A number of the platoon were promoted prior to the battalion going on summer leave. Corporals Salter, Leith, and McKenzie were all selected for promotion to Sergeant this year - a fantastic hat-trick for the platoon and testament to the quality of Junior NCOs in our team - and Lance-Corporal Nisbet was selected for promotion to Corporal. All worked incredibly hard to achieve this and we congratulate them all.

The return from summer leave saw the platoon welcome a new Platoon Commander, Lieutenant Fergus Haigh. Lieutenant Haigh moved to Charlie Company after a period commanding a Rifle Platoon and over a year as Bravo Company Second-in-Command. The whole platoon would like to express our thanks to Captain Dan Macleod for leading the platoon from strength to strength over the last two years - we wish him the best of luck for his six month posting to Jerusalem but worry that the Officers' Mess might not be fully prepared for big Dan's catering demands!

The rest of the year will see an exciting period for the platoon with numerous demanding exercises planned. Ex GALLOWAY HACKLE will test the platoon's ability to deploy within five days after receiving a test activation for the NATO's Vanguard Joint Task Force. We then move into the preparatory phase for Op TORAL, a battalion deployment in Afghanistan due in 2021. Individual Mission Specific Training will take place with a mandatory All Ranks Brief which will bring home the reality and proximity of the tour of Afghanistan. The year will culminate with more Live Fire Tactical Training with the platoon set the target of conducting a full platoon attack at night.



The Mortar Platoon deployed to Salisbury Plain during the summer. Private Reader awaits orders



Members of the Mortar Platoon on Salisbury Plain

ASSAULT PIONEER PLATOON/PIPES AND DRUMS

Pipe Major:

Colour Sergeant Tripney

Drum Major:

Sergeant C Lowe

This edition of the Red Hackle Magazine finds the Pipes & Drums as busy as ever right up until the world was halted by the COVID-19 Pandemic. The end of 2019 saw the band in high demand once again for State events. In November we took part in the National Act of Remembrance in Edinburgh - an event the band has not participated in for some years, as we have normally been in London taking part in the commemorations at the Cenotaph. It was a great privilege to be involved and it is something we look forward to again this year.

We rounded off 2019 with the Pipe Major taking a small ensemble of pipers and dancers to play at Lancaster House in London as part of the NATO summit event. The dinner night in Lancaster house was for all Secretaries of State from the NATO countries and a few high ranking military figures such as the Chief of the General Staff. The following day the Pipey played as part of the "Secretary of NATO's Moment" - opening the Summit along with a small contingent of drummers from the Royal Marines, broadcasting live around the globe.

At the same time as the NATO Summit was going on, new members of the platoon were at Gibraltar Barracks being trained on their Basic Assault Pioneer course, learning the new skills they would need to operate as part of the dual role platoon. This was a great way for them to round off the year before some well deserved Christmas leave.

2020 started with a packed State Ceremonial calendar (little did we know what was right around the corner in March). The first event saw a mini band head to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst to take part in their annual Burns night. This was a first time visit to Sandhurst for some and a great experience for us all. The Traditional Ceilidh band "Torridon" was also part of the entertainment and made the night one to remember. There were a few sore heads the following day, having been hosted well by the Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess.

This led us up to our first State event of the year, playing at a Gun Salute at Edinburgh Castle at the start of February and finishing out the month again in Edinburgh, with the band taking part in the annual Army Piping and Drumming Championships at the Piping School. We had members from novice right up to advanced compete in solo events as well as taking part in the mixed ensemble event. A special mention must go to LCpl McCaskill who took a prize in the Open Hornpipe and Jig contest that day.

In March we, just like the rest of the world, put everything on hold at the outbreak of the global pandemic. Major events were postponed or cancelled leaving a void to fill whilst we were all on lockdown. We used this to our advantage and made the best of a difficult situation by using the time at home to develop the musical talents of each and every member of the band.

We returned in June and took part in a commemoration for the "Heroes of St Valery" marking the 80th anniversary of the capture of the 51st Highland Division in France during the Second World War. We quickly started rebuilding our musical ability as well as our Pioneering capability. We had many individuals take part in piping courses, driving courses, chainsaw courses as well as range work and pipe band training. All challenging work as you would imagine but even more so with adapting to new guidelines for COVID.

We would like to welcome a number of new members to the platoon: Ptes Craven, Keith, McNeill, Moores, Murdoch and Mouat. We would also like to say a fond farewell to Cpl "Fraz" Hall who has been recently posted to the Op SMART (Mental Resilience) Team in Andover for two years. Congratulations are also in order for two members of our platoon on becoming new dads: LCpl Scott McCaskill on the birth of baby Hallie, and Pte Archie Keith on the birth of baby Natalia.

DELTA (LIGHT) COMPANY

Officer Commanding: Major S Wright until July 2020/
Major M Dobson

Second-in-Command: Lieutenant S Adkin

Company Sergeant Major: Warrant Officer Class 2 B Young until
March 2020/Warrant Officer Class 2 P
Roadnight

Company Quartermaster: Colour Sergeant M Arnold until August
2020/Colour Sergeant Lavery

Since returning from Ex WESSEX STORM 4/19, Delta Company pla-

toons have focused to preparing for the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) as part of a NATO commitment. Prior to this preparation was the Maxwell Shield sports competition. Delta Company were already in the lead when it came to the finale; a challenging gun run around the Northern Ramparts of the Fort George. Bravo Company gave chase but the Delta Company team were once again victorious and completed a resounding triumph of the Maxwell Shield for the second year running. Some respite from the more everyday Infantry tasks of readiness preparation came in the form of a two week mental resilience training package. This allowed the Company to test both their physical and mental agility, with the highlight being a week in Dundonnell in the North West Highlands conducting an evasion exercise. The mission was simple: split into teams from the three platoons, dropped off in a remote part of the Highlands, get to the next checkpoint and do not get caught! The teams were certainly tested during the week and the spectacular backdrop of the Highlands made it even more special. We are blessed to have such real estate on our back doorstep to train upon. In November 2019 we welcomed back the Communication Information Systems (CIS) Platoon into the Company; the skillset they bring will only increase the capability of the Company and will provide even more training opportunities.

As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, Delta Company were aligned as the lead Company for Op RESCRIPT (Defence's response to the crisis in support of the Government) in the North of Scotland. The whole Company moved out of Fort George and set up camp in Cameron Barracks ready for tasks. The main deployment for Delta Company was the delivery of Mobile Testing Units (MTUs) for the North of Scotland. This task required the Jocks to deploy to remote areas of the Highlands and provide the resources to the local public to conduct self tests for COVID-19; a very worthwhile task and even more enjoyable when the local bakeries dropped off supplies. On handing over the MTU task to 39 Engineer Regiment, Delta Company quickly re-focused their efforts to VJTF readiness again and live firing, both mounted and dismounted, were the main effort. Two excellent camps were run; Warcop and Tain Training Areas both providing the Platoons with superb training and a perfect chance to rebuild cohesion after the dispersal required for COVID-19.



Delta Company pistol shooting



Corporal Stockham serving lunch at the Fort



Lance Corporal Osanya setting up a new mast as part of the BGHQ testing phase on Ex Galloway Hackle

SNIPER PLATOON

Platoon Commander:	Lieutenant J M Roberti
Platoon Second-in-Command:	Colour Sergeant A Stevens
Platoon Sergeant:	Sergeant T Brownless

The latter end of 2019 saw the Sniper Platoon deploy on Exercise WESSEX STORM where they played a crucial role as we were tested as a Light Mechanised Infantry Battle Group on Salisbury Plain. It was an excellent opportunity for the platoon to hone their fieldcraft skills in varied missions which tested all key sniper functions, including providing live reporting, infiltration, defence and offensive strikes. It also provided a valuable opportunity for the platoon to integrate with other Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) assets and operate in a combined arms context to act as the Battlegroup's eyes and ears on the ground.

Upon returning from Ex WESSEX STORM, the platoon enjoyed leave after regathering to deploy on a very different task and in a different environment, as five snipers left for Saudi Arabia for Op CROSSWAYS. Our snipers instructed the Saudi Arabian National Army in sniper specific skills at their Defence Academy which proved to be a cultural exchange which will live long in the memory of all those involved. A two week period of mental resilience training followed. The Company Survive, Evade, Resist, Escape (SERE) exercise was a highlight for the platoon, as small groups tested their skills under the pressures of an escape and evasion scenario. Concurrently, some members of the platoon deployed on Ex NORDIC HACKLE, the Nordic skiing exercise which saw a small team travel across Europe to train, compete and qualify for Infantry, Divisional and Army Championships. Other members of the platoon also took part in Ex ARES WONDER, providing friendly sniper assets during the Recce Commanders' Course final exercise on Salisbury Plain.

2020 started with the platoon participating in the battalion's inaugural 'Festival of Fitness', a month which saw all soldiers participate in a host of activities from new sports to financial management lessons. The festival gave the platoon time to reflect on the importance of holistic wellbeing. During this period both CSgt Stevens and Pte Proctor were selected to attend the 'Troops to Targets' Smallbore Target Rifle Course, from which the best talent across the three Services battled it out for potential places on the British National team. In their own disciplines, both performed very well and were asked to return for future national qualifying competitions - a testament to the marksmanship talent within the platoon. During this period LCpl Campbell and LCpl Campbell-Brown provided a sniper pair attachment to Alpha (Grenadier) Company as they deployed on Ex JEBEL STORM, a defence engagement exercise in Oman.

In February, the Snipers turned their focus to winning the Operational Shooting Competition. However, immediately prior to leaving for an eight week preparatory range package, we were brought to an unprecedented and abrupt halt as the world reverberated from the shockwaves of the COVID pandemic. Unfortunately, plans to compete at shooting competitions in both Latvia and Spain were also scuppered. In an impressive feat of adaptability, Delta Company moved themselves complete, with vehicles, within 24 hours to Cameron Barracks in Inverness, thereby demonstrating our readiness capability (not to

mention flexibility). Upon doing so, direction changed and the focus became dispersal as the country and the platoon were sent to their homes in lockdown. However, work continued from home and the platoon found creative means of keeping our soldiers mentally and physically fit. This included video conferenced Kim's games, live sketching exercises and online fitness tracking to name but a few. The platoon was also able to take the opportunity for self-development through academic online courses such as Leadership and Management.

During this time, the platoon was held at '12 hrs notice to move' which was tested in March as the signal to return to Cameron Barracks came. This was to be the staging location for Op RESCRIPT; the Defence wide operation in support of the NHS and COVID testing. The platoon adapted well in reconstituting within ten man teams from Delta Company aligned to Mobile Testing Units (MTUs) which saw them operate in different areas across the Highlands from Kingussie to Thurso. This task continued from March to July.

During May, the platoon managed to conduct preparatory training including sniper ranges, camouflage and concealment, sniping theory, navigation exercises and sniper specific fieldcraft skills to prepare those attending a Sniper Operator Cadre. This also gave the Junior NCOs within the platoon the opportunity to deliver creative lessons to a small yet captive audience. Following the pre-course, LCpl Clements, LCpl Duthie and Pte Armstrong deployed on the eleven week Sniper Operators Cadre with Cpl Dagleish joining them as a course instructor. They hope to return as the newest badged members of the platoon.

Throughout the year, the platoon has worked hard and met their aim of becoming 100% General Service (military driving) and Quad-bike qualified. Being qualified to use a range of vehicle platforms affords the platoon a greater degree of tactical flexibility to best deliver effects on the ground, based on mission and terrain. As the battalion and platoon make their transition to a 'new normal', the Sniper Platoon was able to take advantage in joining Bravo Company on Ex BRAVO SHIELD in Barry Buddon. Sections of snipers played an unknown enemy as they sought to use covert manoeuvre to gain intelligence and, later, strike Bravo Company's unsuspecting forces.

OC Snipers moves on to assume the role of Charlie (Fire Support) Company Second-in-Command as CSgt Stevens makes the seamless transition to Platoon Commander. After an eventful and varied year, the platoon has grown from strength to strength. They now stand ready and raring to tackle the challenge of preparing for Op TORAL in Afghanistan in 2021.



Sniper Platoon training in OMAN



Cpl Meeghan of the Sniper Platoon in Oman



Sergeant Brownless of the Sniper Platoon pictured on deployment in Oman

RECCE PLATOON

Platoon Commander: Captain CAW Howie
Second-in-Command: Colour Sergeant Bellshaw

The Recce Platoon deployed to Salisbury Plain to conduct the Battlegroup validation Exercise WESSEX STORM 19/4 towards the end of 2019. The platoon performed strongly and the exercise allowed us to focus on our role within a Battlegroup context - impressive stuff considering it was the first time many of the platoon had worked together.

After the Exercise, the platoon deployed north into the Highlands and conducted a Company level Survive, Evade, Resist, Escape (SERE) exercise; small teams were tasked with navigating and manoeuvring in testing conditions across a peninsula to a pre-determined pick-up point. A hunter force, led by our very own Sgt Stewart, was tasked with finding the patrols, adding to the complexity and motivation not to get caught. Concurrently, four members of the platoon deployed across Europe on the Nordic skiing Exercise NORDIC HACKLE, successfully qualifying for the Army Championships. Cpl Matthew competed on Exercise FROSTED BLADE, the Infantry Alpine Ski Championships in France - his consistently high-level of performance gained him a place in the Infantry Team.

In January 2020, the whole battalion competed in the inaugural Fort George Festival of Fitness (and Fun). This allowed members of the platoon to try out and compete in a variety of new sports, whilst attending lessons focused on mental wellbeing and financial planning. Four members of the platoon who undertook the battalion boxing camp were scheduled to fight in the inter-company boxing tournament, trained by LCpl McRobbie; unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the fight night was cancelled. A lot of hard work had gone

into the training camp, with weeks spent sparring in Northern Ireland and Edinburgh to gain maximum exposure to different fighters. Hopefully, the opportunity will present itself again soon.

In February and March, the platoon was scheduled to compete in two international patrol competitions - the Polish Rifle Brigade Mountain Patrol Competition in Poland and another around Lake Como, Italy. Unfortunately, both were cancelled as the global pandemic spread across the continent. Delta Company complete, then moved to Cameron Barracks in Inverness in order to assist in any way possible with COVID-19. Four members of the platoon completed an ultra-marathon at the start of lockdown within the confines of Cameron Barracks, running around the camp 75 times. They raised over £3000 in five days for NHS Charities - a fantastic achievement. The platoon was subsequently deployed across the Highlands on Op RESCRIPT in support of the NHS, setting up mobile testing units (MTUs) to allow those in rural areas to be tested. During the breaks from these MTUs we took advantage of a relatively quiet programme and had a number of Jocks gain driving qualifications, including Cat C and General Service (GS), complete live firing ranges and online learning modules, remotely.

Prior to Summer leave, as the country returned to what is the new normal, the platoon deployed to Warcop to complete vehicle weapons shoots to maintain our mounted warfighting skills. The week qualified the platoon to confidently fire General Purpose Machine Gun (GPMG) and Heavy Machine Gun (HMG) from the top cover of our RWMIK vehicle platforms.

In August the platoon deployed on Ex RECON DON and Ex RECCE SPEAR to hone our skills. This proved a great few weeks, allowing the platoon to re-focus on its role in the field and to prepare individuals for promotional courses and the Light Role Recce Commanders' Course. Despite the disruptions, the platoon has performed strongly throughout the year, seeking out and taking advantage of training opportunities in preparation for deployment to Afghanistan on Op TORAL in 2021.

ANTI-TANK PLATOON

Platoon Commander;
Second-in-Command:

Captain T Thorpe
Colour Sergeant D Pasifull

Following a busy and productive training year in 2019 culminating in a strong performance in the WESSEX STORM 4/19 test exercise, the platoon was pleased to break for Christmas leave. For some this took the form of competitive sport, with members of the platoon representing the battalion in both Nordic and Alpine ski competitions in December and January.

The post Christmas return to work started with a bang for all, with the Battalion Festival of Fitness (and Fun). Throughout January the focus was on personal fitness, team sport, and athletic development. Members of the "Tanks" rapidly burnt off the extra helpings of turkey and stuffing with a variety of sporting endeavours and two PT sessions a day.

March was a strange time for the platoon with the appearance of COVID-19 and the ensuing lockdown. Following an initial dispersal, in line with government safeguarding policy, the platoon was recalled in April as part of Delta (ISR) Company's contribution to COVID testing in support of the NHS. Over the next two months members of the platoon deployed to locations across the Highlands to provide Mobile Testing Units (MTUs) to remote areas. This was a demanding and, at times, stressful activity requiring the highest standards of discipline and procedure. However, the feeling of contributing and being able to do something useful during a time of national crisis was a running theme among all those involved.

In line with a controlled return to training, the platoon deployed to Warcop Ranges in June to ensure currency in vehicle mounted heavy weapons - a core professional war-fighting skill. Over a two week period, in concert with the Machine Gun Platoon, the Anti-Tanks fired on both static and moving ranges with General Purpose Machine Gun (GPMG) and Heavy Machine Gun (HMG), engaging targets out to 1600m.

Despite the significant disruption of COVID-19 the round of changing faces and new jobs continues. The platoon has been sad to lose Sgt Wilson, a hugely experienced and longstanding member, though we wish him all the best in his new role at the Army Foundation College, Harrogate. We have also been pleased to welcome CSgt Miller to the post of Platoon Second-in-Command, returning to Delta Coy after a period away. Finally, Cpl Campbell, and LCpl Brown are to be congratulated for their promotion to Sergeant and Corporal respectively.



CSgt Bellshaw gives orders to members of the Recce Platoon



Capt Cowie of the Recce Platoon conducts rehearsals prior to the Bravo Company night raid



Members of the Javelin Platoon practice camouflage and concealment

HEADQUARTER COMPANY

Officer Commanding:	Major R Whyte Major D McCutcheon (June 2020)
Company Sergeant Major:	Warrant Officer Class 2 E Nichol Warrant Officer Class 2 A Bowe (August 2020)
Company Quartermaster Sergeant:	Colour Sergeant G Simpson Colour Sergeant C McColl (July 2020)

Since our last instalment and a well deserved Christmas leave, the Company has firmly focused on the preparation for the roles and responsibilities required for the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) which the battalion took over in January. From an HQ Company perspective, the vast majority of the preparation was concentrated on having healthy deployability statistics, sustaining the battalion and maintaining the now vast fleet of vehicles that the VJTF role brings with it. Those earmarked as being on the VJTF ORBAT are now on 5 days' notice to move and the older troops within the Company can certainly relate it to the days of Spearhead Lead Element stand-by and deployments.

After COVID-19 struck, the battalion and HQ Company alike were forced into lockdown. A swift plan was put together to allow the Company to isolate yet work from home and continue to remain VJTF-ready, should the call be made to mobilize. The lockdown was to provide its own set of challenges; how do we continue to keep all personnel engaged and busy? How do we maintain links between platoons and departments? How do we plan for the future, when the future we all faced was very much an unknown? Quickly the Company had a new means of communication in place and the use of social media and military and Army websites were at the fore. Conferences and meetings using Skype and Microsoft Teams became the "new norm". Online learning and courses using the Defence Learning Environment (DLE) for the Jocks to keep them engaged. With the introduction of MODNeT secure laptops from 51 Brigade, it then became possible for the Company Headquarters to plan ahead for training required to maintain deployability, with the priority being range work. HQ Company was to plan and execute two intensive range packages whilst still delivering the usual support of medical, LAD, AGC, chef and QMs.

Within this time period, the Company and its integral Echelons have taken part in several Role Verification Exercises (RVEs) as part of the VJTF requirements. This allows commanders to "run out" their respective platoons or departments and evaluate any shortcomings but more importantly, to point out where the troops are getting it right. This cultivates pride and esprit de corps at all levels. All the personal kit, vehicle equipment, weapons and deployability checks were to be put under the microscope once again when 51 Brigade staff, headed by Brigadier Lindsay were to descend on the Fort.

At the end of what was already a hectic week of preparation and readiness checks by 51 Brigade, the deployment on the eagerly awaited Exercise GALLOWAY HACKLE was underway. HQ Company again was split into its various Echelon formations and they headed off down the A9 towards West Freugh Camp and the Galloway Forest. HQ Company established itself within West Freugh Camp for the duration of the exercise, in order to position all its assets within striking distance of the exercising troops who were deep within the forest area. With the battalion in place and HQ Company providing sustainment and doing what it does best, another planned visit from the Divisional Commander, Maj Gen Weir DSO MBE, provided a fitting completion to what had been a very challenging and unprecedented period.

With the unit in lockdown and unable to allow full face to face handovers of appointments at the planned time, all postings out and in of the Company were suspended. That issue was to pass and we bid farewell to the OC, Major Bob Whyte who moved on to BMATT in the Czech Republic and welcomed Major Dougie McCutcheon from ITC Catterick. WO2 (CSM) Eddie Nichol is also off to pastures new, in an old guise as a civilian! After a colourful 24 year career he hands over to WO2 (CSM) Al Bowe, who has been posted back to the battalion from BATUK where he served as Training Warrant Officer. Our Company Quartermaster

Sergeant, CSgt Glen Simpson has also broken away from the fold and handed the G4 reigns over to CSgt Colin (Coco) McColl, who is now enjoying his first post with the battalion.



Alpha Company FOXHOUNDS at Fort George awaiting the CO's Inspection

QUARTERMASTER'S DEPARTMENT

Quartermaster:	Major Paddy Marshall
Quartermaster (Technical):	Captain Iain MacLachlan
Regimental Quartermaster	Warrant Officer Class 2 Aldo
Sergeant (M):	Duncan/Warrant Officer Class 2 Alan Ferrier
Regimental Quartermaster	Warrant Officer Class 2 Malky
Sergeant (M):	Wilson
Master Tailor:	Warrant Officer Class 2 Scotty Currie

We have seen major changes to the appointments within department. Firstly, the QM Major Billy Garrick was selected for ICSC (L); he is replaced by Major Paddy Marshall. Captain Iain MacLachlan returns to the UK from three years in the Middle East to assume the role of QM (Tech). The RQMSs have also changed over, WO2 Alan Ferrier replaced WO2 Aldo Duncan who has been promoted and posted to 1 SCOTS as the Regimental Sergeant Major and WO2 Malky Wilson as RSM BATUK (Kenya). The Department also said farewell to CSgt Tommy Brady who was posted as a PSI in Aberdeen. He was replaced by CSgt Sean Pratt as Tech CSgt.

We also welcomed a couple of new editions to the extended family. LCpl Toni Moir and Kirsten celebrated the arrival of daughter Remi as did LCpl Willie Chuma and Lessa Simbota with daughter Gianna.

The business end of the Department has seen us supporting all Company training and operational deployments. The most noteworthy was the support to Delta (Light) Company during the recent Op RESCRIPT (COVID-19 pandemic response) deployment as Mobile Testing Units. Whilst the remainder of the battalion had been dispersed, we had to maintain a more permanent footprint in Fort George to assist, introducing a raft of new and novel ways to enable our soldiers to return to the accommodation in the Fort and training in a safe manner. As the restrictions lessened and the Jocks gradually returned to work on a wider basis, we had to focus on getting the vehicle fleet to the required standard by supporting the Light Aid Detachment (LAD) in the seemingly never ending provision of vehicle spares for our fleet of over 200 vehicles. Our recent deployment of nearly the whole battalion on Ex GALLOWAY HACKLE proved our readiness and should be acknowledged as a testament to the amount of work behind the scenes from the G4 team. As well as the operational focus we have been subjected to the regular drumbeat of assurance checks by our higher formation, which we have passed in a professional manner. For all of us in Fort George, the year has seen a number of infrastructure improvements get underway, with a large amount in the pipeline, which will improve the in barracks experience for the Jocks. These included a new hotplate in the Junior Ranks' Mess, a new boiler system, upgraded kitchens, utility rooms and new showers for the lines.

REGIMENTAL ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

Regimental Administration Officer:	Captain J Anderson
Detachment Commander:	Captain S Munro
Regimental Administration Warrant Officer:	Staff Sergeant J Thompson

The AGC SPS Detachment has undergone change in the past year since November 2019. We have bid farewell to several of our detachment members - namely WO2 O'Neill on retirement, Sgt Alderson, Cpl Simpson, LCpl Al Mamun and Pte Cole. We have also had the pleasure to welcome Cpl Tahjya, albeit for a short stint. We have also welcomed the youngest member of the detachment, Colby Copland, the son of Pte Cole and Cpl Copland.

With an end to a challenging 2019 in preparing the battalion to G1 readiness status, we have continued to provide excellent G1 support. We ended the year on a high with an outstanding Christmas function organised by Cpl Barrieffe, where we welcomed the Detachment and their family members to celebrate the end of a productive year. Detachment members made an impressive start to 2020, completing both trade and professional development courses to improve their wider employability: Sgt Cenac (SysCoord) completing the Unit Imprest course; Cpl Barrieffe (IHUB) completing both the Information Support Administrator course and his Off-road Land Rover Driving course; and LCpl Rai (D Coy) managed to achieve a Professional Diploma in English course and a Basic Excel course with the Shaw Academy. He was also selected for well deserved promotion to Corporal. Cpl Asiimwe deployed on a 6 month attachment to temporary staff duty in Kenya and received a glowing report on her return. Our 'Soldier First' attitudes also saw us participating in all other battalion led activities including field exercises and live firing ranges to stay current for VJTF.

The year also brought a new and diverse challenge with COVID-19 grinding the UK to a standstill: we had to adapt and quickly learn new skills to administer the battalion remotely, whilst maintaining our G1 capabilities for readiness. This saw new ways of working, getting to grips with the Defence Gateway online portal to communicate securely and staying up to date with mandatory annual training. As the battalion deployed testing teams in support of the NHS to combat the pandemic, the Detachment was there in support every step of the way, providing pivotal administrative support to enable smooth deployments and ensure personnel were tracked as they moved around the county (not to mention in receipt of their additional allowances!).

As we look ahead to 2021, the detachment stands ready to embrace new challenges and support the battalion with the impending operational deployment.

CATERING PLATOON

Regimental Catering Warrant Officer:	Warrant Officer Class 2 R Jupp
Platoon Sergeant:	Sergeant Powell
Platoon Sergeant:	Sergeant Montgomery

Like every other department within the battalion, it continues to be a busy working period for all the members of the Catering Platoon as we maintain our professional hard-working ethos assisting the contract, maintaining our readiness to deploy, and fulfilling copious amounts of short notice external taskings ('trawls').

The month of January saw the platoon conduct multiple 'Live Healthier' cooking demonstrations to the battalion, proving how quick and easy it can be to prepare, cook and serve healthier meals. We also conducted basic lessons on post exercise nutrition by demonstrating smoothie making, all of this was conducted as part of the Festival of Fitness (and Fun). In addition and in keeping with the theme of healthier living, we also cooked and served a meal to the battalion during Red Hackle Day celebrations, swapping the traditional scotch pie and chips for grilled chicken, potatoes and fresh vegetables (and nearly causing a mutiny!). With COVID-19 affecting the way we go about business it has not impacted on our ability to train and pass on valuable knowledge and experience to the junior members. Setting up a field kitchen, the platoon recently conducted some much needed field catering training providing a VIP lunch for 40 people, utilising 10 man ORP and a mystery box of fresh rations; they then had 2½ hours to come up with an innovative and tasty menu and serve it to more than willing volunteers. We have, yet again, seen another big turnaround in manning, saying

goodbye to Sgt Montgomery, who has been promoted to SSgt, Cpl Stockham who will be moving on after completing a four year assignment and Pte Jebb who is due to leave the Army after five years' service to pursue a career in the NHS. The Department has also seen Pte Lewes gain promotion to LCpl and the arrival of Cpl Tagivetaua and Pte Norbert who are looking forward to the challenges ahead.

CIS PLATOON

Regimental Signals Officer:	Captain Stewart Briggs
Regimental Signals Warrant Officer:	Warrant Officer Class 2 Christopher Bonnar
CIS Platoon CQMS:	Colour Sergeant Barry Smith
Bowman Systems Manager:	Colour Sergeant William Paterson
Platoon Sergeant:	Sergeant Dean O'Driscoll
Training Sergeant:	Sergeant Charles Ross

The first half of this year has been a very strange one for the CIS Platoon, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic - having been busy on multiple tasks to then, almost overnight found most of the platoon being sent home to comply with the government's lockdown guidelines.

At the beginning of the year some of the platoon were deployed to Poland on Exercise LAMA, working as a "LOCON" (subordinate Command and Control node) for the 21st Polish Rifle Brigade during a NATO simulated Command and Staff Training Tactical Exercise. Some of the platoon were used as liaison officers to bridge the language gap between both nationalities. The rest of the deployed platoon were involved in supporting our own Battle Group Headquarters. They also enjoyed the local hospitality introduced by our Polish comrades - mainly in the form of a few nights eating out.

Back on home turf, Cpls Hague and Tudor have been involved in the Army's Support Innovation Challenge, where they were challenged to develop novel concepts to extend the operational lines of communication. This looked beyond their 'comfort zones' of communications to consider logistics and the movement of manpower and equipment. Both have been hugely enthused by the opportunity and spent the lockdown period designing a new concept Battle Group Headquarters tent. Amazingly, this bespoke design has now been manufactured and shipped to Fort George. As this article goes to press, the new tent is being tested out in Galloway Forest and could inform future Defence procurement designs; some achievement for a couple of Infantry Corporals but one which perfectly demonstrates the ingenuity and creativity of our Junior NCOs.

With the restrictions placed on the platoon, we looked at how we could facilitate dispersed training. This was done using video conferencing software, increasingly utilised across the Army and some of our Corporals took the lead on teaching the theory side of a Basic Radio User course to nine students over the application. This application was also used for the fortnightly platoon video call to disseminate informa-



Captain Briggs, the RSO, pictured during adventure training, learning to paddle board – or not?

tion about lockdown and to maintain team cohesion. Cpl Tudor also instigated Friday night quiz nights with the first quiz night raising funds for scrubs for NHS Fife. This was won by the RSWO, who seemed to win on a regular basis unless Cpls Tudor and Cameron fixed the questions in advance. The platoon returned to work from lockdown on the 2nd of June, focusing on the considerable task of getting an uplift of Landrovers roadworthy ahead of breaking for leave in mid July. Returning from leave on the 10th of August the platoon was quickly back into normal routine but broken up with a planned adventurous training day over on the Black Isle. This involved paddle boarding, canoeing and raft building on Loch Achilty and then back to the centre for high ropes and archery. We finished the night with a barbeque and camped out overnight.



Corporal Murphy (front left) of the CIS Platoon relaxes with soldiers of the Polish Army



Corporal Rae undertaking adventure training

The platoon would like to congratulate CSgt Paterson, Sgt Hague and LCpl Pope on their promotions. We say goodbye to CSgt Pratt who has moved to G1098 in the QM's Department; Sgt Ahmed, who has moved down to Aldershot to take over as a House Sergeant; and Sgt Hague, who has taken over as Platoon Sergeant of the Royal Welsh CIS Platoon.

51st Highland, 7th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland



BATTALION HEADQUARTERS

Commanding Officer:	Lieutenant Colonel DDJ Mackinnon
Regimental Sergeant Major:	Warrant Officer Class 1 (RSM) I Carlisle
Second-in-Command:	Major A Rose
Training Major/XO:	Major N Moffat/Major H Wilson wef Jul 20
Quartermaster:	Major B Cooper
Quartermaster (Res):	Major H Hood
Adjutant:	Captain AG Collister
Training Officer (Res):	Captain K Greene
Training Warrant Officer:	Warrant Officer Class 2 J Copeland
Training Warrant Officer (Res):	Warrant Officer Class 2 JP Maestri
Intelligence Officer (Res):	Captain K Rehman
Regimental Administration Officer:	A/Major PJ Ward
Regimental Operations Support Officer:	Captain AG McEwen MBE
Regimental Career Management Officer:	Captain BS Baxter
Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant:	Warrant Officer Class 2 (RQMS) S Lawrence

COMMANDING OFFICERS' FOREWORD

Writing these notes, in September 2020, has offered a real chance to reflect on the outlook of the Battalion and that of my own time in command. Having assumed Command of the Battalion in December 2019, we had not anticipated a year that would turn out the way this one has. But, as ever, we seek to improvise, adapt and overcome!



*Lieutenant Colonel Matt Sheldrick (right) hands over to
Lieutenant Colonel Duncan Mackinnon*

My first comments are those of thanks. These votes of thanks go out to the wider Battalion for their continued support and engagement with what we, as a battalion have to offer, and to the families and employers of our people for their unwavering patronage. I offer my thanks to the wonderful support from those close to the Battalion and the Regiment and, in particular, the support from Balhousie Castle. My final thanks are to Lieutenant Colonel Sheldrick, my predecessor, for the strong position in which I found the Battalion on my arrival. The successes of 2019 through deployments on major exercises alongside our paired sister Battalion, 3 SCOTS, have ensured we are seen as a usable and credible Army Reserve Battalion.

My short tenure as the Commanding Officer has been focussed on the response of the Army to the COVID-19 outbreak and as such these notes are characterised by two themes; Mobilisation and Training.

MOBILISATION

A dedicated group of Reservists put themselves forward for mobilisation as part of the response to COVID-19 and took on critical roles across Scotland to train Mobile Testing Unit staff from across the Army and then deliver a number of Mobile Testing sites to aid the government and NHS in their response.

The dedication, commitment and professionalism of these individuals is unrivalled, and they can only be commended for their work.



Soldiers of A Company man a drive through COVID test centre

During a period of particularly rapid change, the Battalion responded and the tempo increased to meet the demands of the Field Army.

TRAINING

For Infanteers, training in the physical sense is what we know, understand and love. It took a considerable change in mindset to adapt to the online methods of working and training. Our Reservists, who represent the wider society from which they come, took to online training as if it were second nature. The transition reinvigorated the training audience and provided opportunities, knowledge and experience that could all too easily be lost in the physical training realm. The Battalion deployed on a "Digital Bootcamp". Trainees and trainers were all learning together, adapting then thriving on the benefits to be had from the virtual environment. This is certainly an area that will be utilised as part of our routine in the future.

Our gradual return to physical training was kick started by an excellent patrol day which saw our Reservists returning to proper infanteering in one of the first sessions back. The grit, determination and desire to practice what had been learned during the many online sessions really showed.



A Patrol Competition was held on our return to work

SUMMARY

It should not be allowed to go unnoticed that this year, the Battalion will say farewell to our Honorary Colonel, Brigadier (Retired) The Honourable Hughie Monro CBE DL, who has been an incredible supporter of the Battalion and wider Regiment during his tenure. Always at the end of the phone and ready to provide a word of advice, his counsel is much appreciated.



The Honorary Colonel tests a quad bike

While we could never wish for a global pandemic, we must focus on the positives that we as a unit can draw from it. It was inspiring to watch a battalion work towards a common goal and the expertise and experience shone through and in doing so our people have grown in confidence and our stock is high. The next twelve months have potential to be as uncertain, disrupted and interesting but I have no doubt that the Battalion will emerge as strong as ever.

ALPHA (FIRE SUPPORT) COMPANY

Officer Commanding:	Major JA Valentine
Second-in-Command:	Captain MG MacLean
CSM:	Warrant Officer Class 2 L Penrice
PSAO:	Captain S Langdale/Capt L Stewart
RSUSO:	Captain M Dunnigan
Aberdeen Platoon Commander:	Gapped
Dundee Platoon Commander:	Second Lieutenant E McCracken
Kirkcaldy Platoon Commander:	Colour Sergeant G McKenzie
SPSI:	Colour Sergeant L Jones
PSI Aberdeen:	Colour Sergeant T Brady
CQMS:	Colour Sergeant S McGregor

Only twelve months ago we were developing the concept of virtual training but we could not have predicted that it would soon be the only form of training delivery! Virtual training and the Zoom app have allowed the Company to maintain its ability to train and maintain team spirit during the Corona- virus pandemic and as we emerge slowly from the restrictions, it is becoming an important tool in our arsenal.

Following deployment with 3 SCOTS on Ex WESSEX STORM last year, the winter months consisted of Remembrance, a welcome

December training weekend with a Jocks' Christmas lunch and plenty of basic combat skills training. The New Year heralded cold and wet days on the ranges including an exercise in Warcop – rain, sun and snow all in one day – which was well attended and has helped us develop our section and platoon level skills.



Members of A Company paraded at Powrie Brae on Remembrance Day

Lockdown was sudden and disruptive but as we know all too well, Reservists are very adaptable. Within days of lockdown the new Company 2IC, Captain MacLean and Sergeants Naughton and McNiven were developing a menu of on-line courses ranging from communications lessons to PT. Before long the requirement to assist the civil authorities resulted in the mobilisation of the Army Reserve on a scale not seen since the first Gulf War in 1991. The Company stepped up with gusto and formed a large part of the newly formed Normandy Platoon which was attached to Balaklava Company of 5 SCOTS under Operation RESCRIPT. They have been delivering mobile COVID testing for the duration of mobilisation with very little time off. Deployed, often at short notice, to many towns and villages on the West Coast, they delivered day long drive-through testing centres. This has been a critical function in support of the Scottish Government. The commitment and enthusiasm shown by the Reservists was exceptional. As ever their devotion to the task would not have been possible without the wonderful and unflagging support of their families and employers to which we, as a Battalion, extend our thanks.

Looking ahead at the Company training over the next 6 months, we are planning for physical training, plenty of tactics weekends and recruit mentoring events as well as to jointly live fire our mortars with 6 SCOTS.

Recruiting continues on a very positive trajectory in the Army Reserve and especially for the Battalion. We have seen near record numbers expressing interest in joining the Army Reserve during lockdown. Our challenge now is to turn that interest in to fully fledged SCOTS soldiers.

As ever we have seen some key personalities arrive and some leave the Company. Of note we welcome Captain Lee Stewart who is taking over the PSAO position and the new Company 2IC, Captain Mike McClean, (formerly RSM 4 SCOTS) and finally, I would like to welcome 2Lt Euan McCracken, who transferred in from the UOTC. Prior to restrictions we had a few of the Company attend courses; of particular mention has been Private Robertson successfully passing the Section 2IC Cadre and subsequently promoting to LCpl. Also, Sergeant Naughton completed the CBRN Instructors' Course and Sergeant McNiven completed the Regular Mortar 2IC course – which at 14 weeks long is a huge achievement.

I would like to mention a few individuals who have left the Company; Colour Sergeant McDonald, the Aberdeen PSI has moved onto a Recruiting posting in Inverness and has been replaced by Colour Sergeant Brady of 3 SCOTS. Mrs Aileen Lyons, our Civilian Administration Officer, has retired after many years of dedicated service to the Company – she will be much missed and we all wish her the best for the future.

Lastly, I would like to mention Captain Stevie Langdale who has moved on from the Company after a very long and distinguished career. His service from being a soldier in the RHE, as PSI in Dundee, commissioning into the 51st Highland Regiment, Officer Commanding A Company and finally as our Permanent Staff Administrative Officer has been in the very best tradition of service over self and we as a Company and Battalion have benefitted greatly from his tremendous efforts.



The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada

There is no routine in the Army

As usual, the Fall of 2019 welcomed to our unit newly trained infantry men and women and a new cohort of young NCO's and officers freshly back from their courses and ready to begin the training cycle. All that were deployed on various bases and schools came back to their Regimental home to continue our mission. The holiday season was soon upon us and all enjoyed the pause in training and looked forward to the next challenges and then the routine was thrown out of the window!

The global COVID 19 pandemic struck the world without much warning and communities were dramatically affected in ways that had not been experienced in the past century. As part of the Government of Canada's answer to the crisis, our soldiers were deployed in support of the Quebec healthcare system to seniors' residences across the greater Montreal area where they were hard hit by the virus and in dire need of support. True to its tradition of service, we deployed 81 members of the unit to support the operation, named OP LASER. Up to seventy percent of the members that answered the call of duty were deployed in the front line. Under the supervision of healthcare professionals, they provided direct support to the elderly living in seniors' residences. It was a true unit effort. Our infantry men and women, service support soldiers and staff, and pipers and drummers all put their shoulders to the wheel to help our society's most vulnerable. All were trained in basic healthcare, bio security protocols and proximity care and then assigned to a task.

Nobody in the unit, or in the Canadian Armed Forces, would have thought when they joined the Army that they would be entrusted to a mission like this one. Everyone rose to the challenge as only Black Watch soldiers do; they took decisive action and displayed exemplary professionalism, adaptability, and discipline in the conduct of their mission. They provided comfort during this time of crisis and uncertainty

and our troops did it with empathy, generosity and care.

During this operation we were kindly and generously supported by the Branches of our Regimental Associations and organisations. Care packages were distributed to all troops deployed, including our colleagues from the health services group that were deployed with us. This sign of appreciation proved to be a great morale booster and a clear demonstration of the strength of our Regimental family.

If the pandemic had completely transformed and challenged our operational posture, it was also the case for our ability to conduct courses and prepare for operations. New or adapted ways to do our recruiting and individual training are currently being assessed on an almost weekly basis as we are constantly seeking to maintain our operational readiness while keeping our troops healthy and safe. The current situation is so unique and challenging that we are all trying to understand what the "post-pandemic normal" will be and how we will accomplish our mission in the future. All the changes we are living through didn't stop our contribution to the Canadian Armed Forces expeditionary effort. Four members of the unit are currently or will soon deploy overseas in Mali, Egypt (Sinai) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Our Regimental activity calendar was also turned upside down. The celebrations of the 75th Anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands and Second World War anniversaries were rescheduled for 2021. Our May Regimental gathering, dinners, functions, and parades were all cancelled. The first event that was adapted to the new social and public health situation was the change of Honoraries of the Regiment.

On May 1st, 2020, a virtual ceremony was conducted via videoconference and later posted on various social media sites where Honorary Colonel Daniel O'Connor passed on the responsibilities of his appointment and the Loomis dirk to Honorary Colonel Bruce Bolton. The appointment of Honorary Lieutenant Colonel to Mr Jonathan Birks was symbolized by his receiving the Knox dirk. Our unit expresses sincere wishes to the newly appointed Honoraries and appreciation to Colonel O'Connor for his unselfish and exemplary service in both Honorary appointments over the past decade.

Later that week, the annual Regimental Church Parade was conducted in the virtual realm. The congregation of the Church of Saint Andrew & Saint Paul decided to broadcast the service on their YouTube channel. This initiative provided the Regiment with a means to perpetuate one of its cherished traditions and was welcomed by all members of the Regimental family. It also shows the strength of the relationship between the Regimental Church and The Black Watch.

The next significant Regimental event was the Change of Regimental Sergeant Major and Change of Command of the unit. On September 12th, 2020 RSM Stephen Campbell and Lieutenant Colonel Bruno Plourde handed over their respective duties to Command Warrant



Black Watch soldiers and medical staff at St Andrew's Seniors' Home in Montreal during COVID-19 op

Officer François Mamen and Lieutenant Colonel Francis Roy. A special thanks goes out to Command Warrant Officer Campbell for his dedication, wise counsel and professionalism and to Bruno Plourde for his outstanding leadership during his two terms as Commanding Officer. We are very fortunate to be able to count on the experience and dedication of Lieutenant Colonel Roy and Master Warrant Officer Mamen to lead The Black Watch into a challenging future.

The next few months will be a clear test of the Regiment's resilience and capacity to adapt. The Black Watch has the good fortune and privilege to have a solid group of exceptional and dedicated leaders at all levels as well as outstanding professional soldiers that will make this possible.

Right: Piper Robbie Kerr in St Andrew's Home (material republished with the



ARTEFACTS FROM THE BLACK WATCH OF CANADA COLLECTION – THE BATTLE OF BUSHY RUN, 1763

By Earl John Chapman

This oil on canvas, measuring 80 by 121 cm, was presented to Canada's Black Watch in 1950 by Colonel C. Kennedy Allen, at that time the president of the Home Insurance Company of New York. Painted by an unidentified artist, the oil depicts the 42nd (Royal Highland) Regiment of Foot in action during the battle of Bushy Run in August 1763 during Pontiac's Rebellion. An accompanying plaque reads: "'Road to Pittsburgh' – *Am Freiceadan Dhu Buaidh is Fiseach Leat* – Presented to The Black Watch (RHR) of Canada by The Home Insurance Company and the H.V. Smith Museum, 1950," the Gaelic phrase translates to "The Black Watch Success and Prosperity Be With You." C. Kennedy Allen (1907-1977), a Colonel in the Pennsylvania Army National Guard, was instrumental in arranging for the 3rd Battalion, The Black Watch (RHR) of Canada to visit Philadelphia in 1956 and 1958. For the visit of 1958, the 3rd Battalion were the guests of the 111th Infantry Regiment, founded in 1747 by Benjamin Franklin as the Associated Regiment of Foot of Philadelphia. Better known as *The Associators*, they fought in the French and Indian War (1756-1763) and were besieged at Fort Pitt (today's Pittsburgh) in 1763.

That year the 42nd Foot formed the main part of Colonel Henri Bouquet's small force, 465 all ranks, which marched through the forests to relieve the fort, and clashed with the Ohio Indians at Edge Hill near the stream of Bushy Run. After a fierce combat on 5-6 August, the hard-pressed Bouquet finally scattered his opponents but not before suffering heavy casualties (50 killed, 60 wounded, and five missing – twenty-five percent of his force). Bouquet finally dragged his weary column into Fort Pitt on 10 August, his wounded soldiers "pulled on litters slung between the remaining packhorses, or carried in Highlander's plaids doubling as stretchers." After the battle, he paid high tribute to his stalwart Scottish soldiers, writing from Fort Pitt on 28 August 1763, "The Highlanders are the bravest men I ever saw, and their behavior in that obstinate affair does them the highest honor."

Since then at Mess Dinners of the 111th Regiment, a vacant chair has always been placed at the Mess Table, ready to be filled by an officer commanding the Black Watch who might be in Philadelphia. On several occasions this chair has been filled by an officer of Canada's Black Watch, representing the Black Watch family.



The Battle of Bushy Run 1763 (Black Watch of Canada Museum and Archives, photo by Peter Ferst)

HMS MONTROSE – MARITIME SECURITY OPERATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

As the *Red Hackle* goes to press, HMS MONTROSE and the 400 members of our combined Ship's Company have been supporting Operation KIPION for a little over 600 days, having departed Plymouth in September 2018, and arrived in Bahrain for the current tasking in April 2019. Since then the bulk of our time has been spent conducting Maritime Security Operations, ensuring the free flow of trade through some of the busiest shipping lanes in the world, reassuring the merchant shipping community, and deterring malign activity.

To remain on task over such a period, we operate a now well established crew rotation system, with each of our two crews, Port and Starboard, spending four months on board, followed by four months of UK based training and operational preparations, alongside well earned rest and recuperation. As you read these notes Starboard crew are nearing the end of their current rotation, and will hand over in early December.

Following a series of attacks against merchant shipping in 2019, MONTROSE has predominantly operated in the Strait of Hormuz, under the UK led International Maritime Security Construct, which aims to provide reassurance and deterrence in the region. Typically operating in cooperation with other RN, US and Australian Navy ships, our task is to monitor merchant traffic and malign activity, providing a visible, credible military presence to reinforce a message common to both ourselves and the Black Watch: *Nemo Me Impune Lacessit* (No-one provokes me with impunity).

We remain ready to respond to acts of aggression, and events in the region over the last year, from the Iranian reaction to the assassination of Major General Qasem Soleimani in December 2019, to the continued attacks against coalition troops in Iraq, have demonstrated the need for constant vigilance. MONTROSE routinely encounters Iranian naval forces at sea and demonstrates a consistent, measured but robust response to challenge.

This tasking is interspersed with other requirements; over July and August 2020 MONTROSE escorted four RN minehunters

through the Bab-El-Mandeb Strait, which lies between Yemen and Eritrea and has seen attacks against naval and merchant vessels in the fighting between Houthi forces and the Saudi led coalition. We also conduct periodic maintenance; MONTROSE is twenty eight years old and like any complex machine needs looking after. This is an area where COVID-19 has posed us significant challenges – while ordinarily we would be supported in this by a “pit crew” comprising naval and contractor support, the need to maintain the COVID-free “bubble” has meant that our engineers have to conduct all of it themselves – without the luxury of extra time to do so. Their sterling efforts mean that MONTROSE has not lost a day of operational tasking to maintenance or defect rectification which is no mean feat.

With an eye to next year, MONTROSE is planned to remain operationally deployed for the foreseeable future. COVID-19 will no doubt continue to impact our operational cycle; the greatest challenge we currently face is maintaining a healthy, COVID-free crew during UK based training and in the run up to deploying, while ensuring that all our people enjoy quality time with their families and loved ones. Our operational focus will remain on providing security and freedom of navigation for international shipping and we will continue to provide the UK's presence in the Middle East.

Finally, from both Port and Starboard crews, best wishes to the Black Watch Association, 3 SCOTS and the whole regimental family; we look forward to seeing you as soon as the current climate allows!

*“4.5 Illuminate!” -
MONTROSE firing star
shell from her medium
calibre gun*



HMS MONTROSE on patrol in the Strait of Hormuz

Black Watch Battalion The Army Cadet Force

Honorary Colonel:	The Reverend Professor Norman Drummond CBE FRSE
Commandant:	Colonel C G Hubbuck
Deputy Commandant:	Lieutenant Colonel S Rae
Adjutant:	Captain M McCluskey
Officer Commanding Alma Company	Captain R Sangster
Officer Commanding Burma Company	Second Lieutenant K Stark
Officer Commanding Korea Company	Captain R Howieson
Officer Commanding Ypres Company	Second Lieutenant F Campbell
Officer Commanding North:	Major T Dowson
Officer Commanding South:	Major M McCluskey
Battalion Training Officer:	Major K Douglas
Regimental Sergeant Major:	Regimental Sergeant Major T Cameron
Permanent Staff:	
Cadet Executive Officer:	Major A C M Potter
Quartermaster:	Captain A Williams

Due to the national COVID 19 Lockdown, all face to face training within the Battalion was suspended and as I write this in August we are still waiting for the go ahead from 51 Brigade to return to full training in a safe manner.

In order to "Keep the Flame Alive" the Battalion continued to train on a virtual platform. A number of Cadets and Adult Volunteers recorded training lessons on a weekly basis which were then posted on Social Media for Cadets to follow. Virtual Detachments opened once a week with Cadets and Adult Volunteers invited to parade using Zoom. The Brigade Cadet Training Team kept the enthusiasm going through weekly virtual quizzes on subjects such as Fieldcraft, First Aid and Navigation. All eight Scottish ACF Battalions took part in these quizzes and the scores were announced regularly on Social Media. During the Lockdown Cadets were able to honour Victory in Europe Day by making commemorative bunting and parading in uniform at home. The Band was able to record a number of musical performances. In particular they posted on Social Media a tribute to Captain Tom Moore on his birthday by playing the March of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment. This performance was highly commended throughout the UK. The Band will be performing a virtual concert to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of VJ Day accompanied by Musicians from the Canadian and Australian Army Cadets.

NANCHANG MILITARY TATTOO

The Battalion Band was invited to China in November 2019 to perform in the 6th Nanchang Military Tattoo. This was the first time an Army Cadet Band from the UK had performed in China. During the six day trip they played at various venues throughout the city of Nanchang with Military Bands from the French and Russian Armies, the Royal New Zealand Air Force and the Chinese Navy, Army and Air Force. The main musical performances took place in the International Sports Arena. Nanchang has a population of five million and is the largest city in Jiangxi Province in South East China. The Biennial Tattoo commemorates the rising of the People's Liberation Army who fired the first shots in Nanchang in 1927 and is popularly known as the Nanchang Uprising. This trip was a lifetime opportunity for both Cadets and Adult Volunteers with the youngest musician aged thirteen. The Band was highly commended by the professional Military Bands who also played in the Tattoo.

LORRAINE KELLY'S 60TH BIRTHDAY

The television celebrity Lorraine Kelly previously held the role of Battalion Honorary Colonel and so we were approached by ITV to ask if we could arrange a Parade to celebrate Ms Kelly's 60th birthday. Ms Kelly was not aware of this and everyone

involved in the filming was under strict instructions not to post anything on Social Media until the 60th Birthday Show was broadcast live on 29th November 2019. Balhousie Castle was the venue chosen for the filming and a number of Cadets and Adult Volunteers were transported through to Perth one Saturday morning in early November. A small parade was filmed with individual interviews added to the footage. The final filming was shot by a drone camera showing everyone spelling out the number sixty in front of the Castle. The Museum staff kindly supplied hot drinks for everyone on what was a very cold November morning. The footage was then shown to Ms Kelly live on television on the 29th November during her birthday show with the added surprise that she was asked to be the new ambassador for the Army Cadet Force. This proved to be a very emotional announcement for Ms Kelly.

PROJECT POLAND

In February the Battalion arranged the first ever trip to Krakow in Poland. This was an initiative driven by the Padre, Major Kevin Dow who had arranged a similar trip while serving in a previous ACF Battalion. Cadets and Adult Volunteers were given the challenge of completing a project on the Holocaust. This included a workbook which was to be completed prior to travelling to Poland to visit the various locations highlighted in the project. This included the Auschwitz-Birkenau Camp and Schindler's Factory. This was a very emotional and memorable trip for all who travelled to Krakow. There was also an opportunity for some downtime which included touring Wawel Royal Castle in the city and a visit to the local Salt Mines. The Battalion are planning to make this an annual event to enhance the "Cadet Experience".



Cadets commemorating Victory in Europe Day using a virtual platform



The Band parade in front of the Prince Jeng Pavilion in Nanchang



Performance in the Nanchang National Theatre



Rehearsal in the Nanchang International Sports Arena



Cadets outside Balhousie Castle wishing Lorraine Kelly a happy birthday during her morning show



Project Poland - Cadets and Adult Volunteers in Krakow



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Association News

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President:	Mrs Pat Sawers, Lord Lieutenant of Angus (from April 2020)
Vice Presidents:	Mr Robert Balfour FRICS, Lord Lieutenant of Fife Mr Stephen Leckie, Lord Lieutenant of Perth and Kinross Mr Ian Borthwick, Lord Lieutenant of the City of Dundee
Chairman:	Major General J M Cowan, CBE DSO
Vice Chairman and Trustee:	Lieutenant Colonel R M Riddell OBE (Resigned 27 August 2020)
Secretary and Trustee:	Major R J W Proctor, MBE
Trustee:	Major J M K Erskine, MBE
Trustee:	Lieutenant Colonel J A Menzies
Trustee:	Major J D Monteith, MBE
Trustee:	Major A A L Watson, LVO
Trustee:	Mr G Hay, LL.B CA
Executive Committee:	Lieutenant Colonel M Smith, MBE Captain A McEwen, MBE Lieutenant Colonel R I Rose, TD (Retired August 2020) Mr R Scott, JP Mr G Kennedy
Welfare Committee:	Lieutenant Colonel R I Rose, TD, Chairman (Retired August 2020) Major C Gray, Deputy Chairman Major R J W Proctor, MBE, Secretary Mr J Devlin Captain T Graham Mr R Scott, JP Captain A McEwen, MBE Mr W Barr

VJ DAY COMMEMORATION 15 AUGUST 2020

On the 15th of August 2020 a group of Perth Branch members gathered at Balhousie Castle to commemorate the courage and sacrifice of those who had fought in Burma against the Japanese but particularly to remember the men of the 2nd Battalion who fought as Chindits.

The service was short and took the following form; a narrative was read by the Association Vice Chairman and then Major Hugh Rose read the poem "Return to Burma" (An Elegy for the Chindits) which was written by Brigadier Bernard Fergusson (later Lord Ballantrae). It can be found in his book "The Wild Green Earth". Bernard Fergusson commanded 16th Infantry Brigade during the second Chindit expedition.

Hugh Rose then laid a wreath and Major Tim Carmichael read the Regimental Collect and Kohima Epitaph. After a two minute silence Pipe Major Alistair Duthie played the Regimental Lament.

This was the Vice Chairman's address.

Seventy five years ago today in 1945, the Japanese forces surrendered and for the men of the 2nd Battalion The Black Watch and for thousands of other men fighting in Burma and for their families at home, a huge sense of relief prevailed.

We are here today at the Regimental home of The Black Watch to commemorate the men who fought the Japanese often in terrible conditions of weather, terrain and lack of basic medical care.

The 2nd Battalion had the most extraordinary war, fighting in Somaliland, Crete and at Tobruk and then in 1942 they were sent to India to join the 70th Division. By September 1943 orders were received, to convert the battalion into Chindits, a concept created by General Orde Wingate, to use long range penetration groups operating behind Japanese lines in Burma. The Battalion was split in half to create two fighting groups and so were born 73 Column and 42 Column. The former was commanded by the CO, Lieutenant Colonel Green and the latter by Major David Rose, whose son Hugh will lay the wreath.

Each Column consisted of about 400 men with sixty mules, a few horses and some bullocks and the men carried all their equipment with them. Private William Cochrane said after the campaign "I didn't have a clue what was waiting for us when we got there. I knew what a forest was

like but the jungle?" David Rose commented "We were the ordinary product of urban life. We were not used to killing the food we ate, nor even digging up vegetables". They later discovered that they were to survive mainly on American K rations.

The columns now part of 14 Brigade were to be flown into a forward operating base codenamed Aberdeen and on 23 March 1944 the first contingent of 73 Column were flown forward to be joined the following day by the remainder of the Column. Within days they were engaged with fighting the Japanese.

Being resupplied from the air made life easier but each man still carried a 70 lb pack. In just over a month, 14 Brigade destroyed nearly two dozen dumps of Japanese supplies, ammunition and fuel as well as cutting the railway line in several places south of Indaw. 73 Column covered 150 miles during that time and 42 Column only slightly less.

The monsoon created terrible conditions. Rain and thunderstorms presented the threat of starvation; either might prevent the supply planes from flying and with the rain came leaches. A march of ten miles would now take three to four days instead of one. After two months in Burma, spirits were low and most soldiers were in a weakened condition from dysentery and malaria; badly wounded soldiers often had to be left behind with a pistol or grenade or some reports said that they were shot by their own friends to prevent them falling into Japanese hands. The latter fact was not recorded in any Black Watch history.

In August the two Black Watch Columns were still operating behind enemy lines but by the middle of the month they began their journey back to India and a period of recuperation.

As well as the issue of the famous Chindit insignia, each soldier was given a letter which said, "You must remember that the fine work you have done is not the end of the war. We have won this round on points – in the next round we will go in for the knock out. You are now fully trained and know your stuff. Your job is to train the new fellows and lead them next time. Teach them to kill with every round. Teach them that the jungle is nothing like as bad as it is cracked up to be. Teach them that it is a tough job, it's a man's job, a job worth doing and a job that's got to be done if we want to get back to Civvy Street quickly."

It was to be another twelve months before the Japanese were forced to surrender by the dropping of the two atom bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Return to Burma

(An Elegy for the Chindits) by Bernard Fergusson

O Comrades whom we left unsepulchred, O comrades whom we
laid in shallow graves,
O lightly sleeping comrades, have you heard the sound that beats
insistent as the waves?

Up the dark alleys of the jungle tracks where once you stumbled
with your monstrous packs it flows,
The tide that liberates the slaves.

I heard you speaking in the quiet nights when all the birds are
hushed, the crickets still,
When the pale fire-flies with their shuddering lights cruise in the
archipelagos of the hill,

When up the mighty corridors of teak along the secret woodway
from the creek

Pads the great cat returning to its kill.

When the black shadows reach across the path, When from the
village, dies the evening smoke,

When from the mere, streams the sun's aftermath, When in the
marsh, the frogs begin to croak,

The hour when we were wont to bivouac, To choose our sleeping
place and leave the track,

Kindle the fire and put the rice to soak.

Then you have spoken, for you have desired to know our varying
fortunes, how we fared,

Trudging in weariness but still inspired to press again the venture
that we shared.

Then in the night I was aware of you, So lightly laid as still to share
the dew

Falling on us your friends, for whom you cared.

Forest to forest, range to distant range, Across the vales your voices
speak and say:

VJ Day 2020



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“Here where I lie, today was nothing strange – heard you, my comrade, anything today?”
 And one makes answer: “Here where we two lie, four hundred of our countrymen went by –
 we saw them laughing as they went their way”
 And one beside a track more distant yet, one from a group of graves, some old some new says soberly: “Today our comrades met the enemy by our thicket here and slew two score and ten;
 And some of ours who fell lie with us now and have brave tales to tell”
 And voices call “Comrades we welcome you”.
 But you who fell beside us, pioneers shorn of the future –
 you chose to be the hopeless van of the victorious years, the heralds of the day you could not see;
 You, we have steered on as a seaman’s mark, your graves shine forth exulting in the dark,
 The leading lights of ultimate victory.
 O comrades all, the known and the unknown, sleep still at last; your vigil is dispatched,
 The black defences of the night are down, The outmost wicket of the day unlatched.
 This day beyond your graves our armies reach, The hosts are come for whom you made the breach,
 And now at length the enemy is matched.



Lieutenant Colonel Sefton and soldiers of the Black Watch Battalion attended the Service of Remembrance at Balhousie Castle on Friday 8th November 2019. The Service was conducted by the Revd John Duncan, the Association Padre (courtesy of Graeme Hart)



Soldiers bow their heads during the two Minute Silence (courtesy of Graeme Hart)

STANDARD BEARER – ROYAL ALBERT HALL NOVEMBER 2019 – GEORGE EATON

I was approached to represent the Angus Branch as Standard Bearer at the Albert Hall Festival of Remembrance, an honour I was delighted to accept.

After travelling to London by train, it was all systems go, checking

into hotel and on to the Albert Hall for the first rehearsal.

Saturday was an early start with an 8.15 a.m. rehearsal which lasted all morning. Unknown to us there was a matinee at 2.00pm that day. An excellent lunch was provided and the matinee went well. Another meal was provided (not an all in stew in sight) and then the main event took place at 7.00 p.m.

It was an outstanding experience and although the day was tiring it was well worth being part of the performance. After a lengthy wait for a taxi it was off to the hotel for a well deserved beer or two before another early start on Sunday for the parade at the Cenotaph.

A good chinwag was had by everyone while waiting to form up for the parade. After that was lunch and a few drinks then it was off to Kings Cross for our homeward bound train only to discover our train terminated at Edinburgh!! My car was at Dundee. Taxis were provided for onward travel. All in all, it was an outstanding but tiring weekend.

ANGUS BRANCH

President	Major Peter Burnet
Vice President	Lt Col D M Sheldrick
Chairman	Major Ronnie Proctor MBE
Vice Chairman	Mr Peter Tindal
Secretary	Mr Steve Reid
Treasurer	Mr Gordon Millar

At the time of compiling these notes it is difficult to comprehend what has happened over the last twelve months. Life and events which seemed to follow the normal pattern before Covid – 19 struck, were cancelled and then all sense of normality went out of the window. We entered a strange period of lockdown and people began working from home and soon adapted to this situation and adopted new ways of carrying out our daily routine and business.

Monthly meetings and events were cancelled however the Angus Branch decided to hold its monthly meetings virtually, on Zoom. Although this had limitations, as only those who owned a computer and had the ability to access the medium could take part. The advantage was that our Branch members from as far afield as Burnham-on-Sea in the South of England and Werl in Germany managed to take part and those who participated really enjoyed the meetings. We are really grateful to Ms Heather Edmond, the Admin Secretary at Association HQ for hosting these meetings.

With the relaxation of the rules governing meetings, August and September meetings were held in the normal venue of the Royal British Legion clubrooms in Forfar where we managed to conform to current rules of numbers attending public meetings. We have however at the time of writing reverted to Zoom for our October meeting due to another change in the rules.

The annual El Alamein dinner in 2019 which was well attended is now a distant memory. Our Lord Lieutenant and Association President was to be our Guest of Honour but could not attend and Commander (Retd) Jim Smith RN took her place. The Chairman gave a short talk



Mr Jim Gordon (94) was presented with his RBL's World War 2 commemorative medal by Major Ronnie Proctor

on the Battle of El Alamein and Commander Smith replied with a most interesting discourse of the war at sea in the Mediterranean and the support given to the land forces by the Royal Navy.

Jim's talk also bordered on the Battle of Crete and the evacuation of the Army from the island which of course included our 2nd Battalion.

In November 2019, Branch members took part in the numerous Remembrance Parades throughout Angus and the Branch Standard was very much in evidence throughout the County.

Christmas parcels were again distributed in December and once again our Branch Vice Chairman, Peter Tindal and his wife Fiona organised the event. The Branch would like to thank them both and the volunteers who made the deliveries to the recipients who were most grateful.

Our Burns Supper went without a hitch with the Association President, Mrs Pat Sawers and her husband David being our Guests of Honour. We also welcomed the Branch members from Dundee who came North across the Sidlaws to enjoy themselves. A week later our Chairman and a number of our members went through to Dundee to support the Dundee Branch Red Hackle Dinner and sample Dundee Branch Chairman, Willie Barr's famed, home - made soup and "steak peh" which were greatly enjoyed.

We decided not to hold a Branch AGM and it was agreed at our August Branch meeting that the AGM would be held over until April 2021 with all existing Office Bearers remaining in post until then.

Our Branch Standard Bearer, George Eaton turned out for the Angus Council's virtual VE day which was shown on U Tube whilst the Chairman was asked to speak about VE day (which he really can't remember as he was only 5 months old) and also the part played by the 1st Battalion at St Valery. Our Standard Bearer also took part in the commemoration of St Valery on the Steps of the Caird Hall along with members of the Dundee Branch. This was a well publicised event which was shown on both television and the local press.

The Chairman was invited to Carnoustie to commemorate VJ Day by the Carnoustie Royal British Legion with Black Watch stalwart Barry Smith, alias "Polecat" playing a leading role. Chalky Whyte who supervises the Association Forum page also managed to put in an appearance making sure that the Red Hackle was well represented.



George Eaton carrying the Angus Branch Standard and Major Ronnie Proctor took part in the VJ Day commemorations at the Powrie Brae Memorial. George Eaton also carried the Standard at the Albert Hall

DUNDEE BRANCH

President:	Major (Retd) Colin Gray
Chairman:	Willie Barr
Secretary:	Colin Adam
Treasurer:	Len Mitchell

This edition of the Red Hackle Magazine sees us living in extremely strange times as Covid-19 is impacting on everything we do. The Dundee Branch is soldiering on, so if you served in The Black Watch or 3 SCOTS come along and join us at any of our monthly meetings which are held in The Black Watch Club, Arthurstone Terrace, Dundee at 1200 hours on the last Sunday of each month. If you can't wait until then, contact us at blackwatchdundee@yahoo.com.

On Saturday 5th October 2019 a number of members and their partners attended the Perth Branch Croix De Guerre Dinner and as always it was a great evening of comradeship and joviality. Saturday 19th October saw many of us attend the Angus Branch El Alamein Dinner which proved to be yet another outstanding evening.

November being the month of Remembrance saw Branch members attending the City of Dundee Laying of Crosses Service on Saturday 2nd and the Festival of Remembrance that evening in the Caird Hall. Thursday 7th and the Branch hosted the Mains Parish Remembrance Service at Caird Park which took place in a huge downpour. We were so thankful that the Council had laid on tea and coffee in the new Sports Centre as this gave us the opportunity to dry off. We attended the Association Remembrance Service at Balhousie Castle on Friday 8th and then our own Powrie Brae Remembrance Service on Sunday 10th November. The Chairman, representing the Dundee Branch, attended the City of Dundee Remembrance Service at the City Churches on Sunday 10th and after the Powrie Brae service a few members attended the Remembrance Service at the "Tap o' the Lah" and at City Quay for the Submariners Remembrance Service. A huge vote of thanks to those members who regularly attend those events.

On Saturday 25th January, members made their way to Forfar for the Angus Branch Burns Supper. This is always an extremely well organised and thoroughly entertaining evening and this one was no exception. It was a brilliant night celebrating the life of the Bard.

On the morning of 31st January, Joe Barton, Willie Barr and Colin Gray along with Ronnie Proctor and Peter Snaddon attended the 100th Birthday celebrations for that great Black Watch character, Major George Grant MBE, MM. A lovely occasion shared with George's family. George was in good form and still sharp witted.

That same evening it was the turn of the Dundee Branch to host their annual Red Hackle Dinner Night in the Black Watch Club. This event was a sell out and there was not an empty seat in the hall. The Dinner was, as always, greatly supported by all the other Scotland based Branches as well as our ever present Honorary Members from Liverpool, Mick Molyneux, Hughie Campbell, Bobby Lynch and Jonny



The Carnoustie VJ Parade involved "Polecat" Smith, Major Ronnie Proctor and Chalky Whyte

The following day a small contingent from Angus joined the Dundee Branch to commemorate VJ day at Powrie Brae at a short but poignant ceremony led by the Dundee Branch President, Major Colin Gray and the Rev Bob Wightman. It was great to meet up with old friends after so many months with those of us who are hard of hearing shouting at each other!!

Sadly we have lost some of our Branch stalwarts such as Jock Paton who initiated the Christmas parcels scheme for our more elderly members and widows, Ed Chassar formerly 2BW, Dan Dewar who was a WW2 veteran along with John Henderson who both took part in the Battle of El Alamein and subsequent fighting in North Africa and Sicily. They will be sadly missed.

We are constantly looking at ways in which we can continue our activities in the present circumstances and hopefully we will be able to attend Remembrance Services and deliver our Christmas parcels in the not too distant future.

Lastly we would like to congratulate Bob and Margaret Inglis on their forthcoming Diamond Wedding Anniversary on the 10th of October, all members of the Branch would like to take this opportunity to wish them both well for the future with more happy years together.

Hesp. The after dinner speaker for this year was Major Brian Cooper who brought us up to date on what The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland had been doing over the last year and what was in store for them in the foreseeable future. Brian of course during his talk ensured a few of the Branch members were on the receiving end of some light humoured stick. It's good to report that nobody took offence albeit he's not getting invited back.

A vote of thanks goes to our own Branch Chairman, Willie Barr who made sure that the whole evening was a tremendous success. Thank you also to the members who helped set up the hall for the event and to the Treasurer, Len Mitchell for being the "Bouncer" on the door and collecting outstanding dues from members from Linlathen and Fintry. Not an easy task.

The following night on Saturday 1st February a few Branch Members and the Liverpool lads travelled through to Perth for their Burns Supper in the Salutation Hotel. Another fantastic night of poetry, song, banter, food and the occasional drop of the good stuff.

On Saturday 22nd February the Branch held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) where all office bearers were re-elected for at least another year. We didn't know it at that time but this was to be the last occasion for a few months when we were all together.

The 15th April was a sad day for the Branch as we learned of the death of our dear friend and colleague Jake Gauld. Jake's funeral was a very restricted affair with only ten members of the family being admitted into the Crematorium, however, Arthur Keith was asked by Sheenagh Gauld to do the eulogy and Colin Gray and Willie Barr with the Branch Standard paid their respects from outside the entrance.

On the 9th of May Branch Members commemorated VE Day with a short service at Powrie Brae. A strange event considering the COVID-19 restrictions, especially with the 2 metre rule in place. Just so you know, Joe Devlin has never been good at judging distance.

The following day, we were informed of the death of Rev David Taylor another great member of the Branch as well as a dear friend and confidant to many. David's funeral although still under restrictions was extremely well attended by members of the Dundee Branch and Angus Branch. Another very sad loss.

The first Branch Meeting since the start of the Covid-19 restrictions took place in the Black Watch Club on Sunday 26th July and considering the rules that had to be followed, it was an excellent turnout. During this meeting Colin Gray, on behalf of the Branch made a presentation to Willie Barr to mark the occasion of 25 years of service as the Branch Chairman. It is to Willie's great credit that the Branch continues to thrive and prosper.

We were in attendance yet again at Powrie Brae on Sunday 16th August to commemorate VJ Day and it was great to see so many veterans turn out especially those from other Branches and Associations. Thank you to the Provost of Angus, Ronnie Proctor and his ever supportive wife Sonia for attending this event. This service was conducted by the Reverend Bob Wightman and the pipe tunes were played by our Honorary Member, Pipe Major Karen McAleese.

Right: Willie Barr's presentation for serving 25 years as the Dundee Branch Chairman



Below: VE Day Commemoration Service at Powrie Brae – George Eaton, Karen McAleese, Ronnie Proctor, Colin Gray, Rev Bob Wightman, Willie Barr and Chris Thomas



EDINBURGH, LOTHIAN'S AND BORDERS' BRANCH

President:	Lieutenant Colonel Julian McElhinney
Chairman:	Lieutenant Colonel Jock Menzies
Secretary:	Major Alex Stewart BEM
Treasurer:	Captain Ramsay Macdonald
Events Coordinator:	Mr Rory McIntyre

On Saturday 11 January 2020 Branch members and guests gathered in the Leith Ex Servicemen's Club to celebrate Red Hackle Day. Entertainment was provided by Mr Ally Alcorn and Pipe Major Alistair Duthie. Despite extreme weather conditions it was very much appreciated that Branch members and their guests made the effort to support this very enjoyable gathering. It was also very encouraging to see the number of different age groups that spanned from Cyprus in the 1950's to recent service at Fort George in Inverness.

On 11 June 2020 we learnt the sad news of the death of Bryan Ramsay Elliott. Bryan joined the Branch on formation in 2014 and he was a regular supporter of events. He was proud of his service in the Regimental Band and he enjoyed reminiscing about major events such as the band performing for Archbishop Makarios in Cyprus and the Charity Concert at the White House in 1963, hosted by President John F Kennedy. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, attendance at the funeral was limited to a small honour guard. Piper Rab Lindsay lead the funeral procession and the honour guard was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Julian McElhinney. A full obituary is included in the magazine.

The grave of Private James Davis VC (42nd Regiment of Foot) has finally been identified following an extensive search of the overgrown and sadly unkept North Merchiston Cemetery, Slateford Road Edinburgh. His full name was James Davis Kelly, for reasons unknown, on enlistment he dropped the name Kelly. Private Davis was serving with the 42nd Regiment of Foot in India during the period known as the Indian Mutiny (1857-1858), he received the award for conspicuous gallantry for his actions during the attack on the Fort of Ruhya 15 April 1858. The Victoria Cross awarded to Private Davis is on display in the Lord Ashcroft Gallery, Imperial War Museum London. The attached photograph shows the details on the gravestone. A small team of Branch members will now embark on a project to clean the gravestone and improve access to the site.

Despite current COVID-19 restrictions, we are continuing to plan for future events. On Remembrance Day (Sunday 8 November 2020) a wreath will be laid at the Black Watch Monument on The Mound. The Red Hackle Gathering is scheduled for 16 January 2021 and the Al Basrah Lunch on 15 May 2021. Fortunately, branch members keep in touch through social media and the plan is to gather in Edinburgh as soon as it is safe to do so. Anyone wishing to join the Branch (Serving or Retired) is more than welcome to do so and should make contact through either a Committee or Branch member.

Left: Angus Branch Burns' Supper – All ex 3 Platoon men Pte Gray, Sgt Smith and Pte Keith



Below: Red Hackle Dinner – All ex D Company - Davy Stacey, Arthur Douthwaite, Jock Menzies and Tam Purvie



Left: Perth Burns Supper – Bobby Lynch, Jonny Hesp, Davy Gow, Joe Barton, Mick Molyneux, Hughie Campbell, Willie Barr and Colin Gray



The gravestone in North Merchiston Cemetery of Private James Davis VC

FIFE BRANCH

I am sure this is the most barren report, at least in content that I have ever had to submit. The first and only joyful event of the period, goes all the way back to the 5th of January and our Red Hackle Day Breakfast. It was another successful morning, held in the Rothes Halls in Glenrothes but with one slight change, we had a lady present. My granddaughter Rebecca (from New Zealand) was over on an exchange to Glasgow University, so decided as her father couldn't attend she would join her brother and me as his representative. The usual Gun Fire was supplied by David Thomson which rounded off a hearty breakfast. Because of COVID-19 we have had to cancel The Rhine Crossing Dinner and the Ladies Alma Lunch; both these events would have meant a greater and fuller report. Unfortunately we have met under a sad banner at funerals. Although curtailed in our numbers, we have managed to have Hackles present at all the funerals. I must make a special mention of Rob Young who has supported many families as the Standard Bearer. We don't know when as a Branch we will be able to get together again but safety for all is paramount and I feel sure we will return to normal as soon as we get the all clear.

LONDON BRANCH

President	Major General AL Watson CB
Chairman	Major AAL Watson LVO
Vice Chairman	Lieutenant Colonel TA Coles MBE
Secretary	Lieutenant Colonel M Smith MBE

Under normal circumstances it is always encouraging to herald the start of the spring and summer months. They kick off the prestigious activities that focus on the capital. This year has been a year the like of which we have never experienced before; COVID 19 has effectively shut down or minimised almost all public activities in London. Cancellations were received for Founder's Day at the Royal Hospital and the Not Forgotten Association Garden Party at Buckingham Palace.

However, we are encouraged that the Field of Remembrance and the Cenotaph ceremonies will go ahead in 2020 albeit within COVID 19 restrictions which will greatly reduce the number of participants. For the Cenotaph, our representation will be limited to eight marchers but hopefully those selected will represent a full rank range of our veterans and it will be more poignant.

The Field Of Remembrance - 7th November 2019

This ceremony is a well attended event organised by The Royal British Legion. It is always hosted by one or more members of the Royal Family. The Association is fortunate to have the service of Arthur Barty who prepared the two Black Watch plots: the Regimental and the Tyneside Scottish. The work entails the layout of some one hundred and fifty crosses over the two plots.



Arthur Barty meets Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex at the Field of Remembrance

The Cenotaph Ceremony 2019

It is very encouraging to report that we had a full complement of Red Hackles on parade for the Nation's high profile ceremony at the Cenotaph; the effort for all to make the journey is much appreciated. We have also had interest and representation from some members from the Scottish Branches which is very welcome indeed. Thank you to all who supported the occasion in one way or another. Lunch at the London Scottish House was enjoyed by some of the contingent.



(from right to left) Brigadier de Broë-Ferguson, Colonel Nigel Lithgow, David Wilson and Jeremy Hulme before the form up at the 2019 London Cenotaph Parade

The London Branch Association Dinner

This is the main event within our calendar and attendance is on the increase. We would like to thank the Dinner Secretary, Ian Howarth, for the detailed administrative work involved in making this a memorable occasion. The dinner was held at The Victory Services Club and the piping took many members back to days of their youth. We were lucky to have Pipe Major Richard Grisdale, Her Majesty The Queen's Piper, and ex-Pipe Major of 3 SCOTS, to play for us alongside the Branch Piper, Chic Mackie.



General Andy Watson, Branch President listens to The Queen's Piper and Branch Pipe Major at the end of the dinner



The "young" table at the London Branch Dinner included Mr Sam Slota Newson, Mr Richard Holmes, Major Guy Williams, Lieutenant Colonel Alex Cooper, Mr Andy Colquhoun, Colonel Rob Hedderwick, Major Rob Smith, Captain Christian Voce-Russell and Mr Rory Mayberry

The London Branch Memorial to the 51st Highland Division's surrender at St Valery - 12 June 2020.

The last ditch action and eventual surrender of the 51st Highland Division is often side lined in comparison with the Dunkirk evacuation so the Branch decided that on this, the 80th Anniversary, we should mark the occasion in style. It was made more challenging by the COVID-19 limitations.

The end result was a very fitting ceremony held at 'The Queen Mother's Steps' on The Mall. Special thanks are given to Colonel Neil Tomlin for taking the lead at this ceremony. The following were also in attendance: Cathy Burnaby Atkins whose father Freddie was captured at St Valery, at the age of 19; Geordie Fergusson, son of Bernard, who was one of those who was not at St Valery. Geordie's uncle was Patrick Campbell-Preston, who commanded a Company of 1BW in 1940 and was badly wounded on 11th June; Flavia Ormond whose father, Captain Neill Grant Duff, served in the 1st Battalion and died at St Valery on 12 June 1940 and Victoria Schofield, author of the Black Watch history. Also on parade and drawing the attention of passersby and making it a very special event were The London Branch Pipe Major, Chic Mackie, his band's Drum Major and the Pipe Major and two pipers from The London Scottish (the regiment was also represented at St Valery). Bugler Darren Riley (Ex Light Infantry) played the Last Post, Flavia Ormond laid the wreath along with Colonel Neil Tomlin.



A short ceremony was held at The Queen Mother's Steps to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the surrender of the 51st Highland Division on 12 June 1940. Social distancing was the order of the day.

Looking Forward

We hope to hold our AGM in April next year and that there will be a "new normal" which will mean we can hold all of our Branch activities. Meanwhile, we plan to hold a virtual AGM at the end of the year (2020) to pass the accounts and elect the officer bearers of the London Branch.

A FAREWELL

The memorial service for Peter Stormonth Darling was held at St Luke's Church, Sydney Street, Chelsea on Thursday 13th February 2020 and was attended by a number of London Branch members. Chick Mackie played the pipes at the Service.

PERTH BRANCH

President:	Maj (Retd) Tim Carmichael
Vice President:	Lt Col (Retd) Roddy Riddell OBE
Chairman:	Capt Alan McEwen MBE
Secretary:	Pat McLinden
Treasurer:	Frances Sandilands

Over the course of the year the Branch has continued to welcome new members but sadly have recorded the deaths of Eddy Kulik and Tommy Trayner. The Branch stands healthily with 80+ members, the vast majority of whom are paid up members; if you've not yet paid then do feel free to contact the Treasurer!

In December we were very pleased to hear that, having been Regimental Secretary and with 15 years dedicated work as the Vice Chairman of the Regimental Association, Roddy Riddell was awarded the OBE in recognition for his work.

The activities of the Branch have been so curtailed by COVID-19 that the Burns night was our most recent formal event. Our principle guests were Councillor Chris Ahern, the Armed Forces and Veterans Champion for Perth and Kinross and Lieutenant Colonel Duncan MacKinnon, Commanding Officer of 7 SCOTS, and Mrs Sarah Mackinnon. This year saw our new Secretary, Pat McLinden, in the role of Master of Ceremonies during an excellent evening of performances, camaraderie and food. Our collective thanks go to all those who gave us such an able and hugely entertaining evening.



Burns Night 2020 at the Salutation Hotel: Kenny Forbes and Pat McLinden

More recently, in the absence of a formal Perth & Kinross commemoration to mark it, members attended the 75th anniversary of Victory over Japan Day commemoration at Balhousie Castle on 15th August 2020. Our brief commemoration paid particular attention to the men of 2BW. Following the narrative read by Lt Col Roddy Riddell, Maj Hugh Rose read 'Return to Burma – an elegy for the Chindits' by Bernard Fergusson, from his book 'The Wild Green Earth'. Following this the Regimental Collect was shared and the Kohima Epitaph, it having been the decisive battle against the Japanese in north east India in 1944 was read: 'When you go home, Tell them of us and say, For your tomorrow, We gave our today'. Lochaber No More played by PM Alasdair Duthie concluded the brief ceremony.



COVID-19 had clearly affected some officers more than others who had failed to find a barber during lockdown



Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) RM Riddell OBE denying all knowledge of who ate all the pies



The formality of the commemoration to mark the 75th anniversary of VJ day at Balhousie Castle. Pat McLinden, Sandy MacDuff and Major Colin Innes



Perth Branch members enjoyed the Croix de Guerre Dinner



Henry McKenzie Johnston a veteran of the 6th Battalion during the Second World War celebrated his 99th birthday at his nursing home in Bedale, Yorkshire. Pipe Major Stephen Beattie of The Black Watch Association Pipe Band in Stoke-on-Trent travelled to the nursing home to play an appropriate selection of tunes. Many wartime soldiers of the 6th Battalion came from Stoke-on-Trent and there was for many years a strong Association Branch in the "potteries"



Stoke-on-Trent Pipe Band lead the Remembrance parade, comprising The Worshipful the Mayor of Newcastle-under-Lyme, Councillor Simon White and his entourage from the Queens Gardens to St Giles' Church, Newcastle under Lyme for the church service at 10a.m.



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