

The Pomegranate

Issue Four: January 2013





Cover Image: The Commanding Officer's Rover Group pass an ANA convoy at the Gates of Gereshk.

Commanding Officer's Foreword



One of the perks of being deployed in January is that it is difficult to find time to feel the usual post-festive deflation that comes with a return to work in the New Year. That and there is no hangover. I am happy to report therefore, that we have been flat out since I last wrote to you and the New Year has all but passed us by. The PMAG's focus has switched from low level mentoring to training Afghan instructors and the Warthog Group remains as busy as ever. We have also hosted the final Op HERRICK 18 recce, which is a real milestone in our progression.

You will have no doubt heard the news on redundancy and whilst I cannot speak for other capbadges, it is not as bad for the Regiment as perhaps we had feared. Everyone who might be affected has been informed personally but in short, for those of us deployed; as long as a soldier is drawing Operational Allowance on Op HERRICK 17 (and that includes those who are on R&R) then he/she is not in bracket for compulsory redundancy. If he/she is a named individual in one of the fields that have been selected for reduction, then they can still volunteer to take redundancy should they so wish. I cannot summarise the process, rules and criteria here but you should know that I have directed all notified soldiers to discuss their options with their families before making any decision. The Welfare Office and our respective Rear Parties stand by to advise you as necessary.

This month we have continued to receive high profile visitors and have most notably hosted a visit by the Minister for the Armed Forces just after the New Year. He was visibly impressed by our soldiers' exploits and successes, and our reputation and profile remain high. We have also begun our next phase of troop reductions, as outlined in my last update, and at the end of this month we say farewell to more Police Advisor Teams, who will be home with you by the middle of February. The last tranche will, however, remain until March when we begin our Relief in Place in earnest.



As we move into the last third of our tour we are starting to look at the horizon and plan all of our post-tour events. I have asked the Welfare Officer to summarise them in a Forecast for you on our Facebook page so that you can plan accordingly, but before they begin there is a healthy dose of Post Tour Leave to take and it is well deserved.

Finally on an update perspective, I return on R&R shortly and will come into the Welfare Office on 7 Feb at 1830 hrs to talk to whoever wishes to attend. I will give you a brief update on how we are doing out here and will attempt to answer any questions that you might wish to throw at me - hopefully, the Welfare Officer will be persuaded to crack open some refreshments too! If you cannot attend and want to ask me something, you can leave your question with the Welfare Officer and I will answer it through him. I also believe that in a stunning display of technological wizardry you can join the event by Skype. I have no idea how this will work but the Welfare Officer assures me that it will, so please ask him how to dial in if you want to. I look forward to seeing you then and in the meantime hope that time continues to pass as quickly for you as it is for us.

Quis Separabit.

Lt Col Jamie Piggott
Commanding Officer

Editor's Welcome

Welcome to the penultimate edition of our HERRICK 17 newsletter!

The weather here has started to improve once again, and it seems a little unreal to see news reports of the snow in the UK, reports which have caused nervous whispers about delayed flights among those due R&R. As you will read in this issue, stories from those returning from their leave have provided a real morale boost and all who are returning are doing so with renewed drive to make the most of the last third of our tour, although focus is already on our return and this issue contains the final submissions from a number of PATs.



This issue also sees us smash through the 100 page mark of *The Pomegranate*, something almost unheard of for a tour newsletter. The total currently stands at 132 pages and Capt Brad Southall, our Battle Group Engineer, has started to look into structural support for the pile of drafts and back issues on my desk! Yet despite the volume, the quality has remained high throughout, and has been recognised by Brigadier Bruce, the commander of Task Force Helmand. All this has only been possible due to the hard work of the contributors who continue to take time from their incredibly busy schedules. My thanks to all.

I hope you enjoy reading how our work and life on tour continues to evolve.

Until next time.

Lt Bobby Crean,
Editor



Police Mentoring and Advisory Group (PMAG) Headquarters

Capt Charlie 'CFA' Arrowsmith

2013 has proved an eventful year so far for PMAG HQ. The Headquarters had to spend the New Year without its Chief of Staff (Maj Kace), who left on New Year's Eve for a spell of R&R. Luckily we had Maj Todd, our attached 1 Royal Ghurkha Rifles officer, to step into his place. He certainly wouldn't claim to have enjoyed the experience, but luckily he could count the days until Major Kace's return on our Jane MacDonald calendar kindly provided by Sgt 'Doc' Lowes. As the 'Loose Women' star's number one fan, he was delighted to receive photos, posters and other assorted (in some cases autographed) memorabilia direct from Ms MacDonald herself over Christmas. Not to be outdone, the Regimental Signals Warrant Officer, a heavy metal connoisseur, has made headlines in the Official Iron Maiden fan club monthly magazine, an august publication with a readership in the hundreds of thousands (literally!). Following the example of Sgt Lowes and WO2 Dyer, the Rover Group have been requesting autographs and freebies from any celeb that crosses their mind, adding an element of surprise to the Christmas mail deliveries that keep on coming. We are all missing our families back home but the constant flow of letters and parcels has made the New Year lull far more enjoyable.



Members of the HERRICK 18 PMAG Headquarters attend one of our evening briefings.



With promotion to Captain in the bag, the Clover brothers couldn't be happier for each other.

The constant turn-over of staff now heading back for R&R and numerous visits have meant time continues to fly by. It has left me with limited gym friends, as the Chief of Staff and Capt 'Ten-men T-Dog' Tanner refuse to humour me with anything more ungentlemanly than a light sculpt in the 'tin temple.' Needless to say, it has been a busy but rewarding month. As the ANSF progress further towards transition, the news coming from the boys on the ground is increasingly positive. Last month was one of the most peaceful in Central Helmand in three years and the AUP are stronger than ever. LCpl Yardley, one of The Intelligence Corps' bright young stars, has joined the Headquarters and is being whipped into shape by the indefatigable Sgt Wibberley. While more accustomed to the lion's roar on a hot Pretorian night, our South African Counter IED advisor Captain Hugo Engelbrecht is finally beginning to enjoy the Regimental Pipe Major's early morning call, though we fear the other units



based with us in MOB Lashkar Gah may take more time to convince! Finally, and much to the delight of the Ladies in the MOB Signals Squadron, Pte Rummens has returned from R&R and is still brimming with Scouse charm. He remains ever hopeful that he will one day mimic Sean Connery's James Bond and successfully throw his beret onto a coat hook from the HQ door.

I would love to write more but the Chief of Staff and the Ops Officer need more coffee, and they assure me that there is only one man in the HQ up to the task of delivering it. I will therefore leave you with thanks once more for your continued support, from all of us in PMAG Headquarters and the Commanding Officer's Rover Group.



Muscle Beach, Lashkar Gah, 2012.



Silicon 666, the callsign of the Beast.

Lashkar Gah Training Centre (LTC)

Capt Steve Stewart

One of the perks (the only perk?) of non-alcoholic beer is the lack of a hangover the following morning - even after 2 cans! As such, within a flash the Christmas and New Year celebrations were over and there was no excuse for us to delay getting back to the grindstone. The RDG and 1RGR training teams are continuing to push the ANP towards transition, and we have had noticeable improvements across the board. LTC is currently bursting at the seams with ANP recruits who have been released from their check point duties to attend our courses, a positive sign that word is getting back to the ANP commanders of the value provided here. Having passed the half-way point in our tour there has been no let-up in the enthusiasm of the lads, who want to see the tour out in a professional manner. In addition to the constant improvements in infrastructure on the site, the Major Steve Kirkman continues to drive us hard with new initiatives and projects, keeping everyone on their toes and ensuring LTC continues to develop and improve the training and leadership of the Afghan Uniformed Police.



Major Kirkman and I are incredibly proud of our team and the Multiple commanders, SSgt Eddie Bluhme, WO2 Raju Dura and WO2 Bishnu Thapa, continue to excel in all they do. The SHQ and SQMS departments have been busy as usual in the background ensuring that all is running smoothly with the accounting processes, equipment checks and managerial inspections, and generally making life better for everyone living in the ISAF compound; but I will leave it to each of sections here at the LTC to explain exactly what activities they have been involved in over the last couple of weeks.

Squadron Headquarters, LTC

SSgt (SQMS) Gary Cosby



A belated Happy New year from all of us in the Headquarters of LTC, and let me tell you it's totally different to bring it in sober! Our night of entertainment consisted of a fun filled evening in the welfare tent with our guests from the Commanding Officer's Rover Group and kicked off with a quiz that was put together by the Royal Military Police. This was followed by a skit performed by our guests, showing comical moments from the tour and its build up training and was brought to a close by the attached element of the 1RGR and the G4 team conducting some worthy fund raising for Help for Heroes through the running of a mini, makeshift casino.

So far this year has been filled with promise, as the Afghan National Police continue to move in the right direction; this is reassuring, and we are confident that they will be able to meet the challenges they will face as the ISAF troops within LTC pull out in the next few months. This is down to their hard work and willingness to learn, but would not have been possible without the efforts of all the different cap badged personnel continuously mentoring the ANP on the right way, not the easy way, of doing things.

With over two thirds of the tour complete, we really are starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel, and can't wait to see you all again very soon.





Photo Captions:

A) WO2, CSM Raju holding the reigns in the absence of WO2, SSM Ross. B) If I was a betting man, my money would be on the Ghurkha! C) Over a \$10 fag, Cpl Button takes the opportunity to thank the 2IC for enlisting him all those years ago.

Multiple One
Sgt Andrew Percy

The New Year's resolution for Multiple 1 has been, 'work hard, play hard' and we have been trying to make the most of our limited down time this month, whilst doing our best not to adopt a pack of dogs. There are many stray dogs out here and quite a few that hang around LTC, so naturally we have named them all and a bit of rivalry has developed over which dog is best; Whisky (the puppy named by the RDG), another white puppy that the ANSF have named or one of the two bigger dogs that are always found with the DynCorp security on Vehicle Check Point 1.



Another New Year's resolution is to have greater patience with the induction process of new students arriving at LTC for one of the many courses run here. This is a thorough process, which is of real benefit, but if a lot of students turn up it can be painfully slow and a recent intake saw over 200 students arrive. That said, being able to train these sorts of numbers means we are having a real effect and we are proud of what we have achieved so far. The tour is passing really quickly and it will be interesting to see just how many more police we can train before we are home with our families. The R&R many of us have had was great, but brings to light just how much we are looking forward to post tour leave. We look forward to spending more quality time with you in the near future.

Multiple 2

LCpl Subin Rai

Overview of a Patrolman Course.

Last month, we explained the induction process for a course we were running, and we are now half way through mentoring the eight weeks long patrolman course mentioned.

We had a lot of entrants for this course, as the Police Chiefs have identified the training of police patrolmen as a priority. Because of this, we split the trainees into Toli and Bolaks, which are similar to companies and platoons and following a couple of weeks of literacy training with a specialist language teacher; students, tutors and mentors were eager to get cracking on the tactics phase. This commences every morning with drill, although the it is modelled on that done by the soviet military so is very different to what we know as drill!

Students then attend classes in a huge variety of subjects including; police values & ethics, human rights, drug awareness, community policing, road traffic collisions & traffic law, counter IED awareness and weapon handling. Perhaps the most enjoyable aspect of the course for all involved is a real time vehicle check point operation. It is hugely rewarding to see the students excel at this and the sense of accomplishment they get from completing the course. No course in Afghanistan is complete without a passing out ceremony, and it is here that the students swear an oath on the Holy Koran to uphold the law of Afghanistan, before being presented with a certificate to mark their achievement. It is also an achievement for us, but we can't rest easy as very soon after the next bunch of recruits inevitably turn up.



A)



B)



C)



D)



E)



Photo captions:

A) SSgt Bluhme ready for his overnight recharge. B) LCpl Swift and Whisky; one's a hairy mongrel who lies around all day without achieving much, the other is... C) Cpl/Sgt Percy ("Why on earth did I get back on that plane!?) D) Cpl Bateman: half man, half basket weaver. E) Cpl Groves, LCpl Swift, Cpl Bateman and LCpl Fagan... Few are chosen for such vital work.





Top: The students undertake a house search as part of their training. Above: Cpl Ganesh and LCpl Subin with the Bolak 2 students they have been mentoring



Multiple 3

Sgt Kumar Gurung

Football in LTC.

Contrary to reports in other editions of *The Pomegranate*, not all Ghurkhas are professional volley ball players and although we will play, Multiple 3 much prefers football. After a long day training the AUP, we will do our best to include a sports evening. The ground may not be a match for pitches in the UK, but it provides a level playing field, in ability if not in anything else.

Numbers vary according to work commitments, but guests quickly learn the Ghurkha ethic, with press ups being awarded for any goals let in or fouls. Our football skills may not be improving, but by the time our tour finishes, we should all be getting maximum points in our Physical Fitness Assessments! We are also learning that these games help in bonding, not only with our interpreters but also the medics, who are kept busy cleaning scratched legs and arms!

Although, we enjoy playing football during our free time our main task cannot be ignored, and we spend as much time trying to improve our football skills as we do trying to improve how we mentor the Ministry of Interior or how we work as Guardian Angels. We look forward to passing what we have learnt onto our successors in the not too distant future; it really is strange to think just how soon our tour will be over and it goes without saying that whilst we enjoy our role here, we are all looking forward to being reunited with our families.



With a pitch of this quality it doesn't matter how skilful you are!



Life at LTC for an ISTAR Operator

LBdr 'Donny' Donovan

I arrived at Lashkar Gah Training Centre at the end of September, and was immediately impressed with the place. Compared to friends in other locations I am very lucky, and the facilities are gleaming, although with so many Ghurkhas on site, the novelty of curry soon wears off.

As you can tell, I am an attached arm with The Royal Dragoon Guards, but they instantly made me feel like part of the family; of course working in the Ops Room with Sgt Jay Kaye, Cpl Danny Austin and Cpl Chris 'Belly' Button, this involves being on the receiving end of banter for being a southerner, in the Artillery and an Arsenal fan.



ISTAR refers to Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance and my role is to provide security for LTC and the surrounding area by operating and maintaining the Base ISTAR system. This is a fun system to work with and the tour is flying by, helped by getting to know so many new faces. In fact, the only issue I have is that even this far into the tour, there is still a language barrier as I, a lad from Essex, try to understand the broad Yorkshire accents of most of the blokes. This has proved particularly embarrassing when the OC is asking me a question and I have to get him to repeat himself four or five times! That said, I'm really enjoying myself.

Royal Military Police

Cpl Keith Hall AGC(RMP)

The RMP have seen a phase change in the past month, with their manpower decreasing yet workload increasing. This change in workload has come about by the fact that we have taken a step forward in the training of the Ministry of Interior (MOI) instructors.



The MOI take responsibility for the delivery of lessons.



Working with the Ministry of Defence Police, we have created a 3 week package in which a range of essential lessons will be taught to the MOI instructors. These lessons have ranged from Human Rights to simple foot patrols and dealing with the public, and were introduced in order to further the instructor knowledge, improve their practical lesson skills and generally enhance their ability to instruct. With January drawing to a close, these lessons are now in full swing and the MOI are really enjoying the training that they are receiving, the hope is that this enthusiasm will be passed on to future students.

Our increased involvement with the MOI course is the exception to the rule however, and this month has seen the RMP step back and the ANP step forward in many areas. This includes the delivery of 'blue' lessons, with quite a few of these no longer being mentored, and the final exercise for the patrolman's course, Op India Starsky (the VCP mentioned by Multiple 2), which has now been fully handed over to the MOI. So far the Afghans appear to be handling these extra responsibilities well, and as such a smooth transition should be in sight.

In the mean time, we are continuing with other police duties, such as the crime reduction clinics run by Cpl Dehavilland. Morale remains high, with any drop being countered by the visit from the incoming OC, which reminded us just how quickly this tour is going. Lt Novak, Sgt McCallum and Sgt Morgan have all been able to get away on well-earned and much awaited R&R, and the return of those from the UK always brings a bit of a morale boost (if not for the ones returning!).



Above Left: Posing for a photograph after the final Exercise India Starsky with ISAF involvement. Above Right: Lt Novak does a stint on guard.



Nad-e-Ali
2Lt Giles Moon



With the delights of Christmas now well behind us, the men of C Squadron QRL are back into the routine of mentoring the Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP). With only four Police Advisory Teams (PATs) remaining from an original seven, and two months left until we return home, we are definitely having to 'do more with less'. This is absolutely as it should be, and we are seeing tangible evidence on an almost daily basis of the improvements that the police are making in Nad-e-Ali. Our focus over the last month has been on training the Afghan Police to act as instructors so that they can continue to recruit and train themselves once we've left. Despite the range of Afghan related issues which keep us all on our toes, this has been really successful and the Afghan District Chief of Police (DCoP) has fully bought into this process. It is great to see that those in command understand the importance of the sustainable instructor base the Squadron are helping to create.

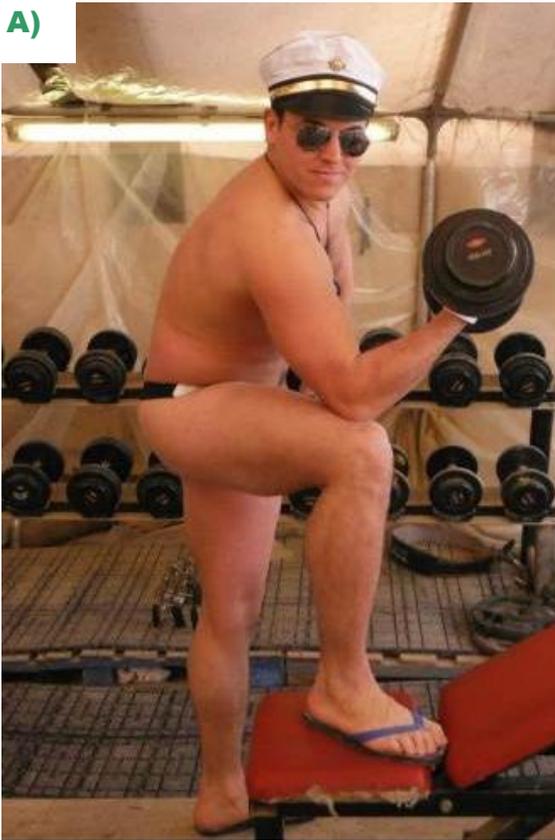
Alongside the instructor training, we are also training a freshly recruited crop of Afghan Local Police (ALP). As their name suggests, the ALP are recruited with the aim of working in their local areas, which makes them an effective force against the insurgents as they have a vested interest in protecting their own communities. Their territorial nature also instils them with commendable enthusiasm, as Sgt Allen recently found out; charged with training twenty new ALP, he swiftly discovered that he was going to have his hands full when one of the more experienced recruits proved almost as good at first aid as the Squadron medic. The other ALP have also taken well to training, although they seem particularly enthusiastic about their introduction to the concept of the NAAFI break!

Life this month remains varied, and on top of the training we have also been able to support a number of operations. Of particular note, elements of the Squadron deployed in support of DCoP to conduct a hugely ambitious clearance operation in the dashte west of Nad-e-Ali. This was a real leap forward in terms of Afghan Security Force capability, as the operation instigated, planned and executed by the DCoP. It involved between 300 - 400 Police and Afghan Army from two separate Districts. We would not even have entertained the thought of this sort of operation when we arrived four months ago, yet it was an extremely effective operation which had a fundamental effect on the insurgents and boosted the confidence of the police – real progress!

The Squadron remains in high spirits as we enter the final couple of months of our time in Helmand. Thoughts are obviously starting to turn towards returning home as we look forward to some well deserved leave and as ever, I wish to thank all of you for your support, as all parcels, letters and emails from the UK (and Nepal!) are welcome reminders of home and serve to make life out here considerably easier. On a final note, my apologies to Lt Guy Amir who, after losing one of the Christmas events, was required to pay a forfeit. Rules are rules and the photo A (see below) is the result!



A)



B)



C)



D)



A) A Christmas forfeit for Lt Amir B) Tpr Lawton on a foot patrol to visit our mentees. C) Vehicle patrols for those check points further afield. Note that this is also proof that we weren't lying about the poor weather. D) Lt Moon discusses progress so far.



Warthog Group



Above Left: The water balloon launcher gets its first run-out. Above Right: SSM Richards shows Cpl Leonard exactly where his sideboards should come down to.



Above Left: More water balloons. Above Right: Upon seeing the camera, Maj Yann Searle and WO2 (SSM) Chris Richards strike a natural pose.



1st Troop

Lt Stu Vine

R&R has now passed and I'm sure I speak for all in saying that it was lovely to see our families and friends over the New Year. Leaving and returning as a Troop ensured there were minimal post-leave blues upon returning to Afghanistan, but our time away from each other also showed how close we have grown over the past year and we were all saddened by the news that Tpr Reid was unable to return with us following R&R. This was a huge disappointment and our thoughts are with him back at the Regiment. With the exception of Tpr Calder, who is now the proud father of a baby boy, R&R was uneventful enough for us to return focused on the task in hand and after only a few hours back in Price we were already planning for our first operation. Before this could be conducted though, there was a list of tasks to keep the crews working late into the night; it really is amazing the extent to which our Warthogs crave attention! These jobs only added to the strange feeling of returning to normality and it is clear we have all grown used to the tempo of operations, living and breathing the Warthog.

Our first operation back after R&R saw us once again return to Yakchal, supporting the Brigade Reconnaissance Force (BRF) in a Raid on insurgent activity in the area. The operation was a resounding success, with the Warthog again proving its worth in terms of its ability to cross all terrain types and ensure freedom of manoeuvre throughout the Green Zone. The operational pace has remained high and we've also worked with The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment and visited the Arghandab River Valley. Even as I write this, many of the lads are deployed with the Royal Marines in their primary Area of Operations... the gymnasium!

Often being out overnight, some of my most vivid memories will be the silence of the dashte (desert), beautiful in its stillness. There is little artificial light in Helmand, and this reveals a sky littered with star constellations invisible in Catterick and I've found my troop oddly at its happiest whilst in the desert. Conditions in Helmand had been particularly unpleasant prior to R&R, so the UK was a pleasant surprise in terms of how high the temperatures were. Thankfully, the weather in Afghanistan improved while we were away, and our return meant we avoided the snow we see you are currently suffering!

Tpr Calder isn't the only proud new father in the Troop and since our return Sgt Appleby has also received the wonderful news that he is now a dad to a baby girl; the whole Troop wishes both new mothers well.

Finally, I will finish this piece by looking forward to February. Next month promises to be as busy as January, with 2nd Troop of the Line enjoying their R&R, there may not be as many events to mark the passage of time as in other months, but there are a few Troopers who believe they will be inundated with Valentines cards. I hope they're not too disappointed, but letters or parcels of any kind are always appreciated!



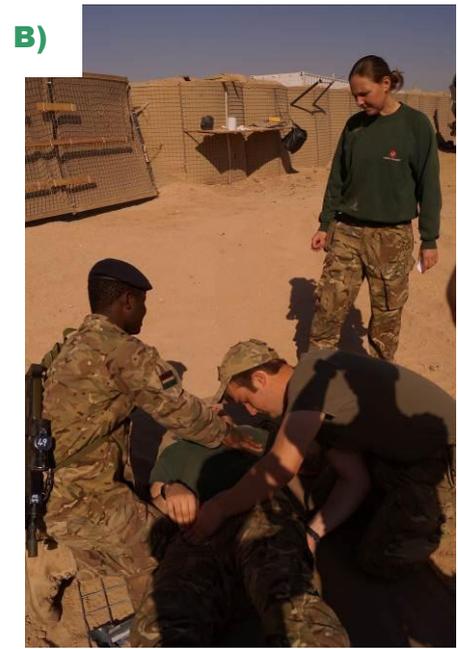


Photo captions

A) 1st Troop awaiting a post Op debrief. B) LCpl Barton supervises Medical Continuation Training. C) Cpl Hurst and his bright young protégés- Tpr Calder and LCpl Davies. D) 'Through the mist'- A dawn insertion by BOC mounted in Warthog. E) Tpr Hadley searching for his pipes. F) Caught off guard, LCpl Hornby watches as Tprs Jarman, Cowan and Kennedy deal with another training serial.





Photo captions

A) Cpl Hurst carries out a weapon handling test with Tprs Kennedy, Thompson and McCrossan. B) 'Clearly in need of a good clean' ponders Lt Vine. C) The Warthog Group relax before a post-Op debrief D) BRF exfil by helicopter from an operation in the Arghandab River Valley, E) The Warthog Group.





Intimate support to the BRF in Yakchal

2nd Troop

Tpr James 'Stevo' Stephenson

I'm told that today is the 18th January 2013, but I'm not going to lie, I've lost track of the days, as they begin to merge into one another due to the rapid pace of life, as we jump from one op to the next. Despite (or maybe because of) the pace of life, the lads and I are still really enjoying the tour and always finding time to have a laugh. Before R&R, LCpl Jason Sutcliffe made many of us the butt of repeated practical jokes, so a few (who want to remain nameless!) took the opportunity one evening to fill his vehicle with bottles of water... 1200 of them! Suffice to say, we haven't suffered from too many practical jokes since and we wait to see who will step into his shoes.

When not on operations (and sometimes even when we are) the maintenance of the vehicles continues, but following this there is often an opportunity to catch up with everyone over a brew and a ration pack. Of course we don't have ration packs in Price, where we enjoy pretty amazing food, but this just means we have to spend more time in the gym or running around camp. Most recently, some of the Squadron even took part in MOB Price's DANCON march. As with those held elsewhere, this is 25km around camp. Weight must be carried, which for us took the form of a weapon and a daysack. Despite our reputation as 'heavy cavalry', competing against the Danish and Royal Marines raised our competitive hackles and a couple of the lads finished in the top 5. That said, you could tell the next day which of us took part, as all competitors were walking around the tank park like John Wayne! Returning from R&R, we rediscovered the rugby ball that had been gifted to us by D Sqn, King's Royal Hussars, and those of us not too injured from the DANCON have found time to spend a few mornings playing touch rugby on the tank park before starting the day properly.

New Years was a milestone for 2nd Troop, as it marked just over two months in theatre and was the last noteworthy date before our R&R. Hearing the stories from 1st Troop of the Line has been a boost to morale and turned our thoughts well and truly towards getting home for a couple of weeks; relaxing, having a couple of beers and enjoying the company of our loved





Photo captions

A) Tpr James Stephenson and SSgt Tommy Cowton, “You take them both Stevo, you look like you could use the training.” B) A Warthog tests the depths of the Argendahb River. C) Cpls Henderson, Bergin, Tuisovivi and Buck relax between ops whilst based out of Attal. D) Tprs play a board game whilst in a lull between ops. E) A late afternoon move into a desert leaguer with Talisman leading the way.



ones (or with it coinciding with Valentine's Day, finding prospective new ones!). We have all been trying to resist counting down the days but most people have now broken and the tally of days remaining gets passed around the tank park at least once a day. Yet having said that, the other look forward for us is, unbelievably, coming back from R&R and continuing to get to work with the Warthog on ops.

B 'The Black Horse' Squadron

Maj Hugh Pearce-Gould



With Christmas behind us it is remarkable how quickly time is passing out here, indeed an alarming amount of planning for training activities when we return to Catterick is already underway. The Squadron is in good heart but we will soon sadly be saying farewell to our Danish contingent from Team 14. Having a mixed squadron has been a real eye opener and a tremendously rewarding experience, we wish them all a happy return to the snowy wastes of Bornholm and are eagerly looking forward welcoming the new team in February.

January sees the mission continuing to progress well, with the Afghan Police growing steadily in ability and confidence, the boys are performing superbly out here and are making a real difference, all should be very proud of what we have achieved to date.

Squadron Headquarters Troop

Lt James Heath

As Christmas and New Year become a rapidly fading memory, SHQ now look forward to the end of tour, which for the majority is just under two months away. After the bitterly cold



nights and mornings of December and early January, there has been a much needed increase in temperature and the return of the warm sun which characterise the Spring and Summer of Afghanistan.

With a flagrant disregard for the limitations imposed on electricity consumption, the dream yurt that is the ops room of NES DAT (under the stewardship of SSgt Bradley) has been working over time. This is primarily because of a renewed drive within the team, but is at least partly the result of the on going problem of the generators turning the power off every two minutes, something which has brought most of the Sqn HQ to tears at one stage or another. The most adversely affected of the personnel at NES DAT is the Danish 2IC Captain Ben Jacobsen. His constant need for power to his laptop is highly suspicious but he consistently denies any wrong doing.

This month has seen the return of SSM Hickinson who has been greatly missed during his time away from us in England, it is a relief to have his sturdy hand once more on the tiller, but of course our thoughts are also with his family. January also brought the arrival of Cpl Booth from the Intelligence Corps, who some say has appeared in order to keep a check on the two existing Intelligence LCpls, Harker and Jones. Others say it was to inject some much needed humour into the Ops room, but either way, he has become a key member of the SHQ team.

The double act that is the two intelligence LCpls, 'Lloyd and Lloyd' is a constant source of amusement. Their powers of divination are often relied upon to form opinions of people that no one has ever met, and they are at their happiest when discussing local gossip with our Afghan comrades, this is Military Intelligence at its finest... keep up the good work chaps!

From an operational perspective SHQ continues to deliver. The current, and our fifth, DCoP is doing wonders for Gereshk and has the full support of both the people and the police in the city (*you had to tempt fate didn't you? Now I know who to blame!* – Sqn Ldr). His vice like grip on all things lawful has already resulted in a noticeable drop in local crime.

The training of the Afghan Uniform Police (AUP) and Afghan Local Police (ALP) is also continuing with vigour under our attached Royal Military Police soldiers and the Squadron is entering the final stages of our training plan, which will see Afghans teaching Afghans in the very near future.

With HERRICK 17 firmly past its half-way point, everybody is now starting to have the finish line in their sights, however we will continue to work hard so that the remaining few months provide the opportunity to leave a lasting legacy within the Gereshk District police Headquarters. On behalf of everyone in SHQ, I would like to thank you all for your incredible support so far, but ask that you keep it up, as your continued support is essential to keep up morale for the last push.

Gereshk PAT/DTT
2Lt Simon Ramage

This month has been distinctly different from previous months, as the PAT has morphed into a District Training Team (DTT), a change we adapted to like a duck to water. This new job sees the PAT travelling to pastures new in the old NES South area near Gereshk. We have



been putting the local AUP through the rigors of continuity training, with some surprising (and not so surprising) results. Every course run requires the awarding of a certificate and the AUP take certificate collection very seriously. Unfortunately, due to the lack of a colour printer in the barren wastes of PB2, the PAT/DTT have had to make promises of certificate manufacture to the desperate Police.

New Year was seen in in style, with the PAT returning from PB2 to stag on the walls of DPHQ. A fireworks display team was created, led by call sign Beef (afflicted with a chronic case of party fever), but unfortunately the flares that had been prepped for firing were swiftly vetoed by the comedy villain Captain Ben Jacobsen. As with other teams, the New Year brought new faces seen and Tpr Tosh rampaged into our lives after being flown in as a replacement for Tpr Cooper who broke his foot whilst showing off kicking a punch bag. Tpr Cooper, if you are reading this then remember your age, its unseemly for the elderly to attempt to high kick a punch bag... especially when suffering from brittle bone syndrome!

The PAT is, as always, incredibly grateful for the support and welfare packages sent by friends and family. We appreciate all forms of communication as we approach the end third of tour. We hope that the weeks away are going by as quickly for you as they are for us, our thoughts are with you all, especially Mrs Ratubalavu, Miss Crowe and their new sons.



PMAG mentor the police in anything they require. Here our mentees conduct an audit of one of their Check Points.





Photo Captions:

A) and B) Auditing of the various Check Points continues. Although we were on hand to help, the Afghans conducted the whole task without assistance. C) One of our Danish colleagues gets to know the locals. D) Taking a break during a joint patrol. E) One of the Check Points ISAF has helped to create. F) Danish soldiers from the Royal Guard Hussars conduct a joint patrol with the AUP





The PAT summon the courage to wake Major Pearce-Gould.



SSgt Booth works on his department with a little book balancing in the Ops Room.



Lt Heath over-joyed at the rare opportunity for him to leave the Ops room... the others less so!



The team just prior to visiting Check Points for chai.

PB2 PAT

Sgt Chris Stead

I would like to start this piece by wishing all friends and family at home a happy new year from Silicon 26. The PAT saw the New Year in by watching a film and getting an early night instead of the normal drunken proceedings of New Year's Eve back at home and woke up on the first of January feeling full of the joys of spring, we hope you were able to enjoy your New Years as much.

With the R&R plot now in full swing the PAT saw the return of Tprs Smith and Van Leewven, and LCpl Bramhall. In turn Tpr Wells, Capt Shorland Ball and LCpls Clark and Richardson have returned home for a well-deserved rest. In their absence, we have had the pleasure of welcoming Tpr Westwood and LCpl Martin (RMP) to our great team. Tpr Westwood, who



has been given the nickname 'Vivian' by all the boys, is fitting in well and keeping a cool head. LCpl Si Martin joined us on the tenth of January and is doing a great job covering LCpls Clark and Richardson, as well as bringing 60Gb of morale with him! This morale is especially important for Tpr McGuffin, who still has 8 weeks until his R&R, however at least his stash of sweets is safe as Capt Shorland Ball is at home! Capt Shorland Ball isn't the only one with a sweet tooth though, and as acting PAT commander I have noticed some worrying patterns emerging and think the PAT are addicted to Cadbury's Cream Eggs!

During a recent visit from the Sqn Ldr and SSM, we learnt that Tpr Bedford had the job title of Intelligence Advisor for this tour. He wanted all of you at home to know that he takes this role very seriously. The rest of us want all of you at home to know that he had to ask the Sqn Ldr how to spell Intelligence in order to make a sign for his bed space!

Throughout January, the PAT has been kept busy, but we have also maintained a weekly training day to keep the drills and skills that we learnt before and during MST up to date and of the highest standard. Despite becoming increasingly efficient, work has not slowed down, but morale remains very high. In our downtime, we have become hooked on FIFA 13, with Cpl Hurst and LCpl Hill holding the record of 25 games undefeated.

Never one to miss the opportunity for mischief; someone in the PAT has taken to robbing poor Tpr McGuffin's towel when he is in the shower, despite the bitter cold he just walks back to our tent without a care in the world. When not on the computer, fitness regimes are still being adhered to, however it is getting a lot harder for Cpl Hurst and myself to get up early in the mornings. This is due to the cold weather, and not (as the PAT insists) because we are both getting old!

As I write this, we are over half way though our tour and are about to see visits from HERRICK 18, which makes us all smile as it is the clearest sign that we will be home safe sound very soon. In the mean time I would like to leave you with a quick message from all of us in the PAT - keep smiling!

ANCOP PAT

Sgt Neil Wood

Silicon 18 moved into the New Year with a new found keenness to get things done. To this end we started January with an admin day and lie in! The PAT has continued to drink tea throughout our AO and January also saw completion of a map indicating the best places to visit for Chai.

Since last writing, we have had the opportunity to visit LTC. This marked only the third time we have left our AO since the beginning of tour and to be honest we were a little worried about leaving our colleagues in the ANCOP, some of whom would have been good friends if we were back in UK. The journey itself was uneventful, but our arrival was a different story. On approaching LTC it became evident that the entrance had been cunningly hidden. We proceeded to drive around their entire camp conducting an impromptu clearance of the fence line of LTC. It was only after this that we realized that it was, as you might have thought, at the front of the camp. We were looked after very well and made to feel at home, despite our





Photo Captions:

A) Sgt Chris Stead his Big Love. B) LCpls Hill and Lawrence. C) Silicon 26 hierarchy demonstrating just how seriously they take life. D) Meeting the commander of CP Jeker. E) Silicon 26 during a foot patrol. F) Capt SB and LCpl Hill enjoying some time out on the ground.



comments on just how easy all in LTC have it compared to us. It soon became apparent that there was not much to do except use the welfare tent and chill out; after an intensive few months this was perfect!

The rest of the month has seen us welcoming in the new ANCOP and they seem to be a good bunch. They have had a hands on approach and are more than happy to let the PAT take a back seat, but we continue to offer help and advice which, for the most part, is politely listened to. At the time of writing, the PAT Commander Lt Moncrieff is on R&R and as a result the local ANCOP have posted him AWOL. I would like to end this little note home with a thank you to all those who have supported us during the tour; the other members of our regiment here or back home and to those who are foremost in our thoughts, our families and friends.

D 'The Green Horse' Squadron Helmand Provincial Police Headquarters

Maj Ben Watts



With Christmas and the New Year now firmly behind us the Squadron has begun to focus on the redeployment and preparations for our handover. Although there is still much to be done between now and April, when the Regiment officially hands over to the men of 2 SCOTS, for

the majority of D Squadron the end of tour is closer at hand. As I type, Silicon 41 have drawn stumps in Lashkar Gah District Centre and are packing boxes and servicing vehicles ready for their imminent departure. Silicon 43 are on the ground working with the Police from 1st and 2nd Kandaks to clear an area on the edge of the city in what will probably be their last pre-planned operation and Silicon 44 are delivering their penultimate lesson to future AUP instructors. By the end of February we should be in exactly the same situation as when we deployed – SHQ in Helmand with the rest of the Squadron in North Yorkshire!





The Squadron Leader and WO2 McKinley reveal their latest culinary experiment...



The taste test.

Those staying until the bitter end will continue to work in the Provincial Police Headquarters mentoring both the Coordination Centre and the District Chief of Police. This will provide us the opportunity to stand back and observe as the AUP test the processes we have helped them develop and the Afghan instructors we have trained begin to teach, before we hand over the development task to the Op HERRICK 18 PMAG. I'm not wishing to tempt fate, but at this stage the signs are good for a bright future.



Trina Mark and Shelly Groves bond with the Female AUP over lunch at PPHQ



Breaking out the Pepsi, a sure sign that this is a special occasion!





LCpl Wepener, Sil 43's patrol linguist, with a 'small' cannabis stash found during an ANP led operation.



Sgt Saxton (SIL43) just chillin' (this is unrelated to the photo on the left!).

Lashkar Gah District Centre Police Advisor Team (Silicon 41) Lt Ali Smith



Silicon 41 and Embedded Police Mentors team photo.

As the Sqn Ldr mentions in his introduction, Silicon 41 are almost at the end of our time mentoring the Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP) around the Lashkar Gah District Centre, with only a week remaining at the time of writing. We will then spend a couple of weeks handing back all our equipment and our 5 vehicles in Camp Bastion (hopefully with no major problems) before the majority of the PAT redeploy back to the UK.



As we prepare to finish patrolling activity here in Lashkar Gah, I am pleased to report that the AUP we have been mentoring for the last 4 months have improved substantially since we have arrived and we are leaving at the right time, as they are now ready to be the sole owners of the security in their Precincts. Crucially for us, we will be leaving them not only with policemen trained in all the different necessary areas, but also trained instructors and Training Officers in each Precinct. This means that their provision of security will be sustainable long into the future, as they are able to continue training policemen in these essential skills. During our time here we have developed an excellent relationship with these policemen, especially the Precinct Commanders, and it will be a shame to no longer be able to see how they are getting on.



Lt Smith and Sgt Wilde chat with Lt Karim over chai



Living up to our stereotype, Silicon 41 enjoy a goat curry

Getting to this point has not always been easy and required real team effort from no less than 5 different capbadges, as well as 3 American civilian policemen. That said, looking back over our tour it has been an excellent experience for all in Silicon 41. Everyone has enjoyed learning about different cultures and the aspects of soldiering that they are used to. Coupled with the successes we have had with the AUP, it has been a hugely rewarding few months and all are justifiably proud of our work. Of course the tour would not have been nearly as enjoyable had it not been for all your support, so I'd like to thank you one last time. It goes without saying that we look forward to seeing you again and for everyone in the Regiment being back together in a few months time.





Riflemen Narayan, Niraj and Prabin and Lt Smith enjoy Christmas lunch



During the Christmas Day Lashkar Gah panto, Lt 'Aladdin' Smith in his 'finery' enjoys the arrival of the camp genie, Capt Ed Michel, from his lamp

Lashkar Gah District Training Team (Silicon 44)

Lt Conor O'Shea

As our tour approaches its end, this is the last time I will be able to write, passing on greetings of Silicon 44 from Lash! It has been a steady month since Christmas, with our AUP Instructor Training Courses continuing on a daily basis and over 60 AUP Instructors qualified so far. This is a very tangible success, and more importantly, something that will hold the AUP in very good stead once ISAF leave Afghanistan. The boys of Silicon 44 have provided all of this training and the skills we are now teaching will enable the AUP to continue to better themselves.

The numbers attending these courses has been steadily dropping, but this is a sign of how we have effectively targeted all those who needed the training, and not a reflection of the quality of our teaching. A symptom of the speeded up withdrawal process (which has seen our tour reduce from 6 months to 4 ½ months), this type of teaching was not something we were expecting to do, but we have actually enjoyed it, and knowing that each course brings us that bit closer to heading home as meant we have given it our all. We now look forward to our final course and simply cannot wait to get home to see family and friends again, that, and of course going on some well earned leave in March! Whilst we have been out here, a number of us have monopolised any press that visited (notably Sgt Slattery and Cpl Wright), so I thought it important to finish with the final thoughts of a few of my blokes:

LCpl Birch: "It's a shame about the short tour, but leaving early is a sign that things here are going in the right direction. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone at home though!"

LCpl Hedges: "We've reached a level now with the AUP that is as far as we can bring them, now it definitely the right time for us to go home."

Tpr Blackshaw: "It was great to see another part of the world, it was a fantastic experience. Afghanistan ticked!"



Tpr Plowman: "This was my first tour and it was great to get all that experience under my belt. Buzzing to be going home though!"

LCpl Lant: "It was an experience working with the Ghurkhas for the first half of my tour! The teaching has been alright and it was good to pass on my wealth of knowledge to the AUP. Can't wait to get home for the end of the football season though and go out with the lads, that and see the birth of my child!"



AUP student instructors show off their skills at PPHQ



Tpr Rimmington has been looking for one of these on Autotrader



LCpl Birch taking a break between observing lessons.



LCpl Tamani, Tpr Beck and Tpr Blackshaw conducting a course at LTC

