

# "OUT & ABOUT"



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## **Regimental Secretary's Notes**

I'll keep it brief.....this newsletter quite rightly will concentrate on how the Regiment is fairing in Afghanistan and Catterick. In addition, I have included some notices that could not wait until December's offering and apologise to those to have asked for articles or notices to be included, they will be in the next edition. I would however like to amplify the points made by Colonel James regarding the rear party and HHQ and include everyone who has been so supportive over the last few months. The Association has really come together, and you can be assured that we are the envy of many regiments when I tell them of the many initiatives and schemes to support the troops and their families. So read on, it is difficult to reproduce all the photographs as copies, so if you do have an Internet connection let us know if you already haven't done so, not only will you get much better quality pictures, you could also save your association some postage costs.

## **Commanding Officer's Notes**

Lt Col J S A Carr-Smith

The Royal Dragoon Guards has over 400 soldiers deploying to Afghanistan on Operation HERRICK 12. The majority of the Regiment is now almost 2 months into the tour with the final elements (D Squadron) joining us over the course of the next few days. The tour has been a long time in coming but we are now settled into a routine and I feel the time is right to give you a flavour of what the Regiment has been up to these past couple of months.

We have Royal Dragoon Guards spread far and wide throughout Southern Afghanistan – from Sangin in Northern Helmand, through Gereshk in the Centre, to Nad-E Ali in the South, and even in Kandahar some 130 km east of Helmand Province. We have soldiers performing almost every function within the military spectrum. B and D Squadrons are providing protected mobility around the battlespace; C Squadron is deployed in the Infantry role acting as a 'ground-holding' company; Recce Troop is providing protected mobility for the British General commanding all International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops in Southern Afghanistan; and a host of others are employed in various other roles, including the Brigade Reconnaissance Force, Forward Air Controllers, Afghan Police Mentors, Liaison Officers, Staff Officers and many more.



On arrival in Helmand Province we were met by Maj Graeme Green's team (OC Prince of Wales's Squadron) who helped run the In-Theatre Training (ITT) package. In essence, this is an 8 day induction serial at Camp Bastion, which is designed to acquaint every single soldier with all aspects of operating in Afghanistan – eg zeroing weapons, firing support weapons, the latest and most up-to-date Counter IED training, medical training etc. On completion of this vital and extremely well run serial,

soldiers are then flown forward by helicopter to their base where they will operate from for the next 6 months. I won't go into the specifics of what each sub-unit is doing – as you will read of their exploits in the following pages – but suffice to say that thus far the tour has lived up to expectations.

A quick word, if I may, about Home Headquarters, the Rear Party and the Regimental Welfare Office. What follows in this newsletter is the tale of the deployed Regiment; you will see no words from those left behind in Yorkshire. But their tale is as impressive as any of us in Afghanistan have to tell, and in some cases more so. They have been outstanding. Their support has been invaluable. And I thank them for it.

Let me just finish by saying that we are in good heart. To a man, we want to be here. We have trained hard for the past 12 months and it is good to finally be in Afghanistan. There will inevitably be hard times ahead, but everyone is focused and we have invested significant time in preparing the Regiment physically, conceptually and emotionally. But we have done so safe in the knowledge that we are truly blessed in having such a supportive wider Regimental family.

### **B (The Black Horse) Squadron**

#### **Squadron Leader's Notes – Major Simon Everard**

The Squadron's deployment on operations in Afghanistan was far from straightforward. However, after two months here, this seems another lifetime ago. The end result sees 75 members of the Squadron deployed to Afghanistan. 73 are trained and employed as crews for the Mastiff Protected Patrol Vehicle, attached to three different battle-groups in Troop sized groups (24 soldiers with 8 vehicles) and deployed to three very different parts of Helmand province. The first installment of their 6-month adventure is given below by the Troop Leaders, but I shall endeavour to outline some of what is common to all.



First is the vehicle – a 30 ton, highly protected vehicle capable of carrying a crew of 3 (driver, gunner and commander) and up to 7 passengers. Its levels of protection are simply first class and make it a prized commodity across the theatre.



Second then is the requirement for the protected mobility it delivers, meaning that all members of the Squadron have been impressively busy, moving infantry units, providing protection to re-supply convoys, transporting key members of the local government to meetings (or *shuras*) in non-permissive areas or acting as a Quick Reaction Force (QRF).

Finally, there is the breadth of the areas we operate in – very few soldiers have the access we enjoy to such wide expanses of Helmand's geography. I trust that this is reflected in the narratives below and, in particular, the startling diversity of the landscape.

What is also clear, even at this early stage in the tour, is the value of our heritage as Challenger 2 tank crews. The close relationship of the crew and their intimate understanding of the vehicle, warts and all, are the life-blood of our existence here. This time a year ago the Squadron was in BATUS rehearsing its obstacle crossing drills – a week ago, I found myself in over-watch above a *wadi* as my lead vehicles formed a bridgehead in the low ground. This gives us an enormous sense of pride and confidence in both what we are doing and how we are doing it.

### **SHQ Troop – Combined Force Nahr-e Saraj (North) attached to the Danish Battle Group – Captain Mike Lee**

Our Area of Operations is centered on the city of Gereshk, a sprawl of mud huts that spans the river Helmand. Market stalls in the Bazaar spill out onto the street, children play and squabble as we drive by. The river is embraced on either side by the green zone, dense vegetation, fertile fields and pregnant trees. And then suddenly there is desert, a vast expanse of hard baked dust, with scattered lonely settlements eking a living from the barren land and a maze of *wadis* that appear suddenly and invariably lead you away from your destination.

Every member of the Troop deployed on this Operation to face new challenges. This is a wish that has been quickly granted, some challenges that were expected; some that weren't, but so far no challenge that could not be matched, thanks to a positive, flexible attitude throughout. Working as part of the Danish Battle Group, the Troop has had to adapt to new roles, in a new environment with a new chain of command. One day we are herding a column of Danish logistic vehicles across the Siminar desert, picking a safe route through the *wadis* and providing a watchful eye as they snake into patrol bases. The next we will be delivering a local governor to a *shura*, a gathering of village elders, where they will discuss everything from security to the poppy harvest. We



Escorting a Danish re-supply convoy



We occasionally work with the Afghan National Army, who operate with admirable courage, bouncing along in their modified 4x4s. On an odd day we find ourselves taking an agriculture expert around a series of wells, analysing the soil to determine what crops could be grown with the highest yield, somewhere between 'Time Team' and 'The Good Life'. And on some days we simply sit there, trying to remember what the hell the Danish code word for MOB PRICE was again.

The Troop has rapidly grown into these roles, making them our own. Even in a few weeks our drills are slicker, our movement more coordinated, our route selection more focused. We are still learning, and I don't think we will stop learning throughout this tour, however now we have a firm base to build on.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Troop – Combined Force Nad-e Ali attached to 1 LANCS BG – Captain David Brooks

Like the remainder of the Squadron, 2<sup>nd</sup> Troop has had to hit the ground running since arriving in Camp Bastion in mid-March. Mounted in Mastiff and attached to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, since moving forward following RSOI we have found ourselves operating on the edge of the Green Zone in the Nad-E-Ali District.



Force Protection for the District Governor

In an area dominated by a bizarrely American style system of gridlocked roads (or more accurately tracks), we have found our services much in demand and have covered the full spectrum of tasks, ranging from protected mobility of people and equipment, force protection to less protected vehicles, supporting recovery operations, route clearing and QRF tasking.



Much to the chagrin of our host Battle-group, the Troop currently hold two records that our infantry cousins would rather choose to ignore. Firstly, having covered more of the Area of Operations than any other call-sign. Secondly (and more importantly) being the first call-sign to get rounds down against the Taliban (within the bounds of courageous restraint) after being attacked on a move back to Camp Bastion on Day 4. During the attack, the Troop had to conduct Troop level recovery under enemy fire, thus allowing the Squadron Leader to sit back with a rather smug smile on his face, having hammered home the value of practicing Troop level recovery in the UK and being heard to mutter on more than one occasion that "the next time you do this could be in contact with the enemy." On a more serious note, the Troop were recently called out as a QRF to secure and assist with the exploitation of the site of an IED in which a Royal Engineer soldier tragically lost his life.

Despite this morale remains high and the Troop currently remains split supporting both Battle Group Troops in FOB Shawqat and Corunna Coy in PB Samsor. We are currently eagerly conducting preparations for a deliberate operation where we will link up with C Squadron to provide both ground manoeuvre and intimate support on the ground.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Troop – Combined Force Nahr-e Saraj (South) attached to 1 RGR BG – Lieutenant Lloyd Walton-Rees

On 15<sup>th</sup> April the main body of 3<sup>rd</sup> Troop finally arrived at Camp Bastion, Afghanistan. With months of training behind them they felt ready to get out and take on the world. Luckily for the world, there were still a few bits of training and revision to be completed. A 6 day training package in Bastion gave the troop time to acclimatise to the overwhelming heat and brush up on techniques learnt from exercises in UK.



3<sup>rd</sup> Troop deployed as the Mastiff Group for the 1 Royal Gurkha Rifles Battle Group, based in the heart of the “Green Zone” South of Gereshk. The initial deployment saw the Troop move to MOB Price. One of the larger camps, sat in the middle of the desert, MOB Price is reasonably well equipped for Afghanistan, and the Troop can entertain themselves with a gym, a Danish welfare centre, and trips to the small NAAFI. As with all concentrations of British forces, there is always the welcome opportunity to use the welfare phones that are available.

Operationally we have completed a variety of tasks already. Much of our time is spent providing the protection for convoys, both back to Bastion and around the Green Zone. This gives the Troop a chance to see a lot of the local people, and it is always warming to see children running out of their compounds to wave as we drive past. Another task is to provide the Quick Reaction Force from the heart of the Green Zone. This gives a great sense of security to the local population and to any ISAF patrol. To complete this task, the Troop lives in a Patrol Base with around 150 Gurkha soldiers. The conditions here are slightly more uncomfortable than Price, but soldiers will always improvise, and the use of a cement mixer as a washing machine is a fine example. Working in the Green Zone brings an interesting set of challenges. The routes through the area are limited, and the country close;



having to drive between compounds with a matter of inches either side. To get back to MOB Price the Troop must complete a trip through a Wadi, with the vehicles driving through water nearly a metre deep.

The Troop has also joined an Infantry Company on an operation in the desert. We were tasked to provide security for three days to ensure that the route through the desert could be used by both the local nationals and ISAF forces, without fear of incident. It was a successful operation, and the Troop definitely enjoyed their time spent on the ground. It has been a fantastic first 6 weeks, and amazing

how quickly the time has passed. It will not be long before the first of the Troop start heading home for some well deserved “R&R”.

## C (The Black Dragons) Squadron

### **Squadron Leader's Notes – Major Sam Bramall**

After numerous flight alterations and volcanic ash induced delays the Squadron has finally made it to Afghanistan and we are now firmly reunited. Many of us have now been in theatre for well over a month and the pace of life has been fast. I am glad to say that the mood across the Squadron is buoyant and everyone is focused on the job in hand. The pre-deployment and excellent in-theatre training package has given us all the confidence we need to get out on the ground. So far I have nothing but admiration for the skills being displayed across the Squadron and I can assure you that we are all as prepared as we can be. The availability of welfare phones is limited at present so you may have had less contact with your loved ones than you might have expected. Rest assured this is being dealt with as a priority and I hope the issue will be resolved by the time you get this letter! This is clearly the first edition of C Squadron's newsletter and I have asked the team to focus on their first impressions of this unique (and very hot!) country and to give you a taste of the conditions we are living in. I hope it achieves this and answers a number of the many questions you will have. The tour is only 6 weeks but we are all finding that it is flying past. May I collectively thank you all for the endless stream of welfare parcels that you are sending us. It means a great deal to receive a small piece of home out here! Happy reading.

### **Squadron Headquarters: PB Chilli – Captain Matt Howden**

The Squadron Headquarters element grew exponentially in the days leading up to deployment. Having trained for 6 months as an Afghan Police Mentoring Squadron it was decided at the last minute that we should change to become a ground-holding Company. Whilst the Squadron Leader attempted to figure out a completely new set of three letter acronyms (TLAs), and the 2IC tore up the Squadron ORBAT, re-wrote it and tore it up again, the soldiers were told "You're flying tomorrow", and then "You're flying on Thursday", followed by, with an impending sense of inevitability, "You're flying tonight"!

We all dashed home and packed GPS receivers, first-aid kits and weapon magazines before realising that the RAF have a baggage allowance that would make EasyJet blush, and so we unpacked these nice-to-haves and stuffed in shorts, flip-flops and suncream. Having landed in Camp Bastion (roughly the size of Catterick Garrison but without the culture or scenery) we started the Reception Staging and Onwards Integration (RSOI) package. If you haven't been paying attention during pre-deployment training and therefore don't know your Taliban from your Tacsat or your Mujahideen from your Mastiff, then RSOI is the place to sit-up and pay attention. Over the 8 days of RSOI we conducted weapon ranges, vehicle familiarisation, counter-insurgency (COIN) tactics, revised the latest techniques being employed in theatre and sat through a series of lectures on everything from 'winning hearts and minds' to environmental health. We were then chomping at the bit to fly up to Forward Operating Base (FOB) Shawqat where we would work under the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment Battlegroup (1 LANCS) as part of Combined Force Nad-E-Ali (CF NDA).



*SHQ TAC Gp proving that the pace of life is relentless!*

Once there, SHQ started to come together as those who had flown forward early (and in some case already earned their medal!) were reunited with those who had only just arrived, and the Squadron started to take shape. In Shawqat we shared an operations room with the Afghan National Army as part of the attempt to partner with the Afghans at every level. This proved to be an interesting experience as the manner they employ when speaking to each other on the radios – mainly shouting but in a foreign language – means you spend the entire time thinking they must be under fire!

The outgoing Company was very helpful in making us feel at home and learning all about the ground, the people, the intelligence and how to influence the local nationals through low-level impact projects such as building wells and handing out prayer mats – all very important in COIN operations. We were also able to take into our welcoming arms the various attachments that would join us for the tour including extra medics, some RAF police attachments, a spare signaller, two fine gentlemen from the Artillery who specialize in dropping large explosives on bad people, and the Squadron's allocation of 14 interpreters. After 3 weeks of bedding-in in Shawqat and sitting through endless Battlegroup conferences, SHQ packed up the ops room and moved two kilometres down the road into Patrol Base Chilli.



*The Fire Support Team making a map – we think. More importantly look at the Squadron's mail in the background. Thank you!*



*The Sqn IO executes a perfect 4-finger point.*

PB Chilli is much more an Afghan Patrol Base in the sense of what you imagine the British Army operating from and see in the news. Think of it as like the South of France with more raw sewage, flies, dust and heat. The locals are friendlier, though. The Afghan land-owner was very concerned when a Troop of engineers moved into one of his compounds and started building a 'super-sangar', welfare tent, accommodation, etc but was soon quietened down and became positively amicable at the mention of American dollars in compensation. The Sqn 21C stayed up all night with the G2 Officer and a team of helpers kitting out the new ops room, organising mapping, radios, where the brew-kit should go and making sure the picture of the Queen was straight before the Squadron Leader arrived and re-organised the whole thing. SHQ now finds itself in the busy but enjoyable role of defending a PB, partnering the attached members of the Afghan National Army, administering the 6 outlying PBs that C Squadron mans, foot-patrolling the local town of Loy Bagh and providing two Husky vehicles to shuttle key personalities around the area to visit local leaders and the soldiers on the ground. We are only a few days into this role but we have become quickly established and entered a routine that should see the remainder of the 6 months pass by all too quickly.

### **Patrol Base Shamal Storrai (Callsign Mongoose 31) – Lieutenant Nick Landon**

Well, hello and welcome to a snippet of life with the merry soldiers of Mongoose 31; you may recognise some of our faces from such adventures as Silicon 11, Silicon 14, and more recently Mongoose 33. We are currently living on the outskirts of a small village known as Gorup-e Shesh Kalay, in southern Nad-e Ali, where our Patrol Base is shared with soldiers from the Afghan National Police. Since our arrival in Bastion some 4 weeks ago most of you will be aware of the 8 day training package that your loved ones will have completed; this served to revise some of the lessons we had



learnt in Catterick during the months building up to the deployment, and also teach some new ones. Not least of all that Tpr Thomas cannot out-run an attack dog! Eye witnesses recount that after a short wrestle and a lot of growling he was soon pinned to the floor, however I am assured he was only out cold for a couple of minutes – Tpr Thomas, not the dog (see photo below).

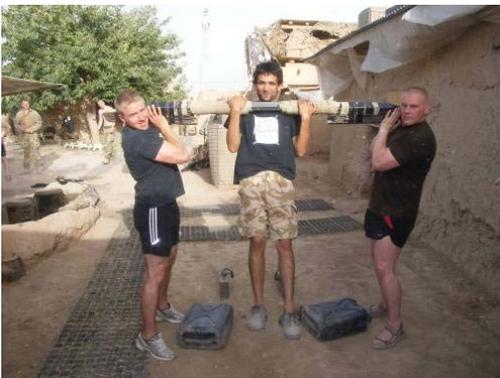
The Troop is living in a Patrol Base known as Shamal Storrai, which is Pashtu for Northern Star. Typically we conduct patrols both at day and night

which are aimed at reassuring the villagers of Gorup-e Shesh Kalay, deterring the Taliban from coming into the village and partnering with the Afghan National Police. The patrols themselves can be anything up to 4 hours in duration and see the troop moving through terrain that would be more readily comparable to the green fields of Yorkshire than your first thoughts of the Afghan desert. Whilst every effort is made to ensure that no unnecessary equipment is taken, the weight of our weapons, body armour and other kit regularly clocks in at around 70lbs, which combined with the midday sun makes for a rather sweaty experience.



*Mongoose 31 relaxing in the salubrious surroundings of patrol base Shamal Storrai*

Being the Southernmost base within the Squadron's area of responsibility we work closely with our ANP commander when deciding where and when each patrol should be to have the best chance of success. The ANP are a friendly bunch and, despite the language barrier, have integrated well with the troop in the short time we have been here. Much has been said about the ability of the ANP throughout the build up training; however what we have seen is a group of capable individuals that are willing to learn from our soldiers, and not just in the field. Indeed the home made gym here in Shamal Storrai is home to a twice daily 'master-class' from Sgt Cunningham and Cpl Kingswood, which has even seen the 2 interpreters keen to join the 'Big Guns for Christmas Club'. See left!

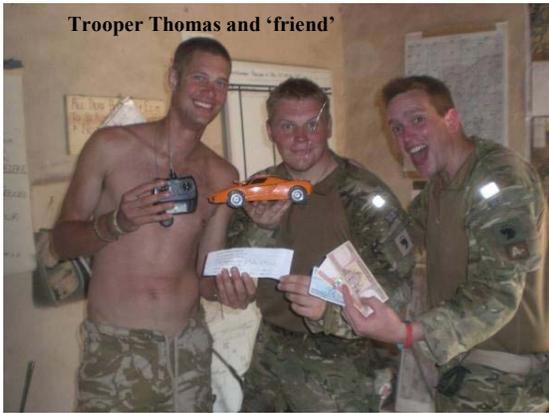


*The 'Gym Queens' in action*

Interacting with the local population is no small part of our work here in Nad-e Ali, and indeed we look to meet as many as possible on each patrol we go on. They are generally more than content to stop and talk, and will happily try and get a pen or two from any of the soldiers; luckily Cpl Cooper had tied his compass to his body armour, as he felt it getting pulled away by a rather sheepish looking boy on the outskirts of town.

The village is a far cry from an area of similar size back in the UK, and it is fair to say that Gorup-e Shesh Kalay is one of the poorer parts of the area that the squadron is working in.

That said, we are actively involved in facilitating reconstruction. This is taking the form of providing 'Cash for Works' schemes for bridge-building and cleaning the irrigation ditches, so important to the farming community, to the building of a clinic and school – facilities that were not present before British Forces moved in several months ago. It is the low income of the town that caused most concern when Cpl Kingswood's patrol spotted a remote control car racing down the alley. This looked somewhat out of place and instantly had the patrol thinking something was not right. On the patrol's return the decision was made to reclaim the car from the local boy, as parts of it could potentially be used to manufacture IEDs, so for a small sum of money and several Yorkie bars the car was purchased and one local went home with more pocket money than he could have imagined. Fortunately it was discovered that the car would have provided no value to any would-be IED makers and therefore it was returned to the young boy a few days later.



Trooper Thomas and 'friend'

*Cpl Cooper, Sgt Cunningham and Lt Landon clearly delighted with their temporary acquisition!*



*Any cookery recipes containing mash potato, beans, pasta, rice, mince, tomatoes and lots of tuna would be gratefully received – please...!*

Despite it only having been a few weeks since we left England the unpredictable mail run does much to improve morale, and it would not be right to mention the mail without saying a big thank you to Jane and Sandra Ashton, LCpl Hornby's cousins that have provided several sacks full of parcels to keep everyone going. The final line, however, has to be saved for a plea. Whilst as a troop patrolling the streets of Gorup-e Shesh we have quickly found our feet, in the kitchen we have been found wanting and any suggestions as to what can be created from the range of ingredients shown in the photo above would be more than welcome!

### **Patrol Base Blue 22 (Callsign Mongoose 32) – Captain Tom Coker**

So far Mongoose 32, one of the larger formations within C Squadron, has been bedding-in nicely. We have taken over our patrol base west of the main village of Shin Kalay and have undertaken a hectic patrol schedule since we have been in situ. Morale with the lads remains high and everyone is getting into the swing of patrolling in Afghanistan in line with the mission set to us.

The patrol base at Blue 22 is reasonably comfortable as patrol bases go. We have two dogs (Anzio and Champ, brother and sister golden Labrador mongrels) who are the subject of a battle of wills between the Troop Leader and the Squadron Leader (the latter of whom wants to spurn them on a health and hygiene basis set against the former who is personally guaranteeing the dogs' protection!). They provide a good source of morale for the guys and are always welcome companions for the lonely hours of dark on gate sentry.



*The Afghan Police demonstrate their advanced, cutting edge surveillance system*



*Medical training with our Afghan partners*



*For some reason wading through canals is easier than crossing bridges!*

Everyone in the base is living on folding beds (fully up-armoured with mosquito nets) in two large green tents which are shelter on a night but like an oven in the day. The facilities are basic but adequate with a communal kitchen/social area. The jewel in the crown of PB Blue 22 is our fridge freezer, which, although it cannot run 24/7 owing to power constraints, is still a big morale booster. The cooking facilities have recently extended to a Fijian Earth Oven (read hole dug in the ground with hot rocks etc) and our hob space has doubled since a second large ammunition tin was nailed to the wall and covered with some metal grill! The extensive pan collection (both of them, and the metal kettle), serves the ravenous appetites of the chaps with regular “all ins” (pasta, curry powder, spam, corned beef, kidney beans and whatever else comes to hand) being produced by the aspiring chefs in the Troop.

It goes without saying that we are all missing everyone at home and are trying to get in touch whenever we can. All of the post and parcels are hugely appreciated and provide a huge boost to everyone whenever they are received. Whilst we are enjoying it here we still can't wait to be home. De khuday pamaan. (Goodbye!)

### **Patrol Base Blue 25 (Callsign Mongoose 33) – Lieutenant Hugh Vere Nicoll**

The first month for Mongoose 33 has certainly followed a steep learning curve. Following the in-theatre training package, a very hot helicopter flight and a trip in the back of some equally hot vehicles courtesy of B Squadron RDG, we finally deployed forward from Camp Bastion. On arriving at Check Point Blue 25 we were greeted by the outgoing platoon, most of whom were taking our places on the vehicles we had just arrived in, leaving only a few behind for a couple of days handover. Since that first day it has been non-stop for everyone, the first week a little busier than most while we waited to be reinforced by some extra manpower.



*Mongoose 33 on patrol in the village of Shin Kalay*

As the first RDG C Sqn callsign on the ground, we have been in place for over a month now, and have begun to work out a firm routine. The PB is situated by the side of a canal outside a village on a main supply route through the Nad-E-Ali district. A typical day usually involves patrolling, frequently at night and in the heat of the day! Breakfast and lunch come from individual ration boxes, whilst our evening meal usually comes communally, often prepared by one of our resident master chefs, usually Tpr Pandolfi supported by his culinary genius!

The patrols through the centre of town see us inundated with children, usually greeting us with direct shouts of ‘pen’ or ‘chocolate’; less requests than statements of assumption that they will receive them! LCpl Diamond, with the aid of his Pashtu skills, seems to have worked a particular bond and is now greeted by many with shouts of ‘Geezer’ from all directions! Tpr Hill also seems to have worked a

particular affinity with both the Afghan children and our resident partners, the ANCOP (the top tier Afghan Police).



Our partnering with the Afghans goes well, so well that whenever one of the lads enters our improvised gym an ANCOP member will usually come and watch, pretending he can do far better, rarely the case of course! As the sun goes down and some of the heat is out of the day, you can sometimes see a fiercely pitched battle on the volleyball court; unfortunately Mongoose 33 seems to usually be coming off the worse at the moment, this shall of course improve with a little practice and further acclimatisation.

All in all, an exciting first month. We have settled in nicely and the boys are rustling up some cracking meals from next to nothing (and sometimes involving the flat bread kneaded by local feet). Certainly I am looking forward to a victory on the volleyball court, even if it takes an enormous amount of practice!



*Mongoose 33 suffers another shocking defeat against the Afghan Police*

### **Patrol Base Blue 17 (Callsign Mongoose 34) – Lieutenant Rob Gough**

It has been an interesting start for all those at Blue 17. Over the last 2 weeks we have slowly been moved into our new home, a transition that has happened fairly smoothly.

One of the smaller locations, Blue 17 is without some of the trappings and luxuries of the other locations which have forced us to adapt and make do with what we have. Shelves made of old pallets and tables made of Hesco Bastion (the blocks the blast walls are made from) are just some of the ways we are making do. We share our camp with the Afghan National Army who have proved to be very good hosts. Taken from all over this vast country they are pretty diverse, and also highly experienced on patrol as they get on with the locals very well. They have also adopted a puppy (imaginatively named PB Puppy) which is looking a lot healthier now than it did on arrival.



*In-theatre training outside Camp Bastion*



*A brief respite from the 45 degree temperature!*

The first thought on arrival is just how green everything is. Many areas are not dissimilar to the landscape back in the UK on a summer's day. The lads have enjoyed more mud and river crossings than they did whilst on pre-deployment training, the only difference being how quickly they dry! The PB gym is coming together nicely; it currently consists of metal pickets and jerry cans of varying weight with some boxing gloves and mats. LCpl John and Tpr Bartle are rarely seen anywhere else and the gym has been a hit with the ANA, who are still enjoying weight lifting competitions (they have yet to win!). For the most part the people who live around the PB are friendly; the local children always seem pleased to see us and currently know two English words; "*choclit*" and "*sweets*".



*The luxury of Patrol Base Blue 17*

Tpr Matthews has taken it upon himself to teach them "*please*" and "*thank you*", although he is resigned to the fact it is an uphill struggle. Although winning over the locals is a slow process we are making progress, with more and more stopping to talk to us whilst we are on patrol and more coming to the PB with information or requests, which is a very positive sign.

Cpl Love is the unofficial PB chef and has taken to coaching the younger guys. Tpr Sibson has already produced some excellent bread using the 10 man ration packs and is working up to making cake. Tpr Cooke has also been enrolled on a one day cooking course with the Battlegroup Master Chef, so we are looking forward to our very own Gordon Ramsay!

Huge thanks to all those back home who have been sending letters and parcels, it is all much appreciated. Please keep them coming!

## Patrol Base Red Cross (Callsign Mongoose 35) – SSgt Jason ‘Tiffany’ Pordage

Red Cross is a small checkpoint located close to the village of Shin Kalay (meaning Green Village). The population is estimated at 1800 and the residents have been very welcoming and pleasant towards us – one local farmer often waves when he see LCpl Fish outside on the check point while driving past on his little red tractor! We work closely with the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) that are based here with us and we often sit down for lunch or dinner with them, eating boiled rice with sweet potatoes and drinking tea. Their Commander is a very professional and proud man from Herat Province, in northwestern Afghanistan, and we have formed a strong bond with him and his men in a short period of time.

Red Cross itself is about the size of a tennis court; we live in a large US Army tent which takes up 1/3 of our total space within the check point. In addition to the small band of C Sqn men, we also have an interpreter. The loo, shower and wash area are rather minimalist, but nothing worse than we were expecting, and over the last few weeks we have been able to pick up BFBS on our wind-up radios so we are now ready for the World Cup!

Red Cross is not far from Blue 25, where Lt Vere Nicoll and his men are located, and they often visit to replace our radio batteries and steal our dumb bells. We have been rotating personnel over the last few weeks between us to allow personnel to see the countryside and give some a little rest from patrolling. Blue 22, where Capt Coker and his men are, is again located not that far away, and he often stops by to drop off mail and paperwork. The guys here look forward to the mail with great enthusiasm.



*The postage stamp that is Check Point Red Cross*

During the first few weeks here Tpr Egerton became the master coffee maker, particularly as the rest of the guys managed to produce something that resembled tar and could keep you awake for 72 hours! For this reason Tpr Egerton reaps the benefit of being Tiffany's favourite Trooper. Tpr Higgins spent most of his time off learning to speak Dari from his new best friend Sgt Nasseem or working on his 'guns' in our homemade gym. Tpr Easton surprised us all by pulling a big tub of muscle building powder out of his bag when he arrived, most of us didn't have room in our bags for all our socks, let alone 2 kg of milkshake, but his beefcake training

Programme ran smoothly for the first 2 days! Now I think he is just hoping that drinking the shake will do all the rest! Tpr Fryer has earned the nickname 'Apu', as he spends more time talking to the ANCOP than us; he is also in my trivial pursuit team, as he has read all 20 of the books we have here in the first 2 weeks!

LCpl Fish and I have this place running like clockwork with the guys cleaning and washing, so they are well trained for when they return to Catterick! The biggest highlight of their day is receiving mail from home; Tpr Fryer is currently winning, and we have been able to build a new Sangar from his empty parcels. The ANCOP has never seen the likes of the crisps, biscuits and sweets we get, but they send their thanks and ask that you all keep them coming.

## Recce Troop

### Troop Leader's Notes – Captain Jeremy Hann

#### Commander Regional Command (South)'s Force Protection Troop – based in Kandahar

Recce Troop find themselves over a month into our tour, and now - having managed to get our ship in order - is beginning to settle into a degree of routine, although flexibility to a fast changing programme has been the key to staying afloat so far. We had to hit our straps running, the heady cocktail of Icelandic ash cloud and several broken RAF planes allowed little time for what had been a carefully planned and thorough hand over period.

There were, in all honesty, nuances to this operational deployment that we had not dealt with. Throughout our pre-deployment training we had trained with the rest of 4 Brigade and thus it was Helmand-centric. What we now face is operations in an increasingly hostile urban environment. We are not navigating our way through wadis and farmland, but a dense city with over a million inhabitants. This brings its very own set of challenges and dynamics.

In terms of security force footprint in Kandahar City it is almost exclusively Afghan Police, with International Security Assistance Forces in support, including Recce Troop RDG.



*Cpl Jackson and LCpls McGowan and Kaye are shown some hospitality in an ANP OP halfway up one of Kandahar's imposing mountains*

Kandahar is a rapidly changing place. On one street you are greeted in a friendly manner, turn the corner and you are facing a hostile mob. The buildings range from shanty town and the mud compounds, to government offices and regal mosques and palaces. We regularly dismount from our vehicles and seek to get amongst the population and interact with them to try and create a friendlier atmosphere. This can prove rewarding and will hopefully, eventually win over a good many of the local nationals.

So how do we busy ourselves on a typical day in Kandahar? The troop is generally engaged in daily moves in the City where we move and protect various VIPs and visitors. This can be anything from securing areas for meetings and shuras, to dismounted protection when Generals want to move among the population. Our experience so far is that a surprisingly large number of locals seem to be pro-ISAF and that most that we have been engaged in conversation with appear to be in relatively good spirits.

The Ridgeback armoured fighting vehicle is proving a very able bit of equipment for urban patrolling. It offers a good mix of manoeuvrability and protection, yet is small enough not to obstruct the local traffic, of which there is plenty. It has largely been a reliable beast which has come as something of a novelty for the boys of Recce Troop who are used to spending their spare time trying to get CVR(T) road-worthy.



*A 'clearance' on Highway 4 on the way into Kandahar City*

When not on patrol we are lucky enough to benefit from the distractions provided at Kandahar Airfield. We have just been moved from temporary accommodation to the new NATO blocks which are remarkably civilised and the amenities include air-conditioning, new ablutions with large shower heads, (although the water pressure is not strong enough to utilise all of the nozzles), and a large refrigerator for our bottled water and Cpl McBride's milk for his protein shakes.

There is a well appointed gym, a five-a-side football pitch, a couple of cafes and some open space around the fabled boardwalk for our weekly rugby, which has now expanded to include Romanians, Dutch, Australians and whoever else cares to join in.

The Troop has relished their task and has performed very well in the challenging environment of downtown Kandahar City. We are winning over the locals with everything we can from smiles to pens to water to footballs. All are looking forward to the challenges the summer will bring when the weight of attention and media descends upon Kandahar, as it becomes the main effort for ISAF and the ANSF.



*Cpl Wright teaching his cool secret handshake to the local children*

A couple of last events that are newsworthy. LCpl and Mrs Windle are now the proud parents of a baby girl, and LCpl Ogden has become a father as a result of baby Harry joining the planet a few days ago. Congratulations to all involved.

## **Brigade Reconnaissance Force**

### **Troop Leader's Notes – Lieutenant Freddie Yiend**

There are 11 men from the Regiment (from all Squadrons) currently serving with the BRF, and they have seen a varied couple of months. The joy of the job is that one has the opportunity to visit all the different parts of the AO in short bursts and that one is given a wide variety of tasks.

We've moved from the heart of the Green Zone (where we learnt the locals like ISAF but the Insurgents don't so much) to the edge of the Northern and Southern Dhast (or desert, where we re-learned the lesson again).

Thus far, the majority of our work has taken us away from our Jackal vehicles as we spend most of our time on our feet. Our daily amusement of jumping in and out of drainage ditches carrying heavy weight has taken its fair toll of twisted ankles and the like, but morale remains high in spite of this. Sadly, those at home will have suffered from a lack of contact with us during the deployment. Our busy schedule leaves us stuck out in the wilderness moving from Op to Op with very limited opportunities to call and e-mail home.

Occasionally we meet up with our Regimental colleagues and, no matter how fleeting the opportunity, it is always good to catch up. On running into Lt Vere Nicoll's Silicon in Nad-e Ali, we amused ourselves by exchanging stories and generally catching-up.

Other than that life continues apace. The temperature is monotonously hot but the food is good and we're developing a good understanding of the insurgent and how we can unsettle him. We have found everything from drugs to bombs, and we have engaged with the locals and insurgents. To a man, we all volunteered for the BRF and there is nowhere else in Theatre we'd rather be. Life is very sweet at the moment and we look forward to coming back home and boring you all with our war stories.



*Out on patrol in one of our Jackal vehicles*



*.....and on our feet (and knee!)*

### **THE YORKSHIRE 3 PEAKS CHALLENGE – by WO2 Grant**

On 21 April 2010 a team of 20 members of the Regimental Rear Party attempted the Yorkshire 3 Peaks Challenge. The Challenge is set in picturesque Ribblesdale and takes in the Pen-y-Gent (694m), Wharfedale (736m) and Ingleborough (723m), following a 25 mile long

circuit which needs to be completed in less than 12 hours. Why the advertisement bothers to mention the picturesque scenery was however slightly beyond most of those that took part once we'd puffed our way to the top of Pen-y-Gent, and started to comprehend the distance still to be travelled, moors traversed and the immense size of the hills still to be climbed.



**Ingleborough Peak:** (Left to Right) Tiffy Cheadle and Sniff; Maj Kace; Tpr Atkinson; Tpr Harris; Cfn Parker; LCpl Scott; Cfn Tyrrell; Cpl Roberts; Tpr Mahoney; Tpr Garthwaite; WO2 Stokoe; LCpl Murray.

**Not shown:** Suzanne Robinson (team photographer); WO2 Grant (Regimental face for radio); SSgt Anders; Sgt Coombs; Cpls Fulton; Tpr Kennedy; Tpr Robson and Cpl Allchurch (driver, supplies and pub finder).

The start and finish point for the Challenge was in the village of Horton-in-Ribblesdale, with only a kilometre or so trek before the steep slopes of Pen-y-Gent kicked in. The path to the summit Pen-y-Gent was challenging, with the route, in places, becoming a significant scramble. Two false crests added to the 'enjoyment' of this, however after an hour and a half, the summit of Pen-y-Gent eventually appeared. It was a tough start to our challenge, but a start nonetheless.

Additionally moral was also lifted by the fact that at the peak (694m), our mobile phones actually gained a single bar of coverage for the first time, giving me my wonderful "that's never going to happen moment" when the BFBS reporter girl phoned for a live update! From which particular orifice I thought I'd be breathing when the OC had spammed me with this had obviously never entered my mind before this point, but you don't survive long as RSWO without a backup plan. Therefore whilst dodgy comms and non-existent mobile phone coverage saved the listening public from a torrid of exhausted Grant expletives, the pre-recorded interview I'd prepared a few days before, "just-in-case", did the 'Welfare Appeal' publicity trick rather nicely!

Akin to waiting for a bus in a small Yorkshire village, the wait for our next Peak took a significant length of time ... and effort. However, such is the landscape that the summit of Wharfedale was constantly in our view (well almost) as we trekked down and across to Ribbleshead, to meet up with Cpl Allchurch, our minibus driver, support team, and lunch 'nose-bag' deliverer. The route to the Ribbleshead viaduct was however over exposed moorland and, as Cpl "Scotty" Scott was the first to experience, it was a bit boggy.



**Troop level recovery the Yorkshire 3 Peaks Challenge way**

Obviously the immediate response from the remainder of the team once we'd recovered sufficiently from all the laughing was to deploy cameras. However time was not on our side, so after toying with the idea of giving up Scotty to the bogs as an acceptable loss, we figured that the god of the moors probably wouldn't accept him as much of a sacrifice anyway, so dragged him out (more hilarity) and cracked on.

Once in Ribbleshead, the group split into two. Those man enough to endure the Richmondshire Centre's finest 'nose-bags' before pushing on to the next peak, and those with a more traditional view of adventure training, who's motivation for making it thus far had been a pint or two ...and who saw the 'Chef's Special Offer' of ham egg and chips as a kind of subliminal message about the importance of replacing body reserves before tackling the next peak.

The route to the summit of Wharfedale from Ribbleshead Viaduct is a 7km route on decent paths, and unlike Pen-y-Gent, the climb was taxing but gradual. Looking back from the summit at the distance covered and knowing by now that we had cracked most of the route was satisfying, despite the fact that Cpl Allchurch could still be seen making a valiant effort of flogging our left-over stickies to tourists queuing for a burger van (God loves a trier!)

However, lured into a false sense of security by the steady climb up the Wharfedale ridge, the team soon realised that the descent would be a different matter altogether. Although the path is well established, it was very steep and extremely difficult. The team was consequently slowed, and all feeling the effects of the pounding to knee, ankles and hips by the time we reached the bottom. With our legs feeling like jelly, it was then a 'man-test' to look across the valley to the sheer sided Ingleborough as it loomed up in the distance.



**The approach to Ingleborough**

After another swift pint or two at yet another well sited Inn (they knew what they were doing when they planned this route!) the ascent of Ingleborough began. Initially trekking over rolling countryside, the group were greeted by the occasional band of soggy looking pot-holes (I never will understand why anyone would want to do that!), before the countryside gave way to steep pathways of slate slabs, which in turn gave way to a near vertical 300m scramble to the summit ridge. Totally knackered, the team paused to deploy cameras before being driven on yet again by the OC, SSM Stokoe and Tiffy Cheadle, the first driven by the need to avoid the worsening weather conditions, the second by the need to make the time deadline, and the third by the need to catch his dog, Cfn Sniff who by that point was making a mockery of our sore feet, adding miles to his route by chasing sheep (cue more hilarity as Tiffy Cheadle ran about trying to catch him!).

Back in the Pub in Horton in Ribblesdale (with day sacks and boots all happily ditched in a corner) the team all agreed that, despite a number of seriously impressive blisters, the 3 Peaks Challenge had made for an outstanding day. Demanding yet also great fun, the secret to mastering the Challenge was obviously to have 4 little hairy legs and a passion for licking yourself and chasing sheep (not necessarily at the same time). However we'd definitely recommend it to future generations of Yorkshire Cavalrymen, and to our Regimental family, all kindly sponsoring us through these events in aid of the Regimental Welfare Appeal.

To donate or to view more photographs of this and other events we've been doing in aid of the Appeal, go to: <http://www.justgiving.com/RDG-WelfareAppeal> and click 'donate now'.

### **CHESTER HALF MARATHON SUN 16 MAY – WO2 (SSM) Stokoe**

On Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2010, 17 members of The Royal Dragoon Guards' Rear Party (plus WO2 (Retd 'old' comrade) Stix Nicholson) completed a half marathon around the city of Chester. Entered as part of the series of events that we've organised to help raise funds for the Regimental Welfare Appeal Afghanistan 2010, this thirteen and a half mile race has been one of the targets (the carrot or the stick, depending upon who we were 'motivating') that Rear Party PT has been working towards over the last 6 months.

During this time, the amount of volunteers we've had down to compete in this event has fluctuated a few times. We had lads slowly getting 'the fear' as our training runs gradually extended into hours in duration and double figures in miles (we've got to know the roads and lanes around Richmond pretty well over the last few months). And we've had some of our swifter young recruits get the green light to deploy to theatre (which I accepted as a decent enough excuse for their unavailability). However overall, the take up for this was good, and the overriding feeling has been (even from some the historically idle) that the lads have wanted to take part in events such as this, to demonstrate their support for their mates on the tour, whilst also raising a bit of sponsorship for the Welfare Appeal.

The team assembled at Chester racecourse at 0815hrs on the Sunday morning of the race, most of us having caught the minibus from Catterick at 0515hrs. After a breakfast of McMuffin and a couple of tabs, we probably didn't look quite like the 'chariots of fire' Olympians which the OC had in mind, but never-the-less were as prepared as we were going to be for the challenge ahead. The race commenced at 0930hrs from the bridge crossing the River Dee and heading out through the suburbs of Chester towards Eccleston with plenty of local support cheering us on. It was then out into the countryside and around a long loop of local roads, lanes and pathways before returning to Chester town, and the racecourse for a grandstand finish.

The route was well marshalled all the way round, and the local support was still there cheering us back in the last few miles to the racecourse ... even for those members of our team determined to challenge the pantomime horse and the man dressed as a deep-sea diver for the dubious honour of the wooden spoon! This support gave us all a lift when we needed it, and enabled me to categorically prove to SQMS Anders that having your name printed on the front of your T-shirt means that more people cheer for you ...although it could of course be down to the fact that I look better in running kit!

This was the first half marathon for the majority of the team and I'm pleased to say that we all completed the course. Whoever said that Unit Rear Parties were entirely composed of the sick lame and lazy. Anyone still wishing to donate towards the Welfare Appeal or to view some more photographs of the events we've been doing should go to:

<http://www.justgiving.com/RDG-WelfareAppeal> and click 'donate now'.

## Parish Notices.....

### **Regimental Association**

It is surprising the amount of members who don't realise that their Association is a charity, in line with all charities it will always need topping up from time to time. As an example during my predecessor's time in office nearly £1m was used to assist members of the Association in need. Times aren't getting any easier and the demand is increasing particularly in these turbulent financial times. The one major advantage of our charity is that every penny goes to where it should go; there are no overheads like wages, which can rapidly eat into capital. There are things we can all do to help keep the charity solvent, for example:

Think of The Association when taking part in a daring do activity for charity. Most charities are quite happy to split the proceeds raised during a charity fundraising venture.

### **Diary Dates**

**2010**

- 29 June – Installation of FM Bagnall's window in RMAS Chapel
- 25 September – Salamanca Dinner Fermanagh, Details from 07762 151608
- 11 November – Opening of The field of Remembrance Westminster Abbey
- 11 November – Association Committee Meeting Royal Hospital Chelsea
- 25 November – Officers' Dinner Cavalry & Guards Club

**2011**

- 17 March – Freedom of York Parade & Lunch
- 9 May – Cavalry Memorial Parade and Association lunch

### **Christmas Cards**

The decision has been taken not to commission a Regimental Christmas card for Christmas 2010. HHQ and the Regiment literally have boxes of old cards dating back to the amalgamation so in the interests of economy it is planned to sell these in assorted packs of 10 for the reduced price of £2 plus postage per pack.

### **Pension rates to be maintained**

Rates of pension payable under the Armed and Reserve Forces pension schemes will remain unchanged for the coming financial year 2010/11. Rates are usually increased in line with inflation, which was negative last year when the calculation takes place. The Government has therefore decided to keep rates unchanged for the year ahead.

## OBITUARIES

We regret to inform members of the following deaths and offer sincere  
Condolences to all relatives and friends

Mr H M McGlinchey (Mac) 5INNIS DG 1955-58, 14 Conway Crescent, Macclesfield, Chester  
Who died 7 November 2009

Mr GA Baird (Angus) 4/7DG, Oakleigh, Jurby Rd, Isle of Man  
Who died 11 December 2009

Major GH Battle (Geoffrey) 5INNIS DG 1955-57, Well Cottage, Flempton, Bury St Edmunds  
Who died 24 December 2009

Mrs J Teague who died 27 December 2009

Mr NE Wisker (Norman) 5INNIS DG 1942-46 Windlesham Surrey  
Who died 2 January 2010

Lt R Macaire (Richard) 5INNIS DG 1960-61, Chile  
Who died 19 January 2010

Mr D Scott (Desmond) 5INNIS DG 1968-74, Belfast, Co Antrim  
Who died 31 January 2010

Mr R Cosby (Roy) 5INNIS DG 1980-88, 6 Ballybean Park, Dundonald  
Who died 10 February 2010

Mr S Weaver (Steven) 4/7DG 1989-92 RDG 1992-98 Hinkley Leicestershire  
Who died on 12 February 2010

Mr J Senior (James) 5INNIS DG 1972-73 Co Cork Eire  
Who died 23 February 2010

Mrs J Ryans who died 17 March 2010

Mr H Thomas (Hefin) 5INNIS DG 1963-85, Caerphilly, South Wales  
Who died 3 April 2010

Mr K Abbott (Bud) 5INNIS DG 1949-50, 1 Abbotts Row, Ludlow, Shropshire  
Who died 4 April 2010

Mr G Hewdy (George) 5INNIS DG 1942-46, York  
Who died 5 April 2010

Mr T Varty (Thomas) 4/7DG 1962-84, Ferryhill, Co Durham  
Who died 27 April 2010

Mr G Waller (Gordon) 4/7DG 1952-55, 7 Maple Drive, Sheffield  
Who died 30 April 2010

Mr CE Etheridge (Charlie) 5INNIS DG 1937-46, 14 Robert Hardy House, Cheltenham  
Who died 6 May 2010

Mr S Nicholson (Scott) RDG, 1A West St, Aspatria, Cumbria  
Who died 8 May 2010