

The Pomegranate

Issue Two: November 2012





Cover Image: Wreaths laid at the memorial in Main Operatin Base Lashkar Gah for Remembrance Day, 2012.

Commanding Officer's Foreword



As we come to the end of our second month here, the Regiment and PMAG as a whole have now really hit their stride. Since I last wrote to you, we have been joined by A Squadron (the Warthog Group); they have completed their in-theatre training and are now up and running. As you will see from everyone's contributions, this has been a busy month for us all. Whether it is capacity building in Provincial Police Headquarters, supporting the Afghan Police in the field or providing manoeuvre support to Brigade level operations, the soldiers of PMAG and the Warthog Group are doing superbly. They are motivated, focussed and remain in good spirits.

Thank you to all of you who supported the Regiment at the Remembrance Service at our Regimental Church, All Saints, in York. Equally I am grateful to those outside of our Regimental fold who have supported us in other ways, either through Facebook or by sending our soldiers of all cap badges gifts and messages through the mail. I have to say that collectively we hardly need our rations, although, whilst we are grateful to whoever sent it, we are still trying to figure out how to cook risotto in the field!

By the time that you read this, we will have entered our R&R window and therefore you will start to see members of the mentoring group and the Regiment come home for a couple of weeks of some well deserved rest. I am sorry that I can't get more back for Christmas but I am sure that you will understand that the mission continues regardless of the calendar. All will make it back at some stage though, and I hope that you enjoy the time together. I know that it is brief (it is only two weeks from the moment that we take off from Afghanistan and sometimes travelling time can reduce this by a couple of days) but it is keenly looked forward to by everyone. I would ask you again to make sure that you have holiday insurance if you plan to go away; I cannot guarantee that dates will always remain the same as those that are published in advance, although we will obviously do our best to stick to them.



I would like to update you on the drawdown here that I mentioned in my last video update; I can confirm now that three Police Adviser Teams will come home in December. This is good news; that they are not needed here means that we have had success in training the Afghan Police to the right level. Their selection is purely based on geography, nothing more. This does not actually equate to many soldiers but it does reduce our footprint on the ground a little. Sadly, these lads will not get R&R because they will have been here for less than four months but they will still be entitled to, and will get their Post Tour Leave – and of course they will be home for Christmas!

Quis Separabit.

Lt Col Jamie Piggott
Commanding Officer

Editor's Welcome

Having set the bar so high with Issue One of *The Pomegranate*, it was with apprehension that I began editing this submission, but I have thoroughly enjoyed putting it together. Your feedback on last month's *Pomegranate* was greatly appreciated and feedback from this issue is once again very welcome. We aim to make this record of our tour the best that it can be.

Since Issue One went to press, we have celebrated Halloween and commemorated Remembrance Day, though these events are already being overshadowed by preparations for Christmas and the fact that the Rest and Recuperation (R&R) period is already upon us. We have been overwhelmed by the generosity of friends, families and well wishers, but please keep your support coming because, as you will see in the articles below, you are making a difference.

November is also "Movember" for many within the RDG and attached arms, sneak peaks will be found dotted throughout this issue, but I'm afraid you will have to wait until December's *Pomegranate* to witness the full effect. In the mean time, you will see that all are still on good form and as we have now got into our routines, attention is being directed towards sport and the infamous Op Massive, although with Christmas around the corner, we'll see how long the motivation to keep fit lasts! Either way, it has felt a little odd editing so many stories to do with beach volleyball when our friends and families endure a particularly wet British winter.

Lt Bob Crean,
Editor



Police Mentoring and Advisory Group (PMAG) Headquarters

Capt Dan Tanner

PMAG Headquarters is now in full swing, and local Mosque's 'call to prayer' is being given a real run for its money by the inspirational tones of the Pipe Major's pipes. Life in the HQ is now a roller coaster ride of presentations to a never ending stream of visitors, answering questions from higher headquarters and working hard to support all the DATs and PATs. Although the life of the HQ staff is sometimes accused of being 'soft', I can assure you all that the RSM's command of the air conditioning is making the HQ Ops room similar to the Arctic tundra which Capt Crookshank and his team will soon be trekking across to commemorate the sacrifice made by Captain Oates over 100 years ago.

The hours we work in the HQ are long but the key motivator is of course doing everything we can to support the lads out on the ground – even if the Squadron Leaders may understandably not always appreciate it! For me personally, the daily grind has been alleviated by enjoying the emotional highs and lows of Capt Will Lines as he goes from 'happy Lino' opening his multitude of daily e-blueys and eating the endless supply of goodies his wife is sending out, to 'grumpy Lino' dealing with the multitude of problems that Squadron 2ICs can throw at him.

November saw the 'DANCON' march held at MOB Lashkar Gah, which commemorated the life of Anders Lassen a Danish military hero who served with the SAS during World War 2 and was awarded the Victoria Cross and the Military Cross...three times! Through the friendly encouragement of Bo, our Danish Influence Officer, the Headquarters entered a team for what could have been a steady 22km march carrying 10 kg, had it not been for the presence of Capt Charlie 'CFA' Arrowsmith insisting on turning it into a race! Yet there was a good turn out and high spirits meant that the twelve laps of Lashka Gar camp went relatively smoothly. Speaking of Capt Arrowsmith, the HQ is slowly getting used to 'CFA's' fitness regime, but descriptions of going to the "Tin Temple" (gym) for a work out, "where the sweat meets the steel" at least keeps the rest of the staff amused.



The Rover Group teach the Americans a thing or two about volley ball.

The Rover Group continues to work extremely hard, escorting the Commanding Officer around the different Squadron locations, as well as turning themselves into an accomplished volley ball team. They may not yet be quite at the standard of our accomplished Afghan counterparts, but LCpl Charlie Baxter can perhaps now look forward to playing on the beaches of Rio with a little more confidence.





Photo captions:

Top: As the day warms up, the DANCON competitors begin to suffer! Left: Sgt B enjoying himself far too much. Right: The PMAG team complete the march. From left to right: Lt Bob Crean, Sgt 'B', Maj Rob Kace, Capt Charlie Arrowsmith and 2Lt Adam Jones. Bottom: The RSWO, WO2 Scott Dyer, and Tpr Sam Lowe delve into the latest delivery of parcels from home.



Lashkar Gah Training Centre (LTC)

Maj Steve Kirkman

It may seem like a cliché, however time is literally flying by for us at the Lashkar Gah Training Centre (LTC) and every day brings a different challenge for members of the team deployed here. We are now well and truly settled into the tour and the task of mentoring the Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP). The LTC continues to grow in terms of importance and size as we draw closer to the final end state of transition to the Afghan security forces, and the building of a new training centre only adds to our significance. A giant step towards achieving ISAF's goal is the implementation of the "Officers Middle Management course." This is the first course of its type aimed specifically at the development of the AUP officers and providing them with lessons in management and leadership procedures. On completion of the course, the students will be able to employ these skills on return to their respective check points. The LTC remains a Mecca for the multitude of visitors who arrive on a frequent basis and on average we have two high profile visits a week, ranging from U.S. civil servants to Danish politicians and many high ranking military officers, all with a vested interest in the long term success of the LTC.

On a less work related note, Ladies be rest assured that "Op Massive" is still underway with members of the squadron, some of whom you would never have previously associated with weight training! I wouldn't expect miracles, as it can take an awful lot to undertake the physical rebuild of an infantile human body, but some significant changes are being seen, in fact the hardest part of the self imposed transformation has been getting the lads to realise that a body like 007 won't necessarily get them through the PFA (at least no-one can accuse the OC of raining on anyone's parade- Ed). Due to the limited space available we have not been able to cover all sections of the LTC, but we thought it would be interesting to focus on the RMP this issue, with next month's edition of *The Pomegranate* featuring RDG Multiples.

Squadron Headquarters, LTC

Capt Steve Stewart

The Squadron HQ have been very busy over the last 4 weeks. Maj Kirkman, as always, ensuring that the tasks are completed to a very high standard, even if that means he has to explain the task, then explain how the task needs to be completed...then walk through the task, talk through the task and often complete most of the task himself! I am still being my normal happy self, with the attached arms struggling to understand how one person can be so jolly at half past five every morning. The SQMS department have been busy as ever, ensuring that all supporting functions are in order ranging from accommodation, weapons and vehicle inspections, these are only a few of the tasks they undertake to ensure we comply with the rigorous operational management checks. SSgt SQMS Cosby, is to be seen forever scurrying between the Ops room and his hideaway ISO container with a fresh set of instructions from the Sqn Ldr ringing in his ears.



LCpl Bromley conducting his weekly checks





WO2 QMSI May LTCs resident "Gun for Hire"



Sgt Kaye and Cpl Milven, "Brothers in Arms."

WO2 Ben May (SASC) has joined us from 4 Brigade HQ and has quickly become an integral part of everything that occurs here in the LTC. As well as many other tasks, WO2 May manages all of the LTC training facilities and resources within LTC, a busy task when you consider the number of Sub Units from across TFH wishing to use the training centre for sustainment training, specialized courses or mission rehearsals; all whom require or demand that we afford them special consideration. As we are only 30% of the way through our tour, WO2 May (who incidentally has the patience of a saint) is showing signs of snapping, especially with one of the Special Forces units who seem unable to organize a "social event" in a brewery, the QMSI is often heard muttering the words, "special forces my arse" but thankfully they are not our own UKSF.

The SSM, WO2 "Robbie Ross", is quietly but effectively roaming the LTC in the guise of the Sqn Ldr's Pit Bull- snapping at all those who dare to step out of line, but the SSM's other role is that of marshalling the Interpreters, who are employed here to assist the ISAF mentors. As a result of this, the SSM has amassed a total of 25 new friends at work and on his Facebook page. These are no easy tasks, but the SSM gets through each day with his can of Scottish amber nectar (Iron Bru). However, if anyone wants to send him a parcel with a Jock Pie in it, I'm sure he will be grateful.

Royal Military Police

Sgt Gary McCallum, AGC(RMP).



Sgt McCallum with one of the ANP instructors

There are currently seven personnel from the Royal Military Police attached to the LTC as part the overall team. Made up of one Officer, three SNCOs and three JNCOs, our roles and responsibilities cover a wide spectrum of tasks, ranging from one on one mentoring to biometric enrolment of the locally employed civilians and students who attend any of the courses within the centre. We also mentor a select few of the Afghan National Police (ANP) Staff Officers including the Planning Officer, Subjects Officer and Security Officer and any of the Ministry of Interior (MOI) instructors who are now responsible for teaching the students. The RMP bring a vast

amount of both policing and managerial experience to the table which allows us to positively



influence, guide and mentor the ANP and we have been pleased to see that they have welcomed us with open arms.

The RMP have been impressed with how well the Royal Dragoon Guards have taken to working as the Police Mentoring and Advisory Group, but we have been on hand to provide and assist with the teaching of “blue” lessons to the ANP, which have been required in recent weeks



ANP being taught how to vehicle search

On Op HERRICK 17 there has been a significant increase of biometric enrolments due to LTC having several new courses starting with student numbers ranging up to anything between 6 -200 per course. Also within LTC there is the new Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) project which employs anything up to 200 plus LECs. It is because of these reasons that LTC currently have the highest biometric enrolment stats in theatre.



Biometric enrolment onto a new course



ANP take part in Op INDIA STARSKY, their final training exercise

LTC may be a great place to work, but it is just as vulnerable and susceptible to the day to day crimes committed by opportunist criminals looking to steal or commit other offences and If needed, the RMP has been on hand to provide real time policing advice and investigatory measures, as well as crime reduction clinics where individuals can have their military/personal kit marked and logged if required.



Nad-e-Ali

District Advisory Team (DAT)

2Lt Giles Moon



LCpl Daniel Pashley and Cpl Will Shone on patrol to an AUP CP

Thankfully, we are now into November and spirits remain high here in the DAT. The Sqn Ldr, Major Lance, and the 2IC, Capt Barker, are as busy as ever writing reports on returns and returns on reports, for the myriad of different HQs we work to, but we still manage to find a bit of time for some Police mentoring too! Capt Tyler continues in his unending quest to turn the men of Nad-e-Ali into a bona fide Afghan Local Police force and Lt Col Ward, continues in his Sisyphean task

to eradicate the mouse population within the District Police Headquarters, DPHQ, with special focus being directed towards the officers' tent. Lt Col Ward's popularity is only enhanced by the 20 welfare parcels a week he receives from the patriotic ladies of Devon and which he distributes to all the troops.

The District level Operational Coordination Centre is developing nicely and thanks largely to the efforts of SSgt Edwards and the newly promoted Sgt Fowler (with radio communications being overseen by Cpl Gardner and Cpl Wilson) the benefits of a command hub are finally being realised by the Afghan National Security Forces. Elsewhere, Sgt Miller's life has become a series of timelines for vehicle repair and he has coped



SSgt EDWARDS and Sgt FOWLER enjoying the District Chief of Police's hospitality during Eid al Fitr

with the stresses of this by shaving all his hair off! Our long suffering SQMS, SSgt Long, is still the busiest man in DPHQ, spending weeks preparing for an Equipment Care Inspection that failed to materialise, although we are not complaining and there is no desire for this to be rectified! Despite this, he managed to find time to organise a superb BBQ on Bonfire night, with a quiz afterwards in which the DAT team wiped the floor with the other two PATs (although this could also have something to do with Capt Barker quibbling every single answer with quizmaster Cpl Wilson!).

Sadly, we are soon to lose two of the most capable and well liked members of the DAT – Lt Jody Bragger and Cpl 'Pedro' Millan from our Intelligence cell. These two characters were left behind like unwanted orphans from Herrick 16, yet have worked extremely hard to make sure we are aware of what the enemy are up to, as well as encouraging the various branches of the ANSF to work together towards a common goal. They will be sorely missed, but our two new Intelligence types, LCpls Smith and Webster, are keen as mustard and will



work to plug the gap!

November is obviously marked by Remembrance Day and we were happy to receive a visit from Rich Hall, the QRL Padre, who conducted a very moving service for us around the ping pong table, with rousing hymns accompanied by the skirl of pipes from LCpl Warren of the RDG PAT. Later in the month, members of the command team were treated to an Afghan dinner party hosted by the District Chief of Police. This consisted of bread, rice, lamb cooked ten different ways and a smattering of what was suspected to be goat. Although its presentation may have left much to be desired, it was actually delicious!

As you would expect, we are all looking forward to Christmas, and the steady supply of decorations certain people have received will make certain that the camp looks suitably festive. Lt Guy Amir has been put in charge of organising Christmas festivities and rumour has it that a Father Christmas outfit fits him perfectly! That said, we are looking forward to the beginning of the R&R plot even more; time is flying by and it is hard to believe this is already approaching. Lastly, we'd like to reassure you that we are all fit and well, in good health and remain grateful for the many packages, letters and good wishes we receive from you all back home... thank you for the morale!

Silicon 51 (1st Troop, C Sqn QRL)

Lt Nick Bartram

We have now been in Nad-e-Ali for 8 weeks and have built a really good relationship with the police we mentor. Everyone knows their day to day tasks and relishes the opportunity to work with the police and train them. Tasks can be quite varied and in the last month we have been helping the police obtain winter blankets; the weather here may not be as severe as winter in the UK, but it is getting very cold at night and helping the police in this task really builds rapport. The cups of chai are still abundant at every checkpoint and interestingly, its colour mirrors the changing seasons, with the chai turning from a pea green to chocolate brown colour. As we look to the next month, our main aim will be to organise a training package for the police so that they have the ability to train themselves when we leave.

Of course work is only one part of life on tour and the highlight of the last month was our BBQ of sausages, burgers and spam, followed by a quiz night where we were cheated from victory by the Royal Dragoon Guards PAT and the Squadron Headquarters.

Particular mention must go to Tpr Joshua Chapman, who has won the award for eating more than anyone thought possible - it's not uncommon for him to eat 3 meals in one sitting and claim that he could still eat more afterwards! Luckily for our stores he is off home for R&R, so we might all be in with a chance of second helpings. Cpl Will Shone had to leave us for 2 weeks whilst he went back to Camp Bastion to train Foxhound drivers and commanders, most can't wait to leave Bastion, but we are yet to see his return. Tpr Jack Morgan also went back to Camp Bastion briefly and although he couldn't find any morale, he is going on early R&R and will certainly find it back in the UK.

We are all learning that watching too many American films can affect behaviour and Tprs James Eltoft and Daniel Lawton decided to go for the Jar-Head look when the barber arrived.



Many thanks to everybody who continues to send us packages, letters and e-blueys, they are invaluable and we are very grateful for everything. Although there is an autumnal feel in the air, Christmas is a lot closer than the weather implies and hearing stories from home lifts everyone's spirits.

Silicon 52 (2st Troop, C Sqn QRL)

Lt Charlie Gray

Having been in theatre for a month and a half, we are now fully stuck into our role as mentors. The first month in theatre saw the Police Advisory Team (PAT) deploy to Patrol Base Wahid and conduct daily visits to check points, meeting and greeting and drinking chai. Good relationships have been formed and we have started our first training package.

After a great start to the tour, we have continued to work hard. A selection of Checkpoints may have been handed over to another PAT, but this didn't mean a reduction in work, instead it has allowed us to increase our focus on our main effort. We have been joined by our replacement Embedded Police Mentor, an American Policeman, who has brought another edge to the Troop. Forgetting the odd bit of warm kit here and there, he has inspired a bit of comedy amongst us.



Lt Col WARD, WO2 TIDBURY and Capt. TYLER with patrol interpreters during Eid Al Fitr

In our down time, the PAT enjoys any number of different activities. These range from phoning home, watching films or TV, going to the gym or playing volleyball, the troop becoming a big fan of the latter. We have an 1st VI and 2nd VI and have challenged the Gurkhas (who are evidently experts at the sport) a number of times. Give us four or five months and we'll see if we can beat them! In addition, a number of the boys have taken to going to the gym on a regular basis. 'OP MASSIVE' has hit PB Wahid for sure and we are certain that you will be impressed with the results!

Over the next month, the PAT will step up its visits to Checkpoints and look at potentially delivering another training package. The temperature is dropping, but morale remains high. For now, we are getting on well and enjoying ourselves in our new, albeit temporary, home.



Silicon 53 (3rd Troop, C Sqn QRL)

Lt Sandy Nightingale

Silicon 53 continues to operate from the Estonian camp that is Patrol Base PIMON and we have now completed our first T3 course, a course which is effectively training police instructors. The police were very receptive and enjoyed all the hands on stuff, including medical training and counter IED training. Trying to convince them not to throw stones at IEDs was a challenge but I think we won them around.

The boys have been working hard to continue to develop our already strong relationship with the police and are slowly getting used to being in vehicles. Gurkhas are traditionally better on foot than in protective mobility, but some promising future Formula One champions are emerging!

Our fitness programme is coming on and some of the older Gurkhas have jumped on the band wagon to enjoy American style “energy drinks” sold to them with inspiring slogans such as “lose weight, get fit!” If only it were so simple!

Silicon 54 (2nd Troop, C Sqn QRL)

2Lt Jimmy Wilcox

The lads have now found their battle rhythm and are regularly visiting Check Points and patrolling with the police. We are getting to know the police that we visit and relationships are being solidified. With us working so closely with the Afghans, interesting methods of crossing the communication barrier have been seen during joint patrolling and some of the blokes have been revealed to be frustrated actors; not only showing off their soldiering skills but creating fake IEDs to teach with and providing dramatic role plays during the medical lessons.



Rehearsing a lesson on IEDs

Every admin day has provided the opportunity to re-enact 60 minute make over shows, our accommodation is now lit up like a fare ground ride during the nights and the lads’ ability to create entire dressing tables out of wire would put scrapheap challenge to shame.

Surprisingly, volleyball has taken a back seat this month, with the PAT now preferring to split their time evenly between the gym and the chess board. The title of PCC (PAT chess champion) has become a coveted one which is frequently contested. I for one am not convinced that ‘trash talk’ is a recognised tactic for the game of chess, but I’ve been strongly advised that it is a key aspect of the ‘Afghan game’! A lot is at stake during these games,



and the RMP have been used to good effect during the sittings of kangaroo courts resulting from disputes. LCpl Barnard and Tpr Wood clearly model their legal style on Tom Cruise in 'A Few Good Men' their accusations of contempt of court appear to have the desired effect, on what can only be described as a 'prejudiced jury'; the sentences handed down are invariably crates of pop

Silicon 55 (C Sqn, RDG)

Lt Jonny Clover

Following the initial stages of mentoring, building our relationships with the police and learning as much about the local area as possible, Silicon 55 have progressed well and are settling into a busy but enjoyable routine. As the men have become accustomed to their new



Green zone – its not Yorkshire but is a break from the dust

jobs they have also become friends with their new mentees. Recently promoted LCpl Danny Hedges has a particularly good ability to converse with Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) patrolmen using his pidgin Pashto and hand gestures, whilst Tpr Black has found that his boyish good looks and charm are enough to win their hearts.

Sgt 'Foz' Foster and I are supporting the ANSF commanders by conducting training, improving their patrol skills, offering as much advice as possible and by using our much studied local knowledge. Many of the men are becoming used to the local delicacies; freshly butchered goats and wiry chickens

are a particular favourite, all washed down with a nice hot cup of sweet green chai. Tpr Barber is becoming used to navigating a very wide ridgeback through some very narrow roads, but is yet to go over a speed bump without causing headaches to those passengers in the rear of the vehicle.

The next month will see the PAT focussing on ensuring the ANSF checkpoint commanders are fully prepared for winter and their plans to develop into a self sufficient force that can provide security for their fellow country men. However my highlight of the month was the meal of chick-pea curry, chicken, rice and bread hosted by the ANCOP to celebrate the promotions of Troopers Danny Hedges and Tom Bedford to Lance Corporal.



Silicon 56 (4th Troop, C Sqn QRL)

2Lt Sam Secombe

Our PAT received a good hand over-take over from the outgoing Royal Anglians, but there was still much to learn in a short space of time and the PAT has dealt with it excellently.

Responsible for advising a number of Afghan National Police checkpoints in the South of the Nad-e-Ali district, we have to be adaptable in our approach to advising, as the ability of the police differs from checkpoint to checkpoint. The PAT's drivers have become very proficient in handling the various road conditions and local traffic, which follows only a loose interpretation of the Highway Code.



The first Children's Shura was incredibly well attended, and gifts were given out by ISAF troops following it.

One of the highlights this month was being able to assist in the planning and running of a Children's Shura organised by the Afghan Local Police and the Afghan National Civil Order Police. 137 local children and elders turned up for the shura and the event was seen as a great success by all involved. Trooper Young provided English tea to all the attendees, which was received with the mixed reactions similar to when we first tasted their chai. 2Lt Secombe made an address at the shura and asked for the children to support the Police in the area and to treat ISAF forces with due respect. A kite flying demonstration was also provided for the children by LCpl Ackrill, which the children found hilarious, we're not sure this was the reaction he was wanting! Each child left the shura with notebooks, kites and toys and we are now warmly welcomed by waving children in the area whenever we pass through.

As with Silicon 51, we live in PB PIMON with the Estonians. We have integrated well with them and taken part in several camp-held competitions. The PATs attempt in the volleyball championship demonstrated a great deal of enthusiasm but lacked finesse. However, this defeat was eclipsed by the glorious victory won by Trooper Black's sterling effort in the Camp's 'Man vs Food' competition... the burger never stood a chance.



Warthog Group

Squadron Headquarters Troop

Tpr Sam Tudor

As I write this, we have only been in MOB Price for two weeks. We have been grafting hard at all hours to make sure that the Warthogs are ready to go out the gate when needed and we are starting to get into a good rhythm, but It certainly looks like it is going to be a very busy six months ahead of us. That's definitely a good thing though, as it is much better to be busy than bored and it should make the tour fly by.



1st Troop and TAC "in the long grass" in Popalzai

As should be clear by now, the lads of A (The Blue Horse) Squadron have been chosen to be the Warthog Group, and we are certain we have just about the best job available to a British Cavalry Regiment in Afghanistan. The Warthogs have proven themselves really good vehicles over the three operations we have already completed, they have been able to cross all sorts of terrain and have excellent survivability, which is very reassuring. Unfortunately, many of your loved ones may need 'bum transplants' after tour, because the seats have been designed to protect you, but really aren't very comfortable! If anyone has a surplus of old cushions kicking about at home, they'll find a welcome home our here with us!



1st Troop and TAC lead the way in Yakchal

For me though, the highlight so far has been having an F-18 fly literally meters above my head as a show of force whilst we were recovering another vehicle. We are already getting to see lots of the country and I'm really enjoying seeing some very random Afghan things, like



kids driving cars, buses with cars on top, and motor bikes loaded up with whole families as well as farm animals all piled up on top!

1st Troop of the Line

Lt Stu Vine

After what seemed like an eternity of preparation for deployment, and the agony of watching most of the Regiment head off ahead of us, 1st troop were desperate to finally be able to get onto the plane and deploy. We enjoyed RSOI in Bastion (Catterick in the sand) and then loaded the helicopters to fly forward to MOB Price our new home for the next 6 months - which I've been reassured will remain a MOB, despite the Marines attempts to rename it as HMS Price!

I wish I had some amusing anecdotes to recount, but only a couple of weeks in, life has been so busy that we really haven't had the time to take stock. However, we are definitely enjoying ourselves and the Warthogs are brilliant. As vehicles, they are equally at home in the desert as they are when ploughing (literally) through fields and ditches. The vehicles are adored, to the point that the drivers are often found nuzzled up to the beasts for a quiet night of vehicle maintenance under the stars.

Our first Op was cancelled, which was disappointing, but we have certainly made up for this false start and now the successful completion of our first couple of operations have calmed any remaining anxiety amongst the younger members of the Squadron.

In just under 4 weeks we have managed to cover half of the British area of responsibility and by Christmas I'm sure that we'll have driven around it all. With tiredness kicking in during some of our longer days, amusing stories are emerging with regards to hallucinations; in particular Trooper McCrossan waking from a day dream screaming that he was trapped. I politely informed him that he was sat next to the door and perhaps that was his best option.

We have settled into some sort of rhythm, no blues yet (pardon the pun), and all are looking forward to deploying on our next operation. In fact, the single point of contention thus far



'Bombing-up' a Warthog



surrounds the torque wrench which is also a ratchet, despite looking exactly the same as a torque wrench! ... I know, I'm becoming a tech-geek, but Tiffy reassures me that I must be interested in such matters and I'm now fully aware of the dual capability and no longer snapping bolts – fun fun stuff!



Lt Stu Vine, Panzer Commander!

2nd Troop of the Line

Tpr Will Owens

After a busy but very useful week of RSOI, we moved on to Main Operating Base (MOB) Price and started the process of taking over the Warthog fleet from the King's Royal Hussars (KRH). They gave us an excellent hand over and then we were off and running.



Joint ROC Drills with the KRH



The first few days in MOB Price were taken up by the unpacking of kit and the setting up of what already feels like home. After the KRH had left, we quickly settled into a busy routine of operations and maintenance, which looks likely to continue for the rest of the tour...I guess there's no rest for the wicked!



Cpl Blackery in the Arghandab River Valley

2nd Troop recently deployed on their first independent operation into the Arghandab River Valley in the South East of Helmand. We were in support of searches being conducted by the BRF. The searches resulted in a number interesting items being recovered which were subsequently moved on for exploitation. It certainly feels good to have a successful operation under our belts now.

On the whole we are enjoying camp life and the operations. With the fast turn around needed, we are always kept busy, but still find the time to fit in the odd, well deserved, coffee from the Danish Kufen; a Christian charity coffee shop and much appreciated oasis of calm. We have also managed to fit in a few Squadron and Troop level events, the highlights so far being the massive cake for Trooper Stevenson's and Trooper Blyth's birthdays and a Squadron BBQ on the tank park. All in all the time is flying by out here and we are looking forward to the rest of a successful tour



2nd Troop's corporals taking it in turns to abuse their position of power



B 'The Black Horse' Squadron

Maj Hugh Pearce-Gould

November has been another busy month for the Squadron, not least due to the time and effort spent on moustache related activities. B Sqn is undoubtedly performing to its considerable potential and is proving to be a shining beacon of professionalism and Cavalry flair in the Nahr-e-Saraj district. The continued support from all of you at home is much appreciated and I would like to take this opportunity to pass on a big thank you from all in The Black Horse Squadron.

Squadron Headquarters

Lt James Heath

Morale continues to remain high in the Squadron headquarters (SHQ), especially as the month of November has marked the half way point of tour for the majority of personnel in the troop and everyone is now firing on all cylinders to get the job done and get home safely. With the last remaining elements of the outgoing troops back in the UK, B Sqn RDG has managed to eradicate most traces of our Infantry predecessors and has injected some much needed Cavalry luxury. SSgt Turner and his team (Cpl McNiff and LCpl Reeves) have built upon last month's good work and the Sqn's welfare and living facilities are better than ever. The ablutions now rival those of the Officers' Mess and our home made sink in the kitchen area makes washing up a veritable pleasure compared to what we had previously.

SSgt Bradley continues to head up the Ops Room team with aplomb and despite him breaking the television in the Ops tent (the only piece of morale during an eight hour night stag); his team continue to work well. Cpl Bladen assures us he has worked wonders with the communications equipment after a wholesale move of the Ops Room into our own compound, but he continues to be met with blank looks from the Officers whenever he tries to explain the technicalities of our radio systems. The Ops Room team now look forward to their next challenge of establishing a functioning Afghan Army, Police and ISAF Coordination Centre in a vast Soviet era compound with an intermittent power supply and one functioning light bulb.

Overall the Sqn remains on fine form under the stewardship of the OC; Maj Pearce-Gould, 2IC; Capt Gannon and SSM; SSgt Hickinson. With their brand of inspired leadership B Sqn RDG is undoubtedly performing in line with its considerable potential and is proving to be a shining beacon in tempestuous waters. The continued support from all of you at home is much appreciated and I would like to take this opportunity to pass on a big thank you from all the men in SHQ and the Sqn as a whole.

Gereshk PAT

2Lt Simon Ramage

The last month has seen the men of Silicon 21 entering into that well known British past time, Movember. Embraced by Her Majesty's Armed Forces, Movember is a critical month in the military calendar as it gives all ranks a chance to demonstrate their masculine virility or, especially amongst the PAT, their lack of, as people compete to grow the biggest or bushiest moustache. Silicon 21 began Movember with gusto and swiftly fell at the first hurdle. It was realised that some members of the troop (LCpl "Rugged" Rothery, Tpr "Tosh" Taylor and Tpr



“Bristler” Bowes) were in danger of severely under performing in the moustache cultivating arena. Others excelled; Cpl “Tom Selleck” Chapman, LCpl “Chopper Reid” Chapman and Tpr “Hulk Hogan” Harris to name but a few. These brave men stand tall upon the facial hair battlefield, proudly staring down the Danish soldiers with their unpleasant Viking beards and prison yard shaved heads.

One of the most important, but unintended, aspects of our newly grown facial hair is a revitalised relationship with the Afghan police. The sudden change in our grooming routine has created a macho bond that has delighted the AUP and brings us a little closer to their cultural norms.

This month has also seen a change in mentoring, as we have given the police more autonomy and are operating with a lighter hand on the tiller. The response has been overwhelmingly positive and the soldiers of Silicon 21 have been rightly pleased with their work so far.

The continued supply of mail and support of our friends and families has been a dependable supply of morale that has helped immensely with the job at hand. Tpr Edwards received the gift of a small Christmas tree from his mother that now takes pride of place in the gym and has started the build up to Christmas nicely. Tpr Edwards can often be found climbing the tree as he is the only member of the PAT with the stature to scale the branches of the two foot tall pine tree.

Sgt “Six Pack” Jackson and Cpl “Tom Selleck” Chapman have led the way lifting weights in the gym. They also search in vain for LCpl Ratabalavu and Tpr Cooper. Tpr Patterson and LCpls Coyle and Porch head up the daily aerobics sessions behind the pump house. This exclusive aerobics club has to be hidden away in shame as visitors have often commented on the Mr Motivator style music and lunge routines that are demonstrated by these fit moustachioed individuals. I myself have often taken part and I am not ashamed to say that a sixties sweatband and ankle warmers are never far from my thoughts. Ladies, be prepared for your men to return twice the men they were when they left you (or half the man if you are expecting to see Tpr Bowes).

As always we are exceedingly grateful for all letters and parcels sent. This tour would be a great deal harder without them. Once again, on behalf of us all I would like to thank you for your continued support.

PB2 PAT

Capt Tom Shorland Ball

It is generally agreed across the PAT that time is now flying. We are at that stage where we can measure the passage of time in reference to the projects we have now seen go from start to finish. The recce we conducted on a new compound for the AUP, in our first couple of weeks, now sees that area with a half built compound which will be finished in time for Christmas. We have already seen Tpr Bedford depart for, and arrive back from, R&R. The remainder of the PAT will start thinning out in next few weeks as more follow suit. I know that Sgt Stead is especially excited to be getting home, those remaining behind share his excitement as he has promised to bring back Christmas presents for the whole PAT! He has assured us that he will also be organising the PAT hoodies, so we wait with baited breath!



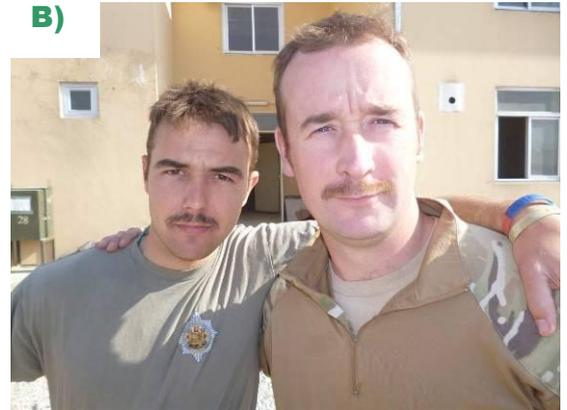


Photo captions:

A) The Gereshk "Tash"kiel B) Tom Selleck and a ginger moustached friend C) The Gereshk chucklebrothers tribute group D) The Rusty Brush E) Groucho Marx demonstrates correct use of the GPMG



Since the last issue of the Pomegranate we have welcomed LCpl Hill and Tpr Totney from D Sqn to our ranks; they have settled in extremely well. Not only does it seem that LCpl Hill has every MST qualification under the sun, but Tpr Totney has proved invaluable in his knowledge of computers, keeping everyone's laptops running well.

Daily life goes on as we continue on our CP visits and foot patrols to mentor the AUP. The later does inspire some dread amongst the boys, as the inevitable irrigation ditches are rapidly getting colder and colder as winter fast approaches. It is true to say that the chance to deploy on our feet is a rare pleasure as we try to do as much as possible. We have now learnt that inviting the Sqn Leader on an operation with us is a mistake. He has an uncanny knack of arriving the evening before we step off, and then, all of a sudden, the operation gets cancelled. This is, of course, not Major PG's fault, however, one does have to wonder!

Morale is currently very high. Celebrating Halloween allowed Cpl Hurst, our Skill At Arms Instructor, to test the guys on their weapon handling in fancy dress. We also had a quiz, and 'PAT's Got Talent'. This was won by the hilarious Tpr 'Carl Pilkington' Wells, for his unintentionally good impression of 'An Idiot Abroad'. The Silicon 26 Darts Championship continues, with Cfn Holmes currently on course to take the title and LCpl Lawrence looking to collect the Wooden Spoon award.

All friends and family should be prepared as the PAT have taken it upon itself to utilise the substantial gym facilities to maximum effect. Almost everyone has started 'Op Massive' and so wives and girlfriends, be prepared to greet your Adonis-like other-halves on our return.

Many thanks to all for sending out the generous parcels and letters, I know they are enormously appreciated. One of the things to be expected when you are based with a RGR company is that the menu will include curry. However, we were surprised to find that curry is served EVERY night. Although it is delicious, the opportunity to add even a little variety is most welcome, so please keep the parcels coming. We wish everyone at home the very best in the run up to Christmas and look forward to seeing you in due course as we get through our R&R window.

OULETTE ANCOP PAT

Lt Andrew Moncrieff

Silicon 18 has had a busy November in Combined Force BURMA. The PAT has forged some strong relationships with 4/5 Kandak, who continue to apply themselves to the task of protecting Route 611. The PAT have assisted the ANCOP with a wide range of tasks; everything from detention operations to infrastructure improvements. A highlight for many of the younger members of the PAT was helping the ANCOP to build and install a gate at one of their check points. This gave the PAT an opportunity to work side by side with the ANCOP who were grateful for the help and cooked lunch for the PAT as a result. This kind of co-operation has helped the PAT to get to know individuals who they have subsequently found themselves mentoring on the ground, which is clearly beneficial for both parties. The importance of simply visiting the ANCOP to say hello cannot be underestimated, in some ways we are kindred spirits as they are from the north of Afghanistan and are therefore very much away from their homes and families.





Photo captions:

A) PAT Comd, 2IC and 3IC with friends B) Cfn Holmes showing Tpr Cook the correct way to lunge C) Cfn Holmes and Tpr Cook looking fierce D) The boys sweaty after another Zumba session E) The Pat Comd locked out of his wagon



When the PAT are not on patrol they are well looked after in FOB OUELLETTE, with two tents and plenty of space to call their own. The food is pretty good most of the time and we are fortunate that we are only on rations one day a week. The gym has been a focal point for SILICON 18 in their down time, with many of PAT ensuring that they are going to return to the UK as either muscled hunks or shadows of their former selves. Trooper Sanson and Corporal Wood have even created an Arnold Schwarzenegger shrine to give motivation and inspiration to the PAT. Silicon 18 continues to be a happy, and busy, call sign. We are all looking forward to beginning to send people home on R&R in the near future.

ANCOP

ANCOP Barracks

Sgt Fleming

Unlike others in Helmand, life here at ANCOP Barracks has settled into a nice, but pretty slow, routine. There are a few lessons to conduct during the week and some limited admin do be done every second day. As we have to cook for elements of the United States' Marine Corps, who are also at our location, cooking duties can seem to come around pretty quickly! Our current focus is on the Masterchef competition we've got running. There may have been a few disasters in the last month and I'm sure some people pretend not to be able to cook in order to get out of it, but we eat very well, as we make it a challenge to beat each other's last meal. Sgt Cooper has become my cooking partner and we were off to a great start when I realised that not only could he just about stir beans, but he has also managed to fry six eggs without breaking a single yolk!

Quite a few visitors have been to our location and have been able to experience the fruits of our cooking practice, reports are slow to return, as are our dinner guests?!

D 'The Green Horse' Squadron Helmand Provincial Police Headquarters

Maj Ben Watts



Afghan Uniformed Police deliver BFPO mail "the last mile" to PPHQ



A lot has happened in PPHQ since our last newsletter. As ever, politics here are rife and the rumours about which senior Afghan will lose his job next are numerous. However, other than this odd setback, our mentees seem to be making steady progress, the job of developing the Police may prove frustrating at times and it certainly requires large doses of patience from all involved, but it is very rewarding.

On a lighter note, the Chief of Police challenged his Mentors to a “friendly” game of volleyball this month. We took him at his word and turned up for a knock-about, only to be greeted by a rather professional looking team, complete with matching Chelsea kit. To add insult to injury PCoP had ordered rent-a-crowd to turn up in the form of 100 men from the Guard Company. Just when we thought it couldn't get any worse, the Brigade Commander, Commanding Officer and a local news team arrived! The boys played their socks off and at one point even managed to win back the serve, although failure was all but inevitable and D Squadron displayed excellent sportsmanship, taking the defeat with good grace, even though we did not manage to get a point on the board against PCoP's chosen men. It turns out that the AUP team are national champions. The rematch will be on home turf and is unlikely to involve volleyball!



The SSM and SQMS doing what they do best,,,



The Dream Team

Both the 2IC and Squadron Sergeant Major managed to talk their way into a jolly to Kabul this month, accompanying the District Chief of Police for Lashkar Gah in his quest to get a visa for a trip to the UK. They had dreams of Embassy pool parties, endless buffets and luxurious accommodation; a sort of Afghan City Break. What they actually got was sparse transit accommodation, limited welfare facilities and no means to get out and see the city. To add insult to injury, their stay was extended by a few days and the Ministry failed to complete the paperwork - so no visa! On the plus side, they did manage to get to the gym three times a day and on the final night met up with D Squadron Old Boy Kes Srikanthan, who is now working for the Foreign Office in Kabul Bank...no wonder Afghanistan's finances are in a mess!

The OCCP version of Masterchef continues at pace. Maj Watts, Capt Walton-Rees and Capt Walker are vying for the championship. The judge's favourite is currently the Squadron Leader, but he did have an unfair advantage in the form of 40 lobster tails that were provided courtesy of the US Marine Corps, who were celebrating their 237th birthday.





Rent a Crows



Spot the ball



The SQMS delivers a rousing half time team talk



Capt Monk - enthusiastic, but futile



Set... Smash! (again)



The corporate box





LCpl Paul showing some skills



Capt Monk failing to impress LCpl Paul



The team try to ignore the score



Still friends



Smug



PMAG Rear - Camp BASTION

Capt David Brooks



Capt Rob Gough – 'I'm in the Brigade Ops Company, but shush, don't tell anyone'

Having got everyone safely out to Afghanistan, PMAG Rear was looking forward to being able to relax, but whilst the workload has certainly dropped off, we are still being kept busy, and with the R&R beginning, our work rate will continue apace.

The grass can often seem greener on the other side, and although those in Bastion can look enviously on the troops actually out in the Area of Operations, it seems that they are as equally envious of us; we have had many visitors over recent weeks. The officers and

soldiers of the RDG work with a huge variety of soldiers and civilians, but all seem to be fitting in well, special mention needing to be given to Capt Rob Gough, detached to the Brigade Ops Company as their 2IC.



Brigadier "Malchett" Hyams enjoying a Balaklava Day lunch in Kabul



We didn't eat like this in the trenches...



Chaplain's Corner

Padre Andy Harding

Being a clergyman I have become very used to being stared at. The first time I wore a dog collar as I walked up the road I became aware of people becoming aware of me. Even though there have been clergy in our culture for many years, we still seem to arouse a peculiar curiosity and that initial curiosity tends to manifest itself in good old fashioned staring. When I joined the Army, I found that the uniform also generates some staring but they tend to be stares of recognition rather than "what a weirdo!"



This month marked my first visit, which was to an Afghan police station where some of the RDG are working. This was the first time I had ventured into what I call "Proper Afghanistan", where the majority of people are Afghans. There I found it was I who was staring, looking at this new environment and trying to take it all in. At the same time, I found myself trying to recall all those cultural awareness lectures we undertook, trying to make sure that I behaved in the correct way and didn't offend anyone.

On entering the main building a smiling Afghan policeman sat behind a desk and greeted us in turn with a handshake and by putting a hand across his heart. Walking upstairs, I was met with typically loud but pleasant greetings from the RDG lads. The Afghans in the room wanted to know who this newcomer was and the response of, "He's our Mullah" was met with shock and confusion of the Afghan Interpreters and resulted in the biggest wide eyed stare that I have ever had! They eventually broke their stunned silence and said, "But, he's too fat to be a Mullah!" After our lads had finished laughing, the interpreter explained that their Mullah's are thin because they fast a lot when observing religious rituals. Rather than being offended by being called fat, I actually found it very funny as well, but I did refuse second helpings for dinner that night! If only the conversation had ended there. You see, I'm still having a little difficulty with the Afghan accent and rather than hearing, "our Mullahs are thin because they *fast* a lot," I heard, "our Mullahs are thin because they *fart* a lot." My response of, "I'll have you know I can fart with the best of them" was met with... silence! One of the points made in cultural awareness lectures, which at that moment came flooding back, was that the Afghans find breaking wind very offensive and find nothing funny about it what so ever!

They stared.

I left the room.

Everything we do in life is a learning experience and as time goes by we become wiser and more sensitive to our surroundings. Here in Helmand, we are learning to appreciate difference and embrace it. Advent, the time of preparation for the arrival of Jesus, is approaching. Advent signifies a great adventure as we begin to anticipate Christmas, a celebration which brings the Christian faith together. But Jesus is not just important to the Christian faith, he is also very important in Islam. In our growing relationships with the Afghan people we are learning about difference and through this we also learn what brings us together. Thank you and God Bless.

