

THE COVENANTER



THE REGIMENTAL JOURNAL OF
THE CAMERONIANS (SCOTTISH RIFLES)

2004

The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) (26 and 90)

The Sphinx, superscribed Egypt. The Dragon superscribed China.

Blenheim, Ramilies, Oudenarde, Malplaquet, Mandora, Corunna, Martinique 1809, Guadaloupe 1810, South Africa 1846-47, Sevastopol, Lucknow, Abyssinia, South Africa 1877-8-9, Relief of Ladysmith, South Africa 1899-1902.

*The Great War - 27 Battalions - Mons, Le Cateau, Retreat from Mons, Marne 1914, 18, Aisne 1914, La Basseé 1914, Armentières 1914, Neuve Chapelle, Aubers, Loos, Somme 1916, 18, Albert 1916, Bazentin, Pozières, Flers-Courcelette, Le Transloy, Ancre Heights, Arras 1917, 18, Scarpe 1917, 18, Arleux, Ypres 1917,18, Pilckem, Langemarck 1917, Menin Road, Polygon Wood, Passchendaele, St Quentin, Roslères, Avre, Lys, Hazebrouck, Baillieul, Kemmel, Scherpenberg, Soissonnais-Ourcq, Drocourt-Quéant, **Hindenburg Line**, Epéhy, Canal du Nord, St Quentin Canal, Cambrai 1918, Courtrai, Selle, Sambre, France and Flanders 1914-18, Doiran 1917, 18, **Macedonia 1915-18, Gallipoli 1915-16**, Rumani, Egypt 1916-17, **Gaza, El Mughar, Nebi Samwil, Jaffa, Palestine 1917-18.***

*The Second World War - Ypres-Comines Canal, **Odon**, Cheux, Caen, Mont Pincon, Estry, Nederrijn, Best, **Scheldt**, South Beveland, Walcheron Causeway, Asten, Roer, **Rhineland**, Reichswald, Moyland, **Rhine**, Dreirwalde, Bremen, Artlenburg, **North-West Europe 1940, 44-45**, Landing in Sicily, Simeto Bridgehead, **Sicily 1943**, Garigliano Crossing, **Anzio**, Advance to Tiber, **Italy 1943-44**. Pogu 1942, Paungde, Yenagyaung 1942, **Chindits 1944, Burma 1942, 44.***

Alliances

New Zealand Army

The Otago and Southland Regiment

Ghana Military Forces

2nd Battalion Ghana Regiment of Infantry

Affiliated Regiment

7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles

Regimental Trustees

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Colonel Hugh Mackay OBE · Major Lisle Pattison MBE

NOTICES

"THE COVENANTER"

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Literary Contributions: The Editor welcomes articles, drawings, photographs and notes of regimental or general interest for publication. The closing date for submissions each year is 30 November.

The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) Officers Club

Chairman:

Colonel J.G. d'Inverno TD ADC, (0131) 662 9792

Hon. Secretary/Treasurer

Major J.G. Maxwell TD (0141) 204 4441 (O)

Regimental Club

The Cameronian Memorial Club -
9 Holyrood Crescent, Glasgow.

Museum:

Low Parks Museum
129 Muir Street, Hamilton ML3 6BJ
Tel: 01698 328 232

2005 DIARY OF REGIMENTAL EVENTS 2005

APRIL

Friday 1st April -

Cameronian Officers Dinner Club -

The Western Club, Glasgow at 7 for 7.30p.m.
Dinner will be preceded by the AGM at 6 p.m.
Those wishing to attend should contact Major J.G. Maxwell TD.
Tel: (0141) 204 4441. (O).



Cameronian Pin Brooch

4 x 3 cms

These hand made brooches Hall Marked (silver) can be supplied to order from A&R Murray, 20 Thistle Street, Edinburgh EH2 1EN enclosing payment in the sum of £27.

MAY

Sunday 15th May -

Cameronian Sunday -

The Douglas Valley Church - St Bride's, Douglas 10.00a.m.

Friday 20th May -

Officers Luncheon -

The Army and Navy Club, St James Square, London. Contact is Col. J.N.D. Lucas.
Tel: (01722) 716 463 (H).

Last Friday of the Month Meeting (Not December)

Following the closure of the Covenanter Bar in the High Street the meeting place has been re-located to The White Horse Bar on the Royal Mile by Jeffrey Street.

OCTOBER

Friday 7th October -

Officers' Luncheon -

Officers Mess Craigiehall, Edinburgh
Contact is Lt Col I.K. McBain.
Tel: (0131) 445 2953 (H). (It has not been possible to arrange this on a Saturday)

Regimental Curling

2004 proved a successful curling season in spite of our perennial problems in finding enough curlers. We just managed to provide the necessary curlers for the Lowland Brigade Bonspiel and for the Lowland Brigade matches against The Highland Brigade. However, we could only find one curler for the Mixed Rink for these matches.

The Lowland Brigade Bonspiel took place at Murrayfield on Wednesday 4th February, and resulted in The Cameronians regaining the Lowland Brigade Curling Cup. The Regimental Rink comprised Jim Orr (Skip) Hugh Mackay, Ian McBain and David Scott. In the morning match we managed to hold on and defeat the Royal Scots 9-6, and in the afternoon we beat the KOSB, who were the holders, 10-5.

The home leg of the Lowland v Highland Brigade match took place at Murrayfield on Friday 27th February, and the Regimental Rink of Malcolm Macneill (Skip), Fred Prain, Jim Orr and Hugh Mackay, went down 10-3 to the Highland Brigade Mixed Rink. David Scott switched rinks to aid the KOSB, in the return leg at Perth the Regimental Rink comprised Malcolm Macneil (Skip) Jim Orr, Hugh Mackay and John McMyn (a National Service Cameronian stalwart from Dumfries and Galloway who was persuaded to help us out). Unfortunately we were up against the strong BW 'A' Rink who soundly beat us 12-3. David Scott again switched to help the KOSB.

In 2005 the Lowland Brigade Bonspiel takes place at Murrayfield on Wednesday 2nd February, and we hope to be able to find the necessary 4 curlers for the Regimental Rink and 2 curlers for the Mixed Rink. The format for the Inter Brigade Matches is changing. There will be just one match versus Highland, with a morning and afternoon session at Perth. This decision was taken at the AGM with the aim of helping the pressure on serving Officers (and others!) who may have difficulty in being available for two days. For the inaugural 2005 match the Highland Brigade will be hosts, and will alternate annually with the Lowland Brigade as hosts at Murrayfield.

My grateful thanks to the small but happy band of stalwart curlers. We shall miss Hugh Mackay very much, but Midhurst to Murrayfield/Perth is a wee bit far for the day!

Jim Orr

Letter from London

Early in May, I received a small package from the Ministry of Defence. With bated breath and trembling fingers I managed to open it, whereupon a small lump of white metal landed on my dressing table with the inscription "Canal Zone". This set me thinking, and asking, Canal Zone? Could it be the Caledonian Canal? The Manchester Ship Canal? Oh! I know. It must be the Panama Canal, but then I realised that I had never been near any of these waterways in my life. At last the penny dropped. Just over fifty years earlier I had spent two of the most miserable years of my life in the Suez Canal Zone. This, then, was the reward I and thousands of other servicemen and women received after all those years, a clasp to be attached to my General Service Medal ribbon (Malaya), a clasp that, in my opinion, is incorrectly worded. Surely, it should have been inscribed Suez Canal. Will they ever learn?

On 27th June, I attended a memorial service for the late Lt. Col. Alan Campbell. This service was held in St Pauls Church in Covent Garden, here in London.

The church is known as The Actors Church and, fittingly, as you sit there, the faces of many famous actors and actresses from generations past gaze down on you. The service was conducted brilliantly, with various members of Alan's family and friends delivering tributes which, at times, were extremely witty and humorous. This was followed by a piper from the 1st Bn The Highlanders playing a lament.

Prior to the commencement of the service, I was pleasantly surprised and delighted to meet up once again with several officers from the regiment with whom I had served. Alan Campbell and I served in 'C' Company in the 1st Bn, in Hong Kong and Malaya during the emergency there. Alan was a first class platoon commander, and a very popular officer.

As you will recall from last year's issue of The Covenanter, I wrote that the British Legion ground staff were now setting out our plot at Westminster Abbey, and a good job they were making of it. For the past four years I have stood at the foot of our plot representing the regiment, and have thoroughly enjoyed the experience. However, this year, and I hope for many years to come, we can have a different volunteer to carry out this pleasant and

revered task. Towards this end, I invited an old Cameronian to stand this year. He is Tom Gore who accepted my invitation with alacrity. Tom served in our 9th Bn during World War Two, taking part in some of the heaviest fighting in N.W. Europe. He is thoroughly delighted at the prospect. I will be attending to see that all is well with our plot, and to meet and greet any ex-Cameronians who turn up.

Since starting this feature, I have received word from the Royal British Legion that Her Majesty the Queen will be attending this years ceremony, accompanied by H.R.H. Prince Philip.

Throughout the years, I have been a keen and supportive member of the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) and Families Association. Like any other organisation, it has had its ups and downs from time to time, but always managed to sort things out. Currently, the Association seems to be enjoying a very good spell, and I have no doubt this is due to the hard work and dedication of our committee, ably led by Mr Andy Berry (Chairman) and our long-serving Secretary, Jim Ballantyne.

Whilst on the subject of our Association, I would like to pay tribute to a staunch patron of our Association, namely Col. Hugh Mackay OBE. Col. Hugh left Scotland recently to take up residence in southern England. During his long sojourn in Scotland, Col. Hugh had a very close affinity with our organisation. He did sterling work in many areas, looking after our interests, thus endearing himself to all our members. I'm sure everyone will join me in wishing Col. Hugh and his family all the very best for the future.

Early in the new year I had a visit from Mr Peter Hart who is an archivist at the

Imperial War Museum. As a consequence of this visit, I completed a ten and a half hour interview on tape tracing my army career from day one. The recordings were conducted by ten separate interviews and, on completion, I received a copy of the ten disks of the whole exercise. The original disks will be held in the War Museum archives with several photographs of myself taken during relevant periods of my service. Ah! Fame at last!

Once again, we were back at the Field of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey; poignantly, on the eleventh hour, of the eleventh day, of the eleventh month. Needless to say, the whole Ceremony of Remembrance was carried out in the usual brilliant manner, with the weather equal to the occasion. Our regimental representative, Tom Gore, did a splendid job, resplendent in Glengarry and campaign medals. Her Majesty stopped briefly at our plot and chatted to Tom. Then H.R.H. Prince Philip also spoke a few words to Tom, at the same time showing interest in Tom's cap badge. At the end of it all, an Old Cameronian and his good lady, Dorothy, walked away from the Abbey a proud and happy couple, with a memory they will cherish for years to come.

Finally, I had a bit of a heart-stopping moment when I arrived at our plot. Although the plot was laid out as per specification, our regimental crests were missing. I contacted the R.B.L. first thing the next morning, and they were most apologetic and assured me our crests would be in place that very morning.

So, dear fellow Cameronians, that's it for another year from the Metropolis. 'Lang may yer lums reek.'

Eddie Clark



Tom Gore talking with Her Majesty - Westminster Abbey November 2004

Museum Report Year 2004

New Acquisitions to The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles)

Purchases

In 2004, the Trustees and South Lanarkshire Council jointly bought at auction an important medal collection that once was awarded to an Indian Mutiny VC winner, John Guise. The group includes Guise's miniature Victoria Cross.

Below is U Gen Sir John Guise's biography from the Crimean War exhibition at Low Parks Museum biography. The Trustees provided funds to enable the museums to commission a researcher to visit The National Archives at Kew. The resultant report was redesigned by volunteer Katie Barclay.

Captain John Christopher Guise, VC 90th (Perthshire Volunteers - Light Infantry) Regiment (Later Lieutenant-General Sir John Christopher Guise, V.C. C.B.)

John Christopher Guise was born on 27 July 1826 in Gloucestershire. His father was Lt. General Sir John Wright Guise Bart KCB. John was first placed on the list of candidates for Ensign 'By Purchase' in June 1840 as he was about to go to The Military College, Sandhurst. In his letter to Lord Hill at Horse Guards applying to have his son on the list, Sir John also added that if there was any possibility for a Colonelcy of a regiment for himself he hoped that favourable consideration would be taken of his services in Egypt, the Continent and the Peninsular. However, this apparently came to nought.

John Christopher was eventually awarded an Ensigncy 'By Purchase' in the 90th Regiment in June 1845 after his father had again written to Lord Somerset from an address in Belgrave Square, London. He wrote to say that John had been complimented with a prize from Sandhurst for good conduct and for Military Drawing and that he would like to introduce him to Somerset as he was now anxious regarding the award of a commission.

After purchasing a Lieutenantcy in 1848 John was appointed Captain 'Without Purchase' in June 1854, shortly before the Crimean War. However, he soon suffered ill health and left to return to England on 1 January 1855 on 'Unlimited Leave'. He nevertheless qualified for the campaign **Crimea War Medal with Sebastopol Clasp** and, presumably, the **Turkish Medal**.

He was a Major when he was engaged in further actions during the Indian Mutiny that resulted in him being awarded the **Victoria Cross**. The particular event occurred on the 16 and 17 November 1857 whilst fighting at Lucknow when Major Guise, together with Sergeant Samuel Hill saved the life of a captain at the storming of the Secundrabagh and also went in under heavy fire to help two wounded men. He is recorded as having acted with gallantry throughout the entire Crimean War and the operations for the Relief of the Lucknow Garrison. The award of his VC was recorded in the London Gazette on the 24 December 1858. He was also awarded the campaign **Indian Mutiny Medal with Relief of Lucknow and Lucknow clasps**.

He attained Lieutenant Colonel 'By Purchase' in January 1860 (an incremental cost of £1,300) when Lieutenant Colonel Purnell retired and finally commanded the regiment from November 1861 to June of 1864. He went on to become a Lieutenant General in the British Army after having been awarded the C.B. From 1890 he was the Colonel of the Leicestershire Regiment.

Additional research showed that John Christopher Guise was reputedly born at Highnam, Gloucestershire on the 27 July 1828 being the son of General Sir John Wright Guise, Bart. G.C.B., a hero of the Peninsula Campaign. However, the 1881 Population Census Returns taken at the home of his brother in law, John W Stratford, a JP and Farmer, records him as married and a Major General aged 55 years born at Little Dean in Gloucester. He reputedly died on the 5 February 1895 at Gorey, County Wexford, Ireland and was buried in the Gorey Churchyard His daughter, Mary Ann, married Frederick Charles Ulick Vernon-Wentworth during August 1899.

Medals and Badges

Medals (plus photos and letters) of Rfn. Gray

Bar of 6 medals from WW' including Royal Swedish Order in original case. 3 WW1 medals of W. Bernard

British Armies in France (Cpl Wheeler)

Medals etc of Pte P Telfer

Uniform accessories and equipment

,Cameronian cap, bonnet and tunic of Frank Picken (plus photos)

Photographs

'D' Coy. Tug of War team 1909

5 photos 'B' Coy.

3 photos 1955-1957 including Bahrain and Germany
7 photos of Cameronian gravestones WW2 in Burma
Photo of 1st Service Coy 7 Battalion

28 photos of Stendal POW camp Germany WW1

Archive

9 items of Cpl Osborne (DoW 25/01/1916)

Officers' message book from WW1

Gallipoli 1915 diary of Maj. C P Will (1881-1970)

War Diaries Project - 'Increasing public access to the collections without 'increasing the staff workload'

The team of dedicated volunteers from the Lanarkshire Family History Society have continued to work tirelessly on transcribing the hand-written Commanders' War Diaries into an easy-to-use computer package. They have transcribed over 200,000 words and have entered into a database the names of over 4,000 Officers and Other Ranks.

With a few clicks of the computer mouse, staff can find if there is any mention of any known person, place, ship, weapon, etc. Previously to do such a search in hundreds of un-indexed hand-written pages was so time-consuming as to be almost impossible.

The team has almost finished transcribing the 10th Battalion. 18th Battalion and the 1st, Garrison Battalion of The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) in the First World War 1914-18. These will be added to the completed First World War 1914-18 War Diaries of:

- 1st Battalion
- 2nd Battalion
- 6th Battalion
- 7th Battalion
- 8th/7th Composite Battalion
- 8th Battalion
- 11 Battalion

We are very grateful to the volunteers for their continued hard work and enthusiasm that has resulted in a major new asset for the public at Low Parks Museum and worldwide through our public enquiries service.

Storyboards

The Storyboard unit at LPM goes from strength to strength. As part of a regular expansion programme, the first three Cameronians Storyboards are now live at Low Parks Museum, Hamilton. The stories of Jordan 1957, Oman 1958 and the Band and regimental music can be seen on the

unit that also houses the Digital Collections gallery. If you've not seen the Storyboards yet, it's well worth a visit. You can follow the story of the operation written by one who took part, illustrated by photographs, many from private collections. There's Regimental music to accompany the start of each Storyboard.

SCRAN

This is not food or eatables, but the acronym for Scottish Cultural Resources Access Network. It began as a millennium project with the objective of creating an enormous database of all museum collections in Scotland. Over the last 18 months or so, South Lanarkshire Council museums took part in a total of 7 projects, four of which featured objects from the collection of The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles). In the Health project we offered many sketches illustrating the health hazards of Army service abroad in the Zulu War 1879 with the 90th Perthshire Light Infantry. Henry Hope Crealock (1831-1891) had a project all to himself as we featured 28 sketches and watercolours from his Crimean War album. The five striking and unique Lanarkshire Covenanter banners were featured for the first time in a new project.

Recently, a new project has gone online at SCRAN. 'Trench life and War Memorials in South Lanarkshire'. You can see 30 photographs of the 1st and 2nd Battalions The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) in France and Belgium in the winter of 1914-1915. The photographs were taken by Captain Robert Money Cotton (later Maj Gen Sir Robert Cotton Money CB MC). In addition as part of this project, there are more than 20 close up views of the names plaques on several South Lanarkshire War Memorials of the Great War. The detail is such that you can read the individual names.

We are grateful to Volunteer Molly Magee, who carried out much of the background research and wrote supporting text for 5 of the trench scenes. We thank Volunteer Katie Barclay for a large part of the work of this project. Katie took a joint share in the final selection of the trench scene images, and scanned all 30 of the final group. In addition she wrote the supporting text for 5 of the trench scene images.

Terry F Mackenzie and Doug MacBeath came up with the project concepts and Terry secured the funding from SCRAN and managed the project.

What's special about all this? Simply this - anyone anywhere in the world with access to the Internet can see these objects from the collection of The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) together with a brief description of them. Those with full access, mainly in education (in Scotland, that means every school pupil) can see in addition to a full screen image of the object, 120 words of description of the significance of the object with full references to every associated person or place.

How to find it: www.scran.ac.uk

In the new-look homepage you'll find a window: 'Free scan search service' type in what you want to look for e.g. 'cameronians' and the system will find all the records with any reference to The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles). Good hunting!

Enquiries

As ever, the public enquiry service continues to be an important part of our work. Each year, we receive about 400 enquiries that require research. 70% (last year 62%) of these research enquiries are about The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) in the current financial year beginning 1 April 2004. Enquiries came from all over the UK, France, Eire, Denmark, Gibraltar and Germany, as well as Canada, USA (including Gettysburg, PA), New Zealand, Hong Kong and Australia. Such diverse bodies as the Universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen, Historic Scotland, RHQ The Sherwood Foresters and the National Museums joined individuals who wished to know about their ancestors time in The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles). A number of serving British service personnel have made enquires from various BFPOs.

The Cameronian Exhibition 2005-2006 60th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War 1939-1945 The History of the 6th Battalion The Cameronians

We have been awarded lottery funding for a number of projects designed to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War 1939-1945. One of these is our Cameronian exhibition for 2005-2006. Terry Mackenzie made the successful Lottery bid.

'The Crimean War - a Mad and Murderous Enterprise'

This exhibition has attracted much favourable comment from visitors.

'The Crimean War - a Mad and

Murderous Enterprise' is the title of the exhibition that will continue its run until the summer of 2005 on the Mezzanine Floor at Low Parks Museum.

The exhibition commemorates the 150th anniversary of the 90th Perthshire Light Infantry's involvement in the Crimean War (1854-1856).

A first for an exhibition on a Cameronian theme is the inclusion of 33 biographies with individual photographs of 33 Officers and Other Ranks who served with the 90th Perthshire Light Infantry in the Crimean War. The Trustees generously provided funds to pay for a researcher to work at The National Archives at Kew, London to investigate a number of sources to put together a report on each individual selected.

A feature of the exhibition is the unique Roger Fenton and James Robertson photographs of the 90th at war in the Crimea. The images are from the collection of Henry Hope Crealock who served with the 90th in the Crimea. Crealock added handwritten notes to the photographs listing most of the individuals shown.

Medals Display

Medals fans rest easy! The medal cases will be remaining on the Mezzanine.

In a new initiative, we have an associated virtual presence on South Lanarkshire Council's Intranet. Thousands of Council workers have been able to access this Intranet from their desks since early in 2004. The new facility will give an insight into work in progress on the exhibition behind the scenes at the museum. After the exhibition finishes its run on the Mezzanine Gallery at Low Parks Museum, we plan to have in due course a virtual exhibition using text and images from the main exhibition on the Intranet also. This facility has been developed by a student from Bell College, Hamilton. This virtual exhibition can remain long after the real exhibition has been dismantled.

In a major new departure, in consultation with the Regimental Trustees, we plan to have a basic Website on The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) as a taster to see what the public would like us to provide on behalf of the Cameronian family worldwide. The work for this has been complete for some time and we await a South Lanarkshire Council decision on funding.

Constitution and Rules of the The Cameronian (Scottish Rifles) and Family Members

The Organisation shall be called The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) and Family Members', herein referred to as The Organisation' and shall be Non-Political and Non-Sectarian.

1. OBJECT

Principal object of the Organisation shall be to enter into and carry out, or co-operate in any schemes for the benefit of Members, including visiting Sick, Housebound and, or Hospitalised Members.

1.2 It shall be a Non-Profit making Association and any 'Surplus' of Income remaining after all Stationery, or other essential financial charges have been paid, may be transferred to the Organisation's Benevolent Account and to be used for the benefit of all Members of the Organisation, or other benefits, as voted and decided by Members present at the AGM.

1.3 All Officials and Members working on behalf of the Organisation shall do so on a Voluntary and Unpaid basis, when Travel and other expenses may be made payable to them from the Organisation's Benevolent Fund, and only after it has been agreed to be paid, by the General Committee of the Organisation.

2. MEMBERSHIP

2.1 Membership of the Organisation shall consist of:-

- a) All Regular and National Servicemen who served in the Regiment as Cameronians, of any Rank, at any time.
- b) All T.A. and T & A VR Soldiers who served as Cameronians part time, at any time.
- c) Members of Second World War Home Guard, who were badged as Cameronians.
- d) All attached personnel of other Arms and Corps who served with the Regiment, or T.A., or T & A VR, at any time.
- e) All Adult Family Members, of Any Generation, of Cameronians, Regular or National Service, T.A., or T & A VR, Attached personnel, or the Second World War Home Guard.

(All of whom must prove their relationship with the Regiment, to the General Committee).

Any Reader wishing to join or to receive further details (including a Programme of Events) should contact the Secretary Jim Ballantyne Tel 0131 555 4066

The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) Association (2004)

This is a new organisation set up in October 2004 to promote an interest in the history and achievements of The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles). It is open to all who have a genuine interest in the history and traditions of the Regiment.

The plan is to have six meetings a year, at which talks will be given by people on the history of The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles). These will be held in a Central Scotland location, possibly in Hamilton or Motherwell. Arrangements are still being made at the time of writing, but will be published in the local press in Lanarkshire in due course. We also plan to have two Dinners, one to commemorate Neuve Chapelle and one to commemorate the formation of the Cameronian Regiment.

Since our objectives are very different, there should be no clash at all with The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) and Family Members, and we hope that any members of that Organisation who are interested in the history of the Regiment will come and join us, where they will find a warm welcome. It would be good if some of the Cameronian Officers would also join us, because their perspective on events is important if future generations are to build up a true picture of the Regiment.

Membership for 2005 is £5 and is open to anyone, whether or not they served in the Regiment, as long as they are interested in the history of The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles). Any reader wishing to join us should send a cheque for £5 to the Hon. Treasurer, the Rev. J. Strachan, L. Th., Dip. Th., 50, Glenbervie Drive, Whitehirst Park, Kilwinning, Ayrshire, KA13 6QR; while anyone wishing further details of our programme for the year should contact myself, Richard Fowler, 'Cameronian Cottage', 7, Muirside Place, Pennyburn, Kilwinning, Ayrshire, KA13 6HH,

Any man should be proud to say, 'I served with the Cameronians'

We want future generations to know why.

Remembrance Day Service: St. Columba's Church, Helensburgh

On Sunday, November 14, 2004, members of The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) Association (2004) took part in a very moving Remembrance Day Service at St. Columba's Church, Helensburgh. The Service was conducted by the minister, the Rev. Fred Booth, L.Th.

At the beginning of the service, Jim Strachan marched to the front of the Church and saluted the minister, reporting to him with the traditional words: 'Reverend Sir, the pickets have been posted. There is no enemy in sight. The service may begin.' Later, Jim read the Legion Prayer. Richard Fowler read the Scripture Lesson, which was Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3, verses 1-8, with a reprise of verses 1-2.

The Rev. Mr. Booth has made it his practice to take one name each year from the war memorial in the Church and to focus on that person's unit. This year, he chose Lance Corporal Alex Anderson, of the 9th Cameronians, who was killed during the Liberation of North-West Europe.

Mr. Booth gave background information on The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) and their part in and after the Normandy Landings. He also spoke of L/C Anderson and explained that the battalion had been trying to cross a canal in Holland on October 31, 1944. L/C Anderson and his platoon had known that the enemy were on the other side of the canal, but not that there was also an enemy unit near them. L/C Anderson was killed giving covering fire. Just before he left to go into Europe, his wife told him that she was expecting a baby. The baby, born in January, 1945, was actually twin girls. They never knew their father, but a treasured possession of the family, along with his cap badge, is a letter written by Mr. Anderson's CQMS, Sergeant Tom Ferguson.

After the war, Mrs. Anderson tried to find out about her husband's grave and eventually made contact with a Dutch family, who told her where the grave was and said that their young daughter, Nellie, tended the grave regularly. A firm friendship was established between the

Dutch family and the Andersons, and still, 57 years after his death, Nellie (now 67) tends the grave of the brave Cameronian who gave his life in the liberation of her village.

Another link between the Dutch people and St. Columba's Church is that Marcella Paterson, a member of the Congregation, is herself Dutch. She decorated the Church for Remembrance Sunday and made a banner in which she incorporated a Cameronian marker pennant, which is owned by Richard Fowler.

St. Columba's Church can trace its roots back to the days of the Cameronian Covenanters.

Attending this Service was a privilege. It was good to worship there; to hear the sermon; and to join the congregation in remembering their very own Cameronian.

Richard Fowler

Service of Commemoration, Kilwinning.

On Sunday, May 16, 2004, a Service of Thanksgiving for The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) was held in the Congregational Church, Woodwynd, Kilwinning. The minister, the Rev. Jim Strachan, L.Th, Dip Th, conducted the service. The service was preceded by a parade through the town centre, at which many branches of the Ayrshire and Glasgow areas of the Royal British Legion (Scotland) took part. The Lord Lieutenant of Ayrshire, Major Richard Henderson, and Captain James McCulloch, formerly of The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles), the Cameronian Home Guard and the Lanarkshire ACF, took the salute. They also read the Scripture Lessons during the service. Mr. Richard Fowler gave the address to the children. Mr. Strachan spoke of the Regiment and its proud history and its covenanting origins and said that Christians to-day could learn from the example set by the Cameronians and their covenanter forebears.

After the service, the Congregation enjoyed a lunch and entertainment in the Church Hall.

It is planned to have another Commemoration of the Regiment at 2.00p.m on Sunday, May 22, 2005, to which all Cameronians are invited.

Richard Fowler

Thoughts inspired by looking at the Cap Badge of The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles)

The Cap Badge of The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) consists of the five-pointed star, or mullet, of the Douglas Family, above a hunting horn with a lovers' knot; and the whole is surrounded by a wreath of thistles. Looking at this one day, I was struck by the thought that not only was the Regiment formed by Covenanters - the Regimental Cap Badge contains a sermon in itself.

The star is a five-pointed star. There are five continents on this planet and the Regiment has served in each of them - Africa, America, Asia, Australasia and Europe. Moreover, the star is a very important image in the Bible - for instance, a star shone over the Bethlehem stable where the infant Jesus was born, and in the Book of Revelation we learn that 'To him that overcometh I will give the Morning Star.'

The horn and lovers' knot are the symbols of light infantry regiments - the HLI had the same emblems in their badge, although they never went at Cameronian pace. But the horn is a hunting horn, used to call the huntsmen together, and it is a reminder that God is calling His people to serve Him and we should answer His call. The lovers' knot cannot be untied and symbolises for me the fact that God's love is always there for us - nothing can separate the Christian from the love of God.

The thistles indicate that The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) is a Scottish Regiment. There are ten thistles, one for each letter in the word 'Cameronian'. The thistle became the emblem of Scotland after the Scots won a night battle with the Danes. The Danes mounted an attack on the Scots under cover of darkness and in an attempt to make less noise a Danish soldier removed his footwear. However, the element of surprise was lost when he trod on a thistle. His resultant howl of pain alerted the Scots, who beat off the enemy. To me, the thistles on the Cameronian cap badge are a reminder that God's protection is always there for us. He will always sustain us and he will never let us be tried beyond what we can endure.

Richard Fowler

The Forgotten Battles Of Normandy - August 1944

When we went to France on holiday last August we had little inclination that our holiday was going to include a trip to Bayeux and start researching my Father's war time experiences in Normandy. We had left a day earlier from Montpellier due to the forecast of bad storms - we did not want to pack up wet camping equipment, so we headed home, albeit very sad after a really good holiday. For many years I had wanted to see Bayeux and the tapestry. Dad had always told me about the circular Cathedral and how beautiful the tapestry was. Little did I know that this 'slight diversion' via Bayeux on our route home was going to put a mere 400 miles on our journey home!

Bayeux is simply beautiful- peaceful, picturesque, tranquil and simply stunning.



We went into the Cathedral on a sunlit early Sunday morning - at 8.am. It was a unique feeling when we entered this magnificent building . We went through the door on the side, the door which Dad would have gone through according to my research. It was difficult to envisage what it would have been like in war time, but I understand that it would have been bare, with a basic stone altar and a few candles.



Our next visit was to the famous Bayeux tapestry - simply wonderful with so much intricate detail. We were virtually the only visitors in it at 9.am. We ambled - Dad had seen this and it was better than we had ever expected - I had never expected to see Haley's comet on it or for that matter for it to be so large and well preserved.

As we had a small amount of time to spare before we headed back to Calais, Alex our youngest Son asked if we could visit the D Day Museum - I must admit that I was not over keen on the idea at looking around memorabilia and uniforms, but reluctantly agreed. How wrong I was in my initial judgment - for whilst our Sons were looking at uniforms I spotted the wartime maps - Knowing that Dad was injured on 6 August 1944 at a place near Bayeux beginning, he claimed with V - it could only have been Vire. Mustering my best French I asked the Curator how long it would take to drive to Vire - I was told about 40 minutes and that it was on minor roads - knowing the way the French drive I decided that doubling it would be a more realistic time - a trip of 3 hours was out of the question with a ferry to catch, but on our way home we decided that we would research Dad's wartime experiences and return.

Without the internet and many wonderful people along the way we would have never achieved this. My knowledge was sketchy to say the least based on childhood memories of Dad's accounts. I knew that he had served with the Devonshire Regiment, was a signaller, had done training in Ireland, on the South Coast of England, and Burnham on Crouch. He had been drafted to France through fate as he had been on an intensive signallers course at Catterick - The War Office had over estimated a draft of men - all those who could return to their Units and courses did, those who could not were drafted accordingly. In Dad's case this meant France.

A wonderful Lt. Col from The Gordon's replied to my email for help, and sent me copies of the Regimental histories. Dad had always said that he had fought alongside the Gordon Highlanders. He gave me some helpful advice on how to pursue my research further. At this time I was still under the misapprehension that Dad was injured whilst serving with the Devonshire Regiment - I was wrong again! It was going to be difficult, although not impossible to get his records from Glasgow without a

service number.

Knowing that Dad had been a member of BLESMA, [British Limbless ExServicemen's Association], I contacted them, who gave me the vitally important service number, date of enlistment and discharge together with details of how Dad came to have his leg amputated. I was surprised to find out that Dad had been a rifleman in the Cameronians - although on reflection, one of his favourite sayings was 'Go and tell that to the Cameronians'.

For many years I had suspected that Dad had decided to have his leg amputated above the knee due to chronic osteomyelitis - a chronic infection of the bone. He had said that he had had to have 33 operations, with 2 major operations during the first week and was not expected to live. He decided that it was best to have his leg amputated, as he would have had a permanently stiff leg, which he felt would be more disabling than an artificial leg, - a decision which he never regretted. This was done on 10 March 1947, 2 days prior to his thirtieth birthday.

Streptomycin, a very powerful antibiotic which could have caused deafness and renal failure had been offered, as this might have helped with the osteomyelitis, but Dad declined this. Dad underwent bone grafting and had been in plaster from his waist down for 6 months, having both legs grown together for skin grafting at East Grinstead Hospital under Professor Beard, whom he later saw again and kept in regular contact.

During this time he learnt embroidery and became very accomplished at this, as well as making stuffed toys during this period. In fact Dad taught me how to do embroidery. Guinness was put on Dad's prescription, but as he strictly abstained from drinking alcohol, he declined this. This made him somewhat popular with the other patients as they gladly drank his prescription!

Today we treat osteomyelitis with antibiotics, bone grafting and Ilizarov frames, and unfortunately, we still have to amputate limbs due to this condition. Dad was always willing to allay peoples fears of having amputations, and yes, we could have done with his expertise and counselling today.

Now that we had this additional information we requested his papers from Glasgow which confirmed the information, most of which we knew. Our next step was the Public Records Office at Kew - where

their knowledgeable and helpful staff pointed us in the right directions. We looked at the Regimental Diaries - and maps but were slightly unsure where the battle took place - further investigation was needed. To my surprise I saw Dad's name in one of the training exercises in May 1944 as Lance Corporal Archer signaller. Dad was very proud that he could send Morse at the maximum words per minute required and of the fact that he was an assistant radio operator.

In the meantime a lady had seen my plea for help for information on the Devon Regiment and gave me some useful background information about the Devon Regiment and kindly offered to take a photo of Dad to the Regimental Reunion.

A gentleman from Edinburgh had seen a request for help via the web on the BBC People's War page and offered to do some research for me in the libraries in Edinburgh - up until now I thought the area Dad had been injured near Estray, but I was slightly in the wrong place. Copies of the Cameronian Regimental histories and other supporting information were sent to me, which gave the exact location.

We were having difficulty in correlating the army battle maps with present day maps. However, through a French internet site, a French historian sent us maps of the local area produced in 1944, which enabled us to define the area on present day maps.

A telephone call from a Major (the Editor) in the Cameronians one afternoon confirmed that Bois des Monts [literally translated meaning High Woods], at Point Saffery as shown on the Regimental Diary maps was indeed the battle site.

Dad landed somewhere in Normandy on 29 July 1944 after a very rough crossing in a flat bottomed boat. On board the troops were gambling the little French currency they had been given. Dad went through Bayeux and Caen, but exact information is somewhat non-existent, except that is for an entry in Dad's paybook showing a posting to the 9th Cameronians on the 3rd August 1944. From the Cameronians history I know that on the 5th August the regiment moved to Au Cornu in preparation for a battle the following day. I am going to try and research this further, although I have my doubts that there is much more information. Dad told me that the troops were so hungry that they raided the farms for cheese which stank and apples. Dad never did like French cheese

after the War. Tea was an important commodity and was dried and re-used on several occasions. - Something which I tend to do, in so much as I will use my herbal tea bags twice!

On 5th August 1944 at Au Cornu the Cameronians were joined by the 2nd Gordon Highlanders and 2nd Glasgow Highlanders, the night being spent at Au Cornu, which is opposite to Chapple Le Cornu. Today, Chapple Le Cornu is farmland, with Au Cornu being partially wooded with the odd farm.

On 6 August a pre-Battle service was conducted I understand by either Padre Sam Cook [Cameronians] or Padre Alexander Dunlop [Gordon's]. One of the things that I always remember Dad saying was that the Padre spoke of forgiveness and 'love thy neighbour', but had a shovel and gun slung over his shoulder. According to my research Padre Cook had previously been a Curate at Porlingland and Surlington, was subsequently wounded, received the Military Cross, and became Rector of Pleasley, Derby. He died in the late 1950's. Rev Dunlop received an Emergency Commission as a Padre, and after the war served with the Territorial Army, where he was awarded the Territorial Decoration. He had previously been mentioned in despatches.

At about 9.30a.m., the men ran over the hill of Bois des Monts, a distance of some one and a half miles from Au Cornu. The Waffen SS were laying wait for them on high ground opposite. Bois des Monts; there is a meadow which is surrounded by trees and high woodland above. This runs to a valley at Pont Saffrey, opposite is a steep wooded hill described as the Grouney feature. At the crest of this feature the Germans waited. Around Pont Saffrey many men were killed and injured in a short time around midday on the 6th of August. They stood no chance of getting out unscathed as Mortars would have rained down on them striking and exploding in the trees above, and heavy machine gun fire from the sides. Dad said there was only one shovel between 3 men, and he very quickly dug a fox hole.

When Dad was injured he had a tobacco tin in his breast pocket covering his heart containing a pair of scissors, which in the force of the explosion bent in half. A Mortar bomb, referred to by Dad as a Moaning Minnie had landed in his fox hole and severely injured Dad's left lower leg. Dad also had shrapnel embedded all over his

face, A comrade either side of him and within touching distance had both disappeared having been blown up, another comrade survived but later died of his injuries. At 3.p.m. on what was a blazing hot day either Padre Cook or Dunlop offered Dad a cup of sweet tea, which he promptly refused and asked for one without sugar! By then Dad had been stacked on an ambulance for just on 2 hours.



Today there are cows in the meadow across from Pont Saffrey, a small bridge over a stream which is little more than a ditch. The objective had been to capture the Grouney feature, which is a high hill on which the Germans were waiting and then proceed to Estry. On one side of Bois des Monts there is farmland and the only way to access it is via a small track.. There is no memorial despite this Battle being one of the bloodiest in Normandy. The Regiments retreated and re-grouped at Au Cornu late in the afternoon on 6 August, where they remained for 5 days; and then went on to fight for the Falaise Road, [literally translated Cliff Road which was one of the many Battle Honours shown on the Cameronians Colours. The Germans left Grouney of their own accord some days later.

We laid a British Legion poppy posy at the war memorial of St. John le Blanc, which is a small village consisting of a church, Marie, general store and a few stone houses. Dad would have been able to have seen the distinctive spire of the church of St Jean le Blanc from Bois des Monts and surrounding area.

A short distance away is the small village of Estry, which consists of a church, Marie, boulangerie, garage, one general store and a few stone houses. Also on 6 August 1944 between 9a.m.-11a.m. many men of the 2nd Gordon Highlanders along with the

supporting tanks of the Guards and other units lost 11 tanks within sight of the Estry church, with many men killed or injured by Mortars, machine guns and a German tank which was dug in by the church. The tank by the church, being eventually blown up by our shell-fire. Today, within the churchyard, there is a pit where dead flowers are put this could well have been the site of the German tank. Even today, this track about 300 yards long still exists and has blue bells, primroses and cowslips growing. There is a new farmhouse opposite the church with childrens play equipment in the garden. The wood to the side of the



village which had Mortars and heavy machine guns has now gone being replaced by several new houses. It hardly seems possible a battle happened here.

Dad never spoke about what really happened at the Battlesite, telling us the briefest of details, nor of his journey to Bois des Monts. He was always proud of the fact that he served with the Scottish Regiments, and that the Germans were extremely frightened of the Scottish Regiments.

Despite the fact that a close friend had offered to accompany him to return to the Battlesite and the places he had been in France, he never wanted to return. Dad suffered severely from what we would call today post-traumatic shock, which was unheard of during the immediate post war years. Dad was a deeply religious man and regular church goer, and was always in church for 6th August and on Remembrance Sunday.

I feel very privileged to have had the opportunity to visit the Battlesite and take the opportunity of thanking all those who have helped me with my research. I still have further research to do regarding where the Casualty Clearing Station and Field

Hospital was and of Dad's pre-battle whereabouts. It is my intention to return to the Battlesite again and maybe to walk up the hill at Bois des Monts, which at present I am unsure whether is private ground, and is guarded by extremely large dogs.

I shall never forget Bois des Monts, Estray, Montchamp, Monthchauvel and all the other little hamlets and villages that I have seen, nor of the utter sacrifice so many men made. I have never experienced the utter horrors of the last war, of how many men died in such a short time and space. If anyone does have any further information, however, small I should be grateful if you would be kind enough to contact me please. It hardly seemed possible to have happened in such a quite and tranquil place. In the meantime I thank you for reading this article, and the many people that assisted me and provided guidance and information along the way.

Marian Damen April 2004.

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May 1945 6th Cameronians VE Day Before and After Celebration or Shock?

Let me make it clear at the outset; this largely is a personal account. It is seen through the immature but impressionable eyes of a subaltern of nineteen years and eight months, having been commissioned in September 1944, immediately after my nineteenth birthday. In early 1945, thanks to the machinations of Hitler and Nazi Germany, instead of being in what might have been my freshman's year at university, I found myself in command of No 11 Platoon of B Company 6th Battalion The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) in Holland, The Company Commander was Major Stanley Storm M.C., with Captain M.T. MacNeil as his deputy, both of whom watchfully took me under their wing, doing their utmost to compensate for the many shortcomings of my inexperienced youth. In retrospect, and with sixty years to reflect, my impressions remain fresh of the tumultuous days that preceded and followed 8th May 1945. My opinions might well have mellowed in the ensuing years, but the factual events of that time, and my reactions to them, still stay indelibly imprinted on my mind. I believe they were

similar to that of most of my fellow Cameronians. I am aided by the recent discovery of many letters written by me to my parents in 1945 during my service with the Regiment.

As April drew to a close, so did the intensity of fighting in parts of North West Germany. While the drive to reach the Baltic to forestall the advance of the Soviets along the Baltic Coastline continued apace, 6th Cameronians as part of 52nd (Lowland) Division, had been deployed in the approach to, the assault on, and the ultimate capture of Bremen - a comparatively bloodless final attack against a defeated enemy that offered stubborn resistance only in pockets. On the night of 26th April, the Battalion captured Hemmelingen on the outskirts of the city. After a further incursion into the city centre, Bremen fell the following day, and the Battalion was withdrawn to rest, once again in that suburb.

It was a pleasant area, and for the first time for many months the Battalion settled into comfortable houses that clearly belonged to some of the more affluent citizens. Rest was needed, not so much to recover from heavy casualties - throughout the whole assault on Bremen itself, they had been mercifully light - but from exhaustion, the result of lack of sleep and constant forward movement both by day and night into attacks that nevertheless presented considerable risks had they run into trouble. It seemed unlikely that at that stage of the campaign the Division would be called on to fight again. Rumours circulated about preparations for a Victory Parade through the centre of Bremen, and a general clean up of ourselves and of our dishevelled uniforms and equipment had begun.

For the 6th, it was not to be. Suddenly on 1st May, Major Storm called a Company 'O' Group. At immediate notice, the Battalion was placed under orders to be detached from the Division, and to proceed North to a destination that was vaguely referred to as a Prison Camp - our mission unclear, at least to us lower mortals. It could be said that there was a certain amount of relief in some quarters that we were to be spared the ordeal of the Victory Parade. Marching at Rifle Brigade pace preceded by heavy infantry battalions proceeding at their more deliberate pace, with which the bands were keeping time, was never easy - especially when some two hundred reinforcements

had joined from various non- Rifle Regiments after March's Alpon battle.

With mixed feelings the Battalion embussed once more. - regretful at being summarily ousted from its 'cushiest'billets for many months, but thankful for the benefit of missing drill and rehearsals for the Parade. It was to be an eventful journey through recently captured countryside and villages where at times, to our astonishment, we were received almost as liberators. The German fear of the approaching Russian hoards, retribution bent, heralded a fate far worse than defeat and occupation by British and U.S Forces. That this was fully justified, we were soon to learn. After a short halt at a German Prison camp for British Troops (I think this was Fallingbostel?) where the inmates patiently awaited the arrival of administrative troops to process them for repatriation, the Battalion was debussed a little short of our destination - Sandbostel, a name that haunts me to this day.

The History of 6th (Lanarkshire) Battalion The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) in World War II sets the scene admirably ... *'information was received that a Concentration and Prisoner of War Camp had been uncovered at a place called Sandbostel, mid-way between Bremen and Bremerhaven, and the Battalion was ordered North immediately to deal with it. At first it was not fully realised what the nature of the duties would be, but when after a day-long drive up the cratered autobahn, they eventually arrived, it became painfully obvious. By now the world is familiar with the details of Belsen and Buchenwald, but at this time all that was known of the Concentration Camp was gleaned from "sensation" stories which seemed too horrible to be true. In any case, no one could have been prepared for the sight, which greeted 6th Cameronians when they debussed. All around was a flat desolate plain, bounded only by downcast skies, and in the centre, a vast cage, wherein seemed to be confined all the bestialities that even the most fertile imagination could conjure up, ...'*

As we neared the location, we were joined by a distressed Jock from B Company, who had preceded the Battalion in a hastily assembled advance party. His account of what had been found almost defied belief. At this stage in the war, all of us had witnessed and taken part in events that perforce included extreme violence and carnage. Nevertheless the halting and garbled warning of what we were to find seemed quite incredible. His report of

chaos, emaciated camp inmates, and of cannibalism forced on the survivors through starvation, brought to an abrupt halt any illusions that we might have held about a pleasant few day's detachment from the Division. In addition, an increasingly all pervading and rancorous odour began to overwhelm what up to then had been a fresh rural atmosphere,

No precise orders yet had been given about our duties, and I am sure that it was only on arrival these began to be apparent. The German camp guards had fled, the only German civilians to be seen were several dead bodies close to some of the looted farm houses and cottages in the immediate vicinity - all males, and all with throats slit from ear to ear. There did not appear to be other British units in the area, and we soon learned that the front had moved on some miles to the North. In the Camp, typhus was rife, food supplies were non-existent, and indeed sadly, the horrific description of conditions given by the highly emotional Jock of the advance party proved, if anything, to be understated. An examination of the Camp revealed that it had served a dual purpose: about one third comprised political prisoners of various nationalities held in an enclave, while the remainder contained Russian prisoners (I use the term loosely as in addition, I seem to recollect there were other nationalities of Eastern European origin). It was essential that the situation both outside and inside the Camp had to be brought under control at once - failure could result in the spread of disease, even wholesale slaughter of the civilian population by the unguarded prisoners. Urgent action by the military to clear the camp was a first priority.

The Battalion History once more... *'Everywhere there was filth and stench and disease and hordes of dehumanised creatures, with sunken features cloaking their emaciated bodies in the dirty rags of their prison uniform...'* Word of the appalling conditions had filtered back to higher authority, and unannounced, the Commander of 30 Corps, the redoubtable Lieut. Gen. Brian Horrocks arrived. It provided the only glimmer of humour that could be salvaged from this grim scenario. No one was sure that all resistance in the area had been quelled, and that isolated pockets might not still remain. Several roadblocks accompanied by slit trench defences were established for this reason, as well as for health purposes, to control entry by non-

essential military personnel. The General arrived with his usual panache, shot past the first checkpoint in his battlegon, screeched to a halt, ordered his driver to reverse, and proceeded to administer an almighty 'bollocking' to three startled entrenched Jocks for failing to salute as he sped past! Obviously he had not heard about the reluctance of Cameronians to acknowledge officers not sporting the Cameronian cap badge.¹ He recalls his entry to the Camp in his memoirs² ...*'We uncovered Sandbostel one of those horror camps which are now common knowledge, but which came to us as a great shock. When General Adair and I entered we came across the most ghastly picture I had ever seen. The floor of the first hut we visited was covered with emaciated figures, clad in the most horrible striped pyjamas. Many were too weak to walk, but on seeing us they heaved themselves up and gave a pathetic cheer. Most of them had some form of chronic dysentery and the stench was so bad that I disgraced myself by being sick in the corner. I was so angry that I ordered the Burgomaster of every one of the surrounding towns and villages to supply a quota of German women to clean up the camp and look after these unfortunate prisoners who were dying daily at an alarming rate. When the women arrived we expected some indication of horror or remorse when they saw what their fellow countrymen had been doing. Not a bit of it - I never saw a tear or heard one expression of pity from any of them. I also brought one of our own hospitals into the camp...'*

A letter postmarked 6th May 1945 sent by me to my parents, supports the General's concern and anger: ...*'Since capturing Bremen we have not been doing any fighting, but have been given a task to which I prefer fighting every time. This job is to guard one of these concentration camps on the Belsen style. Although the conditions were not as bad as Belsen they were bad enough, and previous to the British capturing the camp, there had been two hundred people dying per day. These pictures which you have seen of emaciated bodies piled on top of each other are entirely true... The German civilian population in the area has been rounded up and they are being made to do all the cleaning and burying the dead. I must say that they do it with as little concern as if they were sweeping their own houses and burying a few old tin cans...'*

Access to the Camp was forbidden except to authorised personnel, especially after the arrival of the Medical Units. Before entry, without exception, all were obliged to suffer

the indignity of the attentions of a medical orderly who shot liberal doses of DDT antilouse powder between one's clothing and body at the vulnerable spots. The Cameronians principally were assigned to gathering together the German work force, ensuring that the prisoners remained behind the wire until evacuated, and assisting in facilitating the evacuation of the inmates. It was a harrowing task. Even after the camp clearance had begun - there were reputedly over thirty thousand prisoners in all - providing immediate help was next to impossible. Sanitation was non-existent, the only available latrines consisted of deep pits to which those who were able managed to stumble or crawl. It was heartrending to see skeletons of skin and bone attempting to retain self respect by making a superhuman effort to reach them, despite the fact that the squalor inside the huts where excreta festooned from the tiered wooden slats that passed for beds to the floor below made little difference to whether nor not they had made the effort. Several were seen to fall into the pits, too weak to support themselves. There was not one man who was not sickened by the sight. The British soldier has a record second to none for compassion, but at that time the attitude of us all towards our enemy underwent a drastic reassessment. Given that civil order obviously had broken down in the wake of defeat, and that the food supply chain at that time was completely disrupted, no excuse could be found for the despicable conditions that clearly had obtained for some considerable period prior to the arrival of our troops. The complete intransigence of the surrounding population, some of whom denied knowledge of the Camp's existence - despite that its presence was obvious to all some distance away when the wind was blowing from its direction - was the final straw that bred a new hardened attitude towards, and a lack of respect for our enemy that we now regarded less of a Nazi dominated people, but more clearly as a national entity. Belsen had not been discovered until shortly before our arrival at Sandbostel. We only began to learn of its horrors in the ensuing days. The Official War Department photographers were fully occupied at that location. It was only after Sandbostel had been partially cleared of the dead and some of the chronically ill and terminal cases that photographic records were made.



Sandbostel 1945 (Imperial War Museum)



It was impossible to ensure the security of a camp of this size - I estimate that each side of the square compound measured at least five hundred yards. At night, escapes were inevitable unless security of the kind exercised by the Nazis was enforced. Some attempt at securing the surrounding area was necessary once control of the immediate environments of the camp had been regained. There was still the possibility that pockets of enemy resistance remained in the neighbourhood. I was detailed to lead a patrol to visit three of the small nearby villages. On the evening of the 5th May, I left Sandbostel with a section of eight Jocks. Trouble was not expected, but the usual patrol precautions were observed as if in action. Although no enemy troops were flushed out - clearly they had long surrendered or fled what we discovered was even more surprising. I quote from a letter to my parents in which I tempered my descriptions so as not to make the picture too upsetting: *'...There is a very large percentage of Russians who are creating havoc in the surrounding countryside. They say that we are far too soft with the Germans, and they are quite right. They go into a village and simply turn everything upside down and take what they want. The civil population are dead scared of the 'Ruskies' and are constantly begging for protection from them. If they can't protect themselves that's just too bad because we haven't troops to spare to do the job, and besides we haven't the sympathy. After the frightful conditions which the Russians have had to put up with in that camp, they are entitled to have a 'bit of their own back' on the people who must have known about and at the very least acquiesced in their treatment. The plight of the political prisoners was the worst. Some of them hadn't the strength to get to the latrines, while others just managed to crawl out of the huts to die. It is a most revolting job that we have and I shall be very glad to be relieved of it. The way in which I found out about the cessation of hostilities was almost on the storybook side. This camp was pretty close to the line, and nobody had been forward of our actual positions. Consequently last night I was sent out on a patrol at about five o'clock. We went forward to our objective and finding no enemy there I decided to push forward to the next village, which was about four miles from where we had started the patrol. This we did, and again we could find no enemy...'*

As we entered each village, we encountered a deadly eerie silence - the house doors were open, some of the

contents were strewn outside and in the streets. Nothing stirred; to even the most inexperienced infantryman, this usually meant imminent trouble. A cautious and stressful search of the village brought no reaction. Finally, we tried the village church which was locked and barred. I heard the sound of voices from inside, and after a warning that we would assault the building if the doors were not opened, a thoroughly terrified civilian gingerly appeared. I do not recall catching sight of the village priest, but in the hiatus of our welcome, he could well have been present. Strangely, I cannot recall seeing many of the local men. Official photographs show numbers to be present among the local population that we rounded up to clear the Camp. It could well be that most were members of the Volksturm (the German equivalent of our Home Guard), and had been taken prisoner when the advancing troops had captured the village. I still make no apology that we showed no sympathy, and indeed, no offer of immediate help - our feelings had been numbed by the horror of what we had left only a matter of minutes before. I maintain it was understandable in the circumstances. It seemed the height of cynicism to me that a religious institution should be sought as the source of protection for a nation that as an entity had benefited from barbarity, and yet could still profess to hold such moral scruples.

'... The civilians fell on our necks and wept for joy, because they thought that we had come to protect them from the Russians. I took a quick look into a few of the houses to find the reason for this outburst. Every house had been ransacked Clothing furniture, food, coal and any household articles were all scattered over every room of the house. The whole village was in an indescribable shambles. It took us quite a time to get away and back to our own lines...'

I had not included in my letter the numerous allegations of murder that on the evidence of our own eyes were fully substantiated, and of rape. My letter concluded... .. *'On the way back a very black cloud passed directly above us and began to pour down rain. The time was about half past eight and although dusk should not have been until much later, the thunderstorm produced a similar effect. Suddenly from every side, very lights began to shoot up in great clusters. Everybody seemed to be 'letting loose' and for an hour or so this impromptu firework display continued in a spate of red, green, blue and white lights.*

When I got back to the Company soaked to the skin from the thunderstorm, but sensing that something unusual was in the air, I found all the Officers and N.C.O.'s having a drink together. There was no need to enquire what had happened. I cursed - fancy going out looking for the 'Moffe'³ and 'the big angry man' when he had agreed to stop fighting! However it was worth it, even if only to see that firework display!...

The Battalion's tour of duty finished soon after as the Camp was cleared of the worst cases and the dead buried. We returned to the Division to reflect on an experience that I am certain affected the outlook of all ranks for many years to come, and which on one hand we would rather have missed in the hope that no such place had ever existed. On the other, it silenced the doubters about the justification for the conflict - the necessity had been demonstrated to us in manner that brooked no denial.

General Horrocks was in no doubt. At the ceremony on 5th May, where he received the surrender of the enemy forces in Northern Germany, he concluded his address to the defeated German Generals... *'These Orders must be obeyed scrupulously. I warn you that we will show no mercy if they are not. Having seen one of your horror camps, my whole attitude towards Germany has changed...The world will never forgive Germany for those camps.'*⁴

Perhaps the last word should rest with the Divisional Historian? I have no doubt whatsoever that he spoke for every member Battalion when he concluded his brief account of Sanbostel with the following words *'...No one who did not see and smell and feel the horror of this embodied nightmare could ever believe it. And no one who did see it and smell it and feel it could ever forget it. It was perhaps appropriate that it should be here, with the evils of the system against which we had been fighting so unforgettably displayed before our eyes, that the crusade should end...'*

The 6th occupied a former Wehrmacht Barracks at Delmenhorst south of Bremen for a brief return to a first post-hostilities taste of normal Regimental duty. Regimental Messes were established for the first time in Germany, with formal dinners (less Mess Kit) and full Battalion parades were held on the spacious barrack square. For some, the return to normal Regimental formality was not particularly well received - the expression 'demob happy' became commonplace among some of the long

serving 'civilian'soldiers. After the defeat of Germany they could see no point in prolonging their time in the Forces. The prospect of further service in the Far East was hardly an entrancing prospect, but remained a distinct possibility in view of the Division's previous training in mountain, air-portable and combined operations warfare. Rumours abounded; these varied from a posting to Canada or the United States for more mountain and air portable training in preparation for the invasion of Japan, to the more credible and acceptable assignment to fly into Norway in the Division's former air portable role to deal with the disposal of German forces still in that country. It came as a disappointment when 6th Airborne Division was handed the Norway mission.

However the 6th Battalion's days with the dismantling of the Nazi Regime were not over - a further novel and memorable experience awaited it at Magdeburg, opposite the Red Army that faced the Western Allies across the River Elbe.

In early June, the 52nd Division was allotted a new task. For the Battalion, it proved to be the antithesis of its duties at Sandbostel. There, the primary objective had been to contain the revengeful excesses of prisoners both military and political, against the German population, by holding them in a secure camp. Now, the Battalion was ordered to take part in the repatriation of foreign labour that had been shipped either voluntarily or compulsorily to Germany as slave labour.

Again my account of this episode must be largely based on personal recollection. Most will recall that at the cessation of hostilities, the Allied Armies of the West had met with the Allied armies of the East roughly at a point that made the river Elbe a convenient dividing line. The city of Magdeburg lay astride that river. That city was to be the location of the 6th's next posting. It had been captured by the U.S. Army, from which the Division was to take over. While at a higher level, both sides seemed to regard each other with growing suspicion, there still existed an atmosphere of goodwill and camaraderie between the men on the ground from both the East and West.

Much of the imported slave labour had been concentrated near factory sites, and accommodated in primitive camps. Others had been used as agricultural workers, who were equally bitter about their lot. Several

of these camps were to be used as concentration points from which the liberated workers would be processed for repatriation. The Division was to take over the area from a U.S. Infantry Division with responsibility for arranging the repatriation of all non - German nationals to their countries of origin.

I was ordered to take control of one these camps and to prepare it for the reception of the first batch of repatriates. The entire camp consisted of wooden huts of the barrack room type. It had been vacated only recently, and was then under the control of the Americans. Apart from a fleeting contact with the American forces in the Rhineland battles, we knew little of how they operated at regimental level and what to expect. At Magdeburg station I was met by an American jeep driver who was to take me and a small advance party to prepare for the hand over to us of responsibility for the camp. Four of us, plus equipment, piled into the vehicle '*...The town of Magdeburg had taken a pasting of even worse proportions than Bremen. The centre of the town is burnt to a cinder, and only the main streets are useable for traffic. The side streets are only about two yards wide and great walls of rubble are on either side of the narrow pathways. They reckon that 47,000 people were killed in one raid...*'

After a knuckle-biting drive through the city, we arrived at the camp and were driven to a wooden hut that served as the U.S. Company's HQ. There was little sign of activity. An American soldier lounged against the doorpost at the entrance. Our driver leapt out of the jeep and walked straight over to what I assumed was a very casual sentry. He whipped off the sentry's cap, ruffled his hair over his face, admired his handiwork and announced "Gee Cap'n you sure need a haircut!" In fact, this was the officer whom I was to relieve. He did not turn a hair (an expression I cannot resist in this context); but calmly rearranged his coiffure, gave no remonstrance to the driver, and greeted me as if nothing had happened. I looked at the Jocks and they looked at me in astonishment. Our exchanged glances were sufficient understanding that none of us envisaged a Cameronian repetition of the performance! The take over proceeded in the same informal way and the Americans departed after we shared a meal attended by all ranks. The camp was in a disgusting state. That it was no reflection on the Americans soon became clear.

Each morning, I was allocated a group of former German Army personnel - now themselves prisoners of war - who arrived under escort from their own camp, the guards being provided by men of the 6th. They were handed over to me in a formal parade. This was made into an occasion in its own right, as over three hundred Germans under the command of a Hauptman and an Unter Lieutenant were called to attention and formally reported to me for duty by the Hauptman. I then called my own men to attention, allocated each Jock to escort a specified group to their respective duties, and then dismissed the parade. Both sides were thoroughly on their mettle, the drill of a high standard, the Jocks anxious not be outdone. The task of the Germans was to clear the camp of all the detritus that had been left behind by the former occupants. Fresh from the horrors of Sandbostel, there was a general desire to provide as good conditions as were possible for the incoming freed detainees, if only as some form of inadequate recognition of their ordeal; also, as a mark of our understanding of it. The Jocks saw to it that there was no slacking. A sense of outrage born of their recent experience, ensured there was no question of extending any sympathy. The German troops were allowed a one-hour break for lunch which had to be provided from their own prison camp food. The German Officers were instructed that each Jock must be addressed as 'Sir', and that every occasion on which I appeared all must stand to attention. Many of the Germans still were truculent, and any display of dissatisfaction at being made to carry out the distasteful task of cleaning up some of the worst parts of the camp, such as the latrines which overflowed with excreta, were dealt with by insistence on completion of the task in a manner far more meticulously than really was necessary.

It took about three days of hard work to make the camp fit to receive the first batch of what then were designated 'Displaced Persons'. The majority were destined for the Eastern European countries within the Soviet sphere of influence. The matter had become political. A Russian Police Staff, over whom I had no control, was allocated to the camp. It, and a Communist Party Official dealt with all matters of discipline relating to the Displaced Persons, subject to my responsibility to ensure that no trouble broke out between them and any German troops or civilians in the camp. The Party

Official's duty, I suspect, was to vet the returning displacees - presumably to seek out collaborators or opponents to the Communist regime? He told me that he had been an official (presumably KGB?) at the Russian State Radio station in Moscow. What action the Police ever took against any internal offender was a matter for them. At times it was a delicate situation. *'...I have a Russian Police staff who are pretty good, although some of them have spent a considerable time in Internment Camps while a few have done spells in Concentration Camps. You cannot expect them to treat the German soldiers well after what they have been put through. We have to keep a careful watch on them all the time to stop 'them having a go at the prisoners.'*

The Russians are quite a good lot, but my interpreter says that people cannot do and say as they like. Stalin is certainly very popular with most of the people, but he ruthlessly suppresses any rival political beliefs...'

In effect, the camp was to be used purely for transit purposes. It held upwards of one thousand at any one time. After the initial cleansing of the camp, a very mixed batch of Displaced Persons arrived by rail, and was brought under escort to the camp. My staff and I then processed them. Those destined for countries in the Soviet control were dealt with by the Russians, while others were documented and forwarded to the West. All had been living in conditions that had reduced them to being accustomed to a primitive existence. Many of the Russians, mainly of peasant extraction, never had seen flush toilets - either in Russia or Germany. Within hours of their arrival, the toilets were blocked. Piles of excreta littered the camp that in the hot summer quickly became a health hazard if not promptly cleansed. So far as I can recall, each group stayed only a matter of two days. Each day German prisoners were brought in to clear up the mess. Both they and we knew that the unpleasant task would have to be repeated daily - an event that caused us considerable satisfaction. I suspect that the Russian Staff might well have encouraged the inmates to create as much chaos as possible, simply to give them the pleasure of seeing German troops perform similar unsavoury and unpleasant tasks to those they themselves had been forced to carry out during their subjugation to Germany. Each time a draft vacated the camp, the prisoners were made to return it to the same relatively spotless condition that obtained

prior to the arrival of the last draft. *'...There is a constant flow of people going in and out of the camp, and it is very difficult to keep track of them all. For the last three or four nights, I have been up until half past eleven and half past twelve, so you will see that we have plenty of work to do. There are only seven of us in the camp as staff, and two of us have to handle most of the administration between us...'* Being on detachment had its advantages *'...We live in a house of our own about a mile from the company and consequently we enjoy a good deal of freedom from spit and polish. The Yanks were in the house before us, and they had ripped all the furniture with knives and had made the customary mess of the place before they left. Consequently the people of the house were pleased to see us, since we keep the place in pretty good condition. The housefrau does all my washing and darning, which saves my batman a good deal of work...'*

For a subaltern of my age and relative inexperience, sharing accommodation with the men was difficult. The detachment, led by my newly appointed Platoon Sergeant was all older than I. There was little option other than to eat with them, as there was no room for use as a Mess. While in action, of course this had been the norm. Here the situation was entirely different. Living cheek by jowl in the same house, there was a fine line to be drawn between spending too much time in the men's company at meals and in the little leisure time available, and yet remaining apart. The only free time available perforce had to be spent largely on my own.

After dealing with several drafts, we soon established a routine; the Russian Staff became extremely friendly. *'...I have my own personal car (an Opel), a driver and as much petrol as I require. Of course the car cannot be used for anything but duty purposes. The work is much more easy now that we have got things going. In my camp there has been almost every European nationality. We have had French, Belgian, Dutch, Norwegian, Swedish, Finns, Estonian, Latvian, Hungarian, Rumanian, Austrian, Italian, Czechoslovakian, Bulgarian, Yugoslavian and Russian. Not bad eh? Fortunately the majority speak German, Polish or Russian, so that the interpreter can deal with most of them. The German population is very windy of the 'Rusky' and several people among the Europeans in the camp are considering 'getting off their mark' when and if the Russians come into the area. The food at the moment is almost too good to believe. Almost every night we have strawberries and cream or*

cherries. I am detached from the Company and am able to wangle one or two delicacies on the QT. The people give the stuff to us because they know that while we are living in the area the Russian Displaced Personnel will not come there to loot....

The Russian Police: '... we are getting to know them very well, but they are hard and callous to Germans while at the same time very friendly towards us. They treat the Germans in a much harder way than we do, although I hear that the Russian Army are slightly lax in this respect. The Chief of Russian Police is 'Ivan' who was in the Russian International Circus. His strength is amazing - he can pick up a man of thirteen stone with his teeth, as well as perform several very difficult strength exercises. '... German prisoners here are now being demobbed at a great rate back into civvy street, and are still wearing their uniform devoid of all badges etc., as a sort of utility suit. They certainly are very dishevelled and scruffy, but there seems to be precious little regret about starting the war. I'm pretty sure that they'll have another 'go' at the first opportunity. "... there is still a bit of arrogance in the German Army, and it will take a deal of watching...' I recall an occasion during an inspection of a German working party. I heard the tramp of what sounded like marching feet at the rear of one of the huts. I walked quietly to the end of the building and peered around the corner to find the two German officers goose-stepping to and fro under the cover of the building. I watched unobserved for a short time, and then moved into the open. Both stopped the moment they realised they had been caught, but neither seemed one whit abashed. They were made to recommence their marching display until both were so exhausted they could not lift one foot ahead of the other. Had the Russians seen this display, I do not think that they would have been as considerate. Knowing the mood of all at the time, with hindsight, I ought to have asked the Russian Police to join the audience and then have left the scene before its probable conclusion.

My interpreter was Estonian, and covertly deeply anti-Communist. She was very careful to 'toe the line', save when the Russians were out of earshot. Her hope was that she could accompany us for a posting in the Western part of the British occupied sector when the Battalion left. By this time, amid great apprehension amongst the German population, rumours began to circulate that the district was to form part of



Lt to Rt - Ivan (Chief of Police) and Camp Lager Fuehrer

the Russian Occupied Sector. Our presence became even more welcome. Soon these speculations became an established fact. Panic broke out amongst the inhabitants of Magdeburg. As we departed westwards in a Battalion convoy, we passed mile after mile of Germans trekking in the same direction. It was a replication of the march of the refugees who attempted to flee the oncoming Wermacht during the invasion of France and the Low Countries in 1940. Again, we had little sympathy. My personal regret related solely to the loss of my chauffeur-driven Opel limousine, which ill considerably suffered a puncture on the autobahn. Rather than be left behind the Battalion convoy, I was ordered to abandon it, and transfer to the less salubrious cab of a three-ton truck for the rest of the journey to Belgium - our next destination. After being the envy of the junior officers, my ego was severely deflated!



Back Row - Lieut CS Pettit, Sgt Anderson, CQMS Johnston, CSM Beattie
Front Row - L/Cpl Tanner, Cpl Main, Rfn Johnson, L/Cpl Nelson (*Motherwell and then current Scottish International)*

Our departure had been an emotionally charged occasion. The interpreter had not been successful in obtaining permission to accompany the Battalion Westwards, Ivan the strong man was in tears - even the Political Official was moved to drink a toast to Allied solidarity in the future. We were careful to avoid the potato gin/vodka that the Russian camp staff brewed on a regular basis. Literally, it was lethal. A single mouthful set one's tongue on fire and the palette in danger of permanent destruction. The Americans had warned us of the dire effect it had upon some of their ranks who had been hospitalised after an attempt to out-drink some of the Russians. Reportedly one of their number subsequently had died.

Later in the year when next I passed through Magdeburg, en route for Berlin, the city was deep in the Russian sector. Times had changed. To stop for any reason in Russian occupied territory that lay between the boundary of the British Sector and the British Enclave in Berlin, meant immediate arrest. Imprisonment followed, usually for about six weeks -- the normal period it took for diplomatic representation to secure one's release.

Glad as we were to be away, there was a great deal of apprehension for the future of the returning Eastern European nationals who had been processed through the camp, and then had been marshalled across Friendship Bridge into the hands of the Soviets. I had it on good authority that the voluntary labourers were sorted from the slave labourers on the Russian side of the bridge. One can only speculate on their fate.

Perhaps it is time to move on? Nazism as a force, hopefully is a spectre from the past. That may well be, and thankfully the European political climate has changed for the better -- a Regimental Journal is an inappropriate forum for philosophising. Nevertheless, what occurred in Nazi Germany remains an ominous warning to all, and if vigilance is not maintained, could well re-occur, albeit in a different context and in different environment anywhere in today's troubled world. Those of us who were brought face to face with its reality, can only be left to ponder on ones'fate had its doctrines prevailed.

Cliff Pettit

1. See my article on 'The Cameronian (Scottish Rifles), For The Avoidance of Doubt' - The Covenanter 1988 page 11 Editors Note: see also 'A Historical Coincidence - The Battle of Alpon' by Cliff Pettit - Covenanter 1997 pages 31 - 40.
2&4 Corps Commander - Sir Brian Horrocks with Versley Belfield & Maj Gen Essame - Sidgwick & Jackson 1997 by kind permission of Sidgwick & Jackson
3. This expression was picked up by the Cameronians during the Division's service in Holland. It is a variant of the Dutch term 'Mofin', derivative of Germans; the equivalent of 'Kraut' in English

Footnote: Full post war details of Sandbostel are to be found at www.dokumentationsstaeette-sandbostel.de

Battle of the Sloe Nederlands November 1944

'Having just returned from Holland where I took a party of 50 King's Own Scottish Borderers to the 60th Liberation Ceremonies on the Island of Walcheren I thought your readers might like to read about the part played by your 6th and 7th Battalions of the Cameronian (Scottish Rifles) during the Battle of the Sloe.

I have a letter written by Brigadier Ian Buchanan-Dunlop, who was Commanding Officer of the 6th Battalion during that time, recalling his memories of that period in your History, which he gave to my good Dutch friend 'Frans De Nooijer' MBE who very kindly allowed me to print this.

Battalion movements

2nd November S Herrenhoek.

3rd to 4th November Attack across the Sloe.

5th November Marched back across the Causeway.

7th November Moved to Arnemuiden.

13th November Moved to Flushing.

One Company Detached to Antwerp for Guard Duties.

20th November Moved to Goes South Beveland.

27th November Moved to S Hertogenbosch.

There are no photographs that we know of that were taken during the operation. There was no war correspondent with my Battalion. There were, of course, air photographs, taken for Intelligence, of the Sloe and environs.

Concerning your query about a Dutchman who joined in the fighting on our side in the neighbourhood of an orchard: we have not heard of one (those of us who survived). Sadly, my two Company Commanders, Major Petrie and Major McKellar, who covered that particular terrain in the action, and so might have been able to help us, are now both dead. But I should be not at all surprised if the story were true. You come of a brave people; we found that to be so, throughout the campaign. The Dutch Underground Organisation was of invaluable help to us. I have always deeply regretted having to shell villages with our artillery fire to dislodge the enemy before we attacked and liberated them, but we were invariably given a tremendous welcome by your people.

You ask me for any further information

concerning the battle in the east of Walcheren Island. Perhaps if I were to give you a brief account of the action in which my Battalion took part, together with my own remembered impressions (now becoming, naturally, somewhat dim, as I am getting on for 80 years of age) it might possibly be of help to you.

At the time of the action our 52nd Division had gained a foothold at Flushing and a smaller one at Westkapelle, but the Germans were putting up a stubborn resistance to a thrust across the Causeway leading from Beveland to Walcheren, and the higher command decided that the way to Walcheren from the east must be prised open by some other route, an essential step if the deadlock on the Causeway was to be broken. My Battalion was chosen for this role. The first news of the part we were to play was made known by me to my Company Commanders at a conference held at 12.30 hours on 2nd November. The plan was simple yet bold in conception. We were to strike a blow at the enemy's right flank by a river crossing of the Sloe, made in assault boats and carried out under cover of darkness, when the tides were favourable. The place chosen for the assault must have been regarded by the enemy as a most unlikely approach, since in addition to crossing the Sloe it entailed negotiation of treacherous mudflats, extending some three quarters of a mile, followed by a frontal attack upon the enemy's sea-dyke positions.

Company Commanders immediately set to work and made a reconnaissance of the ground, so far as they were able, from the east side of the Sloe. The Battalion plan was roughly as follows: A Company and B Company were to cross first and secure the objective, the sea-dyke known in the plan as Derby, with A Company on the right and B Company on the left. Advanced Battalion Headquarters and the Regimental aid post were to follow B Company: and C and D Company were then to pass through 'Derby right and Derby left' respectively and secure the next objective, known by the code-word 'Leger'. A fact that has stuck in my gullet ever since is that I was personally forbidden by the Divisional Commander (Major General Hakewill-Smith, an old friend formerly in my own Regiment) to cross with Advanced Headquarters, and bidden to control operations from a Main Headquarters on the east side of the Sloe until our first objectives were secured. I expostulated vehemently at this edict, since

in my view a commander's place is in the battle with his men; but I was twice overruled and had to accept my orders. Major Southward my second-in-command, was allowed to cross with Advanced Headquarters, so that there should be some overall control on the spot.

At last the plans were completed and the Battalion moved off by march route to the forming-up area near the chosen point of embarkation, south of the harbour which then lay just south of Nieudorf. Before the embarkation, a small party of Royal Engineers, led by Captain Turner R E, made a crossing and laid a tape indicating a mine-free path under cover of darkness, up to a point about 200 yards from the dyke.

A prearranged light signal was agreed, to indicate that the Royal Engineers task had been completed, but owing to the nature of the terrain their work was more intricate and difficult than had been expected, and in consequence our first Company could not embark until 03.30 hours, about an hour behind the planned timetable. I remember my reaction of some impatience and anxiety to the delay, because when the signal was not sent at the expected time we had of course no idea when it would be sent-or indeed if it would be sent at all-and the attack relied heavily for its chance of success on being made under cover of the hours of darkness. However, it was fortunate that we waited: the whole area was heavily mined, and if mines had been encountered in quantity before reaching the first objective the results might have been devastating.

The crossing itself was achieved in some ten minutes of vigorous paddling, and then came the arduous task, very gruelling, of negotiating the mud flats, which extended virtually up to the sea dyke. For the whole time my men were kneedeep, often waist deep, in tenuous, sucking mud, which made every step an effort, and some idea of the difficulties may be gained from the fact that it took a full hour for the Companies to cover the three-quarters of a mile. Moreover, everyone knew that at the end of this dreadful journey there was still the enemy to meet. But in spite of all this, such was the temper of my splendid 'Jocks' that when they reached the dyke they were still fully equal to the task of putting in a spirited attack and forcing the enemy's positions at the point of the bayonet.

On 'Derby Right' A Company's attack brought in 25 prisoners at a cost of 2

wounded. The objective was quickly secured and consolidated, and at about 07.00 hours C Company were able to pass through and move forward to 'Leger Right'. At 10.00 hours A Company moved forward to the right of C Company prior to making an advance on to the road-dyke junction at Gronenburg, known by the code-name of 'Oaks Right', but on forming up, enemy positions were observed in the area of Rapenburgh and also on the dyke to the east of the Company. As these constituted a menace, not only to the projected attack but also to the whole of our right flank, the Company immediately attacked, and as a result took a further 477 prisoners. Meanwhile B Company had embarked at 0400 hours as left-hand assault Company. They crossed the river and the mudflats and made immediately for the dyke at the farm known as 'Derby Left'. There were some casualties from Schu-mines embedded in the dyke, but the Company swept on into the farm buildings, and at 08.00 hours D Company passed through to take up position on 'Leger Left'. Almost immediately they met strong and determined opposition. 18 Platoon were pinned down on the dyke by shell-fire and small arms fire from the left flank, but 17 Platoon managed to push on and take up positions in empty German slit-trenches some 200 yards beyond the dyke. Shortly afterwards D Company Headquarters and their reserve Platoon came under heavy shell and mortar fire and sustained some casualties. By this time B Company was approaching in an attempt to push through D Company's positions, but about the area of 'Leger Left' both Companies were pinned down by a veritable hail of fire from Finnish mortars, high velocity guns, heavy machine guns and snipers operating from a position on the left flank. You may wonder what the Commanding Officer of the Battalion had been doing all this time! To answer that it is necessary to go back to the first crossings at 03.30 and 04.00 hours. As soon as the news came back to me of the unexpectedly dreadful conditions on the mud-flats between the river and the first sea-dyke objective, I realised that something must be done at once if we were not to get bogged down, with movement from rear to front and supplies of ammunition and subsequently food becoming impossible; also the movement back from the front of our casualties and German prisoners of war. Accordingly I got in touch with Brigade

Headquarters by wireless and asked them to get Division to send us forward with the greatest urgency at least two miles of Kapok Bridging material. This material was a simple affair of stout duckboards mounted on floats filled with Kapok (a buoyant material) normally used to bridge small streams for the passage of men on foot and manhandled weapons and supplies. It was the best solution I could think of at the time to the problem of the mud. It came to us in surprisingly short time and it worked, successfully. By this time A and B Company had gained their first positions on 'Derby' and Advanced Battalion Headquarters, following B Company, along with the Regimental aid post had set up in farm buildings at 'Derby Left'. I therefore decided to cross over and go forward myself to Advanced Headquarters, leaving Main Battalion Headquarters in charge of my Adjutant in touch with Brigade on the east bank in its original position. I took with me some extra signal personnel and our two battalion dog-handlers with their dogs, since it seemed that they might prove useful in detecting the Schu-mines, which were causing trouble ahead. I remember that the tide was swirling on the Sloe, and our rubber boats made erratic progress. One of the dog-handlers fell over board and his dog named Red an Alsatian sprang in after him and towed him back to safety. Later we gave the story to the newspapers, which resulted eventually in Red being awarded a dog's medal for bravery, which we all thought he had earned, as his handler could not swim. Having reached Advanced Headquarters, I took over from Major Southward. On reaching the sea-dyke I found that he, with his small Headquarters, was operating in the open on 'Derby Left', the only intact building having been given over to the Regimental Aid Post. By this time the German resistance had hardened in front of us, as described above, and the greatest credit is due to Major Southward and his personnel for their cool handling of an extremely delicate situation under the most intense fire. As soon as I had been given the situation I visited the Regimental Aid Post in its barn, where I found the Regimental Medical Officer and our Chaplain in charge of the Medical Section, which was performing wonderful work. Due to the difficulties of evacuation across the mudflats, despite the invaluable help of the Kapok Bridging, which were enormous from the very beginning, the Regimental

Aid Post was crowded with casualties, some with terrible wounds which they did not long survive, throughout the action. This problem of evacuation and supply stayed with us. The ferry and mud-flats were under fire from enemy guns the whole time, and since portage by manpower was unavoidable, there were many casualties here as well as on the front, including some among German prisoners awaiting transport to the east bank. At 12.00 hours some elements of B Company penetrated into some farm buildings to their front, but had to be withdrawn under a protective smoke screen, laid down by the Company's own 2 inch mortars. D Company, meanwhile, were suffering heavy casualties. The Company Commander, Major Sixsmith, was killed, the Company Sergeant Major was wounded together with most of the other senior NCOs and control became extremely difficult. At 13.00 hours D Company began an orderly withdrawal and attempted to organise on the eastern side of the first objective. As you can imagine, Major Sixsmith was a sad loss. He was killed while out in front of his Company position helping personally to carry his wounded men into safety. He had done the same thing at the end of several attacks made by the Battalion during our advance through Beveland. He was an extremely gallant Officer and, being a regular soldier, one of my best Company Commanders. I was pleased and interested to hear from you on his burial arrangements, and I have no doubt that his grave at Bergen op Zoom has been visited by his elder brother, a distinguished officer who is amongst my friends, and by his widow, with whom my wife and I have always kept in touch since the war, and his son, now of course in middle age and doing well

B Company had also found its position untenable, especially in view of the fact that their wireless communications had broken down completely. This being so it was necessary to make personal contact with them, and I managed to crawl forward to their front positions on the left flank. They were under a crippling enfilade fire, directly from their left, chiefly from 88 millimetre guns, and having seen the situation I ordered them, too, to withdraw to their original positions on 'Derby Left'. They suffered many casualties; but their stubborn protection of the left flank during a critical period had enabled a firm consolidation in their rear, and I subsequently recommended

their Company Commander, Major Storm, for an 'immediate' Military Cross, which I am glad to say he received. Re-established on 'Derby Left' they continued to be subjected to heavy artillery and mortar fire, but the fire was now unobserved by the enemy, and consequently comparatively inaccurate, and they were no longer menaced in their new position by the constant threat of small-arms and 88 millimetre gun fire in enfilade. It was not until after darkness had fallen on the 3rd November that the supply situation began to improve, aided by the fact that our weight of artillery support and the evening activities of some rocket-firing Typhoon aircraft had done a good deal towards quietening the enemy guns. I have comparatively clear memories of that night, spent in a slit trench dug into the sea-dyke, with my Headquarters, and the breaking of first light- with a cup of hot tea administered by my intrepid batman, which tasted like nectar. Throughout the campaign, from start to finish of my time in it, from Belgium and Holland into Germany, I recall vividly that the greatest personal problem, by far, to be overcome was lack of sleep. Orders for actions in daylight had to be planned and given in the middle of the night. Attacks at night also, of course, precluded rest. No doubt during periods of 'rest' in reserve, time was found from many essential administrative duties to sleep like a log! But I cannot recall such respite. From VE and VJ Day onwards I have thanked God, sincerely, for the opportunity to sleep. With the lives of 1000 or so splendid 'Jocks' in your hands, you just cannot do it! At dawn on the 4th November I gave orders to A Company (under Major McKellar) still in position on 'Leger Right', to attack 'York Right', the code-name given to the farm and buildings at Grieneburgh. At first the fighting was rather confused, but after a short time the Company was on its objective, and by 16.30 hours was consolidating its position. Simultaneously I ordered C Company under Major Petrie to swing left across the front in a flank attack on to 'Leger Left'. They went in at 14.30 hours, behind heavy artillery concentrations. About 30 prisoners were taken without much fighting, but a good deal of mortar fire was directed on to the position from enemy mortars in the rear, and the Company was subjected to sporadic mortar and shell fire from the time they consolidated until dusk fell about three

hours later. After 'Leger Left' had at last been secured, a Company of the 5th Highland Light Infantry, with the relief of other Companies following the next morning, relieved B Company in their positions. By early afternoon the Battalion, weary but satisfied, was marching back behind our Pipers over the Causeway to s Herrenshoek. Our Brigade Commander, Brigadier Barclay, was waiting for us with his staff at the eastern end of the Causeway, with words of welcome and praise. Seeing him in the distance I had the Battalion 'march to attention' and we gave him 'eyes right' as we went by. My tired 'Jocks' put on a splendid spurt, perfect in their drill, and went swaggering by. It is a moment I shall never forget. If I may say so, next to my own fellow countrymen I admire yours above any other in Europe, and therefore the world. That opinion is based on my experiences during World War II. Winston Churchill once described you as: 'the valiant and stout hearted Dutch'. Those were true words.

'For readers curious why this Article was submitted by a KOSB, I was a former Boy Soldier at Lanark in 1958 then went on to serve 26 years with the Kings Own Scottish Borderers, My father was SGT James Armour Mcfadyen a regular soldier in the 6th Battalion Cameronian Scottish Rifles, killed in action on 18 January 1945 and buried in Sittard War Cemetery. I help the Dutch War Graves Commission in Sittard, and should any readers of this article have a relative buried there, please contact me as we invite 2 close relatives of these soldiers to visit Sittard each November at our expense. Major Sixsmith was my fathers Company Commander and his son Mike joined the KOSB when the Cameronians disbanded and became my Company Commander.'

John Malcolm Nichol Mcfadyen
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Walcheren 60 Years On November 2004

*The torch; be yours to hold it high,
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders' Fields*

In Flanders' Fields. John McCrae, 1915

Cameronians in Walcheren

This time they came in cars and coaches not DUKWs and Buffaloes. Sixty years after the battle of 1944 Veterans of 156 Bde, 157 Bde and 4 (Special Service) Cdo Bde returned to the flat polders of Holland in Zeeland to remember the battle they fought in and the sacrifice of their comrades who were left behind.

Cameronians were no strangers to Walcheren - in 1809 they were part of an ill-fated expedition the object of which was 'to obtain possession of the islands at the mouth of the Scheldt, and to destroy the French ships in that river with docks and arsenals of Antwerp'. [Carter's Historical record of the Twenty Sixth or Cameronian Regiment]

The Battle of Walcheren in 1944 has been overshadowed by other events; perhaps being considered a backwater as it involved a westwards movement at a time when allied troops were intent on moving east towards the heartland of Germany; but it was typical of many feats of arms of British troops over the centuries and was a significant, although un-remarked, success.

All regiments claim to be 'second to none'. The 1st Bn Order of the Day, 16th March 1945, has an unsolicited testimonial to the abilities of the Regiment provided by Brigadier Lentaigne, Chindit Penetration Bde Comd: Field Marshall William Slim, unquestionably one the most successful British generals of World War II, selected the 1st Battalion to join Lentaigne's brigade because it was 'the hardest fighting British battalion under his command in the 1942 Burma campaign'. [The battalion also provided Slim's personal guard and, according to the Field Marshall in his memoirs, what ever else they might have been short of it was never the rum!]

Antwerp

The Scheldt estuary formed part of Hitler's 'Atlantic Wall'. The German 1st Army, under General von Zanger, opposed the Canadian 1st Army with the 70th Infantry Division in Walcheren and South Beveland. As in 1809, the strategic significance of Antwerp was paramount. for the allies in October 1944, due to its capacity and strategic location.

The defeat of the Allies at Arnhem led to a series of 'soldiers' battles' across the Low Countries. These culminated in the slog of the Reichwald, before the Allies were able to force the River Rhine, six months after Market Garden on 8th March 1945, and attack the heartland of Germany.



The German soldier invariably fought well, and often tenaciously. Some 'would never surrender and they ...Gunned down ... Comrades who tried.'

Had Operation Market Garden been successful, this campaign, and significant loss of life, would almost certainly have been avoided. The German formations in Holland and Belgium would have been in a hopeless position with the Allies pouring forces across the Rhine via the Bridge at Arnhem.

Montgomery's brilliant record had been tarnished by the failure at Arnhem. Montgomery by disposition was a cautious general. Witness his determination not to commit to battle against Rommel at El Alamein until he was certain that he had sufficient force to deal the Germans a 'knock-out blow', despite the pressure exerted on him by an impatient Churchill. Arnhem would have been acclaimed as a decisive battle had it been successful. But in war, as often in life, the difference between success and failure is small. Kipling summed up the reality; 'if you can ... treat these two impostors [triumph and disaster] just the same, you'll be a Man my son!'

Cameronians will appreciate the link between the Regiment and Arnhem in the person of Lieutenant Colonel (later Major General) Johnny Frost, who commanded with outstanding élan the only parachute battalion to reach the bridge.

'It is an historical oversight that so little

attention has been paid to the battle of the Scheidt estuary.With hindsight Eisenhower should not have given in to Montgomery's demands over Market Garden, by which time the German 15th Army had been allowed the opportunity to organize the defence of the Scheldt estuary. The fierce battle and the clearing of the Scheldt of mines took almost three months....and so there was a hold-up in the supply to the Allied forces and their march to Berlin came to a halt. Because of this the Germans were able to launch the Ardennes offensive. Not without reason, Antwerp was the main goal of this German attack in December.'

Its significance lies in the fact that the allies' forward momentum, slowed by the set back of Arnhem, was further threatened by supply shortages. By October 1944 the leading Allied formations had reached Aachen but were still dependant for their logistic support on the Normandy ports and the Mulberry harbour. These did not have the capacity to handle the tonnages now required and, moreover, were some 350 miles behind the frontline. It was essential for the allies, therefore, to be able to use the Port of Antwerp. However, the Germans still held both banks of the Scheldt in some strength. The task of clearing the area was given to the Canadian 1st Army, which included the 52nd Lowland Division. Two territorial battalions of the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles), the 6th and 7th

Cameronians, were brigaded with 5th HLI in 156 Infantry Brigade.

While the British 2nd Army followed a more easterly route towards Antwerp, the Canadian 1st Army quickly conquered the Channel ports northwards as far as Gent, Le Havre, Boulogne and Calais were also captured, although not without difficulty. But Antwerp was still of essential

who were there: 'for the first time [the Cameronians] were introduced to a number of strange amphibious craft; known as 'Buffaloes'. These remarkable vehicles can travel in water or on land ... they carry 30 fully armed men ... 'Initially, the crossing from Teurneuzen was scheduled for 25th October, which would have given only a day's training for this new role; 'fortunately,



importance to the Allies.

The Canadians reached Teurneuzen on 6th September but it was not until 22nd October that the south bank of the river was cleared (Operation Switchback). By 24th October Bergen op Zoom had been taken thus entirely isolating the German garrison on Walcheren. Then, after only two days preparation, 156 Bde undertook an assault river crossing from Teurneuzen, landing successfully at Baarland in Walcheren (Operation Infatuate I).

Ironically, 52nd Lowland had spent most of the war in Scotland, training extensively for a mountain warfare role. After D Day, the Division was hastily re-trained in an air landing role and earmarked to take part in Operation Market Garden. However, in the unpredictable nature of warfare, their first major engagement found them in an assault river crossing role.

At Teurneuzen, in the words of some

bad weather made it necessary to delay the operation for 24 hours. This additional time was invaluable and by the evening of 25th October everything was ready for the assault crossing ... 'It was a most thrilling experience to waddle off the shore in these big vehicles and plunge slowly into the water. One could hardly believe that we were going into battle... The landing was successful, despite some opposition. By 17:00 hours that evening the bridgehead had been secured except for one small area.' 'The landing ... has resolved itself into an eerie assortment of impressions - of grotesque machines, nightmarish in the half-light, waddling out of the sea over the almost perpendicular dyke into the flatness beyond; of sadly shaken Herrenvolk trundling down the road with a particularly diminutive Jock trotting happily in rear.'

From Baarland the brigade fought its way eastwards through South Beveland,

reaching Nieuudorp on 2nd November. The War Diary of 6 Cameronians records one particularly hard battle en route:

'0800 - Bn passed through 7 Cams to advance west of Ellenwoutsdijk....

1300 - D Coy began advance on 'Point 77' (2519 ?) - Held up by strong opposition 300 yards short of objective. Found to be heavily defended (Permanent Coastal Fortress). Coy forced to withdraw. 10 men killed, 28 wounded.'

'[D Company] were sent to attack a most strong held position on the coast. They attacked to within 200 yards and then got held up by water. The Boche was in a strong position, concrete and surrounded by minefields, and very unfortunately [the company] was out of range of support by medium or field artillery. Then the Boche opened up with everything he had and [the company] got a pretty terrible pasting ... next day... when one looked at it from the enemy's point of view one realised what ideal country is for defence, and how difficult for manoeuvre, even minor tactics.'

The Veterans started their commemorations by attending a reception at the Burgerzaal in the marketplace in Middelburg on Sunday 31st October. Throughout the whole of the following week a variety of events had been organised by the authorities of Walcheren and the local communities, which included much generous hospitality. Some of the events were attended by Veterans from all of the allied units which had taken part in the fighting in 1944. Other events were arranged for specific units; and some were very personal reunions between life-long Dutch and British friends. Ceremonies were held at Uncle Beach in Vlissingen, where 157 Bde landed; at Baarland where the Cameronians landed with 156 Bde; at the Causeway, where so many lives were lost; and at the British War Cemetery at Bergen op Zoom, where many of those who made the supreme sacrifice were eventually laid to rest. All followed the same familiar remembrance format but each was, in its own special way, intensely moving. The Vlissingen Pipe Band provided the music and Royal Marine buglers sounded the poignant calls of mourning. The British Government was represented by the Ambassador Sir Colin Budd, KCMG or one of his staff

*'They shall grow not old, as we that are left
grow old.
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.*

*At the going of the sun, and in the morning
We will remember them'*

The time-honoured words were reiterated at each commemorative event during the week. Most moving for us, when uttered in a firm voice by Duncan McArthur, 4th/5th Royal Scots Fusiliers at the memorials on the causeway to the French (who defended Beveland against the onslaught of Hitler's rampaging Panzer divisions in 1940); the Canadian 1st Army; and to 52nd Lowland Division.

The week reached its climax for the Cameronian party on the following Saturday night with a private party given by the people of Baarland, held in the community hall, which is named after the Regiment.

The official ceremonies concluded with a final service of commemoration and thanksgiving at the Catharina church Zoutelande on Sunday 7th November leaving the Cameronian party with some final hours with their Dutch hosts before beginning the journey back to Britain on the following day. Inevitably, there will be very few Veterans able to attend any 70th anniversary commemoration. And there may not be any more formal commemorations. However, there seems little doubt that for the foreseeable future British and Dutch friends will continue to maintain the strong bond between them by visits to Holland and Scotland on alternate years as long as health and breath permit. And the local authorities in South Beveland will continue to hold annual remembrance services too.

The author and his family were privileged to meet this sturdy band of Veterans, some wearied by age, some still bearing the scars of that far-off conflict, some as sprightly as men half their age. They had opened the Scheldt estuary but, more important for us, they had been on the battlefield at the time of my father's death. As when I had gone with my mother some years ago, it seemed as if we had known these men for all our lives, yet my family met them for the first time, forging an immediate bond. An uncanny experience.

It is invidious to mention names, as so many people were involved in all the arrangements. However, from our family perspective some people do deserve special mention: Mr. Leon Dewitte, Chairman of the Liberation Support Walcheren committee and Madam Nelleke Jeremaisse-

Platschorre along with Frans de Nooijer MBE undertook the burden of organisation before and during the events. In the middle of a hectic schedule, Frans found time to take us on a battlefield tour. Rene Hoebeke has written a substantial history of the battles; and has also been responsible for the erection of notice boards at the causeway which explain the significance of the memorials for visitors.

156 Brigade Association

Charles Frostick, Rfn 17 Platoon, D Coy was the original co-ordinator of 156 Bde Association formed, appropriately, in 1989 when invited by local people to visit Borsele (the equivalent of our Parish Council). The Dutch made a return visit to Hamilton in 1990. This started a series of reciprocal visits which has continued to this day. While most of the Veterans attending the 60th anniversary events stayed in hotels, the Cameronian party were housed, as in every alternate year, with their Dutch friends.

For the Dutch inhabitants, the arrival of the Allied forces in 1944 was a mixed blessing. Yearning to be free of their occupiers, the joining of battle in the midst of their community disrupted the status quo and resulted in considerable fear, destruction and hardship, not to mention numerous casualties. Forty-six civilians were killed by allied shelling when sheltering in Arnimuieden, where they had been moved to facilitate 52nd Division operations. Despite all the horrors they experienced, what shines out to this day is the eternal and heartfelt gratitude of the local people. Not only of those who were themselves 'Veterans' of the battle but also of succeeding generations. One telling aspect of the various ceremonies was the involvement of young boys and girls, jointly laying wreaths with grizzled Scottish Veterans; and doing it in a totally un-self conscious manner because they have been brought up to be aware of the price of freedom and to appreciate that it cannot be taken for granted.

A policeman, Thijs Way, records how in 1944: *'on the night of 25/26 October I was rudely awakened by the howling of aeroplanes followed by the striking of grenades in Baarland ... as a police officer it goes without saying that I would see if I could be of any assistance. Fully dressed in uniform, I opened the door to step outside when suddenly two [Scottish] soldiers with camouflaged faces yelled to me, "hands up" and "who are you?"*

Way was then interrogated, asked to

verify his position in the Dutch resistance and taken to the British commanding officer, 'who introduced himself as Colonel Leg thereby pointing at his leg! I was requested to accompany a patrol to persuade ... people to leave their houses in order for the British troops to advance unhampered. It wasn't an easy job, we met a lot of opposition, people yelled at us and reacted furiously but we also experienced relief and gratitude.'

Later, Way 'learned of the decision to evacuate all the inhabitants of Oudelande and Baarland to Dutch Flanders ... The misery that was hereby brought on is almost impossible to describe: all kinds of vehicles coming from everywhere packed with adults and children at the crack of dawn.

Prms and wheelbarrows, bicycles with elderly people who had to be supported on either side by their relatives, almost unbelievable! At the foot of the dyke DUKWs were lying where the wretched things [people] were driven in like cattle because there weren't enough seats by far. It was awfully cold in those DUKWs because they were open and there was no shelter whatsoever.'

Way had to persuade his wife to leave with their two children as he *'had to stay and assist this evacuation, which did not pass speckless (sic) lots of panic and anxiety. After the boats left, fear gripped me by the throat ... how will the Germans react, will they let the boats go to ...? This having told, I would have loved to shake the hands of all present Veterans to tell them how happy I am to see and greet them again and to express how grateful we are for their devotion at that time. And, of course, we understand how difficult it will be to stand still in remembrance of all the comrades who gave their lives here for us. ...Finally, our grateful thanks for our liberation Adieu Cameronians!'*

The Battle for Walcheren - November 1944

By 29th November 'only Walcheren remained to be liberated. On this peninsula the Germans had a series of artillery batteries, concrete bunkers, machine gun nests and other enforcements. With the aim of limiting German manoeuvre, the Allied Forces decided to flood Walcheren before the attack ... the sea embankments of Vlissingen and Veere were also bombed as well forcing the Germans to withdraw to higher ground ..., but their heavy artillery was situated in the dunes area. The RAF was

not able to silence the German artillery before the battle began'.

During this time, the battle on the causeway, which began on 29th October, continued with heavy casualties but no progress. The 5th Canadian Brigade had been given the task of attacking Walcheren from the east. Reconnaissance concluded that 'there was only one way over and that was on this damned causeway ... a raised embankment standing some seven metres above the high water line, ... dead straight, about twelve hundred metres long and forty metres wide. The familiar poplars,... Bordered an elevated rail line, a two-lane highway and the inevitable cycle path. The Germans, their backs to the sea, were far from beaten, they had prepared a monstrous reception for their ... enemies ... The German guns were sighted squarely down this narrow strip of raised roadway that they knew the Canadians would be forced to cross. There was, they believed, no alternative. In 1940, as pursuers this time of a French armoured division, the Germans themselves had attempted to cross the Sloe and had seen 150 of their comrades drown.'

The conditions under which the Allied forces fought in Walcheren are vividly described in the words of a Canadian officer, Roger Mathen: *'Imagine a black night, the rain pouring down, and a muddy road with holes of one or two metres deep. If you fall into a hole you are muddy, deadbeat and without your gun or ammunition. The road is ten metres wide, without trees to take cover. Imagine a dyke leading to nowhere, enemy soldiers on both sides with heavy machine guns and light cannons. Then let start a barrage of 296 shells over the Germans, then observe a counterattack with 88mm and 105 mm mortars coming from the other side. Now send to the other side of the dyke some hundred men, platoon after platoon, the men following the edge of the water, with their faces into the unknown.'*

'Near the Sloe dam the attackers found themselves in an extremely difficult position.' Between 31st October and 3rd November a severe battle took place. Three separate battalion strength assaults were made on the Causeway; a fourth battalion, 1st Glasgow Highlanders, relieved the third of these battalions on the morning of 2nd November, by which time the Canadian 5th Brigade were 'completely disorganized and only a few remained.' In three days of fighting on the Causeway the Canadian 2nd Army lost over 1,000 men killed, wounded or taken prisoner.

At this point Walcheren operations became the responsibility of 52nd Lowland Division. The Divisional Commander, Major General Sir Edmund Hakewill Smith, opposed the concept of frontal assaults on the causeway. 'In the early hours of 1st November, Foulkes [GOC 2nd Canadian Corps] appeared at 52nd Div HQ inciting a head-on clash [with Hakewill Smith]. Foulkes ordered Hakewill Smith to send his division across the causeway ... Hakewill Smith demanded that Foulkes issue the order in writing. A blank piece of paper was passed across the table.' In the words of Hakewill Smith, *'The Canadian Corps Commander said that there was no other route and that we had to go in at dawn the next morning. I again protested that it was not a viable military operation ... after further argument he departed, saying that if we did not put in this attack there would be a new commander of the 52nd (L) Division immediately.'* However, 'Hakewill Smith had won a reprieve of sorts. Foulkes grudgingly gave him forty-eight hours to come up with an alternative plan ... Or look for a new job.'

After reconnaissance, a possible route across the Sloe, south of the Causeway, was identified. There is some uncertainty surrounding the identification of this route. A member of the Dutch resistance, Pieter Kloosterman, reportedly knew about it and passed the details to 52nd Lowland. The Divisional commander records that it was discovered independently. The CO of 6th Cameronians said that 'I should not be surprised if the story [that Kloosterman provided the information] were true. You come of a brave people; we found that ... The Dutch Underground Organisation was of invaluable help to us.'

'My battalion [6th Cameronians] was chosen for this role.' 'It was clear that this operation (Operation Mallard) would be a hazardous one. A few days earlier another formation had reconnoitered a crossing place and reported it to be impracticable.'

However, the Allied forces managed to form a bridgehead, thanks to a crossing through the Sloe area). This attack was carried out by 6th Cameronians. It was a bold plan, crossing at a place that 'must have been considered by the enemy as a most unlikely approach, since in addition to crossing the Sloe, it entailed negotiating treacherous mudflats, extending some three quarters of a mile, followed by a frontal attack up the enemy's sea-dyke positions.'

On the night of 2nd/3rd November, 6th

Cameronians embarked in assault boats at the small harbour of Zuid Kraaijert near Nieudorp in preparation for crossing the Sloe. *'It was the task of the 6th Cameronians to follow the rapidly muddily ribbon of white tape [laid out by] 'just two lonely, apprehensive but skilled and watchful men [Sappers from 202 Field Company RE].'* The Commanding Officer later described the crossing: *'The water crossing took only some ten minutes, My men were knee-deep, often waist deep, in tenuous, sucking mud.'* Several members of the Battalion drowned and *'we had seven chaps stuck in the mud for four hours before we could pull them out...'* *'It took an hour to cover the three-quarters of a mile to the dyke, at the end of this dreadful journey there was still the enemy to meet ... Such was the temper of my splendid Jocks that, when they reached the dyke... They put in a spirited attack forcing the enemy's position at the point of the bayonet'*

During the crossing. Rfn Muldoon, who could not swim fell overboard. He was saved by one of the Regiment's dogs, an Alsatian called at the time Rusty but later re-christened, when he hit the headlines, as Rifleman Khan. The dog was subsequently awarded the Dickens medal, the animal equivalent of the Victoria Cross.

'The assault achieved surprise, and gained a foot-hold on the bund, but attempts to push through a follow-up encountered very strong resistance particularly on the left flank where we got a bloody nose':

'08:00 D Coy passed through B Coy - advanced towards Land-en-Zeezicht - met heavy small-arms, heavy machine gun and mortar fire. Many casualties - soon in difficulties and forced to withdraw. Could no longer be considered a fighting unit.'

My father, Charles Sixsmith, was killed on Binnen Dyke about 10:00 by a sniper. He was buried on the dyke along with several others.

The dyke was subsequently moved about 30 meters to the north after the war to make room for a new road. And the remains of those killed were recovered and interred in the beautifully maintained British War cemetery in Bergen op Zoom.

'Although pushed back, the other company on that [the left] flank managed to hang on to its original position and withstand counterattack and shot and shell until a two-company attack could be put in ... to win the battle.' *'The next afternoon, the Highland Light Infantry (157 Bde) passed through the position the Cameronians had so sorely won. It was their Private McGregor who,*



Major Charles Sixsmith

rushing a machine gun post and killing six Germans, eliminated the last obstacle before reaching the Glasgow Highlanders still holding a bridgehead on the Causeway.

On 31 October 1944, while the battle for the Causeway raged, 157 Bde had landed at Vlissingen (Uncle Beach). This brigade included 4th KOSB. In 2004, a 50-strong party led by Malcolm (Nicky) Nichol, Secretary of the Berwick Branch, KOSB Association, attended the commemorations. It was good to see Brigadier Frank Coutts on parade. Also present was a KOSB Territorial officer, Torquil Corkerton, who is the son of David Corkerton, the last officer to be commissioned into the Regiment. We were privileged to be invited to the KOSB Band Night on Wednesday 3rd November. Playing that night and at each of the week's ceremonies were the Dutch drummers and pipers of the Inter Scaldis Pipe Band from Vlissingen. The band has been adopted by the KOSB. They were a fine sight in their Leslie tartan kilts and regimental regalia. Corkerton showed himself to be an accomplished piper, joining the band in some impromptu numbers.

Malcolm Nichol was with the KOSB when I joined them in Osnabruck after our

1st Battalion's disbandment in 1968. He subsequently discovered that his father, whose name was McFadyen and who had been a Cameronian, had been killed on the same day as my own father. On further investigation it transpired that his father was in D Coy, 6th Cameronians along with my father. I have my father's company notebook, returned to my mother with his belongings. In this is the name of 3053920 L/Sgt J McFadyen of 16 Platoon. He is buried in the War Cemetery at Sittard

'On 28th November [1944], with some ceremony, the first convoy of Liberty ships was welcomed into Antwerp. On 1st December more than 10,000 tons of supplies could be safely landed.' It is possible to speculate that, had Antwerp been captured earlier, the western Allies would have been successful in reaching Berlin before the Russians, with significant implications for post-war history.

A Canadian officer, who took part in the Causeway battle, summed up the battle: *The Limeys [Scottish!], on the other hand, when they assaulted Walcheren, they did it with class - not as a sort of spur-of-the-moment thing.'*

The feelings of the survivors of Walcheren were summed up in the Covenanter of March 1945: *'Now it's all over we're all glad we were in it, but it had its unpleasant moments and - it was wet, beastly, dirtily, hopelessly wet. Not only that but George, the 105mm man, and Egbert, the comedian with the mortar, seemed to take a dislike to the company, which over-stepped the bounds of objectivity, and vented their spleen in no uncertain manner. Still, it had its light relief we shall laugh for along time at the 'Its no bloody Santa Claus anyway' given by a wetly exasperated Jock to the persistent high-pitched 'Who's there?' yelled by some optimistic German sentry when we landed.'*

The Regiment can be justly proud of the pages added to its illustrious history by the 6th and 7th Battalions in the Cameronians' second Walcheren campaign.

Mike Sixsmith

Sources:

- i. The Cameronians in the BLA, The Covenanter, March 1945
- ii. The Cameronians in Walcheren, The Covenanter, September 1945
- iii. War Diary, 6th Cameronians, October/November 1944
- iv. Tug of War by W Denis Whitaker, DSO & Shelagh Whitaker

v. History of The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles), Vol III Brig C N Barclay CBE, DSO

vi. Brig. A I Buchanan Dunlop CBE DSO, letter written on Armistice Day 1985

vii. The Battle of the Scheidt Estuary, 1980 Handbook van de tweede Wereldoorlog, Uitgeverij Het Spectrum (Translated by Annelies Verkerk, British Embassy)

viii. 'As if it happened yesterday' Thijs & Marie Way, November 2004

ix. If -. by Rudyard Kipling

The following Cameronian Veterans and others are known to have attended the commemoration events under the auspices of the 156 brigade Association (with apologies for any errors or omissions):

6th Cameronians

Bill Millar, Sgt (& son) B Coy,

James Marler

Tommy Mackle B Coy 6th Bn

Joe Dunn (& niece)

Mrs Robertson (& sister) *Cousin of Thomas Beglin, the first Cameronian to be killed during Baarland landing*

7th Cameronians

James Nightingale (& wife)

Bill Bourse (& wife)

Alex Adam (& wife)

John Kelly

John Stevenson (& wife)

John Fenn (& son)

Bill Morris

Glynis Grant, Mrs

Len Horn

5th HLI

John Deuchars

John Regan

4th/5th Royal Scots Fusiliers

Jim Munro (& son)

Duncan McArthur

Bill Forsyth

Sam Hinchliff (& wife)

John Withers (& son)

Mary Schofield (Mrs)

243 Fd Pk Coy RE

James Anderson MBE JP

Ken Hosie

The Forces Pension Society

The aims of the Society are to secure equitable and justified conditions in the Armed Forces Pension Scheme for all ranks of all three Services, both serving and retired and for their widows, widowers and dependants that recognise the unique commitment they make and have made to their country and which are in line with modern practice and to advise and assist members of the Society on pension problems and related issues.

The Society promotes these aims, in co-operation with other Service and civilian organisations and lobbies Government, Parliament, the MoD and the Armed Forces leadership responsible and by all reasonable means to secure improvements. Members are kept informed of the Society's activities through its Journal **Pennant**.

The Society is funded by its members and is wholly independent. It is not a charity, but it is a not-for-profit company. It has a small charitable arm in its Widows' Fund from which agreed activities, such as fighting widows - cases, can be funded.

Anyone interested in membership should contact the Membership Secretary, Mr AG Hardie Tel 0207 820 9988

New Book

The Thin Red Line

War, Empire and Visions of Scotland
Stuart Allen and Allan Carswell

Allan Carswell and Stuart Allen are curators of Military History at the National Museums of Scotland.

War and military service have shaped the way the world sees Scotland and the way the Scots see themselves. Inspired by the collections of the National Museums of Scotland, the authors uncover the historical forces behind this phenomenon, exploring the impact of war on generations of Scots.

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'The National War Museum of Scotland today forms part of the National Museum of Scotland, a body whose collections span the range of human activity in Scotland and reflect Scotland's interaction with the rest of the world. Yet the National War Museum sits a little apart, at home in Edinburgh Castle, an ancient military stronghold perched high on the rock above Scotland's capital city. The Museum's presence there is testament to the fact that the notion of a

Scottish military tradition was once felt to be something absolutely central to our national history, to our national character even.'

The Aden Veterans Association

The Aden Veterans Association was formed in March 2000 by Mr John Hotston and Mr Ernest Izzard both ex members of the Royal Sussex Regiment. Their aim, as remains the aim of the Association, was to bring together as many as possible of the thousands of ex service and civilian personnel who either served or worked in Aden. Through our database file of members we are managing to put some of those old comrades in touch with each other once again.

Membership figures are constantly increasing and present numbers are in excess of 1000. At the moment there exists a very strong membership in Scotland and readers interested in joining should contact the Membership Secretary Mr Terry Fowler Tel 01945 860819 email: terryfowler@btinternetcom

In order to Kill the Enemy by Tom Gore

Home Guard

On reflection, looking back after some fifty-nine to sixty years, my military service started when at the age of fifteen and a half years I volunteered, being accepted at the age of sixteen years.

I use the word military loosely at this stage, though the L.D.V. days were past, (Local Defence Volunteers) - the now so called Dad's Army. We were at this stage, about 1941, well equipped, hobnailed boots, steel helmets and all, with rifle and bayonet, standing guard every fourth night on the cliffs in all weathers and training on Sunday mornings. The young ones too young for military service, then a large gap; of the old ones, most had seen service in the 1914 - 18 war.

Most of the training ended up in the Waterside Arms Hotel. The older ones had their pints, for us a half pint of shandy. This was to go on for two and a half years.

Employment

At the age of fourteen years in August 1939, a month before the war was declared, I started as a butcher's boy at 11/- (55p) at the local Co-op.

My main job was mornings with my carrier bike with a big basket on the front in all weathers, to collect and deliver the orders, then in the afternoons make the sausages or cook and bag the pounds of dripping etc. As the war years progressed and meat got rationed, the meat in the sausages got less, but we made more with the same amount of meat. Rabbits became a lot more popular to stretch out the rations. Before we went on our rounds we had to skin a load of rabbits, a very cold job on a frosty morning.

After working for one year, my wages were increased to 11/6 (57¹/₂p). All was taken home and handed over to help the family's poor budget, getting back six pence spending money. But of course, money went a lot further in those days.

Food (Or the lack of it)

There were then during the lean days of the Depression, the 1925 - 30s, six of us kids to feed, with father on the dole and money very scarce. It was the bread and jam days, some times this being the only food in the house. Once and sometimes twice a week, the big bell in the market square rang. We and all the other poor kids answered with our big basins and spoons, lining up outside the Soup Kitchen for our main meal of the week - a basin of thick stew with a hunk of bread.

Rabbits featured a lot in our feeding, which Father and another out of work family man caught with their ferrets and nets. There was a plentiful supply in the surrounding woods and country, so it was rabbit stew, pie or roast, with plenty of cabbage, turnip and potatoes, which most of the time also came from the surrounding countryside.

We managed to survive (without going into too much detail), until 1939 when the war started, there now being eight of us, six brothers, two sisters, we became better off, because when rationing came in, being a large family, we had ten ration books.

Clothing

With money in very short supply and now eight of us kids to be clothed, (the eldest born 1923 to the youngest born 1939), it worked on the hand-me-down system. When the woollen garments got too bad to hand down, they were ripped out, a job that the older of us were given. Mum was always knitting pullovers, stockings, gloves and great big scarves that wrapped around you with a safety pin at the

back. If mother was not knitting, she would be darning or patching. Many of the garments had patches sewn to patches. Mother was never idle. Keeping us all in footwear was another big problem and many a time a hole was patched up with a piece of cardboard.

Bath

We were poor as many a large family was at those times. The saying was cleanliness was next to godliness. We were always made to have a good wash under the cold tap, under supervision everyday. Saturday night was bath night. The big tin bath was placed in front of the kitchen range, the big kettle and saucepans boiling away, the fire aglow, starting with the next one up from the baby to the oldest we were all one at a time washed from top to bottom in carbolic soap. Then we were' all given a large spoon of opening medicine - Syrup of figs.

Washday

Mondays was washday. On Sundays we all had clean clothes, so on Mondays the big stone built copper in the corner of the stone floor kitchen was lit and all the last week's dirty clothes were boiled. It was a full day's job again for the never resting Mum. Boiling, then rinsing twice, then it was the turn of the giant mangle out in the yard, the clothes being squeezed through two big wooden rollers that were turned by a big wheel with a handle on the side, and onto the clothes lines to blowout and dry. If the weather was kind, the next day was ironing with flat irons that were heated up on the kitchen range. The way to test to see if they were hot enough was to spit on them. If the spit bubbled and shot off, it was hot enough, if it stayed, the iron wasn't hot enough.

Fuel

We did have a gaslight in the downstairs rooms in our rented house, which very often popped and dimmed and then went out, telling us that the meter had run out. As very often there was no money to replenish it, it was back to candle power - two candlesticks on the mantelpiece over the kitchen range. All the cooking and heating was done by fuel-fed fires. The coalman called once a week with his horse and cart. The best fuel was coal. This was also the dearest, so this was used to start the fires off, then they were banked up with coke, which was much cheaper. At the weekends and holidays, the oldest of us took an old pram and some string to the

woods outside the town, coming back loaded with wood and pulling a large branch that we cut up into logs with an old rusty saw.

Education

At the age of five years I started at the Infants School, very basic I remember, more like a nursery - a lot of playtimes. One thing we did learn was discipline. In those days the rule was children were 'seen but not heard'. One thing I do remember learning was how to lace up my shoes and how to tie a bow. If you made too much noise or got up to any mischief, a slap on the top of the legs was permissible.

Then on reaching the age of seven years, I transferred to what we called the 'big boys' school. The discipline here was ruled by the cane, standing out in the front of the class holding your arm at full stretch, palms up, the teacher swiped his bamboo cane down hard on your upturned hand, one, two, or sometimes up to four strokes. A sharp pain and a tingling sensation, clenching the fist and grinding your teeth returning to your desk. The thing was not to express your feelings by crying, with the rest of the class watching. We learnt to read, write with an ink well and a pen with a bent nib. This often resulted in making an ink blot or two. The end product for this, though it was no fault of your own, was two stripes with the cane. Sums we were taught, but we never reached the stage of mathematics.

I did move to a newly built school at the age of thirteen and a half years, teaching us gardening, woodwork and art, which I found more interesting. But we all still got the cane. Very few in those days could say they enjoyed their schooldays.

Religion

There were many churches and chapels in the smallish town in those days, all very well patronised. Sunday was as preached, 'a day of rest'. We were all brought up as Church of England (C of Es), Father being of a strong Christian family and C of E, but he did turn during the coming war years and after to Spiritualism, and it must be said that some of the things he predicted, through his so called Spirit guide and the tea leaves, left food for thought and were later authenticated.

It was Sunday school on Sunday afternoons for us kids. At a very young age I remember repeating time after time 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil. My rod

and staff will comfort me'. I didn't know then how true it was to become in 1944-45. The only large difference at the time was no rod or staff. My comfort was my rifle, bayonet, steel helmet and spade. It must have resembled the valley of Hell, shrapnel exploding, and tearing limbs from bodies. Fate had thrown us humans together and into the valleys of Hell, because that's the only way to describe what it was like to be an infantryman at the front of the battle, his ranks and comrades decreasing, as the shelling and bullets took their toll. Try to forget it, but I find the only way to express myself is through writing about it. If told verbally it sounds as if you are glorifying, but there is no glory, just the plain facts. The things and sights that entered the mind, some fifty to sixty years ago, are still there and move vividly placed in greater context. Is it right to write this under the heading of Religion? Draw your own conclusion.

Conscription into the Army. 1943

It was broadcast over the wireless (radio) and in the newspapers that all males born between a certain age group (I being one of them) will register for military service.

At the age of seventeen, nearly eighteen as ordered, I reported to the local Labour Exchange (Job Centre) together with most of the class that had left school with me aged fourteen years in 1939, a month before the outbreak of this war.

We never then thought that we would ever be old enough to fight in it. As for some of them, the names on the local cenotaph now sadly remind us.

Before my eighteenth birthday, 3rd May 1943, I had had my medical at Exeter, surprisingly passing A1. About 12th May 1943, my call-up papers arrived by post. I was to report to Goojerat Barracks, Colchester, Essex, on 20th May.

The war had been going on for about three years and eight months. The Americans (Yanks) had joined us. North Africa had been cleared.

I left my butcher boy's job and my carrier bike, handed in my Home Guard equipment rifle and bayonet that had been my main comfort for the past two years, when every fourth night we stood on the cliffs in all weathers waiting for the expected invasion from across the English Channel that stretched out in front of us.

On clear nights the drone of the enemy planes could be heard as they passed on their way to bomb Plymouth and Exeter, leaving the glow of the fires lighting up the skies, the anti aircraft guns firing at them as they crossed our coast. The air raid warning was blasting its continuous warnings across the country. At dawn the longer blast of the all clear, then it would be home and change, and on my bike to work.

On 20th May 1943, with some Spam sandwiches and a lump of Mum's cocoa cake in my bag, dressed in my Home Guard uniform that I had been instructed to wear, with my railway pass, I said an almost tearful goodbye to my family, Mum, Dad, four brothers and two sisters, my elder brother being already in the Army. I boarded the steam train at my local station at Paignton, Devon, not knowing then that this was to be my life's greatest adventure, never to be forgotten, as this time of writing these memoirs fifty-nine years after shows; not knowing then that this was to last nearly four and a half years.

It worked out one year training, one year actually in combat with the enemy, 'except when I was wounded, the rest of my service keeping the peace.

This was the furthest away from home I had ever travelled, the twenty miles to Exeter for my medical being previously the longest. The journey to London went well until at Paddington with its many platforms, and it was by sheer luck and many enquiries I found my way by Underground across London to Liverpool Street, and got on the right platform and train to Colchester.

As the train puffed on its way, it left a lot of bewildered young men about the same age as myself on the platform. Then the answer came. A lot of corporals from the many barracks in this very military town came to round us up. One of them shouted 'All recruits for Goojerat this way', loading us onto a waiting lorry, telling us to enjoy the ride, 'because you will be walking, marching or doubling everywhere in the next sixteen weeks'. This turned out to be true.

The first view of the barracks did not create a very good impression. It was an old 1914 complex, rows and rows of two storey red brick buildings with iron verandas and stairs, with a large square parade ground in the middle. We 'debussed' from the lorry at the main gate. This was a new word for us, one of the many that we were to learn. You

never got off transport, you always debussed or detained.

The next experience was booking in at the Guard Room, the R.P. (Regimental Police) formed us into an orderly line with the police sergeant sitting at a table. After the first man reported, the sergeant stood up to his full height, with his shoulders back and spoke, glaring at us in true military fashion, 'You will always address non-commissioned officers (N.C.Os) by their proper rank, and officers as Sir.' Some of the more timid amongst us, this being their first taste of military discipline answered too quietly. The sergeant shouted at them, 'Stand to attention and say SERGEANT!

We were soon to learn 'Passive Resistance', meaning to take all the shoutings and orders, stay cool, obey, and not to respond.

A corporal took charge of us and formed us into three lines, a very mixed bunch, some in their best clothes with suitcases, all sorts of dress, some of us in Home Guard uniforms. We were soon told to forget all we'd learnt in the Home Guard and start again.

Then came the order 'Quick march, try to keep in step', and we passed the large barrack square, where soldiers were being drilled, the N.C.Os shouting orders. We came to a halt at our allotted red brick block' with the iron veranda around the upper rooms with the iron stairs. Thirty men with hobnailed boots clanging up and down them was a noise that we were to get used to.

A sergeant, who was to be our tormentor, together with a corporal and the worst one, the acting L/corporal, shouted our names, and we joined the allotted platoons of thirty men. The sergeant gave each of us our 'never to be forgotten' army number, that he advised us to write down - 14610251. I was now known as Pte Gore 251, always the last three numbers.

The barrack room was to be our home for the next six weeks in the General Service Corps, - the first stage in training the mixed bunch of us to become efficient infantrymen. Our barrack rooms, a short passage with eight or so wash basins at the end, all had cold water taps. There was a large room on each side with sixteen wooden bunks, one up one down, to accommodate thirty of us rookies plus a corporal who for some reason had a bunk to himself. The bunks had thick wire straps

with no springs in them. On each bed was a sack, called a palliasse which we had to take and fill with straw. We soon learnt from experience and the hard way that if they were over-filled, you rolled off them or if under-filled, you were sleeping on the hard wire straps. With a pack for a pillow and two rough army blankets, we got so tired we could 'sleep on a clothes line' as they say.

Our first army meal was mashed potatoes, chopped meat, peas and for afters rice, with a tin mug of army tea - hot, sweet and strong, the rice, sometimes with jam or sultanas. We had so much rice it was rumoured that we were being trained for Burma. The rice was now called 'Burma Road'. As it turned out this was to be our diet for the next sixteen weeks, except on Sundays when we got the luxury of two roast potato halves.

The next week was spent getting kitted out, being shown how to put your equipment together etc and the very important taking the two pairs of boots to the 'snobs' to get the right numbers of hob nails in each boot. Though seemingly a small thing, it turned out to be very important. If there was one stud missing or worn down, the snobs was open for an hour after parades. It was an experience to watch, about four of them hammer and shoe iron, at a lightning speed, picking up a handful of nails, putting them in their mouths, dispatching them one at a time. They sometimes had a queue of thirty men with two pairs of boots each, with seventeen studs to each boot, that's two thousand and forty studs. Quite a few mouthfuls.

Inoculations - the first of many to come. In fact as time passed you were afraid to report sick because they always found that you were due for another inoculation.

Dental - Before I got called up you never went to a dentist unless you had a toothache for some time, so I was in need of treatment. In two visits I had four out and some filled. Then it was outside, spit, and back on parade. The dental hut had a row of six dental chairs with a poor recruit being tortured in each, except the one vacant, that was to be for me.

Army haircut - the whole platoon paraded, keeping the four barbers chairs in continuous use. It was wait in line, then 'Next' to a vacant chair, still warm from the previous occupant who had left by a far door. It was short back, sides and on top. You hardly had time to sit before the cry

was 'Next' and you were out the far door, amongst the complaining chaps that before they came in the other door had had curls and waves. Not like me, I looked better. I was always a scrubber head.

In this first week we were all beginning to look the same, all beginning on the same level.

F.F.I (Free from infection) - this was another thing that was to be done many times in the years to come. Standing all in a line, as the M.O. (Medical Officer) came passed, you dropped your trousers for his inspection.

Cleaning our webbing equipment, - with Blanco, a green block of like hard chalk, wetted and put on with a brush, then clean all the many brasses. These things were to be done many times in the four and a half years to come.

'Spit and polish' boots - This is a true army saying. Put the polish on thickly, then with a rag on a finger, spit on the polish and rub it in little circles. Keep spitting and rubbing until a smooth shine comes through. This was called 'BULL', but as we learnt very quickly, it was the best way to keep out of trouble, plenty of 'BULL'.

Then we started a training programme, split up into hourly periods. Early call, the sound of the bugle, the tune sounding to the words 'Charlie, Charlie get out of bed', the next line of which is too rude to print. Then came the shout that could be heard from the orderly sergeant from the iron veranda, which was then taken up by the room corporal ' Rise and shine, rise and shine'! Grabbing your washing kit to get to the eight wash basins first. Because there were two rooms of thirty to share them, time was precious. There was so much to do before first parade.

Breakfast was burgoo (porridge). This I was to have each morning for the next four and a half years, always different, sometimes thick, sometimes thin, too much or not enough milk, depending on the mood of the cooks, quickly learning to eat all that was put in front of you, food. The once a week egg was never sunny side up, always hard centred. Still to be fair to the cooks, they had about one hundred and eight to fry each time! The most constant thing was the tea, the tin mug of army char-hot, strong and sweet.

Back to the barrack room, fold the two blankets square; fold the palliasse back, putting the squared off blankets on top; then the steel helmet on top of that; then in

front the Blanco-ed equipment with the polished brasses, your best pair of boots, sole up showing the right number of hobnails; then (eating irons), knife, fork and spoon; my tin mug, that was to become a part of me for the next four or so years, bent, chipped and dented, but that was to be the receptacle of many a half pint of char army style, hot, sweet and strong. The blankets and bunks all had to be in line, like a line of soldiers on parade.

Each man had an extra job to do before first parade. Mine was to mop the passage between the two rooms. Others had to clean the wash room. One of the hardest was keeping the room's table scrubbed white, together with the brush handle. This was done with a razor blade, scraping down to the wood. There was an empty tin used as an ashtray. This also had to be highly polished. Each man had to sweep his own area to the middle of the room, then it was another man's job to sweep and pick it up. All was very organised, if each one did his job. As time passed, and we got more proficient, we didn't use the ash tin, so it only had to have a quick rub, the table we covered with a blanket. Finding a spare brush that we stole from an empty room, perhaps borrowed sounds better, one for inspection, one for sweeping up. The passage only had a wetting. Having a good wash and shave the night before, then in the morning just a rub over with the wet corner of your towel.

Before muster, the first parade, came the order 'Stand by your beds!'

The sergeant inspected each bed, pushing blankets over if they were not to his satisfaction. Then it was the turn of the room, trying to find some dust, or find somewhere that had not been swept. If he found too many faults, it meant another inspection after parades. Muster parade - Platoons lined up along the parade ground for inspection by the orderly officer, or the R.S.M. (Regimental Sergeant Major), backbone of the British Army.

If they were, not on parade, the sergeant inspected us.

This was worse.....

'Attention! Stand still! Eyes front! Chest out! Shoulders back! Fists clenched! Thumbs to the front! Heels together!' all in one breath. It seemed to come out of his big mouth automatically. Looking at him all you could see was his mouth working. Then up and down the three lines, inspecting each man individually. This is where

'Passive resistance' came in.

Most of us only had to shave twice a week.....

'Have you shaved this morning?'

'Yes sergeant!~'

'Then next time, stand closer to the razor, get that bum fluff off your chin.'

'Am I hurting you?'

'No, sergeant.'

'I should be., I am standing on your hair. Get it cut!'

'Pace forward, do up your button, and put your hat on straight. Don't walk beside it.'

Another of his favourites, when on the march.....

'Stop talking Pte Gore.'

'I am not talking, sergeant.'

'Yes, you are. You're answering me back. Don't be so pugnacious.'

This was a new word for me. It was one of the sergeant's favourite words. It was a long time before I looked it up in a dictionary, and I wasn't.

P.T. - Physical Training. You never marched in P.T. kit, shorts, vest and plimsolls, always at the double or a steady trot, to the gym, to us (the torture chamber). A PT corporal took charge of us. There was a name for these corporals and it begins with a 'B', most were about 5'6' tall and very thick set, super fit, with muscles to match. The PT started off light, then as the weeks passed the progress became harder, up and down ropes, over wooden horses, throwing what they called medicine balls at each other and in groups passing telegraph poles, lifting them above the heads etc.

After the end of our sixteen weeks at Goojerat Barracks we became nearly super fit. In fact it was the fittest I ever was in my life, never been quite that standard since, though there was a lot more PT to come in the next four years.

Unarmed combat - how to take a knife off a person, how to use a knife to kill, keeping the blade flat, where to stick it between the bones or the downward stab, kicking in the privates, or fingers in the eyes or up the nose and twist, an army steel comb scraped across the bottom of the nose, most painful!, the downward chop or across the face, with the side of the hand, a kick in the back of the knee and of course the throat throttle. Always ending with *in order to kill the enemy*.

Square bashing - drill marching up and down, or advancing, about turning, the

N.C.O.'s shouting orders
 'Swing those arms, thumbs to the front, shoulders back, watch your dressing, by the right'

Arms drill with your rifle.....

'Slope arms, present arms, shoulder arms, for inspection, port arms, ground arms, pick up arms.~

Bayonet practice, in battle order it was about one and a half miles out on a large plain. At one end was the Army Glass House, a detention centre. We were told some grim tales about the goings on inside, most of the inmates deserters, so' we were told to be good soldiers and not end up inside.

Spaced out in lines were rows of sacks filled with straw, some hanging on wooden racks, others on the ground. Then it was 'Fix bayonets', then in lines it was 'Charge and Shout', stabbing each sack. The sergeant shouting orders

'In out, on guard, shout !'

'To the next sack on the ground'

'Put your boot in to withdraw from the straw sack on the ground' 'That's the enemy. Kill him and shout !'

'In, out, on guard.'

'Go mad'

Swimming - with our towels, no trunks or shorts to the open air Garrison swimming pool. Then it was all strip off in the nude, lining around the pool, not allowed to jump in until a blast on the whistle, the non-swimmers in the shallow end. There was a hell of a splash as the thirty of us went in at once. If up the ladder to the higher diving board, you were exposed over the top of the surrounding wall, this turned out to be great fun as the A.T.S. women's quarters were next to the pool. If you waded with any part of your body, they waded. back with squeals of delight. Good job it was hot weather.

Route marching - started off short, then up to fifteen miles in the first six weeks. On the longer ones we took with us haversack rations, the first of many to come. Two thick chunks of bread with 'bunghole' cheese, so called because it was supposed to make you constipated, and another thick jam sandwich; washed down with water from the important, always filled water bottle. But we always had to remember to empty it and fill it with fresh, because the bottom got full up with crumbs and stale water.

Hobnail boots and blisters on your feet - thankfully I never suffered with blisters

because I was used to wearing boots, but some of the others that had been used to wearing shoes suffered badly. Foot inspection came after a march, lying on the ground with your feet up in the air, the sergeant inspecting each foot.

Foot care, was very important for an infantryman. Good tips were passed on by a corporal that slept in our room. The first thing he did each morning at reveille was to inspect his feet, cleaning out between his toes and trimming his nails. He taught us foot care to make sure that your socks were darned properly and he showed how to darn them, making sure that there were no bits of loose wool, because this was what rubbed and caused blisters, a small thing but important to an infantryman. Another being a supply of toilet paper, because it was very uncomfortable if you got a rash in that region.

If you were unlucky to get a rash anywhere learning the hard way, if your equipment wasn't tight enough, it rubbed, causing a rash. Reporting sick, the orderlies painted it with a blue or yellow substance. It was not uncommon to see a squaddie going around with half his neck or half his face painted one of these colours.

The six weeks of primary infantry training were coming to an end. We had learnt first lessons of the infantry weapons - the rifle, Bren machine gun, Sten gun, PIAT (Projectile Infantry Anti Tank), two inch mortar and the Mills hand grenade.

First lessons, aiming, and judging distance. Mechanism mainly gas and spring operated. And of course loading and cleaning, this being drummed into our heads, some thicker than others.

'If cleaned and cared for is capable of a high and accurate rate of fire *in order to kill the enemy*'

About this time we went in front of a so called Selection Board, filling out a form with what unit or regiment we would like to serve in, or to be put in your trade as a Butcher. The selection officer looking up from my form said 'Who do you think is going to do the fighting when you are back cutting up the meat?'

Second choice, I quickly thought, anything but foot slogging, (infantry). Most of us had the same thoughts. I put down as a Tank Gunner. When the time came for us to be posted, all in anticipation of different units and regiments, twenty-nine of us got posted to the three Infantry Training Centres (I.T.C.) in this barracks, the

Devonshire Regiment, that I was posted to, the others the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, or the Dorset Regiment. The one man went to the Pioneers. A nice squaddie, good looking fair clean skin, not like a lot of us with the adolescent acne. Poor chap couldn't read or write.

Another lesson we learnt was from an older corporal, for some a very expensive lesson. Never play cards with an old soldier, because you never come out a winner, especially if it was his own pack of cards.

One of the sergeant's old soldier's sayings was when a break was due. His favourite was to say 'If I had a cigarette we could all have a smoke'. So someone had to give him a fag before he called a halt. There were a lot of old soldiers' tricks we were to learn. The more you soldiered the more you learnt the saying 'don't come the old soldier with me'.

The first six weeks passed, though we had been threatened many times, no one had been put on a charge, army sheet 252, a fizzer or jankers. At the end of the six weeks, some daft so and so came around collecting to give the sergeant a drink. A small group of us declined, well three of us to be exact. He was a big fat old soldier with authority to us.

He came into the room in the evening saying 'I will think of you lads when I'm having a drink tonight.' I thought to be true to our word.

'Don't think of me sergeant because I didn't give you anything.'

He walked towards me, I thought the worst.

He said, 'That's alright Tom, if you couldn't afford it.'

He was human, the first time he had used my Christian name, I didn't even know he knew it.

The six weeks Primary Training came to an end. We were all out of the new recruit period and had learnt the basics of infantry training. But there was more to come in the next ten weeks. As we were to find out in the next four years or so, the training never really stopped except for the obvious reasons, when in battle, wounded or on duty etc or of course if you were one of the unlucky ones that got killed. Partly for what we were being trained for, fate had a big part to play.

So we spent the day packing our kit bags, a long narrow bag about two and a half feet tall, in which all your spare belongings and cleaning material etc was packed. The worst part was the thing you wanted was always

at the bottom of the bag. Cleaning all our equipment and rifles ready for the early call and the big move the next day.

There followed an interesting period of continuing training at No 14 Infantry Training Centre. Then on to the 12th Battalion the Devonshire Regiment, the 6th Battalion the Devonshire Regiment, the 2nd Army Battle School, Llanberis, North Wales until in July 1944 Normandy...

To Normandy. July 1944

After an early reveille and breakfast, dressed in field marching order, big packs with all our belongings in, best battle dress, spare boots, overcoat, underwear, socks etc., with our steel helmet strapped to it, made it a fair weight to carry. We had a small pack with side straps on our side, containing the very important mess tins and eating irons (knife fork and spoon), though most of the food was eaten with only the spoon. No need for a knife to eat what the cooks did best, stew. Also in the small pack we carried other essential items.

There were no haversack rations from now on. You either got what was called a 24 hour pack, or you got the alternative - nothing, until the next spaced out meal, stew: Then there was the rest of our equipment that seemed less important to us as the before mentioned, but was of course what it was all about - rifle, bayonet and entrenching tool, *in order to kill the enemy*.

The haversack ration-making days were over. The entrenching tool was soon to be swapped for its big brother - a full size spade, to answer the call when the shells started to unexpectedly arrive, 'dig in'. But plenty more about that later.

A draft of about forty of us infantry left Hove and the 6th Battalion the Devonshire Regiment, marching to the station. Leaving behind us the billets in empty houses, with the space on the floor to sleep on in crowded rooms. Most of us were eighteen to nineteen years old. Pte Alder was amongst us, very much alive now, but was to be one of those who got killed in our first action. Some were badly wounded. I suppose the lucky ones, if you can call it that, were the ones with the slight wounds. The ones that survived in these earliest actions sadly went on to catch a packet in the many future battles. About twenty of this draft were to join with the Cameronians Scottish Rifles, 15 Scottish Division. We were to fill their

ranks, to replace some of the many casualties they had had in the past battles in this killing ground of Normandy.

Our destiny was in someone else's hands, a very few got through without a wound, a slight one perhaps, to live to fight another day. As they say 'they laid down their lives for their country'. I can assure you from first hand seeing it happen, that it was they who had their young lives taken from them; getting blown up by shell fire, or a bullet from an enemy sniper, stepping on a hidden mine, or an unexpected burst from an enemy machine gun as you made contact.

A lot of wounds are too grotesque to explain on these pages, but I will give one example, then I will try to avoid any more gory details, but there were plenty of them like this. A young comrade amongst a group of wounded, with his leg blown off and the other with the sole of his boot hanging off, but no foot in it, his life slowly being taken from him, because of something over which he had no choice in life, of being born at the wrong time.

These are my thoughts after the years have passed, and you seem to be able to put things of the past into the right perspective. A lot of these thoughts have been stored for so long in the mind, always there, thought of sometimes, like in the night, if unable to sleep. And as I write they come flooding back, never to be forgotten, and I'm not coming the old soldiers' tales, sometimes exaggerated. This is in its full authenticity.

At the end of our journey, it was always a surprise to find out where the end of the destination was, because in most cases no one ever told you. In this case it was Aldershot. After marching out of town to a massive transit camp, rows and rows of tents and troops on the move, the loud speakers gave out our orders. We were allotted to tents, amongst the jungle, the number to each tent seemed to be impossible to fit in, with all our equipment.

The first night it worked out one man to each panel. We only managed by crawling in under the side flaps, with our feet to the centre pole. The next night a lot of us slept outside in the open, with a ground sheet, one blanket and a gas cape. This was to be good practice for the things to come, only we had to discard our ground sheets and blanket, sleeping most of the time, sitting up in a pit called a slit trench, like a grave. But it was the safest place to be if being shelled or fired on by small arms fire, trying

to sleep and ignoring all that was going on around you, even the shout for stretcher bearers. You never got longer than two or at the most four hours kip. Then it was your turn to stand up for two hours and stay awake staring into the darkness. The enemy was over there and in Normandy most times he let you know it. But there was the quiet spell in the darkness, very eerie, as if something was about to happen, perhaps an enemy patrol. Then the distant sound of a field gun firing, or the scream and wail of the well used six barrelled mortar ('Moaning Minnie'). Then you were on the receiving end again, the whistle of the shell, then the explosion. The whizz of the shrapnel flying through the air, trying to find some ones flesh and bone to kill or maim. So it was down to the bottom of the trench and make yourself so small a target as possible and brave it out. Sometimes if it was really bad, it was a short prayer, 'Oh God'. This always seemed to happen in these situations. I had often called on Him this year, especially 1944 at the age of nineteen. I suppose in retrospect, it was a thing that I very rarely thought of, but now getting prepared, because this was the nearest time you could get to meeting your maker, if the before mentioned fate wasn't on your side.

We spent three days and nights at the transit camp in Aldershot, mostly spent on route marches in full marching order, and kit inspections. Most of us had our hair shaved off. It fitted better under the steel helmet and made us look more aggressive.

One of the last things we had to do, that didn't look too bright for our futures, was to make out a Will on a page from our part two pay books. Not that we had a lot to leave, about two weeks' pay, about £2 2s 0d. Of course there would be no funeral expenses to pay.

On checking the Devonshire Regiment records, it listed fourteen of the drafts from the 6th Battalion to the 9th Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) who had their lives taken from them, buried in military cemeteries from Normandy to the River Elbe, on to the shores of the Baltic.

We left the camp in fine style, marching to the station being led by a red coated band of the Queen's Regiment. As the train left the station, from the safety of the platform they played 'The soldiers of the King, we will fight for England's glory lads' etc., very appropriate for the job in hand.

The train took us right to our

destination, onto the docks of the port of Newhaven, where we de-trained. At a nearby jetty was moored an American I.L.C. (Infantry Landing Craft), that was to take us to our destination. It was late afternoon. On the jetty were cooks with Dixies of our main diet (stew), so we lined up with our mess tin at the ready and spoon in the other hand. We filled up with this farewell meal this side of the English Channel. The Channel that just over a year ago while in the Home Guard, I had on the cliffs of Devon stood looking out across for the enemy coming this way.

Up the steep gang plank boarding the I.L.C., the Yankee sailors sent us below deck to a large cabin with rows of chairs, being ordered to stay below. After some time late in the evening the loud speaker crackled and an American voice announced,

'This is the Captain speaking, you are now under my command. My orders are to land you at the port of Arromanches, Normandy. If this port is under enemy attack, or for some reason we cannot land there, my orders are to land you at the nearest point. This may be a wet or dry landing. Good luck. You may now go up on deck. Do not enter any restricted areas.'

The only troops on board were draft. The I.L.C. was not a very big vessel. As we got further out into the Channel it had to take on the seas and began to toss up and down and sideways. As we got to the point of no return in mid Channel, the sea got rougher. The engines revved and the cabin got warm and stuffy.

A white-faced comrade dashed for the stairs, urging. That started the ball rolling. The soup started to match the rolling sea. Soon there was a continuous dash for the stairs. Sadly some didn't make it which didn't help the ones who were trying to keep the soup down. The cabin got hotter and smelly and it was a great relief to go up on deck in the salty fresh air. As the ship rolled we sat on the deck, with our backs against the superstructure and feet against the rails. As we travelled through the night, other ships passed, flashing messages from winking lights.

As dawn broke, on the horizon there was the coast. As it got closer, in the distance we could make out a mass of barrage balloons, then the concrete blocks and sunken old ships that made up the artificial harbour around the beaches of Arromanches, Normandy. Our craft threaded its way through the large and small ships

unloading their valuable cargo, of which we were a part.

FIRST ACTION - NORMANDY

We landed on a beach in Normandy, having travelled through the night from Newhaven on the American Infantry Landing Craft. Following markers we moved inland to our first transit camp. Putting us in tents they told us a meal would be ready for us in one hour. After settling in the overcrowded tents, lining up outside, the M.O. (Medical Officer) gave us a Free From Infection (F.F.I.). This meant dropping your trousers as he came down the line.

The quickly prepared meal turned out to be a steak and kidney pudding, still in the tin, hacked in half. (Lucky if you got the 'biggest' half). Plus a packet of hard tack biscuits, this being my first experience (but not my last) of hard tack, all washed down with a half filled mug of tea (char).

The draft of about forty infantrymen from the 6th. battalion The Devonshire Regiment, moved on to the next stage of our transit outside Bayeux.

After a two day stay, half of us were drafted to The 9th Cameronians Scottish Rifles, 46 Brigade, 15th. Scottish Division. That was the end of the comforts. Mostly stew from now on, one blanket each under some trees with the guns rumbling away in the distance. Then on to the 9th. Cameronians 'A' echelon on to 'B' echelon. No blankets now. It was a hole in the ground, called a slit trench, two men in each. The guns sounded much nearer now. After changing our field marching order (big packs) into battle order (small packs) leaving behind our 'bull', blanco, bootpolish, Brasso and brushes. Accompanied by an officer, in single file through endless lanes with high hedges we arrived at the 9th, Cameronians Headquarters (H.Q.) situated on the side of a hill, with two knocked - out British tanks, evidence of a previous 'battle for this high ground.

We were met by the Adjutant who gave us a brief history of the Cameronian Regiment. Telling us to try to keep ourselves clean and smart, which was very near to an impossibility. Being allotted to 7 Platoon A Company with a Canadian Platoon Officer, ended up with my mate in the corner of a field, on a two inch mortar in Platoon H.Q. Not a bad job except for the extra weight to

carry. There was a peculiar smell, in fact a stink when the slight breeze wafted over the hedge. It turned out to be five dead cows, blown up, with thousands of flies buzzing all over them, no doubt enjoying their meal. Better than us as things turned out.

After digging our slit trench we were told that the rations and a meal were coming up. It did, smelling somewhat better than the one over the hedge. But we, the new draft, had turned up too late to be included in the rations, so we just watched the rest of the platoon devour the grub. Luckily I had a tin of Sardines in my pack, so with some hard tack biscuits, my mate and I shared a sparse meal. It turned out that it had to last us until the following evening to our next meal.

Came the darkness - the order - 'get dressed'. Marching through the night, gutted villages and guns blazing away all around us. It was very dark. Turning into a field, the order - 'dig in'. We each scraped a hole in the ground, laid in it covered over with a gas cape. Trying to sleep. An odd shell or two fell in the next field to disturb our slumbers.

Came the dawn, there I was, one infantryman in a long line of shallow trenches like graves in a cemetery. Before the day was out some of these bodies would be in one, others very near.

Sunday, 6th August, 1944. 'Get dressed' was the now familiar order. Falling in in sections, moving off, passing a troop of tanks. On reaching a crossroads on high ground, with some very weary looking infantrymen dug in on the sides. There was a high pitched moaning noise coming towards us, a new sound to me. Bombs landed very near to us. My first experience of 'Moaning Minnie' a six barrelled German mortar. Throwing ourselves to the ground, the smell of cordite, shrapnel buzzing through the air. Yet another sound that I was to get used to. Another, the shout 'stretcher bearers' for the wounded.

The Platoon Sergeant shouted for us to 'move on'. Turning left down a high hedged lane we eventually came to a small deserted village with a very large orchard at the end. We spread out in a line. This was the start of the attack.

Moving off, all was quiet. Out of the orchard into a long grass field. It was a fine sunny day and this could have been a manouvre somewhere in Devon, the terrain being very similar. An automatic weapon fired, breaking the silence, answered by one

of our Bren guns. One dead German soldier slumped in a heap against the hedge, his steel helmet slipped forward covering his face: Evidence that a lot of others had been here, judging by the empty tins, rubbish and smell.

We moved on to the edge of a woods to our front. Then it started. With the swish, whistle and noisy bang of incoming shells, shells and more shells falling amongst us, 'Stretcher Bearers' was the cry. 'Dig in!' It is surprising how quickly you can get below ground level when there are a few, or a lot of shells about. Having dug deep enough to sit in and keep your head down sergeant shouted for myself and the platoon runner to move down the bank into the woods and report back anything we heard or saw. There was a path along the bottom of the steepish bank, the trees thick and dark on the far side. We were sizing up the situation when some shells exploded, hitting the tops of the trees and shrapnel falling like rain. Scraping a hole each in the bank I said the first of quite a few prayers that day. Shells, shells and more shells. Making the hole a bit bigger, dig or die. The roots in the bank didn't make our task any easier. I had no watch. Time meant nothing, except to dig deeper, try to stay on this earth a bit, or hopefully a lot, longer. An officer came down the path from a company over on our right. He passed us with blood pouring through the fingers of his left hand, which was holding a wound on his right arm. We shouted to him to ask if he wanted help, no answer he just passed us by down the path.

There was a lull from the shelling. A wounded Lance Corporal was passed down the bank with a foot wound. We were told to take him down the path to the road. there was no blood so we left his boot on, he couldn't walk. It was a cumbersome job, almost carrying him. After some time we came to a farm with six or so dead cows in the yard that had been caught up in the shelling. There was a wheelbarrow amongst them, So putting our comrade in it, we drove on down the path. On reaching the road there was a lot of activity. It was battalion H.Q. with the radios chattering away. The shells started to arrive - again. We took shelter against the hedge, getting as close as we could, almost asking the hedge to swallow us up. Fortunately the shells crashed onto the other side of the hedge.

Then there was a break in the shelling. A Red Cross jeep came up the road, loaded with wounded, two stretchers with bad

cases on the top, with others with less serious wounds seated on the sides. Plenty of bandages and bloodspots. The jeep stopped and made room for our wounded comrade. It dashed off up the hill, overloaded and swaying from side to side.

The shelling intensified and we dug into the edge of the road, trying to bypass the bigger roots. Another prayer was said in the mind. There were quite a few of us, from different companies. We had no idea what to do next so we stayed put, scraping the holes deeper. The chap in the next hole to me got hit in the neck. He put his hand up to it and ran up the road. Hope he reached the first aid O.K.

Suddenly the shelling stopped. Then a short pause. Three of our rocket firing Typhoon fighter planes circled overhead, then dived into the enemy lines with machine guns blazing, then firing their rockets. Then, three more, followed by three more. Smoke from fires rose up into the sky from across the valley. It was all starting to happen. Three tanks went down the road, around the bend and started firing. Our own guns fired, their shells passing over our heads. From behind us our Vickers machine guns splattered away, firing across to the hills opposite. All hell was let loose. After some time things quietened down. The Red Cross jeeps dashed up and down the hill with the wounded.

We were just about to set out to find the Platoon when, up the road came some of the Platoon with their mess tins. I joined them for a late breakfast from the Company ration truck a mile or so up the road, in a field. Porridge, tinned sausages and a round of white bread. Strangely enough, even though it must have been some twenty hours since the half tin of sardines, I didn't feel that hungry. Life had a different meaning now.

Back down the road, past H.Q., around the bend in the high hedged lane. Two dead comrades stretched out with their camouflaged gas capes covering them. The thing that always struck me was the way their hobnailed boots and gaiters always stuck out at the bottom. True to say - 'they died with their boots on'. Most infantrymen did. Further down the road was one of our tracked brengun carriers, upside down in the ditch with some more gas capes with the boots sticking out. On over a shallow stream by a partially blown bridge with just enough left to walk over. The three tanks were sheltering in the

shallow water, tucked away under the steep banks. Seven Platoon was digging in on the hillside across from the bridge. It was much smaller in number now. There was an odd number, so I had to dig in by myself.

Fixing myself up for a long, dark, lonely night. Just me and my thoughts for company. The Company runner arrived with orders to join the rest of the Company on the road. Forming in sections, it was back over the partially blown bridge and up the hill. No talking, just following the shadow in front. Farm houses burning in the distance lit up the night sky. We reached the crossroads where we started that morning. There must surely have been some purpose for what we had done? We had gained nothing, returning without a lot of our comrades killed or wounded.

After following the leader for some miles we turned off the lane into a field. Dig in again for the fourth or so time on that day of hell. We didn't dig deep, we were too tired. Two hours on, four off was the guard orders. But it all went wrong. No one woke me for my tour of duty. If Jerry had come over he would probably have found us all asleep. The Sergeant's watch which was passed on to keep the time was found between two trenches in the earth. Still, we had a good night's sleep (kip). After stand down at dawn it was breakfast. Porridge with salt (the way that the Scots eat it), tinned bacon and hard tack biscuits and the welcome tin mug, of strong, sweet char. We felt good that we were still in one piece.

The Platoon moved to another field. A better position. Only digging in once that day, Enemy mortar shells landed every so often to keep us on our toes, sitting on top of the slits, then diving in again.

The Battalion was a pivot to the rest of the Brigade, so we were told that we stayed put whilst the rest went forward. We could hear the battle going on to our left. As we were stationary a church service had been laid on for so many from each Platoon, I being one of those attending. The Service was held in a small field on a hill, with tall hedges of trees around it. The Congregation, us and others from other Companies, spread out under the trees, with a hymn book in one hand and a rifle in the other. With a fifty round bandolier of 303 ammunition and two live Mills bombs in our pouches, our steel helmets firmly on our heads.

The Padre arrived in the middle of the sloping field, opened his wooden box and

took out a Cross and two Chalices. He put them on the top of the wooden box, forming a sort of Altar. Putting his purple scarf around his neck he commenced with the Service. We started singing a hymn, the only one singing in tune, the Padre, isolated in the middle of the field with his Altar, with the Cross, standing out as if in defiance to all that was going on around us.

The Good Lord could not have been very pleased (or it could have been the other one, the Devil), because the shelling was getting too close for comfort, or Prayer. The Padre made a quick sign of the Cross and packed up his Altar. Without being told we all made for the partial safety of our slit trenches. A short Service, but one to remember. I can't remember the hymn, but it wasn't 'ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS'.

We had a sanitary pit (for want of a better word). Perhaps fly pit would have been a better one. It had a box on top with a hole cut in it. Only a problem if, in the middle of a 'session' the mortaring started again.

A road about half a mile behind us drew enemy fire because of the vehicles driving too fast, sending up the dust. So a notice was put up.

DUST MEANS SHELLS !!!

One rifleman from our Platoon had to serve as a sentry to force the vehicles to slow down at this point. It was my turn. A shell landed up the road and I caught some shrapnel in my arm and shoulder. It turned out to be what was called a 'Blighty' wound. Just enough to be evacuated back to England.

After rides in ambulances, through dressing stations, we reached 106 British General Hospital in large marquees just outside Bayeux. The best part - to be sleeping in a proper bed, the first time for months.

Three days later things hadn't improved so, to my surprise, I was marked down as 'evacuate by air'. This did not go too smoothly. Driven to a freshly laid airfield I saw the Dakota transport plane parked in a ditch for easier loading this meant that the wing was lower to the ground. An ambulance backing up to the door backed into the wing, buckling the end of the port wing. It had a few creases about six inches, or so, apart.

Everything stopped. A mechanic arrived, a Flight Sergeant. He climbed onto the wing, jumped up and down three times, tried to pull a bit of the buckled end off,

without success. He asked the pilot to work the flaps and gave the thumbs up.

The plane was overloaded. Stretcher cases two and three high around the sides, with us, walking wounded sitting on the floor in the gangway. It was a fine August day flying over the Isle of Wight. Those of us who could see the wing kept a close eye on it for most of the journey.

Landing on the edge of a large airfield, with a last look at the bent wing, we were taken to the marquee tent by pleasant WAAF's. We were served a good roast meal on proper plates. We were then taken by train to Neath in Wales. To a small ward in the work house. The old folks who lived there did us proud, washing, darning and making sure that we had plenty of hot water. Medical care was first class with local doctors and nurses. The Mayor and other local organisations came round the wards with everything we needed including soap, toothbrushes, writing 'paper and many other things to help make life easier. The front row in the local cinema was reserved for us. The town people invited us to tea and concerts.

After treatment and some leave, it was now back to reality, To Edinburgh to be passed fit. Then on to Banbridge in Northern Ireland for two weeks infantry training. More leave, taking with us all of our field marching order - plus a blanket. Now another long journey to come. The only difference was that I now knew what was waiting for us at the other end.

(to be continued)

Tom Gore - November 2005 Westminster



Heroes Remembered at St. Peter's Church,

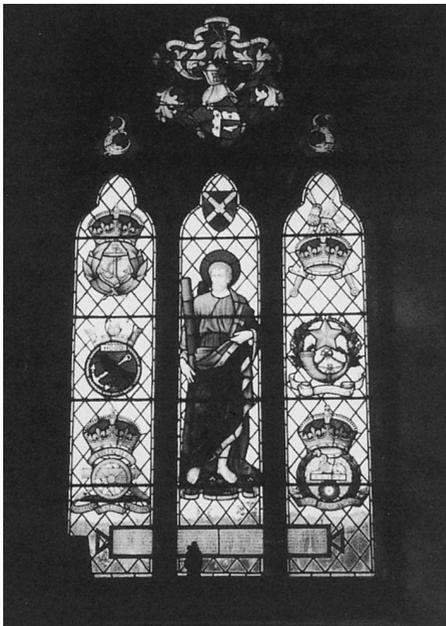
Newnham-on-Severn - Gloucestershire

Approximately eleven miles south-west of Gloucester, on the western bank of the River Severn, lies the village of Newnham. Its church, St. Peter's, stands on a promontory overlooking the river, across the Vale of Berkeley and on to the



Cotswolds. On the wall of the south aisle of St Peter's, below a Royal British Legion Standard, two hand-written Rolls of Honour commemorate those who fell in the two world wars. The frame to the left records, below the dates 1914-1918, twenty-two names of Great War casualties.

In the Lady Chapel is a memorial window to four members of the Kerr Family. Dr. William Charles Kerr was left property in Newnham ('The Haie') by his cousin,



Lady Davy, widow of Sir Humphrey Davy, inventor of the miners' safety lamp. Installed in 1946, the window is illustrated by naval and military devices, and provides a fine record of military service. One member of the family, William Kerr, died from wounds received in the Crimea, and two others, Royal Navy and Royal Artillery officers, fell during the Second World War.

Shown above the badge of the East Lancashire Regiment is the mullet (star) and stringed bugle-horn of the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles). Born in 1890, William John Kerr was a regular soldier. He received his Commission in September 1909, after attending the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, and travelled with the 2nd Cameronians to Malta two years later. The battalion remained here until it sailed for England on 15 September 1914. The Cameronians spent a few weeks in camp at Hursley Park near Winchester, then, having received orders to move overseas, landed in France on 5 November. The battalion had reached La Flinque by 18 November, and on the 21st took over trenches in the Chapigny sector. Here, on 1 February 1915, records the Battalion War Diary, one man was killed, and another, Lt W.J. Kerr, was wounded. Kerr died in England on 10 March 1915, the day that more than 450 members of his battalion would become casualties at Neuve Chapelle. He was buried in a family plot overlooking the Severn in the churchyard at St. Peter's.

Ray Westlake

Who is the Cameronian?



This photograph of a Russian soldier and a Cameronian corporal was possibly taken after VE Day in May 1945. The Cameronian was probably either serving with the 6th Bn

or the 7th Bn, which were part of the 52nd (Lowland) Division. They were in east Germany and may have been standing near the Elbe?

The flash, above the corporal's stripes, confirms that the 52nd Division had been trained for mountain warfare by Norwegian units in the Highlands; they had learnt to ski, wear snowshoes, live in igloos and believed they would be part of the liberation of Norway? A former artillery officer of the 52nd told me that they had been trained as part of a successful hoax to tie up German divisions in Norway, which might well have been transferred to France to await the D Day invasion.

This photograph was printed in The Guardian on the 16th June 2003 alongside three other pictures of Leo Tolstoy; authors Maxim Gorky and HG. Wells; Tsar Nicholas 11, King George V and King Albert of the Belgians. The pictures, owned by the Russian Information Agency-Novosti, were part of a photographic exhibition at the Guildhall in London to mark the banquet given by the Corporation of London in honour of President Vladimir Putin. This was the first official state visit by Russia since 1874, when Tsar Alexander II dined at the Guildhall.

The exhibition called Russia/Britain Past and Present was held between the 21st June and the 6th July 2003. The Cameronian and his Russian comrade, displayed among the historical figures of the past, looked down upon President Putin, the Lord Mayor of London and many others who are making history today.

Bill Coughlan.

Capt. Cliff Petit, ex-6th Bn, wrote the following: 'Your initial paragraph is not simply a 'possibility' - it is a fact.' He goes on to reveal that the photograph was taken on the Friendship Bridge in Magdeburg, which joined the British and Russian sectors over the Elbe. The Friendship Bridge was a temporary replacement for the destroyed Adolph Hitler Bridge.

Can anybody identify the corporal? If we receive his side of the story, we might be able to learn something about the Russian as well.

Terry Mackenzie, the museum officer, states that, although there are snapshots of Cameronians meeting Russians in the 1945 editions of the Covenanter, he believes that the Novosti picture is the only press agency photograph of such meetings between

Cameronians and Russians.

Bill Coughlan.

Tribute to John Terraine

Anyone privileged to compose a piece for inclusion in a Tribute to John Terraine will no doubt have a particular example of his work, perhaps a book written or edited by him, or a television series he has produced, which we hold in special esteem. While I greatly admire *Douglas Haig: the Educated Soldier*, and have enjoyed *The Smoke and the Fire*, as well as the television series *The Mighty Continent* and *The Life and Times of Lord Mountbatten*, for me *General Jack's Diary 1914-1918* must have pride of place. There are two reasons for this: first, my personal connections with the General, and second, the manner in which John drew attention to his fine qualities at a time when the ideals which had inspired him were mostly forgotten, or mocked if remembered.

My father served with James Jack between 1910 and 1912 in the 1st Battalion The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles), the same battalion as I joined in 1948, and of which I was Second-in-Command on the sad day of its disbandment, 14 May 1968. Just before my father arrived in India in 1910, Jack had been made adjutant, although only a 2nd Lieutenant in those days of slow promotion. In his memoirs, my father recalled that it was a time when drill was held to be all-important, and Jack 'was a real addict'. The significance of this preoccupation with what some might consider an almost pointless aspect of military training should not be missed. It was an essential part of the make-up of the pre-1914 regular officer, about whom John Terraine makes important observations in his introduction to the *Diary*.

He starts by mentioning two main sources of information about the war. There are the brilliant books which he describes as the 'testimonies of Britain's Citizen Army', and include works by Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, Charles Edmunds and others. There are also the records of the generals 'who committed millions of words to paper'. But what of the reactions of the regular soldier at the regimental level? John asks. Having posed several questions on this subject, ending with 'What was it that sustained them?', he finishes as follows:

These are the questions which General Jack's diary helps to answer. His narrative fills in (deliberately) much of the detail of a soldier's life at war which alone can provide true

answers to the great inquest into 1914-1918. This is not literature, as such; the language is the language of the mess, the orderly room, Standing Orders, 'reports in writing'. Men do not 'go', they proceed '; things do not 'begin' they commence'. So much the better; this creates a stiff strait-jacket for emotion and passion. If they can break through it, they must be powerful indeed. And, in my submission, they do break through it. With them go other qualities, not to be overlooked: a stern conception of duty; the keen attention to details at all times; the 'eye for country', sharpened by training - and by hunting; a sense of history, instilled by the Regiment. In short, this is a true chronicle of the British professional soldier, at a time when he was worth his weight in gold.

On behalf of two old regular soldiers, my father and myself, who between us were serving in James Jack's regiment for nearly sixty years, I would like to end my tribute to John Terraine with a personal expression of gratitude for *General Jack's Diary 1914-1918*. Lt Col John Baynes BT

'Geez A Shovel, Jimmy' or If Only They Had Known....

B Company were the first there. Trust them to lead the way to the fleshpots of the Hotel Post at Urfeld. But on their first morning there, as they looked out from the dining room south over the frozen waters of Walchensee and up to the pre-Alps which



surround it, little did they know that they were within marching distance of the scene of what has been described in the Guinness Book of Records as 'the largest robbery in the history of the world'. To have two weeks out of barracks was a luxury. The temptation to spend the time bounty hunting might have been too much for more than a few of them if they had known about the gold said to lie buried there still.

In a previous article I have referred to Exercise Snow Queen, the effort ostensibly to teach winter warfare skills to troops serving in BAOR but really a very good way of getting them out of barracks and onto skis. I do not know who thought of it or when it all started. It was certainly going strong when 1 Cameronians were posted to Minden in the early 1960's. It was still going strong when I served with the Army Air Corps in Minden in the early '70's, For all I know it may still go on though I rather doubt that today's army has the time and space for such luxuries.

My understanding is that all of the early 'training' took place in specially designated areas and camps in the British zone of northern Germany in the Arnsbergerwald close to the Möhnesee, the biggest and most famous target of the Dambusters. There was also some skiing in the Harz Mountains on the border with East Germany. But it was much later that the scheme was extended to the Alps which lie many miles to the south and in the American zone. 11 Brigade, of which 1 Cameronians was part, decided to set up an Ex Snow Queen centre close to the biggest and best of all of the German alpine resorts, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, which lies at the foot of the Zugspitz, Germany's highest mountain. This was established at the beginning of January 1963 and was temporarily accommodated at an American Logistics Headquarters at Murnau some 20 miles to the north. It was to this base that I travelled with A Company and where we spent two weeks discovering the delights of Garmisch, Mittenwald, and Oberammergau (of Passion Play fame).

The exercise was run by Captain Ron Gibson, then 2i/c of A Company. Under him he had half a dozen army ski instructors (mostly corporals) and the technical skill was supplied by a local instructor hired for the purpose for the season. Sepp Streidl was a man of volcanic temper and few words, certainly in English. (His most memorable expression, in a mixture of German and soldiers' English was, 'Das Wetter [the weather] ist s***f***!') He had the complexion of a true countryman - mahogany and was known to everyone everywhere we went. Not altogether surprising when you learn that he had skied in the German national team at the Winter Olympics of 1936. At that time the winter Olympics were comparatively new. There had been only three previous ones: 1924 at Chamonix, '28

at St Moritz and '32 at Lake Placid. The '36 Games were held at Garmisch-Partenkirchen and were the first to feature downhill (otherwise known as alpine) skiing and it was this discipline that Sepp was trying to teach us.

The US Army base was unmemorable except for the PX stores and for a large notice which faced vehicles entering the barrack circuit. It was headed 'Why Your (sic) In Germany'. (No doubt somewhere there is a similar one today: 'Why Your in Iraq.'). Those of us who used the PX soon became adept at mental arithmetic. We were paid in DM and the going rate then was DM 12 to £1.00 (it is now Euro 1.50 or DM 3 to £1.00) there were \$ 4 to £1.00 (it's now about \$1.75) so that meant there must have been DM 3 per \$1.00, right? We soon learned to switch from one to the other with ease. Murnau was also our introduction to the American Forces broadcasting service and their news broadcasts 'from the wires of AP and UPI'. Two programmes stick in the mind: 'The Early Bird Show'~ (sing 'Eaaaaa...rly' with an American accent for the full flavour) and the midday special which was called 'Lunchin' in Munchen'. Enough said: you get the general tone.

During A Company's stay new accommodation was found at a hotel which was used in the summer for elderly and infirm Germans taking the curative airs. The old part was on the site of the original



coaching inn (hence Hotel Post) and was still of a traditional design with lots of typical local wood panelling. The main accommodation was in a 1950's annex next door. Here Ex Snow Queen was to be based for the rest of the winter. Urfeld is at the north end of Walchensee. It is about 15 miles due north of Mittenwald and still within easy reach of all of the resorts

mentioned above. It should be said in passing that the countryside thereabouts is particularly beautiful. The mountains are spectacular and there are many lovely old and unspoiled villages. And this is true even now: it is still a popular destination for holiday makers, especially walkers.

The daily routine was always much the same. There were no parades or military duties of any kind. After breakfast we would collect our skis, shoulder them and walk about half a mile along a track beside the lake to a sloping field which provided our nursery slope. Here the first thing to be done was to pack down the overnight snow with our skis to create some sort of a *piste* on which we could ski. The party was then divided into classes of about a dozen each and allocated to an army instructor. We would then continue with classes until it was time for a break. At that point Sepp would gather all of the instructors to him and form a new class. The instructors were then put through their paces not only to improve their technique but to teach them how to teach. Falls were not at all infrequent and this provided suitable entertainment for the watching pupils. At the end of the morning we would then all walk back to the Hotel Post for lunch.

The pattern in the afternoon was much the same but it was usual then, certainly in the second week, for the whole party to go by truck to one of the resorts. Most of the time then was spent in practicing what had been learned so far. The instruction continued but it was much more a question of trying out our technique. We could also go by ski lift up some of the less demanding slopes and enjoy terrifying ourselves, as well as the few locals out and about, by heading for the bottom, more or less totally out of control. Just think of it: a company of Jocks, shouting to one another, arms flailing! It is worth mentioning the equipment at this stage and remarking on the fact that it is nothing short of a miracle that there were few broken limbs. Our boots were issued to us by the Headquarters of the German army Alpenkorps at Mittenwald and we will return to this establishment shortly. The boots were dual purpose: they could be used for marching up an Alp or attached to skis for sliding down. The skis were of a very old design: wood and with wooden soles. I suppose that in itself was something of a safety feature as one's speed was limited, to a degree.

But it was the bindings which were by far

the most interesting feature. They were what are sometimes called 'suicide' bindings. In other words once your boots were strapped into them there was no way out unless the binding broke, or the ski! Incidentally I can vouch for the quality of the boots. Having been able to purchase mine (I think) I was able to use them as a competitor in the Army Ski Championships in Scotland. Later yet I used them on a Mountain Leadership course also in the Cairngorms. (This course was the sole outcome of my application to go the Jungle Warfare School in Malaysia!) Their last outing was across the 18 desperately inhospitable miles of Rannoch Moor when they had already passed their 30th birthday. And a final word on boots: even Sepp, who sported the latest in boot technology, had lace-up leather boots. Plastic boots or those with clips were still some time in the future.

One bonus of the afternoons away was that when daylight failed and we could pack up skiing there was no need to rush back to the hotel. There was absolutely nothing to do there anyway and the weather precluded any ventures forth without full protection. As a result at least one of the three-tonners would usually be held to allow those who wanted to linger to stay on in the villages a bit longer. There were tea dances in some of the hotels in Garmisch (though few of us availed ourselves of that) but Mittenwald and Oberammergau were pretty villages with lots of shops selling wooden carvings. And did I mention the smoke filled wood lined bars? We also made excursions to Schloss Linderhof, one of the mad King Ludwig's palaces, and to the gorgeously baroque chapel at the Monastery of Ettal. They had a souvenir shop too, selling Benedictine liqueurs of various lurid hues.

So why were we not all out hunting for the booty? What was all that about? The answer of course is very straight-forward: we knew nothing about it. The first I knew of the whole story was exactly 40 years later. On the evening on 31 March 2003 I had settled after work for some not too demanding goofing and decided to watch a programme called Nazi Gold being broadcast on Channel 4. It was a good programme well filmed and with a great story line which went something like this.

In early 1945, as the Allied forces advanced on Berlin, it was decided that much of the gold and foreign currency reserves of the Reichsbank (the German

central bank) should be hidden in a disused potassium mine at Merkers, 200 miles south of Berlin. This was duly done amidst extraordinary secrecy and security. It left still a significant amount for the continuing war effort and in April, as the vice tightened on Berlin, it was decided that this should be taken and hidden in Oberbayern (Upper Bavaria). It was loaded onto a convoy of trucks under the charge of one Georg Netzeband, a highranking Reichsbank official, and this convoy made for Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Once there they sought out the local military commander and asked for his help and directions. His advice was that the Americans were already all too close and he sent them east over the small pass and the short distance to the Headquarters of the Alpenkorps at Mittenwald.

Once there Netzeband reported to the Commandant, Colonel Franz Pfeiffer, and was told, apparently, 'That's fine. Just leave whatever you have with us and we'll look after it for you.' One could understand if he viewed this with some scepticism especially when the Commandant declined to sign a receipt! That said, he had few options open to him and the Commandant had also persuaded him that the latest convoy from Berlin was only part of a larger haul of goodies which the Alpenkorps had to hide. It is thought that the remnants of the Nazi leadership had some idea of retreating to a mountain hideaway to rest and regroup and of course they would need all of the resources they could salvage.

Mystery surrounds what Netzeband did next. He was seen taking a small boat out onto Walchensee at night and to lower over the side a number of items. For sure it was not any part of the treasure. We can only guess at what it was but mine is that he was jettisoning all of the careful records for which the Germans are famous. No doubt they would have given details of the sources of at least some of the haul and it is almost certain that he would not want to have that traced back to him in the event that he were captured and quizzed. The reasons are clear. Much of the gold, silver and other treasure had been taken from the countries overrun by the Nazis. Some had come from the Jewish communities in Germany and in Eastern Europe.

After some delays while mule trains were prepared and men briefed an Alpenkorps party set off for the steeply wooded

mountains which surround Walchensee. The first halt was at a *forsthaus* best described as a barn type of building with some accommodation. How long they spent there is not known but it was presumably to allow for rest and recuperation for men and mules as well as for forward reconnaissance. Thereafter they took to the hills and the loot was buried. Some months later the US Army 10th Armored Division caught up with the Alpenkorps and recovered the bulk of the booty. But there is no doubt that they missed some. The Commandant, Colonel Franz Pfeiffer, left Germany after the war and settled comfortably in Argentina. The suspicion is that he took the precaution of packing his pension with him. There has also been a persistent rumour that there are still alive a few old veterans who know where some remains hidden. There was certainly a significant shortfall in the amount said to have left the Reichsbank and the amount ever recovered, hence 'the largest robbery ever'.

Now if B Company, or if any of the others who followed on, had known... As it was, the closest they got to treasure was when one of them snaffled the petty cash box! Trust B Company.

Philip Grant (prg@blutmail.ch)

The 90th's man at Rorke's Drift.

Some years ago a famous author and former Soldier by the name of John Prebble, wrote a short article on the action at Rorke's Drift. This article began an unprecedented interest in the battle and indeed the entire Zulu war.

The public's interest in this war, soon led to the making of the historically incorrect 1963 film "Zulu" starring Stanley Baker, and a newcomer Michael Caine. Since then, much research has been done into the leaders, the battles and the Zulu enemy. Many fine books have emerged telling the story of the war and it's combatants including the role of the 90th Perthshire Light Infantry.

The value of Zulu war artefacts, such as medals, badges and weapons went through the roof. Researchers and medal collectors began delving into the service records of the individual soldiers who served during this campaign. From this research an extremely interesting story emerged concerning the

only member of the 90th Regiment present during the battle for Rorke's Drift.

Daniel Sheehan a civilian clerk and a native of Cork Ireland, enlisted in the 6th Regiment (The Warwickshire Regiment) in 1870, Sheehan gave his age as 18 years 6 months and he signed on for the mandatory six years with the colours and six in the reserve. He was allotted the service number 2202 and began his service in the 2nd Battalion of the 6th Foot. During the next six years his service record shows he obtained the '2nd class certificate' and he rose to the rank of Sergeant by January of 1876. His, thus far impeccable service record, was damaged by his going AWOL for a week in June of the same year.

Sheehan was apprehended and tried. He was sentenced to being reduced in the ranks to Private. No fixed reason for his desertion was ever recorded on his service papers. On the 15th of December 1876 Private Daniel Sheehan passed into the Liverpool District Reserve. Here Sheehan's career takes an almost inexplicable turn. He left behind his reserve commitment, returned to Ireland and re-enlisted at the town of Birr. He changed his name to James Graham, he joined the 90th Light Infantry (Perthshires) giving his birthplace as St. Mary's near Dublin, his occupation as labourer and his height now recorded as 5ft 8 3/4in (an inch taller than his previous enlistment) and lastly he declared he had no previous military service.

Twenty nine days later Army Records caught up, with him. On February 26th 1877 he was arrested and confirmed for two months while awaiting his trial. May 2nd he was tried and convicted of the charge of fraudulent enlistment, he lost his 29 days of pension and good conduct service with the 90th in addition he lost his 6 years of service accumulated for pension and good conduct while serving with the 6th Regiment. He was also imprisoned till the 26th of June 1877.

On release, Private 1123 James Graham returned to the 90th and with the regiment proceeded to South Africa where in January of 1878 the regiment saw service against the Gaiikas and Galekas in the Eastern Cape Frontier.

Graham, despite his previous transgressions. Had been promoted to Lance-Corporal on the 7th of January 1878. He was not with the 90th when the regiment marched to Helpmekaara year later in January of 1879 on it's way to

Dundee and Bemba's Kop as part of No.4 Column commanded by Sir Evelyn Wood V.C.

Lance - Corporal Graham was transferred to the "Payment of the General Depot" on the 1st of November 1878, his years of rapid promotion in both the 6th and 90th Regiments was indicative of a soldier working in orderly rooms where promotion was always accelerated. His transfer also meant he became part of the Central or No.3 Column. The column commanded by Lord Chelmsford

The logistics of transporting a British army in Africa, complete with its Artillery train, provisions for men and beasts, tent's, ammunition etc. must have been a monumental task in 1879. The selection of well qualified clerks from all available units would have been made to facilitate the paperwork required to keep supplies rolling to units in the field.

At the commencement of the campaign against the Zulu nation, Lord Chelmsford and his staff decided a three prong thrust into Zulu-land would be the best initial tactic to find and destroy the bulk of the enemy. The Central or No.3 Column, crossed the Buffalo river at Rorke's Drift. The site was chosen as a supply depot and hospital as the existing buildings were ideal for the purpose, the location was near a ford which the Royal Engineers would bridge over to further the speed of supplies to the army.

L/Cpl. Graham was stationed at Rorke's Drift with Sergeant Milne of the 3rd (Bufs) also transferred to the "Payment of the General Depot" here with Staff Sgt, Mabin of the General Staff and members of the Army Service Corps, all under the command of Commissaries Lt. Dunne and Lt. Dalton.

The service of Graham as a clerk in the supply depot is important, as most published histories wrongly show him on the sick list. His service documents do not reveal any medical problems at this time.

During the battle of Rorke's Drift L/Cpl. Graham would have given a good account of himself. He was a qualified Musketry Instructor from his service with the 6th Regiment. Using the Martini - Henry rifle he was more than capable of knocking down the enemy at any distance the rifle could reach.

After the battle Graham and Sgt, Milne were kept at their duties with the supply depot until the 1st of September 1879. This

meant he was not with the 90th during the battles of Holbane, Khambula and Ulundi.

Returning to the 90th, Graham found the Regiment was being sent to India in October of 1879. While serving in India Graham was promoted to Lance - Sergeant in December of 1879 and further promoted to Sergeant in May of 1880.

In 1881 the 90th L.I. had, with the Cardwell reforms become the 2nd Battalion Scottish Rifles. Graham would have been fully involved in the evolution of the regiment into a Rifle Battalion. Shortly after this Graham was given a restoration of 6 years and 29 days Good Conduct towards pension.

Further promotion to Colour - Sergeant followed on the 19th of March 1887. In February 1885 he married Mary Ann Daly at Bareilly in India. He had also reverted to his original name prior to his marriage.

He was posted to the permanent staff of the 1st Lanark Rifle Volunteers on December 1888, he sailed for home on January 25th 1889. He was finally discharged in Scotland on December 15th 1891.

Alexander Craig.

HAPPY DAYS

It was the last year of the old TA. In a few short months 6/7 Cameronians, along with the battalions of the other Lowland Regiments, would be pruned down to fit a new role as a company of 52nd Lowland Volunteers with all the prospects which that held, but for the moment we were enjoying our final camp at Thetford to the full.

In our second week a three-day op. in the field was taking place and normal Cameronian training weather, namely cold strong winds and driving rain regardless of season, had given way to a few days of dry, dusty, still, sunlit weather which shows rural England at its balmy best. The climax of this scheme on the third day was going to involve the battalion in a trek of some miles over dusty heathland followed by a sweep through woodland, culminating in a full frontal attack on the enemy - a Midlands para battalion who were rumoured to have dropped into the area in the darkness of the previous night.

Bn. HQ. was in a ruined farmhouse with a duckpond, straight from the set of a Second World War movie and as we all prepared for this final attack by the 6/7th, the C.O. said that, as battalion adjutant, it

would, alas, fall to me to stay behind at Bn H.Q. to organise the Bn transport convoy, which would appear by mid afternoon, to convey the doubtlessly grubby and exhausted, but exhilarated troops back to camp after this landmark in our history.

I looked at the shady trees round the farmhouse and the dragonflies dive-bombing the surface of the little pond, compared all of that with the prospect of a trek across the heath, some hours of prodding paras out of the undergrowth, then the sweaty march back to Bn HQ and hid my disappointment as best I could as we assembled the men and watched as A.B. and C. companies, at full strength, moved off in the late morning sunshine.

The three companies were at full strength because D company had been split up for the day and redistributed to make up the numbers in the other three companies. For the purposes of wireless traffic there was a D company, but it consisted of only one officer, one sergeant major, one radio and one Land Rover.

The battalion having set out on its offensive meant that things were fairly quiet at Bn HQ and the few staff left behind were setting about the preparation of a mid-day meal when all of D Company appeared and parked under a shady tree by the duckpond. Ian Young - for it was he, came across and, seeing our preparations, asked me if I would care to join him and his sergeant major, Niall Ferguson, for lunch. Thinking of our need to share our compositions I asked 'what are you planning to have?' 'Oh said he we thought some cold roast pheasant and champagne would be nice' without any question I replied 'but? 'we've put some bottles in the duck pond to cool them and we've got a hamper for the pheasant and so forth' - and so they had!

CSM Ferguson came over and chatted, before we ate, in a hoarse whisper, which denoted a very good summer camp. Many of you may remember why.

In the days of the T.A., when we were spare-time soldiers rather than part-time civilians, as the TAVR would have us become, summer camp was a fortnight away from civilian life when men who never even ran for a bus at home found the energy for so much more. For senior ranks summer camp called for feats of stamina and endurance, many of them performed not far from the Sergeants Mess bar. CSM Ferguson told me that he usually found he was having a good camp if he was hoarse by

the middle of the first week. This, which was to be our last, was 'a good camp'. Mindful of the need to celebrate it suitably we sat in the shade and fell with relish to eating this memorable lunch.

Suddenly, immediately to our front, nine o'clock from ruined farmhouse, there appeared a cavalcade - well two Land Rovers, bearing it was obvious, the Brigadier and staff, What to do?

The Thetford ranges and miles of training area were awash with game. Rabbit, hare, wood pigeon and, of course, pheasant were all there in abundance but the shooting was all heavily syndicated, so much so that for those without a syndicate licence it was forbidden even to speak sharply to a pheasant much less shoot it if it crossed your path. Added to which in July, although almost in their prime, pheasant were out of season!

The Brigadier alighted, strolled over and, with the formalities and niceties observed, was offered some lunch. Now was the moment! Would he like some champagne? Indeed he would. A little pheasant perhaps? He paused, smiled and took the proffered with a quizzical look, As he ate it with evident enjoyment the thought which troubled him, and all of us, made him ask, 'I trust, Sergeant Major, that none of your people have been shooting the game?'

CSM Ferguson was equal to the moment, his hoarseness adding to the solemnity of his reply 'No sir, of course not, these poor birds died as the result of a road accident'.

Stumped for a reply and with the champagne bubbles tickling his nose as he choked back the laughter the Brigadier finished his lunch, chatted for a few moments, returned our farewell salutes and was gone.

This one small short incident has remained with me all these years because it contains so many of the attributes which made, and make, services life even in the T.A. so fulfilling and memorable - initiative, resourcefulness, understatement, deference, and mutual respect all cemented together with the odd moment of high hilarity - happy days indeed!

George Ferguson

The Malayan Emergency

In June 1998, Chin Peng, the Secretary-General of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) gave interviews to the Observer, BBC2, Radio 4 and the BBC World Service to explain the MCP reaction to the

Declaration of the State of Emergency in June 1948. Although the conflict between the British and MCP was inevitable, Chin Peng said he did not want it to happen in 1948 at a time when military help was not available from either China or Russia. Later when the Chinese Communists were fully in power they granted the MCP shelter, medical care, education in China and provided them with funds to operate a radio station.

At the time the 1st Bn arrived in Malaya from Bombay in November 1945 Chin Peng was classified as a hero. He had been awarded the OBE, mentioned in dispatches and given campaign medals, and had been congratulated by Lord Louis Mountbatten for his leadership in continuing the fight against the Japanese after the British defeat and surrender in 1942. When the 1st Bn returned to the Muar area of Malaya in May 1950, Chin Peng was wanted as a number one enemy. Did the 1950 battalion have in their ranks any of the 1945 Battalion?

Historians have waited years for Chin Peng to pen his autobiography. It will be of interest to those Cameronians who served in the Malayan Emergency to know that Media Masters published Chin Peng's book called 'My Side of History' in September 2003. I have read it. It was absorbing to read about the Emergency from the other side and, in particular, to learn the reasons that led to Chin Peng joining the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) before the Second World War. In 1945, having been the leader of the successful guerrilla army against the Japanese, he had the popularity and British approval to become a successful man in politics or business: his life, and those close to him, would have been more comfortable. However, he felt the injustices of British colonial rule and capitalism so strongly that he dedicated his life to bringing both to an end.

Chin Peng was able to use declassified top-secret British documents to back his story. He writes: 'I am not asking the reader to excuse the past. This book is neither a boast nor an apology. It is an invitation to understand how beliefs are formed and how conflicts can start and abate.'

Although the granting of Malayan Independence in 1957 indicates that the MCP was near enough to defeat for the records to state that the Emergency was over in 1960, this is not wholly true. Chin Peng points out that the MCP was still able to attack Malaya frequently from their bases

in Thailand. In fact, so far as the Communists were concerned, the Emergency did not end until Chin Peng negotiated a peace accord with Malaysia in 1989. Not only did he, as he states, obtain 'peace with dignity' but he also gained permission for the old bandits to return home with grants of resettlement money from the Malaysian Government. Chin Peng was not allowed to return home. Now well into his eighties, his one wish is to see again his home village of Sitiawan where he can pay homage to the graves of his family and visit the familiar sites of his childhood. With sad words he writes: 'It is ironic that I should be without the country for which I was more than willing to die.'

Chin Peng reveals there was a possibility that the Emergency could have ended in 1955 when he headed a delegation to meet Malayan politicians and British officials at Baling in northern Kedah. The Chinese and Russians had advised Chin Peng that military imbalance was so great that he should attempt to seek a political settlement. Chin Peng offered the cessation of hostilities if the MCP were allowed to stand as candidates in the election before the granting of independence in 1957. In response the MCP was offered an amnesty if they surrendered. Chin Peng saw such terms as humiliation and said: 'If you demand our surrender, we would prefer to fight to the last man.'

Bill Couglan

British Army Reorganisations

In the light of recent events in relation to the re-organisation of the Scottish Division readers will feel that somehow we have been here before. The following extracts from the September 1967 Covenanter taken from a message by the Colonel of the Regiment on the disbandment of the 1st Bn may be of interest -

'I should like to clarify and fill in some gaps about the Government's decision to disband our Regiment which is causing us all so much distress.

The various Councils of Colonels were called to London in May and were told that cuts were imminent.

We were given a certain time to consult our Regular Battalions and other leading members of our Regiments and were asked to inform the Army Board if in the hypothetical event of a cut in our Brigade we would wish:

- a. to retain as many traditional units as possible; or
- b. to recommend a voluntary amalgamation within the Brigade; or
- c. to form a large Regiment, wherein Regimental Titles would cease to exist

In effect the Lowland Brigade recommended course a, though we naturally hoped that we would be spared and if we were not we had no idea as to which Regiments would go. I, and many of my advisers, though not all, agreed with this recommendation.

Amalgamation is at least, a painful process and means the loss of two old Regiments to make a new one. We of all people, unlike any other Regiment in Scotland or the British Army, with our differences in history, customs, dress and drill, seemed most unsuitable for amalgamation.

Our forbears in the Cameronians and the 90th and then in The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) have written a fine chapter in the History of Scotland, of the British Empire and of the British Army. We all have an immense amount to be proud of.'

That disbandment should fall to us, not least in the context of a similar situation unfolding in relation to at least one other Scottish Regiment should be seen in the context of the following letter (published with the page 43/44 revision to the 2003 Covenanter) from Major General Sir John Willoughby KBE CB sent to the CGS Lieutenant General Sir James Cassels GCB KBE DSO.

17th Feb 67

My dear General

Yesterday, Leslie Dow, Commanding 1st Battalion the Cameronians, left on the completion of his Battalions' tour of duty here in Aden. I would like therefore to now put on record how this Regiment has completed its difficult and exacting duties.

The men arrived in the heat of the summer with all the appearances and bearing of troops seasoned in this kind of half-war we wage here.

They went straight on patrols and escorts; and from the day of their first appearance they looked like business. They have never looked otherwise.

And in many ways a much less easy reputation to earn under these trying conditions, they have won a name for exceptional courtesy.

They will ever be remembered by the families of servicemen and of civilians with

affection, not only for their qualities but in the crowning of their association with the Pipes in the open streets. And in the telling of this day by the ordinary words of ordinary families bearing the strains of tension magnificently, I have seen tears of gratitude and of pride.

They are second to none, and I am as proud of having had these men under my command as they have reason to be of their record and reputation so well and firmly earned in Aden, and in the Hills of Southern Arabia.

Yours very sincerely,

Major General Sir John Willoughby KBE CB
General Officer Commanding Middle East Land Forces, Headquarters, Middle East Command.

We can take comfort in the words of the Rev Donald McDonald (former chaplain for many years to each of our Regular Battalions in turn) at the disbandment parade in May 1968.

'You now move out of the Army List because of changes of emphasis in our Defence Systems coupled with economic duress and political expediency BUT be not disheartened the Army List is a document of temporary significance, liable to amendments or excision according to the whim and swing of governments.

So put pride in your step Cameronians! As you march out of the Army List you are marching into History and from your proud place there, no man can remove your name and no man can snatch a rose from the chaplet of your honour. Be of good courage therefore! The Lord your God is with you wherever you go and to his gracious mercy and protection I now commit you.'

Major General FCC Graham CB DSO DL (Colonel Commandant of the Scottish Division in his reply to the Colonel of The Regiment at the disbandment parade said 'we pledge ourselves to do all in our power to keep your memory alive. To this end we propose that the 14th May annually shall be held as 'Cameronian Day' throughout the ranks of the Scottish Infantry. On that day your Flag will fly on the ramparts of Edinburgh Castle. On that day also a short history of your Regiment will appear in Daily Orders of each Scottish Battalion and your duty Pipe Calls will be sounded in their Barracks.'

Band Characters.

In the past year I have received surprise calls from two ex-bandsmen. Conk Valente I had last seen in 1965 and Dave Davies I had briefly seen in 1972.

'Dave' Ron Davies.

Dave, and his second cousin Johnny Emmins, had joined the band in Trieste in 1949 during Laurie Dunn's final year as BM. Dave remembers him taking and blowing his cornet on the regular route marches through the hilly countryside beyond the city limits of Trieste.

Dave, apart from his training at Kneller Hall in 1950/1, served with the battalion after Trieste in Hong Kong, Malaya and Germany. In 1956 he transferred to the RAPC to return after his training as a pay sergeant with another unit in Germany. After seven years with the Cameronians and fifteen years with the Pay Corps he retired from the army as a W011 in 1971.

Although born in London's East End, his enjoyment of dancing made him a natural choice to become one of the band's Highland Dancers who either performed while the pipe band played a strathspey and reel during tattoos or as part of the military band's concert programme. Alongside his cornet playing Dave used his pleasant tenor voice to good effect in our male voice choir items. We found him a pleasant, easygoing man who made many contributions to band life.

In 1969 I made my first contact with Dave since I left the band in 1954. At the time he headed the pay team of the 1st Bn of the Welsh Guards, I believe at Pirbright. To enhance his popularity he sang with the Welsh Guards Choir: the male voice choir was an important activity of battalion life. Also at this time he had a lucrative sideline selling insurance and, using his prestige and contact in the pay office, had made the Welsh Guards the most insured unit on the Army List. He invited me to go to one of the meetings of his fellow salesmen. It was an atmosphere of sell, sell and commission, commission, with all the excitement of human achievement with each layer of the chain sharing in the commission earned after each sale. To be taken on as salesman one had to memorize a script written in American English called John and Mary. To please Dave I sold one policy without the use of the script but it was something that I disliked and quickly dropped. Dave made a lot of money out of it: he carried the

experience and Pay Corps administrative skills successfully into civilian life after his 22.

Dave went straight into business advertising, creative design, training and the arrangement of conferences in 1971. In 1976, he had enough experience to set up on his own and was not long before he extended his business to the USA, Singapore and Malaysia where he lived until 1998. After three years in the UK his itchy feet took him to Spain where he organized and taught ballroom dancing: I hope not at Cameronian pace. In 2003 Dave returned home to live in Somerset. He is currently training to be a counsellor for the Citizens Advice Bureau while at the same time he is qualifying for his Institute of Advanced Motoring badge. He lives within easy distance of his five children, ten grandchildren and great granddaughter. Dave has and continues to live a full and interesting life.

Bill Coughlan

'Conk' Matthew Valente.

Conk, a native of Edinburgh, joined the band as a boy in Lanark in 1948. His name confirms that he came from one of the Italian-Scottish families. His remarks, and the confident way he dealt with people, suggested that his family were worth a bob or two. Thin, likely to grow tall, curly brown hair and an obvious facial feature, which gave him the name 'Conk.'

Not only did he look a bit like Harpo but also had many of the characteristics of the other Marx's Brothers. He was always ready for a joke and to convey a slapstick and chaotic attitude to life. Of course, this was not wholly true, for while still a boy he became the main percussionist for the band, which gave him the responsibility, often alone, for the large percussion family.

Although someone was always detailed to help him to move and set up, there were times when Conk forgot his music. Most of the time he provided the rhythm rather than individual notes. However, his busking was discovered when he provided the BM with the sound of the triangle instead of a clash of the cymbal or silence when there should be a drum roll or some notes on glockenspiel. Whenever he stood in front of the band playing a xylophone solo we had the feeling that the instrument might collapse or Conk might not complete the

exposed solo passages when the band was silent. As a Highland dancer, he looked exhausted and seemed to suggest the foursome reel might suddenly become a threesome one. He enjoyed playing the role of an erratic firework and, rather like Tommy Cooper, this was far more difficult than appearing competent all the time. Conk liked to argue with those who took their ranks seriously. He was popular because he provided humour in our lives.

Conk was always at ease with women. In between concerts on our summer tours I played putting with Conk as a ploy to meet girls. I noticed his Latin charm, the use of the right words to ensure that they walked with us towards the bandstand as we made arrangements to meet after we played off. I recall after we played at a fashion show the models gladly signed his drum.

He rang me in 1965 to say that he was a sergeant in the Band of the King's Regiment doing Royal duties in London. Having served in all overseas postings of the Cameronians from Trieste to Kenya, he decided to re-enlist in the King's to return to Kenya to be with his girlfriend and future wife.

As perhaps the solitary Scot in the King's Regiment, he had to reluctantly get used to being called Jock Valente. I told him other Italian names in the army would likely lead to Paddy Puccini or Geordie Rossini. He served in the King's until he was thirty-five.

In our recent Walter Mitty like telephone conversation, I failed to work out what Conk has done in his post army life. He lives near Bolton, seems happy and is well contented with life.

Bill Coughlan.

Malaria in Italy in 1944.

I was interested to read Bill Coughlan's article in the 2003 number of *The Covenanter*. He asks, following a BBC programme on the subject, if anyone in the Italian campaign remembers an outbreak of malaria in the spring of 1944.

I commanded D Company of 2/Cameronians for the two years prior to June 1944, during which period we were almost continually in malaria zones. The battalion had many cases of malaria, particularly in Madagascar and in Sicily, often no doubt due to a relapse after a previous infection.

We reached the south bank of the river Tiber on 4th June 1944 and my company HQ happened to have the good fortune to

be quartered in one of the German pumping stations in the flooded Pontine Marshes which they had immobilised.

I described it in an airletter home at the time as 'the best all-round billets I have had since the War started - large buildings, well fly-proofed with gauze, - storerooms, MT parks, a parade ground, a lake a hundred yards away with pedal-paddled skiffs for bathing from.' It had apparently been previously occupied by German troops who no doubt had looted these skiffs from Ostia Lido on the coast three miles to the west. We were just outside the Roman remains of Ostia Antica where the Tiber reached the sea in Roman times; Rome lay 15 miles to the north-east.

We spent about a week here, and frequently bathed in this lake of flooded marshland. The water was clean and fresh, not brackish, and I have no recollection of any mosquitoes, nor of any subsequent occurrence of malaria that could be pinpointed as originating here. Our previous bad spells of malaria had all been some distance from the sea, and nobody suggested that brackish water was more mosquito favourable than stagnant fresh water. From the early spring of 1944 the RAMC carried out extensive spraying of all stagnant water in our sector and this did cut down the malaria risk tremendously.

The suggestion that the flooding of the marshes was an early case of biological warfare seems to me very doubtful. The Germans seemed to have been occupying the pumping station until the beginning of June 1944, and would themselves have suffered from the attention of any mosquitoes at least as much as we did.

Bill Crow

Bahrain Headstones (Covenanter 2003)

Sir,

On my recent visit to Bahrain in July, to visit my family, we once again went to pay our respects to the young Cameronians, 2 Lt. Ronald Graham Boyd (died of exposure 25/8/57), and Rfn J. McLain Sunter (died of accidental gunshot wounds. 1/3/1957).

The Christian cemetery is at the moment being upgraded. Many of the graves had been vandalised, stones broken etc. also the intense heat of the sun, many stones are now impossible to read.

As this cemetery is not cared for by the War Graves Commission, all the work done

there is by the Christian Community,

Mr Herman, the caretaker, and his team of workers have taken great care of this cemetery, and it is a pleasure to visit, they are dedicated to their work. I hope that this article shows that British Servicemen are buried in small cemeteries, throughout the world, that have no official War Graves recognition.

yours etc,
Mrs A Winkley

Editors Note: Readers will be interested in the following response from the MOD

Directorate of Personal Services (Army) - Non War Graves

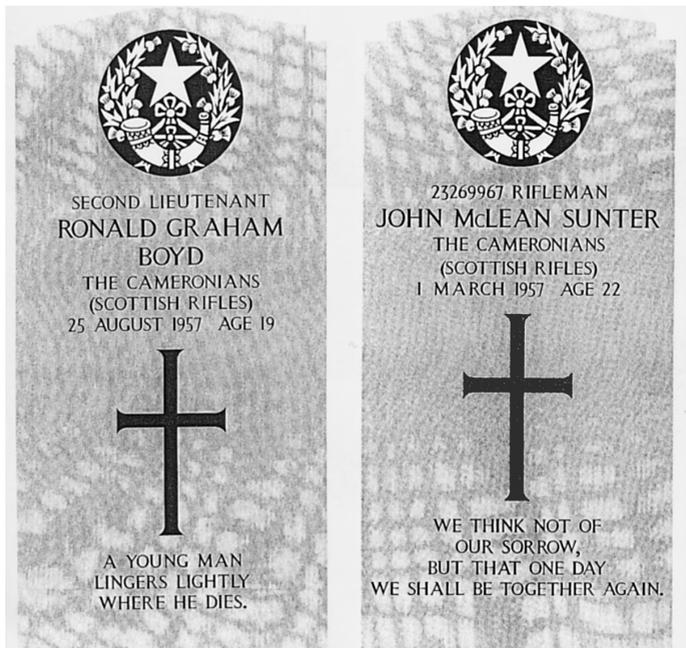
'Our office has within its remit the administrative oversight of the maintenance of the graves of soldiers who have died in Service since January 1948, who were buried at public expense and whose graves have a military pattern headstone (similar to those of War Graves) (This is only a broad outline since there are some grey areas which have to be resolved on their merits). In the UK each service looks after 'its' own, but overseas the Army has a tri- service responsibility. The day to day responsibility for maintenance varies, according to location, but in Bahrain the oversight is carried out by the Defence Attachés office in the British Embassy and the work is done by local volunteers with local contractors taking on tasks as required.

As you are aware there are some problems with the headstones in Bahrain, but you can rest assured that these problems are being addressed. There are 21 headstones that require immediate replacement, of which 14 are Army and two of those are on the graves of Cameronians, as you know. However it is not yet possible to put a time frame on the programme of works being carried out as we have to liaise with the other services, the Embassy, Stonemasons and not least the Budgets people. That said the process is at least underway.

The process of providing headstones for soldiers who die in service - from whatever the cause - remains one of our prime tasks, whenever or wherever the family request.'

Notification has been received from the MOD Directorate of Personal Services (Army) - Non War Graves as follows:

'New headstones for Lieutenant Boyd's and Rfn Sunter's graves along with those of 19 other servicemen have arrived safely in Bahrain. The new stones will be made from grey granite rather than the current Portland: it is hoped that these will withstand the vagaries of geography and climate somewhat better. They are awaiting a 'local contractor' to complete installation. Once this has been done photographs will be sent to you. You will note from the illustrations attached that after some research we were able to complete the epitaphs for Rfn Sunter and Lieutenant Boyd.'



Saturday 18 December 2004 Save Your Scottish Regiments Edinburgh Rally

Participants assembled in Market Street Edinburgh at 11am and marched off at 1130am to join the rally in Princes Street Gardens. From the newspaper Scotland on Sunday the event was described as follows

In a parade headed by regimental flags and pipe bands more than 3000 former infantrymen, families of serving soldiers and various supporting campaigners marched down Princes Street, Edinburgh, to a rally in the world famous gardens to prevent the government-forced creation of one Scottish 'super regiment'

Seventy members of the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) and Family Members organisation joined the parade together with four officers, former members of the 1st Battalion.

The following letter was sent to the Secretary The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) and Family Members by a former King's Own Scottish Borderer Officer:

Dear Mr Ballantyne,

I write to tell you how deeply I and others appreciated the participation of The Cameronian (Scottish Rifles) in yesterdays parade at Edinburgh. I was disappointed you were not invited to be placed immediately behind the KOSB contingent.

It was a generous gesture your taking part in the parade and I believe your presence illustrated the wider concern for the preservation of the Regimental system. There was many a comment that you were the best turned out group on the parade.

I had the honour to serve with your 1st Battalion in Kenya. It was one of the happiest years of my life.

My warm good wishes to you all and never let us forget your wonderful and historically important Regiment. Keep Going!

Yours sincerely,

Alastair Hewat

Major (Retd) AJC Hewat

Letter to the Editor:

Sir,

I was pleased to see your letter in the Evening News drawing attention to the participation of ex Cameronians on the Save the Regiment march. I watched the parade and noted the cap badge and rifle green glengarries although I doubt many of the spectators would have known the significance of these.

I served in the army albeit Royal Signals

in the days of the battle dress brasso and blanco and I always thought the Cameronians made the right decision in choosing disbandment rather than amalgamation and all it entails as can be seen today in the current Highlanders Regiment and most of the English Regiments whose history are now just a mixed up confusion.



As you say, there is no necessity to merge the Royal Scots and K.O.S.B. my grandfather and uncles served in the former and if alive today would have been appalled at the proposed merger, I have sympathy also for the K.O.S.B. However, what else can one but expect from a trio of academics such as Hoon, Ingram and Blair who have never served in the forces. As for General Jackson he is making sure his Parachute Regiment survives even though it is junior in age and has never functioned as airborne in action for many years, and one wonders why they are retained as such. The German army ceased using paratroops after ????? in World War 2 realising they were not viable. The French Foreign Legion have only used them twice in recent years in rescue missions in Africa. I suppose it merely is a macho attitude which retains the Paras rather than their operational role as such apart from which they are otherwise Infantry.

yours etc,
John Thomson



*London March and Rally 9 April 2005 see
www.londonrally.info and www.savethescottishregiments.co.uk*



Anti-Tank Platoon
 Sgt. Connel, Lt. David McWilliam (2/C), *Capt Dunbar (o/c), Sgt. Strachan (Pl. Sgt.), Sgt. Coutts, Sgt. Clarkston
 * Head bandage result of argument with smoke grenade.



Back Row
 Lt. Jock Sawbridge, Lt. James McKay, Lt. Alex Quinn, Lt. Fred Welsh, Lt. Norman Rhodes (IO), Lt. T. 'Pip' Fairhurst,
 Lt. William Menzies, Lt. 'Bull' Wirth (Dutch Free Forces)

Middle Row
 Padre, Lt. David McWilliam, Lt. André Trombetti, Lt. George Alexander, Lt. James Parson, Capt. Dennis Summer-Smith, Capt. J.
 Campbell Shearer, Capt. Michael Dunbar, Lt. Peter McGregor, M.O., U.S.A. Officer

Front Row
 Capt. Peter Cambell-Black, Maj. Andrew Leggat, Maj. George Tweedale-Holland, Maj. Edward Walker (2/C),
 Lt. Col Richard Villiers (c.o), Maj. John Law, Maj. Thomas Scott, Capt. Willaim Leggat-Smith, Capt. John McNair (Adj.)



Lt Col Sir John Baynes Bt and Major Hugh Worthington-Wilmer at RMAS Sandhurst with 2nd Battalion Centerpiece (1st Intake 1946 55th Anniversary Re-union)



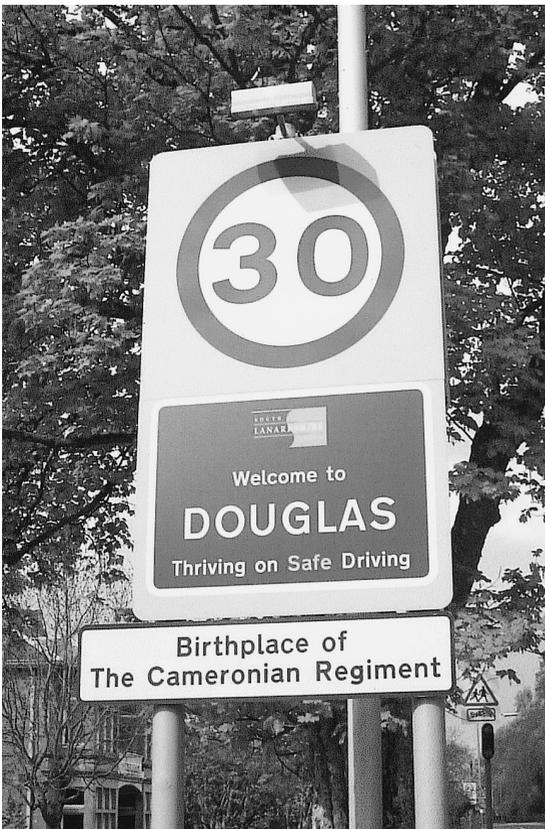
Lt to Rt Don Turrell, Tom Gore - 15 Div Memorial, Hill 112 Normandy



Lt to Rt Bill Gough, Matt Stewart, Andy McArthur, Alan Halliday, Alex Maxwell, Andy Berry, Jim Hamilton, Jack Willis - Lanimer Day, Lanark 17 June 2004



*'The Douglas Piper' Painting by Kenn Robinson
(now hanging between two stained glass windows in Douglas Heritage Museum)*



New Signage - Douglas



Memorial Window (see article page 47)



Tom Balloch, Sydney Scroggie, Davy Garrett (This is your life 1964 programme)



*Pipers 1st Bn The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) - The Curragh 1920
(Both photographs kindly provided by Davy Garrett, Achiltibuie Piping School)*

Letters to the Editor

Editors Note

Delighted to welcome back Mr Steve Fairie - so far the only response to 'Where Are You Now' (Covenanter 2003)

Having just received and read the 2003 edition of the Covenanter, particularly the section on where are you now?, I was somewhat disconcerted to find that I have been airbrushed out of regimental history.

I joined the regiment on 10 May 1959 and served until the disbandment on 14 May 1968, leaving to join the Black Watch in the rank of Sergeant.

I did my basic training at Winston Barracks in Lynedoch Squad, made up mainly of National Servicemen with a few regulars such as myself. The squad sergeant was Bill Tilley and the RSM was Jimmy Murray. Other names that come to mind are Sergeant Major McIntosh. ORQMS John Ansdell, Sergeant(?) Winkley ACC and I think the Officer Commanding the depot was Major J.C.M. Baynes and the Adjutant Captain J.N.D. Lucas. I think amongst the subalterns were Second Lieutenants Stephen and Craig. I was retained at the Depot for a year after my training, working in the orderly room, and other names that I remember from that time were the then Major D.B. Riddell-Webster and Second Lieutenant Buchanan-Dunlop who actually did his basic training at about the same time as myself. At some 45 years remove memory can prove faulty but I think the above is reasonably accurate.

I joined the 1st Bn in Minden in May 1960 and once again worked in the Orderly Room for a time. I worked for two ORQMSs during that time, the aforementioned John Ansdell and Eric Critchell (later commissioned). I finished my time in Germany in A Coy, company commander Major R.N. Walton and one of the platoon sergeants was Bill Todd. A couple of years in Edinburgh then followed part of which I spent with the Royal Guard at Victoria Barracks Ballater, company commander Major H. Mackay and CSM Ted Martin. Then followed Radfan Camp Aden in the QMs Department with the unforgettable late Major G.A.M Soper as QM and RQMS (later RSM) Ronnie Andrews. Back then to Edinburgh and eventual disbandment and posting to the Black Watch with whom I served for 14 years retiring in 1982 in the

rank of Warrant Officer Class 1. Many names now come to mind from my service with the Regiment and I won't bore you with all of them save to mention a few more who made an impression on me - Lt-Cols Harper, Kettles and Dow, Warrant Officers Sandy Henderson, "Jake" Sneddon, Johnny Burns and Sammy Robertson.

As I said I served 14 years with the Black Watch being posted to and exercising in various places - Kirknewton, Malaya, Gibraltar, Northern Ireland, Hong Kong and Catterick among others. On one tour in Northern Ireland, dressed in civilian clothes and with my hair grown long and trying to look anonymous I bumped into a gentleman similarly attired and with the same long hair who turned out to be Captain JJD Cox, Scots Guards and ex Cameronian.

For the last 21 years I have worked as a Clerk to an English High Court Judge, based at the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand, London and going out three times a year to various towns in England and Wales helping to dispense justice. It has proved to be a very interesting second career - one which has provided me with a fund of stories to keep me going in free lunches in my retirement (I hope!).

At 63 years of age now I look back on my time with the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) with pride and nostalgia. I hope, as a result of this letter, I may be restored to the list of those who served with a fine Regiment. I also hope, if you see fit to publish this letter, that I might hear from some of the many people with whom I had the privilege to serve.

Yours etc,
Steve Fairie

Sir,

I would appreciate your help in a quest to trace the descendants of Colonel Robert Holden-Mackenzie.

Throughout his earlier career he was known simply as Robert Holden, and it is my assumption that when in 1902 he was attached to the 4th Bn The Cameronians, in the next few years he unearthed a Scottish side to his ancestry which was important to him, and he took the name Mackenzie and added it to his own.

I would suspect that if he went into retirement from the Honorary Colonelcy of the 4th Bn. in 1917/18, he will have wanted to continue to live thereabouts, where he had held a position of some importance.

Any regimental journal or chronicle of the time would most likely have registered his death and funeral. If I can find out where he ended his days, or was buried, that may give me a lead to his descendants into whose hands portrait of 'Craufurd' may have come. Portraits of Maj Gen Robert 'Black Bob' Crauford from the life are scarce, there is only a miniature done in 1798 as a Lt. Col. Of the 5th Bn. The 60th, and his regiment, now the Royal Green Jackets, would like to have an authentic image of him.

Yours etc,

Michael Howard

Replies to the Editor please

Sir,

I joined the Cameronians at Edinburgh as a REME Fitter.

As an Englishman, myself and others had to do Guard Duty over New Year period so the Scotsmen could have Hogmanay at home.

It was at Guard Mounting that I first met Pipe Major (Pipey). I can't remember his surname, but I'm sure you will.

Inspecting the ranks he spotted my safety catch on my rifle was off. I still remember the words he said to me, although at the time I hadn't a clue what they meant.

'Tak a muckle pace to the rear, laddie and fix the snek on your gun'.

Seeing my bewilderment he explained and did it for me.

The next time I saw him was as we boarded the train at Waverley Station for the first leg of our Middle East posting.

He was marching up and down the platform playing the pipes and as I recall, it wasn't all military music he was playing and I suspect he had been at the whisky.

Anyway we did Bahrain and left for Gil-Gil, Kenya, where I met 'Pipey' again.

The Cameronians were doing guard duty at an Ordnance Dump about a mile or so down the road and 'Pipey' caught an eagle which he brought back to Gil-Gil camp and built a cage for it.

At that time I was the only fitter on camp (apart from my Sergeant) so I was duty fitter every night.

'Pipey' found this out and realised I could get a 'work ticket' for road test easily, so most nights I took Pipey over the hills to shoot something to feed his eagle.

Occasionally I would get a bottle of whisky for my troubles.

He used to say to me 'if anyone is around, then I am Sir. If not, I am 'Pipey'.

He was a lovely person, I often think about him and wonder if he is still alive.

B Mead

ex REME Cfn Att

M.T. Sect. 1st Battalion Cameronians (S/R)

Editors Note: Pipey Mathieson I suspect

Sir,

During the past 25 years, there has been many occasions when I have thought about putting pen to paper, but have never made it, until now, what spurred me on is the thought that everybody is going to be dead and there will be no-one left to write to. A photograph was printed in 2003 Covenantar of the Temperance Hall in Keithley, where I was posted to in April 1944 from the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in Northern Ireland to the 9th Cameronians. Only two of us were sent, myself and a bloke from Burton-on-Trent, S. Booton. Here we met up with Sgt Falkener of A Coy, 9 Platoon and 2nd Lt. MacGregor who was killed in our first attack in Normandy on the 27 June 1944. I was just two feet away from him when he died from a snipers bullet in his neck. I tried to comfort him but he was too far gone for help soon after this the platoon piper was shot and killed on the edge of an orchard and my best mate Midge Freeburn was also killed near by. The Major was wounded and carted off and soon after I received my come uppance but not really serious. A wound in the arm, although bad enough to be brought back to Blighty and sent to Hairmyers Hospital, East Kilbride for 3 weeks and then Redford Barracks for re-equipment.

Then it was back to Normandy. The Cameronians and Major Shearer who was a Captain when I was wounded, who indeed welcomed me back to A Coy 9th battalion when I returned and made me his Company runner - although a very dangerous job I must say. Upon nearing the age of 79, there wont be many Normandy Cams left, I don't suppose so, if there's any bits of info you would like, I would be glad to oblige before its too late.

Yours etc,

G. Moore

Sir,

Recently I visited the Museum in Hamilton hoping to track down members of the 6th Battalion but sadly drew a blank.

I would very much like to make contact

with veterans of the 6th Bn.

Yours etc,
John McEwan
Clydebank

Cameronian Enquiry

I wonder if you could point me in the right direction with regard to the obscure subject of training at Hamilton in the summer of 1940. I realise that we are talking about nearly 65 years ago and that anyone still alive from those days will be in his mid-eighties. However, a letter in the next number of *The Covenanter* might conceivably jog memories.

In 1999 we mounted an exhibition at the Dean Gallery of an artist called John Coplans (b.1920). When Coplans came to install his work, it was his first visit to Scotland since 1940. After the war he went to live in the USA, ending up in New York, where he died last year. Having passed out of Sandhurst in May 1940, Coplans joined the Cameronians (in which one of his uncles had served as a doctor in the Boer War) and was sent to Hamilton for training. 'One of my responsibilities', he later wrote,

'was to oversee the blocking of a small nearby loch with floating logs. I met a Scottish family who lived in a big house by the loch named Glen. They adopted me and I spent nearly every weekend with them and their children. I adored them. They were like a loving father and mother to me... In autumn 1940 I was seconded to the King's African Rifles and, sad to say, never saw them again'.

I have been trying to identify the loch and house from 1940 Ordnance Survey maps of Hamilton and its environs, but without success. There are very few lochs (although a number of reservoirs) in that part of Lanarkshire. I can find a Glenbuck Loch and a House of Glenbuck, but they are some distance south of Hamilton, in Cameronian country near Douglas. Coplans's sentence is ambiguous because it could mean that the family not the loch or house - were called Glen.

Replies to the Editor please

New Years Honours List

John William Jeffrey MBE for services to the community in Surrey

In Memoriam

To those they leave behind may their memories be happy ones

In Memoriam

Captain Archie Sommerville, Lanark, Aug 2004

Mr R Fox, Beconsfield, Bucks, Oct 2004

Mr Hugh McCumisky, Wishaw, April 2004

Lieutenant Colonel Alan Campbell

Lieutenant Colonel Alan Campbell died suddenly at his home in Northumberland at Christmas time in 2003. His death will be a matter of great sadness to his family and to all who served with him in the Regiment. However the last thing that Alan would want is sadness on his account for he would be far better pleased if all who knew him remembered the happy times they spent together. Alan had not been very well for some time but notwithstanding this fact he continued to fulfil an energetic travel programme keeping in touch with his

family, old friends and Regimental colleagues and in particular those at Chelsea Hospital right to the end.

Alan was born in Maymo close to Mandalay where his Father, a Cameron Highlander was on an overseas tour in Burma. Both he and his older Brother Robin were educated at Eton and Sandhurst. Robin joined The Seaforth Highlanders and Alan joined the Regiment in 1949 in Trieste where he went to 'C' Company. He was a Platoon Commander there and in Hong Kong and Malaya along with Sergeant Willberforce. They, a formidable pair who took 9 Platoon on many hard, difficult but successful patrols through the Muar area of Malaya and in particular the notorious Bakri Swamp Region; a large hide away area for bandits. So successful were these patrols that Alan was awarded a Mention in Despatches for his personal bravery and leadership in that most difficult area.

In mid 1950 having completed the Army

Signals course Alan became our Regimental Signals Officer. He held this appointment with distinction for close on six years in Malaya, Barnard Castle, BAOR and the Persian Gulf. While using a radio in Germany Alan saved two riflemen from being burnt to death in their truck an act of quick thinking bravery which the Commander in Chief ordered should be recorded on his Record of Service.

While in the Gulf Alan was next made 'A' Company commander in Sharjah and took part in our Muscat operations. Indeed due to their Beverley aircraft crashing on take-off (fortunately no casualties but their plane lost its undercarriage) they remained out in the very desert for much longer than anyone else.

When at long last in 1958 the 1st Battalion was able to concentrate in Nairobi (we had for some 18 months been spread out through the Persian Gulf and rural Kenya) Alan handed over 'A' company and was appointed adjutant. His immediate task was to reunite the Battalion but this had scarcely started when we were under orders to move. Firstly to fly to Aden with the vehicles to go by sea via Mombassa next all by sea and this time by HMS Bulwark to the Gulf of Aqaba and finally by anything that moved to Amman in Jordan and to make it more interesting we didn't know why. A tough baptism for Alan but he made it. His appointment continued until 1960 when we were in BAOR.

After some eleven years with the 1st Battalion Alan next found himself undertaking a whole series of Extra Regimental posts which included the following:

- a. A Staff Officer with 2 Division in BAOR.
- b. Training Officer with the 6/7 Battalion in Lanarkshire.
- c. The Army Trials Officer researching the 'Jump Jet' concept.
- d. Second in Command of the Boys Training Battalion in Troon.
- e. Air Support Co-Ordinator during the Borneo confrontation.

Alan's stories about the four or five years he was away were always funny, he undoubtedly gained huge experience but more important he became 'staff qualified' and gained recommendation for promotion.

There was an even more dramatic success during this period for Alan met and married the delightful Sylvia. She with great charm and skill turned this wild bachelor into a

husband and proud Father; even Alan's dogs noticed the change for the better. Very sadly Sylvia predeceased Alan. Their married life was exceptionally happy and it was clearly very special for them both.

At the end of 1966 Alan to his very great pleasure returned to the 1st Battalion and took over as 'B' Company Commander. He took his Company to Aden and as he had shown in Muscat remained overseas rather longer than expected. Just a few hours prior to flying home to join the rest of the Battalion after a hard and tough tour on Active Service his Company nominally the Brigade reserve were called out to support the 3rd Royal Anglians in Sheikh Othman. Needless to say 'B' Company undertook the task quickly and with great skill. They were the last men in the Regiment to be on Active Service.

Alan remained with 'B' Company in Edinburgh during the Battalions final year and of course commanded his Company at our Disbandment Parade. Yes, like all of us desperately sad but also proud that he was able to stand with the Battalion right up to the very end.

He left Edinburgh to join the Queen's Own Highlanders, his Fathers old Regiment.

On leaving the Army he was for many years the Bursar cum Manager of a major Medical Training Centre at Cambridge University.

Alan most enjoyed the time he spent with the 1st Battalion for he was a real Regimental soldier who enjoyed serving and service no matter where or what the task. To serve and be with soldiers gave him great pleasure for he loved training them; looking after them and knowing them. He always found out much more about his soldiers that their Mothers would ever have learnt. He quickly gained their trust, confidence and respect. He had a delightful sense of humour; a man who never raised his voice except to laugh. A reliable and good friend who one always looked forward to seeing and whose company was always enjoyable.

I expect that many who knew him will be sad but we can rejoice that we served with him. We send to his family our sincere condolences but ask that they should rejoice in his memory with us.

Hugh Mackay

Captain J O Robertson

A son of Colonel Alec Ogilvie Robertson, a pre-war territorial officer in 5/8

Cameronians, who after the war commanded its successor unit at West Princes Street Drill Hall, Glasgow, James Robertson did national service in 1 Cameronians in 1956 and 1957.

He served in Buxtehude, at Redford Barracks and in Bahrain and Kenya. He was a territorial officer in the 6/7 Battalion in the 1960s in the companies based at Coplaw Street and attended Camp regularly.

After agricultural training James became a potato merchant, working for much of his career from Glasgow and Baillieston before moving to premises in Dalkeith. He operated throughout central and southern Scotland and in Fife and was popular and well regarded in his trade. He married Mairead in 1962. For the first years of life together they lived in Glasgow, followed by Bardowie. Then they moved to Edinburgh and finally, some fifteen years ago, to Pencaitland in East Lothian.

James Robertson followed the example of his notably public spirited parents by devoting considerable time and energy to helping others as a Samaritan, as chairman of the Pencaitland community council and as President of the bowling club there, although he himself did not play the game, and in many other ways. Also, he stood as a would-be Tory councillor in East Lothian in 2003, but without success. James was a man of few words who demonstrated his strength of character as a loyal and reliable friend, helper and adviser, particularly in his immediate family where he was a devoted and steadfast husband, father and grandfather. His main recreation was fishing, particularly on Loch Leven.

James took ill suddenly in Kinross where he had moved a few months before and died shortly afterwards in hospital on 9 September 2004 aged 67. A fine and well attended service in Pencaitland Parish Church provided ample evidence of the esteem and affection in which he was held. We send our sympathy at their sad loss to Mairead, to their children Emma, Gail and David and their partners, and to four grandchildren.

William Carnegie

Rifleman Norman Stander

'Charlie' Company. 9th Battalion
Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) 46
(Highland) Brigade 15th
(Scottish) Division.

Norman did not have an easy time in his

early life living mainly in an Orphanage in North London, then with various relatives until he volunteered for the Army at the age of 17.

Norman, known in the ranks as 'Stan', trained at the I.T.C. in Chester, from there he joined the holding Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment (D.C.O) The 'Diehards', at Hounslow Barracks Middlesex.

When volunteers were called for in 1943 to join a Scottish Regiment he, with several others, (the writer included), travelled off up to the delightful seaside village of Alnmouth in Northumberland, where the 9th Battalion was stationed.

'Stan', who at 5' 10', was a big lad, so when he joined my Section, he had more than his fair share of carrying the Bren Gun. Some of those with whom he served come to mind but, alas, all did not 'make it to the end, some of those who did were, the Platoon Commander, Lieutenant (later Major A. Quinn 'QM'), Corporal Garlick, Rifleman Huxley, Farr Boland, Millburn Duck, Stanton, and big Harry Drury. Alas Sergeant Finnigan was KIA, and C.Q.MS. Newall D.O. W.

On arrival at Keighley, West Yorkshire, I was transferred to 'A' Company, so what follows has come to me by various means.

On the Assault in the Caen area Stan received a 'burst' of machine-gun fire which removed three fingers of his right hand, and severely damaged his lower abdomen.

On De-Mob Stan 'tried his hand' at various enterprises including a stall in Petticoat Lane London, and a hairdressing Salon, in the same area.

But he was looking for better things, so off he went to New Jersey, in the U.S.A. where he had relatives.

It was at this stage that I renewed my friendship with Stan having seen his address in the Covenanter, this was in 1996.

We corresponded and, at the invitation of Eileen (my Wife) and myself he came over to the UK. and we had a great time visiting the places of interest in and around the Midlands. He had become a Part owner of a Real Estate Company (Estate Agent) in partnership with a friend named Van.

Stan retired from active business life about five years ago, but still kept an interest in the day to day running of the office. He made good friends with all the neighbours in the Condominium where he lived in Egg Harbor.

I received a 'phone call from one of his

friends on Tuesday 30th March, telling me he had passed away, he was 79 years of age and died a Widower, his Wife Bette having passed away some years ago. He had children, but these were all from previous marriages.

Nat Gormlay

Lieutenant Colonel Christopher J W Browne

'He didn't have time to fall over', a phrase used by one of his brother officers who skied with him, is an apt way to describe the whirlwind that was Chris. True in early adulthood, it remained so until the onset of the tumour that struck him down at a premature age and still in the prime of life. Chris was always full of ideas, of energy and consumed with enthusiasm for the moment. He was completely disregarding of anything that could possibly upset his plans and was possessed of a rare capacity not to be set back by the vicissitudes of life. Had he a motto, it would have been *carpe diem*.

Chris Browne - known in his first regiment, The Cameronians, as 'Broom with an e', joined the 1st Battalion in Minden on a short service commission from Mons OTC in January 1961. After some time at Redford Barracks, Edinburgh, he was posted to the Infantry Junior Leaders Battalion in Oswestry and was there when the 1st Battalion learnt that it was to be disbanded. He transferred to the Royal Scots, with whom he served in BOAR and Northern Ireland, before secondments with the Royal Brunei Malay Regiment and the Military Advisory Team in Sharjah.

He left the Army in 1978 and subsequently joined The Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) in 1982 thus continuing a link with His Majesty the Sultan, Qaboos bin Said, with whom he had served in The Regiment in Minden; proudly wearing the TOS, introduced by the then Sultan after the Regiment's service in Oman in 1957. Posted to the Muscat Regiment as Second-in-Command, he had a very successful three years during which he was awarded the Sultan's Commendation Medal and promoted to Muqaddam (Lieutenant Colonel). He served as MA to the first Omani Commander of the Omani Land Forces (SOLF) and then with Commander Admin & Logistics until leaving SAF in early 1988.

'Chris was a man of boundless energy... Such was the speed with which he would

appear when there was a problem that within HQ SOLF he earned the nickname 'Zebedee' after the character on a spring in a children's TV programme.' [Journal of The Sultan's Armed Forces Association, with appreciation]. Previously, in South Armagh with the Royal Scots, he had been dubbed the Sheriff of Bessbrook.

Back in civilian life Chris worked with British Aerospace travelling to many unstable parts of the world, such as Angola. Latterly he worked as a Defence Consultant assisting a wide variety of clients from countries such as China and Iran.

He was a man of great compassion, who put others before himself in all aspects of life. Chris 'was always looking to see what he could do to help others.' [Ibid] Recently when a former Cameronian officer was detained for a prolonged period in Dubai, Chris ceaselessly bombarded the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, with letters on his behalf. Christopher John William Browne was born on 2nd May 1941. To his wife Carol and his family we extend our deepest sympathy for their loss.

Mike Sixsmith

Donald Gow

In March 2004, Lofty Hammond telephoned to tell me that Don had died peacefully in his sleep. His neighbours knew that something was amiss by the barking of his dog.

Don's wife, Margaret, had died a few years ago from an unknown virus. This was a great shock to Don, for she was a fit person who had paid attention to her health. Don met Margaret after he returned from Malaya in 1952 while she was working in the NAFFI in Lanark. After Margaret had finished her posting to the Middle East, they married in 1954.

Don, a native of Crieff, was one of the fifteen band boys who gradually came together to fill the boys' room in Hamilton in 1946. Don, unlike the rest of us, was already in the army. He had transferred from an Army Apprentice School to serve with his younger brother Ian. He began to learn the tenor saxophone. Having the longest service and suitable for the role, he became the senior boy. My most vivid memory of him was his ability to blow smoke rings.

Don and Ian will be remembered as successful members of the depot and battalion hockey teams throughout the 1950s. Early in his service he left the barrack

room to become the band store man with quick promotion direct to corporal. Assisted by another bandsman, he had the responsibility of the care of the instruments, keeping the music library in good order and repair while assisting the bandmaster with secretarial and administrative work.

We send our condolences to his brother Ian, the other members of his family and to his friends.

Bill Coughlan

Peter O'Hara

It is with deep sadness and regret that we report the death of our chairman Peter O'Hara. Peter was a member of both the Wishaw & District Branch later to become the Wishaw & Shotts Branch. In his many years of membership Peter held the positions of Standard Bearer, Treasurer and Chairman carrying out all duties with decorum and dignity. Peter was born in Newmains and lived there with his parents until they relocated to Craigneuk, Wishaw.

When he was called up in the early fifties, he signed up with the Cameronians but completed his service in the Royal Scots. He served in Korea and after one action he was Mentioned in Dispatches for his bravery in protecting his platoon who were under fire, and his actions saved the lives of the men. He never made much of this as he would say he only did what had to be done.

On his return he married Rose and they were blessed with three sons and two daughters. Peter was very much a family man, who loved his garden and horse racing. His greatest pleasure in his latter years was the fact the his daughter and he owned a race horse and this gave Peter much pleasure during many months of the year.

He will be sadly missed by Rose and their three sons two daughters and their granddaughter. All members of the branch send our deepest condolences to the family, and just for Peter, Sionara.

British Legion

James (Jim) Morrison

It is with deep regret that we report the sudden but peaceful passing of our Branch Chairman James Morrison on the 4th of May. Jim was born in 1929, a native of Kilwinning where he was well known. In 1947, he was called up for National Service

which took him to Gibraltar, where in time, among other duties, he became a drummer with the Pipes and Drums of the 1st Bn The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) and before demob 1949 in Trieste Italy he transferred over to the concert section of the Regimental Band. This was due to the fact that in Jim's earlier days his father was Bandmaster at the local corps of the Salvation Army. This was to lead him into a love of music after National Service. Apart from playing with the Salvation Army bands in the early 60s he played with the Ayrshire Yoemanry band based in Ayr.

By 1951 he married his sweetheart Cathie and they lived many happy years until her sudden death in 1999. During their time together they had 3 daughters and 2 sons and Jim was always working. It was in the early 60s that it was discovered that due to a road accident some years earlier that he was losing his eyesight. Whilst he came to accept this he became active in working with the local Blind Club. Among the groups he found time for arts and crafts, raising funds for the Guide Dogs, dominoes, bowling where he won several cups. Through out the late eighties he became involved with the local Branch of the Royal British Legion where he was elected to the position of chairman. He is sadly missed.

British Legion

Postscript

Lieutenant Colonel Sir John Baynes Bt on 22 January 2005 - an obituary will appear in the next issue of the Covenanter.



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*Any man should be proud to say -
"I served in The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles)"*

