

1936 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
1st Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

SUMMARY OF FIRST BATTALION DIARY, 1936

Colchester

January 1st — Captain C. W. P. Branson appointed Adjutant Bucks Bn. Oxf. & Bucks Lt. Infty. vice Captain W. G. Clarke.

January 2nd — The Regiment returned from annual furlough.

January 19th—*No.* 5373913 Regimental Serjeant-Major S. F. Burnell was presented with the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal by Brigadier Commanding nth Infantry Brigade.

January 27th— A draft commanded by Captain L. W. Giles, M.C., and consisting of 45 other ranks, sailed in H.T. *Dilwara* to join the 52nd Light Infantry.

January 28th — Captain Hon. C. B. A. Bernard, Lieut. J. D. Palmer and Lieut. G. W. Lathbury sat for the Staff College entrance examination.

January 30th — Major G. Naylor, M.C., joined the Battalion on cross-posting from the 52nd. The following Gentlemen Cadets from the Royal Military College were posted on first appointment:

Gerald Nigel Astley-Cooper.

Michael John St. Aubyn.

January 31st — Delhi Platoon, strength 19, arrived from the Regimental Depot.

February 1st— 2nd Lieut. R. A. St. G. Martin with 25 other ranks went to Warley for magazine guard.

February 10th — The Regiment beat the R.A.M.C., Woolwich, in the semi-final of the Eastern Command Boxing Competition.

February 13th — The Regiment beat the Royal Tank Corps, Lydd, 4—2 in the semi-final of the Eastern Command Hockey Competition.

The Regiment lost to the Royal Ulster Rifles in the final of the Eastern Command Boxing Competition.

February 17th — 2nd Lieut. F. R. C. Bray and G. D. Jephson went to S.A.S. Hythe for a Young Officers' Course.

February 19th— The Regiment was beaten by the Training Bn. R.E. in the final of the Eastern Command Hockey Competition at Woolwich.

March 3rd— The A.D.V.S. inspected the transport and gave it a very good report.

March 5th — The Regiment was placed second to the Royal West Kent Regiment in the Eastern Command Cross Country.

March 13th — The Regiment won the Garrison Hockey Competition beating the 14th Field Brigade R.A. 1—0.

Ctesophon Platoon, strength 18, arrived from the Regimental Depot.

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March 17th — The Regiment was placed ninth in the Army Cross Country.

March 18th — Captain Hon. C. B. A. Bernard won the Mounted Infantry Light Weight race on his horse Mount Elliott.

March 19th — The Regimental Point-to-Point race was won by Lieut. R. C. L. Kennaway (S.R.O.) on his horse Quaker Girl II.

April 2nd — The Regiment won a Point-to-Point team race against the Somerset Light Infantry, having first three home, 1st Captain Bernard's Cobweb (owner); 2nd Major Horley's Jorrocks (Lieut. Clerke Brown); 3rd Captain Toye's Candle Light (2nd Lieut. Higgins).

April 9th — The Regiment went on Easter leave until April 14th. The Artists Rifles took over the Barracks for that period.

April 13th — The first Light Infantry Club Point-to-Point was held. 2nd Lieut. F. H. G. Higgins' Hiram Borlace won the Light Weight cup. Lieut. M. Darrell Brown's John Peel (Depot), won Heavy Weight cup, and the Regimental team consisting of 2nd Lieut. Higgins' Hiram Borlace (owner); Captain Hon. C. B. A. Bernard's Mount Elliott (owner), and Captain G. C. H. Wykeham's Colleen (Capt. Conant), won the team race which was competed for at the same time as the Light and Heavy Weight cups. All the other Light Infantry Regiments, with the exception of the Highland Light Infantry, entered teams.

April 14th — Delhi Platoon, strength 18, arrived from the Depot and was posted to B Company.

Lieut.-Colonel L. L. Pargiter, D.S.O., went on a Senior Officers' Course at Netheravon until April 17th.

April 19th — Lieut. R. H. G. O. Spence appointed Company Officer at R.M.C. Camberley (from Depot).

April 23rd—2nd Lieut. F. H. G. Higgins was first past the post on his horse Hiram Borlace in the Eastern Command race at the Easton Harriers Point-to-Point, but he was disqualified for missing a turning flag. Captain Bernard's Mount Elliott was placed second.

April 29th — The Assistant Director of Remounts inspected the horses of the Regiment and expressed himself well satisfied.

May 1st— Captain P. Booth is seconded for service on the staff.

Lieut. C. L. C. Ward promoted Captain.

Lieut. P. T. van Straubensee went on a Mortar Course at the Small Arms School, Netheravon, until May 22nd.

May 13th —Annual Inspection of the band by the Commandant of Kneller Hall.

May 13th and 14th — The Signallers classification took place. They obtained 99.76 per cent and had a good report.

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May 18th— Lieut. L. L. Falkiner went on a M.T. Course at Aldershot until July 25th.
2nd Lieut. G. D. Jephson went on an Army Officers' Course with R. A. F. Hawkinge until July 23rd.

May 26th — The Regimental team sports took place. X Company were placed first.

June 2nd— Lieut.-Colonel L. L. Pargiter, D.S.O., went on a Senior Officers' Course at the Army School of Physical Training until June 5th.

June 4th — The Garrison Army “At Home” day took place. A large crowd visited the barracks, but no recruits enlisted.

June 6th — Information received that Lieut. G. W. Lathbury had secured a competitive vacancy at the Staff College, Camberley.
Captain Hon. C. B. A. Bernard, Lieut. R. H. G. O. Spence and Lieut. J. D. Palmer qualified.

June 8th and 9th — The Regimental Rifle meeting took place. R.Q.M.S. Warnock won the Regimental Championship after a tie with Pte. Parr.
X Company won the Company Shield.
The Officers won the Lea Cup.

June 10th and 11th — The Regiment was second to the 2nd Bn. The Somerset Light Infantry in the Garrison Athletic Meeting.

June 13th— The Regiment won the Services open relay at the N.A.A.F.I. Sports Meeting, for the fourth successive year.

June 22nd—25th — The Regimental Cricket Week took place at the Depot.

June 23rd— The King's Birthday was celebrated with a Garrison Parade on Reed Hall Common.

June 25th and 26th — The Eastern Command Athletic Meeting took place at Colchester. We were second to the Training Bn. R.E., being beaten by 3 1/2 points.

July 12th — Sjt. Dean and C.Q.M.S. Cobb presented with Long Service and Good Conduct Medal.

July 15th — Lieut. A. J. R. Steele won the Army half mile.

July 16th — Captain C. L. C. Ward was second in the Army discus. Pte. Powell third in the mile and Pte. Phipps third in the high jump.

July 24th and 25th—The Regiment won the Inter-Unit Championship Cup at the Garrison Rifle Meeting.

July 25th — The Regimental Dinner took place at the United Services Club in London. Somme Platoon, strength 17, arrived from the Regimental Depot.

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July 28th — Lieut. A. J. R. Steele represented the Army in the half mile in the Inter-Services Athletic Meeting. Captain C. L. C. Ward captained the Army team.

July 31st — 2nd Lieut. R. F. E. Hill went to Warley for Magazine Guard with 25 other ranks of Letter C Company.

August 2nd — Territorial Gamps started. Officers, N.C.O.s and men were sent to assist 4th Bn. and Bucks Bn. and also the 161st Infantry Brigade, the 16th London Regt. and the O.T.C. Camp at Rushmoor.

August 4th—7th — Major C. R. Horley, M.C., and Captain R. T. Conant went on 4th Divn. Skeleton exercise in Sussex.

August 14th — Battalion training started.

August 17th and 18th — Exercise practising movement by night and taking up a defensive position by night, in the West House area.

August 20th—22nd— Digging and wiring by night. Exercise in Rock Farm area. Good lessons learnt. Headquarters was severely gassed and dislocated thereby.

August 25th — Lieut. P. T. van Straubenzee and 2nd Lieut. J. A. J. Read embarked for West Africa for a tour of duty.

August 25th and 26th — Battle outpost scheme in the area Pt. 108 — Rock Farm.

August 27th and 28th — Brigade scheme. A composite Bn. formed with the 2nd Bn. Lancashire Fusiliers and commanded by O.C. Lancashire Fusiliers.

September 3rd — Brigade scheme, a composite Bn. formed with 2nd Bn. Lancashire Fusiliers and commanded by Major A. C. M. Paris, M.C.

September 14th — Lieut. A. J. R. Steele embarked in S.S. *Laurentic* for temporary service in Palestine.

September 15th — The boys of the Regiment won the Garrison Enlisted Boys cricket league. Mrs. Wright, wife of the Adjutant of the 43rd Australian Regiment, visited us. She inspected barracks and was afterwards entertained by the Serjeants and Officers.

September 16th— 2nd Lieut. John Edward Broke Freeman was gazetted to the Regiment from the Supplementary Reserve (Gen. List).

September 18th — Lieut. A. Clerke Brown went to the S.A.S. Netheravon for a Range Finding Course followed by a Mortar Course.

September 22nd— Captain C. L. C. Ward went to the A.S.P.T. to attend an Advanced Course.

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September 23rd—A semi-controlled brigade exercise took place, one full strength rifle company 2nd Bn. Lancashire Fusiliers v. forward elements of a 43rd Company in defensive position. It was designed to discover the effect of defensive fire power on an attack. The result was 50 per cent casualties on both sides.

September 29th — The Colonel of the Regiment inspected us.

October 1st—The Regimental Signallers under the command of 2nd Lieut. R. A. St. G. Martin went to Warley to do duty as Magazine Guard until October 19th.

October 9th — The G.O.C.-in-C. Eastern Command visited the Regiment.

October 10th — Brigadier H. N. A. Hunter, Commanding nth Infantry Brigade, made his annual inspection of the Regiment.

October 15th — The Regiment lost to the R.A. Shoeburyness in the first round of the Army Football Competition.

October 20th — Captain D. C. Colvill, M.C., attended a Field Engineering Course at Canterbury from October 20th to November 6th.

October 24th — 2nd Lieuts. G. N. A. Astley-Cooper and M. J. St. Aubyn embarked in H.T. *Dorsetshire* at Southampton with a draft of two Serjeants and 90 other ranks for service with the 52nd in India.

October 25th — 2nd Lieut. H. H. van Straubenzee attended the Eastern Command Intelligence Course at Shorncliffe from October 25th to November 6th.

October 29th — The Eastern Counties Harriers Trials took place. In the Infantry Class, Captain Hon. C. B. A. Bernard was placed first with his Mount Elliott and second with Cobweb. 2nd Lieut. F. H. G. Higgins was third with Cairo.

November 6th — Captain E. C. Richards from Instr. in English at a French Military School to be Asst. Military Attache (Graded as G.S.O.2) (temp.) with effect from October 1st.

November 15th—2nd Lieut. R. F. E. Hill went to Army School of Education on the Officers' Course, until December 17th.

November 23rd — Information was received that the Regiment will go to Aldershot on May 20th, 1937, for Tattoo duties.

December 1st — The Regiment beat the R.A. Shoeburyness 5—0 in the second round of the Army Hockey Competition.

December 2nd — The boys of the Regiment beat the boys of the 2nd Bn. E. Surrey Regiment 3—2 in the first round of the Army Boys' Football Competition.

The Regiment, less maintenance party, went on annual furlough until January 3rd, 1937.

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December 12th — Major G. Naylor, M.C., Captain Hon. C. B. A. Bernard, 2nd Lieut. R. A. St. G. Martin, two warrant officers and 83 other ranks went to London to line the streets (Cheapside) on the occasion of the Proclamation of His Majesty King George VI.

December 14th — The second Indian Draft under the Command of 2nd Lieut. F. R. C. Bray embarked at Southampton in H.T. *Nevasa* for service with the 52nd in India. Strength 26 other ranks.

December 15th— Captain R. H. Doyne is posted to the Regiment on the expiration of his tenure as Adjutant of the 4th Bn. Oxf. & Bucks Lt. Infty., T.A.
Captain G. C. H. Wykeham is posted to the Regimental Depot for a tour of duty.

December 16th — The first platoon of Supplementary Reservists 16 strong, arrived from the regimental Depot and was posted to H.Q. Wing.

December 17th—Lieut.-Colonel L. L. Pargiter, D.S.O., handed over command of the Regiment to Lieut. -Colonel A. C. M. Paris, M.C., on the expiration of his period in command. A special order of the day was published.

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FIRST BATTALION LETTER

Dear Editor,

In England we so often hear of a Military Station being described as good because 'it is so easy to get away from'. I always think that that is as damning to a place as when we say of a person that 'He means so well'.

Colchester is in fact fairly easy to get away from even though its station is on the old Great Eastern Railway. But apart from that, there is within normal reach almost everything to suit the tastes of various officers. There is shooting: Rupert Conant and some others procured a very satisfactory partridge shoot, and the locals (especially Guy Blewitt) are very kind in asking us to shoot with them as well. There is hunting: rather fun when once you get used to the plough, and it's very soft falling. There is beagling, if you want it; there are point-to-points, where Higgins in particular, went pot hunting (very successfully) with Hiram Borlace. There is cricket, there can be no more of that anywhere in England, not even at Lord's; I'm afraid the CHRONICLE may have to have a supplement for that this year, as, if the accounts are full and accurate, they would take a volume to themselves. There is polo: there is sailing: there is racing at Newmarket: there are some lovely churches: there is Colchester Castle with its Roman remains: there is Berechurch Hall with its ghosts of Roman cohorts: there are oysters, and last but not least, I am told, there is dancing all the year round. Even with all these amusements at hand, there were two officers who had to go and sample the debutantes in London, their worth can apparently best be decided by the fact that both officers woke up next morning in the Chelmsford Hospital suffering from shock.

We have formed a Regimental Sailing Club at the West Mersea Yacht Club, and we have bought three dinghies, 'Sprites' by name, in a class of about 20 all sailing from West Mersea. There are races most weekends and on a few week-days. We won very few races, in fact Wykeham was the only adequate performer: He beat the cracks of the club once or twice, and in one team race, though the Gunners beat us, we beat the Club team. We also used the boats to sail up the mud creeks and over to Bradwell: we also bathed from them, sometimes on purpose and sometimes by accident. The mud banks are terrible and a great part of our time was spent on them, while the rest of the fleet were sailing.

The point-to-points are also described elsewhere, but I think I must bring to your special notice our great success in the first race for the Light Infantry Club trophies. We won the team race and both the Light Weight and Heavy Weight (you ought to find this in the 52nd letter too) individual cups. Every Light Infantry Regiment, except the Highland Light Infantry, ran at least one team. Next year we hope to do away with the race as at present constituted, and to institute a Light Infantry Club meeting, which we have offered to organize for them. We also did not disgrace ourselves in the local Hunter trials held in October. Bernard got first and second with his Mount Elliott and Cobweb, and Higgins third on Horley's Cairo, in the Infantry class. Several others also had good rides in that Class and the Maiden Class. Our South Oxfordshire team was not so successful, but luckily we were the last to go round and we saved the Committee a lot of time and trouble as they wanted the jumps taken down that night anyhow.

In spite of all these amusements we kept up our standard in Regimental Sport. We had bad luck in the Athletics as we were second in the Brigade meeting and the Command meeting, but were unfortunately not allowed, by technical ruling, to compete at the Army meeting.

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We managed however to win the N.A.A.F.I. relay for the fourth successive year. Steele won the army half mile and represented the army in the inter-services match, Ward was second in the discus and captained the army team, and Ptes. Powell and Phipps were third in the army mile and high jump respectively. We won the Garrison Boys Cricket, and the Garrison Hockey. We were only beaten in the finals of the Eastern Command Hockey and Boxing. We were second to the Royal West Kents in the Eastern Command Cross Country; and at shooting we did better than we have done for a long time; we won several of the competitions in the Garrison rifle meeting and we finished up easy winners of the Unit Championship Cup.

In Army Rifle Association Competitions the serjeants were placed 14th in the Royal Irish Cup and a team from the Headquarter Wing were placed 13th in the Company Shield for which each team received £2 as prize money.

Now we come to more Military matters. We are very sorry indeed to lose Lieut.-Colonel Pargiter after his four years in command of the Regiment. We wish him and Mrs. Pargiter the best of luck. At the same time we are very pleased that Lieut.-Colonel Paris should have been appointed to succeed him, and we wish him all success during his period of command. We are very pleased to have Naylor with us after his long stay abroad; Withington, Winterton and Doyne join us in December, and there are others to come at the beginning of next year, but in the meantime we have lost a great many: Giles to the 52nd; Branson to the Bucks Bn. as Adjutant; Hughes to the Depot, who took Spence's place when he went as instructor to the R.M.C.; Wykeham to the Depot, in Thome's place, who has gone to the 4th Bn.; Booth to the Staff; Straubenzee, the elder, and Read to West Africa; besides this the 52nd have eaten up nearly all our yearlings — Bray, Astley-Cooper, St. Aubyn and Freeman. Richards went from his Instructorship at the French Staff College to Assistant Military Attache at Paris, and from there he was sent on to the Spanish War and he placed himself in the Embassy at Madrid. Steele went to Palestine as Cypher Officer to Force Headquarters and he is remaining there, though part of the force has now returned. The Regiment itself only just avoided going out, as the Bedfords were sent from Colchester very soon after we arrived and the 3rd Brigade went out soon after we left them. Our A reservists went and they were attached to the 60th. I hope they have all found employment again on their return. Of those who are no longer serving with the Regiment we congratulate Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham on being appointed Governor of Kenya and Paget on being appointed to command the Quetta Brigade, and of those with the Regiment we congratulate Lathbury on passing into the Staff College and Bernard, Spence, and Palmer on qualifying, also Doyne and Metcalfe on the birth of a son each and Booth on the birth of a daughter.

The ceremonial occasions this year were not as many as last, but we had a few. The Colonel of the Regiment came down to inspect us before Lieut.-Colonel Pargiter left. We mustered as many men as we could, but in these days that is not a lot. The King's birthday was celebrated in the middle of the cricket week, but we managed to pull through without interfering with the matches. The whole garrison, including Cavalry and Gunners, parades on a place called Reed Hall Common, and though there is room for thousands of spectators, very few honour us with their presence.

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Then we sent up a detachment to line the streets in London for the proclamation of H.M. King George VI. We left Colchester about 10 a.m. and got back in time for dinner. We had a long wait at Liverpool Street Station and marched out and lined part of Cheapside from about 2 o'clock to 4.30 p.m. We saw the Lord Mayor's procession going out to meet the Heralds at Temple Bar; we called ourselves to attention and to our disappointment saw there were only three gilt coaches and the rest of the long procession was only Daimler hires. There were however some gorgeously appalled ladies and gentlemen inside, mostly smoking large cigars, while a lovely aroma of brandy and creme de menthe wafted down the City streets. Then there was a long pause, while a few disinterested people walked up and down the pavements behind us, and the police gave us the latest news of where the procession had got to. It grew dark; the street lights were turned on; the commander of the London District rode past, bands were heard in the distance and out of the gloom appeared the procession. Even in the dim light the heralds' coaches, with coachmen and footmen cloaked in scarlet, looked very fine. It was too dark to see the heralds inside, but at the end of the procession came again the Daimler hires and we could see that the City of London's fine cigars were finished. We heard, later, the bands at the Royal Exchange, and from an enormous crowd gathered there in the dusk, there came a great singing of God Save the King, as the ceremonies were ended.

We had a visit this year from Mrs. Wright, the wife of the Adjutant of the 43rd Australian Regiment. We were delighted to see her and to have her greetings from our affiliated regiment. It is seldom that any occasion of such personal acquaintance occurs. She saw, I think, everything that there is to see, and I hope she enjoyed her visit as much as we did. She gave the Officers' Mess a real boomerang when she left and we are very grateful for it. We only wish there were more occasions on which we could make personal contact with members of allied regiments from our Dominions.

Soon after this came the Colchester Oyster Feast, several of us went, some just out of interest, others with intent to eat as many oysters as possible; only one ate a fair share. He ate five-and-a-half-dozen, which works out about right, as there were altogether ten thousand oysters for the 350 people present. After the oysters there were fifteen speeches, which lasted from 2.30 p.m. until 4.45 p.m. and except for Sir Henry Curtis Bennett most of them were not even funny. The Lord Lieutenant's was positively and intentionally cry-making, the only saving grace was that the woman next to me was able to pretend that her tears were just pearls which she had found in her oysters, and she was running them up and down her face to give them that lovely yellow colour. Others who spoke were the Mayor (a socialist minister of religion). Lord Athlone, Prince Bismarck, the moderators of various churches, railway magnates, scientists, architects and the General. Meanwhile our Band played excerpts of sweet music from the gallery.

Our Military training was cut very short, through lack of funds and troops. We had nothing higher than Battalion Training, and three exercises conducted by Brigade. Of these the first two were combined with the 2nd Bn. The Lancashire Fusiliers. The original idea was to make a composite full strength battalion and a skeleton enemy, but when it came to work out the details it was found that a full strength rifle company and machine gun company and a few left over were all we could raise between us. So we had to do our best still all skeleton-like.

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The third scheme was interesting, it was semi-controlled and was designed to show the effect of fire power from a defensive position on to an attacking enemy. It meant very careful working out of detailed fire plans and very careful umpiring. It led to one or two useful conclusions. Firstly that with more practice a lot of lessons can be learnt from such exercises, secondly that umpires seldom do their job properly and really get down to the detail of what might or might not happen under the circumstances, and thirdly that umpires certainly cannot work from motor cars and on their flat feet.

We provided more territorial assistance than ever this summer; for besides going to Camp with our own battalions, we had to provide officers for the 16th Londons, 161st Infantry Brigade and the O.T.C. at Rushmoor: which eventually became rather a drain on our resources. Our only other extra duty during the year was the periodical provision of a guard for the magazine at Warley. Our strength is now very low, and we have been bolstered up by a platoon of the Infantry Supplementary Reserve. I gather if any of them do stay in the army after their six months, that they will want to go into one of the Corps and not the Infantry. We get gradually more and more motor transport, but we still do not know when our transport will be completely mechanized, nor when we will lose our horses, nor when we will lose our machine guns, and become a rifle battalion. The latest war establishments have cut out all reference to "rifle" or "machine gun" battalions! To stimulate recruiting we still have church parades and one Garrison "at home" day. After the latter, we got no recruits but I believe several people got engaged to be married at the dances held that evening. The barracks had been open all day, displays of all sorts were given, but few people watched. The dances in the evening however were crowded.

Next year we have the terrible prospect of going to the Aldershot Tattoo again and doing a performance of Physical Training; we are also taking part in the Coronation celebrations in London when we are to line the streets and do administrative duties.

Yours,
43rd