

1947 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
2nd Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

SUMMARY OF THE SECOND BATTALION DIARY, 1947

New year's day 1947 found us settled more or less comfortably and happily in our muddy camp at Athlit guarding the Jewish illegal immigrants clearance camp. We were part of 3 Infantry Brigade in the 1st Infantry Division and we hoped that we had at last settled down in our permanent peace-time formation. Little did we realize then what the coming months were to bring forth, which was probably just as well as it enabled us to enjoy to the full three months of hard work on individual training, on Internal Security Operations and when time allowed on the pursuit of sport.

On March 18th, 1947, the Commanding Officer at last received permission to tell the Regiment the dismal news that the 52nd Light Infantry was to be placed in 'Suspended Animation' in the near future. From this day onwards the chief thought in everyone's mind was obviously when was it to happen. Dates were given in orders and counter-orders at frequent intervals but as may be expected disorder was never produced within the Regiment and all men whatever their rank or their age continued to do their duty with unshaken morale and to the best of their ability, as the record of our achievements summarized in this account will show.

A summary of our activities in 1947 can most easily be understood when divided into three parts. Firstly the period January to May as part of 3 Infantry Brigade at Athlit and at Camp 22, Nathanya.

Secondly as part of 8 Independent Infantry Brigade at Jerusalem from May to July and thirdly the period of our disintegration, which took place at Khassa, at Suez and then finally at Cowley Barracks, Oxford, and lasted from August till November.

January 1st to May 15th, 1947 —Athlit and Camp 22, Nathanya

Athlit Camp is a hutted camp some 10 miles west of Haifa and is situated on the sea. In summer it must be a most pleasant place to be stationed, but in winter it became a bog and its proximity to the squalor of the illegal immigrants camp does not add to its attraction. However, hard work on all ranks' part made it habitable and when the Sappers failed to erect the wooden NAAFI and Officers Mess huts which we had been promised before Christmas, we ourselves provided the labour and both huts soon began to take shape, while an elaborate draining system was dug and stone roads through the camp were built, so by the end of the month when we received sudden orders to move we were able to hand over the camp in a reasonable state to our successors, the 3 Para Bn.

During our stay at Athlit we were responsible for providing the guards on the clearance camp and for carrying out road checks at irregular intervals both by day and night. We also carried out one search on January 12th after the police station at Haifa had been blown up at 8 pm. As it was a Sunday and we were only given half an hour's warning to be on the move — we considered it was a good achievement to have the Regimental column at its RV in Haifa within 90 mins of the incident occurring. The resultant search of Tel-Amel, a suburb of Haifa was completed by 1200 hrs on the 13th after we had 'screened' 872 people and had detained 10 'Suspects'.

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On January 6th, 1947, the Regiment had the honour of providing a Guard of Honour consisting of the Regimental Band and 100 men under the command of Capt P. E. Gerahty on the occasion of HM King Abdullah of Transjordan leaving Haifa Docks to pay a state visit to Turkey.

On January 18th the Regiment moved to the camp at Nathanya which we had occupied exactly 12 months before. Unfortunately this camp had been unoccupied for over six months so we had to set to work on the usual routine of clearing the camp, making new roads, constructing drains and digging gardens etc.

Individual training was started within companies and it was hoped to test every man for Star Classification in February. Drill and PT cadre courses were run for Junior NCOs and potential NCOs and a Drill and Administration course was run for newly joined subaltern officers.

At the end of the month Lieut-Col C. L. C. Ward returned from his course in U.K. and resumed command of the Regiment.

On January 23rd Dov Groner was hung and as a precaution against reprisals it was decided that 33 per cent of the Regiment should nightly sleep with their arms and that vehicles would move about in pairs escorted by at least 2 armed men in each vehicle. On January 26th Major Collins, a Government Official, was captured, and at 10 p.m. the Regiment was ordered to make a dawn search of the Measharim Quarter of Jerusalem, which was some 60 miles away.

After hurried preparations and staff work we arrived at the RV on time and carried out a fruitless search, returning to Nathanya late that evening. On the 28th we were again ordered up to Jerusalem and took over the task of curfewing the city from the strong-points we had set up during our stay there last summer. Fortunately on the 30th Major Collins and Judge Wyndham, who had been kidnapped from his Court, were released and the Regiment was allowed to return to Nathanya.

We next settled down to a period of training and advanced our position in various sporting contests. It must not be thought, however, that this period of semi-peace allowed the troops much respite — static guards were still very heavy, road checks had to be carried out daily, the mobile platoon was frequently called out to do snap checks and go to the scene of incidents while a full strength company was called upon to patrol the beaches near Tel Aviv whenever an illegal ship was expected which occurred all too frequently for our liking. Recreational journeys to the various large towns were forbidden owing to the mining of the roads which was occurring nightly, so all ranks were for all practical purposes at all times confined to camp, and the only amusements to be had were at the one camp cinema and by playing as many games as the limited playing fields would allow. Still everyone was always reasonably happy and morale surprisingly high.

On the night of March 1st the calm broke and the 2 Foresters in the camp adjoining us were attacked by mortar fire and small arms fire - unhappily causing two fatal casualties. Our own part in this attack consisted of an immediate stand-to and by immediate action by our guards in the vicinity who opened up with their LMGs in the direction of the muzzle flashes of the attackers who were in dead ground to the 2 Foresters but not to us. Although no known hits were registered this did have the effect of immediately driving off the Terrorists.

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The next few weeks were indeed hectic ones. Martial Law was soon imposed and although we took no part in the imposition of Martial Law in Tel Aviv we did do all the static Brigade duties while it lasted, and every night did extensive patrolling in the country and neighbouring settlements. All ranks displayed great keenness and patrols were often carried out by volunteers, although no man in the Regiment was getting more than one whole night in bed in three. Although we never captured any Terrorists we did succeed in preventing any incident taking place in our sector during this period, and our policy of patrolling was eventually recommended by HQ Palestine for use on a country-wide scale. One platoon from D Coy was permanently attached to the 4/7 Royal Dragoon Guards during this period for duty as lorried infantry and they took part in most of the scraps in Tel Aviv and were recommended by the Divisional Commander for their good fire discipline during the 'Battle' of Citrus House.

During this period the Regiment carried out two searches, one of Ramat Tiomkin near Nathanya and the other at Ezra U Bitsaron near Rishon le Zion. Neither search produced any incidents but several suspects were detained. (It must be stated that we were not on these occasions searching for arms caches but only looking for persons on the police 'Wanted List'.)

At the latter search the Regimental Band played martial music near the screening cages, principally as it turned out to the delight of the small children, but nevertheless it did make a boring search more interesting for all concerned.

On March 24th a commemoration service was held in honour of the Rhine Crossing. After the service the Commanding Officer of the 4/7 Royal Dragoon Guards appealed for volunteers to join the cavalry when the 52nd went into Suspended Animation. Over 200 men of the Regiment volunteered and everyone hoped that they would go to the 4/7th, but alas! within two months this policy again changed and no volunteers were allowed to join the RAC from the infantry.

For the first fortnight of April the local situation quietened down and life returned to normal— that is to say we only had on an average 100 men of the Regiment on guards and other picquet duties daily. In the middle of the month though the storm broke again. The field dressing station at Nathanya was attacked and the unarmed sentry murdered, the Divisional School was attacked, and the convalescent depot cinema destroyed by a bomb. At the same time another batch of illegal immigrant ships was reported near. Once again we were called on for the maximum effort — One company was required to patrol the beaches, another company to provide nightly standing patrols in the woods and tracks in the vicinity of Nathanya, while the remainder of the Regiment provided the usual static guards. To appreciate to the full the difficult life of the soldier in Palestine, it must be remembered that few battalions are ever at full strength owing to the operation of the leave scheme to U.K. and in our own case we seldom had in this period an effective strength of more than 550 all ranks. Still the job had to be done, and every man realized that his individual part in the battle with the Terrorists was an important one, so there was little grouching and everyone managed to get plenty of fun out of life, although to people at home that may seem rather doubtful.

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It was during this period that the Regiment suffered its only casualties in its whole stay in Palestine. A 15-cwt truck acting as escort to an APO Vehicle was blown up by a mine and the unfortunate men inside were fired at from close range by Terrorists armed with automatic weapons. Fortunately the mine was detonated too early and the 'Thugs' aim was bad, so the three soldiers in the truck were only slightly wounded and rejoined the Regiment a few days later.

The Regimental Band left us during this month. Although, through its routine which was organized by Division, they were only able to play for the Regiment half a dozen times in all, we did enjoy having them with us and we must congratulate them on their excellent performances, which greatly enhanced the reputation of the Regiment in Palestine and Cyprus.

At the beginning of May Lieut-Col C. L. C. Ward left us to command and reform the 4th Bn. His departure was a great loss to the Regiment and he left us at a time when our reputation on the sports field was at its peak. We were very glad to hear that Lieut-Col Harry Styles was flying out to take command, and he arrived to find us in the process of leaving Camp 22 and 3 Infantry Brigade to become part of 8 Infantry Brigade in 3 Infantry Division in Jerusalem.

Accounts of our sporting activities at Camp 22 are recorded elsewhere but it is of interest to note that during our 4 months stay in 1 Infantry Division we won three of the four major sporting events, a record of which we are justly proud.

A diary of main events during this period follows:

January 6th — Advance Party leaves Athlit Camp for Nathanya under command of Major A. C. Mason. Battalion supplies Guard of Honour commanded by Capt P. E. Gerahty to HM King Abdullah of Trans-jordan.

January 12th — Battalion takes part in search of Tel Amel — suburb of Haifa.

January 18th — Battalion moves to Camp 22 Nathanya.

January 21st — Lieut-Col C. L. C. Ward returns from U.K. and reassumes command of battalion from Major C. H. Styles.

January 22nd — Weekly Inter-Coy Cross Country Run takes place.

January 23rd — Inter-Coy Boxing Competition. 2nd Lieut D. Strickland joined battalion.

January 24th — Mobile platoon sent to Kafar Yena petrol point which had been damaged by a bomb.

January 25th — Capts E. Brennan and G. H. Postlethwaite leave battalion on Class A release. Capt P. E. Gerahty assumes appointment of Adjutant.

January 26th — Lieut Barroll, Intelligence Officer, leaves battalion to take up duty at Jerusalem Military Court.

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January 27th — Battalion moves to Jerusalem to search Mearsharim area for a Major Collins who had been kidnapped. Return to Camp 22 by night.

January 28th — Battalion returns to Jerusalem for use as curfew-enforcing battalion.

January 29th — All companies on curfew and road block duty in Jerusalem. S Coy carry out static guards at Camp 22.

January 30th — Major Collins is released and battalion returns to Camp 22. Pioneer platoon leaves for Egypt to do a month's training.

January 31st— 2nd Lieut E. A. R. Partridge joins battalion.

February 1st — Major C. H. Styles leaves for U.K. on leave. Major A. C. Mason takes over the duties of second in command. Capt P. H. Godsall takes over command of HQ Coy.

February 3rd — Battalion Cross Country Run won by D Coy.

February 7th — Brigadier Poole (3 Infantry Brigade) carries out an impromptu inspection of battalion.

February 9th — Lieut T. M. Lovick leaves battalion as Camp Commandant 3 Infantry Brigade.

February 13th — 3 Brigade Cross Country Race won by 52nd 'A' team, with 'B' team second.

February 15th — 3 Brigade Boxing Competition won by 52nd.

February 25th — Major J. M. A. Tillett leaves battalion to become DAA & QMG S Palestine District, 1 Infantry Division Cross Country Competition won by 52nd 'A' team with 'B' team second and 'C' team 4th.

February 26th — 1 Infantry Division Boxing Competition won by 52nd.

March 1st— Camp 22 attacked by Terrorists armed with Mortars and LMGs.

March 2nd — Martial Law imposed. 52nd take over all Brigade static duties.

March 6th- 52nd searches Ramat Timpkin. 14 suspects detained.

March 8th — System of Fighting Patrols sent out nightly to keep the peace in 52nd sector started.

March 14th - Major H. J. Sweeney, M.C., returns to battalion and assumes command of D Coy.

March 17th - 52nd take part in search of Ezra-U-Bitzaron.

March 19th — Battalion officially told that it would be going into 'Suspended Animation'.

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March 24th — Commemoration Service for Rhine Crossing 1945.

March 31st - 3 Infantry Brigade 7-a-side Rugby Competition won by 52nd.

April 3rd — 1 Infantry Division Hockey Competition won by 52nd.

April 9th — Palestine Command Cross Country Race. Battalion comes in 2nd.

April 11th — The Orderly Room Serjeant, Sjt Birley, killed in a traffic accident.

April 13th — D Coy carry out a search in woods near Nathanya. NTR.

April 14th— System of one company nightly patrolling woods near Nathanya started.

April 18th - B Coy carry out an operation at Sheffeiyim.

April 23rd — Battalion vehicle acting as escort to APO vehicle blew up by mine. Three soldiers of the battalion slightly wounded.

April 30th — Capt J. F. S. Busher assumes command of HQ Coy. Capt P. H. Godsall assumes command of B Coy.

May 3rd — Lieut-Col C. L. C. Ward leaves the battalion. Major A. C. Mason temporarily assumes command.

May 4th — Finals of Coy Athletics Meeting. D Coy the winners.

May 8th— Lieut-Col C. H. Styles arrives and assumes command of the battalion. Small advance party moves to Jerusalem under command of Major H. J. Sweeney, M.C.

May 14th — Battalion takes over commitments of 2 R Irish Fusiliers in Jerusalem.

May 15th — Battalion moves up to Jerusalem handing over to 2 R Irish Fusiliers.

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May 15th to August 1st, 1947— Jerusalem

On May 15th the battalion arrived at Jerusalem and came under command of 8 Infantry Brigade (Brigadier Bedford-Roberts A & S Highlanders) in 3 Infantry Division. The other battalions in the Brigade being 2 Foresters, 1 R Hampshire Regiment and 1 A & S Highlanders. 3 Division soon afterwards was broken up and 8 Brigade became an Independent Infantry Brigade under the control of HQ Palestine. All the battalions in the Brigade less the Argyll's were due to go into Suspended Animation in the autumn.

The battalion was unfortunate in having two camps to look after and also for being responsible for the defence of two of the four Security Zones into which the British inhabitants of Jerusalem had been herded — Battalion HQ, B and C Coys were situated in one old building —the Hospice de la Notre Dame in “C” Zone. This building was never built for housing some 400 troops, but in spite of the appalling insanitary conditions the men were fairly comfortable living two or three to a cell. The great drawback was the difficulty of adequately defending the building caused by its situation right on the edge of one of the main streets through Jerusalem. A repetition of the attack on the King David appeared all too probable and there was nothing one could really do to prevent it, except by constantly changing the sites of sentries and patrols. Frequent TEWTs were held by the officers of battalion HQ and as a result the Orderly Room Staff were kept busy constantly typing fresh guard orders. Still no Terrorist attack on 'C' Zone did materialize and we feel that this may in part have been due to our strict but just treatment of all civilians.

D and S Coys were situated in “D” Zone in the RAPC camp at the Syrian Orphanage and Major Peter Everett as the Senior Infantry officer became Zone Commander. This camp was situated right in the middle of the Measharim Quarter of the City, which is the real hot-bed of the Terrorists Movement. A few days before we took over, an attack had been made on this camp and casualties had been inflicted on the unfortunate men sleeping there, so the first essential was to produce a sound defence plan. Here some explanation may perhaps be appropriately given as to why Terrorists are so successful in their attacks on military property — The reasons are undoubtedly, firstly that the camps are never tactically sited and have enormous perimeters which cannot possibly be covered constantly, and secondly one is never permitted by law to take the offensive and so cannot start shooting at a man until he has shot at you or committed some other definite hostile act and by the time he has done that it's generally too late for you to do anything about it. Anyway a new plan was produced for the Syrian Orphanage and while we were there no incident took place within its walls although some most unpleasant ones took place very close to it.

Our duties in Jerusalem consisted of providing the guards on our two zones, on Police HQ and on Barclays Bank; of manning road blocks; of running a pass office; of carrying out daily snap checks; and of providing 3 platoons for immediate use in the event of an incident. To carry out these tasks we had to employ 9 officers, 53 NCOs and 236 Ptes nightly, and all out of a total strength which was now down to 550 all ranks, including all the Administration personnel. Thus it can be seen that we were very pushed and everyone was liable to become very tired through lack of sleep.

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One most important and popular duty was to provide a force known as the 'Lightning Platoon', which was a mobile force at instant readiness by day and night to go immediately to the scene of any incident. Men were always very keen on this duty and great dash and enthusiasm was shown, and the platoon was generally on the scene of any incident within 5 minutes of it occurring. The chief success recorded by a platoon from the battalion was the discovery of a large arms cache in an outhouse in the slum area of the city. This was found by a platoon commanded by Lieut John Thorne, which had been given the task of searching a section of the city for 3 armed bandits who had raided a bank. On several other occasions the platoon, while being called out on a practice, was within a few hundred yards of incidents at the time they occurred, but by bad luck and by the co-operation given to the Terrorists by the population no important arrests were ever made. On one other occasion the leading vehicle of the platoon, fortunately a White Armoured Scout Car, was blown up by a mine, within a couple of hundred yards of the Syrian Orphanage while on its way to assist another vehicle which had been blown up, but luckily the mine was detonated too early and the armour plating saved the inmates from suffering any casualties.

On top of its routine duties the battalion was weekly called upon to provide as many men as possible to carry out searches, generally for arms caches in the waste ground surrounding the city. Mine dogs and mine detectors would be used on these searches and spotter aircraft would be in support to give warning of any Terrorist opposition. However no important discovery was made by the battalion, although from time to time the odd grenade or mine would be located.

In July the Terrorists really got down to work and Jerusalem was in the forefront of the battle. Three or four incidents would occur within 24 hours and on each occasion the sirens would wail the alarm. Every time the siren sounded the whole battalion would stand-to at 'Action Stations' and as gangsters normally operate by night, sleep was very disturbed.

It may be thought unnecessary for everyone to 'stand-to' on any incident however small it might be, but we were not taking chances and by always being alert and quick in our reactions we hoped eventually to catch out the opposition and also to make them 'windy*' of attacking the battalion, which it is believed he was, as he never once attacked an installation guarded by the battalion.

On two occasions large scale engagements developed in the vicinity of the Syrian Orphanage and the city rang with the explosions of mortar bombs and the crack of gun-fire, while the night was illuminated with tracer bullets and verely light cartridges. Most of the noise and danger it must be admitted came from the trigger-happy Arab constables on the roofs of the various police buildings, who delighted in putting up a defensive barrage around their billets whenever an incident occurred in their area. Consequently the lightning platoon and other troops called out to cordon the area of an incident were generally more frightened of the police bullets than of the Terrorists. In our own defence it must be stated here that it was rare that a shot would be fired by a man of the battalion and our fire discipline was always of the highest — in fact it was often probably too good.

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Owing to the heavy duties we were finding, our other activities were very much curtailed. Training except on a very limited scale was out of the question. The chief relaxation for the troops was a weekly trip to the sea at Al Jura, some 70 miles away, but the uncomfortable and long truck ride rather took the gilt off the gingerbread. Waterloo Day was celebrated over a period of two days so that every man could get the benefit of it. The PRI laid on a very magnificent meal with a free cinema show afterwards and local NAAFI bands played in the NAAFI.

During the time we were in Jerusalem the security situation prevented us from really enjoying the pleasures provided in the city. For three-quarters of the time all ranks were confined to their camps after 7 pm and at all times troops had to 'Walk-Out' in groups of four or more and at the same time had to move in a tactical formation to lessen the risk of assassination from the rear. The unfortunate companies in the Syrian Orphanage were forbidden to leave the walls of their camp on foot and had to rely on recreational transport to get them into the shopping centre. But in spite of all these restrictions and in spite of the uncertainty of the future, morale remained high.

In the middle of July we were suddenly told that we were to leave Jerusalem on August 1st and that we were to move down to south Palestine to break up. Accordingly we prepared for the move and began to put our carefully drawn up plans for the disposal of men and equipment into operation. On August 1st, 1947, we handed over our commitments in Jerusalem to 1st Bn Irish Guards and the battalion became "non-operational". The following is an extract from the Brigade Commander's Farewell Message to us: "You can rest assured that you leave Jerusalem with a first class reputation — one which the 52nd Light Infantry have always had and which you have done your part in upholding with success. You have done well and I congratulate you on the good-hearted and enthusiastic manner in which you have carried out your heavy duties."

A diary of main events during this period follows:

June 1st — Platoon of D Coy searches Neve Shaanan area with air support.

June 4th — Platoon of D Coy searches Karm Ej Sila Area. One 36 grenade found.

June 9th — Battalion searches Romena area — NTR. Lightning platoon under Lieut John Thorne find large arms cache in David Street.

June 10th — L-Cpl Purkins, H., awarded Commendation Card by C-in-C MELF.

June 11th — Officers give cocktail party in Notre Dame mess.

June 12th — Battalion provides 100 men for lining the road in area of saluting dais during parade in honour of King's Birthday. Capt P. E. Gerahty in command.

June 14th — Operation 'Molotov' put into effect as explosions occur near prison.

June 18th — Regimental holiday in honour of Waterloo Day.

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June 28th — Major P. K. Everett leaves battalion on LIAP.
Major H. J. Sweeney, M.C., assumes command of 'D' Zone.

July 2nd — B Coy search part of the Old City. NTR.
Lightning platoon carried out two searches today after incidents had occurred.

July 16th — Lightning platoon called out twice.
Lightning platoon scout car damaged by mine. No casualties.

July 18th — Lightning platoon goes out 3 times to scenes of incidents.

July 19th — Lightning platoon called out twice.

July 20th — "1st Battle" of Jerusalem — Lightning platoon called to 3 incidents. Heavy firing in area of Mustapha Police Station and Syrian Orphanage. Several casualties suffered by police and soldiers of other units.

July 23rd — Officers give farewell cocktail party.

July 24th — '2nd Battle' of Jerusalem — Lightning platoon called to 4 incidents in quick succession. Troops from Syrian Orphanage engage in gun fight with gangsters.

July 25th — Major John Ballard returns to battalion and posted to S Coy.

July 26th — C Coy leave for Khassa Camp as Advance Party. One company of 1st Irish Guards arrive to take their place.

July 27th — Irish Guards suffer two casualties from a mine.

July 28th — Officers give farewell dinner party to civilian members of the administration.

July 31st — Battalion hands over operational commitments to Irish Guards.

August 1st — Battalion moves to Khassa Camp.
Sjt Cornes, our Cook Serjeant, killed in a traffic accident en route.

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August 1st to November 15th, 1947—'The Last Chapter'.

On August 1st the battalion arrived in its last camp in Palestine — Camp C, Khassa, a wired-in area of desert some 10 miles north of Gaza. For once we found a camp that had been properly cared for and left in a spotless condition, and it was ironic that it should have had to be a camp which we knew we were only going to occupy for 3 weeks and it became even more ironic when a week later we were told we would have to completely strike it and strip it before we were allowed to leave. But in the last few months we had become accustomed to surprises and had learnt to take them in our stride.

The next three weeks were very hectic ones for everyone, which was probably as well as there was no time available to become morbid and depressed as one saw day by day the battalion and its equipment diminish in size and in numbers.

On August 2nd, 1947, we dispatched at 72 hours warning some 160 men to Greece to join Light infantry battalions there, a few days later we sent another 114 to Cyprus to join the 1 DCLI, and so it went on, so that by August 16th, 1947, the battalion was down to a strength of 20 officers and 290 other ranks.

Meanwhile the Quartermaster and his Staff were working flat out — All the battalion's stores and equipment, including the large amount of spare stores which had naturally accumulated over the passing years, had to be handed in — mostly to a camp at Haifa some 100 miles to the north. Everything had to be checked, counter-checked, loaded, unloaded, guarded and escorted and as transport was scarce and the number of men available for working parties strictly limited, it was essential that the time-table was adhered to rigidly. In spite of the inevitable delays caused by RASC Transport failures and by the mining activities of the Terrorist movements, the schedule was maintained and by August 22nd, 1947, all G1098 stores, vehicles, battalion stores, camp stores, etc., had been handed in and the remnants of the battalion together with their personal belongings and essential battalion property were ready for the move to Egypt.

During our stay in Khassa everyone was able to enjoy a few hours' bathing in the sea at Al Jura or Mughazi, which were only a few miles from the camp, and the officers were able to renew acquaintance with the officers' clubs at Gaza and Mughazi which they had got to know well in the battalion's first few weeks in Palestine. The officers also renewed acquaintance with the officers of the Chestnut Troop who are now part of 1 RHA and many a good party ensued.

Before each draft left the battalion the PRI and the messing officer organized a special dinner for the men in the dining halls and a sing-song was afterwards held in the NAAFI. Finally a few days before the battalion left Palestine a battalion Farewell supper was held and a dance band was engaged to play popular music throughout the meal.

On August 22nd, 1947, the battalion left Palestine by train for Suez after a stay of 22 1/2 months, during which it had been ceaselessly engaged in active internal security operations. When we left we had the doubtful honour of being the infantry battalion with the longest record of continuous service in that unhappy country, and we believe that we suffered less casualties than any other unit of an equivalent size in our stay there.

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That happy state of affairs we attribute to the fact that we always tried to do our duty impartially and with justice and to the fact that we tried to live up to the highest traditions of the Regiment and to imbue into all our soldiers the soldierly qualities which make a light infantryman superior to any other soldier in the world.

On our arrival at Suez we found that our advance party under Major Charles Mason had obtained part of the BTD for our use. The BTD Staff kindly consented to administer us and we were thus left with the maximum time to find jobs for the officers and men whom we still had with us. A record of the actual disposal of the officers and men of the battalion may be seen elsewhere in this number.

At Suez all ranks were able to relax again and it was a great relief to be able to walk about freely on one's own and without arms. The bathing in the Red Sea and the Canal was excellent, and the officers had the use of various clubs in Suez, where they were able to indulge in a final bout of 'wining' and 'dining' before returning to the austerities of the Home Country. The shops also seemed to be full of goods which we had heard were scarce or unobtainable in England so that we were quite relieved to leave Suez for Port Said on September 3rd, 1947, poorer but it cannot be said altogether wiser men.

While we were in Egypt we were very pleased to see Colonel Maurice Toye, Lieut-Col J. D. Palmer, Major Johnny Granville and Capt Roy Fullick and we were delighted to see Major Peter Everett who had been returned to the MELF by the War office to complete his Python Tour.

On September 3rd, 1947, the battalion now reduced to 6 officers, 2 WOII's and 88 ORs embarked on the HMT *Clan Lamont*, a converted cargo boat of some 10,000 tons. After a monotonous but smooth journey, during which we shared the ship with 1 RWK and 2 RUR, who were both returning to U.K. at full strength, we arrived at Liverpool on September 12th and finally disembarked on September 14th.

After a quick and fortunately uneventful passage through the Customs we got on the train and arrived at Oxford at 4 pm. At Oxford we felt honoured to be met by the Colonel of the Regiment and by a welcoming committee consisting of Colonel J. J. Powell, Lieut-Col Ducat-Hamersley, Lieut-Col F. Clare and several others. In the evening General Paget gave an excellent and appreciative speech to the assembled battalion and on the next morning we all went on leave.

On October 1st the battalion reassembled at Cowley Barracks and battalion HQ was set up in the pavilion and the battalion flag hoisted on the flag pole. All ranks less the actual representative cadre of officers and 15 regular ORs were transferred for duty at 43 PTC.

The cadre was told that they had weeks to wind up the battalion and everyone got down to work getting rid of outstanding correspondence, burning old records, sorting out and rechecking the battalion property which had been stacked in the Keep during our stay abroad, holding Audit Boards, writing accounts for the Chronicle, etc. etc.

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In spite of the scepticism shown by various members of the PTC staff there was quite a lot to be done and we trust that when the time comes again for the 52nd to be reformed, some advantage will be found as a result of our activities.

During our final few days at Oxford we were glad to see John Tillet, John Howard, Dereck Arkell, Roy Gleed, Mike Hensman, John Barrell, John Thome and many others and we hope to see a good many others at the Regimental Luncheon on December 1st.

On November 15th, 1947, the 'Representative Cadre' was disbanded and the battalion flag was lowered for the last time. The battalion was now reduced to a 'token' cadre of one officer, one WO, one serjeant and one corporal. The Funds have been handed over to Lieut-Col J. Ducat-Hamersley and the Regimental Colours now hang in the Depot Officers Mess.

A diary of main events during this period follows:

August 1st — Battalion arrives at Khassa Camp.

August 2nd— Draft of 160 ORs leaves battalion for Greece.

August 3rd —B and C Coys go into 'Suspended Animation'.

August 13th — Draft of 112 ORs and 2 officers leave Battalion for i DCLI Cyprus.

August 19th — S Coy goes into 'Suspended Animation'.

August 20th — CSM Stevenson, D.C.M. (A/RSM) and 18 ORs leave battalion for 7 Para Bn.

August 22nd — Battalion moves to BTD Suez. Draft of 56 ORs leave battalion for 2 Foresters.

August 23rd—D Coy goes into 'Suspended Animation'.

August 31st — Battalion baggage and baggage party leaves for Port Said under command of 2nd Lieut P. A. Jordan.

September 3rd — Battalion leaves BTD Suez and embarks at Port Said on HMT *Clan Lamont*.

September 14th — Battalion disembarks at Liverpool. Battalion met on arrival at Oxford Station by General Paget and representative officers.

October 1st - All ranks return from Disembarkation Leave. All ranks less Regimental cadre party transferred to 43 PTC.

November 15th — 52nd Light Infantry reduced to 'Token' cadre of 1 officer, 1 WO, and 2 NCOs.

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If this account has been found over-long and over-dull we crave the indulgence of our readers but we remind them that it is our 'swan-song'. If this account should appear too martial for these days of peace, then our defence must be that it is a faithful record of a monotonous yet exciting year spent under active service conditions as exhausting and unexpected as any to be found in many a campaign of the past, and we hope that as a result of these pages the readers will have a better understanding of our difficulties and of our small triumphs.

We should have liked to have followed the example of the 43rd and have devoted our spare time to riding, shooting, etc., but conditions in Palestine did not permit such luxuries this year. We had to take our recreation where we could find it, and we believe we succeeded for seldom before can one Regiment have won three major Divisional trophies in one season — however enough already appears about these activities in other columns.

In the 191 years of its existence the Fifty-Second Light Infantry has remained CA Regiment unsurpassed in Arms since Arms were borne by Man5 and now that her services are (temporarily we hope) no longer required by her master, the Nation, we trust that our stewardship in her final year of life has been worthy of her highest tradition, and we know that all who have served her will cherish for all time the happy comradeship and indomitable spirit which they have learnt in her ranks. *Vale.*

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SECOND BATTALION LETTER

Dear Editor,

This is possibly the last 2nd Bn letter for many years and it is my unfortunate lot to have to write it. It will certainly be the last 52nd letter as we have now definitely dropped the title of 52nd, though no doubt, when old members of the 52nd get together it will always be remembered and spoken of as such.

The spirit of the Regiment was imbued into the younger members at the beginning of World War II and this spirit prevailed until the final day when the last Regimental Part II Order was published. The title 52nd was recognized by the commander of every formation in which we served and undoubtedly if spoken of by any other name it will not ring the same note or recall the same memories as our old title.

The year 1947 opened on a quiet note, individual training was the order of the day, with training for sports and games taking a high place on the priority programme.

Early in January we moved once more from Athlit to our old camp at Nathanya and very pleased we were to move, as Athlit was one of the worst camps in Palestine during the rainy season.

The end of January saw us back in Jerusalem for five days to assist in the search for a Major Collins who had been kidnapped by Terrorists.

1947 was a great year for our athletes, the Regiment winning the 3 Infantry Brigade and 1st Infantry Division Cross Country and Boxing Competitions, 1st Infantry Division Hockey and was second in the Command Cross Country. The success of the boxing was largely due to the untiring efforts of John Thorne. The Regiment did remarkably well at cricket during our final stay in Jerusalem and probably had the best all round side it has had for years.

Early in May we moved to Jerusalem and came under command of Bedford-Roberts, Commander 8 Infantry Brigade. From now on life became more interesting and certainly more exciting as no doubt you will gather when you read the Summary.

Despite the arduous duties, the indignities heaped upon them, the restrictions, and inadequate amenities, the behaviour and conduct of the Regiment was beyond praise.

The tolerance and restraint shown by all ranks during a very trying period enhanced the Regiment's very high reputation. This was borne out by a letter sent by the Civil Administration to the Brigadier which expressed their appreciation of the way the Regiment had carried out its task in Jerusalem.

On August 1st we moved from Jerusalem to Khassa where we commenced to thin out and the feeling of all who had served the Regiment for long or short periods can well be imagined, although not easily described.

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We were pleased to be visited by Peter Young, Major-General Loewn who doubtless will be remembered as BM at Bareilly, Lieut-General McMillan, GOC Palestine, and the Officers of the Chestnut Troop, RA.

We moved to Suez on August 21st, where we were accommodated in the Base Transit Depot. Here we met Scuttle Palmer, who was A/Q and looking very business-like surrounded by an entourage of Arabs and Sudanese who greeted him like the new 'Messiah'.

On September 3rd we embarked on our homeward journey arriving at Oxford on the 14th, where we were met by the Colonel of the Regiment and several other old members.

Our thanks are due to Jack Ducat-Hamersley for the grand reception he gave all ranks, and the speed with which everyone was dispatched on leave.

All that remains now is to hand over the funds and property of the 52nd to OC Depot and the Regimental Committee, and on November 16th, 1947, the flag will come down from our temporary headquarters for the last time.

On behalf of the Regiment I must thank all ranks for the loyalty and devotion to duty shown during these past few months, especially those who had spent so long with the Regiment but who had to be posted elsewhere to finish their time, and who up to the last carried out their duties with the same unflinching spirit that prevailed throughout the Regiment.

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ARRIVAL OF THE 52ND CADRE AT OXFORD

The cadre of the 52nd, strength 6 officers and 18 other ranks, under the command of Lieut-Col C. H. Styles, and 71 other ranks of the battalion who are due for release in the U.K., embarked at Port Said in the HMT *Clan Lamont* on September 3rd, 1947. The vessel arrived at Liverpool on September 13th, and disembarkation took place the next morning when the party left by special train for Oxford, arriving at the LMS station at 3.55 pm. Here they were met by the Colonel of The Regiment and Lieut-Col H. J. C. Ducat-Hamersley and officers of No. 43 PTC. Also present were Lieut-Col and Mrs Powell, Lieut-Cols Clare and Ward and Major R. A. St. G. Martin.

The party was conveyed by motor transport to the Depot where an excellent high tea was all ready for them. During tea the Band of the 52nd played a selection of music.

The officers and men were afterwards assembled in the gymnasium where they were welcomed home by the Colonel of The Regiment. The following is an extract from General Sir Bernard Paget's address:

“I am sorry I couldn't meet you at Liverpool but I am glad to welcome you home to the Depot where most of you began your life in the Army. You have had a very difficult job to do in Palestine and you have done it extraordinarily well, maintaining the highest standards of discipline and efficiency as the 52nd has done throughout its long and varied history. And I would also like to congratulate you on the fine athletic record of the 52nd in the Middle East.

Now you will have to tackle another difficult job at home, one which will demand of each one of us the same high qualities of discipline, team work, courage and faith which have made the 52nd famous.

As you know, we are faced in this country by a crisis as serious, if not more so, as that with which we were faced after Dunkirk; that our way of life, our social progress and our standard of living are at stake.

You will meet a lot of people who will tell you that we are done for, that nothing can save us from economic disaster. But I ask you, where should we be today, if people had felt like that and thrown their hand in in the summer of 1940? That would have meant our defeat by Germany. Most of our able-bodied population would now be doing slave labour; many would have been bumped off and the survivors would be starving under Gestapo rule. But it didn't happen that way because we all realized what was at stake and we were determined that it should not happen; we pulled together and with God's help we won through. And there is not a shadow of doubt that we will win through now, if we realize what is at stake and make up our minds to do so, provided we all pull together. For we are the same people who faced up to disaster after Dunkirk and refused to accept the defeat which every other nation in the world thought to be inevitable.

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The tragedy is that in so short a time after the war we have lost so much of that wonderful spirit of comradeship, of service and of faith which carried us through to victory; and that now the country is so divided by class and party prejudices. Don't allow yourselves to be depressed by the pessimists, don't believe all you read or hear, don't be mugged in by propaganda. Think things out for yourselves and form your own judgments, always remembering that we did win the war in face of tremendous odds, and that we can assuredly win the peace, if we have the guts to do so; remembering also our comrades who gave their lives in the war that we might have the opportunity to fulfil the cause for which they fought and died. We must never forget them and the sacrifice they made for us."

The General went on to explain the reason for battalions being reduced to cadre strength and said that whatever changes might take place in the organization of the Army, the proud record of the 52nd would live for all time as an imperishable example of all that is best in the British race.

In addition to the Commanding Officer the following officers returned with the cadre: Major A. G. Mason, Capt P. E. Gerahty, Lieut (Quartermaster) W. S. Stuart, 2nd Lieuts P. Jordon and E. A. R. Partridge.

Also with the cadre was L-Cpl Purkins who proceeded to India with the 52nd on March 7th, 1922, and has served with the battalion continuously since that date.



CADRE, 2ND BATTALION AT REGIMENTAL DEPOT