

1951 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
1st Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY (43rd & 52nd)

SUMMARY OF THE FIRST BATTALION DIARY 1951

January 2nd — Authority received to promote 2nd Lieut. G. C. Stacey to Lieutenant with effect from December 6th, 1950.

January 4th — Signal from GHQ, M.E.L.F. ordering the Regiment to produce a major as commandant of the Mauritian O.C.T.U. Major J. Willey selected for the appointment.

January 8th — A team of eight officers started to train for the King George Cup.

January 10th— Capt. P. R. Hayter, M.B.E., M.C, and his family arrived from U.K. A draft of 39 other ranks arrived from Bordon. Thirteen of them were regular soldiers.

January 12th — Officers team fired the A.R.A. Non-Central King George Cup match and scored 623.

The team was selected from. The Commanding Officer, Majors R. R. F. T. Barry, J. Willey and G. J. F. White, and Lieutenants M. R. Pennell, O. G. Pratt, M. N. Cracknell and L. P. Fennimore.

January 13th — Rehearsal parade for the annual administrative Inspection.

January 14th — Advance party went to Troodos to try out the snow and slopes for skiing.

January 15th — Preliminary rounds of the Inter Company Boxing Competition. C Company beat B Company by five fights to four. Signal received cancelling Major Willey's appointment.

January 16th — Semi-finals of the Inter Company Boxing. C Company beat S Company by seven fights to two. HQ Company beat A Company the decision being made on the 1st String Welter.

January 18th — C Company won the Inter Company Boxing by beating HQ Company by seven fights to two.

Inspection of Waynes Keep by Lieut.-Colonel A. Keatings, M.C., D.A.D.H.

January 22nd— Signal Platoon Cadre started.

January 23rd — Annual Administrative Inspection by the District Commander Brigadier F. S. Reid C.B.E. B and HQ Companies represented the Regiment.

January 24th — Major A. de V. Gibson attached to Cyprus District as Island Chairman of Sports Committee.

Capt. P. R. Hayter, M.B.E., M.C., assumed Command of B Company.

January 29th — The first Junior Leaders Cadre commenced at Karaolos Camp, Famagusta.

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January 30th—Administration Inspection of Polemidhia Detachment by District Commander.

Semi-finals of Inter Unit Boxing. The Regiment beat the R.A.F. by seven fights to two. Capt. A. B. Gillespie Hill returned from Messing Officers Course in Egypt.

Visit by Rev. 'Tubby' Clayton to Waynes Keep. He lunched in the mess and spoke to all ranks in the NAAFI.

January 31st — Visit of the Director of Army Health, Major-General T. Young, O.B.E., K.H.P. He inspected the camp.

February 2nd — The District Commander carried out his annual administrative Inspection of the Karaolos Detachment.

The Regiment beat 2 Wireless Regiment by five fights to four in the finals of the Inter Unit Boxing.

February 3rd — C Company won the Island Basket Ball Competition by beating the R.A.F. team by 34 points to 17.

February 5th — Capt. R. A. Colvile moved to Polymedhia to become second in command of A Company.

Capt. A. B. Gillespie Hill took over the duties of Messing Officer and Fire Officer.

February 6th — The officers attended a Guest Night at the R.A.F. Station, Nicosia.

February 7th — No. 2 Regimental Band of the R.A.F. gave a concert for all ranks in the Nicosia Garrison Club.

February 8th — The Commanding Officer and the Adjutant visited the Polymedhia Detachment.

February 10th — The Commanding Officer's Bugle competition was won by 21127581 Pte. Russell, J.

February 12th — Lieut.-Colonel H. J. C. Ducat-Hamersley proceeded on leave. Major M. Darell-Brown, D.S.O., assumed Command of the Regiment.

Several officers and N.C.O.s of the Regiment attended a Fire Course at Famagusta. The Buglers and some of the Signal Platoon went to Troodos for ten days' ski-ing.

February 15th — 2nd Lieut. A. J. Raymond-Barker joined the Regiment and was posted to B Company.

The Companies on Detachment moved round:

A Company returned to Waynes Keep

B Company moved to Famagusta

C Company moved to Polymedhia

February 19th — The Commanding Officer returned from leave.

February 22nd— Exercise 'Sandune'. A cloth model exercise run by District Headquarters.

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February 23rd — Exercise 'Sandune' continued.

The officers mess entertained the R.A.F. and their wives in the mess.

February 28th — Inter Unit Cross Country Run. The Regiment won easily. Their only opponents were two teams entered by 2 Wireless Regiment.

Officers "B" Team fired for King George V Cup. Score 564.

March 2nd — Classification of Signallers on completion of a six weeks' cadre. Out of 20 students 16 passed.

March 4th — Island Inter Unit Ski Races won by the Regiment by a narrow margin of 3 seconds. The team was:

Major R. F. E. Hill, Major R. R. F. T. Barry, M.B.E., Lieuts., R. M. Colvile, W. S. B. Rawlings, W. N. Cracknell (Res.)

March 5th — Regimental T.E.W.T. on the withdrawal directed by the Commanding Officer.

March 7th — Capt. D. C. Blake left the Regiment on reversion to U.K. on Python and posting to 1st. Bn The Durham Light Infantry.

March 8th — Six Officers and nine N.C.O.s left by air for Egypt to act as umpires on Exercise "Sandgrouse".

Regimental Serjeant Major J. Stevenson, D.C.M., arrived from U.K. to take over from Regimental Serjeant Major B. Cox.

March 13th — Letter received warning the Regiment of a move in January 1952.

March 14th — Visit by representation of the Command Secretariat.

March 19th — Visit by Divisional Commander, 1 Inf. Div., Major-General F. R. G. Matthews, C.B., D.S.O.

Permission was given for shirt sleeve order to be worn in barracks and on training.

March 20th — 2nd Lieut. M. H. Williamson joined the Regiment from Bordon to carry out his National Service.

The Commanding Officer visited the Polymedhia Detachment accompanied by Regimental Serjeant Majors Cox and Stevenson.

March 22nd — Easter Holiday break started after duty today.

Officers who had acted as Umpires on Exercise 'Sandgrouse' in Sinai returned to the Regiment.

March 27th—Work restarted after the Easter Holiday.

March 30th — Regimental T.E.W.T. — "The Attack" directed by the Commanding Officer.

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March 31st — Finals of the Inter Area Hockey League ended with a draw, after extra time, between C and HQ, Companies.

The warrant officers and Serjeants mess held a dinner and social to say goodbye to Regimental Serjeant Major and Mrs. Cox.

April 1st — It was announced in the local press that 2 Inf. Bde. are to come to Cyprus in May. The 1st Bn. The Cheshire Regiment and 29 Field Regiment Royal Artillery are the two major units arriving.

April 2nd — A Regimental Gas Cadre commenced. The first anti-Gas training since the war.

April 3rd — Letter received confirming that the Regiment is moving to Akaba in January 1952.

April 5th — Lecture by Miss Hewitson Jones on the Forces Help Society.

April 7th — The finals of the Inter Area Hockey League — C Company beat HQ, Company by 1-0.

Serjeant Hatton was married at St. George's Church Karaolos Camp. The reception took place in the warrant officers and Serjeants mess.

April 10th — The Commanding Officer visited Polymedhia Detachment.

April 12th — Guard of Honour found by A Company for Admiral R. B. Carney, Commander United States Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Fleet.

April 13th — A Company fired the Company Shield match score 679.

April 14th — Preliminary games of knockout Hockey League.

HQ, Coy "A" v. Cyprus Sig. Sqn. Won 4-0.

HQ Coy "B" v. R.A.F. Sig. Sqn. Won 3-1.

A Coy v. B.M.H. & Pay Corps. Lost.

April 20th — Officers Day — Wireless procedure by Lieut. M. R. Pennell.

Commanding Officer's Conference on concentration of the Regiment.

April 23rd — Summer hours of work started. First parade at 0730 hrs. — Tiffin at 1300 hrs.

April 24th — Lieut. R. J. Briscoe returned to the Regiment after serving in the Eritrean Police Force.

April 25th — Major M. Darell-Brown, D.S.O., and family left Cyprus for U.K.

Major R. R. F. T. Barry, M.B.E., assumed the appointment of second in command.

Capt. A. B. Gillespie Hill took over command of HQ, Company.

April 27th — Regimental Skeleton Exercise "Popemoff" directed by Major R. R. F. T. Barry, M.B.E.

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April 28th — Final of the Area Knockout Hockey Competition. C Company beat HQ Company "B" team by 1-0.

May 1st — Visit by Brigadier C. E. Taunton, C.B., D.S.O., Commander 2 Infantry Brigade.

May 4th — Major J. Willey was evacuated by air to British Military Hospital, Fayid. Brigadier F. S. Reid, C.B.E., left the Island by air for his new appointment at Benghazi.

May 5th — Lieut. O. G. Pratt and family left for U.K. on Python.
R.S.M. B. Cox left the Regiment after 19 1/2 years service.
Draft DAHKB of 14 other ranks arrived.

May 12th — Telegram received from the Colonel of the Regiment telling of our success in winning the Queen Victoria Trophy.
Marriage of Major R. R. F. T. Barry, M.B.E., and Miss Sheila White.

May 14th — A whole holiday for all ranks.

May 16th — C Company returned from being on detachment at Polymedhia.

May 17th — First Training Conference held.

May 18th — Brigadier D. E. Taunton, C.B.E., D.S.O., talked to all ranks in the NAAFI.

May 19th — Telegram from A.R.A. confirming award of Victoria Trophy.
Visit by Lieut.-Colonel Witpen, M.B.E., A.C.C.

May 23rd — Telegram of congratulation on winning Queen Victoria Trophy received from Brigadier F. S. Reid, C.B.E., Commanding Benghazi District.

May 24th — Telegram of congratulation received from Brigadier K. Bayley, C.B.E., B.T.E.

May 25th — Letter of congratulation on winning Queen Victoria Trophy received from GOC. British Troops, Egypt, Lieut.-General Sir George Erskine, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O.

May 28th — Signal received from 2 Infantry Brigade warning the Regiment of a move next week to Golden Sands and of its responsibility in looking after 16 Parachute Brigade Headquarters and three parachute battalions.

May 29th — The Commanding Officer, Adjutant, Quartermaster and Officers Commanding A and S Companies visited Golden Sands to allot accommodation.

June 4th — The Advance party commanded by Major R. F. E. Hill moved to Golden Sands.

B and C Companies started work on their respective Parachute Battalions Camps.

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June 5th — The Commanding Officer heard unofficially of his appointment as the first Brigade Colonel of the Light Infantry Brigade.
Telegram received from the Depot congratulating the Regiment on winning the Queen Victoria Trophy.

June 7th — The Regiment took part in the King's Birthday Parade at Nicosia.
A draft of 76 National Servicemen left for the UK on release.
A draft of 102 other ranks arrived for service in the Regiment.

June 8th — A message was received cancelling the move of the Regiment to Akaba in January 1952.
A and B Companies moved to Golden Sands.
The 16 Parachute Brigade advance parties arrived by air.

June 9th — The main body of the Regiment moved to Golden Sands Camp.

June 12th — B and C Companies rear parties returned to Golden Sands from Waynes Keep.
The main body of the Parachute Brigade arrived in Cyprus.

June 13th — The officers entertained the officers of H.M. Ships *Triumph* and *Warrior*.
The Commanding Officer was told officially of his appointment as Colonel of the Light Infantry Brigade.

June 14th — The Regiment has a holiday for the King's Birthday in lieu of Thursday, June 7th.

June 15th — Captain R. J. Bartlett, A.G. 3C GHQ., M.E.L.F., paid the Regiment a flying visit.

June 16th — Information was received that the Regiment would be returning to Waynes Keep in not less than six weeks' time.

June 23rd — The Regiment has a holiday for Waterloo Day.
Aquatic and Comic Sports were held on the shore during the afternoon and there was a Grand Waterloo Ball in the warrant officers and Serjeants mess in the evening.

June 26th — Regimental Exercise "Greco" directed by Major H. P. Patterson.
2nd Lieut. Burns arrived and was posted to A Company.

June 27th - Exercise "Greco" continued.
The Commanding Officer left by air for a Divisional Study Period in Tripoli.
Major R. F. E. Hill assumed command of the Regiment in the absence of the Commanding Officer.

June 28th — Visit by the Major-General in Charge of Administration, HQ, M.E.L.F., Major-General Humphries, C.B.E.

June 29th — Draft of 50 other ranks arrived from Bordon.

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June 30th — First Regimental Drill Parade in the Stadium at Famagusta.

July 2nd— Major R. R. F. T. Barry, M.B.E., assumed command of the Regiment on return from leave in England.

July 3rd — Visit by the Deputy Chaplain-General, M.E.L.F.
Draft of 24 other ranks arrived from Bordon.

July 5th — *Empress of Australia* arrived Famagusta but did not embark National Servicemen and Python personnel for U.K.
The officers were entertained by 29 Field Regiment Royal Artillery.
2nd Lieuts. D. S. Hawker and J. St. C. Simmons joined the Regiment and were posted to A and C Companies.

July 7th — The Commanding Officer returned from Divisional Study Period at Tripoli.

July 11th — Lecture by Dr. H. M. Gibson Aitken, M.B.E., on 'Atomic Energy in War'.

July 12th — 57 National Servicemen, Colour Serjeant Field, B.E.M., Serjeant Savage and two coal-miners embarked on the corvette for Port Said to catch the *Empress of Australia* which sailed without passengers a week ago.
The Regimental Advance to Contact Exercise was cancelled owing to lack of transport from R.A.S.C.

July 13th — The Queen Victoria Trophy, Royal Irish Cup and Company Shield arrived in the corvette and were placed in the officers mess, warrant officers and Serjeants mess and C Company offices.

July 16th — Battalion Exercise "Wanderlust" set and directed by HQ,, 2 Infantry Brigade.

July 17th — Battalion Exercise continued.

July 19th — Visit by Deputy Commander 2 Infantry Brigade District, Colonel H. M. Curteis, M.C.

July 20th — Visit by Brigadier C. P. Roe, Chief Education Officer HQ,, M.E.L.F.

July 24th — Study Day organized by HQ, 2 Infantry Brigade District on River Crossings. The Commanding Officer, Second in Command and Company Commanders attended.
The officers gave a Cocktail party and entertained some two hundred guests.

July 25th — Visit by Lieut.-General Sir George Erskine, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O., General Officer Commanding British Troops in Egypt.

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July 26th — The Commanding Officer went on leave prior to sailing for the U.K. Major R. R. F. T. Barry, M.B.E., assumed Command.
One day Health Course organized by the A.D.M.S. and attended by seven officers from the Regiment.

July 30th — Brigade signal exercise “Revelation” in which the Regiment took part in skeleton form.

July 31st — Exercise “Revelation” continued.
Visit by Major-General A. J. Beveridge, O.B.E., M.C., Director of Medical Services, M.E.L.F. and one time Regimental Medical Officer in Germany in 1926.

August 6th — A whole holiday for the Regiment.

August 13th — An officers team beat the warrant officers and Serjeants by four goals to nil.

August 14th — The troopship *Empress of Australia* sailed for England. Lieut.-Colonel H. J. C. Ducat-Hamersley and family and Major R. F. E. Hill and family left for home. National Service Group 4917-19 and July-August Python personnel went to U.K.

August 15th — Visit by Deputy Military Secretary, M.E.L.F., Colonel R. H. L. Oulton, O.B.E.

August 16th — Brigade Study Day—Defence in Low Hills.

August 20th — 1 Cheshire - Battalion Exercise, Advance to Contact in M.T.
The Regiment detailed five officers and eight N.C.O.s as umpires.

August 22nd — Visit by Commander in Chief, M.E.L.F., General Sir Brian Robertson, Bt., C.B.E., K.C.M.G., K.G.V.O., C.B., D.S.O., M.C., A.D.C., accompanied by the Major-General in charge of Administration.

August 23rd — D Company reformed under command of Major G. C. Rush.

August 29th — A draft of 136 non-commissioned officers and soldiers arrived from the 1st Bn. The Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, F.A.R.E.L.F.
The 1st Bn. The Royal Berkshire Regiment arrived in Cyprus.

August 30th — Two officers and two N.C.O.s from the Lebanese Army arrived for a course on the 17-pounder Anti-Tank Gun.

August 31st— Groups 4920, 4921 and all Python and Corsuk personnel due home by the end of October embarked at 36 hours notice in the *Empire Ken* for U.K.

September 1st — Four destroyers of the Mediterranean Fleet arrived at Famagusta.
Regimental Route March — 8 miles, Band and Bugles on parade.
Battalion Training Period started.

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September 2nd — The Regiment entertained the officers and men of H.M.S. *Armada*.

September 3rd — Sand Model Exercise — Defence and Night Attack. Sixteen officers from 29 Field, Regiment Royal Artillery attended.

September 4th — Regimental Defence and Night Attack Exercise 'What a Yawn' directed by Major A. de V. Gibson.

September 5th — Regimental Exercise.

September 7th - One day course at District Headquarters on Air Transported Operations.

September 10th — Study Day — The Advance to Contact in M.T. Directed by the Commanding Officer.

September 13th — Regimental Exercise “Kickemoff” — advance to contact in M.T. directed by the Commanding Officer.

September 14th — Regimental Exercise 'Kickemoff'.

September 15th — Lieut.-Colonel M. Darell-Brown, D.S.O., arrived in the *Empress of Australia* to Command the Regiment.

2nd Lieuts. K. A. How and Margetson joined the Regiment.

Lieut. W. S. B. Rawlings returned from a course at the Support Weapons Wing in U.K.

September 17th — Officers' Study Day — “The Battalion in the Withdrawal” directed by Major P. R. Hayter, M.B.E., M.C.

September 20th — Regimental Withdrawal Exercise “Gone Away” directed by Major P. R. Hayter, M.B.E., M.C.

September 21st — Regimental Exercise continued.

September 26th — Visit of D.A.G., M.E.L.F., Brigadier W. R. Cox, D.S.O.

Visit of Father Gavin, Senior R.C. Chaplain, M.E.L.F.

September 27th — Regimental Route March and Bivouac Exercise, March out 10 miles, bivouacing for the night and march back ten.

September 28th — Cyprus District Motor Cycle Trials. The Regiment entered two teams and one individual competitor.

October 1st — Six Lebanese officers arrived for a fourteen day course.

October 2nd — Regimental Exercise Foxhole. Occupation and development of a Battalion Defensive position.

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October 4th — Lieut. I. R. C. Greenlees promoted S/Captain.

October 12th — Brigadier A. Heber Percy, D.S.O., discussed training problems, Major Stancliffe, A.G. 3 discussed A.G. points.

Mr. Turner and Mr. Lees, Soldier Magazine team, visited the Regiment.

October 20th — The Regiment embarked in H.M. Troopship *Empress of Australia* for Egypt. Strength all ranks 485.

October 21st — The *Empress of Australia* sailed for Port Said.

October 22nd — The Regiment disembarked and moved into 156 Transit Camp, Port Said.

October 23rd — The Regiment found a mobile reserve of one company and an officers patrol for Port Fouad.

October 24th — The advance party and A Company moved to El Ballah.

October 25th — The Regiment moved in a road convoy to Gordon Camp, El Ballah. The Camp was taken over from 41 Field Regiment, Royal Artillery.

October 26th — Guards, escorts and patrols were found in number.

The General Officer Commanding, British Troops in Egypt spoke to all ranks in the cinema.

October 27th — A party of 1 N.C.O. and 15 soldiers arrived by air from Cyprus.

Lieut. W. S. C. Chevis attached to HQ, 2 Infantry Brigade as Intelligence Officer.

October 28th — Warning was received of expected terrorist attacks by the Muslim Brotherhood. Sentries were dug in and protected by LMGs.

October 29th — The day was spent digging in and settling down.

The total number of soldiers on guard or mobile reserve was 108.

The Divisional Commander, Major-General F. R. C. Matthews, C.B., D.S.O., visited the Regiment.

November 1st — A working party at Port Said unloaded 120 tons of stores in record time. The party was found by C and S Companies.

November 2nd— The first lift of the sea tail arrived; it consisted of 24 vehicles and 50 soldiers.

November 3rd— A party of 27 soldiers was attached to 1207 Sqn. (IWT) Royal Engineers to work as dockers, wharf-men and lightermen.

November 4th — Lieut. R. M. Colvile attached to HQ, 1 Infantry Division as Liaison Officer.

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November 5th - A Company took over the El Kantara Ferry from 1 Loyals.
Report of large convoy of vehicles moving in Zone from Delta was investigated by B Company. Nothing to report.
Officers Study period on Internal Security problems.

November 6th — The NAAFI finally lost all its staff and the P.R.I. took over the stock and building as a regimental canteen.

November 9th — B Company moved to Port Fouad on detachment.
C Company took over El Firdan Bridge from 1 Loyals.
One platoon of S Company established a road block on the Treaty Road at Omar Camp.
A further sea tail of three officers and 49 other ranks arrived from Cyprus.

November 10th — Incident reported last night from Omar road block. Shots fired from SMC at sentries and 36 grenades blind thrown. No casualties.

November 12th — An evening “Stand to” was introduced in all camps throughout El Ballah garrison.

November 13th — C Company returned from detachment position at El Firdan.

November 14th — Incident in village near El Kantara. Commanding Officer in charge of search made by A Company. No arms found.

November 15th — Platoon of C Company returned from detachment west of Treaty Road.

November 19th — C Company moved temporarily to El Kirsh to guard SRD.
Captain R. F. Fullick left by air for the U.K. to attend the 1952 Staff College Course.
Brigadier R. G. S. Hobbs, D.S.O., O.B.E., visited the Regiment on taking over 2 Infantry Brigade.

November 20th — A Company returned to Camp from detachment. Their duties at El Kantara were taken over by C Company.
The Regiment was warned to move to Wolseley Camp, El Ballah and that 29th Field Regiment would be occupying Gordon Camp.

November 24th — The Commanding Officer visited B Company on detachment at Port Said.

November 25th — Advance Party 29 Field Regiment arrived.

November 26th — Two soldiers of S Company attached to B Company at Port Said were attacked by two Egyptians who attempted to steal their arms after throwing sand in their eyes. One Egyptian was badly wounded and later died, the other was arrested. No arms were lost.

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November 27th — The Regimental advance party under Captain D. B. Fox left to Wolseley Camp.

All stores were moved in M.T. to Wolseley Camp.

November 28th — The main body of the Regiment moved to Wolseley Camp from Gordon Camp.

Wolseley Camp was last properly occupied by Mauritians. It is derelict and very dirty.

November 29th — The Omar road block was closed and half the S Company force there returned to Wolseley Camp.

The G1098 ammunition was moved to Wolseley Camp.

November 30th — Much time and effort spent on trying to clean and tidy up Wolseley Camp.

December 1st — The remainder of S Company detachment at Omar Camp returned to Wolseley Camp.

C Company withdrew their platoon from the Filtration Plant.

December 2nd — A Company moved to Moascar to fire their annual range course.

December 3rd — A draft of 30 soldiers arrived from the L.I.B.T.C. at Bordon.

December 4th — A second draft of 30 soldiers arrived from Bordon.

December 7th — Lieut. W. M. Cracknell attached to 2 Infantry Brigade as Intelligence Officer.

December 8th — Lieutenant W. S. C. Chevis went home to U.K. on inter tour leave.

December 9th — The first party of one officer and six soldiers left for seven days' temporary duty in Cyprus.

December 12th — The three rifle companies changed round.

A Company moved to Port Fouad,

B Company took over the company position at Quantara and

C Company went to Moascar to fire its annual range course.

December 14th — The Commanding Officer visited A Company in Watermans Camp at Port Fouad.

December 15th — The officers were entertained by the warrant officers and Serjeants mess. The second party of one officer and six soldiers left for a week's temporary duty in Cyprus.

December 18th — The Director of Infantry, Major-General C. M. Barber, C.B., D.S.O., visited the Regiment.

Battledress jackets were worn for the first time.

A party of thirteen soldiers arrived from the rear party in Cyprus.

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December 23rd — C Company returned from detachment at Moascar.

December 24th — The Commanding Officer visited A Company at Port Fouad to wish them a merry Christmas.

Three 36 grenades were thrown into B Company's position at El Kantara at 0245 hrs.— no one was injured.

December 25th — The warrant officers and Serjeants entertained the officers at noon and then both messes went to the cookhouse to serve the soldiers' dinner.

There were no incidents in spite of solemn warnings from higher authority that the Egyptians would take advantage of the festive season.

December 26th — The last quarter of the Regiment celebrated its Christmas Day. Each had turkey, pork, Christmas pudding and a bottle of beer.

December 28th — C Company took over El Firdan and the Filtration Plant.

The Regiment was made responsible for the protection of the British Station Hospital and for establishing a road block on the Treaty Road.

December 29th — Captain D. B. Fox left by air for Cyprus on seven days' 'temporary duty'.

December 31st — A conference was held to discuss the move round of companies on January 4th.

The officers entertained the warrant officers and Serjeants.

The last party of nine soldiers left for Cyprus on 'temporary duty'.

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FIRST BATTALION LETTER

Dear Editor,

At the start of the year we were still in Cyprus, enjoying what we were later to realize, was a very pleasant and peaceful station.

We were still the only battalion in the Island and beyond the fact that all three rifle companies were on detachment there were few drawbacks to such a situation.

The Annual Administrative Inspection was carried out with the usual fervour and interest by the District Staff. Their ardour was a little damped by the time they reached the third detachment and Rowland Hill was able to show them very largely what he wanted them to see.

Tony Gibson left us to be attached to District as Island Sports President. The less polite ones said it was a sinecure of the highest order.

February came and went with little to commend it beyond the fact that all the companies moved round, thus giving each a change of scene. Headquarter Wing, as George White still calls it, was left to hold the fort at Waynes Keep. Being an employed soldier became less and less of a privilege and the average clerk began to wonder what hidden advantages there were in the magic term 'Regimental Employ'.

It was in March that we were officially told that we should be moving to Akaba in January 1952. Only a few weeks before a letter had arrived promising nine months' warning of any move of station and many people were foolish enough to assume that our warning was the first tangible evidence of the new era.

Regimental Serjeant Major B. Cox who had served continuously with the Regiment for nineteen and a half years was due to return home and Regimental Serjeant Major J. Stevenson, D.C.M., arrived from England to replace him. Serjeant Major Cox went home to join the 4th Battalion.

It was from the local Press that the news of the arrival in Cyprus of the 2 Infantry Brigade first came. The 1st Bn. Cheshire Regiment, 29 Field Regiment Royal Artillery and Brigade Headquarters were to arrive at the end of April and we were to lose our independence and once again to become a part of a recognized formation. The Brigade which, we had left in Salonika, had been home for exactly a year and we were not surprised to find few faces we recognized.

The Commander, Brigadier C. E. Taunton, C.B., D.S.O., set up his headquarters alongside District at Wolseley Barracks.

Mark Darell-Brown went home to England to attend a long course at the Senior Officers School for the second time of asking and Rupert Barry left HQ Company to reassume the appointment of second in command.

Oliver Pratt and John Willey both went home in May. John moved via Fayid as a patient.

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Appropriately enough, it was from the Colonel of the Regiment that the first news of our success in winning the Queen Victoria Trophy came. He was kind enough to send a cable of congratulation — it was over a week later that we first heard the result from the Army Rifle Association. Later on, we learnt that the warrant officers and Serjeants had won the Royal Irish Cup, that the officers had come second in the King George Cup and that C Company had won the Company Shield. The Regiment had been trying hard to win one or more of these trophies for a couple of years but few had predicted such a sweeping result. Celebration was immediate and in some cases unrestrained.

It would be unfair for me to give any particular officer all the credit for the results achieved but a great deal of it must go to John Willey who had spent so much time and effort in training the various teams. The result was achieved by efforts from all ranks from the Commanding Officer, who himself shot in the officers team, downwards. To retain all or any of the prizes will not be easy and it is unlikely that we shall again have the opportunities to train and practise that we found last year.

Abadan, although nine hundred miles away as the crow flies, soon made itself felt in Cyprus. We were warned to move out of Waynes Keep to the Leave Camp at Famagusta by the end of the following week and to assist in the preparation of camps for the Units of 16 Independent Parachute Brigade which were due to arrive in the immediate future. Our polite request to be excused the King's Birthday Parade was refused on the grounds that the 'show must go on'.

Each company was given a Parachute Battalion to foster and told to move itself to Famagusta and practise a ceremonial drill parade all at the same time.

All went about their tasks with a will and it was not long before hutted and tented camps were being erected on what had been open fields the night before. A Company who remained at Waynes Keep were given the task of handing over the camp to a Brigade Headquarters, one Parachute Battalion, an independent company and a signal squadron. Buildings which HQ Company had considered barely adequate soon became large enough to accommodate a Regimental Headquarters and the officers and Serjeants messes were stretched to two or three times their official maximum capacity.

The Parachute Brigade arrived in due course complete with their Colours, silver and mascot, Pegasus. They were not prepared for the very rough and ready accommodation found for them but settled down well enough.

Golden Sands Camp at Famagusta was not designed to hold a battalion but at least, for the summer months, it was adequate. The lack of a parade ground or playing fields of any sort was made up for by the presence, at the doorstep, of the Mediterranean Sea. For those who had until now been stationed at Waynes Keep the sea and the sand were a great advantage.

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The Families camp already established remained in our midst and the fair sex were occasionally to be seen venturing from their wattled enclosure. Those in authority foresaw trouble in such a situation but there was but one complaint and it came from a colonel who had discovered a number of soldiers using the families' showers when he went to bathe at five in the morning.

The weather was at its hottest during July and August and only the really persistent worked in the afternoons. For the rest, the day's work started at seven-thirty and was over by one.

By now a letter had arrived cancelling the previous warning of a move to Akaba and we were settling down to some serious training for the first time for over a year. Colonel Ducat-Hamersley was soon to depart to England to take up the new appointment of Brigade Colonel of the Light Infantry Group and it fell to Rupert Barry's lot to organize the Battalion Training Period which was to precede the Brigade Camp.

A detailed programme of route marches and exercises was carried out and much effort and labour were expended in making the Regiment fit to take its place on exercises, in the Brigade. Details of this training could only bore the reader but suffice it to say, we all learnt a good deal and marched a long way into the bargain.

George Rush had arrived from Africa in August and D Company was reformed under his command. The greater part of a draft of 139 soldiers from 1st Bn. The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in F.A.R.E.L.F. went to D Company, the remainder joining Support or HQ Company. This draft was the second we have had from another Regiment during this overseas tour and like its predecessor it settled down extremely well from the outset.

The Regiment was selected to train a number of officers and soldiers from both the Iraqi and Lebanese Armies during the early autumn. Their visit and in particular their habits caused a good deal of friendly amusement all round. An officers mess is used to the eccentricities of its members but the dress and way of life of our visitors soon disproved the theory that there is nothing new under the sun. They left us, showering all and sundry with invitations to visit Baghdad or Beirut where they promised us a royal welcome. Perhaps the most touching incident was the presentation, at the end of his stay, by an officer who delighted in the name of Mewfak, of a pair of socks to the Adjutant. The gift was a genuine one and there is no reason to suppose that it was in any way pointed.

Mark Darell-Brown returned in September, this time disguised as a colonel. All were delighted to see him return to command particularly as his advent must have meant a victory of mind over matter somewhere in the normally somewhat inflexible world of medicine.

We had barely finished Battalion Training when Egypt saw fit to abrogate the 1936 Treaty and it soon became obvious that our services would be required in the Canal Zone. The Regiment together with the 1st Bn. Royal Berkshire Regiment, embarked at Famagusta in the *Empress of Australia* on October 20th. The ship which had sailed but forty-eight hours before for the United Kingdom had dumped its passengers at Port Said and hurried back to collect reinforcements.

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We landed at Port Said and spent a couple of days in the Transit Camp at Port Fouad. Part of the Camp Guard was being found by the Band who were temporarily lodged there on their way home.

This camp, which is but a shadow of its former self, was ill equipped for such an invasion.

El Ballah which is about half way between Port Said and Ismailia was to be our permanent home and there we moved by road. The camp we occupied was better than the one we had left in Cyprus but El Ballah had little to commend it. Within a remarkably short time of our arrival we were split up in much the same way as we had been at the start of the year.

One company went to Port Fouad, a second to the ferry at El Kantara and the third to the bridge at El Firdan. At no time for the rest of the year was there to be more than one rifle company in camp at any one time and when present its stay was never longer than a week. The daily round was much the same in all detachments. At one, perhaps, the guard commitments were heavier than elsewhere, at another there were fish to be caught in the canal and at the third blanco and razor blades were more easily obtainable. Each company was changed round frequently and when a new detachment was found at Moascar all companies in turn were sent there to fire as much of their annual course as their sudden disappearance on working parties and the efforts of the local sappers in digging up the range to lay a water pipe would allow.

There were guards galore and escorts, patrols and working parties of all kinds to find. The departure of some forty thousand civilian labourers from the Zone had left a great many gaps to fill.

Some fifty soldiers were wrenched away to become deck hands on a Z craft or mess waiters at Headquarters messes. Their departure was swift and uncompromising — their return is still a matter of argument and conjecture.

Dick Colvile went to Division as a Liaison Officer and Bill Chevis to Brigade as Intelligence Officer. The latter went home before Christmas to spend an inordinately long time on inter tour leave and was replaced by Martin Cracknell who seems permanently ensconced in the Operations Room.

The rear party was left in Cyprus under George Rush who tried, for a long time in vain, to hand over Golden Sands to another unit. On one occasion he actually completed the hand over to a battalion which marched out again next morning. Aided and abetted by Brigade Headquarters, it was possible to get all married officers and soldiers back to Cyprus for a somewhat elastic period of seven days "temporary duty". No elasticity was intended but the lack of room in corvettes often made it well nigh impossible to get back on time.

Christmas presented a problem. Higher authority were advised, their advisers keeping well in the background, that the Egyptians would take advantage of the occasion to attack us. The thugs they said, were well aware that all Englishmen became inebriated, and in consequence, incapable on Christmas Day. The lack of beer was held by many to be in itself a good reason to doubt the value of this warning.

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Orders were issued that Christmas was to be celebrated over a period of four days and it was made clear that this was only to be interpreted as meaning that one-quarter of the Regiment could celebrate at any one time. Apart from three grenades which were thrown across the Sweetwater Canal into B Company's position there were no incidents during the Christmas period and allowing for the obvious difficulties of a Christmas in quadruplicate, it was a success.

Little has been said about the thugs in the previous paragraph. This, candidly, is because little has been seen of them so far. They make themselves heard on occasions and often dictated that a very large number of soldiers should spend comparatively few nights in bed but apart from this, as far as the Regiment is concerned, they have not often appeared.

The past year may have much to answer for but it cannot be accused of being monotonous. The Regimental scene has changed frequently and at no stage has the grass been allowed to grow under our feet. For the married officer or soldier uncertainty has prevailed to a worrying degree but for the bachelor it all becomes part of the admittedly extraordinary game of soldiering in which he has elected or perhaps been compelled to play his part. The Regiment has very nearly completed its third year overseas and a good deal of interest and speculation is rife as to its future.