

1956 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
1st Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

SUMMARY OF THE FIRST BATTALION DIARY 1956

January 6th — Lieut. J. Stevenson, D.C.M., was congratulated in Part I Orders on his award of the M.B.E. in the New Year's Honours List.

January 9th — 2nd Lieut. R. E. Alcock joined the Regiment with a draft of 27 other ranks.

January 10th — The Small-bore ladder competition started.

January 12th—Lieut.-Colonel Read left Osnabruck to attend the War Office co-ordinating conference on the build up of the Regiment before embarking for Hong Kong.
Major M. N. Harbottle assumed command of the Regiment.

January 16th — Lieut. R. A. Pascoe assumed command of Letter 'B' Company, vice Captain M. G. Hay-Will.
C.S.M. Gater rejoined the Regiment.

January 20th —Captain A. H. Morley assumed Command of Headquarter Company during the absence of Major A. C. Mason, who attended a course at the Senior Officers' School, Devizes. The Regiment was informed that the move from B.A.O.R. would not take place until July and the sailing date for Hong Kong is postponed until September.

January 21st —Lieut.-Colonel Read re-assumed command of the Regiment.
Major R. R. W. Workman took over the duties of Officers' Mess President and Captain M. R. Pennell became Mess Secretary.
Hockey. The Regiment 1 goal, 38 Engineer Regiment 3 goals.

January 25th—The A.R.A. Non-Central competition results were announced. The Regimental team results were:

Officers' team	3rd
Warrant Officers' and Serjeants' team	5th
Young soldiers' team	5th

January 26th —The Brigade Commander, Brigadier Fyffe, D.S.O., attended a Regimental Officers' Day when the technique of street fighting was studied.

January 31st — The Regiment obtained a grading of 'Good' on the annual inspection of technical equipment.

February 1st —The Basket Ball team won the 6 Armoured Division championship.

February 3rd—The Regimental ski team won the 6 Armoured Division ski patrol competition.

February 6th — Captain A. H. Morley was regranted the temporary rank of Major.
Lieutenant R. A. Pascoe was granted the temporary rank of Captain.

February 7th — A draft of 15 other ranks joined from the King's Shropshire Light Infantry.

February 10th — A draft of 44 other ranks joined the Regiment from Oxford.

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February 11th—Regimental Headquarters carried out a movement and harbouring exercise.

February 16th —Osnabruck had 50° of frost.

February 20th —Captain M. G. Hay-Will re-assumed command of Letter 'B' Company, vice Captain R. A. Pascoe.

February 21st — Captain M. R. Pennell assumed command of Letter 'A' Company vice Major D. B. Fox.

2nd Lieut. R. D. Tait was transferred from Letter 'A' Company to Headquarter Company as Assistant Signals Officer.

2nd Lieut. J. R. Strang and D. Stuart joined the Regiment with a draft of 35 other ranks.

February 22nd and 24th — Regimental Headquarters carried out a Harbouring exercise.

February 29th—The Regimental small bore championship closed with Captain M. R. Pennell in first place, L.-Cpl Budd was the runner-up.

March 12th—The Regiment was informed that it would stage at Warley Barracks, Brentwood, whilst in England.

March 13th—The Commander of 1 (BR) Corps, Lieut.-General Sir Hugh Stockwell, K.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O., visited the Regiment and toured the barracks.

March 14th—Captain I. R. C. Greenlees rejoined the Regiment and assumed command of Letter 'A' Company vice Captain M. R. Pennell.

Captain T. D. Byrne assumed the appointment of Adjutant vice Major P. G. Thompson.

March 16th—The Regiment provided a Guard of Honour for the Commander-in-Chief Belgian Forces Northern Army Group, General Gierst. The Guard was commanded by Captain A. S. Payne and the Regimental Colour was carried by Captain R. A. Pascoe.

Major P. R. Hayter rejoined the Regiment and assumed command of Letter 'B' Company vice Captain M. G. Hay-Will.

March 17th—A draft of 17 other ranks arrived from the Depot of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry.

March 19th—The Regiment received letters of congratulation from Lieut.-General Sir Hugh Stockwell, Lieut.-General Gierst and Brigadier Jameson on the Guard of Honour.

March 26th, 27th, 28th—Regimental Rifle meeting at Vorden Range won by Letter 'B' Company.

April 1st—Easter Sunday.

April 2nd—Regiment moved to Sennelager for section and platoon training.

April 4th—Lieut.-Colonel J. A. J. Read assumed command of 21 Indep. Inf. Bde.
Major M. N. Harbottle assumed command of the Regiment.

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April 5th—Lieut. D. A. N. Vansittart rejoined the Regiment.

April 9th—Major A. B. Gillespie-Hill assumed command of the Regiment whilst Major M. N. Harbottle was on leave.

April 11th —2nd Lieut. A. L. Askew joined the Regiment with a draft of 47 other ranks.

April 13th —Regiment left Sennelager and returned to Osnabruck.

April 16th — Regiment moved to Soltau.

April 23rd —Major M. N. Harbottle re-assumed command of the Regiment.

April 26th —Letter 'B' Company with 'B' Squadron 3rd Carabiniers gave a demonstration of infantry/tank co-operation for the remainder of the Regiment.

May 3rd—5th —Ex 'Soft Foot' after which the Regiment returned to Osnabruck.

May 6th.—Major A. C. Mason reassumed command of Headquarter Company vice Major A. H. Morley.

Captain R. A. Pascoe relinquished the temporary rank of Captain.

May 7th —Support Company and the Regimental Rifle team left for Pulos ranges.

May 8th —Lieut.-Colonel J. A. J. Read reassumed command of the Regiment having handed over the command of 21 Independent Infantry Brigade to Brigadier N. J. Dickson, D.S.O.

May 15th —Major E. A. S. Nicoll, T.D., Royal Artillery, joined the Regiment as our first Unit Pay Officer.

May 17th —Brigadier N. J. Dickson, D.S.O., visited the barracks and attended an Officers study period. The Brigadier had luncheon in the Officers' Mess.

May 19th —The Regimental Rifle team returned from training at Putlos.

May 23rd—A draft of 47 other ranks joined the Regiment from Cowley Barracks.

May 24th, 25th —The Rifle team took part in the Lubbecke District rifle meeting winning the Major Units championship and 5 matches.

May 28th —The Mortar platoon and Anti-tank platoon returned from Putlos.

May 30th —A Board of Officers presided over by Major-General Brodie, C.B.E., D.S.O., visited the Regiment to inspect accommodation. They took luncheon in the Officers' Mess.

May 31st—Letter 'A' and Letter 'A' Companies took part in the Osnabruck Garrison parade to celebrate Her Majesty the Queen's official birthday.

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June 1st —The commander of 1 (BR) Corps, Lieut-General Sir Hugh Stockwell, K.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O., attended a guest night in the Officers' Mess.

June 2nd—The Rifle team went to Sennelager to take part in the B.A.O.R. rifle meeting.

June 4th —The following officers joined the Regiment: 2nd Lieut. Elliott, 2nd Lieut. Meade, 2nd Lieut. Hartley and 2nd Lieut. Smith.

June 8th —The Rifle team returned from Sennelager having finished 2nd in the Rhine Army Shield.

June 11th—Regimental Headquarters and small company groups took part in 21 Independent Infantry Brigade signals exercise 'First Steps'.

June 15th —Officers team fired in the King George Cup competition at Vorden Range and the Warrant Officers and Serjeants team fired in the Royal Irish Cup competition.

June 17th—A party of officers and other ranks left by coach for Brussels and the Waterloo battlefield.

June 18th —A Regimental holiday to celebrate Waterloo Day.

June 20th —The Advance Party of the relieving unit—1 Kings—arrived and the Regimental Advance Party left for Warley Barracks, Brentwood.

June 23rd—The officers gave a Farewell Cocktail party in the Officers' Mess. There were 230 guests present.

June 28th —The Inter-company cricket final was won by Support Company by 151 runs.

June 29th —The Advance Party for Hong Kong received the first anti-cholera injection.

July 1st —Draft of Hong Kong 'ineligibles' left the Regiment for 2nd 60th.

July 2nd—The Hong Kong Advance Party left for England.

July 3rd—The Regiment held a practice parade prior to a farewell parade. Brigadier N. J. Dickson, D.S.O., visited the Regiment and addressed all ranks.

July 5th —The Regiment marched through the town of Osnabruck in a farewell parade.

July 9th —The Regiment left Osnabruck for England after a stay of almost exactly 3 years.

July 10th —The Regiment arrived at Brentwood at 11.30 hrs and moved to Warley Barracks.

July 11th —The Colonel of the Regiment paid an informal visit to the Regiment.

July 12th —Leave started for the majority of the Regiment.

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August 1st—0815 hrs. The official signal was received informing the Regiment that the move to Hong Kong was cancelled. All ranks were immediately recalled from leave to prepare for a move to the Middle East.

August 2nd—Members of the Regiment arrived back from leave through the day. Press reporters and ITV camera men were much in evidence.

August 3rd—Official orders were received to move to Cyprus on 10th August. More Press reporters and newsreel cameramen arrived.

August 4th —At Reveille all but 47 men had reported back.

August 6th —Companies were issued with khaki drill clothing.

August 8th —Major H. J. Sweeney, M.C., assumed command of Letter 'A' Company.

August 10th—The Regiment sailed from Southampton in H.M.T. *Dilwara* bound for Cyprus in company with the Suffolk Regiment.

August 15th —The Advance Party for Cyprus left Stanstead Airport in a Hermes aircraft bound for Nicosia.

The *Dilwara* put in to Algiers for a few hours.

August 16th —The Advance Party of 5 officers and 20 other ranks landed at Nicosia Airport and were met by a party from the 1st Bn The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

August 17th —The Advance Party took over two elementary schools at Strovolos, Nicosia, in which to house the Regiment.

August 20th —The *Dilwara* arrived at Limassol. The Regiment disembarked and were taken by buses to Nicosia. Letter 'A', Letter 'C' and Support Companies lived in one school known as SWEENEY'S Camp whilst Headquarter Company lived in the other school called MASON'S Camp. Letter 'B' Company stayed with the 1st Bn The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

August 23rd—A draft of 6 officers and 59 other ranks joined the Regiment.

The officers were posted to companies as follows :

Letter 'B' Company	-	2nd Lieut. R. M. Paul, 2nd Lieut M. P. S. Barton
Letter 'C' Company	-	2nd Lieut. R. J. Osborne
Support Company	-	Lieut. F. J. B. Taylor, 2nd Lieut. M. W. T. Bullock
Headquarter Company	-	2nd Lieut. J. W. S. MacDonald

August 28th —Letter 'B' and Letter 'C' Companies moved out on detachment to build 'Camp X' at Pyroi for the French Parachute Brigade.

September 3rd—Lieut. B. W. Balls was granted the temporary rank of Captain.

2nd Lieut. R. W. S. Ball rejoined the Regiment from a course in England.

A draft of 10 other ranks arrived.

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September 4th—Letter 'B' Company moved into the Regiment's new camp—Oxford Camp, Kermia.

September 6th —The move of the Regiment into Oxford Camp was completed.
Letter 'C' Company took over the guarding of the detention camp at Kokkini Trimithia.

September 8th—Letter 'A' Company were called out to take part in a 48 hour operation near Kyrenia following a terrorist raid on a police station.

September 10th—His Excellency the Governor of Cyprus, Field Marshal Sir John Harding, G.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., visited the Regiment. He spoke to each company in turn and visited the Officers' and Serjeants' Messes.

September 13th—The Regiment was stood to and all available men despatched to take part in a cordon and search operation following the escape of 7 detainees from Camp K.
The Regiment took over the duties of the Nicosia Area Reserve battalion and was almost entirely committed on guards and escort duties.

September 18th—Lieut. R. A. Pascoe was re-granted the temporary rank of Captain.
Letter 'C' Company moved out on a company detachment at Perakhorio.

September 24th—Major-General A. H. G. Ricketts, C.B.E., D.S.O., the G.O.C. Cyprus District, visited Oxford Camp.

September 30th—The Brigade commander, Brigadier F. R. St P. Bunbury, D.S.O., visited Oxford Camp.
The Regiment had its first cinema show in Oxford Camp.

October 2nd—The Nicosia 'Sitrep' showed 'Nothing to report' for the first time since the Regiment's arrival.

October 3rd—2nd Lieut. J. H. Lloyd joined the Regiment and was posted to Letter 'A' Company.

October 11th—The Regiment took over as the Nicosia Internal Security battalion.
Letter 'A' Company were the stand by company.

October 17th—Pte O'Carroll of Letter 'C' Company was accidentally shot dead whilst on guard.

October 18th—Letter 'D' Company reformed under the command of Captain I. R. C. Greenlees for the purpose of carrying out continuation training for new drafts and to run Regimental courses.

October 23rd—2nd Lieut. O. A. E. J. Makower joined the Regiment and was posted to Headquarter Company.
A draft of 45 other ranks arrived.

October 25th —A draft of 17 other ranks joined the Regiment.

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October 26th—Letter 'C' Company, as stand by company were the first on the scene after the escape of 4 detainees from Camp K.

Later both Letter 'B' and Letter 'D' Companies joined in the search with Letter 'A' Company 1 K.O.Y.L.I.

October 28th—The Greek Cypriots celebrated Oxi Day.

Letter 'B' and Letter 'C' Companies stood to on the edge of the old city of Nicosia in case of trouble. All was quiet.

November 1st—Censorship of mail was imposed due to the events in the Canal Zone.

November 2nd—A grenade was thrown at a patrol from Letter 'C' Company in Ledra Street but did not explode.

November 8th—Censorship of mail ended.

November 9th—The Regiment became Area Reserve battalion.

November 11th—A Remembrance Service was held in Oxford Camp conducted by Lieut-Colonel C. F. Whitcombe, O.B.E.

November 13th—A bomb was thrown at a patrol from Letter 'A' Company in Kythrea. The bomb exploded but no one was injured.

November 16th—News came that the Regiment was to move to Limassol

November 18th—The Advance Party of Letter 'A' Company moved to Limassol to relieve the Royal Norfolk Regiment.

November 19th—Letter 'A' Company took over the duties of Stand-by company in Limassol.

November 20th—Letter 'C' Company and Support Company from the Regiment with Letter 'A' and Letter 'D' Companies of the Somerset Light Infantry carried out a cordon search operation.

November 22nd—Letter 'B' and Letter 'C' Companies moved to Limassol and took over guard duties from the Royal Norfolk Regiment.

November 25th—The Advance party of the 3rd Battalion The Grenadier Guards arrived at Oxford Camp.

December 2nd—The move of the Regiment to Limassol was completed today.

December 7th—Lieut. C. St C. Simmons was granted the temporary rank of Captain,

December 8th—Captain C. St C. Simmons was appointed Intelligence Officer vice Captain R. A. Pascoe.

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December 10th—Captain R. A. Pascoe was appointed Adjutant vice Captain T. D. Byrne who left the Regiment to attend the Staff College at Camberley.

December 11th—Since 7th December, Support Company provided parties of men to assist Limassol police in arresting members of EOKA. Acting on information received many arrests were made.

December 15th—Captain W. S. C. Chevis rejoined the Regiment from leave in England. A draft of 49 other ranks arrived.

December 16th—Lieut. J. C. Gardner rejoined the Regiment and was posted to Support Company.

C.S.M. Shepherd rejoined the Regiment and was posted to Letter 'D' Company.
14 other ranks rejoined the Regiment.

December 19th—Support Company of the Gordon Highlanders were accommodated in the camp to await embarkation at Limassol.

December 20th—The G.O.C. Cyprus District, Major-General D. A. Kendrew, C.B.E., D.S.O., visited the Regiment. He toured the camp and saw Letter 'D' Company in training. Before leaving he visited the Serjeants Mess.

December 23rd—Major M. N. Harbottle assumed command of the Regiment during the absence on leave of Lieut.-Colonel J. A. J. Read, D.S.O., M.C.
History was made today when a party of 4 officers and 29 other ranks were lifted by helicopter to place a cordon around a mountain village. The main party moved up by road and arrived just after the cordon was in position.

December 25th—Christmas Day was celebrated by Support Company and half of Headquarter Company.

A festival service of nine lessons and carols was held in St Giles' Hut.
The officers were entertained in the Warrant Officers' and Serjeants' Mess before serving dinner to those celebrating Christmas Day.

December 26th—Christmas Day was celebrated by Letter 'C' Company.
The warrant officers and Serjeants were entertained to dinner in the Officers' Mess.

December 27th—Christmas Day was celebrated by Letter 'B' Company and the second half of Headquarter Company.

December 29th—The Regiment played football and hockey against teams from H.M.S. Torquay.

December 31st—Orders group was held for an operation in the Troodos hills to start early on New Year's Day.

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FIRST BATTALION LETTER

Seven years ago almost to the day we landed in Cyprus from Greece to take over Island Garrison duties from 1st Battalion The Loyal Regiment. Our stay then was to be short but very sweet, in one of the few prize stations overseas. Now we are back again but, oh, what a difference has been wrought. The gaiety and easy going atmosphere has gone—where one battalion soldiered at ease more than a dozen operate actively daily to apprehend the terrorist and prevent bloodshed. It is a very sorry island is Cyprus today, and was without a doubt, when we first arrived, the most uncomfortable station in which the writer has ever had to serve.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. All this comes at the end of the chapter and not at the beginning; so let me put the events of 1956 into their proper sequence so that your readers can follow more readily the vicissitudes of the Battalion of the past year.

In the past it has been the common practice through the medium of this letter to stress the difficulties and the problems which it has been the lot of the Battalion to overcome.- I don't have to do that—it is sufficient for me just to say that 'this was our year for being b*****d about'.

It all started on 20th January. The Colonel had been at home for eight days attending a War Office planning conference for our move to Hong Kong in May—he was due to return that afternoon. A signal arriving mid-morning informed us that our move was postponed and that we should now sail for Hong Kong mid-September. This, of course, meant a considerable alteration in plans not least on the training side where it was now necessary to gear ourselves for another training season in B.A.O.R. On the 'A' it meant a complete recalculation of the strength state of eligibility for Hong Kong. It was learnt that the basic reason for this change of plan was that the Government had decided that an infantry battalion was no longer required in British Guiana. Our old neighbours the Green Howards had been scheduled for that island and were in England awaiting to embark, they had therefore been diverted to relieve the Essex Regiment from whom it had planned for us to take over, and for us to move later to relieve the North Staffordshire Regiment. It was some consolation to learn that whereas the Essex camp was quite the worst in the New Territories, that of the North Staffordshire was the best—so despite the annoyance and the reorganisation of plans involved, we felt that in the long run we should be better off. We would leave B.A.O.R. in early July and arrive in Hong Kong mid-October just in time for the collective training season. And all eyes were focused again on the B.A.O.R. scene and the time honoured names of Sennelager, Soltau and Putlos appeared once more on the training board in the Second-in-Command's Office.

The first three months passed quietly and uneventfully. The Regimental Ski Team excelled itself by winning the Divisional Patrol Race and went on to do very creditably in the Rhine Army competition when it came 14th out of 58 teams. I say creditably because a number of the teams taking part had only just previously returned from taking part in the Olympic Trials. The Regimental Shooting Team also earned our congratulations at this time when it was learnt that the Officers had gained third place in the King George Cup of the A.R.A. Non-central competition.

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Possibly the thing that made the greatest impression during these early months was the cold. On 16th February Osnabruck recorded 50° of frost and was accorded public prominence in the *Daily Telegraph* as being the coldest place in our bit of Europe. It certainly left its visible mark on the ears of one subaltern officer and limbs of one or two of the soldiers who had to receive treatment for frostbite.

All through the autumn and winter, evening classes had been run in carpentry, photography and handicraft so as to provide an interest and form of entertainment in barracks of an evening to counter the lack of amenities outside. In addition each company devised and produced their own stage show over the Christmas period. The standard of these company concerts was exceptionally high and gave enormous enjoyment to players and audiences alike.

Towards the end of March, Tommy Thompson handed over the keys of his office to David Byrne and departed to be a D.A.A.G. at Headquarters Northern Army Group at Munchen Gladbach. Tommy had been an admirable Adjutant and I believe he regretted his leaving as much as we did after such a short tour back with the Regiment.

About this time our first Regimental Pay Officer joined us in the person of Major Ted Nicoll, late Royal Artillery. This is a new innovation but its desirability is without question. Now all pay matters are centralised under the one head including the running of the P.R.I, public accounts. The Pay Officer subsequently will be assisted by a Staff Serjeant, a Serjeant and six pay clerks, all of whom will be on the attached strength of the Battalion.

So we moved into the spring and with it came the cycle of training areas. In addition to training our own young National Servicemen we had been landed with 6 Armoured Division's Viper Training. This is no study of a secret weapon but the teaching of the basic weapon handling, fieldcraft and elementary tactics to the service units of the Division. It is an annual event and means a lot of hard work for someone. For the purpose Major Gillespie Hill's Company was divided and attached to 'A' and 'B' Companies for training and he was put in charge of three training teams of officers and N.C.O.s drawn from all companies. The Services' units were then organised into platoons and over a period of ten days passed through the hands of each team in turn. The success of this very short period of training depended largely on the response and enthusiasm forthcoming from the students. I am glad to say that there was no lack of interest and both the students and especially the young instructor N.C.O.s of the Regiment learnt a tremendous amount from it. 'G', as usual, was tireless and he and his staff earned the grateful thanks of everybody from the Divisional Commander downwards.

All this happened during the first fortnight in April at Sennelager where the Battalion had moved on the 2nd. Two days later a major reorganisation took place in the B.A.O.R. order of battle. We severed our long connection with 6 Armoured Division and became part of 21 Independent Infantry Brigade, a new formation. This was stationed at Osnabruck and became part of 1 (Br) Corps. It consisted of 5th Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery, ourselves, and the East Yorkshire Regiment who were due to arrive in Osnabruck on 10th April. As the Brigade Commander designate was in Hong Kong commanding his Regiment, the Colonel was appointed Acting Brigade Commander and given the task of forming the Brigade Headquarters and planning the operational task of the Brigade. (For which duties I am glad to report that he has subsequently been paid). I will not bother the reader with details of our new tasks, as like everything else in B.A.O.R. they are liable to change daily.

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Our connection with 61 Lorried Infantry Bde of 6 Armd Div had been a long and pleasant one; we had always received the greatest sympathy, help and co-operation from the Brigade Staff from the Commander downwards and it was with a genuine feeling of regret that we passed from under their command. The Brigade Staff presented the officers with a delightful plaster figure of Sir John Moore to mark our departure.

On the 14th April we returned to Osnabruck and two days later moved by road to Soltau. Like last year we had applied to go to a bivouac area rather than the Rheinselen Airfield. This was a wise move for although the weather was cold it was dry and the trees protected us from the ever prevailing wind from the Baltic which sweeps through Rheinselen Camp and chills one to the bone. The final stay at Soltau of our present tour was memorable for the exercise which took place at the very end of our time there. Exercise 'Sort Foot' represented our sole battalion exercise of the year and as such the Colonel had made it as testing as he could. Based on the modern tactical conception of deep penetration patrolling, the Battalion was required to move on a wide front across country by night to a depth of 40 miles—the move to cover a period of three nights. In the narrative we were destined to link up with partisans operating behind the enemy lines and thence to disrupt the enemy's communications by attacking one of its main rail junction towns. In fact it was just a novel idea of the Colonel's for getting us back to Osnabruck in a more energetic manner than in the back of a three ton truck. Each company had its own route to the rendezvous and Regimental Headquarters had theirs. Only one 1 ton truck was allowed with each party, otherwise everything, including 3 days' rations, was 'humped'. By day the Battalion lay up in various hides and avoided contact with the outside world and concealed itself from spotter aircraft. Eventually all arrived at the final rendezvous in very good heart and slept peacefully throughout the rest of the journey back to Osnabruck. Not a man of the Regiment fell out on this march, which was pleasing, as it was undoubtedly arduous.

Immediately on our return Support Company moved to Putlos, returning at the end of the month, having fired almost a complete year's ammunition allotment in three weeks. Unfortunately the majority of those who benefited from the experience were in their last year of National Service and thereby ineligible to accompany the Battalion to Hong Kong—we hope that what has been our loss will be the 4th Battalion's gain.

All this while the Regimental Rifle team had been training for the Rhine Army Meeting. It had been decided early in the year to set our caps at winning the B.A.O.R. competition and not to attempt to train a team for Bisley, as this latter meeting would coincide with our move to England. To give the team experience in competitive conditions it was entered for the Lubbecke District Meeting at the end of May, where it swept the board to the tune of £30 in prize money. This was a heartening start. Full details of the team's performance in the Rhine Army Meeting appear elsewhere, but Michael Hay-Will and his teams are to be congratulated on their excellent achievement of gaining 2nd place to the 1st Battalion the Worcestershire Regiment. It was the last competition of all that decided whether they or ourselves would be the ultimate winners.

So May turned into June. The Colonel had by now handed the command of the Brigade to Brigadier N. J. Dickson, D.S.O., who had arrived from Hong Kong and all our thoughts and attention were concentrated on move preparations. All rifle companies paid a last short visit to Sennelager and Regimental Headquarters took the field for Exercise 'First Steps'—a wireless exercise designed primarily to sort out the new Brigade Headquarters.

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Between the 17th—19th June a number of Officers, Warrant Officers and Serjeants visited Waterloo and a day later the Battalion's advance party left Germany for Warley Barracks, Brentwood, where we were to stage for our short stay in England. The same day the advance party 1st Battalion the King's Regiment arrived to begin taking over. The next few weeks were busy in the extreme, but we managed to fit in a very successful farewell Officers' Mess cocktail party and a march through the town before finally shaking the dust of Osnabruck off our boots on 9th July.

Our date of sailing had by now been put forward to 30th August—a fact which no one in the War Office had bothered to inform us, as apparently we were not on the distribution list! Although a difference of two weeks might not seem to matter it can disrupt the carefully planned leave programme and the attendant hotel and seaside bookings for a number of people.

On arrival at Warley all but a few went straight away on leave—the glorious prospect of five lovely weeks in which to enjoy ourselves. As everyone knows all such dreams were rudely shattered by that tiresome Egyptian Nasser. At tea time on the 1st August the blow fell. The Colonel had just finished packing his last suitcase and in half an hour was to begin his leave with his family in Devon—the telephone rang and we were at immediate notice to move to Cyprus and our move to Hong Kong was cancelled. From then on until the Battalion sailed from Southampton in H.M.T. *Dilwara* on 10th August the days were crowded. Within 72 hours everyone had been recalled from leave. The barracks hummed with reporters, press photographers, and movietone cameras. David Vansittart and Bob Pascoe told the country over Independent Television exactly what they thought about things. The Quartermaster's department had to return all the jungle green drawn for Hong Kong and draw up ordinary khaki drill; a complete set of G1098 boxed was collected from various depots and taken by road to Southampton. At last, early on the morning of 10th August, we entrained at Brentwood Station, by that evening we were at sea.

The advance party flew from Stansted, Essex, in a Hermes five days later and after an uneventful flight touched down at Nicosia Aerodrome at 8 o'clock the next morning. The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry were their hosts until the Battalion reached Limassol on the 20th August. Two schools had been allotted us at Strovolos, a suburb of Nicosia, as temporary accommodation before moving into a new tented camp, just outside Nicosia on the road to Kyrenia. The less that is said about our accommodation at Strovolos, the better—it was very crowded, very hot, very inadequate and very dirty!

Our camp at Kermia was named 'Oxford Camp' although there were many who thought that 'Rock-Bottom Camp' would be much more appropriate. The dust was very bad, the accommodation was entirely tented and we had only six water taps for the whole Regiment. Cooking was the greatest difficulty as it was impossible to keep out the dust. 'Sahara Stew' was the standard dish according to the soldiers.

Self-help was the order of the day—until a certain officer interpreted this as 'help yourself and made off with the D.C.R.E.s stores. No one dared to ask Fred Payne what his nightly convoys were doing but when one saw the shingle paths, cement floors and timber walls appearing all over the M.T. area it was not difficult to judge.

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Quite apart from all the activity of putting our camp in order we were, of course, also involved in a large number of guards and duties. 'G' managed to get yet another company detachment and disappeared for several weeks. Meanwhile the small guards scattered in and around Nicosia swallowed 147 men at a time and the administrative problems of rationing and transport were continual headaches.

In the second week of September we were honoured with a visit from His Excellency the Governor, Field Marshal Sir John Harding, G.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., who visited each company in turn and met the Officers and Serjeants in their respective messes. The Governor spoke to all on parade and stressed the great importance of our job in Cyprus and laid down his policy of 'Firmness with courtesy' towards the civilian population.

As the days quickly passed we began to get really into the routine of patrolling and road blocking, and on 9th October we took part in our first cordon and search operation. As a result of this the police detained 9 villagers for questioning and we recovered many of the inevitable shot gun cartridges. Furthermore, we learnt a lot from this operation—mainly from our mistakes.

Later in October we had our first spell of duty as the Nicosia Internal Security Battalion. This entailed having a stand-by company ready to move out from camp at short notice to deal with anything from a riot to a bomb incident. One platoon was always at immediate notice—and slept in a special area near the camp gate with their transport ready. Although the remainder of the company was in theory at 30 minutes notice to move, they were invariably called out 'immediately' and were usually on the move within 15 to 20 minutes.

Since the day of our arrival in Nicosia we had competed not only with EOKA but with that extremely overworked and harassed Headquarters known as Cyprus District. By the end of October when events in the Canal Zone crisis were coming to a head, we were already steeled to meet most of their communications with the necessary good humour. However, we were a little taken aback to receive a signal on 1st November informing us that a state of war existed between the United Kingdom and Egypt. Excitement was high throughout our camp during the days of the Anglo-French landings at Port Said. Our friends and next door neighbours 2 Parachute Regt were fed entirely by us for several days before they actually sailed for Egypt. The officers' mess wireless was the centre of attraction for every news broadcast and Bryan Balls was made to change the times at which his control wireless set called to prevent them interfering with the hourly bulletins.

In November the Somerset Light Infantry arrived at Nicosia and occupied the next door camp. We felt slightly bogus as we told them all about the current anti-terrorist drills and tactics. We remembered our own 'new boy' feelings only three months before and now here we were teaching others. The teaching had to be speeded up dramatically when we were suddenly told on 16th November that we were to move to Limassol and relieve the Norfolk Regiment, who were due to go home to England. The Nicosia guards and duties were therefore passed hurriedly to the poor Somersets and on 18th November our Advance party and Letter 'A' Company left for Limassol to find out the form there.

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The move was considered a blessing by some and a curse by others. Whilst we had little love for Oxford Camp it was 'all our own work' and it was being gradually improved. All the bother of moving and reorganising in yet another tented camp seemed to be hardly worth while. However, we are now near the sea and have a very pleasant view across the town and harbour from our hillside camp.

Owing to rough seas at Limassol the embarkation of the Norfolk Regiment was delayed for several days, so that the main body of the Regiment was not able to move in until 2nd December, having handed over Oxford Camp to the 3rd Bn Grenadier Guards. This move was made just in time, for shortly afterwards the winter rains began and we heard reports that vehicles in Oxford Camp were up to their axles in mud—this appears to have been one of the very few lucky things that happened to us in 1956.

The new camp at Limassol, however, was not all that we should have liked. Still it does have the advantages of having permanent shower huts, and has electricity in all tents and messes. We also have a big welfare hut which is used for our church services on Sundays and during the weekday evenings as a camp cinema.

Operationally our job in Limassol is much more interesting than it was in Nicosia. We are the only infantry battalion in the area and are shortly due to take over command of military operations in our area. At present we come under the Headquarters of 1 A.G.R.A. (Fd) whose own regiments are many miles away. We still have many police stations to guard, also a permanent stand-by company in the town of Limassol itself. However, we do get the chance to get out of camp and into the hills to do a little terrorist-chasing from time to time. On one of our operations carried out on 23rd December we lifted our cordoning troops into position by helicopters in order to take the villagers by surprise. Just after the helicopters deposited the cordon in their positions the main search force and extra cordoning troops arrived by road and the operation continued normally—but unfortunately without success.

Christmas 1956, like the rest of the year, was difficult. The plan had to be rewritten several times owing to unforeseen reasons, but eventually we were able to provide all the usual Christmas fare and entertainments, but not for everyone on Christmas Day itself. Luckily there were no terrorist incidents to mar our celebrations and thanks to the tremendous work done by Denis Fox, Robin Ball and all the vast army of cooks, ration staff and canteen workers under their command the unusual conditions were enjoyed as much as was humanly possible.

1956 has been quite a year. Every plan made has had to be unpicked and made again. We have moved permanent location, including all stores, marching in and out with full peace time accounting, five times in the last six months. We hope that 1957 may be a little quieter. As I write this closing sentence to the 1956 letter the church bells in the town and the ships' hooters in the harbour are welcoming in the New Year. Few of the Battalion have had the chance to celebrate for in two hours time a force sets out for an operation in the hills—the cordon and search of a terrorist village. We shall be in position before dawn and hope to catch some unsuspecting EOKA with hangovers.

Yours ever,
43rd and 52nd.

P.S.—Delighted to inform you that at 0530 hrs New Year's Day we put a £5,000 terrorist in the 'bag'; may he be the first of many. Unfortunately P.R.I. does not benefit.