

A FORTNIGHT IN SEPTEMBER

6/7 QUEENS AT WESTDOWN

Report by Maj M. J. Dudding

Luck was with us. Our camp period was entirely free from rain. 29 Cdo Regt RA were in the same camp at this time. We were some 350 strong and just under a quarter were recruits. Training was organised in cadres rather than by companies. The new arrival was met by an immaculate RSM and from the verandah of Bn HQ block, he and his Regimental Police could dominate the main road through the camp, and the camp staff commented, after a few days, on the smart appearance of our soldiers.



L/Cpl Cox of the Regimental Police on the look-out for the idle soldier.

The recruits' cadre, under Major Putman, was split into three platoons under Lts Roberts, Hurd and Gregory. Each company had been asked before camp to nominate its best instructors and a detailed programme was drawn up to cover four subjects — foot-drill, weapon training on SLR and LMG, Fieldcraft and minor tactics. Other possible subjects, such as map reading and radio communications, were left to be covered in drill-hall training. Three weeks before camp all instructors were given a full briefing covering the entire period, and each recruit was given a detailed training programme. From Day 1, the course was competitive. The CO and Major Putman gave opening addresses, but RSM Maloney caught everybody's imagination when he announced that only his last platoon at the Depot had completed the course without losing a soldier. Banging

£5 on the lectern, he offered it to the platoon that finished the recruit cadre with no losses. "Some of you are thinking 'why doesn't the old — put down £20?' Well, I know the Regular Army, but I don't know the TAVR — yet!"

Training during the first week concentrated on foot-drill and weapon handling, taken by CSMs Harwood, Bowen and Day (drill), and the section NCOs (weapon training). By the end of the first week every recruit had passed the TsOET on SLR and LMG with a grading of 'average' or above. The recruits' day started at 0530 hrs and each day Major Putman inspected one platoon and all huts, the results going towards the "Best Platoon" Cup.

The recruits' second week started with two days' live firing, followed by two days on the training area learning section battle drills. This phase ended with a small night exercise which enabled the DS to fire off their allocation of pyrotechnics. The final day was taken up by the passing-out parade. After only 13 drill periods, the cadre stood for a 20-minute inspection by the CO, marched past in line and advanced in review order. The standard was a great credit to the recruits themselves and to their instructors. Before the march-off, the CO gave a closing address and presented cups and awards. Finally, and without forewarning, the CO asked the RSM to put his money where his mouth was, and pay 1 Platoon the £5 they had earned for not losing a recruit.

The other main cadre was that for the trained soldiers. It would have been very easy to give these men a fairly uninspiring programme, having committed so many instructors to the recruits' cadre. But the CO had emphasised that if we failed to provide imaginative and well-planned training for our trained soldiers, we would add to wastage. Majors Hopper and Lowens were responsible for two trained soldier groups. Their programmes, which were not identical, included field exercises and visits to various military establishments in the area. We took the opportunity to watch artillery firing, and when Capt Prior asked for volunteers for the butts he is reported to have had four takers! D Coy also scored during a major exercise when Sgt Vallance and L/Cpl Gallagher persuaded some Sappers, whom they found in the area with a mechanical digger, to dig slit trenches for the company. In a few minutes the Sappers completed what others took hours to do with pick and shovel.

Perhaps less successful, however, was Sgt Elliott's night vision demonstration, when a torch on a skyline became confused with a helicopter's red light — the

squad suddenly saw the latter shoot up into the sky. B Coy were fortunate in having the services of Lt Mike Mercer, fresh from his SSVC with the 3rd Battalion, and Capt Gordon Andrew, recently qualified at the Defence NBC School. Their cadre had a 36-hour exercise at the end of the first week, which included a fight through Imber village. Capt Andrew, having lit some of his CS pellets, was slow in putting on his respirator, and in a flash 4 platoon, fully kitted out, pinned him in one of the contaminated rooms. Similar exercises, designed to practise section and platoon battle drills were held in the second week.

In the Bn HQ Lt Joan Morters and her WRAC girls soon got the hang of things, and the Intelligence section of L/Cpls Ewing and Butler showed considerable promise.



Lt Col Herd inspecting the Recruit Cadre on their passing out parade.

For the whole of the camp period we hosted Hauptmann Borges, a reserve officer of the Bundeswehr, and Lt Dwight Martin and a dozen men from 97 Signals Battalion, US Army. Another welcome group was the Sussex ACF Corps of Drums who beat Retreat on 10 September, and showed what a high standard can be reached in a good Cadet force. From 7 September onwards we had a daily flow of visitors including Lt Gen Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley, GOC South East District, Maj Gens Shapland, d'Avigdor-Goldsmid, Ling, Mans and Brigs Webster and Carroll, Col Ogilvie and TAVR Secreta-

(Continued col. 1, page 13)

SINBAD THE SAILOR

A SAGA OF THE SEA

By 2Lt A. St. J. Hamilton

Recently I enjoyed the good fortune and the opportunity to serve with the Royal Navy on a frigate assigned to N. Sea Fisheries and Oil Rig protection Duties.

The first days with kind weather, we headed north towards the Forties Oilfield, on the way passing the Argyll Field at night, the rigs lit up like giant Christmas trees, erect in the midst of a vast expanse of darkness.

During fair weather the ship's 'chippie' got to work and I found the first mischief outside the Wardroom. A replica, life-size, of a Guards Sentry Box, with discreet scribblings imparting a note of welcome.

Approaching the Orkneys, a swell began occasioning a steep roll. Nevertheless taking advantage of the relatively fine weather, an inter-mess tug-of-war competition was organised on the helicopter flight deck. The Wardroom was pitted against a particularly strong team (the Stokers), and when the challenge was

beginning to prove a little too powerful, a sudden and violent lurch of the ship sent the Wardroom team hurtling across the greasy flight deck towards the flimsy side railings. Half the Wardroom came close to a cold ducking after only four days at sea.

The Dangers of Kite Flying

Another sport was provided in the nature of kite flying by which many of the ship's non-accountable stores ingeniously became airborne. To see the loving care and attention of a secretly patented, new aero-dynamic kite plummet irretrievably into sea after five seconds flying time was tragic. But the real tragedy was to see the kite bearing the markings of F.L.Y. N.A.V.Y. do the most spectacular nose dive. I never had the chance to test out this unhappy omen as the ship's helicopter was not on board, by virtue of the fact that recent economies made it impossible that it be three places at one time.

The following morning we were in amongst a Scandinavian fishing fleet, with the excitement of 'fish boarding stations'. This involved contacting the trawlers by radio to find out when they were hauling in their nets, and, at the appropriate hour, closing to within five cables of the trawler in question and lowering a small gemini rubber dinghy to board the vessel to be checked. Once aboard, the net sizes were measured, licences and papers seen to be in order, fish catches examined, and sometimes, finally, that extra touch of professionalism which makes hard work less laborious, the quality and type of the ship's 'special stores' were sampled — helping to establish some rapport between the two nations, interesting when communication relied heavily on the use of a word card translator.

Entente Cordiale

After boarding two Russians, we approached a French fleet, whereupon I was asked to report to the bridge. The Navy had done their homework and I was to earn the Queen's shilling as an interpreter. If the French were caught by surprise on hearing something like their own language we were even more surprised to get a reply loud and clear. Once we had established that nets had just been hauled in, our intention was announced to send over 'notre Officier du Ministre d'Agriculture'. The trawler was well equipped with a host of sophisticated navigation electronic equipment, a substantial part of which was of British manufacture. The trawlermen seemed pleased to exchange news

and to joke in their own tongue with the Navy 'de Sa Majestée Britannique', especially as many of them were ex Navy themselves having served in the Algeria crisis.

Returning to the Frigate we were laden with several baskets containing a multitude of fish and a casket of l'Eau de Vie which went some way to helping Army-Navy liaison.

The Perils of the Sea

The following day I was asked to take the Sunday Service. Whether this was due to my Degree Course in Middle East and Religious Studies or to the adventures of the preceding day was not clear.

By now the weather had turned bad, and although it was announced that Duty Free goods would be available (to be taken off the ship), they seemed strangely unattractive to us on the rolling seas.

That night sleep was interrupted by a series of loud crashes, all the more resented as I had looked forward to an undisturbed night with no watch keeping. I saw the deck was strewn with gear, which, one soon discovered, was the best place for it until the storm had abated. The tragic, messy fate of that evening's buffet dinner, painstakingly laid out, should have forewarned me of disaster. But things could have been worse. And next night they were: my bunk broke free from its stays and smashed to the ground. Fortunately I was watching a film in the Wardroom at the time. The film projector seemed to be the most tightly secured piece of equipment in the ship, a tribute to the Films Officer. Also deserving of great tribute were all those who worked in the galley providing excellent food, and hot stew even under the most trying conditions. Trying they certainly were. One unfortunate cook was very badly shaken when flung from one end of the galley to the other.

After the dining-out luncheon and speeches the Wardroom resounded to the whistling of the British Grenadier, following which the Wardroom Mess was presented with a miniature Grenadier, complete with bearskin. The tradition commemorated by the playing of 'Rule Britannia' by the 2nd Battalion before the National Anthem at Tattoo, lives on with H.M.S. Rhyl.

While I am not advocating a return to the days when the Father of the Household Division, General Monck, won naval battles by ordering his fleet to 'wheel to the right' or 'charge', close liaison with the Royal Navy must continue to serve a valuable purpose.

6/7 Queens: continued from p.12

ries. Civilian visitors included three MPs — Messrs Maurice Macmillan, Hugh Rossi and Michael Mates — the Master and Clerk of the Worshipful Company of Cutlers, the Master of the Builders' Merchants Company and a number of local press representatives.

The social programme was intensive. The Sergeants' Mess led off with a dinner run by WO2 Bowen and Chapman; L/Cpl Jones* tackled the cooking with distinction. The following night 52 officers and their guests sat down to dinner in the superb setting of Tedworth House, Tidworth. On both occasions the Band of the Surrey Yeomanry, conducted by WO1 DJ Butlin, played. Tedworth House was also the venue for the visit of the Sergeants to the Officers' Mess on 13 September. The Corporals held a mess function too, and each company held a smoker.

Record of camp would not be complete without praise for the administrative staff. Capt Gerry Webb took on the task of Messing Officer. We had a full team of our own cooks, and pay clerks, to the pleasure of DVT & C, and both groups gave outstanding service. The Regimental Police were very much in evidence; S/Sgt Doubleday ran a busy armourer's shop; Cpl Trower and L/Cpl Hutchings, WRAC provided the clerical back-up for the recruits' cadre. The outcome of the hard work by all the administrative staff was a march-out bill that was so small that Major Ron Lucas was quite put out at not being able to give company commanders his usual brand of stick!

*L/Cpl Jones has recently passed his Part 2 Certificate for City and Guilds. His picture was on page five of our last issue.