

OSCAR FOR 6/7 QUEENS

AT RALLYE MILITAIRE

Report from Maj J. R. Putnam

6/7 Queens acquitted themselves well in this competition but there were times when it had the makings of a Brian Rix production, with the audience rolling about the aisles. All the ingredients were there — a gentleman losing his trousers in an airport foyer, another taking the bung out of a boat before getting into it, and a demolition expert offering to blow up a French Colonel.

This is an annual competition between teams of six from various French Reserve Units in the Normandy District. This year an English unit from South East District was invited to compete and ultimately five members of A Coy 6/7 Queens (V) based at Farnham, Surrey together with Captain Geoffrey Salvetti from 383 Cdo P1 RAOC (V) found themselves selected to take part about two weeks before the event. The French units usually train for this event for about two months. Nothing daunted the team, headed by Maj Ashley Wilkin, OC A Coy, and comprising Lt John Day, Lt John Scriven, WO2 Bill White and C/Sgt Richard Bicker found themselves at Gatwick Airport on Friday 30 March accompanied by Col D. S. Strong, TAVR Col COord HQ SE District and Maj Wright, GS02 HQ SE District. With true military precision the flight was delayed for about six hours which meant the team arrived at Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris at about 0200 hrs on the morning of Saturday 31 March where they settled in their sleeping bags to get what sleep they could — this was somewhat disturbed by the sight of John Scriven who was not prepared to break with his nightly traditions and stripped down and changed into his pyjamas in the foyer of the airport — one or two Frenchmen also found the sight somewhat unusual and passed by with a perfectly clear gesticulation!

with full kit over about 30 kilometres and was broken down into various stages each terminating with an operational type mission.

They shall not pass! (but they did)

The first phase was an NBC test which ensured the team donned French type respirators which all members felt had been designed for suicide missions as they were unable to understand how air ever got through to the lungs. With chests bursting, eye pieces all steamed up and one hand inside the mask to ensure survival they marched along a track to a range where they had to fire the standard French rifle — the results were not good. Not to be beaten, they set off on a long patrol through woodland which ended with an assault on a tented camp. Full marks were awarded to the team on this phase which had not been helped by a party of Frenchmen armed with shotguns who attempted to persuade the team that they were off route half way along the course. After the assault they moved down a patrol valley to a demolition of a concrete pylon. John Day the team's demolition expert had a little difficulty sorting out the French kit with all its French instructions but eventually he made up his ring main. However, the

12 minutes and the team were most pleased to receive the second fastest time of the competition, especially as two team members were over 40 years old. At the end of this course there was an observation stand from which three vehicles had to be identified and their positions plotted on to air photographs — no real problems here. A march to a tented rest area followed where a typical French snack of bread and beer was provided. Following the resting of weary limbs Ashley Wilkin and Geoffrey Salvetti had to identify a number of mines and the rest of the team were taken into a small enclosure where they found five weapons, one of which they had never seen before, stripped down and were given five minutes to reassemble all into full working order. They managed to complete three satisfactorily.

A long night march followed through a series of manned positions and finally they came out of the woodland, passed through a town and onto a railway track at about 0300 hrs where the next task was to blow up a section of the line. John Day, our intrepid explosives man was pushed forward — he duly completed his task only to find the same French Colonel as DS. The Colonel was still thinking of his car and could still not agree with John's ring main principle of demolitions.

How would you like to be down by the Seine with me?

The hardest task of the entire competition then faced them. A river crossing of the Seine which was in full and fast



Preparing the concrete pylon for the 'off'.

Eventually the team arrived complete at Vernon (between Paris and Rouen) at about 0800 hrs which was followed by three intensive hours weapon training on the various strange weapons they would be required to use and fire during the competition. This was succeeded by instruction on two types of radio which left them with 30 minutes to prepare for the competition. This consisted of a march

French Colonel DS exclaimed that such a circuit would never work — jamais! John Day, never to be done by any DS, offered to put it under the colonel's car — he judged by the volume of words and movement of the hands that he had made his point.

The team then moved along the course for about 1½ miles to the next test phase which was a timed march over a two mile course — mostly up hill. The task time was



Frantically trying to assemble five strange weapons.

flow. They started the task off on the wrong foot when John Day pulled out the bung as he clambered into the boat but with that problem solved they paddled up stream and let the current take them down and across only to get tangled up with the safety rope. Geoffrey Salvetti experienced a nasty moment when he was forced backwards out of the boat with his feet caught but having inspected the bottom of the

boat from the outside he managed to get safely back although a little water logged.

Leaving the river bank the next task was clearing a minefield which they accomplished well and then faced a long haul through several deserted villages and up many hills to an ambush test which seemed to go well with everyone opening fire on the agreed signal. It was not until the DS conducted the debrief that it was discovered that WO2 Bill White had been on the wrong side of the track. A final march of three miles followed when they met a vehicle and were driven back to a welcome shower and clean up before prize giving. The team were awarded a fine gold vase and each member was given a gold plated medallion. The prize giving ceremony was followed by a most generous party with much excellent wine and food.

A long and once again much delayed journey back to Gatwick followed but the general opinion was that it had proved a tough but exciting competition and the team were unanimous that they would return next year — at their own expense if necessary.



The team, standing (l-r) WO2 White, C/Sgt Bicker, Lt Day, front row (l-r) Lt Scriven, Maj Wilkin and Capt Salvetti.

CHARITY CONCERT

WESSEX ENTERTAINMENT AT DEVIZES

Over 300 people squeezed into the Corn Exchange on Saturday 24th March when the 1st Bn the Essex Regt (Rifle Volunteers) entertained the Town Council and citizens of Devizes to a regimental charity band concert. The concert commemorated the granting of the Liberty of Devizes a year ago and also raised over £50 for the Army Benevolent fund.

This was the first time that Devizes Corn Exchange had echoed to the sound of military music.

Sixty musicians from the Rifle Volunteer's 2 Regimental Bands were on parade. The Devon Band based on Exeter and the Hampshire and Dorset Band based on Winchester played a variety of music including Moonlight Serenade, Carmen, St Louis Blues March and Jesus Christ Super Star. The Director of Music, Captain Wally Wroe and Bandmaster WO1 Roy Hibbs, shared the conducting throughout the concert. It was Capt Wroe's

last performance and the Regiment will miss his talents. We wish him the happiest of retirements.

The Drums Platoon led by Drum Maj WO2 Bill Morris played a Wessex Fanfare as the Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire, Lord Margadale arrived, and concluded the concert with Drummers Call and Drum Beating. Other guests included the Mayor and Mayoress of Devizes and Lord and Lady Hindlip who were met by the Commanding Officer Lt Col J. G. T. Southwood.

The Concert was in aid of the Army Benevolent Fund and the Regiment raised over £50 for this very worthwhile cause.

At the conclusion of the concert all the guests returned to the Church Walk TAVR Centre for refreshments.

The overwhelming success of the concert can be judged by the response in the local press and the many letters of appreciation which 1 Wessex have received.



You hum it. We'll play it. The band in full swing. Captain Wroe conducting.

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by those not actually shooting at the time is 'organised coaching'.

Should the shoot be more than two ranges, the competitor must nominate beforehand which two ranges he intends to count for this competition. In shoots where, because of range difficulty, the normal 'shoot through' is extended over two days, the card must show both dates and be signed and witnessed accordingly.

In addition scores made during the Bisley Meeting in any two 10 shot Squadded Shoots at the distances specified above may be counted. The two selected shoots MUST be written on the card beforehand and be signed by an Officer of the Competitor's own club or any club with Headquarters at Bisley. Each score must be 'witnessed' by the 'Register Keeper'.

All scores with TR rifles conforming to the above conditions are eligible. The best four scores made during the year will be counted. Four scores or more must be made to be eligible to compete for prizes. Scores will be accepted up to 1,800 on 'Second Monday' of NRA Imperial Meeting, and should be handed in to Derby Hut. Results will be exhibited in Derby Hut that evening.

The object of the XII is to provide statistics to assist the Captain and Adjutant of the Inter-Service XII Teams in their selections. The organisers will therefore accept every score which is of statistical assistance during a season in addition to the ten competition cards purchased, but only those on the postcards will count towards the XII Roll.

The Roll will be displayed during the Central Meeting on the TARA Notice Board.

Completed cards should be posted as soon as possible.

The Competition Year commences immediately following the Imperial Meeting.

Prizes at discretion of Council according to support.

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