

The Waggoner

Newsletter of RASC & RCT



RASC & RCT Secretary, Dettingen House, Blackdown Road, Surrey GU16 6SQ

Issue No 52

December 2011

Editorial

I hope you enjoy reading this the second edition of The Waggoner, which should reach you over the Christmas/New Year holiday. I am confident that all members of the Officers' Club will receive their own copy, but that will not be the case for all Life Members of the Association. We are working on the Association database to make it compatible with our printer's distribution system, which will require fine tuning over the next few months. Branch registers of their members should be forwarded to me so we can check the accuracy of the database.

Jonathan Knowles

RASC & RCT Converge with The RLC



On 29 July 2011 the RASC & RCT converged with The RLC. The Convergence papers were signed by Brig Paul Evans, Brig Mike Hickson and Maj Gen Colin Carrington. Maj Gen Bryan Colley signed the Benevolence papers.

The Governance structure for the RASC & RCT is shown below:

	RASC & RCT Council	RLC Committees
President	Brig P A D Evans	Association Trust
Officers' Club	Col G E Vaughan	
Association	Col N E L Gilbert	Fraternity
	Lt Col M J B Graham	Benevolence
	Lt Col M H G Young	Museum & Heritage
	Lt Col J E Knowles	Secretary

Association

Officers' Club

Chairman Officers' Club Committee Col G E Vaughan

You will have seen elsewhere the ways in which the former RASC and RCT Trusts have been transferred to RLC care and management. Each element of their former concerns is being dealt with, but not in the structures we used. The Officers' Club is the direct descendant of the Institution, albeit with many aspects shorn away. We do not have any funds, so no portfolio management or financial planning to consider. We have no historical or heritage responsibilities - considered in a different forum. The RCT Medal Collection is in the very capable hands of Lt Col David Owen, Curator as before, but is now the responsibility of The RLC. Our concern is purely the fraternal side of what used to be. This too is handled on a day to day and event by event basis by The RLC - in the very capable shape of Lt Col Jonathan Knowles. Those attending the Association Conference or the Autumn Curry in October will already have met him and will have been impressed by his capable organisation.

Nonetheless, there still exists an Officers' Club Committee to provide oversight and input into this process. This is also true of welfare/benevolence, heritage/museum and the Association. These few paragraphs are intended to provide some insight into our existence and activities. We consist of the following members; Col George Vaughan, Col Alf Grevatt, Col David Green, Col Graham Davies, Col Colin Constable and Lt Col Derek Armitage.

We represent a residue of former Institution Trustees plus some new (but not very) blood. Our appointment was made by the old Institution, and was taken from willing volunteers. Confirmation of our positions will be offered at the first AGM of the Club, to be held on 20 April 2012 - the date of our annual dinner, at which time new names can be forthcoming and a vote held.

Our programme is intended to repeat what had evolved over the 18 years of the life of the Institution; namely an Annual Dinner, a Spring and Autumn Curry at Deepcut, a West Country Lunch at Taunton and, in July, the Church Parade followed by wreath laying in Aldershot and then

a third curry lunch at Deepcut. In addition there will be newsletters each year and a periodic mailing of a revised Blue Book. All of this will be funded by The RLC, using the resources passed over on convergence plus the annual subscriptions we continue to pay (which are, of course, inevitably in decline).

Please do keep your details up to date as the Blue Book is often the only means of contact between members. Please do keep your reminiscences coming or any other contributions to the newsletters. Jonathan is the main point of contact, but I too can be reached on 01794 301045 or vaughan2@btinternet.com. In addition all members of the Committee stand ready to hear from you. Let me wish you well for Christmas and of course for the New Year also.

George Vaughan

**Chairman RASC & RCT Association
Col N E L Gilbert**

It is a great privilege for me to takeover the Chairmanship of the RASC and RCT Association from Lt Col Roger Wills. He will be a difficult act to follow, as he has served the Association for the best part of 20 years, firstly as Controller of Benevolent Fund and Secretary of the Association, before becoming our Chairman. He has been active in helping our Corps family in so many ways over these years, and on your behalf I wish him a very happy retirement.

I would also like to pay tribute to Lt Col Mike Graham and the girls behind the scenes, for their unstinting hard work over many years, both for the Benevolent Fund and for the Association. Mike and Roger have been a strong team, and most recently have handled our convergence with The RLC Association with great care and wise council. We have much to thank them for. At the AGM, both were appointed Vice Patrons of the Association, and I know that I speak for all when I say how much we look forward to seeing them together with their wives, Valerie and Liz, both of whom have been so supportive over many years at Corps functions in the future.

For those who do not know my background, I was commissioned into the RASC in May 1964, and retired in December 1999. Throughout my service, as a result of amalgamations, I wore the cap badges of the RASC, RCT and The RLC. My last appointment prior to retirement was Regimental Colonel of The RLC. In January 2000, I was fortunate to be appointed as a Captain of Invalids at The Royal Hospital Chelsea, where I served for 10 years.

I have been involved with the RASC and RCT Association over many years, having been Chairman of South East Region from 1991 to 1993 and Chairman of London Region during my time at Chelsea. I have also been on the Committee of Management and a Trustee of

the Benevolent Fund in recent years. I am President of the Aldershot Branch of the Association, a position I have held since 1991.

My wife Maureen and I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at Branch and Regional events as well as at our Annual Corps functions in the future. A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to everyone.

Nigel Gilbert

Michael Jackson



A picture of Michael Jackson taken in 2003, proudly sporting the RCT Badge.

Buller Barracks War Memorial



In the next couple of years Buller Barracks will be raised to the ground to allow for a major housing redevelopment programme to begin. While no real love will be lost when the barracks is demolished, the Corps has a particular concern that the RASC & RCT War Memorial does not remain to be engulfed by a housing estate. We have requested that it be re-sited to the grounds of the Church of St Michael & St George, the Roman Catholic Cathedral and the Corps' Church, located on Queen's Avenue. Rushmoor Borough Council appear to have reservations with this proposal and prefer to see the Grade 2 listed memorial remain in its present position within the housing estate as part of Aldershot's military heritage trail. Brig Paul Evans has written to the GOC 4th Division to enlist his support. Watch this space.

RASC War Memorial Baghdad

Col Mike Russell is currently serving a 12 month tour in Baghdad, (yes we are still there!). He was Secretary of the RASC & RCT Memorials Committee, and so is familiar with the Corps Memorial Register produced by Col Kelvin Tutt in 1998. He wanted to establish the whereabouts of the RASC Memorial installed in the St George's Church, Baghdad on 12 December 1937. The memorial was funded by members of the Corps to commemorate those who gave their lives for King and Country in Mesopotamia from 1915-24. Mike contacted The Reverend Canon Dr Andrew White (dubbed the Vicar of Baghdad), the Anglican Vicar of St George's. He wrote "Our church is indeed the memorial-church to the fallen in the Great War, it was built in 1936 to replace the church that had stood before it since 1864. I am afraid that all the memorials were removed and the only one that remains is a general one to all the troops of the Empire. When I first started here in 1998 we had all the regimental windows, now they have all been destroyed." He also spoke of the poor state of the military cemeteries in Iraq, but that the CWGC are considering doing something about them. His congregation used to be all expats but now they are all Iraqi with over 4,000 weekly participants. We are very grateful to both Mike Russell and the "Vicar of Baghdad" for providing this information.

RASC Memorial Panel New Church of Baghdad



Country: Iraq

Location and Brief Description: The information on this Memorial Panel has been obtained from a 1939 Journal of the Royal Army Service Corps.

The decision was made by the RASC to include the new Corps badge and not the one in force at the time. It was also felt that the title 'Royal' should be included as it was those who had given their lives who helped the Corps receive the prefix 'Royal' which, on 25 November 1918, King George V graciously conferred on the Corps. The dates of 1915-1924 were included so that the casualties of the Great War, the Rebellion and Peacetime are all incorporated. The memorial contains the RASC badge and the inscription:

IN MEMORY OF OFFICERS, WARRANT OFFICERS
NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN
OF THE ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR THEIR KING
AND COUNTRY IN MESOPOTAMIA, 1915-1924

THIS PANEL IS ERECTED BY THEIR
COMRADES WHO SERVED IN MESOPOTAMIA
AND SERVING OFFICERS AND OTHER RANKS OF
THE ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS

The Liberator

An interview given by Brig Nightingale to The Independent newspaper in 2005.

Brigadier Ronnie Nightingale MBE (then Lieutenant) was commanding A Platoon, 404 Company, Royal Army Service Corps, when, in April 1945, he received orders to take relief supplies to Belsen.



I and the 60 NCOs and men serving under me were not new to war. We'd been in the Western Desert, we'd worked our way up Italy, we'd crossed the Rubicon. In April 1945 I received orders to go to a map reference in Germany, to somewhere called Belsen.

There was no preparedness. It wasn't till the officer commanding B Platoon warned me, that I had some idea of what I was driving towards.

He suggested I set up a safe harbour for the vehicles away from the camp. There was a whole gaggle of people out there who were very weak and unwell, so what we had was treasure. If you saw the way people clung to the last of their belongings before they succumbed themselves, you'd understand that everything was precious.

So I set up the harbour, then went into the camp to let them know I'd arrived. I have no difficulty in recalling going along the connecting road to the main gate of Camp Number One. On the left side of the road, German

civilians were relaxing in front of their bungalows. Nonchalantly, like they were extras in a play. They were so close to the perimeter of the camp, it was horrifying. Inside the actual camp, I was struck by the enormous piles of compressed clothing and footwear. There were corpses lying about all over the place, too, in advanced states of emaciation. It's hard to believe how much a body can shrink and still remain a living body.

I saw one soldier carrying a corpse under each arm, to give you some idea of the weight loss. I'm an inquisitive person, so I went to look into the hutments. Some people have talked about the living and the dead sharing beds. I can't say anything like that. All I know is that within these hutments, they were in bunks three high. There was the stench; there was the racking, and these penetrating eyes. I started to vomit and I never went back into a hut again. I remember being tugged at, and I remember people trying to cook something on little fires. And I remember the smell - it never leaves you.

On 20 April, I received an order to withdraw, and went to the camp again to inform them I was leaving. Someone offered to show me a building near the camp commandant's office. Inside were personal effects of value that had been taken from the inmates, all stored in little packets, carefully placed in trays. There was meticulous attention to detail. I think that building had the greater impact on me. This was all that remained of so many people; God knows where they'd gone.

But I had my orders to withdraw and I complied. My men were campaign-hardened veterans, but of course they were upset. We were all very quiet, but we moved on to the next assignment because that's what you did. Some years later I commanded a regiment not far from Belsen. I never went near the place. Deliberately.

I never talked about Belsen. It's something I wanted to forget. I didn't jump at the idea of doing this interview, but I thought that it wouldn't be amiss for young people to be acquainted with my experiences. Since I decided to speak, though, the thoughts of those times having taken over this house, and I haven't been easy to live with. My wife and I have been married for 57 years, and she's still the girl of my dreams, but the first time she really learnt about my experiences was this morning when she took some documents to be photocopied. I met one other person who'd had similar experiences, who'd gone into Belsen with the Medical Corps. His wife only learnt about this when he died. It's something he and I chose never to discuss. I still can't square my thought processes with how those human beings in that camp were treated. Those two days were the most horrific of my life. But it didn't damage my hope in mankind. It's something to be surmounted. RG

Brig Nightingale died on 22 October 2011 at the age of 93 years.

Saving Hougomont Farm



On 14 July 1979, Lt Col Douglas Harding, Commander RCT British Forces Antwerp accompanied by Maj Bev Stevens attended the unveiling of a memorial plaque (see below) to members of the Royal Wagon Train who took part in the action of Chateau Hougomont. It was during the Battle of Waterloo that Napoleon sent a diversionary attack to the Chateau, which was on Wellington's right flank, in order to draw in British reserves, thus making Wellington weak elsewhere. The fighting lasted all day with some 14,000 French troops taking part in the attack. Wellington deployed 12,000 troops just to keep the supply route open. The small garrison based in Hougomont held its position. Wellington said "The success of the battle turned upon the closing of the gates at Hougomont".

Royal Wagon Train Waterloo Battlefield Memorial



Country: Belgium

Location and Brief Description: This memorial to the Royal Waggon Train is placed within the walls of Hougoumont Farm on the Waterloo Battlefield. The marble tablet contains the inscription:

ROYAL WAGGON TRAIN

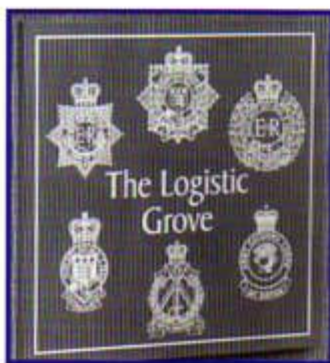
IN MEMORY OF
THE OFFICERS AND MEN
OF THE ROYAL WAGGON TRAIN
WHO TOOK PART IN THE
DEFENCE OF HOUGOUMONT
18TH JUNE 1815

THIS TABLET WAS ERECTED IN 1979
BY THE ROYAL CORPS OF TRANSPORT
THE SUCCESSORS OF
THE ROYAL WAGGON TRAIN

The victory at Waterloo put back the conquest of Britain by France for more than 150 years when Ted Heath signed the surrender document in the 1970s. The Farm is now in a dilapidated state and the Waterloo Committee is seeking help to restore it by the 200th Anniversary in 2015. All donations should be made payable to Project Hougoumont and set to:

Project Hougoumont
Lakeside Manor
West End Lane
ESSENDON
Herts
AL9 6AZ

Rededication of the Logistic Grove



The Rededication of the Logistic Grove at the National Memorial Arboretum took place on 19 September 2011 in the presence of HRH The Princess Royal and the Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire. A service was held supported by The RLC Band followed by a wreath laying ceremony where Her Royal Highness placed the first wreath followed by the Master General of Logistics, Maj Gen Sir Kevin O'Donoghue KCB CBE and then Forming Corps senior officers, Brig Paul Evans laid the wreath on behalf of the RASC & RCT. The ceremony was attended by serving officers and soldiers of The RLC, bereaved families and operationally injured soldiers, retired members of The RLC and Forming Corps, including Chelsea pensioners. Flags and standards of all Forming



Corps were paraded including the standards of the RASC and RCT Association and branches.

After the ceremony Her Royal Highness planted an oak tree within the Logistic Grove. This was followed by the presentation of Elizabeth Crosses to bereaved families. A reception was then held where officers, soldiers and retired members and families were introduced to The Princess Royal.

Important Dates for 2012

RASC & RCT Officers' Club
Spring Curry Lunch
Sunday 18 March

RASC & RCT Officers' Club
AGM and Dinner
Friday 20 April

RASC & RCT
Over 90's Lunch
Tuesday 15 May

RASC & RCT Corps Weekend
14/15 July

RASC & RCT Officers' Club
West Country Curry Lunch Taunton
Date TBC

RASC & RCT Officers' Club
Autumn Curry Lunch
Sunday 28 October

