

# The Waggoner

Newsletter of RASC & RCT



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## Editorial

I hope you enjoy reading this the fourth Waggoner issued since convergence. I am very grateful to all those who have taken the time to write and submit articles, and continue to invite all our members to produce articles, both historical and current, which will interest our readership. Following the disappointing Officers' Club Curry Lunch held last year on 28 October 2012, those who attended that lunch are invited to pay half price for attendance at the Spring Curry Lunch on 24 March 2013, so £5 for the member and their first guest, and just £10 each for Guest 2, 3 and 4.

There are two excellent articles worth setting aside a bit of time to read. The first is written by Lt Col Terry Byrne, "How It All Started". He recalls his days in the early sixties when he left Dublin to join the Junior Leaders' Battalion at Norton Manor Camp for two-and-a-half years "hard graft".

The second article "Are We There Yet, Sir" was written by Maj Marco Ciotti and appeared in The RLC Review two years ago. It is an hilarious account of an RCT Troop Commander on exercise with his troop in Germany, and will no doubt bring back memories for everyone who served with the British Army on the Rhine.

### President RASC & RCT Council Brig P A D Evans OBE

A very happy New Year to all members of the RASC and RCT Association and Officers' Club. As I look back on 2012, I would determine that we have consolidated our position within The RLC structure and are already well established members of the key RLC Committees. We are thus now very much part of the RLC family and continue to benefit from the positive support we receive from the Corps Colonel RLC and staff within RHQ The RLC, particularly our Secretary, Lt Col Jonathan Knowles. I remain confident that 2013 will be equally successful and that we will enjoy the range of activities planned throughout the year. I would, however, encourage you to support the centrally organised events, particularly the Officers' Club Annual Dinner (19 April)

## Diary Dates 2013

24 March

Officers' Club Curry Lunch Deepcut  
(application form on back page)

19 April

Officers Club AGM & Dinner Deepcut  
(application form on back page)

7 May

Officers Club Over 90s Lunch Deepcut

13/14 July

Corps Weekend Aldershot/Deepcut

September (date TBC)

Officers' Club West Country Lunch

5 October

Association Annual Conference

where the Master General Logistics will be the principal guest, Corps Weekend which includes the Association Dinner/Dance on Saturday 13 July and the Church Service at the Corps Church on Sunday 14 July, and also the Association Annual Conference on Saturday 5 October. These are important events which I would urge you to put firmly in your diaries. We clearly need to be able to maintain a level of support sufficient to justify the effort required to organise such events. I know that I can count on your support.

I hope that you all enjoy a healthy and prosperous 2013.

Chairman RASC & RCT Association  
Col N E L Gilbert

It is that time of the year again, when one looks back over the past twelve months and realise how quickly the time passes. I have been Chairman for just over a year, and would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee of Management, and our Secretary for all



their hard work behind the scenes, and keeping the show on the road, a phrase so often used by my predecessor.

Since the summer edition of the Waggoner, the Association has remained busy. Of particular note has been the resurrection of the Southern Get Together, held once again in Bournemouth, thanks to the hard work of the Reading Branch. Their Guest of Honour was the Chairman of the South East Region, Col Mark Underhill. In September, our President attended the Preston Branch Annual Church Service and Lunch, and in November I attended the Annual Wales and North West Region Dinner/Dance in Blackpool. Our wives accompanied us to all these events, which we all thoroughly enjoyed, in particular the opportunity to meet so many old friends, as well as new. The hospitality shown to us all is much appreciated.

Maureen and I also attended the annual Tank Transporter Reunion held in early November in the Britannia Hotel, Liverpool. This function has been organised by Maj "Blackie" Widdows for about 20 years, and he never seems to tire (or age)! The number attending is always over 300, and new faces from years gone by are still attending for the first time, and are amazed at meeting old colleagues, most of whom they have not seen for decades. Indeed this year a Chelsea Pensioner met a friend he had not seen for 50 years! Blackie's goal is 400, so please keep attending, and that includes officers as well.

Remembrance week saw the Corps Association well represented not only locally around the country, but specifically at events in London. I attended the opening ceremony at the Garden of Remembrance Service at St Paul's Cathedral on 5 November, and laid a cross on behalf of the Association. Maj Gen Carrington, our President attended the Field of Remembrance Service at Westminster Abbey, along with myself, the Secretary and some 20 members of the Association. On Remembrance Sunday, I led the RASC and RCT contingent at the Cenotaph Parade. Twenty-five Corps veterans made up our number, which was our largest for many years, and included representation from as far away as Scotland, and included two Chelsea In-Pensioners, both ex-Air Despatchers, resplendent in their Tricorns and Scarlets. Sadly our representation at The RLC and Forming Corps Service at Deepcut was poor. I hope we can do better in future years.

Christmas always generates social functions, and the Aldershot Branch laid on an excellent Dinner Dance, to which 86 attended. The number included friends of members, and for the first time local RAOC veterans, who much appreciated the invitation. The evening commenced with carols sung to the accompaniment of musicians from the Association Band Branch. It was followed by an excellent display by the RBL Basingstoke Corps of Drums. As is customary, I went to Chelsea on 13 December along with our Vice Patrons and the Secretary to deliver our

Christmas Grants and best wishes to our resident In-Pensioners, many of whom are now in the Infirmary.

May I take this opportunity on behalf of the President and Committee of Management to wish all members of the Association and their families, good health and happiness in the New Year. Both Maureen and I look forward to seeing many of you at various events throughout 2013, and in particular at Corps Weekend, which will mark 20 years since our integration into The RLC. Our hope is that the Corps Memorial will have been moved by then from Buller to the grounds of our Corps Church, St Michael and St George.

### **How It All Started "The Journey" T C Byrne**

This is the story of Lt Col Terry Byrne's enlistment and time at the Junior Leaders' Battalion, Norton Manor Camp.

It was a damp, cold, September morning in 1962 when I departed the home place, west of Dublin, on my journey to the big city. Leaving behind Mum, Dad, three older sisters and four younger brothers it was my big break for freedom. The walk to town 30 minutes, then the bus to Dublin followed by the train to Belfast. Task one, find Clifton Street then the Army Information Office and book in. Task one completed it was now two days of paperwork, medicals (cough!) round pegs in round holes and trying to learn a different, if not foreign language. Other lads around me from Cork, Kerry, Galway, Dublin and all locations "North" were having the same problem. It was my first experience of regional accents and even worse was to follow.

Afternoon of day two, having booked out of our YMCA accommodation, our group, of about 20, were informed we would be catching the evening boat to England. Colour Sergeant (whatever his name was) would be in charge. A very big man entered the room, smart uniform, lots of badges and stripes couldn't see his face for cap. I did wonder how he could see. The ferry crossing was an adventure as I had not been to sea before. Suffice it to say I was already pleased I had not joined the Navy.

Train Station platform, "gather around encouraged Colour". "You will now be given your final destinations, tickets and packed lunch. On arrival report to the person in Military uniform, at the train station, who will arrange transport to your camp. You are now on your own my job is done". Names were read out and places named. At the time they meant nothing to me but later I would know them all as Junior Soldier locations. Troon, Chepstow, Rhyl, Oswestry, and my own location Taunton. As our party depleted by groups of four or six total panic descended as last man I was heading for Taunton on my own. Colours parting words "Taunton change at Crewe and Bristol, good luck lad". My first problem, I had never heard of these places and no idea where they were. Plan, sit by a window and watch for the station sign.



Sometimes works but other times you are on the wrong side of the train. Crewe popped up quite quickly, well signed and right side of train. Bristol took forever, not many signs and wrong side of train!! Slight panic but grabbed my duffle bag and left the train onto an empty platform. Spot railway man and ask "train for Taunton"? I now know, having cracked the Bristol accent, that what he said was: "This is Bristol Parkway, you need Bristol Temple Meads and you have just got off the train you need and its two hours to the next one" Finally arrived at Taunton, met smart, very fed up, Army man who waited two hours longer than planned because some Irish twit doesn't know his Parkway from his Meads.

Arrival at Norton Manor Camp, the home of Junior Leaders Battalion Royal Army Service Corps. I did learn to love the place. I was quite impressed with my individual treatment, with my own escort and transport from the station and now being dealt with on a one to one basis. This, I found out, was due to my travel arrangements that caused me to arrive a day early.

The accent situation did not improve and was now further complicated by a completely foreign language "Army Speak". Guardroom, Orderly Corporal, Billet, Cookhouse, Bedding Store and lots more. What are they talking about? It was all a complete mystery!!

To keep it simple we will stick with "Army Speak" and you can decide where I might have had difficulty.

In the Guardroom the Orderly Corporal informs his 2IC that my "bed space is Spider (number) Connaught Platoon, Room 1. (Room 1 I understood) Get the keys to the bedding store, issue set of bedding, mug and diggers and settle him in". Bedding where I came from is straw and is kept in a barn so this should be fun. It was, diggers in my pocket, mug in pillow case blankets, sheets and pillows in neat bundle, mattress on head and off we go to spider, billet and room. Instruction followed on mattress into cover, U.S. blanket on springs (the blanket with the corners cut off!!) pillows in cases and fluffed, hospital corners, position of bedside mat, allocated locker and "Bed space" was complete. Next instruction "grab your mug and diggers we are off to the cookhouse for nosh, then I am off duty and you are on your own until breakfast, I suggest you get to know your billet" The "nosh" was excellent, the "cookhouse" a wonderful place and these were new words I would remember.

My bed space was a lonely place that night and I did wonder why I was there. A re-visit to the bedding store for some clean sheets and a new mattress in the morning will explain a lot.

Breakfast was a joy and then others started to arrive. Very bossy JNCOs, they were very much in charge, then some lads from Scotland, Liverpool, Birmingham, Newcastle, Norfolk, Somerset and Wales filled my room. Everyone

spoke, nobody understood but I could take the lead on Bed space, Bedding store, Cookhouse and Nosh. One-up to "Paddy",

Following the drawing of our "Kit" and lengthy instruction on Locker layout we were instructed to write home. I opened my writing case (I still have it as a docs carrier in my car) to find a card from the family. That day was my 15th Birthday and the start of a great career.

### Next: Junior Leader The Early Days

What a wonderful system: one adult Platoon Sergeant in charge and lots of Junior NCOs to carry out training. All recruits self-employed cheap labour.

Following the issue of our kit there were several important jobs to be done and the necessary tools arrived. Punch kit, hammer and blank Dog-Tags. Make your own. Name, initials and religion. I was now to know I was RC. Next, Studs, Last and another Hammer with Boot-sole plan for 13 studs to the boot. Only later did you discover that such a task should be the reserved occupation of a cobbler. When stud holes appeared in socks and feet you only had yourself to blame!! Now take one pair of brown plimsolls and use one tin of polish to make them black. There is an obvious question here but don't even think about it. Next task is to create a "masterpiece" the perfect Beret. Lots of hot and cold water to shrink it (some did, some didn't!!) next back bow and central, correct height, Cap Badge. Now light a candle, set fire to boots and use heated spoon to apply another tin of polish to create the perfect base for your new lifetime hobby "bulling boots". Any shareholders of KIWI owe us a great debt. When I wandered through my Spider on my early arrival day I did think why "Blanco" had his own room while the rest of us were 14 to a room. We were now introduced to "Blanco" and all became clear. I did learn to hate the stuff, couldn't get it to work properly and spent forever taking it off trying again but ending up with streaky webbing and Brasso stains. It was a regular nightmare. Ironing was the next challenge and the constant smell of burning material informed that not everyone was being successful. But Greatcoats, and SD/Battledress, our first best Uniforms, were made of tough stuff that few irons of the day could destroy. Time management of the ironing board (6ft table) and the iron became a fine art in all Barrack rooms. I learnt the term "2's up" through ironing. Locker layouts took on the significance of a Sistine Chapel repaint. It was all about 9x9 and everything in its place smilie socks etc. No Notice Board was safe as the search for A4 sheets, to fold into garments for the perfect shape, took on expedition proportions. I remember. Shorts PT being a particular "Boxing" (folding) problem. Mess tins, mug and diggers were always fair game for all your kit to leave the room through the nearest window. It was quite amazing just how clean you could get them. I'll finish this "kit" section with the important inventions and tools of the trade. Button sticks were great and everything had to be "Smart



As" one but that got spoilt when brass was dropped in favour of Bakelite (sacrilege). Gaiter elastics and trouser weights became essentials for BD smartness. An old toothbrush the perfect item to get polish into "Welts". I never knew boots and shoes had welts. The final act to look smart, with belt over your pullover or jacket, was the "Pull-round" to create neat side folds and a tight front and back. Remember not much fitted the recruit Junior Leader as you were expected to grow into it!!

"Room Jobs List" were a great education, a team building exercise and a good source of extra's when not completed properly. The famous "Bumper" created more muscle than ever did the gym. Many will be familiar with the job of doing the outside area. The Norton Manor Spider designed with space in between the ablutions and the offices, only accessible from an interior door, appeared on the job list as "The Inside, Outside Area"!! Gallon tins of yellow lino polish, maybe a weeks worth per tin, needed protection of National Security proportions but also represented top barter material with cigarettes, certain magazines, stamps and any sweets as currency. Our first "March" as a Platoon was to the barbers shop. As someone from a farming background this is best described as sheep shearing station. Some very smart and expensive hair styles were destroyed as we all sported a universal "very little hair" style.

Some brown paper and string arrived by way of our room NCO with instructions to pack your "civvies". Although another "new word alert" I didn't think I had any to pack. Big jock from the bed space opposite, a lad of great value as he was an Army Cadet and was to become my best mate, informed me that it meant civilian clothes so I did need to pack. I thought of the excitement the arrival of a parcel would create back home and the fight that would follow for possession. Doing as one is told, however, was to prove to be a big problem come the end of term. Standing in line in best BD, smart as a button stick, to collect travel documents home, an eagle eyed clerk was to notice that travel warrants with Southern Ireland destinations should only be given to someone in Civvies!! Solution: Summon WRVS lady who is instructed to take this "twit" to town and buy him some clothes. Just as well as the old ones would not have fitted anyway.

Life in Barracks was a 16 hour day with always something to do and something new to learn. Connaught Platoon was the Recruit Platoon and was split into A Wing and B Wing. Your Regimental number would decide which wing you lived in. S/ prefix for Clerks were A Wing and T/ were Drivers in B-Wing. I will have no need here to explain the importance of knowing ones Regimental number. Also to be studied was the structure of the Battalion, the names of important people and Corps history.

Sports parade was to prove a challenge, "Tell me what your good at and what you would like to do" asked the

PTI. My sports, I played Gaelic Football and Hurley for my school and Gaelic Handball (Squash without a racket) at County level. New shorts, for Gaelic Football now read Rugby, for Hurley now read Hockey and for Handball now read Boxing!!

I'll finish this Section with Church Parade. Having been educated by the Christian Brothers, a legal bunch of thugs, now thankfully disbanded, I had many rules to follow on church matters. Any church other than RC was out of bounds under serious threat of serious sin. Attendance at RC Church on Sunday was compulsory. There was no RC Church in Norton Manor Camp at this time. Solution: Summon WRVS Lady who was told "take the stroppy little git to Mass in Taunton". As recruits were confined to Barracks this trip out, with tea and cake after mass, was quite a treat. The next week there were 10 of us bundled into the back of a Bedford 3 tonner, JNCO in charge and no tea and cake. Eventually a room was found and a very nice little chapel was created in camp.

#### **Next: Junior Leader, Progress, Promotion and Departure**

Term one, recruit training, was a blur. With so much to learn and a complete lifestyle adjustment to be made by everyone, there was little time to reflect. "1231" were the only numbers needed for drill at this point but the culture of being "Tarmac Technician" was a mystery. Lots of shouting, name calling and "I left you in this position" became the order of the day. I loved drill and got quite good at it.

Term two, saw the creation of a new Morley Platoon where it was decided to keep most of the previous recruit platoon together. We became a very strong unit through the following terms. Everything was now a competition with the other Platoons. The reward for champion Platoon at the end of each term was to go home a day early, a prize worth fighting for. Drill, Weapon Training, Adventure Training, Trade Training, Education, Physical Training, Hobbies, Sports, RSM's Saturday Morning Parades Standards of Drill and Turnout all carried Platoon Points or Credits and the Competition was fierce. It was all designed to ensure you gave of your best and it worked. We were now qualified to do overnight Guard and Fire Piquet Duty. Another great plan to ensure smartness was "Stick Man". The best turned out Guard Member was given the title and was "stood down". This resulted in Platoons having a "Stick Man" kit. The very best of "best boots" ironed BD's/shirt used only by someone going on Guard. Walking to the Guardroom like Tinman from the Wizard of Oz was due to the starch or the fact that the "Stick Man Kit" didn't quite fit. Some sacrifice had to be made to have a chance of winning!!

Pay Parades are worth a mention if only for the pleasure our permanent Staff got from them. Our spider was built into a hill, resulting in slopes in our corridors, all polished



to glass like shine. Great fun to set the pay parade table at the top of the slope with only one boot length on the flat section. Only the most accurate halt could result in stability. Less than perfect, with 13 studs to the boot, resulting in sliding "at the halt" to the bottom of the slope and to the rear of the parade to try again later. A successful halt put you in front of the pay Corporal who completed your pay book. One pace Right Close March, now in front of Paying Officer, Salute, receive cash and pay book. Announce "Pay and Pay book correct Sir". Salute, take one pace Right Close March. Now in front of Platoon Sergeant who proclaims "you owe: Stable Belt, Tracksuit, Polish, blanco and Platoon Fund". Make About Turn with your remaining 10s and 6d slide back to the platoon. I still don't know what the platoon fund was used for other than additional tins of yellow polish to ensure pay parades remained a challenge.

Adventure training was exactly that, adventure. With the Quantock Hills, Dartmoor and the Cheddar Caves on our doorstep there was no shortage of challenge, fear and excitement. An Army out of bounds! school course a Towyn in North Wales, achieving a B grade, was one of my best ever experiences and it would be fair to say a place where I grew up. Promotion to Junior Sergeant followed.

Many hours of classroom Driver Training, giving hand signals from a wooden platform with steering wheel and pedals, was about to become real. A Bedford RL, an Austin Champ and BSA R2 Motorcycle, were the tools of the trade to, eventually, earn a big boys licence.

Our Passing Out Parade was outstanding with many families in attendance but not mine.

Following two-and-a-half years hard graft and armed with a Driving Licence, Drill and Education certificates it was off to Man's Service to prove that "Junior Leaders" are!



### The RASC Association Rallies - Royal Albert Hall

Following on from the previous edition of the Waggoner, Lt Col Ian Vaughan-Arbuckle paraded at the Royal Albert Hall in 1956 with fellow students from the Junior NCO's Regimental School, which was located at Freshwater on the Isle of Wight. The photograph shows HRH The Duke of Gloucester inspecting the guard of honour, which totalled forty-eight soldiers commanded by Maj W J F Weller. Driver Vaughan-Arbuckle is third from the left level with Maj Weller.



### RASC & RCT Benevolence

The RLC Benevolence Committee continues to receive benevolence cases from SSAFA Forces Help and the Royal British Legion requesting assistance to members of The RLC and its Forming Corps. The 2012 statistics for the RASC & RCT are as follows:

Cases received:	764 cases
Grants made:	601 cases
Average grant:	£476.00
RLC total grants:	£286,266
ABF total grants:	£137,193
Total granted:	£423,459

In 2012, The RLC Benevolent Committee received a total of 2,425 (including 764 RASC & RCT) applications for financial assistance from SSAFA Forces Help and The Royal British Legion. After close scrutiny the Committee authorised 1,820 grants totalling £766,761, an average of £421 from The RLC. The Committee managed to secure generous grants from the ABF, The Soldiers Charity totalling £417,805. Therefore all the Forming Corps of The RLC and serving soldiers benefited by an overall total of £1,184,566, an average grant of £650.86 each.

Shown below are just five examples of the 601 x RASC & RCT cases which received grants:

**Case 1.** Financial assistance to an 86 year old RASC veteran who served during World War Two in Northern Europe. Nursing Home top up fees for 1 year of £860, this amount has been paid each year for the last 4 years.

**Case 2.** £450 granted to an 83 year old RASC veteran to go towards the purchase of a Riser/Recliner chair.

**Case 3.** £450 granted to a 74 year old RASC National Service veteran to assist towards the purchase of an Electric Powered Vehicle.

**Case 4.** £175 granted to a 70 year old former member of the Parachute Regiment and the RCT to go towards the cost of a wheel chair.

