

The Waggoner

Newsletter of RASC & RCT



Secretary: Lt Col (Retd) J E Knowles

RHQ The RLC, Dettingen House, Deepcut, Surrey, GU16 6RW

Tel: 01252-833376 Email: rascrctsec@rhqtherlc.org.uk

Issue No 5

August 2013

Editorial

This is the fifth Waggoner to be distributed since convergence. It is designed to provide members of our two separate organisations, the Officers' Club and the Association with news, planned events and a bit of historical fact.

The RCT and its predecessors have occupied the site on which Buller Barracks stands since the late 1850s, so when the Barracks was finally handed over to the developers on 1 April 2013, it brought to a close the Corps long association with this part of the Aldershot Military Town. To mark this moment in the history of the Corps I have re-produced an article written by Lt Col Mike Young which was previously published in the last edition of the Waggoner, March 1993. It is a whimsical record of the history of the Buller Baracks site as seen by the ghost of God's Acre!

Diary Dates

Officers' Club

27 October 2013

Deepcut Curry Lunch

(Application Form attached)

23 March 2014

Deepcut Curry Lunch

25 April 2014

AGM & Dinner

6 May 2014

Over 90s Lunch

14 July 2014

Corps Weekend Aldershot

Association

5 October 2013

Annual Conference Deepcut

13/14 July 2014

Corps Sunday

The Barracks will eventually become a housing estate with over 800 units, completed over the period 2019 to 2023. With this long lead time we are relieved that our War Memorial will be moved to the grounds of St Michael and St George by mid-November 2013. £34k of Regimental funds has been allocated to pay for the move and its future maintenance.



Maj Gen & Mrs Carrington with In-Pensioner Frank Swift on Corps Sunday

President RASC & RCT Council Brig P A D Evans OBE

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in the 2013 Corps Weekend. I thought it was extremely successful and was clearly enjoyed by those Association and Officers' Club members and their families who were fortunate to be able to attend. My appreciation, as always, is extended to those who carefully planned the various events and who worked tirelessly to ensure that all ran smoothly. We have much to thank them for, particularly from the RASC & RCT Secretariat within RHQ RLC.

Particular thanks go to those members who made the journey to Aldershot. I should make special mention of the many widows and their families who were able to join us. It is, of course, a particularly important day for them and I know that they very much appreciate the opportunity to remain part of the RASC & RCT family from which they draw comfort and strength. We had a good turnout of members, particularly for the Church

Service and march to Buller Barracks, I can now confirm that there is complete agreement on the move of the War Memorial to the Corps Church, later this year.

Our challenge, as always, is to ensure that future social events and Corps Weekend remain well supported. I would therefore urge you to put 13/14 July 2014 firmly in your diaries and encourage other members and friends to join you.

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

I am putting "pen to paper" on 24 July, amidst the excitement surrounding the birth of HRH Prince George of Cambridge, and I know that our good wishes go to The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and we wish them and their son good health and happiness in the years ahead. This has been the hottest July since 1976, with temperatures around 30°C (86°F!), so all in all it has been a memorable month.

It is also only a week or so since we celebrated our Corps Weekend in Aldershot. The Association Dinner was held on Saturday 13 July at the Holiday Inn (formerly The Queen's Hotel). Some eighty members together with family and friends attended. It was a most enjoyable occasion, and good to see some "younger" members of the Corps family present for the first time. We were entertained by "A Touch of Brass", a brass quintet with a couple of members of the RCT Band, including Austin Pepper who organises the group. As always we were delighted that our President, Maj Gen Colin Carrington and his wife Joy attended, along with our Vice-Patrons and their wives. Corps Sunday was marked as is customary by a Service of Thanksgiving at St Michael & St George Church, followed by our last march to the Corps Memorial at Buller Barracks, prior to its relocation to the grounds of the Corps Church later this year. The Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas led the parade, at a comfortable pace, thus ensuring that the veterans, including three Chelsea Pensioners, kept the step, under the eagle eye of the RLC Regimental Sergeant Major WO1 (CRSM) S J Johnson RLC. Our President made a short address, and along with Brig Paul Evans, President of the RASC & RCT Council, wreaths were laid following a short Act of Remembrance. Association members then retired to the Holiday Inn for a good lunch and much banter over a pint or two. My thanks go in particular to our Secretary, Lt Col Jonathan Knowles for all his hard work in the preparations for the weekend, and of course to all those who attended, many of whom travelled considerable distances to be present. Do keep coming, for without your support it would be difficult to continue this important event.

Your Committee of Management last met on 9 April. The Regional Representatives gave an update on their activities, and issues of concern. Membership numbers continue to be a worry, not surprisingly, with sadly three

of our Branches closing; Bristol, Colchester and Yeovil. However there are new Branches which continue to blossom, the Amphibious Branch and the Buller (On Line) Branch are recruiting new members. I encourage all Branch Chairmen to submit articles and photos for future editions of the Waggoner. One item that was raised at the meeting was that of membership categories. A formal resolution will be placed before this year's Annual Conference in October. It will be sent to Branches shortly so that delegates have sight of the proposal. The Committee of Management will next meet on 5 September.

Many of you will be aware that I along with other Forming Corps Association Chairmen, am a member of The RLC Association Committee. It meets twice a year to discuss areas of mutual concern. The Chairman is Brig Chris Murray (formerly RCT). Our last meeting was on 21 March, when we were given an update on RLC issues. Of particular interest to us was a paper by the President of The RLC Association, Maj Gen Ian Copeland (also formerly RCT), on the future support by The RLC to the Forming Corps Associations Branches, known as the "Twinning Programme". It is hoped that a closer relationship can be fostered between RLC units and our Branches, and that this will begin to identify itself once the Army has decided on the locations and footprints for both Regular and Reserve Army units. A template is being drawn up showing where twinning might be possible. A current example is the Aldershot Branch and 27 Regiment, although the latter is due to move to Abingdon, but will be replaced in Aldershot by another RLC Regiment. I must emphasise that this programme is not a takeover bid, but a means to foster the bond between the Forming Corps and The RLC retired and serving.

Finally, it is with sadness that I report the death of two stalwart members of our Association, Ken Petrie of Aldershot Branch and Ross Macrory of Londonderry Branch. They were both strong supporters at Corps functions, and are much missed by their families and friends.

Corps Sunday, 14 July 2013

We had a good attendance for our 20th Annual Service of Thanksgiving and Rededication since the formation of The RLC. It is difficult to judge just how many more years we will be able to continue with Corps Sunday with so few members able to make the journey. Out of a total combined Officers Club and Association Membership of 3,648, sixty-eight members plus their wives and families were able to attend and that number was boosted by forty-five guests plus the local parishioners. The Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas travelled up from Shorncliffe, on what was for them meant to have been a planned stand-down day. We were also privileged to have three officiating Chaplains, hosted by the Reverend Monsignor

Canon Robert Corrigan and the resident Chaplain The Reverend Deacon Peter McWilliam, and a truly wonderful sermon was delivered by an Ulsterman, the Reverend Doctor Philip McCormack, the Deputy Assistant Chaplain General 145 (S) Brigade, who was for the first time in his life officiating in a Catholic Cathedral, inspirational stuff! Next year Corps Sunday will be held on 13 July 2014, the weekend before the Farnborough Air Show.

 <p>TO THE COURT OF GOD AND MEMBERSHIP OF OFFICERS OF THE CORPS OF ROYAL ENGINEERS AND ITS ASSOCIATIONS AND AFFILIATED UNITS AND SOCIETIES</p>	Gen. D.J. West	1928-2012
	Maj. D.E. Miller	1922-2012
	Maj. K.G. Ashby CVO MC	
		1920-2013
	Lt Col. A.S.A. Cox	1913-2012
	Lt Col. E. Hutton	1930-2012
	Col. C.A.R. Lovell	1923-2012
	Maj. E.G. Ericsson	1917-2012
	Col. R.L. Nicholson	
		1934-2012
	Maj. W.M.F. Tyler	1928-2012
	Lt Col. P. Wilson	1936-2012
	Maj. E. Woodson	1920-2012
	Col. C.W. Welch	1930-2012
	Col. I.M.S. Murray	1931-2012
Maj. Gen. B. Brown	1928-2013	
Lt Col. J.E. Brinkley		
	1936-2013	
Lt Col. C.E. Deane	1928-2013	
Maj. T.E.R. Wall	1922-2013	
Maj. H.E. Wain	1922-2013	
Maj. J.M. Tomlinson	1924-2013	
Col. R.R. Tarrant	1937-2013	
Lt Col. H.P.L. Gutteridge	1924-2013	



Autobiographic history of the site of Buller Barracks as seen by God's Acre related by Lt Col Mike Young



Old Buller Barracks, God's Acre (centre), Church of St Michael and St George (top)



The mists of winter swirled over the heathland and rarely was a man seen moving around. Only a few houses existed in the Aldershot area but their inhabitants led a

poor existence and didn't ever visit me. My life was in the future though, and I just rested, secure in the knowledge that great times lay ahead. Nature was my being, my very life.

My first sight of uniformed men was when patrol activity took place in the Civil War between Royalists and Parliamentary forces in about 1645 that was a while after the Romans were here. None of them stayed long. Then in the middle of the 19th Century some soldiers exercised in the Cobham area, not far away, and when war broke out in the Crimea in 1845 the area started to come to life and I saw a lot of activity, as the land was thought to be ideal for manoeuvres. 25,000 acres were bought, £12 an acre, so I couldn't have cost much more than £40 - what a bargain! I wonder what I'm worth today? To some priceless, to others nothing.

Large wooden huts were built all round me and my area was called South Camp, that is south of the Basingstoke Canal, the other side was North Camp, lower class, I thought. In no time at all the different lines were numbered and I found myself alongside "X" Lines, occupied by the Military Train. I used to see them practise their wagon drill every day down on The Sands, by the canal, wearing their blue uniforms, shakos and white stripes. One of their nicknames shows what they got up to: The Muck Tumblers; because of the two white stripes I also heard them called The Lamp Wicks too. They really

looked smart as they walked out on Sundays. All seven battalions of the Military Train were here at different times.

Lots of open areas were left as squares for drill and other purposes, but I had the distinction of being designated the Recreation Ground in Stanhope Lines, quite an honour. What sport there was, though only football was hosted by me. What fun the lads used to have. Of course in those days I had a bit of a slope on me, going from Thorn Hill down to "X" Lines, which was always something of a nuisance.

It was on my lower side that the first ASC Officers' Mess was built, in "X" Lines. They used to have trouble with wild cats in the roof, what with the noise and the smell - they couldn't get rid of them, in spite of stabbing through the ceiling with their swords.

The red/brown huts were of good weatherboarding and originally cost £150 each, not bad business for someone. Each slept sixteen men and a Corporal was in charge. They were lit by paraffin lamps and heated by coal fires, neither adequate, really. I used to watch the hawkers come into camp first thing in the morning and sell a penny worth of butter, jam and cheese to the soldiers - poor devils; they never got much from the Army. In those days all meals were prepared in the huts by the hut orderly and carried to the cookhouse, where the cooks either put the dishes in the oven or boiled whatever the concoction was. The smells wafted over to me on the way back, sometimes good, sometimes not good. I didn't see much of the families, four of whom lived in a hut. No indoor sanitation either, or water supply. People today don't know how lucky they are.

The 1890s saw a lot of changes and even I got involved. The cause of all the work and fuss was the building of red-brick blocks in place of the old wooden huts. I was sad to see the huts go, as they were good company. Somehow brick, red or otherwise, just isn't as friendly as wood. Oh, they were clever about it too: the brick buildings were built on the old squares so the men could still occupy the wooden huts while all the building was going on. The dust and noise was incredible but I didn't mind as much as the soldiers did. And then, when the buildings were finished, the soldiers moved in and the wooden huts were taken down, making the new squares. The old wood burnt merrily, feeding the flames of many a Volunteer or Manoeuvres camp fire. It so happens that "W" lines were not built over and the big square became the parade ground. "Fun and games used to happen there too, in later years, but that had nothing to do with sports, I can tell you. I'm told that the mere mention of "W" Square causes an intake of breath even among the "old sweats".

One of the remarkable buildings erected just beside me in 1890 was the Corps Theatre, paid for by subscription

within the ASC, built by self-help too. The officers used to hold grand balls there, inviting guests from other regiments in and around Aldershot who were highly envious, as they had nothing comparable themselves. I used to enjoy watching the brilliant uniforms of gentlemen escorting their ladies in their silks and furbelows from the carriages into the entrance of the theatre. I don't think I could repeat, however, what some of the cab drivers had to say about a few of them. Just as smart, but a bit more formal (and then only after a practice dance had been held) were the quadrille parties given by the Sergeants' Mess - dancing was kept up to a late hour, to the strains of the string band of the ASC. The Corporals' Mess were not to be denied, I should say, and some of their escapades had to be seen to be believed. Some of them were demonstrably not gentlemen ... but 'nuff said.

My shape changed somewhat in 1891. My slope was evidently not to be tolerated further and the bank was cut away either side of the pavilion, which was on the reverse side of the Corps Theatre, and this earth was added to the lower slope, quite a lot of work I remember, magnificently masterminded by Col Grattan and executed by SSM Rose and men of 18 Company, a good lot. At the end of the day I was longer than before, 206 yards by 129 yards, better than the other recreation grounds in the area. For the first time the cricketers were pleased with me and the first cricket match was played in June 1891, a memorable day, equalled only by the Centenary Match in 1991. To add the finishing touches to my appearance ornamental double railings were added to my southern and eastern extremities - in words of a later age, very snazzy. In fact (I would not wish to be too modest) I have been described by someone as "one of the prettiest and most compact little cricket grounds" he has ever had the pleasure to cast eyes upon. Little words of praise like that mean a lot to us recreation grounds.

In no time at all a big red brick Officers' Mess was built on the slope above me, to the east. Soldiers had to move a lot of earth from Thorn Hill to make the area suitable, and most of the thorn trees had to be cut down, more's the shame, as I looked on them as old friends.



On 30 January 1895, the new red brick Buller Officers' Mess held a dinner to celebrate its opening. Seventy-three years later it was knocked down as part of the Buller Barracks rebuild in the late 1960s.



The Officers' Mess, the Pavilion and the Corps Theatre alongside God's Acre

Not to be outdone, a Sergeants' Mess was built on the site of the old Commanding Officer's quarter at the corner of 'R' Lines and their opening ceremony took the form of a vocal; and instrumental concert, but I couldn't hear the words too clearly as the Mess was built a little further away from my domain, but I do suspect that some of the words were not written as the writer intended.

Lots of other buildings went up too, quarters for Officers, Warrant Officers and married soldiers. Married soldiers! That's a turn up for the books - they'll appreciate that after hiding behind blankets in the old wooden huts. I can't help thinking that soldiers are being spoilt too much by having official quarters, but who am I to opine? I merely observe. And record. Alongside me too is a new Canteen with a Recreation Room, and a clock - useful to know the time- and a bit further away are row upon row of red brick blocks for the soldiers' accommodation, with an upstairs, and coke fires in every room. This really is modern development such as would gladden the eye of anyone taking the Queen's shilling. There is even a new store room built by the Corps Theatre for straw palliasses.

Perhaps the buildings I like most are called 'The Tramlines', which are positioned between 'W' Square and me. The Service Companies ASC offices are there, so I see a lot of activity, parades, shouting and trumpet calls at different times of the day. I think the trumpets sound better than the bugles the young ASC lads used to play. Alongside The Tramlines is a Soda Pop Factory, at times the social centre of Stanhope Lines - soldiers queue up when they have a break to drink a bottle of pop. It's become so popular that bottles of ASC pop are transported all over the local area by the wagons - I'll bet there's good money in this new wheeze.

And finally, (what do you think of this?!) there are telephones installed, but only one in each company office - a lot of people don't like these new-fangled inventions, as there are complaints that they speed up life too much. I agree.

No sooner was I getting used to the new buildings than there was a buzz of excitement in the air. News flashes

around that almost all our ASC lads were ordered to South Africa in 1899. What a to-do there was as equipments were checked and horses prepared; and after some hectic parties, tearful farewells and three cheers, they all disappeared off to the Government sidings for journeying by train to Southampton. I was sorry to see them go, as life and soul went out of the place. Sadly, many a good man never trod my turf again.

Eventually the units returned, and pretty pleased with themselves they were too. I heard tales of adventure against the Boers, enough to swing any self-respecting lamp, and of success on the line of communications, in spite of General Kitchener. A new introduction since the war is the khaki uniform, not so smart as the blue and white; more noticeable, though, are lots of new wooden huts to take the extra men stationed in our lines. It is nice to see wooden huts back, but somehow they don't look as good as they used to, now that brick buildings abound.

I really don't know what's going on nowadays, everything is changing. It seems only the other day when the old Queen died and now some smelly, dirty steam traction engines have arrived from Chatham. No one seems to like them, at least not those of us used to horses. Unnatural, I call it, but I hear a few people saying these clanking monsters and the little motor cars that buzz around are the key to the future. Well, I don't mind that, as long as they don't come near me. I'm used to steam off sweaty soldiers, but steam off dirty coal is too much to bear. Fortunately the MT lines are over by the power station, where I hear the first Army workshop has been built. I used to think MT stood for Military Train, but now it means something else. How times change.

There was a pleasing introduction at about the same time as the MT came. A 'Corps Week' started, which had lots of activities on my turf, including athletics and push ball. Officers and their ladies perambulated and took tea - they needed their parasols, as it didn't half rain that first year! The rain kept the smell of the traction engines away, though. Several years later, in 1911, the Corps Tennis Championships were held on my grass in front of the Officers' Mess but I can't say I liked the white lines that were painted on my surface. Very unbecoming. I must admit, however, I liked these occasions, which were very jolly. They were at least nicer than the noisy aeroplane that flew over me, attracting a lot of unfair attention; apparently it was one of our sporty young lieutenants, who drew a good crowd when he landed on another sports ground nearby. He made Major General eventually, so I suppose these machines do have something about them. And I hear tell the King and Queen inspected the MT of the ASC on Laffan's Plain in 1912, but I'm glad they didn't do it here. All sorts of things happen on Laffan's Plain which I wouldn't tolerate on me. I believe Gen Buller would have agreed - it was an honour not to be sneezed at to be named Buller Sports Ground, after all.

