

CYPRUS 13

Cyprus 13, a Friends of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry Study Day, took place on Saturday 22nd June 2013 at Edward Brooks Barracks, Abingdon. The aims of the study day were to:

1. To set regimental operations in the Cyprus Emergency between 1956 and 1959 in the wider military and political context, and
2. To gather material on the experiences of the members of the Regiment who took part in these operations for the Regimental Archive.

The Study Day commenced at 1000 with a full programme of presentations. An introduction was given by Lt Col Ingram Murray with the opening of proceedings given by General Sir Robert Pascoe. Nick Van der Bijl presented an overview of British operations in the Emergency, Lt Col George Elliott the Regimental perspective, and Roy Bailey the 'Boots on the Ground' viewpoint of the ordinary soldier.

General Sir Robert Pascoe, who needed no introduction, opened the proceedings and asked for a show of hands from all those who served in the Regiment at that time, of which the majority attending had. A number of well-remembered personalities were recalled such as Tony Read, Mark Pennell, Tod Sweeney, Charlie Mason and David Wood. Also mentioned were RSM Gilding and Bud Abbot, who was regarded as the 'best shot' in the Battalion. The Battalion in 1956 was just over seven hundred strong; most of whom were National Servicemen. On arrival in Cyprus the battalion was 200 under strength because those units going to Hong Kong were intentionally undermanned. They had spent the previous three years in Germany, returning to Warley Barracks, Brentwood in July 1956. By 4th August all but 47 members of the Battalion had reported back to barracks. The Press paid particular interest to the Battalion being recalled and the Press at that time believed a young press officer, namely Robert Pascoe, had some involvement in an 'army cover plan' to throw the press off the scent to the events in the Suez Canal Zone. Nevertheless the Battalion entrained for Southampton on 10th August, setting sail on HMT Dilwara – 'they had no training, preparation or thought given to fighting EOKA'. British forces were committed with very little intelligence. On arrival in Cyprus they would discover the practical problems involved in COIN operations and discover some new attire for patrols as well as types of transport.

Nick van der Bijl's presentation concerned the overall military operation in the Cyprus emergency. By 1956, 40,000 British troops were stationed on Cyprus, involved into what had turned into a full scale emergency. Nick, an author of several military books including *The Cyprus Emergency: The Divided Island 1955 – 1974*, had served in the Intelligence Corps for 20 years and seen active service in Northern Ireland and with 3rd Commando Brigade in the Falklands War. He retired from the Regular Army in 1989.

Van der Bijl gave a brief history of Cyprus; it being the third largest island in the Mediterranean situated east of Greece and south of Turkey. The island is an outpost of three continents - Europe, Asia and Africa. From the 1570s, as part of the Ottoman Empire, the Greek Orthodox archbishops were treated as ethnarchs, or heads, of the island's Christian population, which made them key figures in Cypriot politics. In 1878 Cyprus was ceded to Britain by the Ottomans and was annexed during World War I, becoming a British Colony in 1921. The island was of particular strategic importance as a base in the Levant after the British withdrawal from Egypt on 1954, although Van der Bijl suggested that previously the Navy had doubted Cyprus' importance. Post 2nd World War, Archbishop Makarios and his followers sought Enosis, political union of Cyprus with Greece. Extremists formed the terrorist organization EOKA (The National Union of Cypriot Combatants), between 1954 and 1955. Colonel Grivas, who had been a Greek Army officer during the Second World War, led EOKA in a terror campaign in late 1955.

Nick van der Bijl opened his presentation with descriptions of the two major protagonists in the call for Enosis and the resulting Cyprus Emergency of the 1950's - Archbishop Makarios and General (most referred to him as Colonel) George Grivas. Whilst the demand for Enosis had emerged in the 1930s it was after the Second World War that it emerged with a new force and was led by Archbishop Makarios. These demands escalated into a terrorist campaign against the colonial power organised by EOKA (Ethniki Organosis Kypriou Agoniston). Its leader was Colonel George Grivas. One portent of impending troubles was the discovery of an arms smuggling operation in January 1955. The Royal Navy and police were successful in intercepting and capturing arms and ammunition.

Van der Bijl discussed EOKA's general plan and methods of operation. Their general plan was to arouse international public opinion and sympathy for their cause as well as harrying the British. Grivas organised resistance using subversion, sabotage and armed conflict with the aim of re-allocating political power within the country; he used guerrilla tactics, operations alluding to the Greek folk hero Digenes Akritas and assumed the pseudonym Digenis. The operational methods included EOKA communications being carried out by mail or more particularly using Cypriot women and girls as couriers. Students and school children were exploited and Greek Cypriots who were not 'loyal to the cause' suffered intimidation. EOKA also targeted service families. The monasteries supported EOKA, and EOKA

intelligence sources were amongst the local employees of the Colonial offices, police and armed forces. The Greek Embassy was found to be complicit in smuggling operations and EOKA's use of the Greek diplomatic bag was well known, although not necessarily substantiated. EOKA began their bombing campaign on 1st April 1955.

Field Marshal Sir John Harding became Governor of Cyprus in October 1955 and declared the emergency on 26th November 1955. He instituted a number of unprecedented measures which declared military primacy and outlawed EOKA; unlawful assemblies were banned; collective fines on villages were instituted; use of the Greek flag was banned as was the wearing of para-military uniforms. Harding was also the victim of a bomb plot with a servant planting a bomb in his bedroom at Government House.

Van der Bijl also stressed the importance of intelligence which Grivas had recognised from his military training, stating in his memoirs, 'No fight can be carried without intelligence' (*Memoirs of General Grivas 1964*). The British forces had been committed with very little intelligence. Nick detailed the British agencies and intelligence sources, one of the most significant institutions, at least to the majority present, being Milpol, the joint military and police headquarters in Limassol. British security and intelligence operations were introduced. Patrols were carried out by foot, bicycle and vehicle, and plimsoll patrols were later instituted in Limassol for swiftness and stealth. 'Whirlwind' patrols were swift and bold, 'short and sharp' aiming to surprise and alert the general public to the presence of the security forces. Arrests and interrogation became the order of the day and anti-smuggling operations, which included travel control of harbours, ports and airports, were instituted. Mules were used as a form of transport and were particularly useful in the rocky terrain and on rural area operations. Also, for the first time on active service, light helicopters were used. MI5 was also operational in Cyprus and MI6 in Greece and elsewhere. The police presence was increased but recruits were predominantly Turkish, although as the Emergency progressed British police and SB were recruited from the UK.

Early in 1956 Archbishop Makarios was arrested and exiled to the Seychelles. EOKA stepped up their campaign as Lionel Savery arrived in Cyprus as district intelligence officer in the Pano Platres area of the Troodos mountains, and a period of attrition against EOKA by British Army units followed. Savery managed to infiltrate EOKA and he and his team became the hunters rather than the hunted and, wherever possible, they patrolled at night. This in turn led to the capture or elimination of leading hard-core terrorists and the recovery of substantial quantities of arms and ammunition. During 1957, apart from maintaining intimidation, propaganda and occasional pipe-bomb or assassination operations, EOKA was lying low and recouping its losses in personnel and arms. Lionel Savery was severely wounded in 1957 whilst leading a patrol and later awarded the MC for his courage and resolution in the face of the knowledge that he was a prime target for assassination. The end of the Suez crisis resulted in the departure of many of the military from the Island, but it did not reduce the numbers on active internal security operations quite as much as had been expected. The Governor, Sir John Harding, was replaced by Sir Hugh Foot. By 1958 EOKA had re-armed and re-organized and the mountain groups carried out occasional ambushes and assassinations. Most EOKA activity however was by the Village Groups, who were engaged in re-establishing their hold over the Greek population by a campaign of intimidation, and carrying out sabotage of Government property. In 1960 Cyprus was declared a republic; however factional in-fighting between the Turkish and Greek communities led to UN intervention.

The cost the Emergency was highlighted with 353 military fatalities of which 105 were killed in action, 248 were non battle. 185 police were also killed in action and 238 civilians killed, of which 203 were Greek-Cypriots.

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After a break for coffee, Lt Col George Elliott gave his presentation concerning operations by the Regiment in Cyprus during the Emergency. He assured all present that Cyprus, believed to be an idyllic island, was found to be the opposite in 1956. On arrival, the accommodation at Strovolos was dreadful and once in Oxford Camp they lived, breathed, ate, drank and wallowed in the dust. Conditions were either hot and dusty or cold and muddy. The Battalion arrived unprepared in the middle of the Emergency and totally undermanned, being 200 men under establishment. Initiative and self help were imperative and were used with training given 'on the job'. Weapon safety was paramount especially when out on patrol for 15 hours at a stretch. In December 1955 there was an accidental discharge of a weapon. To remedy the situation a small booklet *Instructions to Individuals for Opening Fire in Cyprus* was issued to British servicemen.

George explained how Grivas, the leader of EOKA (also known as 'Digenis'), had a £10,000 bounty on his head. He terrorized the local population to ensure they would hide EOKA terrorists, feed them and inform. Whereas Makarios recognised a need for conflict he was not an extremist and preferred to negotiate rather than to threaten. He was aware of the danger of terrorist action going out of control and his own life being in danger thereafter. Grivas initially used safe houses and hides in Nicosia; before very long he had many safe houses island wide, especially in the Troodos Mountains and in particular a number in and around Kykko Monastery. EOKA carried out a brutal campaign and threatened death to traitors to their campaign with mountain groups specialising in ambushes, bombing, surveillance,

printing and distribution of pamphlets, etc. Many Greek Cypriots were killed by EOKA, who carried out a 'Death to Traitors' campaign. EOKA also caused the total disruption of Greek education in schools with the use of propaganda; children acting as couriers/look outs and supporting demonstrations.

Meanwhile the Battalion was on standing orders with camps wired and patrolled. All ranks were armed and escorted on patrol and every vehicle had an escort. At night two vehicles were used on all roads but in daylight a single vehicle could be used on main roads. When off duty, officers were allowed off base in pairs, wearing plain clothes and armed. The men were allowed off-base in fours, two of whom were armed, although some areas were out of bounds.

George identified the vulnerable points with the numbers of men required, such as camp guard of 2 NCOs and 16 men (Orderly Officer visited outside guards nightly with an escort). In Nicosia, the duty Battalion had to provide 147 men daily with rationing and transport. Police stations with an armoury were vulnerable and required a guard, as was Nicosia Central Prison which required a presence of 2 officers, 2 sergeants, 4 corporals and 30 men plus. George recalled rioting at the prison which caused the Mortar Platoon to be called out at the double with fixed bayonets. A terrorist due to be hanged was kept in an inner cell and was the key responsibility of an officer. When the hanging of the terrorist took place an officer was required to witness the carrying out of the sentence; however his name would be withheld. HQ and the 'Mason Dixon Line' with its 6ft high barrier between Greek and Turkish sectors had five access points. These points were classed as vulnerable points as was the Detention Camp Kokkini Trimthia (Camp K). On the 13th September all companies were deployed with a cordon and search operation for six detainees who had escaped. Other VPs were: Cyprus Broadcasting Station - Judges Lodges – Government Secretariat – HQ Cyprus District.

The policy for internal security procedures was 'Firmness with courtesy'. Unit sectors and road blocks were instituted. Road blocks were difficult in Nicosia with so many people around in vehicles, or cyclists and pedestrians - all of which were to be checked. It was necessary to use 'whirlwind patrols'. Twenty-four-hour road blocks were regarded as a waste of time and eight or nine men were required, i.e. two on every task and one observer. However short-term road blocks achieved a presence and could be switched anywhere. Curfews were instituted although their use did not help to win 'hearts and minds'. They were not popular with the Greek Cypriots as work stopped, which meant no pay. Another very unpopular act was the removal of the Greek flag which they had flying on every government building, schools and in many villages. The flying of the Greek flag was considered to be an intolerable affront to the Crown and had to be removed. Security forces on patrol were required to remove the Greek flags when flying, an operation highly dangerous and vulnerable to a sniper ambush.

George's first operation was in the Kyrenia Hills in October 1956 – a 48 hour cordon and search operation where they successfully detained nine suspects for questioning and recovered an amount of ammunition. They had searched ditches, waste land, stone walls and empty dwellings including cattle/goat sheds for bombs and arms caches. Also, road blocks and a night ambush. The night sky in the Med is comparatively light and provides valuable night vision; observation and movement is made easier than in the northern hemisphere or in the Jungle.

Lt Col Tony Read, CO 1 Oxf Bucks commanded three operations in Nicosia:

1. HQ and C Coys 1 Oxf Bucks, 2 Coys 1 South Staffords
2. B, C and D Coys 1 Oxf Bucks, 1 Coy 1KOYLI,
1 Coy 1 South Staffords, 2 Tps The Blues (armoured cars)
3. HQ, C and Sp Coys 1 Oxf Bucks, 2 Coys 1 Somerset LI

Two points of note: Battalion commitments were heavy and so a complete battalion was never available for ops. Command and control including recce/briefings were difficult for commanders in mixed unit operations.

However in November 1956 the British received a wake-up call with 33 fatal casualties in the first 3 weeks across the island; 15 were servicemen; 6 killed by road mines; 1 by an ambush in Troodos; 5 by bombs placed in married quarters; 3 by other means. This was the highest total in the four year emergency. The death sentence became mandatory thereafter and extended to the making of bombs. Unfortunately this had the resultant effect of making searches more difficult.

The Battalion moved to Limassol, based in Buckingham Camp at Polemidhia, with one company as standby battalion for the town. This standby company was stationed at MilPol on the edge of the town. December was a successful month for the Battalion with 42 terrorists arrested on 11th December. On 23rd December a Sycamore helicopter was used to cordon a mountain village. This was the first use of a helicopter in the Emergency and they were particularly good for dropping observers into ordinarily inaccessible areas to gain surprise. Regrettably there were snags: the pilot would quite often just say, "Sorry, due to the downdraught, we cannot land as planned; it is necessary to divert". It meant close liaison with the pilots for an alternative LZ which was not miles away from the objective. The RAF did not always appreciate ground, time and distance in respect of the Infantry! The operation area was 450 square miles of mixed ground - sea shore, rural rugged foothills, village and urban. Operations were usually carried out at night or at dawn: snatch operations, cordon and search of villages and ambushes based on Special Branch intelligence.

The use of helicopters provided flexibility, observation and surprise. Urban searches were usually aimed at catching EOKA leaders in safe houses, uncovering hides and finding arms caches. Ship searches were to prevent smuggled arms and ammunition entering the island.

Night operations cordon and search of villages were difficult using road transport. In the hills the approach convoy could be seen (side lights) and heard from miles away; the village dogs barked at the slightest noise so that the initial outer cordon patrolled in unless the helicopters from RAF Akrotiri dropped the outer cordon at dawn.

1957 dawned with the capture of £5,000 terrorist Haralambous Andronikou on New Year's Day; just over a month later the Regiment took over at Milpol where the Standby Company was located. Later a Town Company was also based at the KEO factory in Limassol when communal riots Greek v Turk were at their height.

Meanwhile with the use of dawn cordons, house curfews, screening of males, house and rural searches, and the use of police dogs brought results. The villages of Ypsonas and Ayia Phylia revealed a significant hoard of weapons and the destruction of the bomb store. British intelligence increased but informers were essential to achieve success. Released terrorists were unlikely to carry out further attacks as they were mistrusted by Grivas. Police co-operation was close and successful but unreliable in respect of loyalty to whom which was not surprising in the emergency.

1957 also saw an increase in intimidation and attacks by EOKA but the introduction of Q Patrols using bicycles and donkeys countered this. The Battalion had to provide guards for the working Mineral Mines (Asgata) and to escort (usually two riflemen) the miners (parties of four) when down the tunnels to ensure that the explosive Semtex was all used correctly. It could be dangerous as flame torches were used for lighting below ground in close proximity to the Semtex. However the relationship between the riflemen and the miners was excellent; not surprising as the miners had safe jobs so long as nothing went wrong! The guard was comparatively small, isolated and vulnerable but never attacked.

The guarding of the Kassoussa pipeline was a very important commitment as it safeguarded the water supply to Limassol and Episcopi. It was over 20 miles in length and followed the valleys. The pipeline was not easy to guard/ambush without being seen by local villagers/shepherds. The approach march for a night ambush and OP positions were therefore selected carefully. The pipeline was blown quite a number of times but repair was a priority. A truce was held by EOKA on 14th March 1957 (although this did not last long) with Makarios being released from the Seychelles on 28th March.

In April 1957, the Intelligence Section carried out urban night patrols in disguise and country patrols dressed as Cypriots using donkey/mule transport. Police interpreters accompanied them and remained in radio communication using a 19 set. In May EOKA began the painting of seditious slogans in towns and villages.

In August, the police attempted a silent snatch on information provided by a deaf and dumb informer. Police, without military involvement, surrounded the house in Limassol which resulted in some rifle and automatic fire. Whilst no casualties were incurred the wanted man escaped. The lesson learnt by the police authorities was that a combined Police/Military operation would have been more likely to have been successful 'A' Coy's 'house search' in Limassol was very successful with the wanted man being arrested. The Police Mobile Reserve were tough and in the area Yerasa – Paoldhia were very successful in exposing a terrorist group and their hides. Observation and listening room by room as the search progressed brought success. The year ended with the arrival of the new Governor Sir Hugh Foot in December. The Regiment provided his MA - Major Dennis Fox, and his ADC - Captain Seymour Thistlewaite. They were useful agents!

On 1st April 1958 the Regiment transferred from the Light Infantry Brigade to the Green Jackets Brigade and were re-titled the 1st Green Jackets (43rd and 52nd). The news was received with mixed emotions. The situation deteriorated in April and the town was placed out of bounds. The Battalion was permanently on standby to quell riots. Restrictions on the carrying of arms, and escorting of vehicles were reintroduced.

For seven weeks, starting on the 15th May, 1958, the Battalion took part in Operation Kingfisher together with 40 Commando and the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, against a terrorist group in the Southern foothills of the Troodos mountain range six miles to the north of Limassol. Initially Col Andy Martin was in command but Brigadier Tony Read of the Regiment, now commanding a Brigade in Nicosia, took over when the op was upgraded. Intelligence received suggested a number of terrorists were hiding in the foothills, including possibly Grivas himself. Two small Greek villages, Phasula and Mathikoloni, were suspected of either harbouring the terrorists or providing food to a concealed man-hide somewhere in the area, and were cordoned off. Units faced each other and although a wide cordon rifle fire aimed in the centre was dangerous, so too was movement of any kind within the cordon. The trapped terrorists started a bush fire in order to escape which they did most cleverly. Throughout the operation great use was made of tracker dogs and helicopters were used to drop 'A' Coy into position and observe at the start. The Operation lasted approximately seven weeks but was not regarded as successful despite the priority given.

In July, the future of the Island for both Greek and Turk was in the balance with leadership differences and also between Greece and Turkey. There were diplomatic efforts to settle the situation but the British Army sought to strike

a lethal blow at EOKA by a total arrest of its known members. An island-wide curfew and a standstill order for Limassol was introduced. 352 were arrested in Limassol and its district in forty eight hours, and the school with the Union Jack flying became the detention camp. 'Operation Matchbox' appears to have had a desired effect and the town became quieter during August and September. There was less arson, and guards were slowly withdrawn, although a Greek church in the Turkish quarter proved to be an endless sore. Grivas declared a truce in September but this ended abruptly on 1st October. However the implementation of a peace plan went ahead with the appointment of Turkish political representatives. The Turks opposed self-determination because of Greek Cypriot dominance. Self-government was only acceptable on the basis of equality. Despite the implementation of the peace plan, personal attacks were frequent and a British married woman was murdered in Famagusta. This in turn caused patrols to be increased yet again.

EOKA propaganda was widespread with allegations of British soldiers' indiscipline; however the Regiment's reputation remained high across the island. For the Regiment, 1958 ended well with the shooting of one terrorist and the capture of a further three! The battalion received no fatal casualties from terrorist action throughout the 3 year tour – a commendable record.

In 1959 the Battalion received the news that it would return to the UK in May. In January 'A' Coy was deployed at Larnaca guarding the detainee camp; 'B' Coy was dispersed as area guards; 'C' Coy were on standby for town duties and 'S' Coy were on standby for wider areas. By March relations with both Greek and Turkish Cypriots were good. All the companies returned to Buckingham Camp. Training resumed with plenty of time for sport and courses. A farewell parade was held before setting sail on HM Troopship *Dunera* for home shores.

Lessons learned:

The high standard of training, expectation on operations was set by three Commanding Officers, all outstanding: Lt Cols Peter Young (Germany BAOR), Tony Read and Andy Martin. Result - no deaths from terrorist action. Very commendable.

Company Commanders WW2 – they were experienced, unorthodox with standards – some of their own! Officers Mess was full of characters including NS which established a memorable atmosphere. Officers were of high grade and Serjeants too. The esprit de corps of rank and file could not have been better.

Police/military co-operation. A combined Police/Sp Coy operation – an arrest of 42 suspects within 10 days of arrival in Limassol was an ideal start made in heaven! Although the police were unreliable and not always committed to fighting EOKA cooperation was good.

National Service brought difficulties with training and turnover but also provided a balance to the platoon - greater depth and non-military skills available (plumber, electrician, farm-hand [poacher]).

An initial 'baptism of fire' of one EOKA incident of a serious nature was necessary and sufficient for platoon Commanders/NCOs/Rfn to 'stand steady' thereafter.

Orders on operations – place trust in members of the team - individual/section/platoon.

Basics: To avoid a sniper - never stand still

Movement – always be positive, purposeful and varied. Turn when moving [all round observation called 'Ballooning'] when on patrol.

Observation – look and be seen to be alert.

Urban operations to avoid casualties;

a. Flood the area with riflemen.

b. Complete the task – asp, quick and sharp ie Snatch operation.

c. 'Bug out' together which requires discipline and careful briefing.

d. Be single minded on ops and avoid diversions ie NAAFI break which only achieves loss of momentum and purpose.

The basic lessons above were used in Northern Ireland in the 1970s to good effect.

Lunch

Roy Bailey gave his 'Boots on the Ground' presentation, giving the young serviceman's perspective of the Cyprus tour. He began his presentation acknowledging the contributions of Brian Hill, Michael Bawtree and the late Brian Mansell. Many of the photographs Roy used in his presentation had been on display as well as others which he very kindly gave copies of to SOFO.

Roy re-affirmed the point made by Bob Pascoe and George Elliott – the Battalion weren't expecting to go to Cyprus - but for the intervention of Col Nasser they should have been in Hong Kong! The men were called back off leave and after the rush of preparation entrained for Southampton on 10th August – setting sail on board the infamous HMT *Dilwara*. Roy detailed an excerpt of a postcard he had written to his parents which must have brought quite a few memories back to those present of who and what they wrote home:

'The ship is practically new and is spotlessly clean and bright. We are a bit overcrowded on the troop decks but the dining halls are terrific and the food good'

Roy gave a brief description of the voyage out to Cyprus, arriving in Limassol on 20 August 1956. They were taken straight to Nicosia and housed in two schools at Strovolos, just south-west of Nicosia. Conditions were very cramped and overcrowded with some men having to sleep on the veranda of the school. This was no doubt un-nerving for those on the veranda as they were close to the public road and in a terrorist war zone. The weather was very hot and sunny and one of the first tasks they carried out, building a camp, was very hot work. They were permitted to dress appropriately for the heat; blue PT shorts, boots with socks rolled down, and a beret. Shirts were ordered as the late morning sun grew strong and anyone disobeying these orders and suffering sunburn or heatstroke was liable to be put on a charge for rendering themselves unfit for duty. Copious amounts of cold Coca-Cola were drunk and they were issued with salt tablets.

The men carried out guard duties at police stations and various other sites around Nicosia including the Central Prison. On one occasion it was 'A' Company's turn when an EOKA terrorist was due to be hanged, and those on duty were forbidden to leave their posts – even to answer calls of nature.

Towards the end of the year the Battalion moved down to Limassol to a camp a few miles north of the town at Polemidhia. They took over from the Royal Norfolk Regiment; there had been a lot of terrorist activity in the area with a number of their soldiers killed. However the Limassol area suddenly went very quiet, it was rumoured that the locals mistook the Oxford & Bucks for Royal Marine Commandos, due to their wearing green berets. The official record states that there was a truce at the time.

'A' Company acted as stand-by company for Limassol and lived in Milpol. They were housed in tents in the grounds at the rear of the House, but unfortunately some of the tents had been pitched in what appeared to be a dried-up wadi. It was now winter in Cyprus and it rained so heavily that Roy watched the water run in on one side of his tent, under the duckboards and out the other.

The house itself was quite an elegant building, containing offices and accommodation for the duty officer. There was a guard room on one side which was sandbagged on one side. There were also some corrugated iron huts in the grounds, one of which was the NAAAFI, also known as the 'Rock and Roll Club'. The main camp was approximately four miles from the town centre, Milpol was approximately 1½ miles from the centre. The role of the Stand-by platoon was to be in Limassol within 15 minutes from when the alarm sounded.

The main camp at Polemidhia, named Buckingham Camp, had wonderful views over the town and out to sea and was more comfortable than Milpol. It was further up the road towards the mountains, surrounded by carob trees and on rocky ground, so there were no flooding problems. There were a number of buildings such as the NAAAFI, the dining hall and the headquarters building, but the majority lived in tents, apparently in a reasonable degree of comfort. They shared the square, which was used for parades and also such sports as hockey, with the Royal Engineers. Roy recalled how they made the tents as comfortable as possible with paving slab floors and walls of sandbags; each tent acquired a 'chattie' - an earthenware container with a narrow neck. When filled with water and stood in full sunlight the water evaporating through the porous wall cooled the water delightfully.

Roy's memories of Cyprus centre around operations, stints at Milpol and guards (mostly police stations staffed by Turkish policemen). Commanding Officer, Colonel Tony Read, later wrote:

These were popular guards with the soldiers. A corporal, lance-corporal and three or four men would retire to a country police station for a week. We bought them Primus stoves, gave them compo rations, which they augmented themselves by buying eggs and local fruit and vegetables, and let them get on with it. These guards were a considerable strain of the nerves of the Commanding Officer. Our junior non-commissioned officers were very young and inexperienced, and their strength and weakness were quickly exposed.

The 'On the Ground' view of these guards were they were left largely to their own devices, with frequent visits from HQ with rations and post, and a check that they were on the ball. Under such circumstances they had to maintain full military alertness at all times, which wasn't always done. The village of Pissouri was about 20 miles from Limassol

way out towards Paphos, right on top of a hill, with a splendid view of the road in the valley below. Anything approaching was about half an hour away so, with the exception of the sentry on duty, they tended to 'slob round', unwashed, unshaven and undressed until a military vehicle was spotted travelling towards them. The men then rushed around making themselves look smart and soldierly!

Roy recalled some other guards, such as Mallia, Lania, Moutayiaka and Ayia Nicola, which brought back many memories and demonstrated the pranks of young servicemen in the field. One guard duty was at the ammunition store containing weapons and explosives at Moutayiaka, east of Limassol near the coast. This had a watch tower constructed of scaffolding, and on the basis that the Devil makes work for idle hands, one of Roy's bored detachment blocked up the bottom of one of the 45-degree tubes, climbed up and dropped a lighted thunderflash down it, and placed his brown enamel mug over the end. This ad hoc mortar sent the mug a gratifying distance, but when recovered the base of it was completely domed and unusable.

One memorable guard duty for Roy and his colleagues was that at Asgata copper mines, where they had to go down with the miners to check that they used up all the explosives. The duties involved issuing the explosives required to the miners, accompanying them down into the mine on each shift to watch them prepare the charges, make sure they didn't spirit any away for EOKA, and that there were none left over after blasting. This was one of the 'A' Company guards visited by the Colonel of the Regiment, Major-General Sir John Winterton, in April 1957.

Off duty pranks were occasionally just as explosive when someone decided that the latrine was too smelly, so in the absence of modern air-fresheners, a quantity of petrol was poured into the hole and a lighted match thrown in. The resulting explosion redecorated the inside of the building and did nothing to eliminate the smell! Roy stressed in both of those incidents he was not the instigator, but merely casually involved and did nothing to stop them.

Other duties were ship searches in Limassol port. There were also road blocks and escorting children of the married families on school buses. One member of 'A' company, a quiet little man called Brooks, was awarded the Commander-in-Chief's Commendation for spotting a bomb attached to the front door of a service family's house whilst he was on bus escort. There were also several instances of bombs being thrown at vehicles.

No.1 Platoon Commander Michael Bawtree proved himself a bit of an impresario; he not only wrote catchy little 'ditties' but in December 1957 wrote and produced an 'A' Company pantomime entitled *Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp (Pressure)* which starred the Company Commander, Major 'Tod' Sweeney MC, as *Kushi Ollie McKeefik*, 'an evil contractor of doubtful but half Scottish parentage'. Michael went on to be a successful writer and producer in Canada.

Roy explained that in the 1950s there was little or no social contact or familiarity between officers and other ranks and senior officers were looked on almost as gods, so to see their officers labelled with those descriptions and dressed in pantomime costume was a bit of an eye opener. Major Sweeney was an archetypal British Army officer of the period – tall, lean, serious, and with a large military moustache. But he was an excellent leader and very fair. Like their previous Company Commander, Major Denis Fox, he had been one of Major John Howard's platoon commanders on the D-Day glider operation.

Roy recalled Major Sweeney on an operation in the Lophos area in the first week of July 1957, during which he celebrated his 21st birthday. The company had acquired a small donkey – possibly two – to carry equipment up into the mountains, and Tod Sweeney had decided to ride on it – he was a lanky man astride this little animal with his feet almost touching the ground.

The CO, Lt Col Anthony Read, was another fine officer and very popular. He later became a knight and a full General. He was succeeded by Lt Col Andy Martin, who was another tall wiry man. Roy's platoon serjeant was Maurice Kempster, who was known almost universally as 'Doc'. He stern but with a great sense of humour which got the best out of his men. He finished up as a WO1, and rightly so.

These officers and senior NCOs were men worthy of respect. They had been there, done it, got the medals, and the soldiers were lucky to have them. They had a difficult time, because there were a number of National Servicemen who didn't want to be in the army and rebelled against the discipline. There was one of these in 'A' Company; he came from the back streets of High Wycombe and could neither read or write, but he was the most popular man in the Company – at least among the private soldiers. Others were even worse – Glover, the Regimental Police Serjeant, was regularly beaten up at night by some of these people. It is hardly surprising that Company Serjeant Major Horace Gater, (known as 'G') was heard to remark in plaintive voice, 'I can't do anything with them!' Horace was, however, a mild and gentle man; and how he became a warrant officer in the British Army remains a mystery.

Being a rifle company the men were not armed with anything exotic like mortars, just the rifle, Bren and Sten. As an NCO Roy was initially issued with this horrible and unreliable weapon, which would go off without warning if you weren't careful. They were dangerous little weapons, and later the NCOs were issued with Stirlings.

Roy described the uniform in more detail – he had mentioned PT shorts as working gear, and they sometimes used denim overalls on operations, but once the winter came they were almost exclusively in battledress for parades and operations. This was worn with blanched gaiters. Those who were on ops up in the Troodos Mountains in the coldest weather were equipped with snow suits and hats a bit different from the usual beret.

In summer, formal dress was Khaki Drill, or KD, with which the soldiers wore long dark green socks and puttees around the ankles. Even then there appeared to be a bit of mix and match, and on formal occasions they sometimes wore a battledress shirt with rolled-up sleeves and KD shorts. Apart from sports and off-duty in camp, when they wore plimsolls, footwear was the good old studded ammunition boot, which of course had to be kept highly polished with bulled toecaps.

Life was not all duties and there were opportunities for entertainment. Reveille in the summer was 5.30 and they would work until about noon, then they were off for the rest of the day unless on guard or a similar duty, so swimming parties at Akrotiri or Governor's Beach were popular. 'A' Company also had a skiffle group organised by John King and Dave Pope. Pope was a good musician, and in later years, as a duo called Des and Dave, had a Christmas no. 1 hit with a rather sweet little song.

They could go on leave at Kyrenia on the north coast swimming in the crystal clear waters of the harbour. Unfortunately the troops on leave were targeted by EOKA, and one beach party was blown up by a bomb. Two soldiers from the Royal Berkshire Regiment drowned there; apparently one of them was trying to save the other who had got into difficulties.

The Regiment was fortunate in that they lost only three men whilst in Cyprus and none by enemy action. Big Jock Neil, the band's bass drummer, was killed in a road accident when the Land Rover in which he was the escort overturned; Michael O'Carroll of 'C' was accidentally shot dead on guard; and Gerry French of 'A' Company, a big, genial, reliable man from Banbury, died of peritonitis. Roy was privileged to be one of the wreath-layers at Gerry's funeral.

The 371 British servicemen who were killed during the period of the Emergency were commemorated by the British Cyprus Memorial, which was unveiled in Kyrenia on Remembrance Sunday November 2009. Roy was honoured to be asked to lay the wreath on behalf of the Regiment. The inscription reads: **In memory of those members of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry who lost their lives while serving in Cyprus between 1956 and 1959. From the 43rd and 52nd Old Comrades.**

Roy spoke of the strong friendships made when in the army. One of the great spinoffs of Service life is the friendships one makes. Officers and sergeants had their messes so they got to know colleagues in other companies, but for the rest of the men the Company tended to be the village. He concluded that three years in the Army – half of them in an area where there was a frisson of danger – helped to make a man of him and many others.

* * *

Bob Pascoe summarised the strengths of the Battalion:

Blessed with good commanding officers in the battalion, they knew their job, they were relaxed in carrying out their duties and they let us younger ones get on with the job as long as we got it right. We were lucky we didn't actually suffer any terrorist casualties. Perhaps they didn't want to take the Battalion on directly. I say that seriously - EOKA was a fearsome organisation but they were more fierce against their own people than they were against the military. Because the military were too difficult - and we were part of that.

I have doubts about good military/police co-operation. The personal relationships were good but the police were hopeless. When we arrived, as you have heard from George earlier, they had problems with Greek Cypriots being throughout the police force. Not surprising; they could not be trusted because they were being leaned on if they weren't already supporting the cause. They were being leaned on or their families were being threatened by EOKA – 'You tell us what is going on or when there is going to be an operation or your family will suffer'. Perfectly understandable but for a police force dealing with a terrorist organisation it made life very difficult. You have also heard about the need to bring up the Turkish element of the police force but that alienated the Greek Cypriot population – so it was a very difficult situation. As for intelligence it was very, very poor indeed and that is why Field Marshal Harding used the military, crashing about with our big heavy black boots on to try and stimulate the terrorists in to doing things, exposing themselves to good military movement and ambush and reducing their numbers. And although we never won the war, if we hadn't been as effective as we became against EOKA it may not have been able to find the truce, the basis on which to negotiate some sort of settlement. That has been the same whether it has been Malaya, Kenya or Northern Ireland where we had to deal with the IRA. When I was the GOC in Northern Ireland I used to go around to the Battalion commander on his arrival and say, please don't think your Battalion is here for four months and you are going to win the war. That is not your job – your job is to keep your area as quiet as possible for four months and take all of your men home and gradually the IRA will realise they are never going to beat the British Army and the Ulster constabulary. They will never do it and until they realise that they will not wish to negotiate. We

also knew that the IRA were negotiating with MI6 contacts at high Government level. Even I, as GOC, did not know the detail of that but we knew it was going on because we were listening into their meetings and knew that Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness wanted a settlement. They knew they could not win militarily although they talked big they couldn't bring it off. The same was true to a lesser degree with Makarios and Grivas. You have heard of the possible dissent between the two - a slight difference of approach and that helped our cause. It helped eventually to bring about a truce but good was a bit qualified.

National Servicemen – well that was the flavour of the time. Everyone was called up at eighteen unless they had medical or another particular personal excuse so that you would get it delayed. Some got it deferred. Some were sent off to the mines and became Bevan boys. I think you are probably all glad you didn't have to do that. Our experienced company commanders - again I have mentioned the same thing – Tod Sweeney, David Wood, Dennis Fox and Gillespie Hill – remember him? We have heard a lot about 'A' Company but Gillespie Hill was in 'C' Company and he was quite something. He was nearly arrested one night for drawing his revolver in a cafe in Limassol – well into his meal and well into his drink and shooting the clock off the wall with his .38 revolver. He didn't go to jail but he got a terrible wiggling from Tony Reid.

Minor tactics – it was a junior NCO's and junior officers' operation. As you heard from Roy, small detachments going out on guards enjoying a certain amount of freedom and a terrific amount of responsibility on young NCOs. So that was good. Constant observation was very difficult when we went back later in the UN role; we weren't pro-active, we had to watch and report and one of the most difficult things for the officers and NCOs was to keep the riflemen awake. I don't mean literally but sometimes that was true. Keep them alert. If you go on duty and in two hours of a stag nothing happens anywhere around you the temptation to nod off is extreme and when you are doing that over a twenty-four hour period you know the strains on the young men. So constant observation watching for that parcel that wasn't here yesterday that might be a bomb today, watching when a telephone cable has been cut. All these sorts of things were terribly important to us. And then the conflict between operating in the country which we enjoyed and operating in the town which was much more difficult. The threat of a sniper from a window right above - short range and sure to hit his target. Luckily they didn't do it very often and had to be single minded – not sure what you meant by that George . . .

There is a handout which you can read and it is all to do with Demos Hadjimiltis. In Limassol, the search party was working going down the street. Demos was at a garage, realising that they were going down the street searching every house - and then a corporal/section commander said NAAFI break – tea's arrived. And Demos knew that god was on his side. All the searches stopped and they backed off for tea. So I just emphasis that if you are on a mission finish that mission before you get led astray.

Bob Pascoe continued with a personal story – I was married, twenty-three years old and officers were not supposed to be married until they were twenty-five. So my wife was in Cyprus unofficially as far as the army was concerned. It was called living in military sin. It was highly enjoyable – I remember and somehow she became pregnant and one day my house was about 100 yards north of Milpol and just off the road up to camp – and one day I was coming back from town in my Land Rover and I passed this British woman carrying two bags and, hey presto, it was my wife – and I said can I give you a lift? She said yes please – I didn't have car I couldn't afford a car. So I got into the back of the Land Rover put her in the front put the bags in the back and we drove up the road. When we got to Polemidhia crossroads, where the ring road came across the main road out of town - There was a military police check-point. We hardly ever saw military police but there they were this day and they pulled me over and said 'who is this lady in the front'? I said my wife – they said - is she in the army? I said no she is my wife – well sir it is not allowed – can I have your name, rank and all that stuff. I had to go up before Colonel Tony Reid and he said 'Bad luck Bob – fined £5 – give it to any charity you like'.....so I sent it to SAFA. That was the sort of wonderful man he was he didn't care about things like that.

Now I've have said enough and I would like now to help you to share any more experiences you have. I will try to control you up to a point but please feel free to speak about anything you want to bring up as a result of your own experiences in Cyprus

My Regiment - the Royal Ulster Rifles - had a rough time with the RMP in Cyprus– too many of them because of the security operation. In Northern Ireland there was always a certain amount of friction between the Army and the police – these were two forces doing the same job side by side on very different terms of service and very different rates of pay and the clash of them occurred in various places.

A funny tale from a former Rifleman – it was the winter of '57. It was very cold and I was on guard duty. I heard someone and I called out 'halt, stamata, dur' and he kept coming. I repeated and still kept coming – I fired and it was silent but I realised I had shot a donkey. Years later a social club in Summertown, the steward there was the same age as me – I asked him if he was in the army – he said 'yes 56 – 58' I told him I was there at the same time 56 – 58 Ox and Bucks – he said 'do you know what – some silly bastard shot a donkey'.

A story about Cyprus in 1974. A friend and I built a motorhome and we were going in it to Australia to patent it and put it on the market but through Turkey it became extremely cold – I've never seen weather like it. So we decided to go down to a place called Mercia down on to the beach. Whilst it was icy cold at the top when we got down on to the beach at 6:00pm in the evening there were people still on the beach – it was unbelievable. Some Turkish soldiers came up to the van within a few days and wanted to know what it was all about and of course we had Playboy on there and to an Islamic soldier it was something he wasn't allowed to take out so he came into the van to see it. They said they were with a tank regiment further up the beach – when I went up later to get some water they were A47s two squadrons of them fighting on the beach facing Kyrenia. So when the time came to go on the ferry, we said our goodbyes and got on the ferry and landed in Famagusta. When we landed where was everybody? There were very few customers – they had gone to Limassol to George Grivas' funeral. We parked up in Famagusta and again some Greek lads got interested in this motorhome and we befriended them. I eventually decided to take the van back to England and then settled in Famagusta. Bought a hotel and settled there and we went to celebrate the Greek Easter which is our Christmas and I am sat at our table with our party and the guy at the top is the father of one of the lads that befriended us. He said I know you, after a while he was staring at me, 'I know you, I've seen you before' he said. 'You were in Limassol'. I was in Limassol and I had one of those posters and his picture was on there. He was one of the gang certainly. 'You came to my house and you pulled my son out of the bed'. I remember I did pull a child out of a bed and looked under the bed but I didn't look at the child. George turned around to me and said 'all the bullets and grenades were strapped around my waist and down my leg but you didn't see those as I covered them with pyjamas'. He said 'you are the corporal who came in'. I said yes – here he got a 303 bullet. 'I promised that one day I would shoot that corporal' and he broke the head off the bullet and he gave it to me - I still have that today.

A member of the audience asked how many if any officers, NCOs or riflemen spoke a smattering of Greek let alone Turkish?

Bob Pascoe replied: Very few I remember. Charlie Simmons had a couple on his intelligence section – one particular corporal who was I think quite good despite having been Oxford educated Greek – he converted to the local dialect but very few. I can't think of a figure I just have no idea.

Was that a hindrance?

I suppose yes of course it was when you went on search and in to rural villages you couldn't ask a local person. I mean maybe one or two local people had some smattering of English, maybe a teacher would be probably as good but not always co-operative. So yes it was a hindrance, which is why we had to have interpreters attached to us and many of the Turkish Cypriot policemen could speak Greek. They had to as part of their job so that is where the Greek /army cooperation was of a practical nature.

I found 20 years later in Cyprus that if I dished up my classical Greek in modern pronunciation it was understood but it was rather like saying 'behold yonder galley instead of look at that ship'.

Another question: The intelligence section initially was very poor but they got better and better and they changed the MI5 and MI6 people and so on but do you believe it was actually well enough disseminated to people like yourself to enable operational action to be taken?

Bob Pascoe: No it wasn't. My experience of the intelligence was that we were very good at producing wonderful intelligence reports three weeks after the incident. And telling people what had happened as we were usually able to piece it together but in predicting what might happen we were hopeless. We never had any idea which is why a lot of effort was put in to Lionel Savery and his teams to get inside the organisation and they produced more practical results in human captures or kills than any other systems throughout the years of the campaign.

Ingram Murray also answered: I think I came in to contact with him because at one time I was asked in great secrecy to provide a villa on the Kyrenia coast with adequate protection for a counter gang/organisation and I set off with a group of sappers and we created a barbed wire fence around this villa with adequate height and depth to prevent it being cut very easily and out of grenade throwing range from the house because they didn't have RPT7s and in the house we wired it. (the electricians did that) and we provided an arms cache we provided XPM and picquets all welded together and more villainous crew you could not have imagined and with them were the women who had been caught as couriers – very often their girlfriends and it was run by a chap who it was explained to me was an SAS captain and his wife looked after the women and they were paid as policemen and they had a sentry on the door who was if not more villainous than the others. He had an enormous Luger pistol and inside instead of pin ups like the rest of us they had pictures of the chaps they had murdered and it was a pretty grim business. But they had been rumbled up in the Troodos somewhere and they had had to move out and I met one of the chaps, a policeman called Joe Mounsey who eventually became deputy chief Constable of Liverpool, a big league playing Liverpoolian and he was associated with this lot and they would do snatches – they would get one of these chaps in a car to make a rendezvous with a terrorist group who were all in cells around the place and they pretended to be a cell and Joe would lie in the back seat and when they got into conversation he would grab this 'pit post' by the scruff of his neck, pull him in to the

car and sit on him and cart him off to the interrogation centre into which no-one really wanted to go and actually had an equivocal reputation.

Bob Pascoe asked: Does anyone other than me know what they were called these men? We called them 'toads' but the policemen were called bluebirds on the radio network – but the term terrorist we called 'toad' which was indicative of how we thought of them but they were very useful.

And then we developed the idea which I think had come from Kenya with Mau Mau gangs and all that. We never start any of our operations with a clean sheet of paper we have always got our experience behind us but in 1955. That is only 10 years after World War Two and we hadn't had much of this counter guerrilla/counter terrorism experience and what had gone on in Malaya was totally different to what had gone on in Cyprus. So there was not much to read across of tactics or training or training facilities and with the rapid turnover of national Servicemen (two years) which meant six months training, six months preparing to pack your bag and chalking off the days on your chart – you only had about a year and a little bit more of actually being an effective soldier. So it was not a highly trained army that was sent in to deal with this very difficult situation.

Ingram Murray asked: Were people aware of the Kenya experience where turning terrorists was seen as tremendous?

Bob Pascoe answered: Well someone like me a mere lieutenant/captain had no knowledge of it at all. My first experience was meeting this man at this briefing in Milpol.

Ingram Murray asked: Had it been entirely different in Northern Ireland?

Bob Pascoe answered: We had become much more sophisticated by then and you had intercept, you had sophisticated radios communication – a totally different picture. We had so little information back in the 1950s. We have probably done information – there is now information overkill and the Commanders big problem now is not having enough information but having too much. There is so much information where is the important bit of it that leads me to make my decisions.

We talk about telephones – when I joined the battalion in Suez Canal Zone in early 1953, the Battalion had one telephone line to the outside world. That was in the Adjutant's office which meant when we were orderly officer we took our camp bed into the Adjutant's office and we slept like that in case the Battalion needed to be turned out. The only way of doing it was by Brigade Headquarters ringing that one number. Within the camp we had telephones but they were all detailing wire which we put up or someone would go and cut it or the Bren gun carrier drive over it by mistake or deliberately.

One of Fred's Payne's wonderful tricks which he used to do in Osnabruck when he was orderly officer – he would go to the guard room where there were several of these internal/field telephones and he would pick up one and ring it to the officers' mess and put that down and then pick up the other one and ring it to the sergeants mess and then pick up the two phones and put them side by side. So some officer would say 'hello Officers' Mess' and the other 'Sergeants' Mess here' and 'you called me' – 'no sir I didn't call you' – you called me sir' and 'I didn't call you....', and we all knew it was Fred Payne. He livened the place up.

Were you conscious of being spied upon by EOKA – did you catch people who were keeping you under surveillance?

I suppose we were aware that it was a possibility and undoubtedly must have been done by people who we never knew were doing it. You look out of your window and you go and ring your civilian telephone and you tell someone there is a military convoy of several trucks going west or east – that could go on. We were taught things like if you see a packet in the road don't drive over it every. Always go around it. I remember Peter Hayter give a driver a tremendous rocket 'don't every go over a box in the road – you don't know what is in it'.

When we went out on cordon and search we always went at 3am We tried to do things like that otherwise they were alerted that you were coming, which is why the advent of the helicopter and it was the Sycamore – it could take more than two or three, I think it could take four or five but not many more with only a rifle and a waist-belt. Four – three at the back and one beside the pilot and there weren't that many helicopters so you had to drive up the road by a 'three tonner' so they could see you coming up the hill and so on. In the town it was difficult because you couldn't move the 'three tonner' around the back street – so you went in on foot usually in the town. But we had to do both rural and urban.

Yes, one night I was sent up in to the Troodos and I was told as we were moving at night to take the half track and the half track's lock is appalling so by the time we got to the top of the Troodos everyone in Cyprus must have heard us coming as this wretched vehicle backed and filled around all of the corners. They are very noisy anyway half tracks and my lad sat in the back of the vehicle like this snug and I was in the stripped down, freezing the death in the front being the officer. Fortunately we were not ambushed but it was not a very enjoyable experience and in terms of security it was hopeless.

The terrorists had one thing in their favour – the village dog. They could smell us a mile away and would start barking and it didn't matter what you did those dogs were warning anyone in that village that we were coming. I never experienced one expedition where we didn't meet the sound of the dog a good mile away.

David Innes asked: Whilst you were there in 1958 George made a point you became Green Jackets – I wonder what your memory of that is, what it was like, what you did to mark it and in a way what you felt about it. It would have been a big change or not much of a change?

Well it was a huge change in official terms – I can tell you one or two things about that being under command of this wonderful Tony Reid. The first thing he did when he was told this thing was on the cards – everyone gets fussed about uniform and dress. We, remember were a line regiment with colours with our own peculiar forms of dress – officers wearing a double strap – not a double Sam Brown, it was a regimental belt – we never called it a double Sam Brown which was a contradiction in terms. Up to the First World War every officer wore double straps – you wore them as private soldiers in your time as webbing straps – officer used to have smart leather ones. You had a leather pistol holster and leather water bottle holder and so on. So Sam Brown lost an arm and so therefore said I can't use two straps – he threw one away and put the other one the other way and invested the Sam Brown belt. Every regiment in the British Army except two changed. The Oxford and Bucks was one and the Cameronian Rifles was the other, and we both kept that belt until they were disbanded and we were amalgamated with the Green Jackets. But Tony Reid said what are we going to do with our colours are we going to stay as a regiment with the Green jackets but being different or are we going to join them and didn't say 'and beat them' because that was understood. He set up a committee under 2IC who was a major, a captain (I can't remember who that was) a lieutenant, sergeant major, colour sergeant, corporal, lance corporal and private and that committee sat down and said, what do we want to do and they came up with a list of everything we wanted to do. Tony Reid took that list back to London to meet his opposite numbers in the other two battalions and the Colonel as commandant of the three Regiments and ours was General Jack Winterton, whose photograph we have seen, and they agreed every single thing we ask for except one and that was the cap badge. We said we wanted a plain bugle horn stringed and the War Office dress committee said no that bugle will go to the Light Infantry Brigade (it was slightly different to the Oxford and Bucks bugle horn but it was basically the same) and you will have to have a different badge. So we then went to a rather plain Maltese cross with no battle honours, a wreath, crown and bugle in the middle and that was the first Green Jackets Brigade badge. What did we feel about it? We felt it was a challenge, we felt it was good and to illustrate how unfazed the 43rd/52nd were by this dramatic change, the Rifle Brigade were in Malaya and they sent us a military signal:

From 1RB to 1Oxf Bucks Welcome stop to the new Green Jackets Brigade stop.

Our adjutant replied:

From 1Oxf Bucks to 1RB Thank you for your message of welcome stop nice to have you back stop.

Because the original Light Brigade under John Moore was the 43rd, 52nd and 95th and that is the way we approached it and I don't remember - you guys may have had a different feeling - but among the officers it was welcomed – god, someone in the MOD has got something right at last. It was that sort of attitude.

Did you have a parade in Cyprus?

Yes we did and the colours were laid up – we changed our brass buttons for black. The three Regiments all kept one thing to show where they had come from – the Oxford and Bucks kept the little gorget button on the officers and warrant officers uniform. The 60th kept the ball button and the Rifle Brigade had the seventh and that was how you knew which battalion you came from and that lasted until we became the Royal Green Jackets, when those differences were dismissed and we dropped out bracketed titles. I had a big argument with my MTO Jim Price who had been an RSM before and he said 1 RGJ is still old Oxford & Bucks and I said no Jim it isn't; it is a bit Oxford & Bucks, a bit of the 60th and a bit of the Rifles because our bosses, the Generals, knew that one day three Green Jacket battalions would be reduced to two. We had already been told that if that happened it would be the third battalion that went to the wall. You couldn't say that is the Rifle Brigade gone – none of us wanted that so we said that every battalion that remains will represent a bit of the former three regiments. That still went on and I think the Rifles are trying to do that now. You are not I am Devon & Dorset, or a Berkshire, Gloucester, Wiltshire the five battalions are trying – and it has been difficult because they have been so busy on operation but they are trying to represent all our Regiments because we are not going to have five battalions forever; they are bound to come down.

When I took command of 1RGJ they had just come back from a very successful Belfast tour under Colonel Roly Guy and I had a draft of about 120 men from the 3rd Green jackets which had been put in to suspended animation except one company, R Company under Christopher Dunkerley. About a year later they decided to resurrect that Battalion and Robin Eveleigh who was commanding the 3rd Bn wrote to me and said I want my 120 men back. I said fine – he said I want the same ones Bob. I said no trust me Robin you will not get the same men back but I am not going to unload all my crap on you and I then got the 120 men together and asked who wants to go back to Shoeburyness? Some had brought wives out with them who had jobs in Germany – they didn't want to go back to England, some had

got children into schools. Some who hadn't been in the 3rd Bn wanted to go back to England and so I sent back 120 men who wanted to go and join the 3rd Bn. Not all did - some had to be told sorry you've got to go because I've got no reason for keeping you rather than anybody else. But that was the way things went and it was a very difficult time to cancel a battalion and build it up again – Robin had to do that – we were still friends up until he died.

The colours weren't actually laid up for several years were they? They were in the Mess at Warminster and I'm not sure that one set didn't come out to Penang. They did come to Penang; they came on the Nevasa and we still had our colours until 1st January 1966 when they then went to Warminster Officers Mess – I don't know where they are these days. So you had the colours but you didn't carry them as it were? Well actually we did carry them even though we were 1st Green Jackets although not after we became Royal Green Jackets. They were never on Parade; they were on parade in 1960/61 for the freedom of High Wycombe together with the 4th Battalion colours I think. That was the other interesting thing you mention. There was 4th Oxford & Bucks as a TA battalion. They were asked what they wanted to do – stay as you are or join your regular battalion and become Riflemen and they again opted to join them and go into it wholeheartedly.

I was on Kingfisher – they started bringing the helicopters in and in those days someone had to be in charge of the smoke grenades to let them know which way to come in. They were on a small playing field of the school. I can't remember which RSM but he came across with box of grenades and left them with me he said 'If you see a helicopter come around and it looks as if it is going to come and land put one of these grenades there. A helicopter came around, I put one of these grenades out the helicopter came in and settled and pilot got out and came running across to me and it was not smoke it was tear gas and he wasn't very pleased etc.

It has been a fascinating day I hope you have enjoyed it. I have learnt some things that I didn't know went on about Sjts' Mess caterers. Thank you for taking part in it and I hope you all go home feeling even more pride in the fact that you belong to this great regiment.

Thanks to Ingram who had the idea of bullying us all in to taking part and coming and doing so much of the preparation and to our speakers George and Roy.

SOFO – Thanks to Google Groups about trying to find a regimental volunteer to support the Oxford & Bucks Research Team which is actually James Pearson supported by a few but we haven't really got much in the way of regimental support in there at all and if you know of anyone who might be interested in supporting that team it would be wonderful to hear about this because we do need some help as we get towards the end of this year when we take over the museum and we start fitting it out and we are very keen to get some regimental support in there. Please if you know of anybody or can pass the word we would love to hear from you.

Secondly, Robin Draper, who many of you know here, has very kindly agreed to speak about the Regiment in Oxfordshire. We don't have very much of this going on at the moment and as the new museum gets going the more we can talk about the regiment and the various feats of arms and they are legion aren't they which went on under that cap badge so much the better. Robin will talk to any historical group and any interest group that you know about. So if you have got access or you know of any group; that would benefit from Robin Draper talking about the Regiment please let us know as we would love to get the word spread further please.

James Pearson – I have been around most of you gentlemen today collecting your army numbers – now unfortunately the database which contains 120,000 names and numbers ends in 1947 when the National Service Act was introduced and the first intake came in March 1948. We have no numbers of soldiers from that date onwards – so even now we are getting enquiries for people whose father served. We can't put them on the database without a number - we can go through the regimental magazines and look at the names but we don't know who that particular person with that name is so I have taken your numbers as we can have you entered on the database for your children, grandchildren and great grandchildren but if you know any of your friends asks them to write in and send their name, number and the period that they served. After that we can fill in all of the blanks as long as we have numbers and names. We work alongside the Oxfordshire Yeomanry – their database is about 2,000; ours is 120,000. Their admin staff is at battalion strength (about 14 or 15) but unfortunately for the Oxford and Bucks there are about two of us working it. Anyone who wants to come in and see about volunteering we would be pleased to have you because there is plenty of work to do.

The closing comments and sentiments of the day came from a female member of the audience, 'Could I just say as a mere wife what a fascinating day this has been with everybody's anecdotes and everybody joining in and telling each other all the stories they had forgotten'.

General Bob responded that no wife is ever mere!