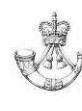


The Pomegranate

Issue Five: February / March 2013





Cover Image: Scenes from the Oates' Memorial parades in Helmand Province.

Commanding Officer's Foreword



The strange thing about operational tours is that the days have a habit of standing still whilst the weeks fly by. As I write this, the final edition of *The Pomegranate*, we only have three weeks left before we officially transfer authority to 2 SCOTS. Indeed, a fair proportion of Op HERRICK 17 PMAG have already left theatre and are either now at home or decompressing in the sunshine of Cyprus. There are obviously still a few of us here, but the numbers are dwindling daily. It is quite extraordinary how quickly time has gone and it seems only yesterday that we were taking over out here. Not all of us will be home in a couple of weeks though, as having deployed a little later than the main body, the Warthog Group will stay until May; you will of course, still be able to keep in touch with them via the Regimental Facebook page and the Welfare Office.

This edition of *The Pomegranate* covers both February and March in order to ensure that we incorporated the final weeks of each team; and of course to cover St Patrick's Day. St Patrick's Day really marked the last time that we would all be together and I can tell you that it was a magnificent affair. Somehow the RSM and RQMS managed to organise for shamrock to reach us here (and in perfect condition), so in each of our locations, RDG had their own small shamrock parade and an Oates' Memorial Service. Sadly there could be no Guinness based fun but it didn't seem to matter; the boys improvised their own entertainment with imagination and verve - I was particularly impressed with the frozen potato conkers and water balloon catch!

As we near the end, inevitably we start to reflect on our tour and the most apparent observation for us is that the pace of change here has been simply terrific. When we first arrived, our soldiers were mentoring Afghan patrolmen on check points and in the precincts; they were embedded at the lowest level, shoulder to shoulder with the Afghan Police. As we depart, we are only providing the lightest of mentoring touches at the highest level and very few of our soldiers are now deployed on the ground. This is because the Afghan National Police are increasingly independent, confident and competent. As combat soldiers, we want to be busy, to be pushing on, and it is anathema to us to not be in the lead, but that is what



mission success requires us to do here. The Afghans are doing more and they need us less; the time is absolutely right for us to come home. As we do, you can be extremely proud of what your soldiers have accomplished here: they have achieved mission success and they have done it with style.

We can now look forward to our homecoming and the next round of activity after Post Operational Tour Leave. For the RDG elements this will mean Adventure Training in May and June and a medal parade which will be held on 27 June at Clarence House in London for those 100 or so soldiers who have yet to be awarded an Op HERRICK medal. For everyone, and particularly the families, the concluding event of our post-tour activities will be Dettingen Day and the All Ranks Party, which will be held in Catterick on 29 June. More details of both events will follow through the Regimental chain and the Welfare Office.

You have shown us much kindness whilst we have been away; knowing that you were interested and following what we were doing has meant a lot to us all. I would therefore like to close by thanking you again for your support. Without you we would not have been so successful here; you are, and remain, our better halves.

Quis Separabit.

Lt Col Jamie Piggott
Commanding Officer

Editor's Welcome

Capt Bob Crean

And so it's here; the final issue of *The Pomegranate*, the traditional afghan fruit which has become something of an emblem for the Royal Dragoon Guards in Afghanistan; here representing an informal record not just of the Royal Dragoon Guards' Op HERRICK tour, but also that of their attached arms and the Police Mentoring and Advisory Group as a whole. As an attached arm myself, it has been a privilege serving with the RDG as the Education and Media Officer; editing *The Pomegranate* has given me a fantastic insight to the Regiment. Because of my various roles, I have been lucky enough to get out of the Headquarters more than most, but even I have only really gained a proper understanding of life in the various outposts through reading their articles in *The Pomegranate* over the last 6 months.



Although this is unsurprisingly the most 'slim-line' of *The Pomegranates*, the wonderful submissions have again led to another high quality product. In this issue, the writers not only look forward to our return, but reflect upon the successes we have had... and we have had many. The back of this issue also includes several plates of photographs taken during the tour and highlighting the various aspects which have defined our time on HERRICK 17. I have also taken the opportunity to credit all those who have contributed to the newsletter, as it is they who have made *The Pomegranate* what it is, but with so many of us now home, I am particularly indebted to those who have sent me their final submissions during their Post-tour Leave and apologise to their better halves for distracting them from all the household chores they really should have been catching up with.



Police Mentoring and Advisory Group (PMAG) Headquarters

Maj Rob Kace and Capt Charlie Arrowsmith

It really is remarkable just how quickly the six months of HERRICK 17 have passed by. Since the last *Pomegranate*, the Headquarters has seen the departure of some key characters (powerbrokers, as the CULADs would say...) and the face of the PMAG HQ has become noticeably more Scottish over the past few weeks. Lt Stu Bedford was first to head on, the right-hand 'law' man to Capt Tony 'Task Force' Freeman, who followed soon after. The HQ will miss their wealth of experience, but the joy of finally being able to go to the gym without 'Task Force' hogging all the weights didn't last long, with the new S7 Mentor (US Maj Frank Dennis) sweeping through the MOB like Hurricane Katrina. Our engineers, Capt Brad Southall and Capt Hugo 'Tokalosi' Engelbrecht have also handed over to their 2 SCOTS counterparts; and most recent to go was our Intelligence Officer, Lt Adam 'Old School' Jones, so if anyone's interested, there's now an opening on the MOB Chapel Jazz keyboard.

The emphasis of workload in the HQ has seen a noticeable change with all the H17 Police Advisory Teams now having lifted off from Precinct level mentoring. Whilst the number of meetings generated by the TFH Brigade HQ will never drop away, the more limited need for J3 coordination has made PMAG HQ comparatively stress free over the past couple of weeks. This lack of stress, persuaded Capt 'CFA' Arrowsmith to finally give up 'the grinders' (more traditionally known as smoking), following the lead of both the Commanding Officer and Ops Officer. Sadly for CFA, he did not find giving up the grinders as easy as Colonel Jamie or Capt 'Ten-Man' Tanner. Increasingly cantankerous, but with the CULADs and Tin-Temple on the receiving end of most of his frustrations, CFA's trials and tribulations kept the HQ amused... until in a moment of weakness he tucked into the Commanding Officer's Christmas Cake – a mistake that his shocked nervous system will likely never truly recover from. CFA later described the RSM's delight at intensifying his embarrassment, as the RSM described in gory detail how angry the Commanding Officer was about it, and how this little transgression may prove considerably more hazardous than merely smoking 40 Marlboro Reds a day.

The Commanding Officer's Rover Group remain in particularly high spirits, despite being currently stranded in Camp Bastion again – allegedly due to bad weather although they always seem to return with a smile and impressive sun tan. Their high spirits have always been contagious, and the PMAG HQ all enjoyed the evening of games laid-on to celebrate St Patrick's Day – particularly Major Todd's good humoured discomfort at being given yet another HUGE slab of Sri Lankan treble chocolate cake to eat as forfeit for losing in the Rover Group's game of Battleships. With our remaining time in theatre now counted down in days, it's safe to say that the HQ's morale is here to stay. Next stop a warm beer on a bankrupt beach in the Eastern Mediterranean, and then all back home in time to start the training year all over again!



A)



B)



C)



D)



Photo Captions:

A) The Chief of Staff and Cpl Murray cross the finish line of the MOB Lashkar Gah Half Marathon. B) Despite his earlier bravado, Cpl David Brooke crosses the finish line behind a girl. C) Having not learnt their lesson, Captain Bobby Crean and Lt 'Old School' Jones show off their medals for completing their second DANCON March. D) Major Todd tucks in to the 'forfeit' of a sixth slab of cake for losing in a game of home-made Battleships. E) Having not noticed the help the Rover Group were giving each other in Battleships, like a lamb to the slaughter, Capt Arrowsmith steps up.

E)



Lashkar Gah Training Centre (LTC)

Capt Steve Stewart

At the time of writing this, the final submission from the Lashkar Gah Training Centre, we only have a matter of weeks until the handover to The Royal Highland Fusiliers, 2nd Battalion, Royal Regiment of Scotland (aka 2 SCOTS) as they arrive to start Op HERRICK 18. This week saw the return of the Sqn Ldr, Major Kirkman, and Cpl Blackery, who clearly had a thoroughly enjoyable R&R and, unbelievably, they will only have to push 14 days until they're back on the aeroplane for the end of tour. With our return so close, many of us are tweaking our Hand Over-Take Over notes, the writing of which provides a great opportunity to look back on what we have achieved since our arrival in August last year. Most immediately apparent is the fact that the LTC itself has changed dramatically over this period, and definitely for the better, with an improved gym, classrooms and further buildings close to completion. These include facilities which will create one of the best training complexes in Afghanistan and allow the Ministry of Interior to produce highly trained policemen for years to come. The 'Afghan National Policeman' is the most important of LTC's outputs and thanks to the work of the centre; he already has a better understanding of the part he plays in the defence of his country against the insurgents.

As well as these successes, we have also learnt a lot during our time here in Afghanistan. Firstly, we have seen time and again that the Afghans are a proud people, who really do want the best for their country. Secondly, they are appreciative of the sacrifices made by ISAF troops throughout this long campaign and are both willing and able to ensure these have not been in vain.

Now back to a lighter note. This morning we passed another milestone in the tour with the celebration of St Patrick's Day. As with other locations, this kicked off with a parade and we had the pleasure of the Regimental Padre, across from MOB Lashkar Gah, to deliver a service linked to this. Having built up such a close relationship with our colleagues from other capbadges, it meant a lot to be able to celebrate the day with the Ghurkhas from 1 RGR and members of the Ministry of Defence Police. Many were involved in making the day memorable, but a big thank you goes to Sgt Lil (1 RGR), who played the bagpipes immaculately. It has been a pleasure compiling the notes for the LTC for submission into *The Pomegranate*, and I hope you all had pleasure reading them. See you all in Catterick in a few weeks.



A)



B)



C)



D)



E)



Images from St Patrick's Day at LTC:

A) The Squadron Leader and SSM during the St Patrick's Day Parade. B) LCpl Bromley, our 'ginger' Irish Yorkshireman. C) Members of 1 RGR Celebrate the event with us. D) Sgt Whittle struggles with his shamrock at the LTC. E) Despite being told several times, easily distracted, Cpl Melvin just has to look at the camera.



Squadron Headquarters, LTC

SSgt (SQMS) Gary Cosby

After a very pleasant winter, March brings even warmer weather, so it is getting quite hot during the day as we try to complete our usual routine of herding cats... or is it accounting for Afghan students? Although others may say that the tour has been flying by, Matt Cosby has had his kit packed for over a month now, so although we are on the home stretch and the first flight is RIPing out in less than 2 weeks, time seems to have been standing still for those in our tent!

Silicon 10 has handed over its small Toli to Silicon 20 and received a bigger Patrolman Toli in place of it. With the start of the tactics phase of another course, the guys are getting stuck in mentoring the MOIs. They have also been briefed to be on the lookout for anyone who might cut it as a gunnery instructor to make up the shortfall in the regiment for when we get back to England.

Over the last few months the routine trips to MOB Lashkar Gah have continued and it has got to the point that Lee has promised the drivers in his patrol a beer for the first one to do the journey with his eyes closed. The bet is on among LCpl 'Swift' Swift, Cpl 'Jonno' Johnson and Cpl Kev Groves, though we are still waiting for anyone to complete the man-test of doing the Lash run on the quad. I joke, of course (the OC struggled to see the sportsmanship... Spoilsport.).



The Swift attempts to register with the AUP.





Wrapping up warm for a bit of top cover, Tpr Fagan enjoys a break from mentoring.

Small Arms School Corps

WO2 (QMSI) Ben May

It was early in 2012 when I learned I was to be attached to the RDG as part of the Police Mentoring and Advisory Group. Though I am happy to be heading home, I have enjoyed my tour and the time has flown by (at the time of writing this article I'm already 184 days in). This is the second time I have trained the ANSF in two years, and so I thought I was well aware that the standard of the Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP) was a far cry from the Afghan National Army. Yet on arrival at LTC I was amazed at how far the AUP had come in the last 12 months and I have seen this positive trend continue. In the last few months alone we have seen the Afghans take responsibility for the Course Tracker, course programming & scheduling and complete control of both the final exercise and graduation parades. We have also implemented a sustainment course for the Afghan instructors, which are not only good for their personal development but has been the nucleus for them taking responsibility for the delivery of the NTM-A (NATO Training Mission) course syllabus.

Having never worked with a cavalry regiment before, I didn't know what to expect, but I can say with all honesty that I have been thoroughly impressed and enjoyed my time at LTC, with Major Kirkman and his Squadron treating me like, one of their own, right from the start. Having done this kind of work many times before with a number of different Armies in many different countries, I firmly believe that the RDG have made a significant difference to the training and development of the ANP. This has done been through developing exercising concepts, patience and an unrelenting thirst to make the training better. I would also like to thank Major Kirkman for passing on his knowledge and experience in sport/cave diving. As a 'non diver' I now have an expert understanding of re-breathing systems, laying a line in a water filled cave, underwater hand signals and open water diving qualifications, despite a fear of water! Joking aside, I'd like to finish this piece by saying good luck to the POW Sqn with Exercise Blue Juice – they're a great bunch and I've really enjoyed my tour with them.



Royal Military Police

Cpl Keith Hall AGC(RMP)

This month the RMP based in the LTC have conducted a number of different taskings and even managed to achieve a few personal goals. For Sgt McCallum and Cpl Hall, these goals included seizing the opportunity to run the Lashkar Gah Half Marathon. With limited space to run in the LTC it was nice to be able to stretch their legs for a while and they set respectable times in the process.

Professionally, yet another female instructional course took place, which saw the arrival of Sgt Becky Ord for a few days. This course also allowed Lt Novak to show off her instructional and hosting skills, and there are now whispers that she may transfer to the ETS! The female courses are a source of pride for everyone involved with them, as they target those who don't usually receive a great amount of training and ensure that they are able to work as efficient police officers.

This month also saw the arrival of the Embedded Police Mentors (EMPs), who are American civilian police. These will oversee the transition from military to Afghan control, and although there is an element of jealousy that they get to finish what we started, it's always nice to see a few more police faces and I don't think any of us would volunteer to stay on an extra 6 months this close to going home. The RMP are also set to see a huge milestone in their tour, with the arrival of 2 SCOTS, which will mark the final countdown of our tour and provide new challenges in the process.



Above. AUP students run through the scheme of manoeuvre for the final exercise.

Left. Sgt McCallum tries to hide the pain following the Lashkar Gar half marathon.



Multiple 2

Rfn Bibek Meche

With both our previous posts focussing on the patrol courses we have been running we, as a Multiple, have decided to widen the scope of our articles and look at how we have been filling our down time, and what better way to do this than describe the ISAF Games afternoon?

Although we were busy in LTC, on 7th March 2013 the LTC Command group planned an organized sports afternoon. This may seem a relatively simple procedure, but obtaining all the kit proved to be harder than expected and even once that was done it took Herculean efforts to secure the places to play in such a busy environment. In the end, and in no small part thanks to our resident US Security Company, we were able to create makeshift volleyball, football and basketball courts.

The afternoon itself was the hottest we had experienced in a while, and so the PTIs limited each activity to 45 minutes (15 minutes per half, with a 15 minute break for water). My side easily won the football and basketball, but lost by a very wide margin during the volleyball. Despite this setback, we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and speaking to other teams later that evening, it seems this was the case for everyone. We have an important role to do in Afghanistan, and work very hard at ensuring we do it to the highest standards, but time out is also important in order for us to keep working at an optimum. I speak for all of 1 RGR when I say that we have loved working with the RDG, and will look back fondly on events such as the sports afternoon we shared.

Nad-e-Ali

Lt Giles Moon



After six frenetic months mentoring the Nad-e-Ali ANP, the time has finally arrived for C Sqn QRL to head home. Originally deploying with 130 blokes, we have seen six of our seven Police Advisory Teams (PATs) redeploy early to the UK and there are now fewer than thirty of us left in Afghanistan. Already the first of our 2 SCOTS replacements are arriving for their handover, which officially took place on 17th March, so the remaining Lancers, who are tantalisingly close to stepping onto the flight home, are now panic tanning in preparation for hitting the beach in Cyprus!

Our tour has seen a dramatic change in Nad-e-Ali, and one we are very proud of. At the start of the tour, the PATs were patrolling twice a day to numerous checkpoints in order to mentor the Afghan CP commanders. Now, in what really has been a short period of time, the AUP have progressed to a level where they only need mentoring at the District Police Headquarters. In our time in here, we have also seen the Afghan Local Police become fully manned. With 300 of these committed policemen now operating in the district, Nad-e-Ali has



a sustainable police force to counter any threat which emerges after the planned ISAF withdrawal in 2014.

With this being our final submission, it is important for us to highlight the huge amount of help the Squadron has had from other regiments throughout the tour. 1st Battalion the Mercian Regiment, in their role as the Transition Support Unit in Nad-e-Ali, have been a constant help, and also provided a handy excuse to visit Shawqat for some proper food under the pretence of important meetings! 1st Battalion, the Royal Gurkha Regiment provided two of the Nad-e-Ali PATs. They were excellent mentors for the AUP in their area of operations, and provided us with a unique cultural insight. Of course it goes without saying that we extend our gratitude to the RDG, to whom we have been attached for the duration of MST and the tour. We have had a very enjoyable year working with you and we look forward to training with you all during the conversion to an Armoured Cavalry role. Finally, those of us who remain out here would like to thank everyone back home who've continued to support us throughout the tour; the letters and parcels from home have been invaluable in keeping spirits high and reminding everyone that there's light at the end of the six month long tunnel.

Warthog Group

1st Troop

Cpl Davie McQuade

This month has seen the operational tempo for the Warthog Group rapidly slow down, but this has given us the opportunity to get our teeth into other Squadron activities, such as training and making the most of Oates' Day. From a work perspective, the Troop leaders have adopted a different approach to continuation training, establishing an on-going inter-troop competition. Four months into tour, it has re-energised all the lads and given all ranks the motivation to get stuck in and refresh life saving techniques. Training has included weapon handling, casualty evacuation, vehicle maintenance, rules of engagement and first aid. Despite being so far into our tour, we have had a number of recent arrivals to the Squadron. They have relished the fun challenges we set them and, as a consequence, have settled in very well, it's hard to believe they haven't been with us from the start.

Following the example of the Troop leaders, March saw us start other inter-troop competitions, such as a football and volleyball league. So far no one seems to be giving an inch and this is keeping the minds and bodies of the guys active. All of this has given us the chance to get back together as a Squadron, which is great, as the troops have been missing each other as we deployed on differing operations.

This month has also seen the Squadron commemorate Captain Oates and, of course, celebrate St Patrick's Day. Everyone knows just how important this is to the Regiment and being on tour made little difference. We started the day with the glorious sounds of the SQMS on the bagpipes, followed by coffee and breakfast served up by the SNCOs and Officers. This leisurely start ended with the presentation of shamrock during a short service, and provided a nice opportunity for our friends and colleagues in B and D Sqn QRL to take part in a unique element of RDG life. The remainder of the day saw troop competitions in the form of tug of war, caber tossing, sand castle building, 'welly-wanging' and a traditional



Paddies Day chariot race, in which some fantastic chariots were constructed. I'm sure that I speak for the entire Squadron when I say it was a memorable day and reminded us of the fun we usually have when we are back in UK.

As we all know, the Warthogs need maintaining and although March has been somewhat quieter than previous months, they won't maintain themselves so normal maintenance and servicing has, as always, been top of the agenda. Keeping the Warthogs in a state of readiness remains our top priority and allows us to be out of the gate on any operation in under an hour. The boys have always been at the top of their game and I'm certain this will not change. It has also given us the chance to put ourselves in a very strong place to begin preparations for our handover to the Royal Tank Regiment and give them the best possible start to HERRICK 18. I'm sure the great work done by ourselves and our predecessors will continue with their arrival at the end of April.

Finally, all the members of A Squadron have asked me to include their love and best wishes to family and friends back home and to thank you for your support, which has been second to none. They would also like to say hello to other elements of the Regiment now back in Catterick, well done on what you've achieved lads, we hope you have a great post tour leave and we'll see you all very soon.

2nd Troop

Tpr Carl Wilkinson

I'd like to begin by saying that we are all still having a great tour and enjoying our time together in theatre. We are still working hard but obviously we are also looking forward to coming home and writing this final submission to *The Pomegranate* only emphasises how close we are to the end. We are now counting the days until we can see our friends and families again.

With a reduction in the Op tempo (already mentioned), we've had a chance to attend a number of training events and courses in our time away from the tank park. The training and courses are run in three tiers. Tier One is the usual continuation training, which includes medical training, counter IED training and weapon handling tests. The second tier includes preparation for future courses, advanced medical training for those who don't have it and advanced communications training. Lastly, the third tier includes literacy and numeracy and for those who want it, there is even the chance to learn languages in an evening. The courses are great, and even though our focus is firmly on the maintenance of the vehicles and preparation for operations, the drop in tempo has coincided with the return of the sun after a chilly winter and as well as providing perfect conditions for the volleyball tournament, a number of the guys have begun Op Bronze. Complementing Op Bronze, the 'insanity workout' craze has finally hit MOB Price; with many in the squadron working through the 60 day workout, the hope is to be in unrecognisable shape to our girlfriends, wives and loved ones back home.

Once a month we have a Sqn BBQ. Whilst the only beer is the non-alcoholic variety, these are still great social occasions; with food aplenty cooked by the civilian chefs here in MOB Price and with music on the speakers you can feel yourself relax properly after all the operations.



Overall the Sqn is in great shape. We are counting down the days and looking forward to getting home. Plans are being made for how to spend our tour bonuses, with holidays being booked and ideas for what to do with the rest of the leave changing daily, but keeping morale high.



Photo captions

Top. The Troop couldn't imagine a better way of being woken up on a Sunday, than with the SQMS, SSgt Dudley coming into their tent playing the bagpipes. Bottom. Wanting to socialise, but with not enough free tables, the troop. Find a new use for the Hesco.





Photo captions

Top. The Warthog Group prepare for their St Patrick's Day service. Middle. Major Searle and Capt Lines present the Squadron with their shamrock. Bottom. Lt Stu Vine regrets asking for some water during the relay race.



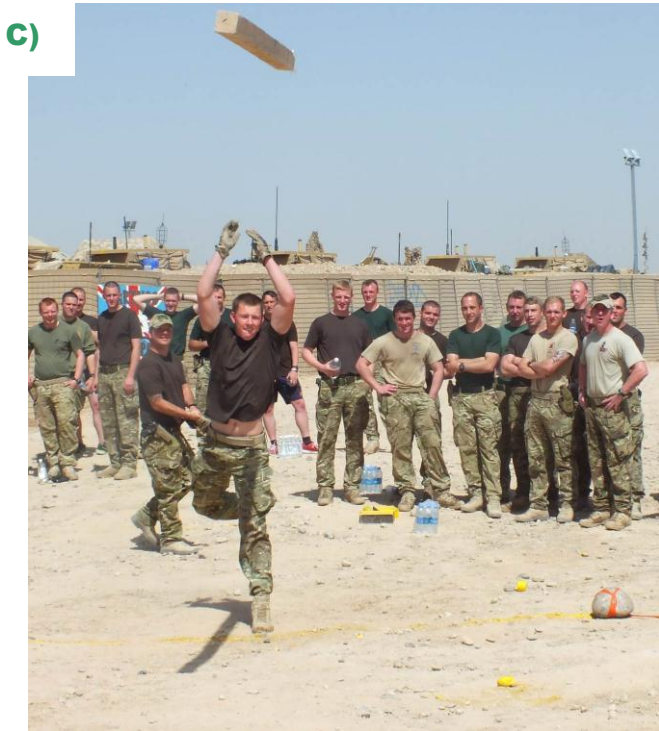


Photo captions

A) LCpl Murphy during the welly-wang. B) 1st place in the sandcastle completion, run and won by 1st Troop! C) Tpr Tudor during the caber toss D) 1st Troop immediately prior to the chariot race. E) Capts Chris Clover and Stu Vine; soaked but undeterred during the tug o' war



B 'The Black Horse' Squadron

Maj Hugh Pearce-Gould

This last month has seen some good progress and the coming to fruition of some of our longer term plans for the tour. We have seen the first distributed training of female AUP members (a long neglected part of the force) who will add a great capability to the Police in Nahr-e-Seraj. The Police have now completed training the Afghan Local Police in the areas mentored by B Squadron, which marks the end of the long process we began back in September last year. The police now have the skills to deliver their own training and have bonded well with their Local Police brothers who they now mentor. Our focus is now increasingly swinging towards Handing over to our successors from 2nd Battalion Royal Regiment of Scotland. Indeed as you read this SHQ will have completed their hand over, with the PATs following a few weeks behind. A great deal of work is on-going to ensure that we leave 2 SCOTS in a great position to carry on our work in the Summer, with the SQMS and his team ensuring there are no skeletons in our cupboard. We wish 2 SCOTS, and of course our Afghan friends in the Police and Army, all the best for the year ahead. Finally, we would like to offer our thanks to you, one last time. The whole Squadron has been so grateful for the continued support from home and the wider Regimental family, you have made a real difference to us out here.

PB2 PAT

Capt Tom Shorland Ball

The Final Hurdle

It is amazing to contemplate just how quickly the last six months have gone. Here I am writing this with only 10 days left in Patrol Base 2, and with most of the boys trying to thin down their kit prior to packing up. Sgt Stead and I are now in the process of preparing for the momentous task of providing a proper handover, and with the excitement of children waiting for father Christmas, we look forward to the arrival of Lt Simon Wright and Sgt Allison of 2 SCOTS!

As the police in Malgir have not requested any joint operations with us since before Christmas, life has become really quite quiet. Though a little dull, this is a good sign, as it shows the police are a capable force. To fill our time, gym attendance and sunbathing (it's a balmy 30 degrees today) have increased exponentially. Everyone is hoping the wives, families and girlfriends will be impressed by the dozen or so Adonis warriors returning to the UK and some cold weather.



Having seemed to occupy most of the tour, the R&R period has finally finished, it would be nice to say that we were back to being fully manned but LCpl Lawrence and Tpr Bedford (who both deployed early) have already returned home, leaving us to finish their jobs for them... Brev and Bedford, if you are reading this then be aware that I am struggling to silence the rumblings about you having only completed half a tour!

Vehicle maintenance may not have occupied as much of our time as it has with the Warthog Group, but it has kept us busy. Sadly, 'Big Jeff' packed up whilst in MOB (not HMS!) Price, where it has remained for almost two months; I can nervously report that, if all goes well, there is a chance 'Big Jeff' will return to PB 2 this evening in all its former glory... but there are many who doubt this

Despite the odd hiccup, morale has remained sky high and even with the absence of LCpl Lawrence, laughs are still ten a penny. The PAT has uncovered numerous hidden talents vying to fill the space left by LCpl Lawrence; with Tpr Westwood doing some uncanny impressions, Tpr Van Leeuwen delivering his own take on well known football anthems and Tpr Smith... well, just being himself!

Clearly, everyone is now focused on getting through the last few patrols before heading to Cyprus and then home. The economic crisis in Cyprus may be well documented in news bulletins, but the squaddie rumour mill reliably informs us that of far greater concern is the beach closure due to mating turtles... this is such a strange rumour it must be true, but we will let you know when we see you in person in the very near future.



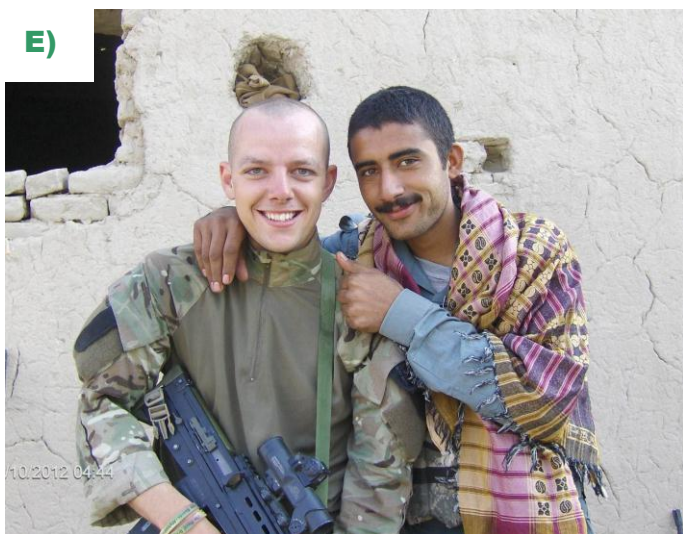


Photo captions:

- A) Taking a break on patrol to enjoy the ration packs one last time.
- B) A small, elite group of warriors known as Silicon 26
- C) Capt SB is caught having tried to escape his role monitoring the net.
- D) Cpl Hurst, the interim gaffer, on patrol.
- E) Tpr Van Leeuwen making friends



Gereshk PAT/DTT

Lt Simon Ramage

As our tour gradually comes to a close, the men of Silicon 21 have maintained the high standard they have demonstrated from the start, but this was recently aided by an impromptu visit to PB Attal for some last minute training of the AUP. This last push of training gave focus to our final days in Helmand and provided a much needed change of scenery. As with other locations, a week of balmy sunshine provided an opportunity for our own first aid training and to try and get a bit more colour.

When not teaching in Attal, our down time has provided the perfect opportunity to look back on the last six months. As a PAT, we can be very satisfied with what we have achieved and speaking to the boys, it is clear they are already feeling nostalgic about their time on HERRICK 17. The AUP we have trained, have continued to work at their skills and are still improving, which is hugely encouraging. Many of my own troop have matured quickly while on tour, in no small part thanks to the guidance of the Troop Sgt and his Adonis like six pack (and the Troop Corporal with his magnificent sideburns!). We have all gained a huge amount of experience, both in the field and of the wider world. We have become better soldiers for the experience and I am sure patience has increased due to the trying and complex schedule that the AUP keep and which has constantly kept us on our toes.

Working daily with the Afghans may have been trying at times, but it has also been vastly rewarding. We have met many interesting characters who have opened our eyes to a different way of living and this has highlighted how comfortable home is for most of us and how lucky we are to have family and friends who support us.

I would like to thank all those who have sent Christmas presents, birthday presents and an endless stream of letters or welfare parcels to us during our time at the District Police Headquarters. I can comfortably speak for the entire PAT when I say they have been hugely appreciated and it has meant a great deal to know we are being thought of by those of you at home, our tour would have been a lot less bearable if it were not for you. Thank you.



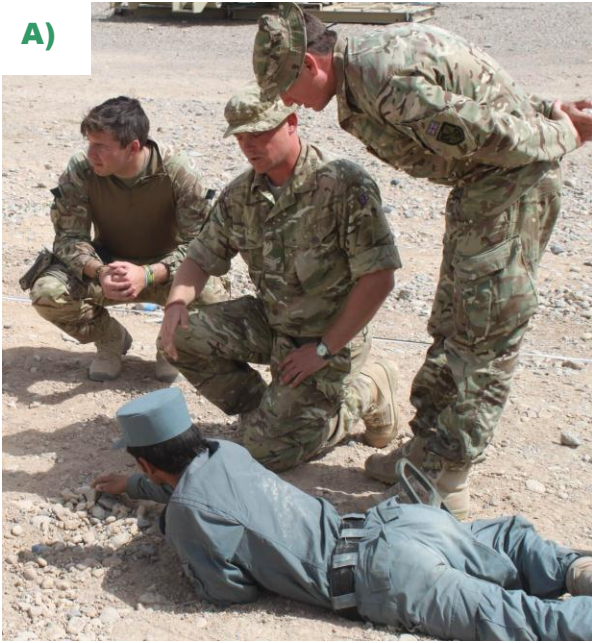


Photo captions

A) Lt Ramage briefs up the instructors prior to one last round of teaching. B) Six months into the tour, and the novelty of trying to 'look ally' still hasn't worn off. C) Taking the opportunity for one last photo before the final patrol. D) Humouring Lt Ramage's inner photographer is clearly taking its toll. E) What patrolling should look like. F) The gang in good spirits following a vehicle patrol.



A)



B)



C)



D)



E)



Photo captions

A) and B) Examples of the counter IED training the team have perfected during HERRICK 17. C) and D) Sunset and sunrise, the most awe-inspiring times to patrol. E) With our afghan instructors.



D 'The Green Horse' Squadron Helmand Provincial Police Headquarters

Maj Ben Watts

This will be the final D Squadron entry for *The Pomegranate*; and I can't quite believe I am writing this article from sunny Cyprus, where the first elements of Squadron HQ are undergoing Decompression before returning to Catterick. Our last two Police Advisor Teams are already back in the UK enjoying their hard earned POTL after a job well done and by the time this edition of the newsletter is published the remainder of SHQ will be on their way home, leaving the Provincial Police HQ and Lashkar Gah District Advisor Team in the hands of 2 SCOTS.

Our time in Afghanistan may have been relatively brief, but we are confident that D Squadron has left the Lashkar Gah Police in a better state than when we arrived. Thanks to the combined efforts of the PATs and SHQ, we managed to train over 80 Afghan Police instructors in counter-IED, basic first aid, vehicle maintenance and routine police skills. We have also worked hard with the District Chief of Police to help him utilise this new resource to best effect; and his men are now delivering training to large numbers of patrolmen at the Precinct level without ISAF help. The OCCP has maintained its role as the principle coordination centre for inter-ANSF operations and as we departed theatre senior AUP and ANA officers were engrossed in detailed planning for the security of a VIP visit to Helmand, it was an incredibly rewarding sight.



Silicon 41 at the end of their tour.



Whilst there is still much that the men of 2 SCOTS can accomplish during their 7 months in theatre, there is a real sense that the mission is drawing to a conclusion. Having started the tour with six Advisor Teams and SHQ, D Squadron handed over a footprint to HERRICK 18 that sees no Advisors on the ground in Lashkar Gah. Although this will present them with a challenge, that we are able to lift off in such numbers to allow the ANSF to stand on their own two feet is yet another sign of the progress we have made.



Colonel Ismail and the Commanding Officer chat over a brew at the RC(SW) farewell part. The smiles vanished as soon as the speeches began!



Colonel Ismail, the Commanding General and DCOM RC(SW) during a marathon 3 hour session of farewell speeches and presentations of fine carpets.

Finally, although it has not been easy enduring long months of separation from our families, we feel lucky to have been trusted to undertake the PMAG role, which has allowed us to develop some strong bonds with our Afghan partners and interpreters. This final month has seen a raft of leaving speeches and ceremonies and it is not just RDG pennants and polished marble that changed hands at the end of this tour, but rather fond and lasting memories for both sides.



Ulster TV and the Press Association pay a visit to the OCCP.



Colonel Rabani and Karim 'enjoy' Capt Walton-Rees' cooking at our farewell supper.





Capt Walton-Rees breaks after only 6 days without a cigarette.



The Squadron Leader and WO2 McKinley unveil another of their culinary collaborations (*not* experiments!).

Chaplain's Corner

Padre Andy Harding

It's Easter Time. A celebration of new life and of a new beginning. Because it's spring, when we get to Easter there are signs of new life all around us. New born rabbits, blossom in the trees and, a favourite of mine, driving past fields of sheep and seeing the new born lambs. Being in the desert at this time of year you don't see the same signs that we are used to, in fact in some places if we see a frisky bouncing lamb, it's not a sign of spring but means dinner has escaped... a problem I've never had at Nandos! I miss home!



A large number of us are already home, and for many more of us it is only a matter of weeks. We are really looking forward to getting back and I have yet to come across a soldier who cannot tell me how many days they've got left. It's like when you're a kid and counting down the days to Christmas or a child sat in the back of a car asking their parents that most annoying of questions, "are we there yet?"

But it is not just kids at Christmas or impatient children restrained in the backs of cars who seek an end to their journeys. We all do it. We may refer to our longing for the end of a working day or week, the end of a task, the end of training, the end of a mission or the end of tour. The word 'end' as well as words such as 'last' or 'final' or 'ultimate' are ambiguous. They may simply label a conclusion but we also use them to articulate the goal or purpose of something. Something like the purpose of a journey or a life. We frequently want things to end, but what we really desire in our lives is some sort of completion or fulfilment, an arrival at our 'journey's end'. It is the something beyond the end that we really want.

On Good Friday we commemorate the death of Jesus but this was not the end. This was the beginning of something very different, the start of a new life that sprang from death on Easter Day.



So as we return, it is not the end that we are so looking forward to, it is our lives with our loved ones that make us count down the days. And for some it will be a new life, a time to draw a line under what has happened before, to learn from the past and build a new future; a new life. It should be a happy time for all, and I wish you all a Happy Easter.

Acknowledgments

Capt Bobby Crean

As I said in my Welcome this month, a great many people have contributed to making this product what it is. The Commanding Officer, Lt Col Jamie Piggott, clearly set out his vision for what he wanted *The Pomegranate* to be and his monthly contributions were integral to the newsletter. I may have my name on this as Editor, but every month many, many drafts are put before the Chief of Staff, Maj Rob Kace, Ops Officer, Capt Dan Tanner, and SO3 J3, Capt Charlie Arrowsmith. The Chief of Staff deserves special mention as, after the RDG was hit with a sudden wave of indecision, it was he who christened *The Pomegranate*, but I must also thank Dan and CFA for their articles. Once it has passed our checks, each issue is also viewed by Task Force Helmand's Media Team, and my thanks go to all in that office. Most of the photos you see at the end of this publication were taken by the Brigade photographers, Sgt Rob Elliott and Cpl Mike O'Neil, I am hugely appreciative of your help with getting high quality shots into the media. I am also grateful to all those who have taken photos during their tour, many of which have been used in *The Pomegranate* and the Royal Dragoon Guards' Facebook page. Pictures may paint a thousand words, but your memories have provided an excellent read, which I am certain we will come back to again and again, so finally, my thanks go to all those who wrote articles; Maj Steve Kirkman, Maj Ben Watts, Maj James Lance, Maj Hugh Pierce-Gould, Capt Ali Smith, Capt Iain Monk, Capt Tom Shorland Ball, Capt David Brooks, Capt Steve Stewart, Capt Gyan Dhenga, Padre Andy Harding, Lt Giles Moon, Lt Nick Bartrum, Lt Charlie Gray, Lt Sandy Nightingale, Lt Jimmy Wilcox, Lt Jonny Clover, Lt Sam Secombe, Lt James Heath, Lt Si Ramage, Lt Guy Amir, Lt Andrew Moncrieff, Lt Stu Vine, Lt Conor O'Shea, WO2 Raju Durra, WO2 Bishnu Thapu, WO2 Ben May, SSgt Gary Cosby, Sgt Garry McCallum, Sgt Fleming, Sgt Andrew Percy, Sgt Kumar Gurung, Sgt Chris Stead, Sgt Neil Wood, Cpl Chris Button, Cpl Keith Hall, Cpl Davie McQuade, LCpl Joe Heslop, LCpl Subin Rai, LBdr Donny Donovan, Tpr Steve McClure, Tpr Sam Tudor, Tpr Will Owens, Tpr Matthew Trounson, Tpr Matthew Passmore, Tpr Andrew Norton, Tpr Tom Collings, Tpr James Stephenson and Rfn Bibek Meche.



The Tour in Pictures











ENDS



