

1937 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
1st Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

SUMMARY OF FIRST BATTALION DIARY, 1937

January 3rd — The Regiment returned from annual furlough.

January 4th — Lieut. H. E. Montgomery posted from 52nd and granted sick leave.
2nd Lieut. R. A. St. G. Martin went to Catterick for a signalling officers' course until March 25th, 1937.

January 16th — Capt. A. M. Toye, V.C., M.C., went to Hythe to attend Bren L.M.G. and Anti-Tank Course until January 29th, 1937.

January 18th — Hindoostan platoon, strength 20, arrived from the Regimental Depot and was posted to H.Q., Wing.

January 30th — 2nd Lieut. H. H. van Straubenzee went to Hythe to attend Bren L.M.G. and Anti-Tank Course until February 12th, 1937.

February 1st — 2nd Lieut. R. G. M. Bathgate, R.A.S.C., reported for six months attachment to the Regiment.

2nd Lieuts. F. H. G. Higgins, J. A. J. Read and R. F. E. Hill promoted Lieutenants.

February 3rd — The Regiment won the Colchester Garrison Young Soldiers Cross Country Championships.

February 5th — The Regiment beat the 2nd Training Bde., R.A., 4—0 in the semi-final of the Eastern Command Hockey Competition.

February 9th — Captain and Brevet-Major T. J. W. Winterton joined the battalion on cross posting from 52nd. Remains on Indian Establishment until absorbed.

February 16th — Regiment won final Eastern Command Hockey Tournament, beating 2nd Devonshire Regiment 3—0 at Woolwich.

February 26th — The Eastern Command Cross Country took place in conjunction with the Garrison Cross Country Race. The Regiment won the latter and were second to the Royal West Kents in the former.

March 2nd — The Regiment lost 2—1 to the R.T.C., Bovington, in the Army Hockey Competition.

March 12th — South Africa platoon, strength 27, arrived from the Regimental Depot.

March 16th — The Regiment were 9th in the Army Cross Country.

March 17th — The officers of the Regiment gave an "at home".

March 25th—16th London Regiment, Queen's Westminster and Civil Service Rifles occupied Barracks for their Easter Training until April 3rd.

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April 5th — Capt. (Bt.-Major) T. J. W. Winterton attended Senior Officers' Course at (Army Co-operation R.A.F.) Hawkinge.

April 19th — 2nd Lieut. H. H. van Straubenzee attended Junior Officers Course at (Army Co-operation R.A.F.) Hawkinge.

May 1st — Regimental Rifle Meeting held. No. 5373367 C.Q^A.M.S. Hunt won the Regimental Championship.

Capt. Hon. C. B. A. Bernard vacated appointment of Adjutant on the completion of his tour of duty as such.

Lieut. J. A. G. R. H. Harden appointed Adjutant.

May 3rd — Lieut.-Colonel A. C. M. Paris, M.C., attended the Senior Officers Course at S.A.A.S. Netheravon.

May 10th — Troops on duty at the Coronation of H.M. King George VI and H.M. Queen Elizabeth proceeded to London and returned on May 14th. The Regiment provided the following detachments:

CORONATION OF THEIR MAJESTIES
KING GEORGE VI AND QUEEN ELIZABETH
WEDNESDAY MAY 12TH 1937

DUTIES 43RD LIGHT INFANTRY

1. The Regiment left by special train for London from Colchester at 4.20 a.m. on Monday, May 10th, 1937.

2. Parties were accommodated in London as follows:

- (a) Processional Party in Kensington Gardens.
- (b) Street Lining Party and Colour Party in Regent's Park.
- (c) Reserve Street Lining Party in Kensington Gardens.
- (d) Traffic Control and Police and Car Parking Parties in Hyde Park.

3. A new free issue of blue uniform was worn for the first time at the Coronation by all troops. The webbing belt was worn with this uniform.

4. The composition of the above parties was as follows:

(a) Processional Party:

Lieut.-Colonel A. C. M. Paris, M.C., commanding.

5373913 R.S.M. S. F. Burnell

5374560 C.S.M. E. Hawtin

5377749 C.Q.M.S. C. Prior

5373785 Sjt. W. George, M.M.

5377270 Cpl. A. Beresford

5381166 L.-Cpl. S. Willmin

5381489 Pte. A. Pickett

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(b) Street Lining and Colour Party:

Major G. Naylor, M.C., in command

Lieut. A. Clerke Brown, carrying King's Colour

5377267 C.Q.M.S. R. Johnson, Escort to King's Colour

5377027 C.Q.M.S. W. Dovey, Escort to King's Colour

and 41 warrant officers, non-commissioned officers and men street lining

Route lines: Cockspur Street, opposite United Services Club.

(c) Reserve Street Lining Party:

Captain K. S. Wootten, in command

Lieut. J. A. G. R. H. Harden

Lieut. R. F. E. Hill

2nd Lieut. R. A. St. G. Martin

2nd Lieut. H. H. van Straubenzee

2nd Lieut. G. D. Jephson

2nd Lieut. J. F. Ballard

2nd Lieut. R. Hornsby-Wright

and 186 warrant officers, non-commissioned officers and men

R.V. Band Stand near Serpentine.

(d) Traffic Control and Police and Car Park Duties:

Lieut. L. L. Falkiner, in command and 52 non-commissioned officers and men

Area: Knightsbridge.

5. During the period that the Regiment was in London the conduct of the troops was exemplary.

6. The Regiment returned by special train, arriving at Colchester at 4.0 a.m. on Friday, May 14th, 1937

May 14th — Mons platoon, 19 strong, arrived from the Regimental Depot and were posted to B Company.

The following were awarded the Coronation Medal:

Lieut.-Colonel A. C. M. Paris, M.C.

Capt. A. M. Toye, V.C., M.C.

Capt. & Quartermaster E. Smith.

5373913 R.S.M. S. F. Burnell.

5373347 R.Q/M.S. W. Warnock.

5376511 Pte. C. Waite.

May 15th — Capt. E. Smith, Lieut. F. H. G. Higgins and 46 other ranks proceeded to Bourley Road Camp, Aldershot, as advance party for Tattoo duties.

May 20th — The Regiment less Maintenance party proceeded to Bourley Road Camp, Aldershot, for Tattoo duties.

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May 31st — Further Coronation Medals were awarded to:

Major G. Naylor, M.C.

Lieut. L. L. Falkiner.

Lieut. R. H. Harden.

5377039 C.S.M. J. Dilley.

5374560 C.S.M. E. Hawtin.

5376515 C.S.M. W. Cobb.

5377205 C.Q.M.S. R. Johnson.

5377029 C.Q.M.S. W. Dovey.

5377794 C.Q.M.S. C. Prior.

5373785 Sjt. W. George, M.M.

5374054 Sjt. F. Williams.

5377270 Cpl. A. Beresford.

2nd Lieut. G. D. Jephson proceeded to Aldershot to attend M.T. Course at R.A.S.C. Training Centre from May 31st, 1937 to July 23rd, 1937.

June 9th — The Regiment paraded to celebrate the King's Birthday.

June 12th — Information received that the Regiment is due to proceed abroad during Trooping season 1941-42.

June 22nd — The Band toured Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire on recruiting duties, visiting Banbury, Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Slough.

June 22nd — The Regiment returned to Colchester from Aldershot on completion of Tattoo duties.

June 25th — The Band played in Oxford on the occasion of Her Majesty Queen Mary laying the foundation stone of the extension of the Bodleian.

June 26th — The Regimental Athletic Team won the Garrison Athletic Championship and were second in the Eastern Command Championship.

June 28th — Commencement of the Regimental Cricket Week at the Depot.

July 2nd — 12 Private soldiers proceeded to Omagh on transfer to the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers under A.G.I., 144/37.

July 6th — The Regimental Athletic Team was placed ninth in the Army Athletic Team Championships at Aldershot.

July 10th — No. 5381997 Boy Smith won the Young Soldiers Javelin in the Army Individual Championships at Aldershot.

No. 5381051 Pte. Powell qualified for the Mile Final.

July 12th — *Et.* Lieut.-Colonel Backhouse of A.G.2 War Office visited the Regiment.

July 13th — Capt. Hon. C. B. A. Bernard, married at St. Margaret's, Westminster.

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July 30th — 5 other ranks proceeded to join the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers at Omagh on transfer under A.C.I. 144/37.

July 31st — Information received that Lieut. R. H. G. O. Spence and Lieut. J. D. Palmer were successful in the February 1937 Staff College examination. Capt. Hon. C. B. A. Bernard qualified for the second time. Authority: Army Order 149 of 1937.

August 1st — Major G. Naylor, M.C. and Lieut. L. L. Falkiner and 23 other ranks joined the 4th Bn. for their Annual Camp. Major T. J. W. Winterton and Lieut. R. A. St. G. Martin and 17 other ranks joined the Bucks Bn. for their annual camp.

August 19th — Capt. Hon. C. B. A. Bernard is seconded for service on the Staff (A.D.C. to G.O.C. 2nd Div.)

August 24th — No. 5382141 Cpl. A. Cheyne joined Royal Military College, Sandhurst as an "A" Cadet.

August 26th — Capt. J. P. A. G. Graham relinquished the appointment of instructor at the Royal Military College.

August 27th — 2nd Lieut. M. H. Mulholland joined the Regiment from General List, T.A. January 30th, 1936. The undermentioned Gentlemen Cadets from R.M.C. to be 2nd Lieutenants. August 26th, 1937: Herbert John Mogg, Michael Frederick Burness, David Stancomb, Michael Neal Harbottle.

August 31st — The undermentioned 2nd Lieutenants to be Lieutenants, August 30th, 1937: R. A. St. G. Martin, H. H. van Straubenzee.

September 22nd — Major C. R. Horley commenced a course at the Senior Officers' School, Sheerness.

October 2nd — Lieut. F. H. G. Higgins commenced a short course at the S.A.S., Hythe.

October 22nd — The Regiment conducted a Field Day for Felsted School O.T.C.

October 25th — Lieut.-Colonel A. C. M. Paris, M.C., attended the Senior Officers' Course at the S.A.S., Hythe.

November 10th — Captain R. H. Doyne and seven other ranks attended the Earl Haig Memorial Parade. Captain J. P. A. G. Graham, 2nd Lieut. R. Hornsby Wright and 70 privates embarked at Southampton *en route* to join the 52nd at Bareilly.

November 23rd — Annual Inspection of the Regiment by Brigadier H. N. A. Hunter, D.S.O.

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November 24th — 12 supplementary reservists of the Royal Ulster Rifles arrived for completion of their training.

November 30th — 2nd Lieut. M. H. Mulholland embarked for India.

December 1st — Lieut. J. P. F. Miles joined on posting to the Home Establishment.

December 3rd — Annual furlough period commenced.

December 7th — Information received that the Regiment won the King George V Cup in the A.R.A. Non-Central Match with a score of 505.

December 10th — Major C. R. Horley proceeded to Oxford to take over command of the Regimental Depot from Major E. H. Whitfeld, M.C. on the latter being appointed to the General Staff Eastern Command.

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FIRST BATTALION LETTER

Dear Editor,

We have completed our second year in Colchester, and I think I can safely say that the hopes held out by my predecessor in his last letter to you, are justified. Everyone seems to agree however, that in the winter, Colchester must be one of the coldest places in England, and as most of our fire-places appear to have been designed for a doll's house, keeping warm is a difficult business. At the moment we are wondering what our immediate future is going to be, owing to the fact that our foreign tour has been postponed to the Trooping Season 1941-42, which makes it extremely unlikely that we shall go abroad from here. It is to be hoped that the powers above will ensure that our last year or two in England will be spent in some perfect station (if there is such a place) which will cater for everybody's tastes.

What with one thing and another, we seem to have had quite a busy year, in spite of the fact that we have so few soldiers. On May 10th practically the whole Regiment went up to London to assist in the Coronation celebrations. We were divided into several parties, the details of which will be found in the Summary of our Diary. There was a small party, headed by the Commanding Officer, which actually took part in the procession; another including the King's Colour, for lining the street, another for Reserve street lining, and police duties, and yet another to assist the police in traffic control. I am sure I am right in saying that everyone enjoyed themselves, and were grateful for the opportunity of witnessing a spectacle of world-wide interest.

Two things spoilt our short stay in London: one of course, being the weather, which was nobody's fault, and the other being the exceedingly poor administration of the various camps. We left Colchester in the early hours of the morning, and on arrival at Liverpool Street, the different parties went by tube to their respective camps in Kensington Gardens, Hyde Park, and Regent's Park. Very heavy rain turned the camps into quagmires, and successfully penetrated all the tents. It was a pity that we could not have been all together, but the Coronation arrangements rendered this quite impossible. The food, both in the officers' and men's messes, left a great deal to be desired, even after taking into account the fact that the cooks were working in adverse weather conditions for most of the time.

All the troops were issued with a special suit of blue uniform, which was intended to be used afterwards as a ceremonial, and walking out dress. However, it was of a very rough material, and proved unpopular, and we have seen no more of it. On the actual day of the Coronation the weather improved slightly, and most of us had a very good view of the Procession, and were much impressed by the passage of all the troops representing the whole Empire. We left London at 2 a.m. on the morning of May 14th by tube and train, and arrived at Colchester feeling glad that we had left the London parks behind us.

We only had a week in which to look round before we went off on our next trip. This time it was to take part in the Aldershot Tattoo, and on May 20th we entrained for Aldershot, and went into camp at Bourley Road. We were down to give a Physical Training Display with the Prince of Wales' Volunteers and The Somerset Light Infantry. Although we only had to find 200 performers, it took nearly the whole Regiment into the arena, including several of the younger officers, some of whom, in their efforts to perform the various exercises correctly, would have made an excellent comic turn in a Variety show.

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We were luckier with the weather this time, and nearly the whole period we were at Bourley Road we were treated to plenty of sunshine. However, as usual, it rained two or three times during the actual Tattoo period, on one occasion so heavily that Horley hurried off to the nearest pub, and came back with many bottles of rum, but as the performers returned to camp dry they did not get any. I regret that I am unable to say what happened to the rum. The Band and Bugles took part in the massed band items, during which Mr. Plater's prize march, 'The King's Men' was played. On June 22nd the Regiment returned to Colchester after what is hoped to be our last Tattoo for some time. Taking part in the Aldershot Tattoo means five weeks taken out of the summer training period, with the result that there is a scramble to get Company and Battalion Training finished before Brigade Training starts.

While we are on the subject of training, I must just put on record how difficult it is becoming to carry out our collective training, owing to lack of men. Last year, two Companies had to train together, while the other two lent them what few men they had. Even then Companies were only about forty strong. This coming year will be worse, because there will be fewer men still. However, Companies managed to do a certain amount of tactical work, including three day treks, over parts of Essex and Suffolk. Battalion Training was over before it had hardly begun, and was very interesting, and instructive, particularly a Defence scheme on the Rock Farm area when Horley, as Chief Umpire, made full use of his histrionic abilities, and Toye was let loose with his beloved gas.

Higher training, which promised to be very instructive, was a failure as far as we were concerned, as we spent half our time touring round Hertford, Cambridge, and Essex, in buses, and the other half hiding ourselves, and our vehicles from the prying eyes of the enemy bird men. Metcalfe constructed various disguises for all our transport, and we really think that we are quite good at concealing ourselves from air observation. The Signallers on one occasion, in their enthusiasm to secure the shady side of a hedgerow, found themselves sharing it with several wasps' nests, and were forced to evacuate their position. Of course, as you know, Mr. Editor, we are now overburdened with mechanical vehicles of all sorts of sizes and shapes. They have taken away all our Horse Transport and chargers, and out of the kindness of their hearts have left us with six pool chargers. However, I am given to understand that Higgins, our ex-Transport Officer got quite attached to his new steed — a Norton motor bicycle. Once someone had started it for him, and he had disentangled his spurs from the spokes of the rear wheel, he got on very well — until he had to stop.

We have had several changes amongst the officers. Horley has just left us, after attending the S.O.S. to command the Depot vice Whitfeld, who once more is a member of the gilded staff. Winterton, after being told he was to go to school again at the Naval Staff College, has been promoted to going to the Staff College at Camberley as an Instructor, where he will shortly be joined by Spence and Palmer, as students, to whom our congratulations are due for passing in. Bernard handed over the Adjutancy in May to Harden, who came from the Depot. We must congratulate Bernard on his marriage in July, and record our sorrow at his departure, not for India, as was at one time supposed, but to take up the appointment of A.D.C. to the G.O.C. 2nd Division at Aldershot. Montgomery joined us from the 52nd but shortly afterwards went to the Depot to fill the vacancy caused by the departure of Hughes for West Africa.

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Miles has also returned to us from India, and we are expecting Barnard, Theobalds, and Bayley to join us earlier in 1938, while Wootten comes to us from the Depot. Withington and Doyne will be sailing for India during the next month or two, while Graham, who came back to us from the R.M.C., on paper only, has already arrived at Bareilly, with a draft for the 52nd. Mulholland joined on first appointment from Cambridge University, and very shortly afterwards went out to India.

We are very glad to welcome Mogg, Burness, Stancomb and Harbottle, who all joined together on first appointment from the R.M.C. in August, Hornsby-Wright accompanied Graham out to India, and Martin is just about to sail for Cape Town, and a whirl of social activities as A.D.C. to the Governor General of South Africa.

I think that completes the tally of our changes, and there are so many that if I have omitted something of national importance I offer my apologies to the individual concerned.

Whilst on the subject of individuals, it must be recorded how pleased we were to be visited by Captain Bruer, of the 43rd/48th Australian Battalion, who was in England for the Coronation celebrations, accompanied by his wife. They both very generously gave up some of their valuable time in England to come down here and see us. We are always very pleased to see any member of our Allied Regiments in the Dominions if they happen to be over here, and we wish a generous Government would give us an opportunity of being able to return their visit.

The Band has been away most of the summer on its usual round of engagements at various seaside resorts, including a visit to our two counties, giving performances at Banbury, Aylesbury, High Wycombe, and Slough, in order to encourage recruiting. That their efforts appear to have had no appreciable results cannot be said to be their fault. They also had the honour of playing in Oxford when Her Majesty Queen Mary visited the city to lay the foundation stone of the extension of the Bodleian. They must be congratulated on obtaining an outstanding report at their annual inspection in November. Doyne and seven other ranks went to London on November 10th to represent the Regiment at the unveiling of the Earl Haig Memorial.

I have mentioned before how acute the man power situation is becoming, and the powers that be have utilized this deplorable situation to turn us into a Military hotel. We are now harbouring post Depot Platoons from the Ulster Rifles, waiting to join their Unit in Palestine, and supplementary Reserve Platoons from the same regiment, and men of the Royal Norfolks home from India, awaiting their discharge. We rather feel that it can only be a question of time before we are completely outnumbered by our guests. As the system of drill in all the regiments is different, I think that a massed Adjutant's drill might provide a little comic relief for an otherwise sad situation.

Our sporting activities, I trust, are adequately dealt with elsewhere in the CHRONICLE, but there are one or two items that I think ought to be recorded here. First, the splendid achievement of our team in winning the King George V A.R.A. competition. They scored 505 — nine points more than the second team.

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Once again for the ninth time in ten years, the athletic team reached the final of the Army Sports; this year having won the Garrison, and been second in the Eastern Command meetings on the way. I venture to think that our record in the Athletic competitions can be second to none.

The Hockey team has made great strides, and they won the Eastern Command Tournament, but were defeated in the semi-final of the Army Tournament by the Royal Tank Corps from Bovington.

I cannot end this letter without some reference to our social activities. Various members of the Regiment have worthily maintained their ballroom reputations during the year, and although some of our leading lights have left us to dance elsewhere, I am able to say that there are others eager to, and capable of, carrying on with the good work. However we were all given a chance to show our paces in April, when a dance was held in the Mess. Horley's rooms were turned into an oyster bar which proved so popular that by midnight seventy dozen oysters had gone to their doom. It was a great success, and the Band brought it to a close at just the right moment, that is to say, when it was discovered that the champagne was on the point of running out.

I have a feeling, Mr. Editor, that there is much that I have omitted to tell you, but as this letter is, I fear, a trifle late already, I must put an end to it.

Yours
43rd.