

**1949 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE**  
**1st Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY (43rd & 52nd)**

**SUMMARY OF THE FIRST BATTALION DIARY, 1949**

*January 5th* — First Christmas Party given to 350 poor German children at the Toc H, Gottingen.

*January 6th* — Second Christmas Party given to 350 poor German children.

*January 8th* — Regiment paraded for a “Show the Flag” Route March through the streets of Gottingen.

*January 10th*— 2nd Lieut. P. D. Gadsden joined the Regiment from Light Infantry Brigade Training Centre.

*January 11th* — Major J. R. P. Montgomery, M.C., assumed command of the Regiment during the absence on duty of Lieut.-Col. C. Clifton.

*January 16th* — Lieut.-Col. C. Clifton re-assumes command of the Regiment. The Regimental Band gave a concert at the Toc H Gottingen in full ceremonial dress for the first time since pre-war,

*January 26th* — Major M. N. Harbottle joined the Regiment from H.Q. 24 Infantry Brigade, British Element Trieste Force. Major D. R. L. Bright relinquishes the rank of T/Major on becoming surplus to Lower Establishment.

*January 30th* — Capt A. C. Eyre relinquishes the appointment of Adjutant on posting to the Pakistan Army. Capt. A. C. Mason relinquishes the appointment of President of the Regimental Institute on posting to British Military Mission Ethiopia. Major M. N. Harbottle assumes the appointment of Adjutant. Capt. J. Willey assumes the appointment of President of the Regimental Institute. T/Major H. P. Patterson promoted to Substantive Major.

*February 1st* —The Regiment won the H.Q. 31st Independant Infantry Brigade Cross Country Competition having eight members of the team home in the first ten places out of a field of fifty.

*February 4th* — Major J. D. Palmer assumed command of the Regiment during the absence on leave of Lieut.-Col. C. Clifton. A draft of 82 other ranks left the Regiment to join the Durham Light Infantry at Dortmund. Capt. A. R. Allcock, C.F., joined the Regiment on temporary duty. He had been padre to the 43rd in England, at the beginning of the 1939-45 war.

*February 9th* — The Regimental Cross Country team finished fourth in the Hanover District Cross Country race which was won by the Parachute Battalion. A disappointing result but the team very definitely had an off day.

*February 17th* — News received that the Regiment was to move to the Middle East in early summer. No definite information as to dates or destination.

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*February 18th* — Lieut. D. E. J. Sweetzer posted to the Pakistan Army as an instructor in Physical Training.

31st Infantry Brigade .22 Rifle Competition for February.

*February 19th* — Second day of Brigade .22 Rifle Competition. The February competition was won by H.Q. Company with C Company second. Individual Medals were won by Capt. J. Willey and Lieut. M. R. Pennell.

*February 20th* — Major J. R. P. Montgomery, M.C., left the Regiment on posting to the School of Infantry, Warminster, as an instructor in tactics.

*February 21st* — Regiment informed that it was to move to Greece.

14447302 Pte. F. Terry, died as a result of a gunshot wound.

*February 26th* — 2nd Lieuts. C. A. S. Hinton and J. D. F. Mostyn joined the Regiment from R.M.A. Sandhurst on first commission.

*February 27th* — Major J. A. Tresawna, D.S.O., left the Regiment on posting to the Tactical School, Devizes.

*February 28th* — Gapt. A. R. Allcock, C.F., left the Regiment for Bad Oyenhausen where he had been appointed Senior Chaplain to H.Q. Rhine Army.

*March 1st* — Hanover District reconstituted as the 7th Armoured Division. 31st Infantry Brigade changed its name to 31st Lorried Infantry Brigade. The Regiment once again became part of the 7th Armoured Division.

*March 2nd*— Lieut.-Col. .C. Clifton returned from leave and attended the B.A.O.R. Study Period for Commanding Officers.

Major J. D. Palmer remained in command during his absence.

*March 5th* — Lieut.-Col. C. Clifton assumed command of the Regiment on his return from the B.A.O.R. Study Period at Bad Oyenhausen.

*March 8th* — Capt. H. McLean, Somerset Light Infantry, posted to H.Q. Rhine Army as Staff Captain 'Q'.

*March 16th* — A second draft of 82 other ranks left the Regiment for 1st Durhams at Dortmund.

*March 20th* — A draft of 20 other ranks joined the Regiment from 1st Battalion Durham Light Infantry.

*March 23rd* — Advance party of 2 officers and 50 other ranks left Gottingen for Crowborough, Sussex. This is to be our station in England for two months prior to our sailing for Greece.

*March 25th* — A third draft of 55 other ranks left the Regiment to join the Durhams at Dortmund.

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*March 28th*- Capt. T. Reynolds, M.C., K.O.Y.L.I., left the Regiment on posting as Staff Captain Q to H.Q. 31st Lorried Infantry Brigade.

*March 30th* — Major A. de V. Gibson joined the Regiment from, 1st Durhams and was posted to command B Company.

Major S. F. Burnell joined the Regiment as Quartermaster vice Major W. P. Warnock, M.B.E.

*April 2nd*— Lieut. O. G. Pratt joined the Regiment on posting from H.Q. 7th Armoured Brigade. He was posted to C Company.

*April 5th* — Capt. J. A. Davis, Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, Lieut. J. M. Baird and 2nd Lieut. D. D. Wade left the Regiment on posting to the Durham Light Infantry at Dortmund.

*April 7th* — The Regiment left Gottingen station for England at 0720 hours.

Embarked at Hook of Holland 2030 hours.

Major J. D. Palmer left the Regiment on posting to Durham Light Infantry.

Major R. R. F. T. Barry, M.B.E., appointed second in command vice Major J. D. Palmer.

Lieut. J. A. D. Lord left the Regiment on Class "A" Release.

*April 8th* — The Regiment disembarked at Harwich at 0900 hours. Arrived Warren Camp, Growborough, Sussex.

*April 11th* — Major-General P. G. S. Gregson-Ellis, C.B., C.B.E., Commander Home Counties District, paid a visit to the Regiment.

Capt. E. F. Garcia joined the Regiment from Intelligence Depot Maresfield and was appointed acting Motor Transport Officer.

*April 12th* — Embarkation leave for 14 days granted to all ranks.

*April 17th* — Lieut. C. J. Lambert left the Regiment on posting to the Sudan Defence Force.

*April 20th* — Capt. A. B. Gillespie-Hill rejoined the Regiment from the Light Infantry Brigade Training Centre. Posted to A Company as second in command.

*April 23rd*— Lieut.-Col. H. J. C. Ducat-Hamersley assumed command of the Regiment vice Lieut.-Col. C. Clifton on completion of his three years term of office.

Lieut.-Col. C. Clifton posted to Light Infantry Brigade Training Centre.

*April 30th* — Capt. T. Reynolds, M.C., rejoined the Regiment from H.Q. 31st Lorried Infantry Brigade.

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*May 1st* — Lieut. J. R. Whalley joined the Regiment from School of Infantry, Warminster, and was appointed Mortar Officer.

Lieut. D. J. Wood joined the Regiment from being Adjutant of Airborne Forces Depot and was appointed Motor Transport Officer designate vice-Capt. E. F. Garcia.

*May 2nd*— Major M. C. Davies joined the Regiment from the Depot Corps of Royal Military Police and was appointed President of the Regimental Institutes.

*May 3rd*— A draft of 176 National Servicemen arrived from the Light Infantry Brigade Training Centre for service with the Regiment.

*May 4th* — Capts. R. A. Colvile and R. J. Briscoe joined the Regiment from the Light Infantry Training Centre and were both posted to B Company. Capt, Briscoe relinquished the temporary rank of Captain on becoming surplus to establishment.

*May 5th* — Advance party of 4 officers and 50 other ranks under command of Major R. R. F. T. Barry, M.B.E., left to embark on H.M.T. *Windrush* for Greece.

Capt. B. C. Innes, M.C. and Lieut. T. Paul joined the Regiment from the Durham Light Infantry. Capt Innes was posted as second in command of D Company. Lieut. Paul was posted to A Company,

*May 6th* — Lieut. T. D. Byrne left the Regiment on Class A Release.

*May 9th* — Capt. (Qr.-Mr.) G. J. F. White joined the Regiment vice Major S. F. Burnell. Major Burnell continued to act as Quartermaster while the Regiment is in England. Captain White left to join the advance party in Greece.

*May 10th* — A second draft of 17 other ranks arrived from the Light Infantry Brigade Training Centre.

*May 13th* — *Gen.* Sir Evelyn Barker, G.G.B., D.S.O. General Officer Commanding in Chief Southern Command visited the Regiment with his Chief of Staff and stayed an hour and a half.

*May 17th* — 20 other ranks joined the Regiment from the Light Infantry Brigade Training Centre.

*May 24th* — 14 other ranks joined the Regiment from the Light Infantry Brigade Training Centre.

Major S. F. Burnell left the Regiment on posting to the London District Assembly Centre and subsequent employment in Middle East on the Extra Regimental List.

*May 25th* — The Colonel of the Regiment visited the Regiment. The Regiment paraded ceremonially 300 strong and marched past in threes. Approximately 100 past and present officers and other ranks of the Regiment witnessed the parade.

Regimental sports took place in the afternoon and were watched by the Colonel of the Regiment before he returned to Ashridge.

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*May 27th*—Capt. T. Reynolds, M.C., K.O.Y.L.I., attached to Eastern Command for Staff attachment prior to taking the Staff College examination next year.

*June 1st* — The Regiment embarked at Southampton in H.M.T. *Dilwara* for Salonika, Greece. The Regiment's strength at the time was 31 officers and 610 other ranks.

Major M. C. Davies left the Regiment on posting to the Light Infantry Brigade Training Centre.

Capt. A. L. Hills and 2nd Lieut. C. A. S. Hinton left the Regiment on posting to the Regimental Depot, Oxford.

*June 3rd* — Lieut. P. S. Smith left the Regiment on medical grounds and has since been discharged from the Army as medically unfit.

*June 10th* — Disembarked at Salonika and occupied Sobraon Barracks just outside the town. The Regiment was met by Brig. C. P. Jones, C.B.E., M.C., Commander 2nd Infantry Brigade, the formation to which the Regiment now belonged. Major M. Darell Brown, D.S.O., of the Regiment was also on the quay.

*June 14th* — 2nd Infantry Brigade Rifle Meeting. The Regiment only entered for the rifle competition.

*June 15th* — Rifle Meeting continued. The Regiment won the Rifle Competition by 12 points from the 1st Battalion The Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment.

*June 17th* — 2nd Infantry Brigade Athletic Meeting — first day. Regiment was third at the end of the day.

*June 18th* — Waterloo Day.

Final day of the Athletic Meeting. The Regiment finished third 8 points behind the winners who were the Bedfords.

*June 20th* — Conference at Brigade Headquarters to discuss extra regimental employments.

*June 21st* — A draft of 34 other ranks arrived by sea from England.

*June 24th*—14466773 Pte. J. Halloran died of injuries received when he inadvertently fell into the sea off the quay at Salonika.

*June 25th* — Regimental cricket match against the Bedfords which the Regiment lost by four wickets.

*June 27th* - H.M.S. *Vanguard* visited Salonika. A cocktail party was given for her officers in the Officers Club.

*June 28th* — Lieut.-General W. E. J. Erskine, C.B., D.S.O., General Officer Commanding British Troops Egypt and Mediterranean Command visited the Regiment and talked to all officers.

Cocktail party given by officers of H.M.S. *Vanguard* on board. A cricket match against H.M.S. *Vanguard* resulted in the Regiment being defeated by 3 wickets.

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*June 30th* — Lieut.-General Sir Robert Mansergh, K.B.E., C.B., M.C., the Military Secretary, visited the Regiment and talked to all officers.

*July 1st* — A regimental holiday. This replaced the customary one on Waterloo Day, as a holiday then so soon after our arrival was impracticable.

*July 2nd* — The Regiment defeated the 2nd Infantry Brigade Training School at cricket by 3 wickets.

*July 4th* — A and C Companies moved to Khortiatis Camp.

*July 5th* — Brigade Study Day to consider the reorganization of an Infantry Battalion on Lower Establishment.

*July 6th* — The Brigade Commander visited A and C Companies in camp.

*July 8th* — The Brigade Commander visited the remainder of the Regiment in barracks.

*July 13th* — The Staff Paymaster visited the Regiment and inspected the company accounts and bookkeeping. The subsequent report was excellent in the case of three companies and very good in the case of the other two.

*July 15th* — Mr. D. S. L. Dodson, Vice-Consul to H.B.M. Consulate North Greece gave a short talk on Greece to all officers in the Mess. Derek Dodson worked in the Special Air Service during the war when he won a Military Cross. He had in fact virtually captured Salonika by himself from the Germans in 1945.

*July 21st* — Officers Day. R.T. procedure was practised. A few of the wireless sets worked.

*July 22nd* — B and D Companies carried out range classification practices on Mikra Range.

*July 23rd* — Range classification for B and D Companies.  
Capt. E. F. Garcia left the Regiment to be attached to the 2nd Infantry Brigade Training School as Adjutant and Quartermaster.

*July 25th* — A and C Companies return from camp.

*July 26th* — D Company disbanded. S Company formed with a Mortar Platoon, a Carrier/Anti-Tank Platoon and a Pioneer Platoon, Commanded by Major R. F. E. Hill.

Major J. Willey took over command of C Company. Regiment visited by Major-General W. M. Broomhall C.B.E., D.S.O. Chief Engineer to Middle East Land Forces.

*July 28th* — Exercise 'Havabang'. An Officers Study Day to practise officers in wireless procedure. The wireless sets worked.

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*July 29th* - T/Capt. T. C. Periam promoted to Substantive Captain.

*July 30th* — B Company and Signal Platoon moved to Khortiatis Camp.

*August 1st* — A North Greece cricket side left Salonika for Athens. The Regiment was represented by Lieut. O. G. Pratt, 2nd Lieut. W. S. B. Rawlings, 1126770 L.-Cpl. J. N. Weston, and 19040040 Bds. F. Burke.

Rear party with Major L. C. Puttick and Capt. T. C. Periam arrived.

*August 6th* — Capt. B. C. Innes, M.C., assumed command of S Company in the absence of Major R. F. E. Hill on leave in England.

*August 11th* — Officers Day. Study of Battalion Battle Procedure.

*August 13th* — Regimental Cocktail party in the Officers Mess for 200 guests.

*August 17th* — C Company carried out field firing exercise with 201st Field Battery R.A. at Filiros.

Terrific gale, sea lashed to a foaming fury, very cold and wet. Cricket ground a sea of mud.

*August 18th* — B Company carried out field firing exercise with gunner support.

*August 22nd* — A Company carried out field firing exercise with gunner support. All three of these exercises were most successful and were the first experience our young National Servicemen had ever had of guns firing over their heads.

*August 24th* — A Company and Carrier Platoon moved to camp.

*August 25th*— 201st Field Battery R.A. gave a demonstration at Filiros, to all units of the Brigade, of Artillery support of Infantry.

*August 26th* — Officers Study Day. Subject, R.E. demolitions in the withdrawal. The T.E.W.T. was conducted by Major Scott Bowden, D.S.O., M.C., Officer Commanding 12th Field Squadron, R.E.

*August 27th* — Carrier Platoon returned from Khortiatis.

*August 29th* — Intelligence section moved to Khortiatis.

*August 30th* — Major-General H. Murray, C.B., D.S.O., Commanding 1st Infantry Division, watched a demonstration by A Company of a company in the attack at Khortiatis. He became so enthusiastic as to join in the final assault himself.

*September 1st* — Brigade Officers Study Period. Subject, Defence in desert warfare. The Divisional Commander was present.

Major-General H. Murray, C.B., D.S.O., visited the Regiment in the afternoon and dined in the Mess in the evening with a number of his staff officers.



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*September 3rd* — Carrier Platoon moved to Khortiat's camp in their new Oxford Carriers. Much interest shown in these new fighting vehicles. Mortar Platoon returned to barracks from camp.

*September 4th* — The Regimental cricket team defeated the Brigade Workshops by 3 wickets.

*September 7th* - Second Officers Study Day on "Desert warfare" run by the Brigade Commander.

*September 8th* — 201st Field Battery R.A. fired a series of practices; fire being directed by officers of the Regiment.

*September 11th* — Lieut. J. R. Prichard joined the Regiment arriving in the *Empire Windrush* from England and was posted to A Company.

*September 12th* — A Company, Carrier Platoon, Anti-Tank Section and Intelligence Section combined in advance to contact exercise at Khortiat's.

*September 14th* — A demonstration was given by 12th Field Squadron for all officers on the laying and neutralizing of mines and booby traps.

*September 15th* — Skeleton wireless exercise "Wilco" for all Headquarters down to and including Platoon H.Q.

*September 17th* — A Company and Intelligence Section returned to barracks from Khortiat's.

*September 20th* — Major-General E. E. Downe, C.B., C.B.E., Commanding British Military Mission Greece, spoke to all officers of the Brigade on the subject of 'Communism and the Greek War'.

*September 21st* — Brigade Officers Day on subject of "Withdrawal".

*September 22nd*— Brigade T.E.W.T. "Battalion in Withdrawal".

*September 23rd*— Exercise 'Roger'. Second Battalion wireless communications exercise down to platoon H.Q. level.

*September 29th-30th* — The Regiment carried out a 48-hour exercise known as "Quickfire" which was directed by Capt. D. R. L. Bright. It was an advance to contact exercise and the first the Regiment had carried out since 1948 in Germany. Results were most promising. This exercise was in preparation for a Brigade exercise destined for the following week.

*October 4th* — Brigade exercise "Welsher" A withdrawal exercise which lasted three days, The Regiment had its first experience of formation training since the summer of 1948. This first exercise was an undeniable success.

*October 5th* — Exercise "Welsher".



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*October 6th* — Exercise “Welsher”.

*October 8th* — Brigade Commander's conference on exercise “Welsher” at which he congratulated the Regiment on its performance throughout.

*October 18th* — Brigade exercise “Hermes” A wireless skeleton exercise in which all three battalions of the Brigade and Brigade H.Q. took part.

*October 19th* — Exercise “Hermes”.

*October 20th* — Brigade Commander's summing up of Exercise “Hermes”.

*October 24th-25th* — Exercise “Welsher II”. A battalion exercise to practise the night attack. The exercise finished at dawn on the 25th.

Major H. P. Patterson and Capt. M. N. Harbottle flew to Athens to study guard commitments for the Regiment when 1st Battalion East Surrey Regiment leave Greece.

*October 28th*—“Oxi” Day. Regimental Band and Bugles paraded in the main square of Salonika and sounded retreat. In 1939 the Greek Government said 'no' (oxi) to the Italians ultimatum. Since then the day has been commemorated annually.

Major H. P. Patterson and Capt. M. N. Harbottle returned from Athens.

*October 31st*—Brigade Exercise “Neptune”. This exercise involved a march of a total of 40 miles over a three-day period. It began with the Regiment acting as leading battalion of the Brigade in the advance to contact.

*November 1st* —Exercise 'Neptune'. The Regiment carried out a most successful night attack over very difficult country unreconnoitred by daylight.

*November 2nd*— Exercise “Neptune”.

*November 4th* — A demonstration squad, under the Regimental Serjeant Major, demonstrated to all officers and non-commissioned officers the new Light Infantry guard mounting procedure.

*November 6th* — A Remembrance Day Service and parade was held at the Greek Military Cemetery in Salonika. After the service the Regimental detachment of 150 all ranks marched past H.B.M. Consul-General and the Brigade Commander who took the salute. The detachment was commanded by Major R. R. F. T. Barry, M.B.E.

*November 7th* — H.M.T. *Windrush* docked with the Commanding Officer's and Quartermaster's families on board. 2nd Lieuts. A. S. Payne, D. R. Peppiatt and F. W. Edwards were also on board. These three officers joined the Regiment from Eaton Hall Cadet school and were posted to A, B and C Companies respectively.

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*November 10th* — Gen. Sir John Crocker, G.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., Commander-in-Chief Middle East Land Forces, visited the Regiment and stayed to tea in the Officers Mess. A Company provided a guard of honour on the Commander-in-Chief's arrival and departure. Their turnout and drill were good and Major H. P. Patterson, the officer commanding the guard, was complemented by the Commander-in-Chief.

Regiment told that they would be moving to Cyprus early in 1950.

*November 11th* — A holiday to celebrate Nonne Boschen Day.

*November 16th* — Major-General E. E. Downe, C.B., C.B.E., spoke to half the Regiment on 'Communism'.

*November 17th* — Major-General E. E. Downe, C.B., C.B.E., spoke to the remainder of the Regiment and stayed to tea in the Officers Mess.

*November 18th* — Advance party of A Company left for Athens in S.S. *Kadio*.

*November 20th* — Lieut.-Col. H. J. C. Ducat-Hamersley flew to Cyprus with the Brigade Commander to make an advance reconnaissance.

Major R. R. F. T. Barry, M.B.E., assumed command of the Regiment during the Commanding Officer's absence.

*November 21st* — Main party of A Company left Salonika for Athens in S.S. *Kadio*.

*November 22nd—2nd* Lieut. W. S. C. Chevis took over the duties of Messing Officer and Officer in charge of Civil Labour vice Lieut. T. Paul.

*November 24th* — 1st Battalion East Surrey Regiment left the Brigade for service in East Africa.

*November 25th* — Lieut.-Col. H. J. C. Ducat-Hamersley returned from Cyprus and assumed command of the Regiment.

Capt. B. C. Innes, M.C., took over the duties of Fire Officer vice Capt. R. A. Colvile.

*November 27th* — 2nd Lieut. W. M. Cracknell joined the Regiment from the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, on first commission. The Church Room in Sobraon Barracks was dedicated during the morning service and will be known in future as St. Christopher's Church Room. This maintains a link with St. Christopher's Church at Gottingen in Germany which was used by the Regiment during its stay there.

*November 30th* — A Company provided a guard of honour in Athens for the Secretary of State for War, Mr. Emmanuel Shinwell.

*December 2nd—* Brig. J. R. C. Hamilton, D.S.O., Deputy Director of Military Operations, talked to all officers of the Brigade in the Regimental Cinema on the world-wide situation.

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*December 5th* — A Company provided a guard of honour in Athens for the retiring head of the Military Mission, Major-General E. E. Downe, C.B., C.B.E., on his departure from Greece.

*December 9th* — Lieut.-Col. H. J. C. Ducat-Hamersley assumed command of 2nd Infantry Brigade in the absence on duty of the Brigade Commander.

Major-General W. A. Bowen, C.B.E., Chief Signal Officer, Middle East Land Forces, visited the Regiment and had tea in the Officers Mess.

The Second Minesweeper Flotilla anchored in Salonika Bay.

*December 10th* — Lieut.-Col. H. J. C. Ducat-Hamersley and Capt. M. N. Harbottle called on the Captain (M), Royal Navy, Commanding the Second Minesweeper Flotilla.

Hockey and Football games were played against the Flotilla teams and resulted in wins for the Regiment.

*December 12th* — Advance party of 3 officers and 37 other ranks left Salonika by sea for Athens on the way to Cyprus.

Five officers of the Minesweeper Flotilla were entertained to dinner in the mess this evening.

*December 13th*—Advance party disembarked at Athens.

*December 14th* — The Regimental “A” team beat the Regimental “B” team by 5 goals to 2 in the final of the Brigade Knockout Football Competition. The cup was presented by the Brigade Commander.

Advance party embarked at Athens for Cyprus.

*December 16th* — Advance party disembarked Famagusta.

*December 17th* — The Brigade Commander inspected the Motor Transport Platoon.

A farewell cocktail party was given by the officers to 250 guests including Lieut.-Gen. Grigoropoulos, Commander of the Greek C Corps, and H.B.M. Consul General.

*December 19th* — The Regiment tied for 1st place with 1st Bedfords in the Brigade Inter-Unit Messing Competition with 182 points apiece out of a maximum of 200.

*December 20th* — Brigade Inter-Unit Boxing Competition. At the end of the first night the Regiment was 4 points behind the Bedfords.

2nd Lieuts. C. H. C. Bacon, P. J. R. Spira and A. T. R. Walding joined the Regiment from Eaton Hall Cadet School. All three went direct to Cyprus from Port Said and joined the advance party.

*December 21st* — Brigade Commander visited the Regiment and talked to all ranks for approximately an hour and a quarter about the Regiment's work during the year, with which he appeared pleased. He also gave his own appreciation of the present world situation.

Final night of the Brigade Inter-Unit Boxing Competition, final results: 1st Bedfords 30 points, 43/52nd 27 points. Minor Units 22 points.

Messing shield was presented jointly to 2nd Lieut. W. S. C. Chevis and the Messing Officer of the 1st Bedfords.

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*December 25th* — Christmas Day. All officers living in Mess ate their Christmas dinners with the married officers living out.

*December 26th* — Boxing Day.

*December 28th* — Regimental “A” Hockey team beat 1st Bedfords “A” team by 2 goals to 1 after extra time in the Brigade Inter-Unit Hockey Competition.

*December 29th* — Regimental Children's Party in the Serjeants Mess. 5379471 Bugle Major G. Tipton was Father Christmas.

*December 30th*—14396225 Sjt. E. G. Field, Orderly Room Serjeant of the Regiment, was awarded the British Empire Medal by His Majesty the King in the New Year's Honours List. Award published in tonight's *London Gazette*.

*December 31st* — Farewell parade of the Regiment to Greece.

12 officers and 180 other ranks paraded in Aristotle square in Salonika alongside a Greek Army detachment of equal strength. The Regiment was inspected by Lieut.-Gen. Grigoropoulos accompanied by the Brigade Commander. Later the Regiment marched past in threes.

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**FIRST BATTALION LETTER**

Dear Editor,

I must freely admit that I view the writing of this year's letter with no little concern. So much has happened during the past year; so many changes have taken place, that it will be difficult to avoid compiling a catalogue instead of composing a letter. I have always been a little awed at the prospect of becoming the author of a CHRONICLE letter if that responsibility should ever become mine, and that awe has in no way diminished now that the time has come to sit down and write it. I hope that the reader when he comes to the end, will not think that an article from the *Geographical Magazine* has somehow found its way into the REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE.

When 1948 ended there was no reason to believe that the Regiment would be anything but a training regiment for National Servicemen in Germany when another year had passed. Drafts were arriving twice monthly with constant regularity and company commanders had few commitments other than supervising their training. January passed without much notice except that Tony Eyre handed over his adjutant's office to me and departed for Pakistan. Charles Mason left the same day, but in his case for Ethiopia.

Early in February, Rupert Barry joined us as a company commander but was later to become second in command vice "Scuttle" Palmer when the Regiment moved to England. It would take far too much time and room to give a complete account of the comings and goings among the officers which followed, and it must be left to a perusal of the order of battle to show how much the officer strength of the battalion has changed. Suffice it to say that out of the thirty officers now with us only ten were in Germany with the Regiment; and of those, two will depart as soon as we arrive in Cyprus — Leslie Puttick is for F.E.L.F. to join the Ghurkas and Ronnie Dowden returns to England to become Adjutant of the Depot.,

In February — on the 17th day to be exact — we had our first warning that we were not to be left in peace for long. A long involved signal was received from Rhine Army asking for a return showing the number of ranks eligible for overseas service on June 1st and six months afterwards. This could only mean one of two things. Either we were due to start an overseas tour ourselves or we were about to be milked of both regulars and National Servicemen to bolster up another Light Infantry regiment already serving abroad. Whichever it was to be would leave us sadly depleted. Very shortly afterwards we were told we were destined for Middle East. As Middle East stretches from Gibraltar to Nairobi this news fostered a great deal of interesting conjecture. Everyone hoped it would be Nairobi and prayed that it would not be Hageisha. When we heard it was to be Greece the news was received on the whole favourably, certainly with interest, although some were slightly sceptical having recently read an article in the press describing the Army in Greece as 'The forgotten Army'. England was to be our first stop, where we were told that we should stay for two months.

By the time all the packing had been done, and drafts had been sent to the Durham Light Infantry at Dortmund, we were very much a shadow of our former selves. Pat Patterson, who was on leave in England at the time was ordered to stay there and take command of the advance party of 50 all ranks, which left Gottingen for Crowborough in Sussex on March 24th. The Regiment itself left Germany on April 7th just 200 strong — 650 less than it had been eight weeks before.

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The six weeks stay in England was a very pleasant one. Everybody was given as much leave as possible, including fourteen days embarkation leave. As the flat racing season was just beginning Pat Patterson, Tony Hills, Ronnie Dowden and others were very happy; and with Lingfield, Lewes and Goodwood so close, were seldom to be seen wasting time in Crowborough. For others, London was an hour's journey from Tunbridge Wells and the restaurants, theatres and night clubs were well patronized by those who could afford them. But work was being done as well and mainly consisted of equipping ourselves with Khaki Drill and welcoming hundreds of young soldiers and many new officers, who came from many army walks of life. Maurice Davies came from being second in command of the Military Police Training School near Byfleet; Rowland Hill from looking after Displaced Persons in Austria; "G" (Gillespie Hill) from Africa; Robert Colville and Bob Briscoe from Bordon; David Wood from being Adjutant of the Airborne Depot; John Whalley from being an instructor of mortars at the School of Infantry; Toby Garcia from "living underground" for two years to quote his own words; Tony Gibson, Brian Innes and Jock Paul came from the Durhams in Germany, and Oliver Pratt from 7th Armoured Brigade also from Germany. Sammy Burnell was posted as Quartermaster in relief of Popeye Warnock but War Office found that this was a mistake and so George White was hauled out of the Depot, pushed into an aircraft which he viewed with considerable misgiving, and flown to Greece to meet the advance party which left England on May 5th under Rupert Barry.

Colonel "Boy" Clifton had by this time completed his three years in command and we knew he would not be taking us to Greece. Shortly before leaving Germany he had become engaged to Miss Elizabeth Hamilton who was well known to us through her W.V.S. activities on our behalf in Gottingen. Colonel Clifton handed over to Colonel Ducat-Hamersley soon after our arrival in England and then left to go on extended leave awaiting the War Office's pleasure. We hear that he is now commanding thousands of men with five Lieut.-Colonels under him. Our all too short English summer was now coming to an end. Our advance party had left at the beginning of May and early on the morning of June 1st we set out from Crowborough to resume our journey to the Middle East in the H.T. *Dilwara*. Six days before we left we held a Regimental Day at Crowborough. A nearby school had lent us their playing field for the afternoon in which to hold our impromptu sports. In the morning three hundred of the Regiment, for the first time in their green berets, paraded for the Colonel of the Regiment. A stand-up lunch was eaten in the Officers Mess afterwards, where a great number of past and present officers forgathered. It was a great pleasure for us to have the opportunity of welcoming so many and entertaining them before starting on our overseas tour; for no one knows how long it will be before the Regiment will be back in England again, and such an opportunity seldom recurs. To us it was a most enjoyable day.

Our voyage to Greece was uneventful but pleasant. Those few wives who were able to come with us travelled in the same ship — a concession the War Office hinted darkly had not been permitted since before the war. The Regiment made up only a proportion of the passenger list, the majority of the others being bound for Hong Kong and Singapore. We were glad to enter Salonika harbour on June 10th and not to have another six weeks sea travel ahead of us. We were met by the Commander of 2nd Infantry Brigade to which we now belonged. Brigadier G. P. Jones, C.B.E., M.C., and his wife, and were soon on our way out to our new camp six miles from the centre of the town.



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The Brigadier, who served on the staff of Colonel of the Regiment when he was Commander-in-Chief Middle East, is a great enthusiast. We had had an inkling of this before we left England and had had high hopes of being able to train our young National Servicemen into a good team before their time for release came around. In this we were not to be disappointed. The Brigadier gave us until September to get our team built and up to a company level in training. Then he said collective training would begin. A camp was established at Khortiatis in the hills overlooking Salonika and Pat Patterson and Douglas Bright with their respective companies moved into it on July 4th. From then on a company was continuously in camp until the end of October.

In the meantime we had already participated in two brigade sporting events. The first, the Inter-Unit Rifle Meeting, took place five days after we arrived. A team was entered for the rifle competition only, as it was considered impracticable, in the time, to produce sten and bren gun teams from men who had never fired either of these weapons before. After staying in second place up to the last practice, the Regimental team exerted itself and won the competition by 12 points from the Bedfords.

The second event was the Brigade Athletic Meeting which followed immediately after the rifle meeting. In this we finished third behind 1st Bedfs. Herts, and 1st Surreys. This was not surprising as less than a week's training had been possible, and the team chosen from those who had shown promise at the Regimental sports in England. However, we were by no means badly beaten and were only 8 points behind the winners.

Having put these two important events behind us and not disgraced ourselves in either of them, we turned our attention more solidly to training. Each company started with a four-week spell at Khortiatis with a further three weeks later on as time allowed. Tony Gibson's company was the only unlucky one, in that his second spell came to an abortive end after only one week, owing to bad weather.

By this time, November to be exact, we had already had a number of battalion exercises, both skeleton and live, and the Brigade Commander was ready to put our summer's training to the test. Unfortunately it was not possible to complete more than three exercises before training had to stop for the preparations to be made for the move out of Greece. But these three exercises were successfully carried out and our degree of training was subsequently praised by the Brigade Commander.

In all it has been a most gratifying training season. Plenty of excellent facilities, plenty of encouragement from above and enthusiasm from the men themselves. In fact it has been unanimously agreed that it has been by far the best training season the Regiment has had since the war.

Nobody can say we have not had our difficulties. In an independent station such as Greece outside duties are always likely to be heavy on the Infantry battalions that garrison these out of the way places. Trieste was one and Salonika is no exception. A heavy toll of outside commitments has fallen on the Regiment and with the Bedfords, our Salonika bedfellows, being reduced to less than two hundred men the brunt has had to be borne rather naturally by us. It has been possible, however, to play one job off against another and in this way ensure that four-fifths of the battalion completes a full cycle of training.



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Unfortunately it means that the remaining fifth have been extra-regimentally employed ever since we landed in Greece. Many of these have now returned to us and it is to be hoped that they will receive some modicum of section and platoon training before they are released from the army. It was a sacrifice that had to be made and it is to be hoped that in Cyprus, where there will be three battalions, the burden on this Regiment will be reduced to a minimum.

By now the future of the army in Greece had become front-page news in England. It had been apparent for some time, that with the cessation of hostilities in Greece, the necessity for keeping British troops in the country was fast disappearing and we confidently expected to start our travels once more. By the middle of November we knew that we would depart early in the New Year. The East Surreys were already scheduled to leave for Mogadishu at the end of the month and as we were to find a company to do guards in Athens until the relief battalion arrived, Pat Patterson and I flew there in the last week in October; Pat's company having been chosen to find the guards with the assistance of one platoon of John Willey's company. We had a most pleasant four days there and returned to attend the Greeks' National "Oxi" day celebrations at which the Regimental band in their scarlet uniforms and white helmets and the buglers in their white sounded Retreat in the main square of Salonika. This parade was a great success for the band and buglers who were well received and wildly applauded at the end by a crowd of nearly 18,000 Greeks.

Pat Patterson and his company departed for Athens on November 18th and are still there. They follow us to Cyprus in the middle of January. Before they left they mounted a Guard of Honour for General Sir John Crocker, G.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., Commander-in-Chief Middle East, when he paid a short visit to Salonika and to the Regiment. Since then they have twice repeated the performance in Athens, once for the Secretary of State, Mr. Emmanuel Shinwell, and again for the retiring commander of the British Military Mission, Major General E. E. Downe, C.B., C.B.E., on his departure for England.

Meanwhile life continued quietly in Salonika. John Willey, with one full strength platoon in Athens, found himself commanding a company of 16 N.C.O.s and 34 men. Tony Gibson, with the only strong rifle company, was able to carry out two days field training a week, which made up for the weeks he lost at the end of the summer. For the rest it was guards and duties. Preparations for our move went smoothly ahead. As December dawned the Regiment began practising for a farewell parade to be held on December 31st, just before we sailed -- a fitting end to our visit to Greece and to the first half of the century.

Christmas came and went and was enjoyed to the full by all. Some might describe it as a quieter Christmas than usual but for many of our National Servicemen it was the first they had spent away from home. Although the receipt of Christmas parcels was small it did not deter them from having a good time and they seemed amused and interested, if not impressed, by the traditional antics of the officers and Serjeants on both Christmas and Boxing Day.

In addition to the above festivities, the officers gave a most successful farewell cocktail party on December 17th, at which there were well over two hundred guests. These included General Grigoropoulos, the Greek military commander in Salonika, the British Consul, the Brigade Commander and the heads of all the foreign consulates in Salonika. The party's success was entirely due to John Willey and his mess committee and staff. John Willey also organized two equally successful children's parties just after Christmas.

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The first was for the children of the Regiment's families and the second for two hundred Greek children; victims of the recent war against Communism.

By this time we knew that we were to leave for Cyprus on January 7th. The advance party under Rowland Hill had left on December 12th and had duly arrived in Cyprus from whence there came cryptic and sometimes improbable signals; one of these read 'bring crokey, cutlets and gals'. It took a little time deciphering it to read 'crockery, cutlery and glass'!

Although our days were spent in packing and preparing for our move we still managed to add to the Regiment's sporting achievements. First we won the Brigade Football Shield, having both our "A" and "B" teams in the final; and then won the Brigade Hockey Shield by beating the Bedfords 3—2 in a close game. In culinary matters we also gained a success when we tied for first place with the Bedfords in the Brigade Messing Competition. We only dropped 18 points in two hundred, scoring a total of 182 points, an achievement of which Jock Paul and the messing staff and Serjeant McLeister and his cooks can be justly proud.

The parade on New Year's Eve went well. The form of the parade was a simple one. Two companies, each of four officers and 75 other ranks, were drawn up on one side of Aristotle Square flanking the Colour Party. The 43rd Regimental Colour was carried by Ronnie Dowden. The Commanding Officer commanded the parade, and the acting Second in Command and Adjutant were on the right and left flanks respectively. Drawn up on the opposite side of the Square and facing the Regiment was a Greek detachment of similar strength. The Commander of the Greek Corps, Lieut.-General Grigoropoulos, and the Brigade Commander, after taking the General Salute, inspected both guards in turn. It is interesting to note that General Grigoropoulos has since been appointed Secretary of State for War in the caretaker Greek Government. He has been the Greek Military Commander in Salonika since our arrival and has visited the Regiment more than once.

After the conclusion of the inspection, the two Greek companies flanked the saluting base while the Regiment marched past in threes. From all accounts the Regiment bore itself extremely well on parade, was smartly turned out and as steady as a rock during the inspection.

So with the fall of the curtain on the first fifty years of the twentieth century, my duty is finished. I feel somehow that I have not succeeded in what I set out to do, but I have tried to write this letter more as a letter than as a stodgy recital of Regimental facts and figures. A great deal has been omitted only because it will appear elsewhere in the CHRONICLE, and there is of course not room for it all. All those who have served with the Regiment during 1949 have had a great year and a most interesting one. We have accomplished a great deal both in training and in rebuilding our Regimental team. It can be fairly said that we have all learnt a lot and have enjoyed ourselves.

Yours,  
43rd/52nd