

**1953 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY**

SUMMARY OF THE FIRST BATTALION DIARY, 1953

January 1st— Brigadier R. G. S. Hobbs, D.S.O., on leaving 2nd Infantry Brigade sent the following message to the Regiment:

“On giving up command of the 2nd Infantry Brigade, I thank you all for everything that you have done in the past year in the Canal Zone. You have worked hard and played hard and have maintained a high standard of discipline. You have always shown a cheerful spirit, often under trying conditions.”

January 3rd— The Regimental Cross Country team came second in the 1st Infantry Division Race at Fayid. The team captain was 2nd Lieut. B. W. Balls and the team was trained by Capt. C. A. S. Hinton. This was also the Canal South Race. The Regimental team came third in this event out of a total of thirty teams running.

January 4th — Major P. K. Everett returned to the Regiment from GHQ, M.E.L.F. where he had been employed on the staff.

The Regimental Hockey team drew 1-1 in a replay in the second round of the Army Cup with the 1st Bn Royal Berkshire team.

January 5th — The Commanding Officer returned from leave in England.

January 6th — Brigadier i/c Adm. HQ, B.T.E. Brigadier R. G. Thurburn, C.B., C.B.E. visited the Regiment.

January 10th— The Commanding Officer held a conference of the O Group to discuss arrangements for Abu Sultan.

January 12th — Capt. H. J. W. Newton was appointed O.C. B Company. O Group carried out a recce of Abu Sultan 9 Base Ammunition Depot.

January 13th— Mr. A. J. P. Andrews, a War Office sponsored lecturer, gave a lecture to all officers and warrant officers on “Atoms and Development of Atomic Energy”.

January 14th — The Regiment moved to Abu Sultan to take over the duties of guarding 9 Base Ammunition Depot. A small rear party was left behind, two Regimental Cadres and the Cross Country team. Capt. R. S. C. Dowden was granted powers of Detachment Commander and placed in charge of rear details Grovehurst Camp, Suez.

The first “engagement” at Abu Sultan. The Commanding Officer captured four Bedouin who had been fired on by Capt. Cracknell after crossing the perimeter minefield and wire. The prisoners were handed to the 9 Base Ammunition Depot Security Officer.

January 15th— Major A. V. Brown returned from a Land Air Warfare course in England.

After being in 'Shirt Sleeve Order' during the day, the Regiment started wearing full battle dress or denims.

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January 17th— The Brigade Commander visited the Regiment at Abu Sultan. The Regimental Cross Country team came sixth in the Army Championships at Moascar. 2nd Lieut. J. S. Ibbotson was team captain. Capt. R. M. Colvile was appointed Weapon Training Officer. Major A. V. Brown was appointed Education Officer.

January 18th—2nd Lieut. S.E.Thistlethwayte returned from a Regimental Signal Instructors' course at the School of Infantry, Hythe. Major Sweeney and Major White went to Cyprus for a few days to discuss the move of the families to England in April.

January 19th— Capt. H. J. W. Newton was promoted T/Major.

January 23rd— Capt. R. M. Colvile was transferred to HQ, Company.

January 27th — The Regimental Football team beat the 1st Bn East Lancashire Regiment by 5 goals to 3. The Regiment was then top of the Canal South Units B League.

January 28th— The Regiment returned from I.S. Duties at Abu Sultan. During the period January 14th to 28th the Regiment had been responsible for patrolling and guarding the perimeter wire and minefield of twelve miles in circumference of the 9 Base Ammunition Depot. During the day the task was carried out by observation posts erected on towers, with wireless and line communication to a central command post. By night there was a system of standing patrols, foot patrols and one jeep patrol which ensured the safety of the ammunition depot although frequent attempts were made at infiltration. During this period the Regiment was almost under active service conditions and the continued long period of duty was a strain on all ranks. There were less incidents of theft and sabotage during this period than at any other time since the disturbances in Egypt started.

February 1st— The following officers all obtained "B" gradings on courses they recently attended in England:

2nd Lieut. P. J. Lott — 3-in. Mortar Course.
2nd Lieut. A. Pascoe— Platoon Weapons Course.
2nd Lieut. S. E. Thistlethwayte—Signal Instructors' Course.

February 2nd— Regimental Boxing team commenced training under 2nd Lieut. P. J. Lott. Major G. N. Astley-Cooper was appointed Mess President and Capt. E. R. R. Hicks Mess Secretary. 2nd Lieut. M. R. Radcliffe joined the Regiment and was posted to C Company.

February 4th— Brigade Exercise 'Icicles' commenced at 2345 hours. The Regiment moved out of Camp at 0200 hours.

February 5th— Exercise 'Icicles' finished at 1700 hours. The object of this exercise was to practise a rapid move across mountainous country without vehicles followed by the deployment for an attack.

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February 7th — C Company took over guard duties at the Ataga Cold Storage Plant. S Company took over kilo 99 on the Suez-Cairo road from 1st Bn Royal Berkshire Regiment and B Company took over the Water Filtration Plant on the Sweet Water Canal near Suez.

February 9th— 2nd Lieut. D. S. Hawker promoted to Lieutenant with effect from February 8th, 1953.
2nd Lieut. J. St. C. Simmons promoted Lieutenant with effect from February 8th, 1953.

February 21st — National Service Group 5105 left for England.

February 23rd— Divisional Skeleton Exercise called Exercise 'March Hare' commenced today. Bn HQ took part represented by Major G. N. Astley-Cooper, 2nd Lieut. S. E. Thistlethwayte and 2nd Lieut. D. Morgan.

February 25th — Five officers leave to take part in Exercise "Longbow I", a 3 Infty. Divisional Exercise, as umpires. The officers were: Major J. F. Ballard, Major D. B. Fox, Capt. E. R. R. Hicks, Capt. R. S. C. Dowden and Capt. C. A. S. Hinton.

February 28th— 2nd Lieut. K. A. How promoted Lieutenant with effect from February 13th, 1953.

March 2nd— Umpires returned from Exercise "Longbow I".
Major A. V. Brown took over duties of Mess President from Major G. N. Astley-Cooper. The first round of the Divisional Boxing Competition. The Regiment v. 29th Field Regiment R.A. at Geneifa. The Regiment won by 17 points to 16. The match was decided on the last bout which was won by Lance-Corporal Lewis. The standard of boxing was very good. The Regimental team was trained by 2nd Lieut. Lott and C.S.M. D. Furr.

March 3rd— 5106 National Service Group left for England.

March 7th— The Regimental Boxing team beat the Cheshire Regiment Boxing team in the second round of the Divisional competition. The Regiment won by 18 points to 15. The Regiment thus won the Brigade Boxing Championship.

March 8th — The training party due to take over drafts in England left today. This party was to carry out continuation training of recruits who were to join the 1st Battalion when they arrived in England. This party was commanded by Major G. N. Astley-Cooper.

March 10th— 2nd Lieut. S. E. Thistlethwayte took over command of the Signal Platoon from Capt. C. A. S. Hinton.

March 11th—Officers' training period — Discussion on the Withdrawal.

March 14th— Regimental Serjeant Major's Drill Parade.
Today briefing and preparation took place for Exercise "Longbow II", an exercise for the 1st Infantry Division in the Sinai Desert.

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March 15th— 5107 National Service Group left for England.

Final preparation took place for Exercise “Longbow”.

2nd Lieut. Goodhart transferred to HQ Company.

Regimental Boxing team beat 1st Bn West Yorkshire Regiment in the semi-finals of the Divisional Boxing Competition. A very close contest was decided on the last bout, which was won by Lance-Corporal Lewis.

March 16th— Exercise “Longbow” began. The Regiment moved by night to a Harbour area near El Shatt east of Suez and 2 miles from the gulf. Left in late afternoon.

March 17th—The Regiment arrived at 4 a.m. in the Harbour area and spent all day there.

March 18th — In the very early morning while it was still dark the Regiment moved as Brigade reserve up to the Mitla Pass. During the day the Regiment moved into the pass behind 1st Bn Royal Berkshire Regiment. At 1715 hours the Regiment on foot and carrying all wireless sets (No. 62 sets) and batteries, one section of 3-in. Mortars and one section of M.M.G.s without any transport started a march round the flank of the enemy into the open desert.

March 19th — The march continued over very rough and difficult country including deep sand and high rocky mountains. In spite of all difficulties the Regiment reached the objective on the enemy's lines of communication at 0245 hours. This was just in time to catch a whole battalion of the enemy withdrawing in transport. Soon after dawn the 40 Royal Marine Commando arrived to link up with the Regiment.

March 20th— Exercise “Longbow” continued. The Regiment started the day by guarding the whole length of the nine-mile long Mitla Pass and finished by hurriedly preparing two whole Brigade positions. The forward one was reced by the Commanding Officer and the rear position by Major A. V. Brown.

March 21st- After a confused 'battle' Exercise 'Longbow' ended in the afternoon.

March 22nd— The Regiment moved back to Grovehurst Camp, Suez. The main body crossed by the ferry at Port Tewfik and marched to Grovehurst Camp from the town.

March 23rd- Conference on Exercise 'Longbow' was held at Fayid. Most of the officers who took part in the exercise attended. The Regiment was warmly praised for its part in the exercise.

March 24th — The Commanding Officer addressed all ranks and thanked them for the way in which they had worked on Exercise “Longbow II”.

A conference was held to discuss the move of the Regiment to England and training and administration during that period.

March 25th—2nd Lieut. E. W. Leask promoted Lieutenant with effect from March 11th, 1953.

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March 30th— Major J. F. Ballard assumed command of the Regiment during the absence of the Commanding Officer.

March 31st— Capt. W. S. C. Chevis was appointed O.C. A Company.
Capt. C. A. S. Hinton was appointed Intelligence Officer.

April 4th— Capt. C. A. S. Hinton left to attend a Junior Intelligence course in England at the School of Military Intelligence.

April 7th—In England the advance party concentrated under command of Major G. N. Astley-Cooper at Oxford.

April 8th—General Sir Francis Festing, K.B.E., G.B., D.S.O., G.O.C., B.T.E., visited the Regiment.

The Platoon drill competition was completed. The final order was:

B Company 6 Platoon first

B Company 4 Platoon second

A Company 2 Platoon third.

The advance party in Egypt left by road for 156 Transit Camp at Port Said.

The advance party of the 1st Battalion in England moved from Cowley Barracks, Oxford, to Chisledon Camp in Wiltshire.

A large draft of recruits joined the advance party at Chisledon Camp.

April 9th— In Egypt the baggage party commanded by 2nd Lieut. D. A. N. Vansittart moved by Z craft from Adabiya Docks, Suez, to Port Said.

The Regiment was paid a farewell visit by Major-General T. Brodie, G.O.C. 1 Infantry Division.

April 10th — The main body of the Regiment marched to the Suez Garrison railway siding and went by train to Port Said. The Regiment was accommodated in 156 Transit Camp.

In England Capt. P. J. E. Durant joined the advance party at Chisledon.

April 13th— The Commanding Officer left Egypt by air for England.

April 14th—The Regiment embarked in H.M.T. *Empire Ken* at Port Said.

In England Lieut. A. S. Payne rejoined the Regiment at Chisledon.

April 15th— *Empire Ken* left Port Said for England.

April 16th — *Empire Ken* arrived at Famagusta, Cyprus, and collected the families of the Regiment.

April 25th—*Empire: Ken* docked at Southampton after a good voyage.

April 26th—The Regiment disembarked at Southampton and moved by rail to Chisledon Camp near Swindon. On arriving at Chisledon Station the Regiment marched with the Band and Bugles to the Camp.

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April 27th—The Regiment settled into Chisledon Camp and prepared for skeleton duties and leave.

Brigadier Bray, Commanding 50 Independent Infantry Brigade, visited the Regiment. Capt. P. J. Durant was nominated as successor to Major H. J. Sweeney, who was to go for one year to the Command and Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, U.S.A.

April 28th— The Regiment less the advance party proceeded on leave.

2nd Lieut. S. R. Hart joined the Regiment and was posted to A Company.

Major D. R. L. Bright rejoined the Regiment.

April 29th— Capt. I. R. C. Greenlees rejoined from the 4th Bn T.A. and was posted to HQ, Company as Assistant Adjutant.

May 1st— Capt. R. M. Colvile left to attend the Anti-Tank Gun course at the School of Infantry.

Major J. M. A. Tillet rejoined the Regiment and was put in command of A Company.

May 14th — 2nd Lieut. D. Stanley joined the Regiment and was posted to A Company.

The Commanding Officer visited the headquarters of the Light Infantry Brigade at Strensall in Yorkshire.

Capt. W.M. Cracknell went to attend W.T.O. course No. 4.

May 19th —All officers not on courses returned from leave for three days, for co-ordinating and training conferences.

Three officers of the 4th Bn T.A. visited the Regiment at Chisledon.

May 20th— Lieut.-Colonel H. H. Van Straubenzee, D.S.O., O.B.E., lectured to all officers on life in B.A.O.R.

T/Major Newton relinquished the rank of T/Major on becoming surplus to establishment.

May 26th — The bulk of the Regiment returned from leave.

Major D. R. L. Bright took over duties of Mess President.

A draft of forty-five other ranks joined the Regiment.

2nd Lieut. Ibbotson was posted to HQ, Company as Assistant M.T. Officer.

May 28th —The Bugle Section and the Regimental Band concentrated at Oxford before moving to Shorncliffe for the 150th Anniversary of the raising of the Light Infantry Brigade.

Coronation Route lining party moved to London, to prepare for coronation duties.

May 29th —The Coronation Colour Party commanded by Major H. J. Sweeney, M.C., moved to London. 2nd Lieut. P. J. Lott and 2nd Lieut. B. W. Balls were to carry the Regimental Colour and the Queen's Colour respectively. The party consisted of three officers, R.S.M. J. Stevenson, D.C.M., and the colour escorts.

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May 30th — The Band and Bugles and a party under the command of Lieut. A. S. Payne visited Aylesbury to take part in a parade organized by the borough.

June 2nd— Coronation Day. The Regimental detachment lined part of the route in Hyde Park and the Colour Party and Escort marched in procession from Westminster Abbey to Buckingham Palace.

June 4th—The Commanding Officer explained the significance of the Colours to all recruits who had joined since Egypt.

June 5th —The Queen's Birthday. A parade was held on the occasion of the Queen's Birthday and was taken by the Colonel of the Regiment. On this parade a presentation of two Maori statuettes were made by the Mayor of Tauranga, New Zealand, Mr. Wilkinson, on behalf of the Hauraki Regiment, which is affiliated to us.

June 6th —The Regiment provided a guard of honour at Oxford on the occasion of the presentation of the Freedom of the City to the Rt. Hon. Mr. Menzies, Prime Minister of Australia. Capt. P. J. E. Durant commanded the Guard. The Regimental Colour being carried by Lieut. J. St. C. Simmons.

June 11th—2nd Lieut. B. K. Peppiatt joined the Regiment and was posted to B Company.

June 13th—The Assault Pioneer Platoon returned to the Regiment from their attachment to 32 Assault Engineer Regiment.

June 15th— Major-General Firth, G.O.C. Salisbury Plain District visited the Regiment.

June 19th—2nd Lieut. B. W. Balls and eight other ranks moved to Shorncliffe to take part in the 150th Anniversary of the Light Infantry Brigade. All the remainder of the Regiment except for exceptional cases returned from leave.

June 21st—The Regiment moved to Larkhill area under command of Major G. N. Astley-Cooper to take part in Exercise "Scamperdown" as part of 50 Independent Infantry Brigade, who were acting as enemy to the 51st Highland Division (T.A.).

June 25th— Exercise "Scamperdown" ends.

The first half of the advance party commanded by Capt. E. R. R. Hicks moved to Germany. Lieut. D. S. Hawker was baggage officer. Major D. R. L. Bright, Major G. J. F. White and Capt. R. S. C. Dowden had already moved with their families.

Major H. P. Patterson visited the Regiment and gave a series of lectures on Methods of Instruction.

June 26th— A cocktail party was held in the officers mess which was attended by a large number of serving and retired officers.

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June 27th — The second half of the advance party left for Germany consisting of three officers and thirty-five other ranks. It was commanded by Capt. C. A. S. Hinton with 2nd Lieut. P. J. Lott and 2nd Lieut. D. G. Lloyd-Evans.

June 29th—An officers' study week began at Chisledon Camp.

June 30th—2nd Lieut. R. A. Pascoe and 2nd Lieut. C. C. Cuningham were posted to the Depot of the Durham Light Infantry prior to going to Korea.

July 1st—Capt. W. S. C. Chevis went to the Regimental Headquarters at Cowley Barracks, Oxford, to take up the duties of Adjutant.

July 6th—Regimental Athletics Meeting won by S Company.
2nd Lieut. O. R. W. Wynne joined and was posted to A Company.

July 7th—The Regimental Band rejoined the Regiment having completed their embarkation leave.

July 11th —The Regiment marched through Oxford with the Colours and the Band and Bugles. The Regiment was entertained afterwards at Regimental Headquarters, Cowley Barracks, Oxford.

July 13th—A draft of forty-four men joined the Regiment from Regimental Headquarters, Oxford.

July 18th —The Regiment moved by train to Harwich and embarked for B.A.O.R.

July 19th —The Regiment arrived at the Hook of Holland and moved in two train parties to Osnabruck where they all arrived at Belfast Barracks before 1800 hours.

July 20th—Regiment commenced settling in at Belfast Barracks, Osnabruck.
Nine other ranks joined the Regiment from 1st Bn K.O.Y.L.I. in Berlin.

July 31st— Exercise “Oil Up I” a skeleton battalion exercise took place on training areas B and A.

August 3rd— The rear party arrived from England.

August 4th —The majority of the families arrived at Osnabruck from England.
Brigadier C. L. Richardson, C.B.E., D.S.O. visited the Regiment. He inspected the guard and spoke to all members of the Regiment in the Cloth Model Room.

August 11th—Exercise “Mailed Fist” began.
The Regiment moved out to the Dorbaum training area near Munster.

August 11th-15th— Exercise “Mailed Fist”.

August 17th —The Commanding Officer held a conference on future training.

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August 19th—The Commanding Officer talked to the whole Regiment at 1000 hours on the Football Field.

August 22nd— Lieut. G. C. Stacey rejoined the Regiment from Trieste where he had been A.D.C. to Major-General Winterton.

August 24th—Major-General G. E. Prior-Palmer, C.B., D.S.O., visited the Regiment and watched soldiers training.

August 25th— 2nd Lieut. P. J. Lott and 2nd Lieut. S. E. Thistlethwayte were promoted to Lieutenants with effect from August 3rd.

August 27th—Lieut. G. C. Stacey was promoted T/Captain with effect from August 22nd, 1953, and posted to B Company.

The Commanding Officer, Major D. R. L. Bright and Capt. C. A. S. Hinton reced the Sennelager Training Area.

September 5th—The Commanding Officer inspected all M.T.

September 8th— Commanding Officer's Administrative Inspection of A Company.

September 10th—Commanding Officer's Administrative Inspection of S Company.

A draft of thirteen other ranks arrived from England.

Inter-Platoon Cross Country Race was held. Winners were the Regimental Band with the Signal Platoon second and Anti-Tank Platoon third.

September 14th—The Regiment moved to Sennelager for training with the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment.

September 15th—2nd Lieut. W. Goodhart left the Regiment on release from National Service.

September 16th- 2nd Lieut. Finny joined the Regiment.

September 23rd— The Ceremony of Retreat by the Band and Bugles took place at Normandy Barracks, Sennelager.

September 26th —The Regiment returned from Sennelager to Belfast Barracks, Osnabruck.

September 30th—Lieut. E. W. Leask was posted to HQ 6 Armoured Division as M.T. Officer.

October 2nd—Lieut. S. E. Thistlethwayte left for three weeks leave.

October 9th — The Commanding Officer and Company Commanders attended an address by Major-General F. N. Mitchell, C.B.E., D.S.O., G.O.C. 6th Armoured Division, at Bunde.

1st Round of the Inter-Company Boxing.

2nd Lieut. D. Marshall joined the Regiment and was posted to C Company.

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October 15th—Administrative Inspection of HQ, Company.

Finals of the Inter-Company Boxing won by S Company, who narrowly beat HQ Company.

October 20th—A, B, C Companies and the Assault Pioneer Platoon moved to Sennelager for classification and field firing.

October 24th—Capt. I. R. C. Greenlees left for England for leave and to attend a Company Commanders' course at Warminster.

October 27th—The Anti-Tank Platoon commanded by Capt. R.M. Colvile moved to Hohne Training Area.

October 31st—Those who went to Sennelager returned and also the Anti-Tank Platoon from Hohne.

November 1st—2nd Lieut. M. N. Peppe joined the Regiment and was posted to B Company.

November 2nd—A lecture was given to selected officers on defence against Atomic Attack by Lieut.-Colonel Cross of the U.S. Army.

2nd Lieut. J. D. Finny left to attend Platoon Weapons course. No. 148 at Warminster.

November 3rd—A draft of twenty-one men arrived from the D.C.L.I.

November 10th—Capt. H. J. W. Newton was promoted temporary Major.

November 11th—Nonne Bosschen Day. A Regimental holiday. A church parade and service was held on the square. The Colours of the 43rd and of the 52nd were carried on parade. A concert was held in the NAAFI in the evening.

November 13th—The Regimental Boxing team beat the 5 R.H.A. team.

November 18th—Capt. P. W. Mitchell joined the Regiment and was posted to HQ Company.

November 20th—Exercise "Hot Up II" set by Brigade.

December 3rd—Regimental Cross Country Race, which was won by A Company. First Individual was Lieut. A. S. Payne.

Capt. C. A. S. Hinton and 2nd Lieut. C. St. C. Simmons returned from leave in England.

December 8th—Annual Administrative Inspection taken by Major-General F. N. Mitchell, C.B.E., D.S.O., G.O.C. 6th Armoured Division and Brigadier C. L. Richardson, C.B.E., D.S.O., Commander of 61 Lorried Infantry Brigade.

December 25th—Christmas Day. All officers and warrant officers and Serjeants served the soldiers with their Christmas dinner in the dining hall.

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FIRST BATTALION LETTER

Dear Editor,

Our last letter finished as we said goodbye to the Colonel of the Regiment at a crosstrack in the desert near Suez. We were on our way to an exercise, he on his way back to England. We had been much cheered by his visit and in spite of the almost complete lack of what was called 'amenities' morale was high and remained so during the next four months in Egypt.

During these four months our manner of life remained much as it had been since we arrived in Egypt nearly eighteen months before. There were always some internal security duties and there was always our own camp to guard. When General Neguib and the Egyptians created trouble the I.S. duties increased. We trained as best we could and as the situation allowed. The I.S. duties themselves were excellent training and junior leaders and men developed fast, far faster than they do in Germany today.

In January the Battalion was given the task of guarding for a fortnight the main ammunition depot in Egypt at Abu Sultan. The perimeter of this depot was 12 miles but with hardly a strand of wire sufficient to deter a dog let alone the wily wogs of the Canal Zone.

Our arrival here coincided with another surge of Egyptian unpleasantness and we were kept alert by well-informed Headquarters who told us daily 'Abu Sultan is No. 1 Priority tonight'. Indeed it was, and no doubt it still is an attractive target to ill-intentioned persons whether their aim was to obtain brass for ashtrays, ammunition for the Egyptian Army or to make a very large bang. However, no intruder succeeded in stealing anything during the Battalion's period of duty. The casualties to both sides were nil, though four misdirected Bedouin on their way to a wedding, who wandered across the perimeter in broad daylight, had the privilege of being captured by the Commanding Officer who at the moment found himself the only available mobile reserve.

The Battalion returned to Suez and to a period of collective training which culminated in a divisional exercise in Sinai known as Longbow II. Exercises in Egypt were fun. There were no restrictions on ground, and few on movement which skill and determination could not overcome. In consequence exercises were reasonably uncontrolled and there was scope for ingenuity and initiative.

'Longbow II', which can almost be called a Regimental peace-time battle honour, was no exception. On the second day of the exercise the Battalion was ordered to carry out a night march to cut the enemy's line of withdrawal. The only possible route was 15 miles long over sand-dunes and rocky hills. Carrying its medium machine guns, 3-inch mortars and No. 62 wireless sets, and brilliantly navigated on a moonless night by Captains Bill Chevis and Christopher Hinton, the Battalion reached its objective after a 9 1/2 hours' march. Within twenty minutes of the Battalion's arrival, an enemy battalion—the 3rd Battalion Grenadier Guards—unaware of its presence attempted to drive through it in lorries head to tail. The slaughter in war would have been great. In fact the umpires ruled that the 3rd Grenadiers had ceased to exist.

It is worth recording that at the final conference on the exercise the Chief Umpire, himself a Grenadier Guardsman, described this operation as a fine piece of soldiering, while the G.O.C. British Troops Egypt, General Festing, called the actions of the Battalion during the whole of this exercise as a glorious swansong to its tour in the Middle East.

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Three weeks later the Battalion embarked at Port Said on the *Empire Ken* and on April 25th greeted by the Colonel of the Regiment and many past and present members arrived at Southampton. Once again the 43rd and 52nd Light Infantry had completed a tour of foreign service and had returned home.

Home for the Battalion was Chisledon Camp near Swindon. For almost three months we were based on this collection of almost derelict huts which were adequate enough in summer and anyhow luxurious in comparison with our tents and camp we had left behind in Egypt.

This summer interlude in England was enjoyed by everyone owing to leave which was the first consideration and for which many were considerably overdue. Militarily it was of course a disruptive period. However, two functions of Regimental interest and importance did take place. The first was the presentation to the Regiment on June 5th of a carved Maori statuette by the Harauki Regiment our allied regiment in New Zealand. The second was the march of the Battalion on July 11th through the city of Oxford with Colours flying and band and bugles playing in pursuance of the privilege accorded the Regiment when the freedom of the city was conferred on it after the last war. Accounts of these two ceremonies appear elsewhere in this *Chronicle*.

On July 18th the Battalion left England once again and moved to Osnabruck in Germany where it joined the 61st Lorried Infantry Brigade of 6 Armoured Division in the British Army of the Rhine. The barracks we found waiting for us were excellent and married quarters were plentiful and good. For the first time for almost two years husbands were able to live again permanently with their families.

Within three weeks of arrival in Germany the Battalion was called upon to take part in a divisional exercise called "Mailed Fist". We had to work fast to rub off some of the rust which had collected in England and to learn both our role in an armoured division and warfare in a European country. Accustomed to driving across the desert on a compass bearing or on the only existing road we found it difficult at first to find our way and not to lose ourselves. However, during the big exercise the Battalion did not seem appreciably less well trained than units long established in B.A.O.R. and concluded by successfully conducting a somewhat complicated attack, after an exhausting 50-mile night move in M.T. We went into the exercise feeling like new boys at school but came out of it happy to find that we could manage and hold our own in the complex, if conventional, type of operation for which the Army of the Rhine is trained. We also came away with the impression that exercises in Germany were less interesting than in Egypt.

If exercises were different in Germany, so too we found was administration. And in between visits to that excellent training area at Sennelager called the All Arms Training Centre to work with the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment with whom we are affiliated or to carry out our annual range classification, the Battalion had to get to master the elaborate administration of B.A.O.R. and to put its house in order. Ahead of us lay that dominating event of winter life in Germany, the Annual Administrative Inspection.

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An Annual Administrative Inspection was an event which the Battalion had not seriously suffered from for some time and probably not on the scale it is now practised in Germany since before the war. Fortunately our inspection was late in the year and by the time our turn came by dint of very hard work on everyone's part the barracks glistened with whitewash, the vehicles gleamed with new paint, and floors and passages shone from vigorous polishing and scrubbing. And under all this facade there really was a sound administration. In fact the Brigade Commander called it good.

The inspection was hardly over when Christmas was upon us and which needless to say was celebrated in the accustomed manner and on Christmas Day itself unlike the last two years when I.S. duties made it necessary to stagger it over two or three days.

And so with Christmas over and the New Year about to begin the 1st Battalion letter for 1953 ends. You will notice that it has not the same chatty style as previous letters. The day-to-day events and the comings and goings of officers are not referred to as they will be found in the Diary of Events. On the other hand more important events of the year are recorded in more detail. This is done deliberately as this letter is the main source from which the future historian of the Regiment will draw.

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MARCH OF THE FIRST BATTALION THROUGH OXFORD

ON July 11th, 1953, the 1st Battalion Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (43rd and 52nd) exercised the privilege conferred upon it, when in 1948 the Regiment was granted the Freedom of the City of Oxford.

The initial planning started even before the Regiment left Egypt because the City was anxious that its return after four years abroad should not go unnoticed.

A parade of this size and ceremony required a great deal of planning. Most excellent arrangements were made by Regimental Headquarters with the NAAFI, the City Police and all other organizations that had to be co-opted.

The route to be followed was from the junction of Headington Hill and Morrell Avenue via the Plain, Magdalen Bridge, the High, Carfax, Cornmarket Street to St. Giles, where in the enclosure in front of St. John's College, the Mayor, Alderman Brown, would take the salute.

The order of march of the parade was:

Band and Bugles: Bandmaster H. A. Kenney

The Commanding Officer, Lieut.-Colonel P. G. F. Young, O.B.E.

The Adjutant, Captain P. J. Durant

The Regimental Serjeant Major, R.S.M. J. Stevenson, D.C.M.

No. 1 Company (A Company and three files HQ, Company), Captain I. R. C. Greenlees

No. 2 Company (B Company and three files HQ, Company), Captain H. J. W. Newton

No. 3 Company (C Company and three files HQ, Company), Major J. F. Ballard.

The Colour Party

2nd Lieutenant J. S. Ibbotson, Serjeant Stanley, 2nd Lieutenant B. W. Balls,
Serjeant Paris, Serjeant Ball.

No. 4 Company (Support Company), Major P. K. Everett.

No. 5 Company (HQ Right Half Company), Lieutenant A. S. Payne.

No. 6 Company (HQ Left Half Company), Major A. V. Brown

Second in Command, Major G. N. Astley-Cooper.

The Regiment moved to Oxford by road on the morning of Saturday, July 11th, 1953, and after haversack rations and a final polish of brasses and boots at Cowley Barracks moved down to the bottom of Morrell Avenue to await H Hour. It was very warm and the sky heavy and oppressive.

There was quite a pause before the march began. This helped to swell a not inconsiderable crowd that had been attracted and also enabled people to talk to spectators many of whom were former members of the Regiment.

All the traffic had been stopped on the side of the road and the area of the Plain and Magdalen Bridge was packed. Claps and cheers greeted the Regiment, as in sixes it marched through the City. I don't think that anyone who was on parade had any idea how spontaneous and moving the reception accorded to the Regiment was going to be.

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As we marched up the left-hand side of St. Giles' the crowd surged forward to get a better view. As a result, the Regiment, having wheeled near the War Memorial, had difficulty in getting through to its allotted position with the Colours opposite the Mayor.

The 43rd and 52nd were then turned into line, dressed, and presented arms to the Mayor who made an address. He welcomed the Regiment home and congratulated them on their bearing and turnout. The Commanding Officer replied saying how proud the Regiment was to be exercising its privilege for the first time and thanking the Mayor for the excellence of his arrangements, which enabled the citizens of Oxford and many parents and relations from elsewhere to see their sons and husbands on parade. The Regiment then presented arms once more, moved to the right in column of sixes, and to the Regimental Marches wheeled right and marched away.

Tea was arranged at Cowley Barracks and it was here again that the first-class organization of Regimental Headquarters was appreciated. The Mayor and Councillors, the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Bicester, the Colonel of the Regiment, many past and present members of the Regiment together with their families, and friends of men serving with the 1st Battalion had been invited. In addition some 500 men of the 4th Battalion were also present to make a Regimental gathering such as probably never had happened before.

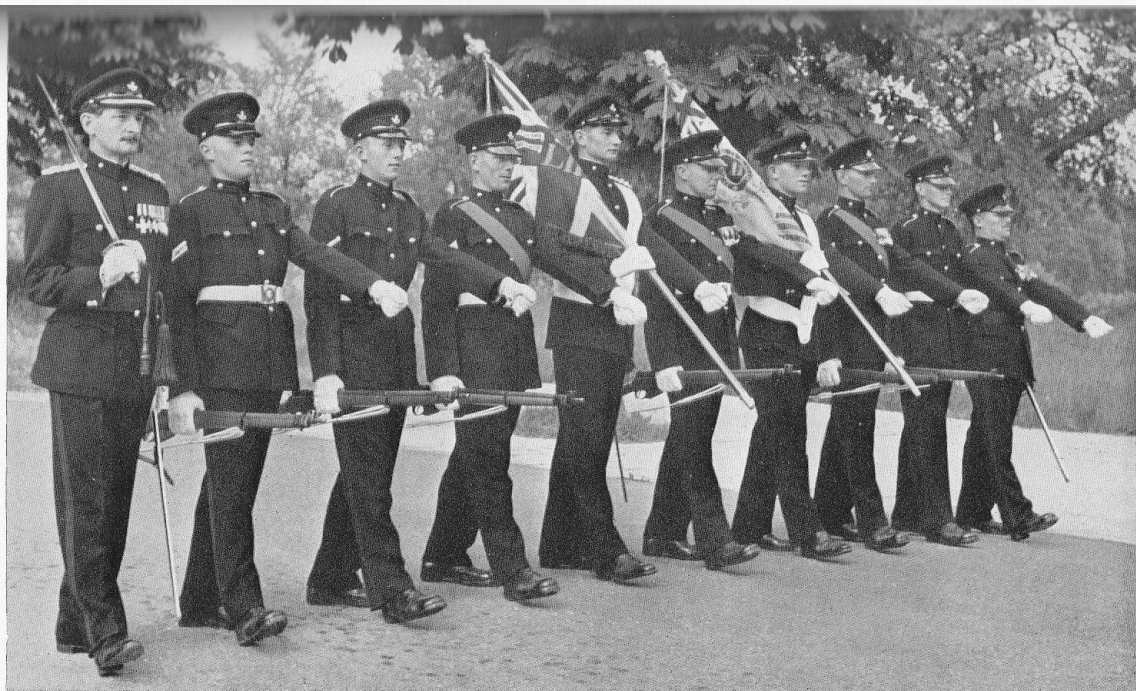
The Colours of both the 43rd and 52nd were displayed on the cricket ground. The Regimental Museum and a recruits' barrack room were open for the families to visit. The Band and Bugles sounded Retreat.

And so ended a notable day in the history of the Regiment which will be remembered with pride and pleasure by everyone who took part in it.

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Marching through Oxford — 1st Battalion



Coronation Party, 1st. Battalion (43rd & 52nd)
Major H. J. Sweeney, M.C., Corpl. Overfield, L.-Corpl. Jubilee, Serjt. Phillips, 2nd Lieut. P. V. Lott, C.-Serjt. Gater, 2nd Lieut. B. W. Balls,
Serjt. Young, Pte. Wightman and R.S.M. J. Stevenson, D.C.M.