

Airborne Signals Association



Newsletter 2014

**Foreword by
Officer Commanding 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron Major Graham Clarke
ROYAL SIGNALS**

Almost halfway into my tenure as OC 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron, I feel that the days race past and that the achievements of my people are so thick and fast that I am denied sufficient opportunity to recognise and reward them. So please excuse me for the rather indulgent and biased report that now follows.

I vividly recall the lump in my throat as I addressed those of you who gathered for the Airborne Signals Dinner at Caythorpe on 7 Sep 13. I said then, and I believe now, that too little is done to connect the serving and ex-serving communities. Selfishly, I want my people to seek and find inspiration from the unbridled enthusiasm and friendship that separates 'old comrades' from mere acquaintances. But there is much my generation can offer in return. If you need an antidote to the regular drum beat of newspaper headlines downplaying the intellect, compassion and conduct of young people, then look no further...my 170 men and women will reaffirm your faith. To any remaining doubters – come to Caythorpe for 5 – 7 Sep 14. See for yourself. Failing that, how about a day out in Galloway Forest on Sat 20 Sep 14, for the Lanyard Trophy? I have been hard with the team this year, as I expect that we should be able to overwhelm the competition without countless weeks of dedicated training; we should be that good everyday, not just for one day. Come and watch, please. Maybe I expect too much? We'll soon see.

Normandy 70th preparations looming, it barely seems appropriate to talk about exercises and other commitments short of 'proper operations'. But I echo the comments of my predecessor (soon to be Lieutenant Colonel) Mike Fayers when I assert that the business of Contingency is no trivial undertaking. I reminded my troop commanders only yesterday that we have the delicate and crucial task of balancing the requirements of Very High Readiness with the simple but inescapable needs of human beings (rest, family, community etc). Our challenge is to hold a perpetual simmer without running out of water or boiling over. Try it. Good luck with that.

We have just emerged from a rampantly successful performance on Exercise JOINT WARRIOR, where large chunks of Britain's Navy, Army and Air Force joined with forces from other nations to play out forcible early entry into a non-permissive theatre of operations. I'm proud to say that despite the shifting sands of an ever-evolving communications capability, and the vague and changeable demands of those we serve, my people just get on with it. And deliver. Time and time again.

The geekier (some might say more professional?) crowd remain torn between the excitement of crunchy interoperability work with American and French colleagues, and the desire to see their friends and family more than once in a blue moon. There is much I could say about this aspect of our work, but it is perhaps best summarised by quoting the great (albeit much-quoted) Billy Connolly...

"We want this! And that! We demand a share in that, and most of that, some of this, and f*****g all of that! Less of that, and more of this, and f*****g plenty of this! And another thing, we want it now! I want it yesterday, I want f*****g more tomorrow, and the demands will all be changed then so f*****g stay awake!" (...oh, and if you could deliver it all by parachute, that would help too)

On a more mature note, I bring to your attention an article in the Mar 14 edition of the RSI Journal, describing the bravery of a certain Corporal Crabb of 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron. I must stress that this example of exceptional courage pre-dates his donning of the blue and white DZ flash, and comes from a soldier who is not para-trained. Incidentally, he is also pretty handy with a radio. I say this not in any way to diminish the obvious value (to me and the Brigade) of Airborne Signallers, but to reinforce the fact that I continue to benefit from very high quality people; some of whom wear the blue badge of courage, some do not. All add value. Long may it continue.

I do hope to see a few familiar faces at the Airborne Signals Old Comrades Association Biennial Reunion Dinner Dance on 14 Jun 14. If it is half as good as the Arnhem Weekend fundraising dinner (8 Feb 14) – organised by Doreen and Pete (and friends) – then it will be a night to remember. Keep looking out for each other. OC 216.



216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron – Wire Articles 2013/14

March – August 2013

Alpha Troop on Exercise JOINT WARRIOR – Cpl Tucker

After a lengthy build up, the end of March saw the Squadron on Ex JOINT WARRIOR (Ex JW). The exercise represented not only the biggest exercise of the year in Europe. The official statistics state 9,999 Troops were deployed on the exercise from around HM Forces – the actual deployment likely to have significantly exceeded that!

Ex JW was an opportunity for Alpha Troop to deploy our Tier 2.5 Step-Up HQ, with our new Troop Commander Lt John Dodson deploying for the first time. The Headquarters represents the Squadron's most likely HQ to deploy at the start of Operations, so the pressure was on our small team of 8 to show what the Air-portable Headquarters was capable of when deployed.

Our first task was to enable Staff to provide Command and Control from South Cerney during the insertion of the Pathfinders, in addition to the Setup of the Tier 3 Main HQ in Carlisle. Murphy's Law of Combat 'If it can go wrong, it will go wrong' was prevalent in the early stages, but with the teamwork and ethos associated with our Squadron we pulled together to ensure the staff were given all the tools they needed to do their job effectively. A hard week led to a Change of Control (CHOC) to Bravo Troops Tier 3 HQ, and our Step-Up HQ was torn down in preparation for a Rapid Air Land (RAL) move to Carlisle – a forward mounting base for our next deployment in West Freugh, Scotland.



West Freugh offered a change in scenery and with the help of Tier 1 Para TAC, of who were already on location following their Para jump with the Brigade Commander, our team began their rapid build with a tight timeline before Staff were due to arrive. Once established more hard work and CHOC back Tier 3 enabled yet another move for the deployed members of the Troop back to Carlisle for the final stages of the Exercise.

Ex JOINT WARRIOR culminated in a final assault which saw many members of the Squadron deployed in unfamiliar roles. Outgoing Alpha Troop OC **Lt Coterrill** deployed in command of a small Man Pack Rebroadcast Team, whilst **Cpl Tucker** and **LCpl Dale** deployed as drivers for the Pathfinders assault. A worthwhile exercise for the Troop with regards to further familiarisation with our Tier 2.5 Step-Up HQ, as well as bonding those who had worked closely together for 3 weeks, the Exercise endured. We look forward to our next challenge as a Squadron – with our hopes strongly pinned on an operational deployment in the near future!

Even Some Adventure Training – By Sig Farminer

One of 10 lucky members of the Squadron to get a place on Adventure Training, I was relishing the opportunity to travel up to Balmacara House in Scotland for a week of Mountaineering and Mountain Biking. Monday's arrival saw us split up into 3 teams and after being given our timetables we were given the necessary briefs and kit issue.

My teams first day of activities were centred around mountaineering, led by **Maj John Higginson**. After being briefed on the route, together we navigated steep down-hill climbs and ridges, with a couple of descents requiring us to don our less than flattering helmets. After a few shaky moments, and some even shakier knees, we were relieved to overcome the challenges that many of the obstacles presented. This activity took up much of the day, gratefully split up by a short lunch at a spot overlooking some remarkable views of the Scottish Highlands.

The remainder of the AT was dominated by Mountain Biking. Led by **Sig Harman**, a trained Mountain Bike Leader, we navigated both steep and technical routes around the terrain – with only a few comical falls! As the weather closed in after two days of solid sun, the muddy trails proved more fun for our saddle worn group. Further to this, the legendary Scottish delicacy of the 'Battered Mars Bar' kept energy up later in the week.

The final ascent of the week was followed by the fastest and possibly most difficult descent back to Balmacara House, and following a good old fashioned 'chippy' we readied ourselves for the journey home. A quality week, the long drive back to Colchester was hardly noticeable to any of us from behind the back of our eye lids!



WO2 (RQMS) Nipper Sherlock

Exercise ALPHA TROOP REMEMBERS

Ex ALPHA TROOP REMEMBERS saw members of the Troop under **Lt John Dodson** and **SSgt Paul Steel**, deploy to Stafford on a group bonding exercise. Gratefully hosted on 22 Signal Regiment's camp, a quick turn around saw the lads into their 'out on the town' gear as they left camp for a troop meal. The first 'do' under **Lt Dodson**, it was a perfect opportunity for him to get to know his Troop more in an informal setting – for better or worse!

The following morning the Troop departed for a visit to the National Memorial Arboretum. Guided by Alan the tour guide, the group visited the Royal Signals and Airborne memorials where Sig Oostuizen and Sig Barton gave presentations on the history of the Squadron and Pegasus Company. These presentations were followed by **Sig Williamson** presenting on the late General Deane Drummond, a Corps and Squadron legend. The tour was concluded by a visit to the wall of memorial where the names of all Soldiers who have lost their lives since WW2 serving their country, are recorded. The Airborne prayer was read for the members of the Squadron who lost their lives, after which a wreath was laid for Squadron legend Cpl Steve Dunn who was sadly lost on Op Herrick 13 in 2010.

A humbling and educational day for all members of Alpha Troop, the trip was exactly what being a member of 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron is about. The lads had fun, bonded, and paid their respects to those who deserve it the most. We will remember them.



Exercise DRAGONS NAPOLEON_ – by Sgt Ricky Dowds

Ex DRAGONS NAPOLOEN, headed up by **Capt 'Chaos' Cotterill**, saw 13 members of 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron deploy on a 3 week AT Package in Corsica in order to complete the challenging GR20. Regarded as Europe's most arduous trek, the route will regularly take you up to heights of 2000 metres and above. After the necessary lessons from the JESMEL's, **SSgt Colin 'runs with foxes' Smith** and **SSgt Gilly Smith**, the group boarded a flight from Gatwick to Nice where they were to wait for their ferry to Corsica.

On arrival in Nice, as you would expect during the summer in the South of France, the weather was pretty warm! The majority of the group had per-empted this, with **Cpl Rankin** proudly sporting his new duty free sunglasses. There is always one exception however, and in this case **LCpl Dom Eccles** decided to implement a bit of 'tech admin' as he announced to the group that he had failed to bring any shorts! Luckily saved by **Sig Jas Moore**, the group set about Nice exploring its restaurants and bars.

A 6 hour boat journey saw the party of 13 arrive safely in Calvi, Corsica. The group set up camp to the north of the GR20 route, pitching tents in a sea of ants that became a running theme for the majority of the trek. The camp was basic, as were all on the trek, providing the necessities of a shower, toilets and not much else. The camps sometimes offered small shops, however due to the prices that would need you to sell your spleen in order to afford a Tropicana let alone a beer, these were left alone.

The following morning the group split into two and after the necessary group photos, the party set about tackling the GR20. The pace was steady however due to the nature of the ground suitably challenging, with the majority of the most challenging climbs rewarding you with some truly stunning scenery. Aspects of the route were furnished with chains, steel wire rope and ladders to assist the trekker providing another element to conquer along the way. Interspersed deep water pools on route allowed for some fun, with **SSgt Andy 'I'm a water baby me like' Dunn** taking full advantage wherever possible with his trademark bomb!

After 15 days and 130 miles of trekking, the group arrived at the southern finish point where **Sig Tim 'I used to be in a band' Maynard** captured a group photograph as Squadron photographer. A fantastic journey, with each individual being awarded the 'Summer Mountain Proficiency' qualification, many of the team are now looking to further themselves by applying for MLT. A quality expedition, the Squadron now look forward to their next opportunity for AT.



ARMED FORCES RUGBY LEAGUE WORLD CUP - By Captain Tom Howley

The Defence Rugby League World Cup took place in Colchester across July and comprised of four teams; GB, Australia, New Zealand and Serbia. The GB team was made up of Combined Services players including eight from the Army and I was lucky enough to be involved.

The previous World Cup in 2008 was held in Australia where GB narrowly beat Australia in a hard fought final. Conscious that GB were not only hosting but defending the World Cup a mission statement was set out from the start; *Retain the Armed Forces World Cup on home soil.*

Preparations started back in January where the initial train on squad met at Marjons College, Plymouth for initial strength & conditioning tests. Each player received an intense training programme and further tests were conducted 12 weeks later in April. Head Coach, Wayne O'Kell (RN) and his team whittled the squad down to 24 which met for a week in June in Portsmouth, prior to the first fixture.



Capt Tom (Hardcase) Howley receiving the ball

The tournament was an all-play-all format, split into two stages; the groups and the knock out stages. The strong competition resulted in me being excluded from the match-day squad against a strong New Zealand team. After a close first half, the hosts pulled away to win a comfortable 32-8. In the other fixture Australia hammered Serbia 112-0.

The second fixture for GB was against Serbia and I was selected to start and wear the historical GB shirt on home soil. GB soon found their feet and ran away winning 96-0. Fortunately I capped a strong performance by scoring two tries. New Zealand narrowly lost to Australia 32-22 in a fiery encounter.

The third group fixture was the big one against the Aussies. I was again selected to pull on the GB shirt against Australia. Wearing the GB shirt against the Aussies was a proud moment especially whilst singing the national anthem before competing against our sporting rivals. The Aussies

started well and gained momentum very quickly, building a 20-4 half time lead. GB came out hard in the second half and began to build field possession with resulting scores but were narrowly defeated 20-16. The defeat meant that GB would progress to the semi finals against the Kiwis who defeated Serbia 66-6.

Plagued with injury from a tough, physical encounter against Australia, GB recouped and progressed to the semi finals and a rematch against the Kiwis – I was again selected to pull on the GB shirt. The semi final was a close encounter with each side scoring early tries in another hard 80 minutes. With 10 minutes to go, former Hull FC player, Dominic Maloney scored a try to put GB 16-14 in front; however it was the Kiwis, who upset the apple cart and scored a last gasp try to win 20-16. The Kiwis progressed to play the Aussies in the final after they defeated Serbia 120-0 in the other semi. To come so close and have it taken from us at the end was heart breaking.

Australia were crowned Armed Forces Rugby League World Champions after they defeated New Zealand 32-22 in another close run game. The next Combined Services Rugby League major event will be in Australia in 2015, where a commemorative fixture will be played on ANZAC day.

The experience was a once in a life time and thoroughly enjoyed being around such talented individuals. I look forward to taking my experiences back to the Corps side, which will again compete in Merit 1 in 2014.



Colchester Garrison Show – by Sig Wood

This year saw the Squadron support the Colchester Garrison Show. The show replaced the 'Colchester Military Festival', and had over 10,000 people come to visit. The show was made up of different elements from around 16 Air Assault Brigade, with demonstrations including the Parachute Regiments Red Devils parachuting in, an Apache stand and a section attack mocked up with blank rounds and pyrotechnics by the Parachute Regiment. 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron hosted a recruitment stand, upon which many of the attending children seemed far too infatuated with the display of weaponry and equipment to ask about the role of our Squadron in the Brigade! The Tier 1 HQ (Para TAC) was commanded by **Cpl Mike Carver** and **Sig Wood**, whilst the Man Pack Rebroadcast (MPR) element was hosted by **Cpl Stu 'Pinnars' Pinnington** and **Sig 'Tat'**

Butler, unique to 216 (Para) Sig Sqn both these capabilities drew plenty of attention from the passing public.

Concurrent to the Colchester show was the Para's 10 in which a number of personnel from the Squadron competed. Bravo Troop Commander **Lt Scott Mapplebeck** was the first of the Squadron in with an impressive 1 hour 41 minute time. To further add to the atmospherics of the day there were also two Armed Forces Rugby League World Cup matches; New Zealand vs Serbia and Great Britain vs Australia. Two very different matches, New Zealand destroyed Serbia, where a closer match between GB and Australia saw the Australians coming away narrow victors.

Overall the day was a great day out for all that attended. A worthwhile recruitment event for the Squadron saw much interest in the Squadrons capabilities from those there on the day with a military focus, whilst the atmospherics created by the additional events allowed for those just hoping for a day out in the sun a fun environment in which to do so.



Ex PEGASUS - By LCpl Hillary

After a quick turn around after Ex JOINT WARRIOR, a small portion of the Squadron deployed to France to take part in Ex PEGASUS. The aim of the exercise was to support 16 Air Assault Staff Officers as they work with their French counterparts from 11 (Fr) Parachute Brigade, however for the Squadron it posed the perfect opportunity to further test the Tactical Network Gateway (TNG) used to facilitate interoperability with the French.

Faced with a new French interoperability team to who we had worked with before, the first day of setup was spent forging the working relationships that we enjoyed with the previous team. After a few minor mishaps, to which neither side would admit fault, the TNG was in and working come the third day. With the fact that the French do not work weekends, it was time to explore what France had to offer.

Friday saw 12 of us depart for a day in Paris. It was only a 2 hour drive away, however **Cpl Mick "Fred Flintstone" Qualtrough** managed to make it a 5 hour epic before we finally found a place to park up – only to be faced with a bargain 250 Euros parking fee for the 2 vehicles! After splitting up into groups around Paris we all met up under the Eiffel Tower at 7, with the park relatively peaceful; that was until **LCpl Chris "Buzz Lightyear" Hardy** came crashing through with a rugby ball shouting "it's ok the Brits are here".

Saturday saw the remainder of the group who had not had the opportunity to explore Paris given the opportunity to explore the town of Trios. After a brief look at the cultural history of the impressive town, the group found themselves trying out their impressively un-impressive French on the local waitresses. With no luck but full stomachs, Trois offered a high street of bars in which to relax whilst we could before real work started on Monday.

Monday, and all the lads were back conducting final testing before the start of the French CAST Ex. With the shift rotor up we began our 12 hour shifts, with the usual jobs such as officers purging hard drives or forgetting passwords taking up the majority of the manpower! End-ex was called just after evening meal on the Thursday and with our own beds beckoning, we managed to tear down the British part of the HQ in less than 2 hours.

The drive back was relatively uneventful, with the minor matter of a flat battery being the only hindrance. We now look forward to the opportunity to work with our French Counterparts 11 (Fr) Parachute Brigade in the future – their cookhouse cuisine excluded!

Lanyard Trophy 2013

History

The history of the Lanyard Trophy goes hand in hand with the history of 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron itself. Having been re-rolled after the Second World War the Squadron found itself as part of 6 Field Force, during the height of the Cold War. As part of a lightly armed, un-armoured Infantry Brigade the Squadron faced down the nations of the Warsaw Pact which boasted air superiority and a 'massive' armoured superiority. It became clear that such a lightly armed, un-armoured formation could only last for a matter of hours in the event of hostilities. It was as part of the reaction to this apparently dire set of circumstances that the first Lanyard Competition came into being...

In order to give the men of the Squadron the best chance of 'breaking clean' from the enemy it was decided that they should train to cover 40 miles in 24 hours with a weapon and a load consisting of essential ammunition, water, food and NBC kit; assessed as weighing not less than 40 pounds. All ranks of the Squadron took part in this training with the emphasis being on 'endurance'; the ability to keep going. The March was an individual test on the basis that 'on the day' soldiers could well be alone.

Certificates were awarded for completion of the 'Endurance March' and an individual competitive element was introduced. The March was also welcomed as being tough and challenging training, helping to keep alive the tradition of airborne fitness.

In 1979 the March was opened up, competitively, to other R SIGNALS units and the Lanyard Trophy was offered to the winning unit. It retained its essential simplicity of testing endurance over distance, with a load, and developing the soldier's confidence in his ability to do this.

In 1982 many soldiers who had completed the Lanyard Trophy were deployed on Op CORPORATE, the Falklands Conflict. Faced with the now famous 'yomp' to Port Stanley they reported on their return that they had felt fully confident in their ability. It has always been the case that the British Army will be required, sooner or later, to march long distances with heavy loads and that signallers' loads will inevitably be amongst the heaviest.

The Modern Competition

The Lanyard Trophy is now held annually and is still largely faithful to its original incarnation. The only major exception being that the race is held as a team event, each team consisting of 8 soldiers with one Senior NCO and one Officer. The aim remains the same; to cover 40 miles with 40 pounds in less than 24 hours. The event now draws teams from across the Corps with several Regiments entering multiple teams. There are 7 trophies to be won in the modern Lanyard Trophy; Competition Winners, Runners Up, TA Competition Winners, Female TA Competition Winners, Veterans' Prize, Saxony Lanyard Trophy.

As well as representing a demanding competition and training tool, for the wider Corps the competition also serves as a recruiting platform for 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron and other specialist units within the Corps. Individuals who perform well on the competition and have demonstrated the physical robustness and mental hardiness required to finish the race are seen as ideal candidates for P-Coy and service with Britain's Airborne forces.

Lanyard Trophy 2013



The Lanyard Trophy Competition is organised each year by the unit that won the competition the previous year. As such, 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron had the honour of running the event once again this year. The Squadron set about organising the event in the vicinity of Warcop Training Area. Situated in the idyllic landscape of Cumbria right on the edge of the Lake District National Park, the terrain would be picturesque but challenging.

On 6 May 13, members of 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron descended upon Warcop Camp for the beginning of what was going to be an arduous period of training for the Lanyard Trophy competition. Wanting to make themselves at home for the duration of their stay in Warcop the Squadron soldiers decided to 'maroon' the place up by adorning the windows and walls with various maroon T-Shirts. **LCpl Rose** added to the airborne aura of our allocated sleeps by mounting a goats head on the door, which was met with approval by all members of the Squadron who were present.

So whilst accommodated in this slightly satanic looking hut, the men of 216 began in earnest their training and preparation for the upcoming Lanyard Trophy. Giving up more than one weekend to scale mountains and fight extreme winds the team showed immense commitment to the training program and gave it their all. Training included several early starts, several long marches and even a few visits to the swimming pool, where the team demonstrated their collective discomfort with the idea of swimming. The training program culminated in a 25 mile forced march across the Warcop area which resulted in the following team having the honour of being selected to represent 216 (Para) Sig Sqn:-

Lt Mapplebeck
Sgt Jon 'Buchy' Buchan
Cpl Stuart 'Pinnars' Pinington
Cpl Adam 'son of QM' Milson
LCpl Jowers
LCpl Rose
Sig 'H and M' Hale-Mullin
Sig Pollock

The team was supported by an excellent admin team on the day led by **Sgt Dowds**, with his able assistant **LCpl Laval-Chesterton** who performed admirably during training but unfortunately succumbed to a knee injury.

With the team selected and the admin team prepped and ready the 216 Lanyard Trophy Team 13 made up for the bank holidays they'd missed and the weeks leave they'd forgone by indulging in a long weekend prior to the competition. With four consecutive days off, the team was ready to go and back to Warcop for a the final days prep and a little bit of psychological warfare with the other teams who were now beginning to arrive.

The race itself began with a reveille of 0200 hrs, a very early breakfast and on the start line for 0400 hrs for a 0500 hrs start. With a motivational playlist on loop, the team was raring to go. The starting whistle went and the race began with 21 Signal Regiment (Air Support) leading the stampede, the Squadron team simply pulled out to the left overtook them, and proceeded to build a nice steady lead. By the third checkpoint the Squadron was about 30 minutes ahead and maintained that lead until the finish.

Sig Pollock, two-time Lanyard champion, unfortunately succumbed to the heat of the day and despite insisting that he be allowed to continue, he was dropped at the penultimate checkpoint. After battling heat exhaustion for half the course he demonstrated true airborne ethos and a will to 'crack on' in an exemplary manner. Alas, the Saxony Trophy remains just out of the Squadron's reach for another year.

Our warmest congratulations to all the competitors at this year's Lanyard Trophy; it truly was an excellent competition and we look forward to next year's event. Special thanks and congratulations to our French cousins who powered round the course with nothing but EVIAN bottled water and came away with the Saxony Trophy.

The Runners up were the Male team from 21 Signal Regiment (Air Support), the female winners team was also from 21 Signal Regiment (Air Support) so well done to them.

The winning teams;

Male – 216 (Para) Sig Sqn (10:56)
Female – 21 Sig Regt (AS) (12:48)
Male (TA) – 63 (SAS) Sig Sqn (14:47)
Female (TA) – 39 Sig Regt (TA) (15:43)
Veterans (Male) – 14 Sig Regt (EW) (15:29)
Veterans (TA) – 43 (Wessex) Sig Sqn (18:07)

With the halfway mark of the year fast approaching the Squadron has enjoyed yet another busy period, with deployment on exercises both inside and outside the UK taking the limelight. First the entire Squadron deployed on the long anticipated Ex JOINT WARRIOR to locations around the UK. Shortly afterwards, a small contingent commanded by **Lt John Dodson** deployed to France in support of Ex PEGASUS working with 11 (Fr) Parachute Brigade, our partners in the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force. In the meantime 10 lucky individuals from the Squadron found themselves exploring the highlands of Scotland on Adventure Training, chancing the Northern weather that was said to have been inconsistent at best! The Squadron has also continued its run of success in the Lanyard Competition, once again bringing the Lanyard Trophy home to 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron.



French Signals Compete in the Lanyard Trophy following Ex PEGASUS

Continuing with the busy theme of the period, there has been no rest bite for the 'top Corridor' at Squadron HQ with wholesale changes. Bde RSM **WO1 (RSM) Pete Watson** moves on to 22 Signal Regiment following his LE Commission, with **WO1 (RSM) Paul Henderson** returning to the Squadron from Blandford as his replacement. **Captain Dave Phillips** returns to the Bde, replacing **Captain Nelson Reynolds** as 2ic. **Captain Paul Johnson** is replaced in the Ops-O hot seat by **Captain Charlie Jones**, whilst the impending departures of OC **Maj Mike Fayers**, **WO2 (YofS) Neil Port**, and **WO2 (FofS) Scotty Davis** will finalise an almost completely new top Corridor. We wish all those posted on new assignments the very best of luck, whilst wishing a warm welcome to our new and returning members of the Squadron.



September-October 2013

With the summer sun scorching over the past couple of months the Squadron welcomed a relatively calm period. The usual build up to exercise and deployment has been downscaled leading into summer leave, the unusually calm calendar presenting an opportunity for plenty of Squadron and Troop training. Live Firing Tactical Training package Ex **EAGLES DAGGER** represents the only significant exercise over this time with **SSgt Steel** organising the two week package, putting the blokes from the Squadron through their paces in a tactical setting. The Squadron also managed to enter a team of four into 'Trailwalker'; a best effort 100km foot race event for charity over the South Downs. Top marks to those who made the final team, first British team home, cracking result!

The following months are sure to be interesting and busy with troops deployed as far a field as Mali (still) and Kenya. That said, the Squadron is still managing to send guys on P Coy, basic Parachute Jumps course, and lads are getting the opportunity to jump with our allies – **LCpl Baker** is soon to jump with the Belgians, including a balloon jump that is making him mildly nervous to say the least.

The wholesale changes in the Squadron 'top corridor' are now completed, the new and returning members of the Squadron settled into their new offices before departing on summer leave. The next change on the Squadrons calendar is scheduled on its return from block leave, with the move from two Comms Troops to three with the re-establishing of Charlie Troop. This troop will see the incoming Troop Commander **2Lt Pete Stradling** at the Helm straight off his Troop Commanders Course, with the newly returned **SSgt Mick Richardson** as the Troop SSgt. **Sgt Corbett** will move

into the Troop from the Training Wing as Troop Sergeant – what could go wrong? Exciting times at the Squadron, the Troops have their new ORBAT, missions and tasks are chomping at the bit.



Ex EAGLE'S CALL 2013 – by Lt Mapplebeck, OC BTp

216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron has recently reorganised itself and re-allocated roles to its Radio Troops. This has seen Alpha Troop become 'Ops Troop' and Bravo Troop become 'Mission Specific Training Troop' or 'MST' Troop. This reorganisation is aimed at mirroring the form-cycle the Battle Groups have within 16 Air Assault Brigade, with one Battle Group stood by to deploy with the AATF and the others conducting training to prepare for their year as part of the AATF. In addition to this the Squadron has seen the recreation of Charlie Troop which will be responsible for providing the Brigade with Out Dets and Rebroadcast Dets.

As part of this internal reorganisation MST Troop was required to conduct CT1 level training as part of its validation for the AATF role. The Troop, supported by Charlie Troop and soldiers from Support and MT Troops, deployed to Crowborough Camp near Pippingford Park in Sussex to conduct a week of training and exercise. The week long package included instruction in patrolling, route selection, CBRN, BCDT, Occupation of a Platoon Harbour and Section Attacks, the instructional phase took place within Crowborough Camp and was delivered as an intensive classroom-based package over 48 hours. This was then followed by a 72-hour exercise and confirmation phase on the Pippingford Park Training Area.



Once deployed onto the area, troops received in depth training in C-IED and CPERS, both culminating in demanding confirmation serials. Once the training serials were completed the Section Commander's were put to the test in a series of demanding Section Attacks against dug in enemy positions. It made a refreshing change for the junior soldiers and JNCOs and they relished the chance to get back to basics and close with the enemy. Once the enemy were all dead and searched the troops deployed to a Platoon Harbour and began to settle into harbour routine.

It wasn't long though before the Troop received some disturbing news; a well-known enemy Bravo had entered the AO with an extremely dangerous weapon. The Troop was required to conduct

reconnaissance patrols in order to establish the Bravo's location and identify the weapon he was carrying. After a target pack was delivered to the troops by the Squadron's very own SF Liaison Officer, **Sgt Dowds**, Orders were delivered and the Section Commander's were ready to deploy and get eyes on the enemy. What followed was a series of daring patrols in which 1 Section managed to intercept a phone call from a Northern Irish Terrorist and 2 Section managed to get eyes on the Bravo himself.

These patrols provided the intelligence required to start operations against the enemy within our AO and an ambush was planned for the next night. In the early hours of Friday morning the Troop left their harbour and set-up an ambush on a known enemy MSR. After laying up for 4 hours the Ambush was sprung and the known Bravo along with 3 others were killed and two tubes of weapons grade plutonium he was carrying were retrieved; a mission success.



The Troop were then able to extract from the ambush and found a Merlin Helicopter inbound to extract them safely back to Colchester with their precious cargo secured.

The whole week provided an engaging and demanding training package for the soldiers within MST Troop, the infantry skills they learnt will improve their ability to support the Battle Groups effectively. Whilst the command challenges it posed for the junior commanders enabled them to develop and learn their role as a Section Commander. MST Troop now looks forward to its CT2 level training in February where it will provide J6 services for the Engineers and prove its readiness to provide J6 and C2 support to deployable assets.



CHARLIE TROOP

It has been a hectic first couple of months for the newly formed re-born Charlie Troop and the dust is finally beginning to settle after the re-orbat of the Squadron for Army 2020.

Life has 'settled' into the frantic pace expected of the Royal Corps' most elite Squadron, with the newly established Charlie Troop ready to write a new chapter in the history of 216.

Further to the in-camp administration required (jobs dished out, tasks detailed and detachments signed for) some members of the Troop have been spread to the four winds deploying on Exercises: EAGLES ENSIGN, EAGLES CALL and FOLGORE, with other members of the Troop preparing to deploy on Exercise ASKARI STORM in Kenya.

Congratulations must go to **Sig Oostuizen** for passing P Company, and rapidly getting his hands on a smock to parade in!

A few new faces have joined us fresh from Blandford, including **Sigs Honeyman, Clifford and Patterson**, the later two have been welcomed with a swift hello and loaded straight onto P Company! Farewells go to **Cpls Smart and Qualtrough, LCpls Britton, Kenyon and Hartland, Sigs Foster and Lonorgan**.



The Caythorpe Weekend



On 17 September 1944, in the midst of World War 2, the largest Airborne Operation in military history was launched, Operation Market Garden. The tactical objective of the operation was to secure a series of bridges crossing the main rivers of German occupied Netherlands. This objective was to be achieved through a rapid advance of Airborne Forces on a scale never seen before. The plan was that by securing these bridges the allied advance could cross the Rhine, the last major natural barrier to an advance into Germany. Heavily involved, the Airborne Signals launched their part in the offensive from the small Lincolnshire village of Caythorpe.

Operation Market Garden was not to be a success however, immensely proud in the part they and fallen comrades had played in the operation, a small group of surviving Airborne Signallers returned to Caythorpe Village some years later. They returned to show respect for those who had lost their lives in the skies over Holland and in the battles that followed. This show of respect and unison amongst the Airborne Signals fraternity developed, and today the Airborne Signallers proudly call Caythorpe Village their 'spiritual home'. Proud to be Airborne Signallers, 216 (Para) Sig Sqn embrace this, returning to our spiritual home on the first weekend of September annually.

Firmly engrained on the Squadron's calendar, recent years have seen the Saturday's annual fete on the Caythorpe Village cricket ground become a key event. The fete allows members of the Airborne Signals, past and present, to meet with local villagers and enjoy a series of stands in the build-up to the weekends main events. This years stands included an air rifle stand where young enthusiasts as young as 10 could hone their skills, as well as the MT's 'Crazy Crane' which proved to live up to its name whilst providing laughs all round. A barbeque in the later part of the afternoon followed and an enthralling football match between Caythorpe Village FC and 216 (Para) Sig Sqn. This annual tradition saw 216 (Para) Sig Sqn victorious, on penalties after a 1-1 draw. Too close for comfort for many members of 216 (Para) Sig Sqn, not least Troop Commander **Lt John Dodson** who whilst taking the first penalty of the shootout saw his dismal effort fall wide of the mark.

On the Saturday evening members of the Airborne Signals Association (ASA) were hosted by all ranks of 216 (Para) Sig Sqn at a meal in the village hall. Mess kit and blazer kit donned, the night allows past and present members of the Airborne Signals to get to know each other whilst the old and bold recount tales of daring, from Arnhem and Suez to Iraq and Afghanistan. This dinner is but one highlight of the weekend; there was not a member of the Squadron who did not say how humbled they were by the experiences of those who served before them, After some top class cuisine (it was hard to believe it was cooked in a field kitchen!), this years Saturday was finished off with a raffle before the majority of those involved retired to the talismanic Wagon and Horses pub.



The events of the Saturday serve well to lead into the main event on the Sunday of Caythorpe weekend. As is tradition this year saw 216 (Para) Sig Sqn formed up to march through the village led by the **OC Maj G J Clarke**, from the 'Wagon and Horses' to the village church. Fell in behind the Sqn followed the ASA. The streets were lined with villagers clapping and cheering as though the Sqn had just returned from tour. This year's church service, as always, was a fitting tribute to those who have lost their lives whilst serving as Airborne Signallers. Prayers were read, hymns were sung, and the names of the fallen read by old comrades, the poignancy of the words said in the church would have been lost on no one.

After the laying of wreaths at the memorials outside Caythorpe Village church, there was no better way to say goodbye to friends old and new than to have lunch back at the village hall. The vast majority of those involved this year will endeavour to return, and to those who cannot we send our best wishes. The Squadron now look forward to their next opportunity to return to their spiritual home of Caythorpe.

"They are in fact, men apart, every man an emperor..."

RED ON.... GO!!!

After the drought of recent years Para is truly back on for the Squadron. In the last few months the Basic Para course has been completing more P Coy qualified 'Penguins' than ever and the lads are getting the opportunity to earn foreign para wings. Currently in the Squadron we have blokes wearing Australian, French, Italian, Polish and Omani wings, in the last month 3 more lads have qualified for German and Belgium wings.

Exercise MARKET GARDEN 2013

On 17 September 1944 thousands of paratroopers descended from the sky behind enemy lines as part of the largest ever Allied Airborne invasion, codenamed Operation MARKET GARDEN. Their mission was to secure bridges over the rivers of Holland in order to liberate the country from the Nazi regime and allow Allied Forces access to Germany. The British 1st Airborne Division were tasked with securing bridges in the towns of Arnhem and Oosterbeek, with the capture of Arnhem road bridge being vital to the Operations success. Unfortunately the British troops were met by heavy resistance and only 740 made it to Arnhem Bridge. Cut off from reinforcements and with only limited supplies, those brave men held the bridge for four days against a well trained and equipped enemy of much greater numbers before being captured.

September 2013 was the 69th anniversary of the Battle of Arnhem and **Sig 'H&M' Halle Mullen** and I were fortunate enough to secure places on the anniversary jump. So at 0500hrs on Thur 19 Sep 13, we met with almost 250 other Paratroopers on the drill square, boarded coaches and set off for Harskamp, a Dutch Army transit camp close to the original DZ.

On arrival, some 12 hours later, we were given a quick brief on the upcoming weekends activities before being left to recce the camp bar. The next morning, with headaches in tow, we paraded alongside the remainder of the Brigade and saw for the first time the scale of the exercise. Hundreds of troops from a whole host of nations were to be jumping onto the same DZ from foreign aircraft using foreign equipment. We were soon told all British Forces were going to be jumping from German Aircraft. This news led into a few hours of familiarisation training with the German equipment, which involved a lot of men shouting "Actung" in chorus and regular confirmation that "everything will be okay" from the German PJIs. For obvious reasons there was a drinking ban on camp the evening and everyone was gated so we got an early night in preparation for the following day's activities.



Cpl Milson and Sig Hale-Mullen in Arnhem

Saturday began with an 0400hrs reveille, our breakfast bag consisting of four sandwiches and a carton of milk, we boarded coaches to Eindhoven Airport to be met by a number of aircraft and a lot of excited faces. Gearing up didn't take long, partially due to the slightly more relaxed attitude towards parachuting shown by the Germans, and before long we had boarded our aircraft. The plane taxied for what seemed like an eternity but eventually took off and we were soon in receipt of the first few "Actungs"; commands to remove seatbelts, stand up and fold up seats. The red light came on shortly afterwards followed by the green light and a barrage of men rushed forwards and excited the plane. Being the second to last man in the final stack, I was forced to wait until the third pass over the Ginkel Heide DZ before being able to exit the aircraft.

When the time came, I jumped forcefully into the slipstream and began shouting the compulsory count, hoping I wouldn't have to pull my reserve as I wasn't entirely confident in the German 6 step reserve drill! All was well though and by the time I'd reached the count of 4000, a canopy had opened overhead and I was left to enjoy an aerial view of the celebrations below. A soft landing into heathland completed my once in a lifetime experience of jumping into Arnhem, and I couldn't have been happier during my long walk from the DZ.

On leaving the DZ, we were given the opportunity to enjoy a few hours watching the remaining airborne troops jumping and having a beer or two before heading back to Harskamp for a short medal ceremony. The evening was our own and everyone headed into Arnhem to sample the nightlife. Although the price of drinks was high, the airborne spirit was higher and we all had a great night, including those who don't remember too much of it! The weekend concluded with a long drive back to Colchester which, aside from a misplaced passport by **Sig Hulle Mullen**, went without incident. All in all Exercise MARKET GARDEN was an incredible event and one which I would like to take part in again.

St Michaels Day and Belgium Para Course



LCpl Baker receives his Belgium wings

LCpl Baker was lucky enough to be selected to represent the Sqn at the St Michael's day in Schaffen, Belgium. For those who are not aware, St Michael is the patron saint of paratroopers, this event was organised by the Belgian Paras who invite their airborne brothers from around the world to come and celebrate the occasion together.

After a long drive we arrived on Sunday evening to be immediately taken out to the local town for drinks. The following morning we carried out ground training to prepare us for the first of four balloon jumps. Belgium and South Korea are the only nations that still carry out balloon descents and to say some people are nervous would be an understatement; a number of foreign soldiers present refuse to jump. It was certainly different to the rigidly controlled and practised parachuting we carry out in the British airborne. After two descents we were again hosted for the evening but this time we were taken a little further afield to Diest. The following morning we received a demonstration from the Belgian version of the Path Finders prior to carrying out a further two balloon jumps. We then watched a HALO demonstration before there were more drinks at a BBQ attended by many Belgian veterans. It was a fantastic, if tiring event to attend, myself and four other members of the Brigade were hosted in great style by our Belgian counterparts and I managed to add to my collection of foreign wings.

Parachuting is on the up at the squadron. The number of lads now qualified in both British and foreign wings is getting greater by the week – great news for all concerned.



SUPPORT TROOP

After returning from summer leave, Support Troop have been heavily involved with everything that could possibly be undertaken by such a small group, everything from personnel deploying on exercises to conducting acceptance trials for new IS capabilities. Recently **Cpl 'The Kraken' McCoy** deployed on Ex ACTIVE EAGLE in support of a 2 PARA exercise on which he has quite rightly earned a solid reputation after single handily fixing faults; everything that could have gone wrong did go wrong! **Cpl Kev Ellis** and **LCpl 'Cakes' Eccles** have also recently deployed on the Squadron Field Skills exercise, which, everyone was surprised to find, included helicopter extraction back to Colchester at ENDEX.

Although there is plenty of time away there is also plenty of time to organise celebrations of arrivals, promotions and say our goodbyes. A Troop function involving a day out shooting at The Royal Hospital School followed by a comedy night at the Weston Homes Community Stadium (home of Colchester United) were two such events. **Sgt Sarah Smyth** ended up "Top Shot", luckily no children were injured during this outing. The epic Friday PT that the OC has now insisted upon was not made any easier by the Sp Tp Sore Heads.

Leaving us we have **LCpl 'The Fish' Dodd** posted to 225 Signal Squadron in Northern Ireland and Cpl Max Tyson posted to 200 Signal Squadron in Germany. Also we have said goodbye to **Capt Fensom** (QM) who has disappeared to 1 ADSR.

It's not all bad news with **Alex O'Brien**, **Dan 'The Kraken' McCoy** and **Max Tyson** all selected for promotion to Cpl.

Support Troop welcome the new QM/Troop Commander, **Capt Kev Read**, into the hot seat (he was here when Centurion was a rank, not a tank), **Sgt Matt Devlin**, who arrives on promotion from 4 Sqn, and **Sig Dane Scullion** just in from 22 Sig Regt.

Mountain Bike Leaders Course - LCpl Conway

As part of the 16 Air Assault Brigade Adventure Training plan for Ex ASKARI STORM 13, the opportunity to attain the Mountain Bike Leader Level 2 qualification was presented as one of the Adventure Training opportunities. Amongst the lucky members of the Brigade to attend were several members of 216 (Para) Sig Sqn, including **Cpl Dan 'The Kracken' McCoy**, **Cpl Brown**, **Cpl Simon 'Red Eye' Rankin**, **LCpl Tim 'Nice Guy' Maynard**, **Sig Jason 'Thug Life' Moore** and many more.

The first day consisted of getting the usual long winded safety briefs, as well as covering the basic theory of the Sport. Come the second day we were itching to get on our saddles, and from the very start of the week you could differentiate between those who had Mountain Biked before, and those who simply owned a 'Mountain Bike'; **Sig Moore** not excluded with several comical heavy, yet thankfully injury free, falls.

The excitement of exploring the Kenyan outback on a saddle quickly transferred to the excitement of stopping and getting off the saddle, as what had been briefed as 'down hill jollies' transpired to be the equivalent of a hot, humid Everest! A hard first couple days all round, our mileage on the third day surpassed 45 kilometres on paths that ranged from city and town setting, to the Mount Kenya Forest.

On conclusion of the course, all those who took part in the challenging 5 days qualified as Level 2 MIAS MTB Leaders. Awaiting our certificates in the post, the course was extremely challenging and fulfilling. The bumps and bruises on those of us less talented on two wheels have by now healed, however the memories of our times cycling through the Kenyan outback will remain with us for a long time yet!



Inter Unit Swimming and Water Polo Championships

Yes, unknown too many, the Squadron do have a swimming team! On 9 Oct, nine members of the Sqn made the trek to RNAS Heron to compete in the Corps Inter-Unit Swimming and Water Polo Championships, seven of these individuals came from the MT/LAD plus **Cpl Bowden** and myself.

First up was a group warm up in an extremely packed pool involving a few near misses and first affects of loose-fitting goggles. Competing in the minor units, the Squadron excelled, with a particularly strong performance from **Cpl Coatsworth** in the 100m freestyle. **SSgt Beaman** then ran away with the 100m individual medley. With three out of the five individual races in the bag, the competition moved on to the relays. Two out of three victories saw the Squadron home as Minor Unit Corps Champions, cemented by a commanding victory in the 4 x 50m Medley.

Waterpolo up next and enthusiasm was high from our earlier successes. Led by **LCpl Hanson** the team swept all before them. Commanding wins against 215 Sig Squ and 21 Sig Regt set us up nicely against a strong looking team from 11 (RSS) Sig Regt. A tough encounter resulted in a victory for the Sqn, noted most by **SSgt Dunn's** inability to tread water in the shallow end due to his 6' 4" plus frame! A final match and outstanding work from **Cpl Sear** and the title was ours. Back on the bus, a celebratory feast on the M3 and the delights of PT the following morning; a good day's work.

November-December 2013

With the winter frost and short days well underway, the Squadron has done its best to tackle the winter woes with some exciting times this period. November and December saw a large portion of the Squadron deployed on Ex ASKARI STORM 13 in Kenya, whilst the remaining members of the Squadron found the usual build up to exercise and deployment downscaled in the build up to the Christmas period. The long standing Squadron tradition of the Sportsman's Dinner presented a welcomed get together for all those not deployed, with **Sgt Buchan** and **Sgt Dowds** putting on an impressive show for all. This was shortly followed by the Squadron Christmas function, amongst many other festive celebrations, of which all were enjoyed with the airborne spirit associated with the Squadron.

Some key introductions to the Squadron with **FofS (IS) Spinks** and **FofS Thapa** being welcomed to the 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron 'Top Corridor' and Ops team. The Crypto Cell also welcomes **SSgt King** back to the Sqn for the second time. Exciting times for the Sqn with the prospect of further deployments to Kenya and America in 2014, the Troops look forward to the challenges that the New Year will bring!

ALPHA TROOP

An exciting time for Alpha Troop, this period saw the majority of the Troop deploy to Kenya on Ex ASKARI STORM 13. An unlucky few remained in the UK to maintain a healthy vehicle fleet, whilst those deployed balanced the commitments of a HICON and a 3 PARA RLD with experiencing Kenya through ample opportunity for AT. With a range of activities from White Water Rafting and Kayaking to Rock Climbing and Mountain Biking, those lucky enough to deploy returned with experiences (and a tan!) that they will never forget.

The Sqn tradition of the Sportsman's Dinner was the highlight of the period for those not deployed, with Alpha Troop claiming a large portion of the accolades including **LCpl 'Bakes' Baker** for Top Field Soldier, **Sig Dominic 'Cant Tan Wont Tan' Gladwyn** for Top Tradesman and **LCpl 'Binksy' Binks** for Top Sportsman. Further to this good showing, **Sig 'Nunny' Nunn** passed All Arms Pre Parachute Selection first time! Well done!

With no movement in terms of personnel into the Troop, A Troop say farewell to **Cpl Carver** and **LCpl 'Revs' Revell** who go over to the dark side with moves to Charlie Troop and Bravo Troop respectively. The Troop offers a further farewell to **LCpl 'Binksy' Binks** who moves to 2 Signal Regiment after 4 years at the Sqn; you will be missed but we are relieved you have left! The troop also would like to extend their congratulations to **Sgt 'Ricky' Dowds** and his wife Katy as they welcome their newly born son Harry William Dowds to the world. Congratulations!



Life in the 3 PARA RLD – Sig Snell

Ex ASKARI STORM 13 presented an opportunity for 216 (Para) Sig Sqn to deploy to Kenya in support of the a 3 PARA BG exercise. As always an RLD from the Squadron was detached to the BG, with the RLD exercising with 3 PARA over three phases that included two training phases and a confirmation exercise.

Employed within B Company as the OC Signaller, the training phases consisted of excessive amounts of digging and tabbing, interspersed with a wide range of exposure to Platoon level tactics including; patrolling, offensive actions, defensive actions, CBRN, LFTT, amongst many more tactics of which I previously had had little exposure too. Extremely exciting, it was this role that I had joined the Royal Corps of Signals and 216 (Para) Sig Sqn to do.



Prior to the confirmatory exercise 3 PARA executed a BG jump into the Horn of Africa. Included within an Air Field seizure, **LCpl Ross 'Meads' Meaden** and **Sig Joey 'Turkington' Barton** were part of the Para-infiltration from which, much to the awe of those watching from a distant vantage point, a successful attack was launched. This led nicely into a 5 day confirmation exercise which, amongst five days of intense operations, saw our RLD single-handedly save 3 PARA MAIN HQ from being overrun by 1 Royal Irish! Genuinely!

A role only surpassed in appeal by the self appointed role of 'CO close protection' held by technician **LCpl Jordan Fern**, the RLD provided the experiences of a lifetime for those involved. Presenting the challenges, experiences and training that I joined the Army for, I look forward to my next opportunity to deploy as an RLD Signaller within the Companies of the Parachute Regiment.



Bravo Troop

November and December were busy months as always for Bravo Troop. **Cpl Brown**, deployed on Exercise ASKARI STORM to utilise his wide ranging Oakley collection in an exercise supporting 3 PARA BG, whilst those remaining concentrated their efforts on slightly more local exercise experiences. Ex MOUNTED EAGLE saw 11 members of the Troop, along with Norwegian Officer **Lt Vimmes**, deploy into what even he might call cold conditions on a mobility cadre. Further communications based training exercises took place in the later part of November as the Troop attempts to take full advantage of its MST year.

The festive period brought the Sportsman's Dinner, shortly followed by the Christmas function of which was well organised by Troop Cpl, **Cpl McHugh**. A multitude of items were snapped up by the Troop in a seasonal auction, of which Troop OC **Lt Mapplebeck** is still trying to track down where his Girls Aloud calendar has got too.

No incomings or outgoings over this period for Bravo Troop, however a strong showing means that we congratulate **LCpl Winsen, Sig Burns, Sig Brewster, Sig Carter, Sig Coleman, Sig**

Yarrinton and **Sig Whitaker** on passing All Arms Pre-Parachute Selection first time. Well in! Airborne!



Charlie Troop

November and December was a busy couple of months for Charlie Troop; no change there then! The main effort was Exercise ASKARI STORM in Kenya with MPR deployed along with personnel supporting the HICON. They arrived back with tans all round much to the rest of the troop's annoyance! For everyone so rudely left back in the UK, it was business as usual, joining MST Troop for their Comms and Mobility Cadre. Elsewhere blokes were deployed on Exercise EAGLES SHADOW and ARCADE FUSION, Charlie Troop punching above its weight. This busy period of exercise was gratefully followed by a chance to unwind at the Sportsman's Dinner and several nominations for awards for Charlie Troop. Close but no cigar, the Troop had to wait until the Christmas function for their first award as **LCpl 'Buzz Lightyear' Hardy** won best fancy dress, despite his protests that he had in fact come in his usual attire.

This period also saw Charlie Troop have its best showing yet on P Coy with **Sig Malin**, **Sig Reddington-Thomas**, **Sig 'unnatural' Clifford** and **Sig 'Lizard' Wilkinson** all passing P Company at the first time of asking. Well done lads! You did Charlie Troop Proud!



Kayaking in Kenyan White Water – By Sig Pike

As part of the Brigade effort to utilise the AT opportunity Ex ASKARI STORM 13 presented in Kenya, 9 members of the Squadron were lucky enough to take part in a 3* Kayaking Qualification course. All those selected jumped at the opportunity, and with the military camp behind us for the next 5 days morale was high.

Early tuition introduced those who had not kayaked before to the basic drills, drills that **Sgt 'water baby' Martin** would fail to grasp for the duration of the exercise. Despite his lack of talent, with all others seemingly ready for anything the Kenyan water could chuck at them, the group loaded up the minibus and headed for their first experience of 'White Water'.

With waters high and the rivers fast, the freedom of movement on the river was minimal. Despite this, and despite numerous what felt like 'near death' experiences of being submerged for 2 seconds as people capsized, the group made the most of their first few days. All members of the Sqn showed strong progress, with the exception of the previously mentioned **Sgt Martin**, allowing a progression onto half day river trips down the white water in the last few days.

The river trips presented further opportunities to push our developing kayaking skills as we tackled grade 2 and 3 rapids on numerous occasions throughout, whilst the more experienced Alpha Troop OC **Lt Dodson**, having Kayaked before, was presented the opportunity to kayak off a 15ft waterfall; an opportunity he snapped up in an instant.



Lt Dodson

An all round challenging course, this AT opportunity presented all the challenges you would want from AT; with the added opportunity of being able to laugh at our fellow members of 216 (Para) Sig Sqn of who were well out of their comfort zone. A number of us will be taking up the sport now we are back in the UK, so watch this space!



Mount Kenya – Sig Barfield

Whilst deployed on Ex ASKARI STORM in Kenya, the opportunity was presented to a select few to challenge themselves and climb Mount Kenya. A mountain surpassing 4900m, the challenge was no mean feat; however certainly not one that the members of 216 (Para) Sig Sqn could turn their backs on.

The first day saw us climb the maximum recommended altitude gain of 600m. With a decent incline but good footing, the first day was relatively easy compared to the challenges of which we were warned we would face later on in the expedition. Getting to the camp well ahead of schedule, we settled in for an early evening with a ration packs and 'doss bags'.

An early start on the second day saw our Troop Commander **Lt John Dodson** begin his four day 'battle' with what he assures us was definitely altitude sickness, as we faced the far more daunting challenge of a 900m gain over 20 km. Rain was on cue from the moment our team stepped out into the elements, and would refuse to stop for the duration of the day but for a couple of minutes at a time just to get our hopes up! All in all, day two consisted of 8 hours walking; an impressive time to cover the distance and height gained at that altitude we were told by our guides.

Some light altitude gains, and minimal walking was all our third day consisted of in preparation for an early start the following day. Up at 0230, and facing the final 600m climb to the summit of Mount Kenya, the team set off at a steady pace under torch light. With every metre of height gained the air seemed to be noticeably thinner, as all members of the team joined the Troop OC with their own attempts of shrugging off nausea; finally **Cpl Rankin** had an excuse as to why he had pink eye!

Reaching the summit as the sun was rising over the horizon, those members of the team feeling affected by the 4900m altitude were instantly revived as we enjoyed some of views some people won't get to view in a lifetime. Sitting above the cloud line we all expressed our thoughts on how 'easy' it had been, as we enjoyed the surreal surroundings. The feeling of being 'on top of the

world' was soon scarpered as we were literally brought back 'down to earth' with a 30 km trek back to our starting point for pickup! An outstanding Adventure, I would climb Mt Kenya again in a heartbeat.



Support Troop

The members of Support Troop found themselves in unfamiliar territory over this period, with a relatively quiet period. **Cpl 'The Kracken' McCoy** and **LCpl 'CO Bodyguard' Fern**, deployed on Ex ASKARI STORM 13 providing technical support to the 3 PARA BG, whilst the remainder of the Troop enjoyed the festivities that the Christmas period had to offer in both the Sportsmans Dinner and the Christmas function. A strong performance on the OC's Christmas PT saw the Troop finish 3rd overall in the competition; not bad for a bunch of Techs!

The Troop welcome newly posted in **Sgt Devlin** back to the Squadron, whilst also welcoming back **LCpl Lamb** back from his 6 month attachment to the Falklands. We would also like to say congratulations to **RQMS WO" Sherlock** on his recent selection for promotion. A farewell is also sent to **Cpl Adam Hills** who has lost his long standing battle with civvy street and chosen to leave the Armed Forces. Only time will tell if the grass is really greener on the other side!



MT/LAD Troop

It has been a busy and fast paced few months for us in the MT/LAD. Along with the everyday "fast ball" task's that come with supporting a fast paced and contingency focused Brigade, Cpl Bradshaw and LCpl Dale deployed to Kenya with Alpha Troop in support of 3 Parachute Regiment on EX ASKARI STORM 13. This was a great trip that enabled them to work hard on exercise whilst testing their trade skills providing vehicle/power support for 3 Para BG FTX. The blokes had the opportunity to play even harder whilst participating in a couple of weeks Adventurous Training. The AT package involved a 3 day walk scaling Mount Kenya, kayaking, mountain biking, white water rafting, rock climbing and bungee jumping.



Cpl Bradshaw Mt Kenya

At the same time we had **LCpl 'chunk' Jowers** and **LCpl 'chunkier' Hollis** pass their Class 1 RSE course after what seemed like an eternity away from the Sqn. Both are claiming that they finished 1st and 2nd on the course, we are yet to see any proof of this achievement. The Troop also had **Sig 'No Banter' Tranter** successfully pass the newly structured P coy (welcome to the Airborne Brotherhood). The course has recently changed its structure and is now split into 3 blocks of training, **Sig Tranter** felt that the new structure helped him with his preparation for test week and strongly recommends that people who have previously tried and failed or failed to try should attempt the new course.

2013's Troop Christmas celebrations were organised by **LCpl Hanson** who decided that the evening should consist of bowling followed by a meal at The Albert Beefeater. The bowling was enjoyed by all, even though **Cpl Thomas** was confused about the rules and spent most of the game trying to get his ball higher than anyone else. The food at the Albert was great and moral was quite high. Eager to celebrate his successful organisation, **LCpl Hanson** decided to spray the pub with champagne. This was a prompt cue for the party to move down town. A good time was had by all.



Websters Xmas jumpers

The MT narrowly missed out on first place during the Sqn OC's Xmas fitness challenge. The day consisted of a bergan run, tyre carry, 500m Land Rover push (uphill), hideous log run, river run whilst the RQMS put us under fire, plus a lap of the assault course. With the final sprint to SHQ **LCpl 'lights out' Bagshaw** had agreed to cream in so that the MTO could drag & carry him the rest of the way. Before the ordeal was over a quick Beaver fit and tyre flip session was chucked in for good measure. The challenge was well organised and tested all the individuals involved, the bacon butties at the end were well received.



Capt Oliver leading from the front

The end of 2013 has witnessed six significant coming and goings within the troop, we would like to say our goodbyes to **Staff Sergeant Andy Dunn**, **Cpl 'Crystal Ball Head' Sear**, **LCpl 'Boring' Anderson**, **LCpl Kibru** and **Sig 'Sick Chit' Chick**. At the same time we would like to welcome back **Staff Sergeant 'Karl' Conley** to the Sqn.



JANUARY-MARCH 2014

Exercise EAGLE'S EYE - by Sig Clifford

Exercise EAGLE'S EYE was a Brigade Level exercise situated in Calvi, Corsica. C Troop deployed to Camp Raffalli, augmented by a few random extras from A Troop, on our first proper exercise as a new Troop. The exercise was an opportunity for the Bde ISTAR assets, including members of 216 (Para) Sig Sqn, to get out on the ground with Paratroopers from the French Foreign Legion, while we provided the HICON, RLD and road move.

The main exercise lasted five days, during which the ISTAR assets practised their TTPs, and co-ordinated with the Foreign Legion, producing target packs after conducting close recce. The exercise proved worthwhile for the Para trained as they were given the opportunity to gain their French wings; **SSgt Allan**, **Sgt Summerfield**, **Cpl Carver**, **Cpl Lister** and **LCpl Meadon**, some of the lucky few involved.



C Tp lob with the French Foreign Legion in Corsica

216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron were a key element, led by **Lt Stradling** on his first overseas deployment with the Squadron. We provided the communications backbone throughout. Local facilities were transformed into a HICON, where 117F and HF capabilities were put into action during training cycles and FTX. We also picked up the logistic burden of driving all the way to Corsica... and back... not a short trip!



C Tp at the home of 2 Rep

Aside from the main exercise, there was scope for members of the Squadron to add value to the training. **SSgt Allan** and **Sgt Summerfield** ran an overnight survival stand on the training area for the Brigade, which included shelters, ground sign awareness and some very freshly prepared rabbit. **Cpl Carver** planned and co-ordinated a tactical NavEx that challenged the exercising troops. The Legion also put on some training, allowing members of the Squadron to learn amphibious drills under the instruction of 3 Compagnie; this included river crossings and anti-aviation drills; nothing like capsizing in the freezing Mediterranean sea in February!

Overall, the exercise was a great opportunity for both the experienced and inexperienced soldiers to brush up on their skills, particularly on TACSAT and HF. It was also a good opportunity for us to train and live alongside the Legion, and of course, get out of Colly!

Exercise LONG REACH – by Sig Snell

216 (Para) Sig Sqn assisted the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst by providing two RRB detachments for the new Officer Cadets' first major navigation exercise, in a very wet and snowy

Wales. The cadets, who are only in week 5, have to cover between 70 and 80km carrying a Bergen, a bit like Lanyard but not as hard. They have a number of checkpoints to go to, in which many include command tasks they have to attempt in teams and hopefully pass.

North RRB was the responsibility of **Sig Snell** and **Sig Sinclair**. This was located 800m up in the Black Mountains. It was definitely a cold one, wind speeds of 52 mph and a wind chill of -20 we did think of these new recruits for a second or two while we were snuggled in our doss bags (not together, that would be weird).

South RRB was crewed by **Sig Barton** and **Sig Moore**. Although they didn't have the joy of the snow they were blessed with strong winds. We found this out when we heard they had to go and retrieve their 12x12 one evening! They also had time to brush up on their 'I Spy' skills with an epic 4 hour game, **Sig Moore** winning this because of his knowledge of different bushes and wildlife, clearly showing his old age. They were so keen and enjoying themselves they even stayed out another night!

Overall the exercise went well, it was a good training exercise for us as well as the Officer Cadets. The comms were good and was invaluable in terms of brushing up skills and drills whilst maintaining a RRB in some tough terrain. It was also good to see what the other half do in order to earn their commission!



82 Airborne Division Visit, Fort Bragg – by Cpl Crabb

Following a much deserved Christmas leave 9 specially selected members of the Sqn, **WO2 (FofS) Ruscoe**, **SSgt (FofS) Risley**, **SSgt Steel**, **Cpl Mauger**, **Cpl Crabb**, **LCpl Lavel-Chesterton**, **LCpl Moorby** and **Sig Gladwyn** led by **WO1 (RSM) Henderson** eased our way into the New Year by deploying to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, home of the 82nd (All American) Airborne Division. After a nine hour flight and a 3 hour car journey, with some very tired faces, we arrived. Fort Bragg is basically the largest Army base in the world; it has a motorway, 2 hotels, 3 malls, an airbase and a training area the size of Salisbury plain. The purpose of the visit was interoperability of all tactical communications systems, both voice and data, for future joint deployments of both NATO countries. We were shown around their vehicles and deployable trunk systems, as well as their Div HQ, which turned out to be considerably smaller than our current Bde HQ. We even managed a bit of interoperability with a Dutch contingent who went on to use our TVB on an exercise with 3 BCT to great success.

Between trials we managed to find space for a little recreational activity; **LCpl Moorby** and **Sig Gladwyn** took some time out of their busy schedule to travel to one of the many local pistol ranges. Upon arrival they declared that we were A) "Not American red necks" and B) "Were not terrorists" and therefore were allowed to stroll onto the range (with 100 rounds of 9mm and 100 Rounds .45 special) with no instruction other than 'try not to shoot yourself'. Whilst trying not to shoot each other they managed to fire a Springfield 9mm XDM match grade pistol, an all American classic colt 1911 and a heavily modified sports Glock 17L as a treat from our new American friends.

After a very useful and interesting 10 days with a great deal learnt on both sides, it was time to say goodbye and make the long journey back to Colchester to make plans for future exercises. A short trip in May is looking promising and an extended Sqn deployment in Oct (approx 6 weeks...) is on the calendar. Exciting times to come, Para, AT, Sport, Comms and more Para!!

American Jump – by SSgt Steel

Fri 10 Jan 14 and the 4 Para trained personnel from the Sqn, **WO1 (RSM) Henderson**, **WO2 (FofS) Ruscoe**, **SSgt (YofS) Risley** and **SSgt Steel** had to attend jump school with elements of 7 (Para) RHA. Having passed the course we were qualified to jump the following Sunday.

Sunday arrived, we received a DZ brief and off we went to Pope Airfield which is the same size as RAF Brize Norton but only 10 minutes away. It was then we found out that we were jumping from a C-17 at night with new in service parachutes. What could go wrong?! The C-17 took off with us all raring to get our American wings. One more thing was mentioned on the plane however, there were vehicles and armour on the DZ so steer away from the red cylumes, great!!



The jump went in at 1000 feet and all four members landed safely with no injuries, no one collided with the heavy loads on the DZ and no one forgot their new American drills. On our final day we finally got presented our American wings, yet another set for the collection.



CHARLIE TROOP

Troop Overview – by Sig Stark

What a start to the year! With Charlie Troop fully established, January saw the Troop deploy on Exercise EAGLES CHAIN on the local training area. This was a chance dust off the cobwebs on the Bowman platforms, practicing our new role as a Troop. Once out on the area, the lads familiarised themselves with their new dets and got stuck in. Admin prizes, good and bad go to; **LCpl Flynn** for almost getting his wagon bogged in (bad), whilst **LCpl Hardy** was that squared away he even managed to pack a radio, heater and a fabreeze scented air-freshener (good)!

Straight from Friday Woods, C Troop deployed in force on Squadron CT2 in Otterburn, whilst the more lucky members deployed to Corsica on Exercise EAGLES EYE for four weeks. Both exercises brought their own war stories; snow in Scotland v a flooded Ops room in Corsica, living in Otterburn v being 100m from the Beach... fair to say Corsica was much more arduous! A swift recovery by all means the Troop are set and ready to go supporting A Tp on CAST(N).

With a raft of new faces due to join us in the coming weeks, we say a farewell to **Lt Stradling** who moves over to A Tp to plan their MST year, whilst **Lt Dodson** comes in as the new OC Charlie Troop.

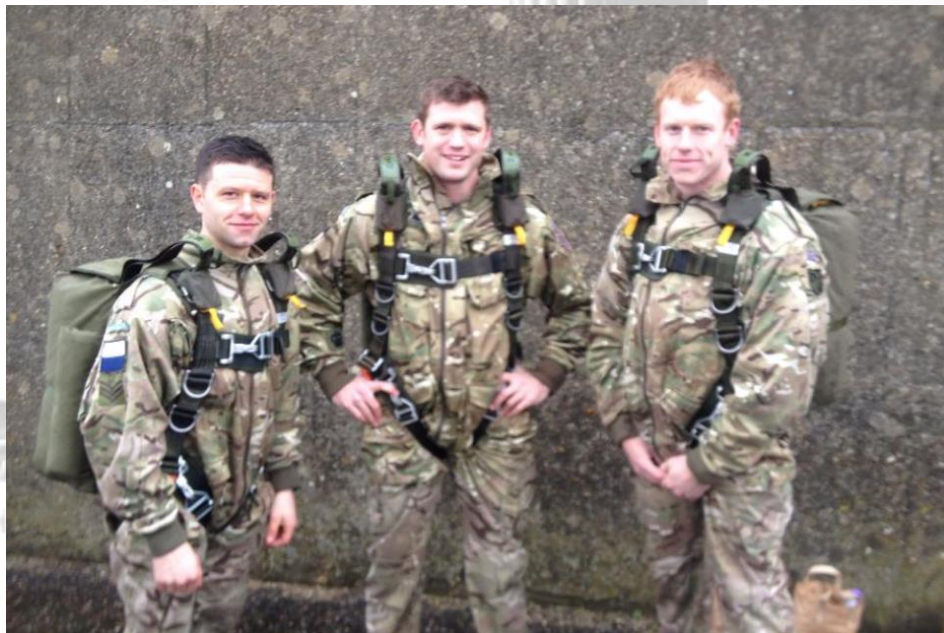


SUPPORT TROOP - *by LCpl Moorby and Sig Scullion*

Support Troop and Para

While the rest of the Sqn are busy gallivanting around Europe and swanning off to the USA Support Troop are busy preparing for the forthcoming exercises; the nearest crocodile to the canoe being the Bde CAST in Catterick, before the notorious JOINT WARRIOR in April.

On 10 February the Training Wing organised a refresher and currency parachute jump for 20 blokes from 216. The weather was a bit hit and miss and despite the low cloud coverage of c.600ft, most jumps went ahead less the QM's who is "still" waiting to complete his refresher jump! It wasn't that the QM refused, the jump was aborted for all refreshers on board the aircraft, much to their disappointment as they had to jump from a far more casual 1000ft! Back at 600ft **Cpl Black** had a real test of character as the RCMO 13 Med Regt got caught in his risers, only managing to release and continue the decent when at 100ft! Luckily both came away unscathed and unsoiled after quite a fast decent.



216 Training Wing

For **WO2 (RQMS) 'Nipper' Sherlock** this would be his last of many jumps before he leaves the Squadron for Northern Ireland. The RQ asked all who jumped to sign his parachute decent logbook for the very last time. The book is now full of all the names from his previous jumps, and there are a few! A fine way to mark the end of loyal service to 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron; we all wish the RQ the best for the future.



The RQ's final jump

Cross Country

On 22 Jan the Squadron Cross Country team travelled to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst to compete in the Army Championships. The top Army cross country runners were in attendance so it was surely the cream of the crop. People were slipping and sliding everywhere and running through knee deep water, and with over 500 runners it was a busy course. **Sgt Devlin** performed particularly well, being the first Squadron member to cross the line and despite the heavy rain, boggy conditions and a tricky course he managed a very respectful time. Congratulations go to the whole team for what was an excellent effort.



Football

On 5 Feb the Squadron played football against 7 Para RHA. Three members of Support Troop played in the fixture all contributing with sterling performances. **Cpl Black** particularly, in goal, making some good saves but despite his efforts three got past him. The strength of the 7 Para RHA side came through in the end and despite a dogged battle by the Squadron, the final score was 3-1 to the Gunners.

The Drummond Historical Room

Maj Gen Deane-Drummond opened the historical room within the new Squadron Headquarters, Merville Barracks in July 2007. The room consists of photographs and memorabilia dating throughout the history of Airborne Signals from its inception in 1941 right up to the recent deployment to Afghanistan. Any former Squadron member wishing to have a look around the room is more than welcome to do so and should contact Capt Kent Oliver or WO1 (RSM) Henderson to arrange a visit.

Airborne Signals Association Membership

Membership to the Association is open to all ex members (and their wives/husbands) who have ever served with Airborne or Air Assault Signals, irrespective of rank or age and is free of charge. The Association is keen to increase its membership and it is usually the ex members of the Squadron who spread the word on its behalf as to what is happening. If you meet anyone who qualifies to become a member of the Association please pass on my details and encourage them to get in touch.

Although the Association is not resourced as the Royal Signals Association, there is a lot we can do with regard to members seeking advice and information. We can act as a signpost to point members in the direction of the relevant agencies who will be able help with any queries of problems they may have.

One of the Associations main aims remains the annual pilgrimage to Caythorpe village in Lincolnshire where a weekend of events with the former and current soldiers of the Squadron and the villagers culminates with a service of remembrance in the village church of St Vincent.

Please ensure that you keep me informed of any changes in contact details so that you are not missed off our mailing lists. Also, if you no longer wish to receive our newsletters please let me know.

Caythorpe Weekend 2014 (Friday 5 - Sunday 7 September 2014)

Full details of the weekend have yet to be confirmed but a full outline on the weekends program will be available on arrival.

PGL adventure activities have once again made a number of rooms available in Caythorpe Manor where the majority of you have stayed previously. Price will be £20 Per Person Per Night. When compared with standard B & B in the area this is still a very competitive price.

Accommodation with the villagers is now well established as those of you who billet with them do most years. However should you wish to stay with one of the villages please indicate on the attached return so the appropriate arrangements can be made. The camping site will still be available for those of you who wish to pitch your tents.

Transport will be provided over the weekend and may be available from the local railways stations on the Friday and Sunday, if requested. Please have the enclosed returns along with cheques for accommodation and the dinner night returned to be by the 25 July 14. Unfortunately only a limited number of places are available at the dinner so please send your returns promptly to avoid disappointment. I and all the Squadron membership look forward to seeing you in September.

PRI Shop

The PRI shop will be available throughout the weekend and will be selling a large array of 70th anniversary Shirts, Plaques, Coins, Tankards, and Berets etc at very competitive prices. Contact details for the shop are listed below: If you would like any specific items please do not hesitate to get in touch with Margaret.

Mrs Margaret Watson on Civil 01206 815505 or mil 94660 5505

Caythorpe Reunion Weekend 5-7 September 2014 Attendance Form
(Returns are required by the **25 July 14**, please **do not** send your return to Maj J Aspinall MBE)

Member's details:

Forename: Surname:

Address:
.....

Post code

Telephone Number:

Email address:

Guest

Forename(s) Surname (if different)

Booking Details

Accommodation

PGL Caythorpe Manor (£20) per person per night

Friday 5th September

Saturday 6th September

Reunion Dinner 6 Sept 14 @ £20 per person

TOTAL Cost Reunion Dinner & Accommodation

£

Please state on the back of this form who you would like to be seated with for the evening function. We will try and meet your request; however, this may not always be possible.

BOOKING AND PAYMENT METHOD.

Please complete this form and return it together with cheques made out to:
CENTRAL BANK HQ COLCHESTER STATION

Send to:

Capt K Oliver R SIGNALS
16 Air Assault Headquarters and Signal Squadron (216)
Merville Barracks
Colchester
Essex.
CO2 7UT.

- ***If you have made your own accommodation arrangement within the village or downtown please let me know so as I can inform the Arnhem Committee and avoid double bookings.***



AIRBORNE SIGNALS ASSOCIATION DATABASE INFORMATION

Number:		Rank (On Discharge)	
Forenames:		Surname:	
Date Of Birth:			

Units Served With

Unit	Date From	Date To

Contact Address

Post Code:	
Telephone Number:	
Email Address:	

Honours & Awards

--

Any Other

--

Please Return To:

Capt K Oliver
216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron
Merville Barracks
Colchester
Essex
CO2 7SW

Email: 216SigSqn-MTO@mod.uk

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For more information: Capt Kent Oliver 01206 815527 Email: Kent.Oliver798@mod.uk

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