



Gareth (Ginger) Dixon

9<sup>th</sup> November 1951 – 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2014

Gareth Wyn Dixon was born in Bangor North Wales in 1951. His family moved to Liverpool when he was 3 years old. He did not even speak English when he arrived in Liverpool but quickly became very conversant in the English language as many a recruit will testify.

Gareth Dixon joined the army as a junior soldier in Winchester in 1966 and quickly became known as Ginger due to his full head of ginger hair. After completion of both Junior Riflemans Company and adult training, he joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion the Royal Green Jackets in Tidworth in 1969.

Over the course of the next 10 years Gareth undertook various postings in addition to the inevitable Battalion postings to Northern Ireland. These included being a very young training corporal at the Rifle Depot. It was during this period he became known to others in different Battalion's. He was always liked by the many recruits he trained and he was very well liked and respected by his peers and his superiors and known for his tolerance, patience, honesty and integrity. Upon returning to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion in Dover in 1974, he re-joined B Company. He completed the various 4 month tours of duty in NI and Cyprus.

Whilst on a UN post, the guys that were not in the OP Towers, and to pass the time of day, the other members played a game of cowboys and Indians but Ginger found himself being run over which shattered his femur. Nobody had any pain killers whilst they waited for the casevac helicopter, so they filled him with 'Bacardi' and that was the story told to his CSM Eddie Bright. Whilst he was in hospital recuperating he was promoted by records and posted as a recruiting Serjeant at Oxford, Aylesbury and Milton Keynes.

He re-joined the battalion and was posted to 1Platoon, A Company (Commanded by Maj D Innes), the Battalion Commander Lt Col G Johnson, RSM Eddie Bright and the Battalion was now stationed in Hong Kong.

Ginger was a very popular Platoon Serjeant with his superiors, peers and subordinates, so much so that many a Platoon Commander was grateful to be rescued from the J/NCOs and Rfn in Wanchai.

Ginger kept his ear to the ground and always turned up at the right time to whisk away the 'Boss' before he was lead like a lamb to the slaughter to the 'good time ladies just as the 'men' were about to take photo's.

Whilst stationed in Hong Kong, he attended Platoon Commanders and Platoon Serjeant's Jungle Warfare Instructors Course in Brunei. As Platoon Serjeant in Fiji he looked after his platoon very well but the sun took its toll on his lips which ended up like two bananas. Any shade he could find Ginger moved with it.

During his tenure as Platoon Serjeant, a new Lance Corporal was posted in from Anti Tanks - Billy Hughes, who unknowingly was about to be taught a very good leadership skill and so was the rest of the Platoon. Billy was a very good friend of Gingers and this was widely known. The Platoon Serjeant kept him waiting outside his office for 30 minutes at ease. He called him in but kept him standing to attention.

The Platoon Serjeant welcomed him to the Platoon and explained "LCpl Hughes during my time as Platoon Serjeant you will be duty NCO permanently which means you will be in the Platoon Lines from 07.00 every working day to ensure the men are up, the block jobs are to be completed by 07.30 and area cleaning by 07.50 ready to get the Platoon on Parade by 08.20, married men come in from 08.00 onwards, march out and you will complete the platoon nominal roll ready for my perusal at 08.20."

A very good friend indeed, Billy marched out bewildered. There was no way Ginger wanted Billy or anyone in the Platoon to think he showed favouritism, they certainly didn't after that because LCpl Steve Rose said "blimey if he's doing that to his friend we better all watch out." This set the scene for all in the Platoon and certainly elevated and cemented Gingers high standing in the Platoon, Company and the Battalion.

There was a common thread from when he was a Junior soldier right through to being a training corporal and onwards as he rose through his career. He said in later years that his mantra is to be honest to every one because the truth will always come to the fore and never do a bad deed because it will come back and bite when you least expect or want it to. He was always known to many as a confidante, a person who could be trusted; a great man with integrity.

Ginger was soon on the move again, this time he was selected to serve with the Sultanate of Oman's Army. First of all he was sent on an Arabic Farsi language course which he excelled at and a language. He used this skill after he left the army with a shop keeper very close to his house, Alexis. They became very good friends and when he moved to another part of Liverpool Ginger went to his shop every Sunday morning to help him out sort papers and work behind his counter even during his illness. However, back in Oman, the sun took its toll as he could always be seen at a distance with white sun block on his lips two inches thick.

After Oman he spent a very brief time in the Battalion before he was promoted to Colour Serjeant then posted to 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Volunteer) RGJ in Fulham. During his tenure at 4 RGJ he got on famously with the men there, so much so he became a regular attendee at their reunions over the years, he could always be found with 'Chris Davies' and they remained lifelong friends.

On completion of the tour of duty with 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion he returned to 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion and was promoted to WO2 in B Company. Sadly during his tenure as CSM, one of his men was shot dead. Immediately after the incident the Platoon was waiting for the Company Serjeant Major to turn up at Belleek Police Station. The platoon was trying it's best to put some dark humour into the situation to raise spirits, however, me and most others were devastated. CSM Ginger Dixon turned up with tears in his eyes, he gathered us in and he spoke very softly and compassionately about what we had just witnessed, he enabled us to collect our thoughts.

That show of great humanity let us know, its ok to cry and grieve, its not a sign of weakness. Ginger for all that knew him well, knew that he was a very honest, generous guy, he gave freely of his time to all, never misled, never gave way to anger or retribution.

Further appointments came his way. TQMS & Divisional Serjeant Major on the Senior Officers Division of what was then Combat Arms Tactics Centre in Warminster. He held his farewell to the Army Party in the WOs & Sjts Mess and true to form it started at 13.00 with a round consisting of a bottle of Port, it broke up turned 23.59.

Gareth retired from the army in November 1991 and worked as a Cadet Admin Assistant with the Merseyside Army Cadet Force. He enjoyed football refereeing around Liverpool and would never miss an Everton game. He considered himself privileged to be Chairman of the North West Branch of the Royal Green Jacket Association. He took the NW Branch from 6 guys getting together in the Liver Pub, Crosby in the early 1990's and developed it over the years.

One of his proudest moments as the Chairman of the North West Branch was in October 2006 when Gareth and some members of the branch were invited to St James Palace where Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth was saying her farewell to the Royal Green Jackets as it was being disbanded and formed into the Rifles. That day Gareth was invited, along with his sister Ruth, to be one of the chosen people to speak to the Queen. That was his proudest moment as chairman.

Gareth has not only left the Branch with a solid foundation to move forward but he has left the Royal Green Jackets and the City of Liverpool with a 'Legacy'.

In St Johns Gardens, Liverpool is the memorial for the fallen soldiers of Liverpool who were killed in Northern Ireland. Included on this memorial are the names of Green Jackets. The memorial was paid for by various organisations and associations and was laid in June 1996 and dedicated by the Duke of Westminster. The NW Branch played a big part in this ceremony.

Since 1996 either Gareth or Ray Gerrard would tidy up the memorial before the anniversary in June and before each Remembrance Parade, as nobody seemed to maintain it. Prior to Gareths departure he asked a 'fellow Brother' David, in his Masonic Lodge to do him a favour and to always look after the stone memorial. David, true to his word, after Gareth passed away, went down to St Johns Gardens in his professional capacity as a stone mason cleaned it up, repaired and repainted the gold lettering. This is something David has said he will always do as long as he is able.

Again Gareth 'Ginger' Dixon will be reaching out to us all long after he has passed. He was definitely borne with the attributes of a thinking Rifleman who lived his life according to the words that make up the 'Chosen Man'.