



The Royal  
Green Jackets

# THE LIGHT'BOB

Newsletter of the Oxford branch  
of the Royal Green Jackets Association

No. 1 - January 2013



43<sup>rd</sup> & 52<sup>nd</sup>  
Light Infantry

## From the Editor

As you will see from the attached minutes, at the branch AGM last November I was elected onto the committee as Newsletter Editor.

This was to take some of the pressure off Mike Marr, who has a large number of responsibilities within the RGJA, and also (as he elegantly put it) 'to make the newsletter a bit more izzy-whizzy'! Mike's laudable ambition to make it more attractive to the reader and to use it to raise the profile of the branch elsewhere.

At the moment that just involves publishing it in this new format three times a year - in January, May and October - but we hope to include as many items of interest as possible.

What will make the newsletter more entertaining and informative are contributions from members. As those of you who are also subscribers to the 43<sup>rd</sup> & 52<sup>nd</sup> Old Comrades Googlegroup are aware, almost anything is grist to the mill.

So items of news, reminiscences, pictures, etc. should be sent to either Mike or me by post or e-mail.

*Roy Bailey*

## THE NEW MUSEUM

Construction of the new £3 million Soldiers of Oxfordshire Trust museum in the grounds of the Oxfordshire Museum at Woodstock is progressing.

Work started on the main structure last August, and is now two-thirds complete.



There has been some comment in the press reflecting concerns about the project, but work continues and is on schedule for completion later this year.

Our picture is an artist's impression of how the finished museum will look.

There is a good deal of information about the project online at <http://www.sofa.org.uk/the-museum/more-about-the-new-building>.

## THE ANNUAL REUNION 2012

The day of the RGJA Oxford branch Reunion, Saturday 10th November, was a busy one. In the morning was the bi-monthly Turning the Pages ceremony in Christ Church Cathedral. This was attended by around 70 people, including several members of the US Armed Forces and a senior member of Oxfordshire County Council.

The ceremony was slightly different from usual as not only was it a service of remembrance but also included a dedication of the new Standard of the Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars. There was the usual convivial get-together afterwards over sherry in the Priory Room, but sadly no Lawrence Belcher to entertain us with monologues. Canon Roland had to announce that, because of the increasing attendance at Turning the Pages, his stocks of sherry were running low!

There was no such shortage of alcoholic drinks at the Reunion at Edward Brooks Barracks that evening. There was a good turnout (perhaps not as large as last year); the usual splendid performance by the Waterloo Band and Bugles of The Rifles; and we were treated to two speeches instead of the usual one.

The first was the usual inspiring exhortation by Robin Draper, who reminded the meeting of the sacrifices made by members of The Rifles in Afghanistan. As well as supporting the Regiment's Care for Casualties charity, he urged those present to give moral support to families who have been bereaved by attending any repatriations at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford, if possible.

The second speech was by another brigadier, David Innes, who spoke of the new museum which was gradually taking shape at Woodstock. This would not be just a museum for the soldiers of Oxfordshire but a record of conflict within the county, going back to Roman times. He mentioned a new initiative - the Friends of the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum - which would generate support for the Museum, both financially and by involvement. Copies of the new leaflet were available and a copy is attached.

On Remembrance Sunday the Oxfordshire (The Rifles Battalion) ACF laid an Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry wreath at the Rose Hill memorial on behalf of the Old Comrades.

At the same time some members of the branch attended the church service in St Giles, Oxford, and afterwards met at Falklands House, home of the Oxford University Officer Training Corps.

All in all, a memorable Remembrance weekend.

## THE FORCES MARCH AND THE VETERANS CHARITY

The Forces March was inspired by the training march undertaken by 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry in August 1942. After training in Ilfracombe, North Devon, the battalion was ordered to march back to their barracks in Bulford, a distance of about 130 miles. This they accomplished in 5 days, carrying full kit, in one of the hottest weeks of the year. On the last day, it was Letter 'D' Company's turn to lead and they marched smartly into Bulford, led by Major John Howard. He later led his reinforced 'D' Company in the gliderborne assault on the Orne Bridges on D-Day

As a part of the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of D-Day in 2009, Barry Tappenden, whose father Ted was John Howard's wireless operator on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944, came up with the idea of a sponsored march/run the 65 miles from Tarrant Rushton airfield in Dorset, where the original glider party had taken off, to Portsmouth and then via ferry to Ouistreham and on to Pegasus Bridge. This was called *Project 65* and was set up as a registered charity, with General Bob Pascoe as President and Major Michael Massy-Beresford as a Trustee – both ex-43<sup>rd</sup> & 52<sup>nd</sup>. Danny Greeno became Chief Executive with offices in Pinewood Studios.



The following year the name was changed to *The Veterans Charity*, and it was decided to re-create the 1942 march as an annual fund-raising event, open to any individuals and teams who are able to raise sponsorship. A number of military teams have taken part, and last year the team awarded the Army Challenge Cup was from 'E' Company, 7 RIFLES (TA), based in Milton Keynes and led by Captain William 'Dutch' Holland. They beat a team from the RAF Regiment, who marched in full kit, and one from the stores personnel of RNAS Culdrose. These guys take it seriously; others don't. Last year, in the hottest week of the year, a girl walked the whole way in a bright yellow woollen duck costume! (pictured)

The support team is organised and headed by Michael Massy-Beresford and contains, as one might expect, a number of ex-OBLI and Green Jackets veterans. If you enjoy the company of old comrades and like-minded friends, camping out in some of the most beautiful countryside in Southern England, and helping to raise funds for a very worthwhile cause, please contact Michael on 020 7385 1983 or e-mail [MssyDrsf@aol.com](mailto:MssyDrsf@aol.com). This year's march is from Wed 22<sup>nd</sup> to Sun 26<sup>th</sup> May.

Michael also organises fund-raising for the Veterans Charity throughout the year at various busy venues such as mainline railway stations and supermarkets. Again, a number of old comrades, resplendent in blazers, berets and medals, turn out to 'rattle the bucket', but more are always needed.

For more information, see <http://www.veteranscharity.org.uk/> and <http://www.forcesmarch.org.uk/>.



The winning 7 RIFLES team at Bulford, having been presented with their trophy by General Bob Pascoe

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## DIARY DATES

### 2013

*(Members meet in the Volunteers' Bar at Edward Brooks Barracks (EBB) on the first Tuesday of each month at 20.00hrs.)*

**Sun 16<sup>th</sup> January.** The Anniversary of the death of Sir John Moore. Wreath laying at the Evensong service at St Paul's Cathedral, London, commencing at 7 pm..

**Thur 17<sup>th</sup> January.** RIFLES Officers Oxford Club Lunch.

**Thur 14<sup>th</sup> February.** RIFLES Officers Oxford Club Lunch.

**Sat 2<sup>nd</sup> March.** Turning the Pages Ceremony at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, at 10.45 am.

**Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March.** RIFLES Officers Oxford Club Lunch.

**Thur 11<sup>th</sup> Apr.** Oxford Branch Members Lunch.

**Thur 18<sup>th</sup> April.** RIFLES Officers Oxford Club Lunch.

**Sat 4<sup>th</sup> May.** Turning the Pages Ceremony at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, at 10.45 am. .

**Thur 16<sup>th</sup> May.** RIFLES Officers Oxford Club Lunch.

**Wed 22<sup>nd</sup> - Sun 26<sup>th</sup>.** The Forces March. Ilfracombe to Bulford.

**Sun 16<sup>th</sup> June.** RGJA Oxford Branch Band Concert. *To be confirmed.*

**Date TBA.** Oxford Branch trip to the Assault Glider Trust, RAF Shawbury, Shropshire.

*(Events are all held at Edward Brooks Barracks (EBB), Abingdon, unless otherwise stated.)*

## COMMITTEE

Following the Branch AGM in November last, the new Committee is as follows:

**Major Charlie Helmn** (Chairman)

**Phil Evans** (Secretary)

**Mike Marr** (Treasurer/Membership Secretary)

**Denis Offord** (Oxford & Bucks Old Comrades)

**Roy Bailey** (Newsletter Editor)

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## IN MEMORIAM

We have learned of the deaths of the following old comrades since the publication of the last newsletter:

**John Brown** (b 1914) Joined as a boy soldier in 1929 and was a corporal in charge of a carrier section in the 1<sup>st</sup> Bucks Bn. at Dunkirk. Later a Sapper. Became President of the Bucks Bn. Old Comrades Association.

**John Redwood 'Reddie' Haseler** (b 1936) Corporal in 'A' Company, 1<sup>st</sup> OBLI in Germany and Cyprus, 1955-58. Later Regimental Ration NCO in HQ Coy.

**John 'Johnny' Wetherall** (b 1925) Joined the Oxford & Bucks in 1942 and became a serjeant glider pilot, losing an eye at Arnhem. Escaped from Stalag Luft VII and finally retired to Ireland.

**Roger Whistler** (b 1916). 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. with the 4<sup>th</sup> Oxford & Bucks (TA). Captured in 1930 and imprisoned in Lafuen and later Eichstatt. Transferred to the RMP as a regular officer after the war.

**Greville Goodwyn** (b 1938) Commissioned into the Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry in 1957. HQ Coy as Regimental Ration NCO. Served in 1 GJ & 1 RGJ, retiring as a major.

**Jeffrey Duncan** (b 1945). Served as a Rifleman in the RGJ from 1966 to 1975. A regular member of the Veterans Charity fundraising team up to his death.

**John Willoughby**. Served in the OBLI, 1GJ (43rd & 52nd) and 1 RGJ, retiring as a WO2. Custodian of the Regimental museum at Slade Park Barracks for some years until its closure.

## HELPING THE FAMILY

Oxford branch chairman Major Charlie Helmn was appointed Casualty Visiting Officer to the family of Lt. Andrew Chesterman of 3 RIFLES, who was killed in Afghanistan on 9th August 2012.

This is a 6-month appointment (with a possible extension), and involved taking over responsibility for helping the family through the various procedures. These included organising the repatriation, with hotels for the relatives; arranging the funeral and the funding for it; and dealing with such agencies as the Service Pensions and Veterans Agency.

A very worthwhile job, for which Charlie has been extensively praised.



Canon Roland Meredith welcomes Conducting Officer Robin Draper (right) for the Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry and Ronald Barnes for the Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars at the Turning the Pages ceremony at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, on Saturday 5th January

## The Resolution of the Brunei Emergency 1962

December 1962 in Brunei, then a British Protectorate, represents a dynamic chapter of joint service counter insurgency operations, mounted from a standing start. The hall mark of a swift succession of different actions was hot planning followed by rapid execution. In the event the insurgency was contained by the loyalty of the Brunei Police, the Civil Power, and the people of Brunei, and by the swift reaction of the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force reinforcements, principally mounted from Singapore. The Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Green Jackets, 43<sup>rd</sup> and 52<sup>nd</sup>, played an auspicious part in the operation.

The Malayan Emergency was resolved in early 1960s. The Sultanate of Brunei was set in the midst of British Colonies which had recently achieved or were about to achieve independence. The Sultan, Sir Omar Ali Saifuddin, whose dynasty had begun 600 years before, enjoyed the wealth generated by Brunei Shell, oil having been discovered some thirty years before. The challenge to the status quo in Brunei was generated by thirty four year old Azahari, a political activist, who was driven by the concept of a Brunei controlled crescent, which would span Sarawak, Brunei and Sabah. A secret rebel army – the TNKU [*Tentara Nasional Kalimantan Utara*] of 4,000 was formed and had received training in Kalimantan (Indonesia).

The revolt in Brunei and some adjacent areas of Sarawak was launched at 0200 on 8<sup>th</sup> December, with rebel assaults in Brunei town, on the Sultan's palace, the police stations and the power station and the British residency. The attacks on the first two objectives were repelled. However at Seria, Tutong, Limbang and Bangar the TNKU rebels assumed full control and hostages were taken.

The Gurkhas Force comprising HQ 99 Gurkha Infantry Brigade – small headquarters, two rifle companies 1/2<sup>nd</sup> GR, detachment of Royal Engineers and Royal Signals, and one Intelligence Officer. Task: to secure Brunei Town, the Istana (Palace) and rescue the Sultan on the night 9 December. The action was swift and decisive. The Gurkhas moved into Brunei Town and fought a series of sharp actions – six casualties, two of them fatal. Later, reinforced by 1/2<sup>nd</sup> Gurkhas and the Queen's Own Highlanders.

Queen's Own Highlanders. Task: 60 men to secure west end of Seria and Panaga Police Station; 40 men secure Anduki airfield and control tower, and the bridge over the Sungei Bera river; establish road block on the Tutong/Seria road. All objectives were achieved by 1530hrs 10 December. Route secured from Anduki to west Seria. The Sultan's Country Palace at Kota Menggalela was relieved after coming under heavy fire. Seria police station and Kuala Belait was cleared assisted by 1/2<sup>nd</sup> GR and RAF. Rebel prisoners were taken and mopping up followed.

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The Royal Marines - 42 Commando. Task: Once Brunei Town was recaptured it was a major priority to retake Limbang and release high category hostages due to be executed on 12 December. At midnight 11 December a small force was ferried to the Town in river craft and launched a contested dawn assault and succeeded - in short order - to rout the rebels and rescue the hostages. The rebels lost 15 dead and 20 wounded, many of whom died later. Two Marines were killed and one officer wounded.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Green Jackets (43<sup>rd</sup> and 52<sup>nd</sup>) – under command Lieutenant-Colonel HJ Sweeney MC - stationed in Penang on an accompanied tour and under no notice to move, was ordered at lunchtime on Sunday 9 December 1962, a normal Sunday afternoon, to move as soon as possible to Singapore, there to take over responsibility for internal security or to stage and move to Brunei. The Regiment mobilised from a standing start, moved 500 miles overland to Singapore and embarked in HMS Tiger in the space of thirty-four hours.

The Battalion-minus disembarked and prepared for an immediate fight but found Miri Town still to be loyal. Bekenu however, a police and administrative post ten miles up the Sibuti River and some twenty-five miles south-west of Miri, had been captured by a group of rebels and there was uncertainty as to the situation in Niah, a smaller post some forty miles south-west of Miri on the Niah River.

Major Mark Pennell MBE, commanding 'C' Company (Captain Eveleigh, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieuts Bayley and Hume-Rothery), was tasked to secure Niah which was achieved without a fight.

Major David Mostyn MBE, commanding 'B' Company (Captain Blaker, Lieutenants Petter, Drummond-Hay, Mullard, Shaw), was determined not to sail his force up the Sibuti River and attempt a direct amphibious landing at Bekenu. He decided instead to disembark the company, less one platoon, at the small coastal village of Tanjong Batu, from whence there was said to be a path towards Bekenu. The remaining platoon (6) was to sail quietly up the river in the District Officer's launch and lie up in the rushes short of Bekenu, to provide flanking fire support when the company attacked and also to control the river.

After luncheon on 12 December the company (5, 6, 7 and 8 Platoons, Company Headquarters and a section of the Police Field Force) set sail on board a Shell Company landing-craft, towing the District Officer's launch. The Company, less 6 Platoon, was off loaded into the shallows off Tanjong Batu at 1700hrs and began an appalling trek. This trek, always through mangrove swamp and thick jungle whose floor was one perpetual pond, included a four-hour rest, a long detour to avoid a guarded bridge and a river crossing in small dug-out boats.

Reaching the outskirts of Bekenu, the force shook out behind a plantation of pepper trees on the edge of the kampong into formation for the attack. The time was 0945hrs on 13 December, nearly seventeen hours after it had waded ashore from the LCT five miles away. Radio contact was made with 6 Platoon on the launch, waiting round a bend in the river just downstream, and then the force moved into the assault.

Firing broke out and a brief battle ensued before the rebels, armed only with ball-loaded shotguns, turned and ran to the river to escape in an outboard-powered boat. They were intercepted by 6 Platoon from the launch. When the battle was over five rebels lay dead, one more had floated away downstream, six were captured and ten or so more had managed to make their escape into the jungle. After the engagement at Bekenu patrols were sent up and down the river for three days to search kampongs and bring in prisoners. Nonetheless it was feared after the fall of Bekenu and Niah that the bulk of the rebels in the area, which was said to number at least 300, would escape up the rivers into the hinterland and there would be a prolonged hunt for them over the next few months. To prevent this happening it was decided to make use of HMS Albion's helicopters to place 'A' Company (Major Ian Greenlees, Captains Goodwyn, Haines and Lieut Letts) in cut off positions on the head waters of the Sungei Setap, Sungei Sibutu and Sungei Niah. The 'stops' were in place by 15 December. In addition irregular forces controlled by Tom Harrison, Curator of the Sarawak Museum, Kuching rallied the indigenous tribesmen in their hundreds, growing to nearly two thousand. This played a major part in containing the rebellion and cutting off the escape routes.

**Assessment of Success** This final anachronistic expedition in imperial history was a resounding success, resulting in the complete pacifying of that area of Sarawak. During the Brunei emergency naval and air forces carried troops, with their vehicles and equipment, to and from Borneo, supplied them during operations, conducted landing operations, river and bay patrols and provided communications. Each played their part. Royal Marine, Battalion and Company operations were in the main isolated from each other and those on the ground were unaware of the tasks and objectives that were assigned to others.

The Seminar held on 12 December 2012 on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Brunei Emergency 1962 at the Royal Marine Museum, Portsmouth, brought to light the entire operation for the very first time to the majority of those who took part.

### Brunei Today

Brunei, officially the Nation of Brunei, the Abode of Peace, is a sovereign state located on the north coast of the island of Borneo, in Southeast Asia. Apart from its coastline with the South China Sea, it is completely surrounded by the state of Sarawak, Malaysia, and it is separated into two parts by the Sarawak district of Limbang. It is the only sovereign state completely on the island of Borneo, with the remainder of the island belonging to Malaysia and Indonesia.

George Elliot