



The Blue Hackle

Newsletter of The Highlanders, 4th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland
September 2014

Commanding Officer's Introduction

While on Op HERRICK 19, the Battalion produced a monthly newsletter which aimed to keep our friends and families informed of what those deployed were doing. Now that we have all returned home to Germany, I feel that it is still important for us to continue this line of communication and The Blue Hackle will, therefore, be published on an ongoing quarterly basis. This is our first edition and I would be delighted to have any feedback or hear any suggestions you may have on how it could be improved.

Since the last Highlanders' soldiers returned from Afghanistan in mid-July, the focus has been on ensuring that everyone takes the leave which they have earned and on re-shaping the Battalion in line with our future role as a Mechanised Infantry Battalion. We have had the opportunity to re-connect with our traditional recruiting areas during the homecoming parades and have enjoyed the presence of a number of members of the Royal Family at both the medals parade in Fallingbommel and at the laying up of the 1st Battalion, The Highlanders' Colours. There have also been plenty of opportunities for sport and adventurous training as we seek to re-build cohesion across the Battalion following a rather disjointed 18 months. Information regarding the upcoming move to Catterick in summer 2015 is filtering through in greater detail and there will be a series of briefs before Christmas to ensure that the Battalion and our families are as well-informed as possible.

Op HERRICK 19 Medals Parade



HRH The Duke of Edinburgh talking to the Commanding Officer and Pipe Major MacGregor

On 12 June, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh visited Fallingbommel and presented Operational Service Medals to those Highlanders who had just completed their first tour of Afghanistan. In his

address, His Royal Highness made reference to the enormous satisfaction that the Battalion can take from three successful tours of Afghanistan and the importance of the support which families and friends have provided to the soldiers. Following a Battalion photograph, the visit concluded with lunch in the WO and Sgts' Mess, together with a selection of soldiers and their families.

The Highlanders' Homecoming Parades



The Pipes and Drums leading the Battalion through Aberdeen

To mark the Battalion's recent tour in Afghanistan, we were delighted to have the opportunity to return to Scotland to take part in various homecoming events. We began at the official National Armed Forces Day celebrations in Stirling, a proud day for all the Armed Forces and their families, and particularly so for B Company who were the Army representatives in the parade through Stirling. The company marched from Stirling Castle down to the event field where they took part in an open-air ceremony attended by HRH The Princess Royal, the Prime Minister, David Cameron, and Scotland's First Minister, Alex Salmond. B Company then moved to join the rest of the Battalion in Cameron Barracks to prepare for the parades through our traditional recruiting areas in Inverness and Aberdeen. Both parades were a huge success, with a fantastic turnout from the public and superb support from the local councils who were extremely generous in hosting us thereafter. B Company also represented the Battalion and the Army at the Armed Forces Day parades in Dundee and Clydebank, where once again they were very well received and hosted. At each event, it was wonderful to see the Jocks immaculately turned out in their kilts and standing proud after a long, and often difficult, operational deployment.

Laying up the Colours of the 1st Battalion, The Highlanders

On 3 July, B Company provided the guard for the laying up of the Colours of the 1st Battalion, The Highlanders at the Scottish National War Memorial in Edinburgh Castle. It was a poignant day, made special by the attendance of our Regimental Colonel-in-Chief, HM The Queen, and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. For the majority of the Jocks on parade, the day was a valuable reminder as to what has gone before and the necessity for us to maintain our 'golden thread'.



HRH The Queen inspecting B Coy and the Colour Party

Elgin Rose Bowl Inter-Company Sports Week



B Coy taking on HQ Coy in the inter-company football final

The Elgin Rose Bowl inter-company sports week began with the Charles Morpeth cross-country race. 283 members of the Battalion completed a 6-mile route around the local area with the Adjt, Capt Hamish Waring, taking top spot on the podium. As well as competing for the Elgin Rose Bowl throughout the week, soldiers had the opportunity to try their hands at new sports, from Nordic skiing (on roller-skis) to orienteering, as well as hone their skills at the more mainstream sports of football, rugby and shinty. Following the final fixtures on Friday morning, the Commanding Officer presented this year's winners, Sp Coy, with the Elgin Rose Bowl.



Support Company – 2014 winners of the Elgin Rose Bowl

70th Anniversary of the Liberation of Veules-Les-Roses and St Valery



Highlanders lay roses on the graves of fallen Highlanders

In 1940, the 51st Highland Division had been forced to surrender in Le Havre, after being surrounded by Rommel's forces. Following the Normandy landings in June 1944, the reformed 51st Highland Division was in the vicinity of Le Havre and Montgomery was insistent that it be the 51st Highland Division which retook the port, thereby liberating neighbouring Veules-Les-Roses and St Valery at the same time. By 13 September 1944, the German forces in Le Havre had surrendered and the massed Pipes and Drums of the 51st Highland Division beat the retreat in St Valery.

To recognise this milestone, a combined party from B Company and 7 SCOTS travelled to the village of Veules. Courtesy of a local historian, the party was treated to a tour which included visits to the sites where the 51st Division blocked the road from Dieppe to Le Havre to deny the Germans access to the village, and the cliffs where many Jocks so sadly fell to their deaths while attempting to climb to safety. Following the tour, the party attended a reception in Veules as guests of the town's Mayor. The next day, and to the delight of the locals, the party marched through the village (bedecked with Saltires) before attending a church service to remember those who gave their lives. The Jocks performed 'Flower of Scotland' for the local residents of Veules which was then followed by the raising of the Saltire in the village square and the playing of the Last Post. After

visiting the village's Commonwealth cemetery, the Jocks attended a second reception where they met Tom Renouf, a former Black Watch soldier who had fought in the village.

Adventurous Training and Sport

As part of the Battalion's recuperation programme, there have been a number of adventurous training exercises which have taken advantage of our location in Germany, including hill walking in the Harz mountains and climbing and mountain biking in Bavaria. Alongside this, the Battalion has reinvigorated its sports teams and achieved success in winning the BA(G) Volleyball and coming second in the BA(G) Cricket. The Battalion football team were undefeated at the Infantry sixes tournament, winning eight games and drawing two. They unfortunately they went out at the quarter final stage on penalties.



Adventurous training in the Bavarian Mountains



Capt Anderson makes a break for glory at the 20 Armoured Brigade Sevens

The rugby team has also been busy and on 2 September they travelled to the Newbury Rugby 10s. Having trained together for a week, confidence was high and the team won all four groups games by comfortable margins. The next step was the semi-finals of the Cup competition where, despite being level at half time, the team were edged out 24-7 by a strong 12 RA side who went on to win the tournament. Cpl Natubavivi, LCpl Lewavakula and Sgt Boila all put in notable performances throughout the tournament and laid the foundations for what we hoped would be success at the 20 Armoured Brigade Invitational Sevens. However, a series of small errors saw the team edged into the Plate competition where they eventually came third. The team now shifts focus to the 15-a-side game as they look forward to competing in the BA(G) league.