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Senior Serving and Retired Highlander or Antecedent Officers

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Dear Brother Officers,

CHANGE OF REPRESENTATIVE COLONEL FOR THE HIGHLANDERS, 4th BATTALION THE ROYAL REGIMENT OF SCOTLAND

Since I took over from Brigadier Hughie Munro in the Spring of 2006, just after the formation of the Royal Regiment of Scotland, it has been my privilege to be the Representative Colonel for the 4th Battalion and also the Chairman of the Joint Trustees of our Highlander and Antecedent regimental charities and museums. However, I am posted to Muscat, Oman in September as the Defence Attaché and it is therefore time for me to step down and pass the Colonelcy to Colonel James Hopkinson.

Looking back over my 4 years in the chair I would say the Regiment in general, but the Highlanders specifically, has been through a particularly turbulent period. The Regular battalion has come to terms with the new regimental system, including the boarding and selection of all key officer and warrant officer appointments on a regimental basis, settling into permanent basing in Fallingbowl, a very difficult and fragmented operational tour in Iraq in 2008 and a highly testing and dangerous tour for the B Company Group in Afghanistan at the same time. There has been significant under-manning, the removal, at least temporarily, of the Battalion's Armoured Infantry role and majority of its vehicles in 2009, and now preparations for a battalion deployment to Afghanistan. The pace of life has been relentless.

It has been a similarly challenging on the Antecedent regimental side with a growing recognition that the Joint Trustee arrangements were no longer fit for purpose and that there was a need to break up the Joint Trustee arrangement in order to provide more effective oversight and management of the antecedent museums and trusts. This happened in September last year and seems to have worked very effectively. The period also saw the development of plans for a major modernization of the Fort George museum and this is now moved to the fund raising stage.

I am happy to say that, thanks to the efforts of many key players, some serving, some retired, some civilian volunteers, others paid, we have successfully navigated our way through all of these issues and events and have now arrived at sensible and pragmatic solutions which will hopefully stand the test of time. My job has also been made very

much easier by the tireless efforts of Maurice Gibson, Mike Low, Norrie Donald and the rest of the HHQ team. I am delighted with the way in which day to day communications and the passage of information has developed, with the quality and simplicity of the on-line newsletter, and the inroads made to simplifying and tightening up the management of the regimental accounts. Many thanks to those of you who have given so much and for so little remuneration.

I think it would be fair to say that the Royal Regiment of Scotland has now come through its initial teething problems. There are still some who lag behind the vast majority in recognizing how fundamentally life within the Regiment and within the Army has changed, but they will catch up in due course. Our regular and TA battalions are distinguishing themselves on extraordinarily difficult and dangerous operations and the quality of leadership amongst the officers and senior ranks is as high as it has ever been. Similarly the jocks are showing the fighting spirit, determination, humour and resolve in abundance.

We need to recognize that we have been lucky as a regiment not to have suffered more casualties and we need to brace ourselves for this to get worse in the coming year as so many of our battalions, including 4 SCOTS, will be deployed to Afghanistan in the period. Never has there been a greater need for regimental solidarity and support and this includes the intimate and overt support of the antecedent associations.

The nature of the regiment may have changed but I have seen at first hand that the people remain the same: proud of their past, friendly and great company, but also forward leaning, professional and adaptable to an ever changing operational and military situation. It has been a tremendous privilege to be your Representative Colonel and I wish you all the very best of fortune for the future.

With best wishes,

Mark Dodson