

4 December 2013

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Dear Sirs,

My second report and this one will be lighter on military jargon. We passed our first Tour milestones in the last month with A Company returning home after a very successful time running in-theatre training for all the forces as they arrived. They departed for Fallingbommel and a well earned rest over Christmas but return in January to a packed programme of Adventure Training, low level military skills and an Exercise to Jordan. One of the events they will be doing is a trip to the World War One battlefields to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the war beginning. We will keep you updated on their progress.

For the Battlegroup the routine of operations continues. Our role is to protect the troops deployed in Bastion and in the remaining four bases in central Helmand. We operate in support of the Afghan National Security Forces whose focus is on the population in the towns and fertile land beside the Helmand river. We operate a little further out concentrating on making sure the roads are safe for ISAF travel and to prevent the insurgency attacking the remaining bases we have left. These operations are fascinating and relatively complex, especially when working with a number of different nations as I said before. As an example, we took the new Estonian Company on their first operation in combination with the Danish Tanks this month. They adapted quickly to the Afghan environment and scored a success immediately by following a bomb layer to his 'cache' and discovering a good amount of equipment and detonators. These small victories protect both us and more importantly the Afghan Security Forces.



A Multinational O Gp in the Field (left to right – Myself, Maj Martin Sorenson, OC Viking Tp and OC Estonian Coy)

Our other major operation this month was to strengthen the military bridging on Highway 1, the principal Afghan arterial route, in Gereshk – the economic capitol of Helmand. The

combination of a UK Armoured Infantry Company, some US National Guard Engineers and the Afghan Uniformed Police all commanded by 4 SCOTS was a both eclectic and potent mix. Yet, the complex task was completed ahead of time in the dead of night with no enemy interference and limited fuss and bother – although I may have one or two more grey hairs.



The Gereshk Bridge from the SE looking NW, note the military overbridge which we extended on Op DAAS PUL 1

Unfortunately this month was beset by tragedy as the Battlegroup lost WO2 Fisher from 3 MERCIAN to enemy action. WO2 Fisher was well known and respected in 4 SCOTS having served with us both in Canada last year and now in Afghanistan. Our thoughts remain with his wife Emma and sons James and William and 3 MERCIAN in the aftermath of this awful event. WO2 Fisher's death coming 6 days before, made Remembrance Day all the more poignant. The Pipes and Drums played a significant part in Bastion and all the outstations providing a unique reminder of our military heritage and connecting us to those who went before. We were joined by His Royal Highness the Duke of York and the Secretary of State for Defence who laid wreaths in Bastion and Pipe Major Macgregor had the honour of playing the lament at the end of the Service.

The RSM changed over this month and we welcomed RSM McQuillin to the Battalion. A veteran of HERRICK 11 he brings much to 4 SCOTS and is already making his mark. Capt Philbin eased across to become the principle career manager for soldiers and joined the Officers Mess effortlessly. He was an excellent RSM and will be remembered fondly by all ranks.



RSM McQuillin and LCpl Bird on operations with TAC.

The Regional Corps Battle School passed out their first course of Afghan instructors this month and I was represented by the Adjutant and RSM at a stirring graduation ceremony. B Company continues to forge ahead with this important task and receive daily praise from the Divisional Commander for their work.

We welcomed Anna Redwood to theatre for a visit in advance of a commission for a painting for this operation. Her visit was a huge success especially in STERGA 2 where she joined a patrol and had the Jocks participating in several art projects. We hope some of the work she did at the Patrol Base will feature in her upcoming exhibition.



Anna Redwood on a 'patrol to sketch operation' from Sterga 2.

At home, the ROG continues to run two thirds of the Battalion with startling efficiency. Adventure Training continues at pace and a good number of soldiers are getting away. On the sporting front, we are doing well. The cross country team is holding its own in the Divisional Championships, ably led by Captain Grant Burnett and we are well represented in the Infantry Rugby side. The Nordic and Alpine skiing teams depart next month to Norway and France respectively and I hope to repeat the Biathlon success of last year.

Finally, a sincere thanks to all those who have sent parcels, in particular to Anne Leslie from the Duchess of Gordon's Ladies for the shortbread, Kathleen and George Gedded from Inverness Queen's Own Highlanders Veterans for their very kind Christmas gifts and Angus Don MSP for the Irn Bru and Tunnocks caramel wafers which although yet to arrive will be a huge boost when they do.

I hope you all have a Happy Christmas and New Year, we will be well looked after although it will not be the same as spending it with our friends and families. But all is not lost; the 2IC Major Jes Giles is in charge of Joy and Christmas and will hold his first planning meeting tomorrow – Santa may even attend...