



ROYAL MILITARY POLICE CYPRUS VETERANS' NEWSLETTER

Number 77 – December 2017



Message from the Editor:

Welcome to what sadly will be the last of these Newsletters. Many thanks to everyone who has sent in their stories, memories and pictures over the last ten years during which Sue and I have greatly enjoyed producing the Newsletters. I would like to wish you all well over the Festive Period and beyond into whatever the future holds.

Membership

Sadly Tony Nobbs died recently. His funeral was on 16 November Slough, Buckinghamshire. New member Roy Wooller who served in Squad 601. Cyprus:- 56-58. 227 Pro Coy, Kyrenia.

Interesting points to note:

- THERE WILL NOW BE NO REUNION IN OCTOBER 2018, OR INDEED IN THE FUTURE. ALSO PLEASE DO NOT SEND ANY FURTHER ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS.
- Cyprus Memorial (All Services) at the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffordshire on 21 August 2018.
- RMPA National Annual Reunion 11-13 May 2018 at The Holiday Inn, Rotherham. Details from your local RMPA Secretary or Maj (Rtd) Allan Barley, NEC, 01904 427422.
- RMP Journal – Southwick Park – Tel: 023 92284564
- RMP Shop 02392284651 or email rhqrm@btinternet.com
- Old Comrades Link-Up – Bob Eggelton – 02392 265645 or email joybob@btinternet.com
- Portal or gateway for Veteran's seeking support can be accessed via www.veteransgateway.org.uk

The following articles and contributions have been received from our members:

Maurice Nichols *writes about the late Lt Col Harry Burden*

I was very amused to read Jim Pointon's excellent article about Harry Burden which prompts me to recall my own experiences of the great man at Inkerman Barracks in the 1950s. As one of a half-dozen newly commissioned young officers into RMP during National Service days my colleagues and I quickly became aware of the awesome presence of RSM Burden. As so-called "Lone Star Rangers" we were often viewed with a mixture of wonder, suspicion and even contempt by professional members of the Depot's establishment at that time and were sometimes treated accordingly.

Having just completed some eight months intensive officer-cadet training, which included a generous amount of Drill under the exclusive supervision of Guards Warrant Officers and senior NCOs, I was rather taken aback to find that we were to do yet more of it every Wednesday morning at Woking under the supervision of RSM Burden and the Adjutant (who shall remain nameless). On one such occasion we were required to remove our webbing belts for inspection when to his apparent horror and apoplexy, the RSM found traces of white blanco on the internal surfaces of one of the brass fittings on my belt! What would I do were I to find such a dreadful thing on a L/Cpl's belt? demanded Harry. I confess, I was rather stumped for an appropriately military response and muttered something about asking the chap if he would be good enough to clean it better next time. Fighting off an apparently overwhelming attack of utter dismay and outrage at my seemingly inept response, Harry managed to resist a possible seizure of some sort and staggered off shaking his head in utter disbelief.

However, all was not lost. A month or so later, my Company Commander asked me if I would command the Company on Parade for the Armistice Service at the Corps Chapel. Being asked to do something by a superior in those days was effectively an order, and so with rather mixed

feelings I said that I would be delighted to do it. "Cut along and see the CSM then. He will tell you what to do", said the OC. Our CSM was a splendid man, a former Guardsman of course, always immaculately turned-out but apparently with a ram-rod in lieu of a backbone. "Right Sir", he said, "this is what I want you to do. Now at 1030 hrs on Sunday morning, NOT 1029 or 1031 hrs, I want you to march smartly under the Archway on to the Square. You will see me there, straight ahead of you in front of the Company. You will march up to me and come to a halt just in front of me. I will then salute you, and you Sir, will then salute me. I will then hand the parade over to you and take up my position at the head of the column" he said. "Thereafter, you should give the command for the Company to move to right in threes, Right Turn! then take up your position at the head of the column just in front of me and march us all around to the Chapel. On arrival, give the command, Company Halt! and then about-turn and hand the Company over to me. You alright with that Sir?" he asked.

"Well actually, Sarn't Major, between you and me, I am not very good at giving the command Halt on the correct foot, as a result of which any outfit I am supposed to be in charge of just comes to a sort of shuffling standstill" "That's alright Sir", said the CSM, "I shall be right behind you so you just shout-out Company and I will shout Halt". "Crikey, do you really think that will work?" I asked anxiously. "Yes, don't you worry Sir, just make sure you get on parade on time in your best bib and tucker!" Much relieved, I marched away to the Officers' Mess.

Well the great Sunday morning came and at 1030hrs, and not 1029 or 1031hrs, I marched under the Arch and on to the Square. Sure enough, the CSM was there with the Company immaculately turned-out behind him. He saluted me etc and off we went marching towards the Chapel with me at the head of the column. On rounding a corner to approach the Chapel, however, to my horror stood on the steps were RSM Burden who terrified 2/Lts, the Adjutant who despised them, and the Commandant who appeared to be totally unaware of their very existence. Praying that the Sgt Major would not forget our little ruse, I made sure that we at the head of the column had just passed the dignitaries on the steps before, with fingers crossed, calling-out "Company". To my intense relief this was followed by the CSM's "Halt" followed by the blissful sound of the Company coming to an immaculate halt.

Turning, I hoped casually, to the Sgt Major, I handed over the Company to him and walked smugly into the Chapel. The following morning I saw the Sgt Major and thanked him profusely for saving my bacon so magnificently. "That's alright Sir, in fact the RSM came up to me during Curry Lunch in the Sergeants' Mess after the Parade. He asked me, What's the name of that young Subaltern of yours Sarn't Major", to which I replied "Mr Nicholls, Sir". "Well, he's got a very good word of command", replied Harry approvingly before wandering off to meet other Mess members.

Some thirty or more years later, I had the pleasure of sitting next to Harry, by then a retired Lieutenant Colonel, at an Officers Mess Dinner Night and told him of my little escapade so long ago. He chuckled and said, "Ah yes, that was Sarn't Major Legett, one of the best", he said. I totally agreed.

After Note

Lt Col Harry Burden MBE MSM served in the Regular Army from 1939 to 1970 and was re-employed thereafter as a Retired Officer (RO) at Rousillon Barracks where I believe his ashes were interred upon his death on 24th July 1994. Like nearly all of our Warrant Officers who I met over many years, if you scratched Harry's bristly skin just a little bit you would soon find a heart of gold trying to get out!

Jim Pointon – *The Fire Picket*

During my early days at Inkerman Barracks in the mid fifties I became a member of the 'Fire Picket,' which comprised of a small party of men under the command of a Corporal who knew all about the fire fighting equipment and water supply points within the barracks.

His 'Small Party of Men' was six sprogs, chosen from A Company, who performed this function for a few weeks until they moved on to B Company when they would be replaced by another six.

The primary task of the Corporal was to teach each new Picket how to use the equipment which comprised a wheeled contraption housing a petrol Engine, lengths of hosepipe and various bits and pieces. We spent many hours practising the necessary drill to assemble everything, at the culmination of which the man holding the pointed bit at the end of the hosepipe would shout 'Water On' and someone would go through the motions of pretending to open the valve, which supposedly provided the water.

Moving the contraption to the where it was required relied on manpower – supplied of course by the sprogs. It was heavy and looked just like the one seen in early 20th century silent comedy films such as *The Three Stooges* and the famous 'Keystone Cops. But unlike them, we never actually got to use any water. Our training was confined to pulling the contraption to where we were told, starting the engine, rolling out the hosepipes, coupling up and shouting 'Water On.' The Corporal in charge was fairly laid back and had obviously never heard of 'Sods Law', because after we had mastered the drill, he assured us it was unlikely we would be called upon to deal with any fires as he'd never know any happen there.

It was early one evening a week or two later that Sods Law took effect (at a time as we later found out when the Corporal was absent from the barracks). Smoke was seen rising from a building just outside the main barracks perimeter. The alarm was raised, the 'Fire Picket' were summoned and in no time at all we were dragging the contraption along, looking just like the 'Keystone Cops.' We hurtled through the Barrack gates at enormous speed, hanging on with grim determination to its shaft and must have appeared unstoppable because everyone was running out of our way as we raced like madmen towards the rising smoke.

On arrival we discovered the fire was in a building used for some sort of weapons and explosives training, with what appeared to be a variety of ammunition stacked around the place. But we just concentrated on the drill we had rehearsed, which now worked with the precision of a Swiss watch. The engine started at the first turn of the handle, the hose was quickly linked up and the pointed piece fixed on the end – followed by an almighty bellow of 'WATER ON' from the man holding it. But that was as far we got! The Corporal was not there to help us and, having no idea where to find any water, we began running around like headless chickens.

It was at this point a man in civilian clothes appeared on the scene. He was no great size, but spoke in a clear and very direct manner which not only captured our attention but he didn't give us the opportunity to ask any questions before getting us all running into the building to bring out boxes of ammunition which we then placed well away from the fire. How much of it might have been real or dummy I don't know, but we fetched plenty of it out before the real Fire Brigade arrived and took care of the fire.

But who was the man in civilian clothes, I hear you ask? It was none other than RSM Burden who, without needing a uniform or even raising his voice, had effortlessly commanded a party of confused young men and guided them through what was needed to be done in a situation which could so easily have ended in disaster. It was no mean feat, which I should perhaps make clear, he managed to accomplish without giving any indication whatever of having the slightest fear for our safety!

Jim Pointon –*The Unused Thirty Six Hour Pass*

I have written previously about those occasions the paths of Regimental Sergeant Major Burden and myself crossed, with each of them being, for me, truly memorable. This one was no exception.

It was one Saturday morning during the mid fifties that my training squad, along with all the others, together with just about everyone else then at Inkerman Barracks was lined up on the Parade Ground waiting to be addressed by RSM Burden. Every man in my squad was clutching a thirty six hour pass and anxious to get the parade over so we could dash off and catch a bus. Many of us could make it home inside four or five hours and the prospect of enjoying some home cooking and spending the evening at a local dance hall was uppermost in most of our minds.

I was in the front rank of my squad, facing that famous wall on which the RSM insisted we pick a brick our own height and keep our eyes on it, while he strolled around with his pace stick - the

one with pointed ends which he threatened to shove up our nostrils if we didn't buck our ideas up. The RSM began by addressing Corporal Jessop but, not knowing where he was, spoke loudly enough for us all to hear. It seems Mrs Burden had made a complaint that Cpl Jessop was neglecting to draw his bedroom window curtains before getting undressed each night. He followed that with a few threatening pronouncements which were no doubt intended to concentrate our young minds before going on walkabout among the hundreds of men on parade. He wore what I can only describe as 'quiet boots,' which meant unless you could see him you had no idea where he was, and this made me feel uneasy. In an attempt to overcome this unease I chose a particularly quiet moment to take my eyes fleetingly off my brick in order to take a quick squint around; whereupon I immediately heard his voice bellow out, "That man there, don't look at me." Having learnt by then to take a hint I immediately refocused on my brick, but the uneasy feeling would not go away and a short time later found my eyes wandering sideways again. This time, to my astonishment, I found I was looking directly at the RSM who in turn appeared to be looking my way, and he wasted no time in barking out, "That man there, shan't tell you again. Don't look at me!"

From time to time some of us do things for which there can be no logical explanation. In my case one of these was, inexplicably, for a third time to leave the safety of my brick and shoot a lightening glance around. This time the RSM was more than half the length of the parade ground from me and I can only suppose he must have had some form of extra-sensory perception, or possibly it was the whites of someones eyes moving because he could not possibly have seen me! However, he must have felt it was time for a salutary lesson because he bellowed out, "Drill Sergeant, put that man inside," following which he pointed vaguely in my direction before strolling off on another walkabout.

Up until being summoned the drill sergeant would obviously have been keeping his eyes on his own brick and could have had no idea who the RSM wanted 'put inside,' but nevertheless he came marching up to where my squad were all standing smartly to attention. As he came near I realised there was only one thing for me to do. So, frozen with fear, and reacting to a basic instinct which comes to the fore with most men in this situation, I kept my eyes firmly glued on my brick.

Sergeants in those days were highly experienced and trained to make instant decisions without wasting time with questions, and this one was no exception which he proved by seizing upon one of my fellow squad members - who was stood so near me our eyes might have been watching the same brick - and promptly marched him at the double across to the guardroom. Its been a long time ago now, but I think his first name might have been Graham. So while the rest of us enjoyed a thirty six hour weekend at home Graham, instead of using his pass, spent his thirty six hours in the Guardroom! He was a really nice chap, and on returning to the barracks we all commiserated with him. I did wonder about mentioning what could have been my part in his misfortune, but remembered something a very wise man once said about sleeping dogs. However, as it was 62 years ago, its probably about time it was mentioned. So, if you are reading this Graham, I'm sure you will be aware that among all the men on parade that day there will have been many who did not keep their eyes firmly on their brick all the time, as some might like to believe, and would like you to know that I admit to being one of them.

The paths of the great man and myself crossed for the last time over two and a half years later when I returned once again to Inkerman barracks. It was one morning, down by the Spider Huts, that I came across who, to my surprise was now Captain Burden, as he strolled slowly between the huts with obviously nothing interesting to do. We did the saluting thing - fortunately on that occasion I was wearing a hat - and, having by then gained a little more confidence I commented on his promotion, but sadly he did not seem to be overjoyed with where he now was in the grand scheme of things. He spoke quietly and solemnly, and the eyes which used to be bright and very alert were now a little subdued.

I could be wrong, but hold the view he might have been far happier remaining as he used to be, enjoying the immense respect and character driven power he held over not just the recruits entering The Corps, but every soldier of every rank who set foot on his Parade Ground. Good on you sir and, wherever you are now, you still have the respect of a great many men.



Wreath Laying in Kyrenia

These photos show Remembrance Day 2017 at the British Cemetery in Kyrenia. The RMP Cyprus Veterans' wreath was laid by George Pollock and the WRAC wreath was laid by Cyprus Vet Sue Steele.



Derek Coleman sent in these pictures of the further delapidation of Inkerman house which he observed on his 2017 trip to Cyprus



John Moss writes

1957 It was a quiet night, three of the night patrols were stood down. The last patrol picked us up from the Duty Room. One more pass along Tazmate Street. " No 'Johnnys' here ". said the girl. We went in, saw a pair of shiny boots under the bed. I pulled on them, one very naked soldier. ' No Johnnys here' - all in a nights work. 1956 the OC said you and Sgt Lee are posted to Cyprus. My third visit to the island. We reported to Inkerman, we were three Sections being posted to 3 Div Pro Coy in Cyprus. Sgts Lee, Danny Morgan & Shiner Wright. The start of another adventure. ' Some like it hot !'.

1957. It was so hot in the MT tent we had to do the 'Daily Detail' before 10am because the chinograph pencil melted in the heat after that. 'Day Patrols' Pointon. Crisp, Mountford, Rowbotham . Yes 60 years ago !



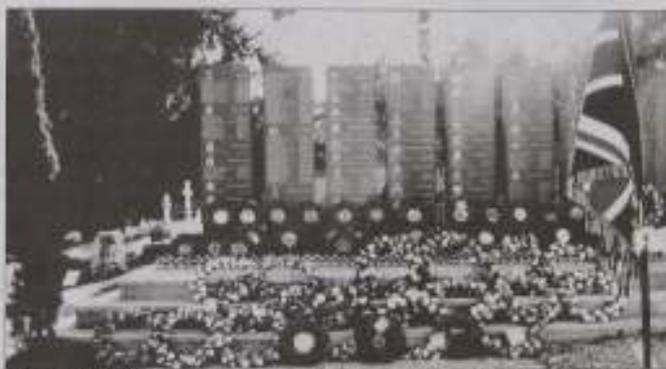
Names of British servicemen to be compiled in book

By IAN SHEPHERD

A BOOK of remembrance is to be compiled to record the names of all 400 British servicemen believed to have died on active service during the final years of British Colonial rule between 1955 and 1959.

Fundraising is now under way to pay for the *British Cyprus Memorial Book*, which will be hand-printed in old English calligraphy and bound in leather by experts in the UK. If approval is given, it will then be kept in a special cabinet in St Andrew's Church, Girne, where relatives of the dead men may inspect it by appointment.

Work on the project is being led by former Welsh Guardsman Keith Lloyd, a member of the Royal British Legion (RBL) Kyrenia branch, who said: "There are 371 names of servicemen currently on a memorial in the Old British Cemetery but another name, that of Driver William Witt of the Royal Army Service



The British Cyprus Memorial on Remembrance Sunday

Corps, is to be added later as it was originally omitted by mistake.

"All 372 died during the Cyprus Emergency, which officially ended in April 1959, but 28 or possibly 29 other servicemen died between April and December of that year and these will also be included in the book to give a total number of 400 or 401 names.

"Our research is continuing and we expect to finalise the total number of fallen for inclu-

sion in the book which should be a lasting memorial to brave men who gave their lives in the cause of peace and freedom."

The Kyrenia branch of the RBL is gearing up for next weekend's Remembrance service at the memorial in the Old British Cemetery — its ninth such ceremony, said RBL chairman and retired major Brian Thomas.

St Andrew's Church chaplain Rev Wendy Hough, also chaplain of the RBL, Kyrenia

branch, will perform services next Sunday, November 12, at 10.30am in the church, then at the Old British Cemetery at 12.30pm.

"Once again, 40 wreaths will be laid during the service, although it is very sad to see wreaths from some famous line regiments disappear, such as the Leicestershire Regiment and Durham Light Infantry as the old and bold either move back to the UK or veterans who attend every year slowly dwindle in number," said Mr Thomas.

He added: "The RBL is committed to helping everyone understand the importance of Remembrance so that sacrifices are never forgotten. Remembrance is part of modern British life, culture and heritage and our poppy is the symbol of Remembrance." **06/11/2017 13**
www.gofundme.com and search for "British Cyprus Memorial Book".

Gordon Haywood The cutting above is from *Cyprus Today*, publicised on 6 November and makes interesting reading.

Dave Billham sent in further information about the O'Brien saga which hopefully completes the story. Re above. First of all best wishes to all. In particular Roy Oswick, Jim Wisdom and Jeff Beckwith. Yes I knew Jim O'Brien in Cyprus Provost Company, Episkopi and like Roy says perhaps we should leave well alone regarding his demise and his conduct leading to his demotion and 28 days detention.

I don't recall Jim being with 227 Pro.Coy. whilst I was there and thought he had been transferred in from either Malta or Aden. Nevertheless Jim was older than the rest of us having had previous service in the Merchant Navy and I'm afraid was a bad influence on some of the younger element of the Company relating to the excessive consumption of alcohol. Anyway on that fateful night Jim was serving his detention at the GP guardroom which was situated about 50 yards from the RMP offices. Colleagues often passed him 'refreshments' through the security fence of the small exercise yard.

Dave Billham responded to the previous articles about That night just before Jim was due to be returned to the UK it was decided by certain friends of Jim to give him a night out in Limassol. These friends sadly included Corporal Tom Broady RMP (PM's Clerk) and Corporal Jock Wilkie one of the Guardroom staff, not RMP but GP. It was Jock's car that was used that night with him driving at the time of the accident when it ran into the back of an unlit Cypriot wagon between Limassol and Episkopi. Jock was the only one of the three that survived. I recall visiting the scene later that morning after the bodies and the survivor had been removed and finding Jim O'Brien's false teeth in the wreckage. (Not a pleasant memory).

As stated earlier by Roy, Jim was buried in Cyprus and Tom was flown home and interred in the UK.

Finally I recall writing to Lance Corporal Dave Widdowson who had recently been demobbed and was a good friend of Tom Broady, informing of Tom's death.

Dave Billham

PS Hope this account clears up an controversy.

Ian Carpenter was prompted into action by Bob Eggelton's piece in the last newsletter about John Townson

Having read the article about John's daughter Jackie looking for information about her late father's army service, I started a search of my photographs. I contacted Jackie and supplied information and photos, one of which is reproduced here and shows Jock Townson (L), Pat Rathbone (M) and Sgt Sands (R)



And finally.....

Cyprus Veterans Group a note from Peter Harrison

Unfortunately my health is such that I can no longer operate as Group Organiser and I have not been able to identify someone who has the full range of skills/experience, along with sufficiently robust health to take over. It is therefore with sadness, but with the agreement of Gordon Haywood (Newsletter Editor), Dennis Pepper (Cheque signatory) and Col Maurice Nichols (our senior Group member), that we have decided to wind up the Group with immediate effect. This has not been an easy decision but sadly all things have to end at some time. I have in stock Four Poppy Posies they will be laid on our commemorative 'Bench' at the next Four Annual Corps Days in June, at the National Memorial Arboretum. (Hopefully many of us will be able to

meet up there). Also I have Four 'Cyprus Veterans ' Ties @ £10 each!! First come 1st served!! The proceeds will be included in the final donation to the RMP Benevolent Fund – see below. Glynis and I thank you all for your friendship and generous support. Best wishes to you all for a healthy 2018 and beyond.

When the last of the Group's financial transactions have been accounted for, the balance remaining will be donated to the Royal Military Police Central Benevolent Fund. This fund exists for the assistance or benefit of any person, serving or having at any time served in the Royal Military Police, or dependents, wives, widows or issue as may for the time being be in need of charitable assistance or benefit. Funding for the RMP CBF is derived from donations, legacies and investment income. Applications for benevolent grants for serving members may be made direct to RHQ RMP or through the Unit Chain-of-Command. All other applications are made through either the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airforce Association (Forces Help) (SSAFA(FH)), the Army Benevolent Fund (The Soldiers' Charity) (ABF) or the Royal British Legion (RBL).

And finally, finally.....

I am sure you will all join me in saying a huge 'Thank You' to Peter and his wife Glynis for all their excellent work over many years in organising our Group and arranging many superb Reunion Weekends.

Gordon

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All cheques for ties payable to **Cyprus Veterans Group**