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## *All Members of the Regimental Family*

RW Update

23 October 2020

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

**At the back of this letter is an updated list of dates (many cancelled) for your 2020 diary and a couple for 2021**

### **Introduction**

Firstly, some good news. From the belated Queen's Birthday Honours List, many congratulations to Maj (Acting Lt Col) Jim Wood Contingent Commander St Brigid's CCF (badged R WELSH) awarded an MBE, Col LT Williams awarded the Queen's Volunteer Reserves Medal and Lt Col Mike Lewis who has been awarded a BEM for his work over many years in support of SSAFA in Wales. The not so good news is that the wretched virus has meant that almost all our events planned during 2020 and the early part of 2021 have had to either be postponed or cancelled. For details see later in this update.



Martin Jenkins (supportive employer, Silver Employer Award Recipient, Covenant Signatory and donator to the R WELSH Battalion Sports teams) is the Group Managing Director of Hazelwood Group. These are the high visibility vests that his workers are wearing to raise money for the Poppy Appeal. Martin Jenkins also funded the Red Dragon decal on the bow of HMS DRAGON after it's refurbishment.

## **1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions**

Both the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions have returned to work from a well-deserved Summer leave period after working very hard in support of the government's fight against Covid-19.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Battalion**

The last three months has been a busy time for Delta Company. Following commitments in support of Op RESCRIPT, the Company has Returned to Work prepared for cadres and delivered excellent Support Weapon Platoon training.

Over the summer months, Delta Company were tasked to support the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, all under the banner of Op RESCRIPT. Teams were deployed to support Mobile Testing Units (MTUs), drive ambulances, deliver PPE and oxygen, and support Local Resilience Forums. All taken in their stride, the soldiers, NCOs and Officers of Delta Coy delivered in spades. Members of the Company served selflessly as a part of the COVID-19 Support Force, remaining in-place and dedicated to the tasks for 4-week rotations.

After a long period of dispersed working due to the pandemic and many policy and practical considerations, Delta Company was the first within 1 R WELSH to Return to Work in early August. The programme focused on PT, rebuilding Company cohesion, and developing battle-worthiness. Operating with newly introduced force health protection measures remains paramount and we have had to get used to social distancing, wearing masks, and cohorting; all this has impacted on the way we train. The Company were pleased to have helped the Battalion RTW in September with a number of recommendations from our experience.

Following the summer leave period, the Battalion also conducted a re-ORBAT; Exercise DRAGON SAMURAI. It enabled well-earned promotions and the movement of experience across the Battalion. It delivered a further 50 soldiers to the Company, taking our strength to almost 190. This allowed us to regenerate the third Anti-Tank section that had been in abeyance, to rebuild the Assault Pioneer Platoon and to bring fresh blood into the Company.



***Cpl Powell issuing a back brief to the CO and OC Delta Coy - recommendations for a deliberate attack***

Finally, during September, the Company focused on “Building the Force” by delivering Support Weapons Cadres and convening essential Armoured Fighting Vehicle (AFV) qualification courses. The platoons have been excellent in designing and delivering challenging and

rewarding Support Weapon Cadres; Mortars, Anti-Tank, Assault Pioneer, Snipers and Reconnaissance Platoon respectively.



***Mortar Platoon Live Firing***

Mortar Platoon conducted training in Okehampton and Otterburn; Reconnaissance Platoon and Snipers on SPTA; Anti-Tank Platoon on SPTA and Strensall, whilst Assault Pioneers visited Royal Engineer training and conducted a final exercise on SPTA. A number of soldiers from 3 R WELSH also attended the various cadres and demonstrated commitment and enthusiasm throughout.

The Cadres culminated in a deployment as the ISTAR Group in the armoured role on SPTA. This was an excellent opportunity to dust off the armoured cobwebs and to test that ISTAR Gp in the advance, the delay and establishment of a screen. Ultimately, the cadres qualified and refreshed 24 recce patrolmen, 43 anti-tankers, 29 mortarmen, 15 assault pioneers; and the Sniper cadre is still ongoing; a great achievement.



***Anti-tanks conducting an insertion into an Observation Post***



We are now working hard towards qualifying our new soldiers in their respective roles, running numerous and simultaneous armoured courses to qualify drivers, gunners and commanders on a variety of platforms. Delta Company are also fulfilling several "Support to Experimentation and Training" tasks in support of Land Warfare Centre, which will give us opportunities to develop our small teams and conduct low-level training. Finally, we will also be preparing to take over as a sub-unit within the UK Standby Battalion over the Christmas Period. The Forecast of Events for 2021 remains understandably fluid but we all anticipate a busy period up to Easter leave and thereafter a busy period preparing for our Mission Ready validation in late-2021, most likely to be conducted in Germany.

### **3rd Battalion**

#### **Annual Deployment Exercise (ADE), September 2020**

3 R WELSH deployed on their ADE in September to Hightown Barracks in Wrexham. As the Battalion has only recently returned to training due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, all ranks were keen to get back to proper, hands-on, soldiering.

The first four-day phase of the ADE was a range package/urban operations exercise; B and C Companies conducted Urban Ops for days one and two on Nescliffe Training Area whilst HQ and D Companies were on Sealand Ranges, before switching at the end of the second day. As infantry soldiers, being proficient in the use of an array of weapon systems is crucial to our role and the package provided the first opportunity in several months to get range time with the individual weapon (IW), pistol and the GPMG. Soldiers also got the chance to work on their Close Quarter Marksmanship (CQM) by practising transition shoots between IW and pistol under the expert tutelage of CSgt Greenslade. This was a highlight of the range package, and was a new skill and type of marksmanship for many within the Bn.



The two-day Urban Ops exercise on Nescliffe Training Area focused on consolidating all the skills practiced throughout the training year, whilst also developing soldiers' and officers' knowledge and ability of how to operate in urban areas; a complex and chaotic environment in which to work. 55% of the world live urban areas, and with that number only rising, it is key that we are able to operate effectively in these areas to fulfil our role as a light infantry Bn. The training consisted of pair up to section level clearance drills, recce patrols, and it culminated in a dawn attack on three farm buildings.

After the dawn attack, the platoons broke down into sections and soldiers got to consolidate their newly developed drills by clearing a pitch-black building using *Simunition*. The use of *Simunition* is relatively rare, and it is a fantastic means of increasing the realism and value from training. After the range/urban ops packages were complete the Bn moved back into Hightown Barracks to conduct a day of personal development, followed by courses in either a Mountain Bike (MTB) Leader; Endurance Training Leader (ETL); Basic Radio User (BRU); or a Command, Leadership and Management (CLM) course for any JNCOs wishing to promote. All these courses were very informative and increased the depth of extremely useful qualifications held by officers and soldiers across the Bn.



Moving into the second week sections deployed onto the Clwydian Mountain Range to conduct a patrol competition. The sections patrolled along approximately twelve miles of hard terrain on Offa's Dyke trail and in between meeting, and probably slightly surprising, the occasional dog walker they completed various stands where they were assessed on their ability to deal with a

multitude of complex situations. The stands included: counter explosive ordinance, obstacle crossing, battlefield casualty drills, a close target recce (CTR), and last but certainly not least a kit inspection/ regimental history quiz from the RSM. In a very tight result, a B Coy section under Cpl Lewis-Powell came out as victors.



The Bn then moved into the last 3-day Adventurous Training (AT) phase of our ADE. Hill walking, mountain biking, rock climbing and kayaking were all on offer, and groups rotated through their three selected activities on each day. Initially several individuals bravely put themselves down for three days of kayaking; but after a nearly 14 mile kayak at a relentless pace into a headwind on the first day, and plans to do the same the following day, there was a flurry of activity with people frantically switching their choices that evening.

On the last night of ADE there was a short prizegiving, followed by an excellent BBQ with enough food to fill even Mr Sheppard. It was a great way to end what had been a fantastic ADE, and to celebrate the brilliant achievements of our soldiers over the last year, before the companies dispersed to their own locations the following morning.

### **Teaching At AFC Harrogate - Lt Lucas Colley R WELSH**

I have recently been posted to Army Foundation College (Harrogate) as a platoon commander after relinquishing command of 4 Platoon, B (Rorke's Drift) Company – now ably commanded by the venerable Lt Alex Marsh.

Command in a training establishment is a subtly different beast from that at Regimental Duty, demanding a different approach from Permanent Staff towards trainees and bringing slightly different challenges with it. I have had my batch of Junior Soldiers for just over a week and the challenges are already becoming apparent. I have more soldiers under my command than I did previously, with 48 Junior Soldiers and five Permanent Staff as opposed to 35 non-commissioned officers and Fusiliers previously. Welfare and discipline problems are more acute than what I would normally expect at RD, and they are an eye-opener to say the least. However, it is already rewarding to see the Junior Soldiers overcome the initial challenges associated with the “shock of capture” and they are already making good progress after the first few days.

Junior Soldiers are currently undergoing a two-week Controlled Monitoring Period in order to mitigate the risks of Covid-19, with each section constituting its own household. Sections currently mix within their section rooms, but strict social distancing is enforced between



households and masks are enforced. While Covid-19 has imposed certain constraints, we are making good on the challenges and training is continuing both in person and sometimes virtually.

We have the benefit of also having Cpl Jones and Cpl Lee up here as a Section Commander Instructor and PTI respectively, and between us we proudly fly the flag for the Regiment and for Wales. Our presence here is small, so we must make an extra effort to promote and advertise the Regiment and its good name within the establishment. Harrogate itself is a great place in a lovely part of the country, and the camp, although small, is immaculately kept. Once the ongoing problems of Covid-19 begin to diminish, we all look forward to having a more adventurous time than at present, and we will continue to be proud ambassadors for the Regiment.

### **Britain's Unknown Warrior 'They buried him among Kings' The Regimental Connection - Major Martin Everett MBE**

One hundred years ago on 11 November 1920, the Cenotaph was unveiled by King George V. After the ceremony and service of remembrance in Whitehall, the King led the procession with the gun-carriage bearing the body of Britain's Unknown Warrior to Westminster Abbey for burial. The Unknown Warrior's Grave was the idea of The Reverend David Railton, an Anglican padre on the Western Front. He later recalled:

I came back from 'the line' at dusk. We had just laid to rest the mortal remains of a comrade. I went to the billet in front of Erkingham, near Armentières. At the back of the billet was a small garden, and in the garden, only about six paces from the house, there was a grave. At the head of the grave there stood a rough cross of white wood. On the cross was written in deep black-pencilled letters, 'An Unknown British Soldier', and in brackets underneath, of the Black Watch'.

It was dusk, and no one was near, except some officers in the billet playing cards. I remember how still it was. Even the guns seemed to be resting. How that grave gave me to think! How I wondered! How I longed to see his folk! - But, who was he, and who were they? ... Quietly and gradually there came out of the mist of thought this answer, clear and strong, 'Let this body-this symbol of him-be carried reverently over the sea to his native land.'

It was not until August 1920 that Padre Railton wrote to the Dean of Westminster, Bishop Herbert Ryle, with the suggestion that an unknown soldier should be buried among the nation's 'Illustrious dead' in the Abbey. A committee was set up, which recommended that the Foreign Secretary should take immediate steps to make a body available for the forthcoming Armistice Day commemorations, on 11 November, when King George V was to unveil the Cenotaph in Whitehall.

Rarely can there have been such a macabre mixture of military pomp and religious fervour as in the events that followed. **Lieutenant Colonel John Bradstock MC of the South Wales Borderers** was placed in charge of the battlefield working parties. To ensure that identification would be impossible, four bodies were dug up in the four main battle areas of the Western Front (the Aisne, the Somme, Arras and Ypres) and brought to the military cemetery chapel at St Pol (near the site of the battle of Agincourt - a battle incidentally won by the Welsh archers). Each of the remains were placed on stretchers in a row in front of the altar, each draped with a Union flag. At midnight on 7-8 November, Brigadier-General L J Wyatt DSO (late N Staffords) selected one, which was placed in a coffin brought from England (the other three bodies were later buried with due reverence in the cemetery).

In the morning Anglican, Roman Catholic and Nonconformist padres joined forces in a service, after which the body was sent under escort to Boulogne. From then on it was a half-triumphant, half-reverential progress, by the destroyer HMS Verdun, by train to Victoria (in the carriage that

had brought home the body of Nurse Edith Cavell), finally through silent crowds to the Cenotaph, the coffin resting on a gun-carriage flanked by senior officers of all three services, including Earl Haig.

From the Cenotaph the King led the procession to the Abbey. During the service the elite of the land listen with emotion to the high-sounding phases: 'They buried him among Kings, because he had done good towards God, and towards His House'. During the singing of 'Lead Kindly Light', the bearers under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Bradstock removed the helmet and side-arms from the coffin and lowered it into the tomb.

At the committal the King scattered earth brought from the battlefields. Drums rolled, the Last Post rang out, followed by the Reveille. Finally, holders of the Victoria Cross (whose numbers included from the South Wales Borderers Sergeant Major Jack Williams VC DCM MM from Ebbw Vale) led the file past on either side of the tomb. After such a ceremony, it was perhaps surprising that the words chosen to be inscribed on the stone over the tomb should have been restrained, invoking neither God, King nor Country: 'Thus are commemorated the many multitudes who gave the most that men can give'.

Lieutenant Colonel Bradstock's sword which he wore at the ceremony can be seen in the Regimental Museum of The Royal Welsh in Brecon. John Bradstock initially joined 3 Essex Militia and served in South Africa during the Boer War. He was commissioned into the South Wales Borderers in 1903 and was serving with the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion in China on the outbreak of World War One. He was awarded a Military Cross, one of first of this new gallantry award for his actions during the assault of Tsingtao. In 1930 he retired from the army as Lieutenant Colonel. His sword was donated to the museum by his daughter in 1971.



**Lt Col John Bradstock MC SWB**

- **Remembrance Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November.** We had hoped to be represented throughout Wales and again at the Cenotaph in London. However, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and in light of the risks posed, whilst the annual Service of Remembrance at The Cenotaph will still take place, neither veteran participation through the March Past, nor public spectators will be possible this year. This will be deeply disappointing for all who were due to take part and it is not a step that the Royal British Legion (RBL) has taken lightly. This decision has been taken by the Government based on expert advice to protect the health and well-being of those who would have been travelling to and participating in the event.

Despite the changes this year, the RBL are encouraging people across the nations to ensure Remembrance Sunday is still marked appropriately by taking part in remote and socially



distanced Remembrance activity, whether that be watching the small but significant service at The Cenotaph on BBC One, attending a local Remembrance event or pausing for the Two Minute Silence in their home or on their doorsteps. Many of the local services throughout Wales have been either cancelled or on by invitation only. You need to go on-line to find out if services are taking place in your local area.

- **The Officers' Society Annual Dinner 13<sup>th</sup> November.** This was planned to take place on **Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November** in the Principality Stadium, Cardiff. You may have seen that there has been much talk of the extension of the Nightingale Hospitals throughout UK. In Wales the main one is in the Principality Stadium, known as the Dragon's Heart Hospital. We have made some enquiries into our Annual Officers' Society Dinner in November. Unfortunately, the Principality Stadium will not be able to accommodate us until Jan 2021 at the earliest and would not be able to confirm until later this year for future dates.

## 2021

- **Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> January** - Rorke's Drift Church Service in Brecon Cathedral and lunch in the Sergeants' Mess, Dering Lines. The Brecon Branch has reluctantly decided to postpone the Rorke's Drift Service due in January 2021. There is just too much uncertainty about the virus, which will inevitably have a knock-on effect on the Comrades' confidence to make any commitment to attending at this stage. It is hoped that a date in the spring will allow us to commemorate the battle and to come together over lunch. More details to follow.
- **Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> January** – Rorke's Drift Dinner organised by Tony Kane in the Cardiff area has had to be postponed until Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2022.
- **1-6 March. Wrexham Engagement & Recruiting Week** - CO 3 R WELSH has decided to postpone these recruiting & engagement events until later in the year.

### Not everything is cancelled...

- Sun is not cancelled
- Spring is not cancelled
- Relationships are not cancelled
- Love is not cancelled
- Reading is not cancelled
- Devotion is not cancelled
- Music is not cancelled
- Imagination is not cancelled
- Kindness is not cancelled
- Conversations are not cancelled
- Hope is not cancelled

And God's love for HIS people is never cancelled.

Stay safe and keep well.

*Yours sincerely*

*Chris Kilmister*

RHQ Contact Details. I remind you of our office phone and email addresses and other email addresses. Where there are 2 email addresses you should always use **BOTH** email addresses:

**Our Email Addresses are:**

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Our office telephone numbers are laid out below, and it is best to **use email for almost all communication**. Our mobile phone numbers (**to be used in emergency only**) are also listed:

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## Provisional Diary Dates for 2020

- **Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November** – Remembrance Sunday. Local conditions and Covid 19 restrictions will limit these commemorations
- **Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November** – Regimental Committee Meeting via Zoom
- **Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November – Officers' Society Dinner – Principality Stadium Cardiff. Postponed until a future date or as a worse case cancelled until next year.**

## Provisional Diary Dates for 2021

- **Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> January** - Rorke's Drift Church Service in Brecon Cathedral and lunch in the Sergeants' Mess, Dering Lines. Unfortunately, this has been postponed until later in the spring (likely to be April). Details to be confirmed in due course.
- **Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> January** – Rorke's Drift Dinner organised by Tony Kane in the Cardiff area. Has unfortunately had to be postponed until Saturday 22 January 2022.
- **Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March - Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> March** - 3 R WELSH Wrexham week of activities has also had to be delayed until later in the year possibly July.
- **Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> March** - Freedom of Wrexham. 3rd Battalion will not now exercise the Freedom of Wrexham in March and hope to do so in July.
- **Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> April RRW Officers' London Lunch**. At the Army & Navy Club. Peter Kerruish will put out more details in due course.
- **Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> or Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> July** – Brecon Reunion.
- **Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> September** – Wrexham Reunion.