

The Regiment, having started early in the year, has now completed its individual armoured trade training. This has been a mammoth task but we are glad to report that we have achieved considerable success, in that the general level of attainment in qualifications has increased significantly. We continue to send as many men as possible to Royal Armoured Corps Centre courses and are very pleased that most soldiers have come back with exceptionally good reports. This is indeed a credit to the training organisation that taught them and to the individuals' own hard work. We will have some way to go before every soldier is properly qualified; however, this aim is still an achievable one. One area which gives particular concern is the need for all drivers of armoured vehicles to qualify with a B vehicle licence. From 1 July 1992 soldiers without it will not legally be allowed to drive an armoured vehicle on the road. This has given us a sizeable problem which, with both limited resources and suitably qualified instructors, may take some time to solve.

For one month prior to our range training the squadrons worked very hard to get their vehicles up to the required standard. As ever, they had to provide manpower for various other commitments as well, for example taking on additional camp guard responsibilities. Amidst all this, they managed to complete some gunnery training in preparation for the range period.

The line at Hohne ranges was jinxed from the start. Vehicle movement was badly affected by the German public workers strike and we were able, by torture only, to arrange the release of one train-load of 25 tanks to depart Osnabruck two hours before the strike was due to begin. There was a worrying time thereafter during which we were not sure whether or not that train would make it to its final destination; fortunately it did. The range programme was hastily rewritten and squadrons were rotated through what amounted to a three-day firing package. Suffice to say, marvellous results were achieved. The rebuilt tanks were proved by the unprecedented pass rate of the Confirmation of Accuracy by Firing and the crews were similarly proved by achieving some most creditable scores in difficult conditions. All those involved are to be congratulated for this effort.

Next month we move to Soltau for some pre-Canada training, and to Canada itself in September. After the restrictions to operating in Germany all of us yearn for the freedom of action which the Suffield training area allows. We continue to experience major difficulties as a result of the drawdown of the Regiment, while at the same time we remain committed to a full training year. We anxiously await any additional help that comes our way!

Despite our problems this has been a successful period, in which 4 RTR have shown that they are well on their way to re-establishing themselves as a professional armoured regiment.