

Preparing For The Future

Now the season of farewells is upon us. As the frosts and snows of winter embrace Osnabruck the start of the process which will eventually see the Regiment formed up on sunny Salisbury Plain in July has begun. Quite rightly, this process was initiated by Reconnaissance Troop packing off their Scorpions to the United Kingdom and taking delivery of a fleet of sparkling Scimitars. An emotional moment followed some weeks later when 29 of our ageing Chieftains began the long trip back to Ludgershall. It was strange to see the tank hangars empty, the lower tank park a place of peace and tranquillity! The question remains, however, whether these old friends will rejoin us in Tidworth.

Some old friends certainly will not be with us after the move, having been picked up by the latest round of redundancies. The Fourth lost thirteen officers and 29 other ranks in this latest phase and, although the vast majority were volunteers, the loss of so many fine soldiers with so much experience will lead to hard times ahead. Those leaving will be as well cared for as possible, with the 4 RTR redundancy and resettlement team, superbly lead by Captain McPhaden, working overtime to look after their interests. Inevitably the knock-on effect had led to another minor reorganisation so as to ensure that we are still able to carry out our remaining duties before amalgamation; the wisdom of reducing to two tank squadrons some months ago is now self-evident.

On a more cheerful note, training has continued with hardly a break. C Squadron, with its new antipodean style supplied by Major Orme, 'enjoyed' a week at Soltau, preparing 1 Battalion The Prince Of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire for their forthcoming move to Bosnia. Command Troop continued with the weekly round of command post exercises and radio drills, Reconnaissance Troop are to be seen tramping thousands of miles carrying heavy weights in preparation for the brigade physical endurance test exercise, while B and C Squadrons are also preparing for our last annual firing scheduled for April. Overlaid on top of this has been individual training in every discipline, so as to ensure that all 4 RTR personnel are as highly qualified as possible on amalgamation. A busy time!

Meanwhile, the move to the United Kingdom gets ever closer. The reconnaissance party from 17/5 Lancers has been to Osnabruck and a similar combined 2 and 4 RTR party has been to Tidworth. There is a growing realisation that this will be a good posting. Disadvantages there may be, but the barracks are brand new, the duties are less frequent, there are more than enough quarters; and everyone involved in the move and in the formation of the new Regiment could not be more enthusiastic about the whole project. The omens for a successful outcome are in place; see you all at the Amalgamation Parade in Tidworth on 1 October.