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The GROUND SHEET

The Official Publication of
The Royal Westminster Regiment Association

*‘Dedicated to the ideals and comradeship
we knew in wars and peace in our
services both home and abroad.’*

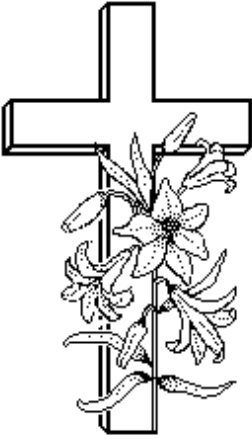
‘Pro Rege et Patria’

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In Memoriam

Rigby-Jones, Roy John____June 2009____Vancouver____WWII____Irish Fusiliers

Health an Welfare

Pte Andrew Ekeli was injured during training for Op Podium (Olympic Platoon) and has been returned to the Regiment. He is currently, doing light duties at the Regiment.

Cpl Maitland seems to be more mobile and has been visiting the Regiment.

I believe that it is the reonsibility of all members of the regimental family to report both positive and negative apsects on our membership and their families. I am sure with such a young Regiment there will be births to report. So please drop me a line if you know anything.

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Editors Report

Welcome again to our winter addition. Last year I was remarking on how much snow we had and this year we have had very little. Despite the small amount of snow the Winter Olympics are going ahead. Our Regiment Platoon is very busy at this time up on Cypress. Our members continue in their efforts in Afghanistan.

I have a correction from our In Memoriam of the last issue. Major Rigby-Jones served in WWII and after the war had significant involvement in the Cadets as well as our Regiment.

As I write this our executive has been working on our Melfa Weekend. This years efforts have significant Regimental involvement. As things are shaping up I believe this will be a great weekend. I reminder everyone that we require notification on who will be attending Please use the contact information on page 7 to let us know if you will be attending the Melfa Golf, Melfa Dinner, and/or the Melfa Brunch/AGM. This is very important to have the appropriate numbers or our costs will explode. Additionally, those WWII veterans that would like a ride to any of the events should also contact Terry or Herb.

Part of our AGM is the nominating committee. The nominating committee chairman is Allan Morton. Alan is looking for a few good persons to serve on our executive. Some senior members of the executive would like to step aside from significant involvement. Additionally, we are always looking for a helping hand. Should you be interested please contact Alan at amorton25@shaw.ca.

You may have noticed last issue I did not get anything from the cadets. I have sent emails repeatedly trying to get some responses. I know there have been some exchange tours and would like to have some pictures with a brief description. There are 5 Cadet Corps so there must be something going on at some time.

Well that my rant for this issue.



The Commanding Officer

Lieutenant-Colonel Doug Poitras, CD

Lieutenant-Colonel Poitras was born in Calgary, Alberta in 1958 and was raised in the Greater Vancouver and Victoria areas. In 1976 he enrolled in the Regular Force and was commissioned upon graduation of Armoured Officer Cadet Training in 1980.

Through his 28 years in the Regular Force Lieutenant-Colonel Poitras served in a variety of operational, instruction, and staff positions. He was first posted to C Squadron, The Royal Canadian Dragoons as a Leopard tank troop leader, and participated in a number of NATO Canadian exercises. Later he re-badged to the Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) and served as Battle Captain Reconnaissance Squadron:

highlighted by winning the Merritt Cup for best reconnaissance squadron in the Canadian Army. For one year he served in El Salvador as a United Nations Military Observer and participated in the ultimate separation and disarming of forces there.

He helped develop future leaders during his postings at the CF Officer Candidate School in Chilliwack and both the Armour and Tactics Schools in Gaagetown. He also served in a variety of staff positions including Operations Officer of the Armoured School, Coyote Reconnaissance Vehicle Implementation Officer, Deputy Commanding Officer of the Administration Branch at the Combat Training Centre and as the G3 of 39 CBG. His achievements during those tours include planning and hosting the 1997 NATO Armour Schools Commandant's Conference, assisting with the plans for Y2K, the establishment of the Kosovar Refugee Camp and deploying reservists to fight the forest fires of 2003.

Since retiring from the Regular Forces in 2004, Lieutenant-Colonel Poitras joined The Royal Westminster Regiment and served as a full-time reservist, first as the G5 Plans for 39 CBG Headquarters and initiated Canadian Forces planning with the RCMP for security of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games. From December 2007 to August 2008 he served as the J5 for the US Army Afghanistan Regional Security Integration Command (South) with the focus on rebuilding the Afghanistan National Police.

Lieutenant-Colonel Poitras has an under-graduate degree in psychology from the University of New Brunswick and a Masters in Business Administration and Executive Management from Royal Roads University. He also graduated from the Canadian Land Force Command Staff College at Kingston and is qualified as a Combat Team Commander. A volunteer for The Children's Wish Foundation of Canada since 1993, Lieutenant-Colonel Poitras has served as a director on the national board for the past thirteen years including chair of the marketing and governance committees. In a civilian capacity he is a management consultant presently is a business partner with www.asims.ca.

Lieutenant-Colonel Poitras is married to Lois and they parent their remaining two children at home in Burnaby, British Columbia.

Presidents Report

Another Christmas has passed and we are into the New Year. I had the pleasure of attending the Men's Annual Xmas Dinner. It was nice to see a large turnout for this event. The Regiment was presented with a cheque for a donation from the Association.

By the time you read this, the Olympics will have come and gone and also a ceremony celebrating the 65th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Netherlands. We will have three Veterans registered to attend. I will have a full report on that event in the next Groundsheet.

Plans are well underway for the Melfa Weekend. We are having the golf on Friday as it is to expensive on the Saturday and we cannot get early Tee times on Saturday. So mark your calendars and register early for the Golf and the Dinner on the 22nd of May. This will be followed by the Brunch and AGM on Sunday morning. The Regimental personnel have really stepped up to assist with Melfa plans, for which I thank them in advance.

Please let us know as early as possible if you plan on attending

Pro Rege et Patria

Terry Leith

President



December 2009 President Terry Leith and Jerry Gangur Presented a Plaque to Doug Morgan Doug Helped Us Reach \$100,000.00 Goal for Our Assication Fund

The Regiment

Dear Westies

The Battalion continues to keep busy and stay on top. We are extremely proud of our soldiers serving with distinction in Afghanistan and atop Cypress Mountain, while many continue to lead, develop, train and support activities between Jericho, New Westminster, Aldergrove and Chilliwack. As I write, WO Bergan is down in the States as part of a rifle team representing the Canadian Forces in an international competition. Westies continue to lead the way.

It is the combined efforts of the entire Regimental Family that makes our success, if not enjoyment of soldiering, as every little bit helps. For example, the contribution of the Association towards providing refreshments after the Remembrance Day Parade as well as a presenting a cheque to the Regimental Fund at the Christmas Dinner. What would we do without the participation of the Band? It provided its fanfare to the colour of Remembrance Day, and well as serenading the mess dinners of the officers', sergeants and warrant officers' messes. And do we not take somewhat for granted our very foundation, our heritage? It is so often ignored when passed yet remains and continues to evolve under our very eyes in the corner of the Armoury, our Museum. And then there are our cadet corps, who evoke memories of our youth and represent the future, participating as much as they can given the constraints and challenges they face. These combined efforts must continue.

The new year, both calendar and fiscal, will provide further challenges for us to work and opportunities for us to celebrate, together. There will be, of course, the continued training effort culminating in a long weekend gun camp in the Chilcotin. We will have soldiers to welcome back from the Olympics and Afghanistan, and reintegrate them back into the family fold by having them contribute their experiences to raising all of our standards. Finally, and before the summer training season of courses, we will have the opportunity to break bread, raise our glasses and kick our heels, together as an entire regimental family at the Melfa Dinner to be held May 22nd. I am looking forward to having fun with all of you.

Pro Rege et Patria

Lieutenant-Colonel Doug Poitras
Commanding Officer

Our Cadets

1789 Agassiz - No Report.

2316 New Westminster - No Report

1838 Maple Ridge - No Report.

2822 Surrey - No Report.

1922 Aldergrove - No Report.

Are Your Dues Up To Date?

The Royal Westminster Regiment Association depends on your dues and donations. Yearly dues are \$15 and a Life Membership is \$100. How about a tax deductible donation? You can identify where you want the donation to go. The Future Fund, Cadets, Health & Welfare, or whatever you feel is worthwhile. Whatever you support, it is appreciated. Send in your dues today. Thanks.

MIA/AWOL

Melfa Weekend 2009

If you plan on attending the Golf on the 21st and the Melfa Dinner on 22nd of May, Please let us know that you will be attending. You may contact us by e-mail or by telephone. It makes it easier for us to give the caterers numbers for the amount of meals required. The contact numbers are as follows

Terry Leith 604 521 0042 Tmleith@gmail.com

Herb Hamm 604 515 7933 Hehamm@telus.net

Storm's a Brewing in Kandahar

By Major Chuck MacKinnon, The Royal Westminster Regiment, and Observer Mentor Liaison Team Task Force 3-09.

My previous article talked about my arrival to this foreign place and briefly describes those things that make this place so different from home. Well, two months have past and a lot has occurred. The distinction being that like previous experiences it is the extremes of human nature that encapsulate this place and many other war zones.

After we have arrived in this place the first thing was trying to get accustomed to the dust. I described it before as talcum. But its real issue is it settles in a fine veil which covers everything. A person who is compulsive about cleanliness in this place would quickly become institutionalized. We had our first "snow day" here. But unlike the ones we are used to at home this one consisted of a light sand storm which blew in unannounced. The sand so fine that it obscures your view and grounds all aircraft although this one was not as dramatic as Hollywood, however it lasted for six hours. Bringing movement for man, beast and machine to a stand still. The biggest difference was it was missing the bone chilling cold wind of the Canada.

As this storm passed through, we got on with the business at hand unaware that another storm would engulf us a few days later. This storm has become too frequent here and is one that is always on the back of your mind and has touched many families, all the way back to Canada. It was a typical sunny day here in Afghanistan. Our headquarters was out on patrol in the Bazaar, working alongside the Afghan National Army. As I surfaced that day from my Command Post there was a resounding explosion. Unfortunately, explosions in the distance are not abnormal here. What made this day so different was that it was really close by and from my Command Post in the same direction our patrol was. I paused briefly, cursed and hustle back to my Command Post to see who, what and where was the incident. As I headed back into my Command Post the storm clouds were forming and the information was starting to trickle in. At first, it was hearing our Patrol asking what had happen and where was the incident. There was a momentary sigh of relief for I knew that it wasn't our team. However, I was for a moment feeling a little guilty because it was becoming apparent that it was a Canadian element involved. We listen intently to a patrol trying to reach the incident location. Their efforts hampered by the grape fields, wadis, and the many walls. They were heading in a general direction of the sound not knowing if they were running into a trap. Communication with the patrol that was involved was non-existent. As the rescue team got closer they then came under small arms fire. The team was pinned down but was still trying to get to the team whose condition they were unaware of. Coalition aviation assets arrive on site. Over the radio network you hear them trying to ascertain the location of rescue team who has become in need of being rescued. It seems every Coalition asset is heading to the scene and this has become the focal point for the Task Force. You can hear the frustration of the Commander on the ground trying to make sense of his surroundings, trying to confirm his team's location and the location of the insurgents. The Coalition Aviation assets presence seems to scare away the assassins. The Aviation assets locate the incident site and verify that there are people

moving around. A momentary sigh that there is some hope still left. The rescue team finally makes communication contact. As they are directed on to site by the aviation assets you can imagine the team rushing to the possibly injured team's assistance. Through the transmissions you hear the Commanders voice change. He has arrived and there are Canadians involved. Some are wounded but one is missing. As they continue to investigate the outcome is announced over the radio via the medical assistance request or "nine liners" and the truth is unrevealed. A quick check in the Command Post with other headquarters and the victim is identified. The remaining of the Coalition starts to arrive and secure the scene allowing for medievac of the wounded and the insertion of National Investigation Service. Our team arrives back from there patrol. They know that something bad has happen and it might be one of there brethren from Edmonton, AB. I then reveal the name of the fallen, to my OC. We have to wait now for our headquarters to give us the OK to tell our soldiers who the victim was. Many asking questions that you are not allowed answering, just giving the soldiers in our team vague responses. Trying to prepare them for the worse but it doesn't seem to be enough. We finally gather and the name is given- Lt Justin Boyes.

Justin was working with the Police Observer Mentor Liaison Team assisting Afghan National Police when he apparently stepped on an Improvised Explosive Device. We had been told before that we would remain at our posts and not go to a Ramp Ceremony, in KAF. We were asked to take some time to remember him. Lean on each other for support. Justin was a great guy. His smile would light up a room and bring a smile to your face. He had visited our Command Post the day before. It was great to see him. He had just arrived and still was adjusting to his surroundings much like the rest of us. The closeness of our organization is revealed when you find out that some of the soldiers knew Justin even closer than I did. He wasn't just a work mate but for them he was a close friend. There wives at home who socialize together now would probably come together to support each other in the next few weeks. I had been an Assisting Officer a few years ago when our unit lost MCpl Colin Bason. I knew what there lives were about to become and experience. That was all surreal and very far away. It was time to pause and remember and to focus on the task at hand. This is not the place to mourn. We will do that when we come home. We will remember our brother.

As the storm pushes aside we return the next day back to our tasks. We are notified that the OMLT is required to assist at the front gate of the base. I grab our interpreter and we head down to see what is the commotion. As I arrive, I'm advised that a Local national was in an accident and has broken his leg. As I walked down, I see the emergency services sitting on the edge of the Helicopter Landing zone on there gators. I warn the medics that we may need there assistance. They were sitting waiting for the inbound helicopter which will soon arrive at the base, part of the regular resupply flights that comes here. As I arrive at the gate, I see a young Afghan boy sitting inside an Afghan National Army Ford Ranger truck. He was holding his leg. Tears streaming through his dust covered face. I advise the ANA to advise his commander, the executive officer or XO of the situation. One quick look at the boy's leg and his sandal covered foot is not where it should be. Apparently, the vehicle he arrived in is the offending source of the accident. The boy is quickly sent to see the medics. Eventually, I head up to see the boy. He is in great hands as the medics try to reduce his pain and stabilize him. However it is apparent that the boy is a little slow mentally. The ANA XO arrives. I see a kind and compassionate

side of him. He determines the boy's telephone number to get hold of his family. Approximately an hour later a Blackhawk helicopter arrives to airlift him to the hospital near KAF, with him is his uncle. I started to realize that it was bad enough being run over, then have 5 -6 people poking you, asking you questions and many who are not from your country or speak your language. Then whisk away on a gator to arrive at a dust storm and a noisy black helicopter that whisks you away. Considering that most of the population here probably has never left their local village; let alone ride as a patient in a helicopter.

It made me pause and think that if we had not been here I'm sure he would never walk on his one foot ever again and be a cripple. Now he might have a slight limp. Thanks to folks at home we were able to give this patient an "Izzy Doll". There has been a day where there was something good. This storm, like the dust from the helicopter, slowly settles down. There are many storms here. I am reminded of a saying that is stated often by those that live here "O n shala" or its God's Will. It makes it a little easier to cope in an unforgiving and dangerous place.



Kandak Mentor Team Major Chuck MacKinnon and Pte Doyle
Missing is Cpl Gerbrandt (Working Elsewhere)



Photo submitted

Local cadets visited the HMCS Ottawa.

Cadets test their sea legs

Army Cadets from 1838RCACC left Maple Ridge at 5 a.m. on Sunday, March 29 for a day full of military history and awareness.

The day started with a rocky ride aboard BC Ferries' MV Spirit of British Columbia, en route to Sidney where the corps was met by a Canadian Forces luxury coach which escorted the army cadets and CF officers throughout the day.

Upon arrival at CFB Esquimalt the group was welcomed aboard HMCS Ottawa, one of Canada's state-of-the-art frigates.

The officer of the day met the cadets and offered an overview of the tour they were about to receive.

Afterwards, the group was divided into small groups and got a first-hand view of one of Canada's foremost fighting ships.

The cadets saw the inner workings of the vessel, from the Bridge to Fire control, from the Flight Deck to a review of the vessel's defence systems. The Ridge Meadows Army Cadets were given a

first class private tour.

After the vessel tour, the group was taken on a walking tour of this historic naval facility, which includes the oldest dry-dock facility on the West Coast of North America.

Once learning about the proud history of this naturally protected harbour, and eating lunch, the corps boarded the bus for the short drive over to the Royal B.C. Museum for the remainder of the day, after which, it was back to the Ferry Terminal to go home.

Royal Canadian Army Cadets is a youth initiative sponsored by the Department of National Defence, the Canadian Forces, the Army Cadet League of Canada, and locally by Maple Ridge Branch-88 of the Royal Canadian Legion.

Interested youth are invited to attend to the corps any Monday or Thursday evening in the basement of the Maple Ridge Legion.

Call 786-6634, or visit www.cadets.ca/lhq/1838army for more information.

The ANA Kandak (Battalion) has been fostering the local boys school in Bazaar -e- Panjwayi (B-e-P). On January 16th the ANA visited the school again. This time to ensure that some of the repairs have been completed. As well as, to deliver school supplies to the children. We appreciate those who have supported the second venture. Below are some photos of the event. Some of you will be able to make out the supplies you provided. The BG CO was also in attendance.

There are still repairs to be completed at the school. Rome and Afghanistan was not built in a day. In my opinion (Chuck MacKinnon), in the COIN environment we may have moved the yard stick just one more inch or two forward. Therefore, we will visit the school again.

