

# University of London OTC, Gun Troop Practice Camp

by Officer Cadet Richard Sparks ULOTC



B Sub firing.

24 July 1989 saw ULOTC's RA subunit set out for a two week practice camp leading up to the King George VI 'Top Gun' Trophy, a day long dry and live firing exercise in which all OTC gun troops participate.

Arriving at HMP Rollestone we were disappointed to find that the 'Goon Towers' and high barbed wire had been taken down, and that any thought of digging a tunnel would have to be shelved, as someone had had the crazy idea that, just because you gave students beer money, you could expect them to work as well!

However, work we did and under the enthusiastic tutelage of Capt Redmond, WO2 (SMIG) Chaffe (of GTT North) and Bdr Gilsenan (7 Para RHA and 17 Trg Regt RA and Depot) we quickly swung into a week of drills and dry deployments.

As a member of the OP I was to come under Capt Redmond's tender care — and an interesting experience it was too. We were to get to know the floor of the Larkhill Invertron very well as dire disasters in fire planning led to the team being killed off and the inexperienced Radio Operator (me!) being left to conduct the battle from under the desks!!

Out in the field we carried out the inevitable dry deployments whilst SMIG Chaffe tightened up the Gun Drill, Bdr Gilsenan worked on our Voice Procedure to a point where OP and CP could actually understand what each other wanted (no mean feat) and our PSI, BSM Ashton, watched his lovingly restored Pack Howitzers being worked harder than they had been for a long time.

At last the weekend came and with it Exercise Follow the Bear, Capt Redmond's orienteering exercise with a difference. At each point questions stuck to cans of a well known lager were left for each two (wo)man team relevant to their gunnery training. The winning detachment turned out to be C Sub (breach rats, yuch!) under OCdt Mclusky. What I never worked out was why all the cans were empty, even though my team got to the OP ones first.

The exercise started at the mythical grid 123456 and ended at *The Bustard* where Lt Clitherow, our HAC Troop Commander, was a welcoming sight as were the refreshing bevies we had no alternative but to drink inside.

That evening we held a barbecue organised by the long suffering BSM Ashton and a very successful evening it was too, enlivened by plentiful food and drink, good company and a packet of scampi fries . . .

At long last Monday dawned and the chance to get some rounds on the ground and the opportunity for Safety Officer Capt Lycett-King of 100 Fd Regt (V) to do his stuff and be omnipresent to save the innocent people of Wiltshire from a repeat of 'The Incident'.

With very heartening results over the next few days we were ready at last to vindicate all the work that had been invested in us, under the eyes of our Gunner CO, Lt Col Clayton and, more dauntingly still, Maj Johnson and his DS.

Somehow the magic did not quite work despite our initial optimism at the end of the day. Leeds OTC kept the title they had won last year and we were pushed into 'a close sixth' out of eight.

As 48 tired OCdts paraded for dismissal at our London base the next day, we said goodbye to JUO Eddie Carter, our senior cadet, but took heed of our TC's words 'remember how you feel, remember for next year' — we will.

## 60th Field Regiment RA (TA)

The story of 60th Field Regiment RA (TA) finally ended on Sunday, 8 October 1989 at St Peter at Gowts Church, High Street, Lincoln when the Standard of the OCA was laid up. It hangs proudly, alongside the Standard of The Royal Lincolnshire Regiment Old Contemptibles OCA, as also their Books of Remembrance lay side by side.

In the presence of the Lord Lieutenant of Lincolnshire, Mr H N Nevile, a church packed with ex 60th Field members, their families and friends, the Standard, which has been carried on numerous occasions, was handed to our Vicar with due dignity and ceremony, for safe keeping.

The regiment was formed in 1922 as 60th (North Midland) Brigade RFA; it consisted of one battery of 4.5 inch Howitzers from Lincoln and three batteries of 18 pounders, one from Nottingham, one from Leicester and one from Grimsby. In the re-organisation in 1938, the Lincoln and Grimsby batteries were separated from Nottingham and Leicester, and became 60th Field Regiment RA TA; Lincoln Battery was numbered 237 and Grimsby 239. About this time horses were exchanged for mechanical transport.

The regiment was mobilised on 25 August 1939, re-equipped with QF 18 pounders and eventually shipped to France on 31 December. On 10 May the regiment moved up to Brussels and

was soon in action, but by the end of May it was evacuated from Bray Dunes.

After a short leave, the regiment was re-formed at Okehampton, then placed along the south coast in a defence role. Training and re-equipping followed and 8 February saw the regiment embarking at Gurock, on the Sythia. A voyage lasting 13 weeks ended at Port Suez where, after dis-embarkation the gunners and guns were reunited at El Tahag Camp. The guns were now the new 25 pounders. We, the regiment were not allowed to settle long as trouble was brewing in Iraq and Syria.

As part of a small striking force, we left Egypt and crossed 700 miles of waterless desert to relieve the RAF station at Habbaniya which had been under siege by the Iraqis. One or two small battles later, peace was declared and we moved into Baghdad on 1 June. Meantime, the Syrian trouble flared up, and it was on the move again. Palmyra was the main battle, defended by the French Foreign Legion, and after its surrender the regiment moved up to Aleppo near the Turkish border, and took up defensive positions round the airfield. This was a duty, but more of a rest after a hectic month.

The war was still going on though and the Western Desert called, so it was limber up and advance down the coast road of Syria, across Palestine and the Sinai Desert again and into El