

To Revel in God's Sunshine

The Story of RSM J C Lord MVO MBE



**Compiled by Richard Alford
and Colleagues of RSM J C Lord**

© R ALFORD 1981

First Edition Published in 1981

Second Edition Published Electronically in 2013

Cover Pictures

Front - Regimental Sergeant Major J C Lord in front of the Grand Entrance to the Old Building, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

Rear - Army Core Values

To Revel in God's Sunshine

The Story of the Army Career of the late

Academy Sergeant Major

J.C. Lord MVO MBE

As related by former Recruits, Cadets, Comrades and Friends

Compiled by Richard Alford

(2nd Edition - Edited by Maj P.E. Fensome R IRISH and Lt Col (Retd) A.M.F. Jelf)

John Lord firmly believed the words of Emerson:

“Trust men and they will be true to you.

Treat them greatly and they will show themselves great.”

Dedicated to

SOLDIERS

SOLDIERS WHO TRAIN SOLDIERS

SOLDIERS WHO LEAD SOLDIERS

The circumstances of many contributors to this book will have changed during the course of research and publication, and apologies are extended for any out of date information given in relation to rank and appointment.



John Lord when Regimental Sergeant Major The Parachute Regiment Infantry Training Centre

CONTENTS

2ND EDITION

Introduction	General Sir Peter Wall KCB CBE ADC Gen – CGS	v
Foreword	WO1 A.J. Stokes COLDM GDS – AcSM R M A Sandhurst	vi
Editor's Note	Major P.E Fensome R IRISH	vii

To Revel in God's Sunshine

Introduction	The Royal British Legion Annual Parade at R.M.A Sandhurst	viii
Chapter 1	The Grenadier Guards, Brighton Police Force	1
Chapter 2	Royal Military College, Sandhurst. Airborne Forces	7
Chapter 3	The 3rd Battalion The Parachute Regiment in Tunisia	10
Chapter 4	Sicily – Italy – Return to Spalding	15
Chapter 5	Arnhem	20
Chapter 6	Capture and Aftermath	25
Chapter 7	Arrival at Stalag XIB. John Lord's Recordings	27
Chapter 8	Establishment of a Regime	33
Chapter 9	Arrival of Corporal Ray Sheriff, and a journey by R.S.M. W. Kibble to Lubeck	38
Chapter 10	Events Leading to Liberation	42
Chapter 11	The Parachute Regiment Infantry Training Centre	47
Chapter 12	The Purpose Behind the Regime	54
Chapter 13	John Lord's Arrival at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. Major L C Drouet Remembers the Selection Course	59
Chapter 14	The Pace Stick Competitions. RSM W L A Nash Stands in	63
Chapter 15	Capt. P. Horsfall Recalls the Techniques of Instruction	70
Chapter 16	BBC Programme "This is Your Life"	74
Chapter 17	Daniel Oxberry takes the Course with Intake 33	80
Chapter 18	The Course Completed	84
Chapter 19	A Lecture on 'Discipline' to the Staff College. Retirement	86
Chapter 20	John Lord's Death in January 1968. Obituaries	92
Chapter 21	Details of Research	95
Chapter 22	Final Tributes	98
Appendix 1	Lecture (full text) on 'Discipline' to the Army Staff College 1963	100
Acknowledgements		104
Index		106

(Intentionally Blank)

INTRODUCTION

TO THE 2ND EDITION

GENERAL SIR PETER WALL KCB CBE ADC GEN CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF

I am indebted to Mr Richard Alford for bringing the story of WO1 John Clifford Lord MVO MBE to life. Although excerpts have been woven into various aspects of Army leadership training, this publication has been all but lost since it was first published in 1981. It gives me great pleasure to see it re-issued as an Army publication.

WO1 Lord's career took him from basic training in 1933, to RSM in World War II and culminated as the Academy Sergeant Major of the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. Although he joined the Army nearly 80 years ago, those serving today will recognise aspects of the leadership challenges he faced and will have had recent similar experiences.

This book is neither doctrine nor directive, policy or prescription, nor will it tell you how to lead soldiers. WO1 Lord's story will show you why he came to be respected by NCOs, Officers, and even a King. This account will cause you to reflect on your own leadership style. There is much that we can learn from his example; in particular the values and character he demonstrated throughout his career. His is a story that has a resonance and relevance to those serving today.



Chief of the General Staff, Army Headquarters 2013

FOREWORD

TO THE 2ND EDITION

WO1 (AcSM) A J STOKES COLDM GDS

I am delighted to have the opportunity to add comment to such a great book. As the present Academy Sergeant Major (AcSM) I owe much of the reputation and kudos of the appointment to AcSM J C Lord. Forty-five years after his death his presence is still felt around the Academy; still lurking in a hidden corner of the Academy Sergeant Majors office are extracts from his addresses and lectures to various branches of the Army. In Old College the nearest prestige room to the Grand Entrance is dedicated to the late JC Lord. In the Sergeants' Mess the bar is called the Lord's Bar, and the Warrant Officers Class 1, collectively (of which there are fifteen) in the Academy, are known as 'The Lords', so it is a real privilege for me to be asked to comment on this great man's life.

This book tracks the remarkable story of his life, and it is a must read for all aspiring Junior and Senior Non-Commissioned Officers. J C Lord dedicated himself to excellence by personal example in the desire to get the best from everyone he met. It highlights the leadership attributes that he displayed throughout his life, a life dedicated to duty. Quickly identified pre-war as a special talent he received a rapid rise to the Sergeants Mess.

During the 2nd World War he was appointed the first Regimental Sergeant Major of the newly established Parachute Regiment (3rd Battalion) and immediately set about creating the standards expected, often higher than any anticipated by those who volunteered but soon embraced. It was these exacting standards that undoubtedly saved hundreds of lives in prisoner of war camp Stalag XIB. In the face of adversity and amongst broken men he designated himself as the leader and enforced standards and discipline where there were none.

His example and presence ensured that the Nazi prison guards treated POWs with more respect and conditions improved. Within the prison camp he instigated military funerals and buried the dead with dignity and honour. He enforced daily routine, promoted self-respect, introduced and managed a chain of command; all this through his professionalism and self-discipline. Personally he demonstrated standards that only few could comprehend and even less could match.

During his time post war (after a brief spell at the Parachute Training Battalion as the Sergeant-Major) he moved to the Royal Military Academy where he changed the lives of thousands of Officer Cadets; such was his reputation that he became a household name, even receiving acclaim on national television. His development and approach to training is still in evidence today and his genuine affection for those he trained is vibrantly reflected in the folklore of the Academy nowadays. His humorous stories are still being told.

The book is difficult to put down, a story of selfless commitment, moral and physical courage, it moves the reader and encourages reflection and with that a desire to improve oneself. This book is an essential read for any leader.



Academy Sergeant Major, RMA Sandhurst 2013

EDITOR'S NOTE

MAJOR P E FENSOME R IRISH

The catalyst for the project to bring “*To Revel in God’s Sunshine*” back into print was a desire to provide a source of inspiration for those who instruct our soldiers at Phase 1 (Basic) training establishments. It is especially pertinent as RSM Lord is the figurehead of the Army Recruit and Training Division Staff Leadership School (ASLS) through which all potential Phase 1, (and 2), instructors pass prior to assuming instructional duties.

Whilst scoping the idea of republishing this book I had positive responses from RMA Sandhurst, ASLS, The School of Infantry and Initial Training Group so whilst not my original intention, it is hoped it will also provide example and inspiration regardless of the level at which leaders and instructors operate in training establishments and indeed the wider Army.

I am indebted to Capt Adam Hindson AAC, the former Corps RSM, who introduced me to the author, and of course to Richard Alford himself for agreeing to allow the Army to republish this often quoted but little read classic on a non-profits basis.

I would like to thank the current Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Peter Wall and Academy Sergeant Major Stokes for their support and contribution by way of their Introduction and Foreword respectively which provide a modern context and relevance.

Working off an original copy in the absence of any digital format I would like to thank Mrs Eileen Geldard, my erstwhile G3 Clerk, of the 1st Army Training Regiment, for assisting me to retype the book, including the full text of RSM Lord’s inspirational presentation to the Staff College in 1963 as an appendix. I finally passed an electronic-version to Combat Publications at the Land Warfare Centre, Warminster where Lt Col (Retd) Mike Jelf prepared the manuscript for electronic publication. I am indebted to him for his passionate support of the project and extensive commitment of time and effort not only in reviewing the script in detail and resetting, but sourcing new imagery which provides further insight into J C Lord’s life. Critically I wish to thank him for finding homes for this book as an e-publication so that a new generation might ‘Revel in God’s Sunshine’ now and in the future.

Throughout the process, the support and guidance of Mrs Valerie Charters, Richard Alford’s daughter, was invaluable. She undertook extensive reviews, found original photographs, and all the time kept her father fully informed of what was happening to his book. The author is delighted with the outcome.

If, during the reproduction of this book, there are errors of fact then they are solely mine and I hope they do not detract from the reader’s enjoyment.

I wish to thank all the contributors to the original book. I am sure, given that the original intention behind publishing this work was to highlight the life of a man they all very much respected, they will forgive any liberties I have taken to complete the project.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P E Fensome R Irish', enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Major P E Fensome R IRISH

Pirbright 2013

INTRODUCTION

THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION ANNUAL PARADE AT R M A SANDHURST

Warm sunshine greeted the Annual Parade of the Royal British Legion South Eastern Area at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, and as the Academy Sergeant Major and his staff quietly but efficiently straightened the five long ranks of members numbering over two thousand, the heat began to rise from the large parade ground fronting the magnificent Old Building with its famous wide stairway to the Grand Entrance and impressive row of black cannons.

The parade gradually settled down to await the arrival of the Royal Visitor, the only movement coming from the front and second ranks where the slight breeze ruffled the hundreds of beautiful gold and blue standards representing each branch taking part. Soon all was still and the RMA Sandhurst Band quietly played as the smart contingent of Officer Cadets stood perfectly at ease.

Parade members gazed across the wide green grounds of the Academy with its separate Colleges and immaculate roadways. Some distance to the front standing majestically alone was a statue of Queen Victoria, and it was beyond the statue that everyone watched for signs of the arrival of the Royal car.

George Kirby had attended this parade for many years as Branch Standard Bearer and took great pride in his turnout which reflected the years spent as a Sergeant in the Grenadier Guards. The Academy Sergeant Major, tall and straight, with a fierce moustache turned upwards at the ends, dark eyes missing nothing, approached slowly along the front rank glancing at each bearer, and on passing George lightly tapped his foot with his pace stick and commented “That’s what I like to see”. George replied just as quietly “Good morning Johnny, Sir.”

He felt justified in such a response as he had known Academy Sergeant Major J C Lord MBE for many years, long before he had been appointed to the most senior and responsible post a Non-Commissioned Officer could hold, before his prominent service in the Parachute Regiment and period of captivity at Stalag XIB, back to those years before the war when they had served together in The 3rd Battalion, Grenadier Guards.

Academy Sergeant Major Lord now paced between the ranks having a quiet word here, and summoning a medical orderly to an old gentleman there who, with a chest full of medals, had to give best to the unusual heat of the day. Walking back to the front rank he placed the corner of a standard across the neck of one of the bearers as a sun shield, and then quickly marched and halted in position as the Royal guest arrived.

The Royal Salute preceded the colourful parade, and a lengthy inspection followed in which the Royal guest traversed the long ranks in a Land-Rover. Eventually the South Eastern Area Standard was paraded along the length of the front rank at the slow march, the Colour Party being escorted by Officer Cadets and ASM Lord.

Finally came the impressive march past when Academy Sergeant Major Lord positioned himself beyond the saluting base so that he could say farewell to each Branch contingent with the words “Well done, Ladies and Gentlemen – see you again next year.”

As George Kirby’s contingent marched back through the grounds of the Academy towards Camberley, the smart swing of arms inevitably took him back to the immaculate rise and fall of those recruit Guardsmen’s arms at the Guards Depot at Caterham.

* * *

CHAPTER ONE

THE GRENADIER GUARDS BRIGHTON POLICE FORCE

The squads of recruit Guardsmen drilling on the square at the Guards Depot Caterham could in the right conditions be heard from the town as they called out the time between movements “One, - two, three, - One”, recalls George Kirby, “and from the moment of reception at the guard room the Sergeant Instructor assisted by a ‘trained soldier’ took charge of one’s whole life. The transition from civilian to striving recruit was immediate, seeming only to take as long as it took to parcel up and send home personal clothing and don fatigue dress of brown canvas. A prompt Depot haircut virtually removed all visible hair and served to remove one’s previous identity, and replace it with a number – and a whole set of new military rules previously unimagined.

“The ‘trained soldier’ became the instant challenge with his unlimited power in the barrack room, and all of one’s previous freedoms disappeared abruptly and now required his strict permission. Soon Lance-Sergeants and all ranks above became unapproachable and their status immense. Even recruits well advanced in the twenty week training course required due respect. Life became a matter of absolute cleanliness, in everything from cap badge to bed space. The world outside of the Depot soon became insignificant, the new limits giving the main gate a vast importance – through which one seemed unlikely to ever pass again.”

John Lord was slightly older than some at twenty-four and was fit and strong and was recognised by George as obviously having received a good education. He revealed a methodical approach to everything and soon mastered the knack of cleaning his kit and achieving a smart turn out. This came from a boarding school background in which he had developed a self-confident ability to look after himself and cope with outside pressures. One of two sons, he had helped his father in the family business in Southport, where he was born, until the grim economic recession made it clear that he needed to develop a career of his own. His positive personality coupled with a tall physique and love for sport soon suggested the police force to him, and a frequent method of entry at that time was to enlist in the Guards in order to gain the smartness and self-discipline so necessary in the police force. On the 27th March 1933 John Lord therefore signed on with the Grenadier Guards for four years with the Colours and eight years in the regular reserve. The recruiting office had given the Regiment’s undertaking to assist men of good character in seeking occupations on return to civil life.

The recruit Guardsmen gradually settled into the rigours of the ‘Drill factory’ seeming to be at the double from reveille to lights out. The morning muster parade was taken by Regimental Sergeant Major G F G (Freddie) Turner and in demanding an exacting standard no detail missed his practised eye. His sharp discipline was laced with a humour which remained in the memory, and his polished manner foretold the very prominent career he would have in the Grenadier Guards as a senior warrant officer and commissioned officer. His parade ground voice and immaculate style made a strong impression on the recruits who would with a grin quote his statements made on parade.

Following muster parade the training squads went on to long periods of foot and rifle drill ever more demanding in concentration and with a clearer suggestion of sentry drill and ceremonial movements. Physical training gave an introduction to many sporting activities encouraged within the battalions, such as athletics, boxing, football, rugby, cricket, and the tug of war.

George Kirby continues to describe the regime: “During the daytime each iron bed was telescoped to half its length and all kit laid out in a carefully prescribed way with articles aligned the full length of the barrack room. Everything needed to be squared off and highly polished as daily room inspections were made which would so easily result in a charge of ‘dirty equipment’. Defaulter’s parades were frequent and occurred in the rare moments of spare time. Extra drill or ‘show clean’ parades were held which could themselves end with fresh charges, until one was attending punishment parades wearing full field service marching order when – by gum – your feet hardly touched the ground!

“After tea would come a two hour ‘shining parade’ when we would sit astride our beds and methodically clean and polish every piece of equipment under the eagle eye of the ‘trained soldier’, who would frequently examine a finished article – and deposit it into a coal bucket in disgust.

“We were chased about to the end of each day, and having successfully approached the trained soldier with a request - ”leave to fall out Trained Soldier please” we would dash to the canteen for a quick pie and chips before ‘drummers call’ came and it was time for a supervised wash. Tattoo roll call meant that it was time to stand by our beds for inspection by the Sergeant-in-Waiting. Repetition was the name of the game with its firmly established habits of cleaning and drilling, which would become second nature and ensure a smart turnout and high degree of self- discipline at any time.

“At about the seven week stage of the course, we were allowed to present ourselves at the guard room for a possible brief period out of barracks, but many would not pass the Sergeant of the guards inspection and would be sent doubling back with ‘boots insufficiently polished’ – or on occasion ‘studs not burnished’. I must say that the discipline made one develop a spirit of stoic determination, and a keenness to compete against the other Regiments of Guards. When we were eventually passed out we were immaculate Guardsmen erect in stature, and ready for bigger things. The great day came when we moved from the barrack rooms to those famous tin huts opposite the barrack square, and this marked the end of our recruit training period – but far from the end of training! We were then split up and were drafted to one of the three regular battalions of the Grenadier Guards”

* * *

In August 1933 John Lord was posted to Number One Company, 3rd Battalion, Grenadier Guards, stationed at Chelsea Barracks, in which numbers were being increased to Colonial strength in readiness for a tour of duties in Egypt.

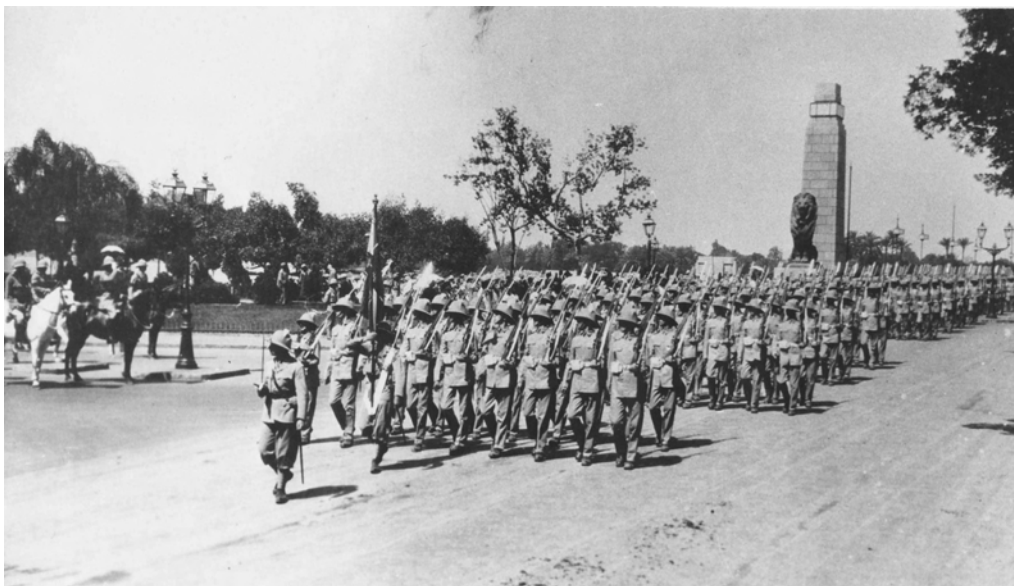
Company Sergeant Major H Oulton made a point of talking with each new Guardsman in his company, in order to assess his attitude. He particularly remembers John Lord’s keenness and smartness of turnout. “He was a rather reserved young guardsman” he writes, “but when asked his sporting interests gave details of several including rugby – which made me grin a little as few guardsmen would get time to play what at that time was considered to be a Commissioned Officer’s game. We went on to discuss his plans for work on eventual discharge from Colour Service, and he stated his intention of joining the police force. I was able to reassure him that several former members of the company had successfully applied for the Police on completion of their service. I posted him to No. 1 Section advising him of the presence of another guardsman from the North Country named Troughton, who was also a keen sportsman. They would later – with other members of the company – feature prominently in many sports.”

At Chelsea Barracks training quickly developed with an introduction to the famous ceremonial guard duties, and John Lord went on to share these with the men of No. 1 Section whom he would know and meet at many future stages of his life.

Joe Flanagan was already established in the battalion but remembers sharing guard duties with John Lord at Buckingham Palace, St. James Palace, The Tower of London, and at the Bank of England. Long hours of polishing, cleaning and buffing went on with preparation of scarlet ceremonial uniform, drill rehearsals and detailed inspections, but the spectacle and colour of these ‘West End duties’ well justified the hard work and discipline.

The atmosphere in London in the 1930s was of course marvellous and young soldiers would always remember marching through the famous streets of London with the Regimental Band in full sound, and scarlet tunics flashing in the sunshine. Joe Flanagan remembers the march to the Bank of England was rather long – unless the Officer in Command was well off – when he might pay for the whole guard to travel by underground railway. At the end of that duty each guardsman would receive a new shilling piece.

In the evenings when not on duty much time was spent walking through the parks, and around the West End of London, and this formed a great relief from the rigidity of the barracks. Joe Flanagan showed John around the sights of the city and was at times surprised by his quiet reserve. “He certainly had received a good education, and obviously came from a good background but talked little of his earlier life, except for his great interest in rugby.”



The 3rd Battalion Grenadier Guards. Ceremony of Trooping the Colour, Egypt

With such colourful duties the three month battalion training had gone quickly, but now it was time for the 3rd Battalion to pack up for service in Egypt, and the young soldiers looked forward eagerly to the long established route by troopship to Port Said.

On the 14th November, 1933 the 3rd Battalion, Grenadier Guards boarded S S Nevasa and for the next few days enjoyed the sunshine of the Mediterranean. Eventually they arrived at the Kasr-el-Nil Barracks in Cairo, which was known to Guardsmen as the 'bug-hutch' for very appropriate reasons. Otherwise Cairo turned out to be picturesque, and the barracks was situated at the head of a large bridge over the River Nile.

Twenty-four hour guard duties commenced immediately and these were just as demanding as the West End duties but without the attractions of London. Main guards were posted at the residency of the British Ambassador, Sir Miles Lampson, also at the residency of the General Officer Commanding, at the Military Police Barracks and at the Citadel. The Regimental Sergeant Major of the 3rd Battalion W E (Chef) Hawkins maintained a very strict but happy regime, and gained enormous respect from all ranks, indeed was occasionally referred to as 'Daddy' of the Battalion. John Lord was to learn much from his example and integrity.

Soon after the battalion had settled in, CSM Oulton was asked if he had any rugby players in the Company. He replied that indeed he had and very soon afterwards Troughton, Lord and a Guardsman named Hawkins were selected and helped to form a battalion team which played sufficiently well to defeat other well-established Service teams. Eventually the 3rd Battalion team was to win the Egypt Command Rugby Cup and John Lord became one of its prominent players. Guardsman Kibble, of whom we shall hear later, also played in the team.

Sport played a large part in the battalion routine and John also became a member of the cricket team, which toured Palestine in June 1935 winning matches against the Berkshire Regiment and the Palestine Police.

George Kirby arrived in Cairo with a later draft from England. He was posted to No.1 Company and found himself with John Lord who had been promoted to Lance Corporal. John's first comment was, "Well George, we will soon have to get those pink knees brown". He was placed next to John in the barrack room and followed closely his example of always being well turned-out on parade. In particular he copied John's knack of wrapping the puggree¹ around the topi (pith helmet) and this paid off, with several credits on guard mounting parades.

On Wednesdays George found that an interesting ceremony took place called 'swabbing and de-bugging'. Material and blow-lamps were drawn from Company stores and efforts were made to entice bugs from the old iron beds. He says "They must have belonged to a special breed as they were quite large and must have been long-established".

¹ A strip of cloth wound around the upper portion of a hat or helmet, particularly a pith helmet and falling down behind to act as a shade for the back of the neck



The High Commissioner of Egypt, Sir Miles Lampson meets one of the prominent Rugby Teams in which John Lord (1st left) featured in 1934-36

George continues: “I was glad to be shown around Cairo by John and we went on pleasure cruises up and down the Nile. On one occasion it was a trip to Memphis to view the great temple and other historic monuments. The Egyptians were not very good navigators and the river could be very treacherous with shifting mud banks. The boat in which John and I, with other Guardsmen were travelling became stuck in the mud. John took over with his smattering of Arabic and summoning a passing boat had a line thrown and our boat towed until free of the bank.

“Life was not all pleasure however, as the Battalion went on a twenty mile march to Helouan Camp to join in Brigade training. As there was little recognised transport it was a case mostly of foot slogging. The Company equipment was carried by mule and limber, and also by camel and donkey. We also carried a great deal on our backs. The march from barracks to the training area was approximately 12 miles, and the Regimental pipes and drums would take the lead. The men were busily singing on one such occasion when an Egyptian came in view pushing a hand cart piled up with dried camel dung. This was used for fuelling fires and could be detected by smell before it could be seen. As the cart approached a wheel suddenly came off, and it turned over in front of the marching column. John Lord was in the front rank of four when CSM Oulton’s voice rang out, “Shift the cart Corporal Lord” – and with some stalwart assistance the cart and its load was despatched onto the desert. We often reminded John afterwards of his skill in ‘muck shifting’.

“Sometimes on rest days at the training camp, camel and donkey races would be organised, and I well remember a donkey named ‘Mohammed’ which was to be ridden in a race by John. At the start great effort was needed to get Mohammed to move at all but suddenly the creature ran a few yards then sent John head first into the sand. Everyone was convulsed with laughter, but John was not to be put off and after severely reprimanding Mohammed remounted and actually won the next race.

“John was soon to meet Mohammed again during the training exercise, when, on this occasion, the donkey was laden with ammunition boxes. The Company was ordered to move up to a new position on a sand-dune but Mohammed steadfastly refused to budge, and it was only with me pushing from the rear and John hauling from the front that Mohammed was persuaded to join the rest of the Company. John’s expression was a study and as he scowled at the donkey he growled, “You bloody idle ass – you’re bone idle!!” John was to be plagued with Mohammed and was frequently to be heard urging him on or trying to stop him with howls of “Whoa Mohammed”. This comment caught on and John used it on many occasions. It was a coincidence that in the war later the paratroops in North Africa used this saying as a battle-cry.”

Company orders stated that anyone falling in to the River Nile was required to report sick – in order to obtain an injection – but Joe Flanagan points out that few bothered about this, and when he and John used to arrive back late in barracks, they would enter by the Corporal's Mess – around some barbed wire – and in doing so often fell into the river. They were caught, with others, on occasion and all would receive an extra drill parade.

Concerts were held in the barracks and CSM Oulton remembers John Lord reciting monologues such as 'Sam pick up thy musket' and also 'Albert and the Lion'. He would replace the characters with the names of well-known celebrities.

George Kirby remembers a group going to visit the great Pyramids. "John suggested that we climb to the top of the largest which was a height of some 460 feet and all of us eventually reached the top to enjoy the panoramic view of Cairo and the surrounding desert. The next problem however, was to get down again and the negotiation of the first two or three six-foot square blocks proved quite difficult. John jumped the first block and called "He who can't make it will be issued with a parachute".

"When training in the desert one day the Company came across traces of a petrified forest, and whilst digging in to form a defence position some of the pieces of rock were used as front cover. I was lying on the ground 'watching my front' when John Lord ordered loudly from behind, "Guardsmen Kirby, do not move!" and hurrying forward picked a large scorpion with his bayonet from the top of my stocking.

"Back in barracks the Company rested and during siesta time most of the lads laid on their beds under mosquito nets sleeping or watching the big black bugs walking about. Their rest was suddenly disturbed by a 'char wallah' entering with his tea urn and yelling "Chia – Chia". John's voice was louder however and sent him scurrying off – for the double crime of entering the barrack room, and waking sleeping Guardsmen!!"

In the autumn of 1934 Regimental Sergeant Major 'Chef' Hawkins left the Battalion to return home, having completed twenty-six years service in the Army. He had been with the 3rd Battalion since 1925 and would be missed, but his place was taken by Regimental Sergeant Major 'Freddie' Turner from the Guards Depot, and he soon became popular.

In 1935 John Lord took over the role of Battalion Sports Secretary from Ernest Ormerod, and continued a busy sporting calendar. CSM Oulton remembers that his company held almost all the sporting trophies to be competed for within the Battalion at that time. The tour of duties eventually ended for the 3rd Battalion and it was time to pack up and leave Cairo. On the 29th January 1936, they boarded the S S Cameronia for the journey home.



Two great Warrant Officers who influenced John Lord's Army career, Left: RSM G F G (Freddie) Turner GREN GDS; and right RSM W E (Chef) Hawkins GREN GDS

Back in England there came a special occasion when on the 9th April 1936 the Battalion was inspected by King Edward VIII, and a total of 24 Officers and 665 other ranks took part in this parade.

In early 1937 John Lord was promoted to Lance Sergeant and CSM Oulton recalls how unusual it was for short-service men to gain such promotion. He tried without success to persuade John to extend his Colour Service. At this time John Lord was interviewed by his Commanding officer, Col C R Britten (later Brigadier Retd C R Britten OBE MC DL) who also hoped that he would extend his service, but John stated his intention of joining the Police. Colonel Britten therefore wrote to the Chief Constable of Worcestershire but a reply came that they did not wish to accept men aged over 28 years. There had at that time however been considerable mention in the newspapers regarding the return of the 3rd Battalion and Colonel Britten was asked by the Chief Constable of Brighton if two vacancies in his force could be filled. Colonel Britten replied that he had an outstanding soldier of 28 years if he was not considered too old. John Lord was successfully interviewed and entered the Brighton Police Force in March 1937.

* * *

After serving in the Grenadier Guards John found it an easy task to maintain a smart turn-out, but there was a great deal to learn in relation to Court procedures and the Rules of Evidence and he took much of this to heart; he assimilated particularly the attitude that justice should not only be done – but be seen to be done.

His interest in sport soon resulted in his selection for the Police cricket team, but he was effective also in his work as a policeman. A commendation was received from a Magistrates Court for his part in arresting two men who had stolen a motor cycle. Just how he did this is not clear. He may well have physically removed the men from the machine, or conceivably simply ordered them to stop in his parade ground voice.

He became the close friend of another young constable, George Penfold, who remembers John as one of the smartest young policemen to enter the Brighton Force. The Brighton Borough Police Force ceased to exist in 1968 when it was amalgamated with five other Forces to form the Sussex Police, but there are long service and retired policemen who remember John Lord's time in the Force.

On 3rd September 1939, war with Germany forcibly ended John Lord's aspirations of a Police career.

* * *

CHAPTER TWO

ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE, SANDHURST,

AIRBORNE FORCES

Possibly because of the control upon call up of Police reservists, John Lord was not mobilised until 4th December 1939, but was then immediately sent on a refresher course to Windsor Castle in the rank of Lance Sergeant. He might on completion have been posted to one of the Grenadier Guards battalions on active service, but after four months was posted to the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, receiving promotion to Gold Sergeant. This would suggest that his instructional abilities had been noted, but he would no doubt have wished to rejoin his former battalion.

Sandhurst did not become the Royal Military Academy until 1947, and was in 1940 one of several Officer Cadet Training Units. The very high calibre of Sergeant Instructors is revealed by the fact that both John Lord and a fellow Sergeant named Desmond Lynch went on to achieve great prominence.

Sergeant Lynch went on to become Regimental Sergeant Major at Eaton Hall and then at the Mons Officer Cadet School from 1958 to 61, and as one of the very top league of RSMs in the British Army, will be remembered by thousands of former Officer Cadets. His is a story of its own, and he is now Captain Retd. MBE, DCM, Assistant Adjutant Headquarters, RMA Sandhurst. He states of those early days: "At that stage of the war we served together as Sergeants, and had both been through a full apprenticeship in the Army. John Lord was a great example to young officer cadets, a sharp disciplinarian on parade but human and approachable off duty. He was an enthusiast and had a very resilient mind, and he particularly liked to get to the teeth of a subject."

It was not long before John Lord gained promotion to Company Sergeant-Major, and in March 1941, a young Officer Cadet named William Corbould commenced training in C Company and he writes: "Both C and D Companies were formed of those candidates seeking commissions in the Brigade of Guards, and the majority of the instructors were Guardsmen.

"On the first company drill parade Company Sergeant Major J C Lord was standing on the flank of the parade, and before he even gave his first word of command we knew instinctively that here was a man who would demand a high standard, and would inspire leadership. When the parade got under way and individual faults were being noted, we were amazed to find that he knew each cadet's name. At a later stage John Lord admitted that after photographs had been taken of the whole course, he had learned the names off by heart in one evening!

"When on parade on a very hot summer afternoon at about mid-course, one cadet was unwise enough to imitate CSM John Lord when giving his executive word of command. John Lord did not trouble to find out the culprit but instead doubled the whole company of 160 cadets to the gates of the Staff College and back, a round distance of over one mile. Throughout this run he ordered us to do rifle exercises on the move, and to ensure we did them correctly he led the company from the front demonstrating what he required. A lesson indeed of leadership by example.

"I was later placed on report by John Lord whilst on parade for – marching with my right arm swinging below shoulder height. I was ordered immediately to double around the whole company, including the band, but of course he accompanied me to make sure I doubled properly. Later I was marched in front of the Company Commander where I was awarded seven days C.B. There was no question of resentment on my part, but a feeling that I had let my Sergeant Major down.

"Throughout our course CSM Lord showed infinite patience with us, for we were highly spirited youths eager to commence our careers of adventure at this second year stage of the war. He knew just how to handle us whether on parade, on the sports field, or on tactical exercises. He could be approached at any time in his office for advice, and I remember him as a man well-endowed with experience, intellect and commonsense".

After 36 years in the Army, Colonel Courbold, Coldstream Guards. Regimental Headquarters, The Parachute Regiment, still regards John Lord as one of the most outstanding characters he ever met.

At about the conclusion of Cadet Courbold's course, word was received by John Lord of a vacancy for a Regimental Sergeant Major existing in a new airborne formation. This appealed to his wish for action and he was one of three candidates for the appointment. All three CSMs who applied were to become well known in the future, but John Lord was selected and on leaving the Royal Military College in October 1941, he reported to the Airborne Forces Depot at Hardwick Hall.

* * *

As John volunteered for the Airborne Forces so did hundreds of other men from various units. Allen Watson from Cumberland had enlisted in the Highland Light Infantry in 1940 and after attending an NCO's course wished for more action and volunteered for the Airborne Forces joining as a Corporal. Ron McBain, a quiet tall man from Whitehaven, served in the Territorial Army before the war and volunteered for the Airborne Artillery from the 51st Field Regiment Royal Artillery. He had been training since 1939 and felt that it was time that he saw some action. Eric Tims joined the Army in 1933 and served in the Manchester Regiment. He went to France with the B.E.F. and came back through the Dunkirk evacuation to become a Sergeant instructor. A tough NCO, eager and alert, he volunteered for the Airborne Forces in search of excitement.

Bob Rothery had enlisted in the Border Regiment in 1938 serving in Palestine, and was then shipped to France seven days after war was declared. His unit was positioned in front of the French Maginot Line in December 1939 when Bob suffered severe frost bite! Posted back to the Border Regiment Depot he soon recovered and found himself transferred with others to the Gordon Highlanders. He hoped for further excitement but was disappointed to find himself laying barbed wire on the sea front at Cleethorpes! He then volunteered for the Royal Air Force as an air gunner but was not selected so volunteered for the Airborne Forces.

Bill Gilbert, a mild mannered man with a quiet sense of humour lives in Redditch and as a member of the Royal Army Medical Corps volunteered with fourteen other men for the Airborne Forces but only three passed the rigorous medical check.

Ray Sheriff was serving in the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, and was not particularly enjoying the constant kit inspections, drill parades and blancoing which seemed to be delaying the unit from taking part in the war. He "liked the sound of this new parachuting outfit which seemed to suggest some action and escape from large degrees of bull."

The Airborne Depot at Hardwick Hall, Chesterfield was still being built as the volunteers arrived and they were formed roughly into three battalions. The First Battalion was formed from men of the 11th Special Air Service Battalion (formerly No. 2 Commando) and many of those men were selected to train new volunteers. A Second Battalion was formed and then the Third to which five of our six volunteers were posted. As soon as the unit had been formed the Commanding Officer Lieut. Col. G W Lathbury DSO MBE had everyone assembled in the camp gymnasium. There was a lot of banter and chattering going on but suddenly from the back of the hall a voice ordered "Quiet" and then the new RSM of the Third Battalion J C Lord walked onto the platform. Very tall and straight with a dark moustache and bristling eyebrows one could suddenly have heard a pin drop. He soon handed over to the Commanding Officer but everyone to a man realised how things were going to be, and Ray Sheriff was already beginning to feel some alarm! This was not helped when Ray was later returning from the dining hall to his billet carrying his eating irons when a sharp command spun him around. By the time he had gathered his calm and collected his eating irons from the ground the bulk of RSM Lord stood over him. The knuckles of his left hand which held his pace stick had become colourless, and everything about J C registered displeasure. He obviously had a strong message but his voice was so loud that Ray could not decipher the sound. He was sure that he heard something about a dozy man and well realised that he was far from being over with large degrees of bull.

Many of the original 3rd Battalion remember well the first drill parade. This was not the show piece of later years, as volunteers came from many units of the Army. Some effort was made to place them into groups; all of the Guardsmen were made into C Company, the Light Infantry men into A Company, and all of the Fusiliers into B Company. It was anticipated that all light infantrymen would drill in similar fashion but this was not to be.

Allen Watson found that the HLI drilled quite differently. There came the first battalion parade and the results of the first drill orders made even John Lord wilt. The speed of the Light Infantry left the measured movements of the Guardsmen way behind. There was chaos and John Lord soon dismissed the parade and called the Company Sergeant Majors and Sergeants to him where he explained what he wanted in the future. His message was positive “Enough of that! – we are all parachutists and will do the same drill”. The battalion was sorted out by John Lord very quickly and he demanded such a high standard of turn out that the Third Battalion soon became known as ‘The Shiny Third’. As a medical man Bill Gilbert was excused rifle drills as of course the medics were unarmed. He went on parade only for Church parade or any larger events. He watched the battalion being put through drill parades, however, with John Lord using a metronome to seek a pace of drill somewhere between the Light Infantry and Guards pace. He obviously felt the lack of a proper drill parade ground.

The majority of the volunteers settled down into training with only a few being returned to their parent units as unsuitable candidates. Groups of men were then taken to Tatton Park to go through their parachute training and eight parachute drops were completed in order to qualify for the parachute badge which was worn on the right arm. Two jumps were made from a captive balloon and then six from converted bombers (Whitleys, Wellingtons or Albermarles). Bob Rothery was surprised to notice at Hardwick Hall men walking about with bandaged heads and arms, and wondered how they had become injured. He soon realised, however, when ground training commenced as it was then the practice to jump off the platforms of moving trucks to simulate parachute landing conditions. This method was stopped later as more men were hurt in training than in actual parachute jumping. He remembers doing everything at the double with long sessions of physical training each day. After six weeks training at Hardwick he went to Ringway for his jumps and having qualified returned to his battalion. He was then told to return to Ringway for some experimental jumping and this turned out to be from various types of planes including the Dakota.

On one morning he took the place of a Major Rothery (no relation) upon the first occasion they were to jump from the Dakota. Eighteen men entered the plane and Bob Rothery was No.8. He felt strange going out of a side door instead of through the usual aperture but it was quite a pleasant experience. As he fell he waited for the usual tugging at the shoulders of the parachute opening – but nothing happened. He looked up and could see the ‘chute’ streaming and flapping above him but not developing. He frantically shook the liftwebs but to no avail, and he then blacked out. The ‘chute’ must have opened at the very last moment and he came round in an ambulance with an orderly repeatedly asking him his name. He suffered no serious injuries and although very dazed found that memories suddenly returned – and he realised that it was pay day. Unfortunately the WAAF parachute packers had been allowed to watch the jumping that day and his packer not surprisingly passed out believing that he had been killed. Bob states that he was telling Ray Sheriff about it later and was asked if he felt any effects, and had replied “No, except that I used to be six feet tall and now I’m only five feet seven”.

* * *

Eric Tims found that John Lord ran a very good Sergeants Mess at Hardwick and when initially he found a group of Company Sergeant Majors sitting separately he made it known that he wanted the different ranks to mix. Eric had served with about ten RSMs in the past and now admits that they can vary a great deal. The pre-war RSM quite often ruled by fear but John Lord was not like that. He was a strict disciplinarian but treated everyone the same and was very much a gentleman. It became a pleasure to go into the Sergeants Mess and there was a free night whenever there was a kitty. John Lord would laugh heartily when at a Mess meeting Eric Tims would propose a free night and a close Sergeant mate would always second it. John Lord’s sharpness and smart turnout did not worry Eric Tims as he had been a regular soldier. It might have bothered some he admits – but it shouldn’t have done!

* * *

CHAPTER THREE

3RD BATTALION THE PARACHUTE REGIMENT

After a time the battalion moved to Wentworth Woodhouse near Barnsley and was billeted in various parts of an estate. One company was in a village hall, others in Nissen huts on the estate. Corporal Ken Prosser advises that A Company was billeted in the estate stables. In off-duty hours company functions were arranged at a local miners welfare hall and guests would be invited. The company arranged a dance and invited RSM Lord and as each man still wore his parent unit head-dress John Lord attended wearing his SD cap with Guardsman badge. He placed this in the cloakroom and enjoyed the evening. On leaving later he found that someone had stolen his cap. The following morning was a Sunday but the bugle sounded early for Orderly Sergeants. They reported and the whole battalion was soon paraded in hollow square by companies. John Lord came out on parade and to everyone's amazement he wore no hat. This was unheard of but the parade was soon told the reason! And if John Lord rarely lost his temper he certainly did on this occasion. His comments are variously quoted but differ greatly. He never did receive his cap back and this probably upset him as the cap badge had been presented to him on an earlier occasion. There were mutterings in the battalion about being paraded on a Sunday morning and all being held responsible for the actions of one. In retrospect, however, the event is seen by many as part of the inevitable growing up process of the battalion.

The Third Battalion then moved to Bulford in company with the First and Second Battalions, and at last John Lord had his own parade ground. Ken Prosser remembers John Lord's delight at this – and the frequency of large drill parades. He continues: "At that time the Luftwaffe developed a sneaky habit of coming in over the coast and straffing military establishments. One foggy morning around 7.30 am a Dornier dived in and straffed the barrack square with cannon shells. These left large holes in the surface and all hell was let loose as John Lord came out onto the barrack square, pace stick and all and called the German pilot things he hadn't been called before. The fact that the plane might return with more cannon fire didn't seem to occur to J C and the watching troops were over the moon! Not for long, however, as repairs were soon made to the parade ground."

Having recovered from the shock of his tenth parachute drop Bob Rothery returned to Bulford and after standing as stiff as a ramrod on morning muster was later on his way to the NAAFI when he heard John Lord's voice calling, "That man!". Bob stopped – turned and then doubled over to him. "Your beret," bellowed John Lord, "only two men in the British Army are allowed to wear their berets like that and you're not one of them, GET IT ON STRAIGHT!" Bob did so in quick time and doubled off but adds that he would have liked to ask who the two men were.

Further training occurred and Bob Rothery remembers a parachute drop being made by one company as a demonstration for the Prime Minister and he remembers one of the men banging his head against the end of the plane aperture (known as 'ringing the bell'). The men landed after a good drop and lined up to be inspected by Winston Churchill. The injured man's nose was bleeding badly and Churchill was said to have asked "Have you hurt yourself son?" Bob conveniently forgets the reply.

With the good barrack square Bill Gilbert was glad that he was not included on the morning parades, but he admired the smartness of the battalion. There then commenced some very long route marches and he remembers marching in stages to Lyme Regis where the battalion support guns were fired. On one such long march John Lord arranged for a local band to play the men back into camp which was, he thought, a nice gesture.

George Thompson lives in Buckinghamshire and remembers joining the 3rd Battalion at Bulford in 1942. "John Lord's parades were the feature of the week particularly Saturday mornings when he took the Senior NCOs for drill. John Lord would stand on a table and would use a metronome (an instrument for indicating the correct time). The other ranks watched out of sight in glee as he put the NCOs through their paces". Often on drill parades, George remembers, John Lord's commands would be mimicked by someone from the nearby First Battalion lines. It was then his custom to go to the edge of the parade ground nearest to them and address his parade so that everyone in the First Battalion could hear him with the bellow, "That is an example of poor

discipline". George believes that J C was at his most severe at Bulford.

Richard Bingley, former Captain in the First Battalion The Parachute Regiment, remembers that when he was Battalion Orderly Sergeant in July 1942 in the hutted encampment, he was about to leave the Sergeants' Mess in order to visit late breakfast. The battalion was having a rest day following a rigorous three day exercise which had commenced with a parachute descent. In the adjacent barracks the Third Battalion was having a drill session before attending Sunday morning church parade. RSM Lord's powerful words of command echoed through the First Battalion lines disturbing the occupants. In his company Sergeant Bingley had a number of Grenadier Guardsmen parachutists who were not amused at being awakened so they loudly issued words of command which countered those of RSM Lord. In all innocence Sergeant Bingley left the Sergeants Mess but was spotted by RSM Lord who ordered him to report to him at the double. There, in front of the whole Third Battalion, Sergeant Bingley was informed in no uncertain manner that the Sergeant and his Guardsmen of the First Battalion would be spending the rest of the day in his Guard room if they did not stop that abominable noise!

On a similar morning parade Bill Mollineux of Blackpool remembers John Lord ordering an Orderly Sergeant to take the name of private so-and-so as being "idle on parade". The Sergeant stomped around the ranks looking for private so-and-so but was informed in stage whispers that he was on leave. Upon informing John Lord the Sergeant was told to still place him on a charge because "wherever he is - he's idle!". John Lord left the parade with a broad grin however.

At last the Quartermaster's nightmare in relation to the hundreds of different types of cap badges issued was ended when Airborne forces were issued with the Red Beret and with the forming of The Parachute Regiment on the 1st August 1942 the Regiment gained its own splendid silver cap badge.

A particular feature of John Lord was his correctness in military matters and the former Captain Alec Vedeniapiin illustrates this by indicating that whereas he had been a Lance Corporal at Hardwick Hall, he progressed through the ranks to Captain and therefore, after serving under RSM Lord became his superior officer. He concludes that John Lord always accepted this absolutely correctly and courteously.

With his Royal Artillery background Sergeant Ron McBain was placed in the 458 Air Landing Light Battery. Initially, First World War pack howitzers were issued which were very heavy. Although many of the volunteers went through parachute training the Light Artillery would travel by glider into action, and as there were no Horsa gliders available at first, Hotspurs were used. These could take about a dozen men, and troops were taken from Bulford to Netheravon airfield where they would gain flight experience, and also serve as passengers for trainee glider pilots.

The routine would be for airborne troops to be towed up in a Hotspur glider to about 1,000 feet, the glider to be released to perform a steep landing and for the troops to hasten to another glider with a fresh pilot and do the same thing again, for circuit after circuit.

The Light Artillery Regiment was formed into three batteries and equipped with the American 75mm howitzer which came to pieces easily and had a range of over 5,000 yards. Sergeant McBain's battery was to work in support of the 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment but many of the exercises took place in brigade strength, and eventually divisional strength. The Horsa glider was then introduced and hundreds of training flights were made. The new airborne "pudding basin" helmet was issued. The airborne units mixed in off duty hours and Ron got to know many of the NCOs from the 2nd or 3rd Battalion but did not at that time come into contact with RSM John Lord.

* * *

Whilst the 3rd Battalion was stationed at Elsecar, Allen Watson remembers them being inspected by Brigadier Richard Gale who later commanded the 6th Airborne Division in the 'D' Day Normandy landings. Brigadier Gale advised the Battalion that action would soon follow. Further training continued until Lt Gen Sir Frederick Browning addressed the whole Division.

His message was to the effect, remembers Bob Rothery, that we had been wondering where we would be going. It was to be North Africa, and we would soon be enjoying warm sunshine.

So at last most of the 1st Airborne Division was to see active service, and in no less a venture than the Allied

Invasion of the coastal regions of North Africa. This was a huge undertaking involving the landing of American forces at Casablanca, and the Anglo-American landings at Algiers and Oran, all to coincide with the offensive by the 8th Army at El Alamein. The scale of the operations can be gauged by the distances involved and as Allied troops landed at Algiers, the Casablanca landings were made 750 miles to the west, and the battle of El Alamein was taking place 1,700 miles to the east.

The 8th Army under General Bernard Montgomery and the invasion forces under General Dwight D Eisenhower would slowly advance towards each other and compress Rommel's German and Italian forces in a grand strategic plan. So swift was the German recovery from the invasion however, that a hard defence line was formed in the mountainous regions of Tunisia which soon involved the Allied troops in bitter fighting, focussed in small valleys and wooded hills rather than sweeping desert areas.

Most of the 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment accompanied the seaborne invasion force heading for Algiers, but two companies travelled by air in order to make a parachute landing on Bone airport, an important objective, ahead of the seaborne landings. This was to prevent the Germans from landing their own parachute forces there.

Bob Rothery and Eric Tims took part in this drop, and Bob recalls: "We came over the airfield in the early morning of the 12th November and jumped from our Dakotas. The ground was as rough as a ploughed field and many of the lads were injured on landing. I hurt my knee which quickly swelled up but I managed to carry on. We had expected German paratroops to show up but they did not do so and instead our detachment was strafed heavily by German fighter bombers. We took up positions to defend the area and remained until a squadron of Spitfires arrived to operate from the airfield. Soon after elements of the 1st Army arrived from the seaborne landings, and we were taken to Algiers where we re-joined the battalion."

Further parachute drops were to be made by the 1st and 2nd Battalions on to specific targets during the first weeks of the campaign, but very soon the 1st Parachute Brigade was to be drawn into the line in an infantry role, in either battalion or company strength, and used to spearhead attacks, to bolster defence areas or to recapture lost positions. John Lord's task was to maintain ammunition supplies to the 3rd Battalion companies, and this was to be difficult with detachments moving about.

Allen Watson's company moved to Beja by cattle truck, the journey taking about three days, and he adds: "We then did a good deal of patrol work, after which we received a visit from the Commanding Officer, and he was accompanied by RSM John Lord. They were getting around the various company areas, and the RSM would make a point of drilling the escort of Provost staff just to remind us that we were in the Army."

German resistance increased as they brought in reinforcements, and conditions became very bad as the new year of 1943 opened. Bob Rothery ruefully adds, "It seemed to be always raining and we had no blankets, so we would move then dig a fresh fox hole to sleep in and cover the top with an anti-gas cape. Our company patrolled an area for a time and then moved into the line on the side of a hill, where we were attacked and bombed for what seemed an age. Our sector was then taken over by the Americans and we were moved to another trouble spot. This became the pattern of events for a long time."

In February 1943 the Germans made a strong attack which pushed back our forces for a time, and the Tamera Valley and Sedjenane areas in which the 1st Airborne Division had long fought, became critical. Ken Prosser of the 3rd Battalion well remembers the fighting for control of the Tamera Valley region, and explains, "Our Company had been detailed to act as ammunition carriers for the 1st Battalion, which was to mount an attack on an important hill position. It was the hell of a place and we were being stonked with mortar bombs and had taken cover in a railway cutting. RSM Lord was there organising the allocation of the ammunition, and I was handed two cases of 3 inch mortar bombs to carry. By now we were really getting strafed and suddenly a chap came running up from the rear echelon, poor sod, he must have been terrified, as we all were. He gasped out "Where's the RSM?" and in all that din John Lord heard him and bellowed "RSM! RSM! I'm the bloody Regimental Sergeant Major!" Who but him would have thought of such a thing at that time? But the point was that it pulled that chap up by his boot straps and he delivered his message more calmly, and it helped us to grin and carry on."

A more favourable reaction was gained by David Madigan Medical Orderly, when in the line at Bou Arada. He was working with the Medical Officer at a First Aid post which John Lord would visit each morning. It was David's turn to make tea – and as he placed the cups out and commenced pouring he named each cup – and

coming to John Lord's said "That's the RSM's". He received a sudden clout on the shoulder and looked around to see John Lord grinning at him, "Regimental Sergeant Major to you, Madigan!" he growled.

In the Tamera region in which much opencast iron ore had been mined the paratroops became caked in red mud, and with their Denison smocks trailing tail pieces on occasions it was no surprise that the Germans named them 'The red devils', quite apart from their fighting qualities. Bob Rothery also recalls the early if not original use of the war cry "Whoa Mohammed" being used in the actions around Tamera. His company became involved in ferocious fighting against German paratroops and whilst eventually the German unit would be decimated, Bob's unit became surrounded and were captured. He adds that "For the next three weeks we were used by the Germans as stretcher bearers for their wounded. We also sampled the most unpleasant effects of our own fighter bombers which thoroughly strafed the area. Twenty of us were used on this task and we were warned clearly by our captors that if one man escaped, all the remainder would be shot. Later we were passed on and eventually ended up in a POW camp in Sicily."

* * *

Corporal Ray Sheriff was in action on the slopes of Green Hill and he explains: "The fighting here was very heavy and many casualties occurred. My Sergeant was Allen Watson and he would often ask me to accompany him on patrols, these were extremely dangerous and I would not have been with anyone else. Later when I was positioned about two hundred feet up on the side of Green Hill, the Germans had launched their usual dawn attack causing many wounded, and I received a chest wound. The medical orderlies were unable to evacuate the wounded quickly as the ground was so precarious when hauling stretchers. The Company Commander therefore ordered all walking wounded to make their own way to a gully below, where they would be collected and taken to headquarters situated about a quarter of a mile away. I was bleeding rather badly so holding a field dressing to my chest I decided to make my way down to the gully. I rolled and staggered to the bottom of the hill, and then after a pause to readjust the dressing and check direction, went on my way. My progress was rather a stoop - stagger - and rest. Moving towards the headquarters I had not been mobile for long when I was abruptly halted by a roar "Corporal Sheriff - if you can't walk in a soldierly manner - lay down!" Naturally I quickly obliged and I saw RSM Lord standing over me. As he was carrying a sten gun in his right hand I thought he might just shoot me. "What's your trouble Corporal?" he asked. I replied that I had a chest wound, hoping vainly for some show of sympathy. John Lord glanced me up and down for a brief moment then said "You haven't shaved this morning Corporal", "No Sir," I admitted, "I didn't have time as the Germans attacked at dawn". There was a pause as J.C. growled that this was no excuse, but he then softened, suddenly stooped and made me comfortable and handed me a cigarette. He then went away to find a couple of men to carry me in, and still affected by the confrontation, I was laying in a position of attention and smoking by numbers when he returned. As we waited he spoke of the days gone by, and of the many men of the battalion who were now missing."

Gradually the German attacks were overcome and the Allies began to regain lost ground. The 1st Army captured Kairouan and with this city came a more general advance celebrated by the linking up of the 8th Army with the 1st Army.

The 3rd Battalion was still fighting in the Sedjenane area when Allen Watson was wounded and taken with others to a large military hospital out of the battle area. He recalls, "One of the visitors to see us was RSM John Lord who in his usual immaculate state wanted to know why we were all looking so scruffy. He brought us the latest news of the battalion."

The capture of Tunis and Bizerta in May 1943 marked the virtual end of the campaign, and the 3rd Battalion was withdrawn to the Sousse area where reinforcements were received and a fresh programme of training developed.

Bill Gilbert remembers that whilst the battalion was at Sousse General Dwight D Eisenhower, Supreme Commander visited and inspected them. Whilst walking the ranks he was heard to ask John Lord "How do you get them all the same size?" It would seem that the American forces did not at that time form up the men – shortest on the left, tallest on the right. Bill also recalls that at the end of the campaign a large number of Germans and Italians were giving themselves up, and one of the 3rd Battalion Corporals walked into camp with 250 Italians trailing along behind. RSM Lord saw this and hurrying over asked, "Corporal, what are you doing with all those men? Take them back where you found them!"

With a large number of replacements joining the battalion John Lord included drill parades in the training, and George Thompson describes the first muster parade. “Having called out his right markers, J.C. ordered the battalion to “Get on – parade”. The next second he roared “Get off again. Take them away and find me some real soldiers.” Next time they were called on parade, they really moved.”

Doctor John Rutherford was Medical Officer of the 3rd Battalion, and remembers that RSM Lord was particularly pleased with a thumb stick fashioned for him by a member of the mortar platoon. It was named ‘Joskyn’ and was the counterpart of ‘Wyskin’ wielded by the mortar sergeant. John Lord was not amused however when Dr Rutherford suggested that he should have one named appropriately he thought, ‘Foskyn’.

Occasionally, when in the line, recalls Dr Rutherford “Officers received an issue of spirits, and Warrant Officers and NCOs had bottles of squash. John Lord and I spent many a happy hour in a slit trench, one at either end – drinking gin and lime, and having long discussions, philosophical and otherwise. Pleasant evenings were occasionally spent listening to John Lord’s impersonations of Stanley Holloway’s monologues in the Sergeant’s Mess. I also remember well his taking part in a version of the ‘Little Nell’ story – to great acclaim by the H.Q. Company audience.”

Charlie Nye was present at Sousse when John Lord called all ranks together for an informal chat. He finished by asking if all those who had not started with him at Hardwick Hall would quietly leave. Only a small number of men remained and he then addressed them “Lads, it is now up to you originals to keep up the standard of the battalion. God bless you all.”

During the rest period adds Charlie, “A sergeant and a private soldier had been drinking and came to blows. I suggested that they left matters until the next morning when we could go somewhere quiet, and I would act as referee so that they could settle things. As arranged we met the following morning, and after a brief set to – it was obvious that the sergeant was too good for the private and I stopped the fight. They shook hands and the loser apologised. We had not realised that RSM Lord had observed the whole thing and he strode towards us with a face like thunder. I explained what had happened and whilst he could obviously have placed all three of us on a charge, he gave us a brief but sharp lecture and walked off.”

With the 3rd Battalion now preparing for the invasion of Sicily, the North African campaign came to a close, but on a roadside in Tunisia were placed plaques in memory of the many men of the 1st Parachute Brigade who had given their lives during the fighting from November 1942 to April 1943.

Many of those original volunteers who joined in search of action found it in those deadly hills, often against their German counterparts. Their service had often to be almost anonymous because of security, and in little known parts of Tunisia, but on one of the plaques was listed the names of places which will remain in the memories of men who fought there.

BONE

SOUK EL ARBA

DEPIENNE

BEJA

MEDJEZ EL BAB

DJEBEL MANSOUR

BOU ARADA

TAMERA VALLEY

* * *

CHAPTER FOUR

SICILY-ITALY AND RETURN TO SPALDING

Although the Parachute Battalions had fought in North Africa, some parts of the 1st Airborne Division including Ron McBain's Artillery unit, had remained in England. At last however, smarting at the delay the unit was moved in July 1943 by ship to Sousse. The North African campaign was almost over, however soon after arrival Ron was advised that everyone should be in the Sergeants Mess that night because John Lord was visiting. Ron had not met 'JC' before but had heard a great deal about him. Later when he appeared Ron was impressed by his smartness, and as he was introduced around the Sergeants Mess his forceful personality was clear. As he shook hands with John Lord he thought "I bet your blokes will follow you anywhere". John Lord remained for the evening and after drinks left in a jeep with his two Sergeants.

Sergeant McBain's Artillery unit continued to train hard, travelling into the mountains each day to fire live ammunition. Then in July 1943 he heard over the radio that Sicily had been invaded, and the unit again hit rock bottom as they realised they had missed the action yet again. Many other units of the 1st Airborne Division, including friends of Ron McBain did take part in the operation however, and again heavy casualties occurred.

The invasion plan included the use of Airborne troops to capture bridges and important targets ahead of the sea-borne landings. The force of gliders carrying the men of the 1st Air Landing Brigade arrived off the coast of Sicily on the 9th July 1943 but was released in strong winds and few gliders managed to reach the shore. Many of the troopers were drowned, but those who could reach the shore later joined up with any unit available and fought on. The 1st Parachute Brigade was dropped in the early hours of the 13th July to secure the Primosole Bridge over the River Sineto, but were scattered widely. Sergeant Eric Tims was in one of two platoons which landed before the full Brigade arrived and their task was to put out of action the anti-aircraft gun sites. He states: "We were dropped all over the bloody place, and the Company Commander was dropped the other side of Catania! We only had one casualty, Corporal Charlie Nye who damaged his ankle. The few of us available carried out the task, putting out of action several guns before the Parachute Brigade arrived. We saw only a part of the Brigade landing, which was made in moonlight. It took some time for units to gather around the Primosole Bridge and set up a defence, and await the arrival of the sea-borne forces".

Captain Richard Bingley of the 1st Parachute Battalion jumped at 23.00 hours but after a heavy landing was feeling dazed. As he slowly disentangled himself from the parachute harness, a figure suddenly loomed up out of the darkness. Uncertain whether it was friend or foe Captain Bingley challenged giving the first part of the recognition code 'RED'. There was no reply and the figure came on. Again Captain Bingley challenged and this time prepared to open fire but the other person crashed into him. It turned out to be RSM John Lord who was badly concussed. Apparently within seconds of his landing a container of mortar bombs had hit the ground nearby with a failed parachute. The bombs exploded on impact seriously affecting John Lord's hearing. Apologies were made and the two assisted each other until they joined up with other men and eventually arrived at the Primosole Bridge. Captain Bingley was always thankful that he did not open fire when his second challenge did not produce the code reply 'BERET'.

Before taking off from North Africa for Sicily Sergeant Major Allen Watson and his men had been warned by their American pilot to "hold on tight" during the flight as he would be taking some evasive action. They later approached the east coast of Sicily and the parachutists could see the slow approach of tracer bullets. Soon after the Dakotas turned over the dropping zone and Allen Watson took up his position in the door as No.1.

The green light came on as the plane went into its usual shallow dive but suddenly the pilot pulled the plane up again and everyone behind the leader piled on top of him. He was howling 'Get off, get off', but by the time they managed to disentangle themselves and jump they were wide of the dropping area. It was an otherwise normal jump and as they landed close to the river they had only to follow its course back to the bridge.

Allen Watson remembers that John Lord was positioned at the side of the bridge with Headquarters. The



His Majesty King George VI talks to RSM J C Lord when visiting the 1st Airborne Division

16th March 1944. Imperial War Museum Copyright

force held on to the bridge as long as ammunition lasted, but then steadily withdrew until they met elements of the 8th Army. The 3rd Battalion again suffered heavy casualties and reinforcements would be necessary. The Airborne troops were subsequently taken to Syracuse and thence by boat back to Sousse, where followed the inevitable training.

The Rev. E.L. Phillips was attached as Chaplain to the 3rd Battalion and joined them immediately after the Sicily operation when the Battalion was camped in olive groves between Sousse and Kairouan. He states: "The Adjutant took me to a party in the Sergeant's Mess in order to introduce me, and RSM John Lord was compering an evening's entertainment at the time". Revd Phillips also remembers that Field Marshall Montgomery visited to inspect the Battalion soon after his arrival. "John Lord had given them the 'full guards treatment' in preparing them for the parade, but after hours of waiting in the sun the Field Marshall arrived in his jeep – from which he never descended, but simply stood up and ordered the troops to gather around. John Lord had to improvise an appropriate order, and was quite disgruntled."

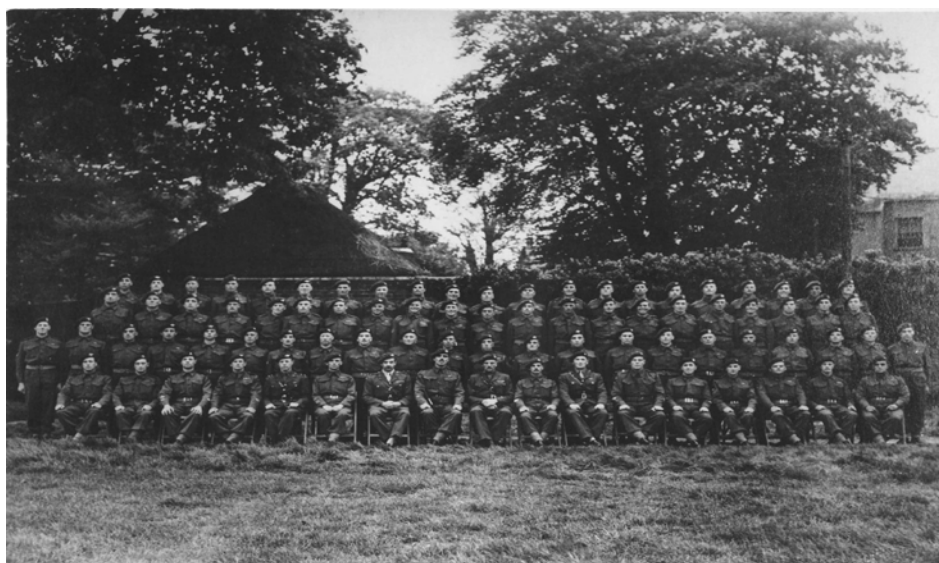
At Kairouan Fred Radley recalls that a concert was arranged by A Company. He first explains: "The Adjutant,

Captain Thesiger had been involved in an accident resulting in his arm being supported in a very large white sling, but each day he would tour the camp with RSM John Lord and would inspect the guard. Everywhere could be heard his voice “Mr Lord, charge that man there – button undone” or “Mr Lord that man there – hose top loose” and the men would be in the guardroom like a shot! As a result of this our guard mounting was probably the largest in the Army!”

Fred continues: “During the concert Corporal Creasy and another man dressed up as women gave excellent imitations of Elsie and Doris Waters gossiping over the garden wall. The dialogue went something like this: Elsie “Hallo love, have you heard my daughter Agnes has got them there paratroopers billeted near her home.” Doris: “Has she, cor what are they like? Bet they’re a rough lot!” Elsie: “Don’t know really but that RSM of theirs is a terrible man. Beats his wife something awful. I saw her walking round the other day with her arm in a sling”. For a moment there was complete silence, than an outburst of laughter with cheering and clapping, and RSM Lord was among the first to join in aided by Captain Thesiger with whom he was sitting in the front row”.

Soon after the Sicily operation John Lord met, with surprise, an old friend from his Grenadier Guards days, Joe Flanagan, who was serving with a nearby Guards Battalion at Sousse. After duties they would go swimming in the sea with Warrant Officer friends and this provided a welcome and much needed break.

The Battalion was then warned that they were to take part in the invasion of Italy, but instead of going by air they would be landed by Royal Navy ship at Taranto on the 9th September 1943. There was little immediate fighting in Italy as the German forces at that stage slowly pulled back as our troops advanced. The 3rd Battalion moved forward as far as Bari, where the 8th Army took over their positions. On the 19th November the Battalion returned to Algiers and after a short period re-embarked for England arriving in time for Christmas 1943.



The Sergeants Mess, 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, taken at Spalding, June 1944.

Ron McBain had at last gained his wish for action as his unit went with the parachute battalions to Taranto. The First Air Landing Light Regiment remained there when the rest of the Division returned home. Moved wherever they were needed in support they fought for a time alongside a French Canadian Regiment and later crossed the Sangro River with the New Zealand forces, gaining much battle experience. Ron says proudly “We wore our red berets throughout our time in Italy and became well known, particularly with the Canadian and New Zealand forces”. In January 1944 the unit was ordered home and like the men of the parachute battalions anticipated a further period of training in preparation for the ‘second front’, the final invasion of Europe which everyone expected to be so soon.

On arrival in England the 3rd Battalion had been taken to Ruskington near Sleaford, with detachments spread around the area. Leave was then granted and the Battalion later re-assembled in a Nissen hut camp within the grounds of the Grammar School in Spalding. (The 2nd Battalion was based at Bourne and the 1st Battalion at Grantham). For security reasons the men were to show no medal ribbons or Regimental titles, and were not to

wear their red berets. This soon led to incidents as other troops assumed them to be inexperienced recruits. A dance was held at the Corn Exchange Spalding, soon after their arrival and Eric Tims talks of a glorious scuffle which well illustrated the danger of seeking trouble with innocent looking lads in plain uniforms! The order soon followed for red berets and Regimental shoulder flashes to be worn.

There was no parade ground at Spalding but RSM John Lord made good use of the Odeon Cinema car park for guard mounting and this drew crowds on occasions. He then began to get the routine working again and prepared Battalion Orders for every purpose. The Commanding Officer authorised them and in fact these orders later came into the possession of Allen Watson who forwarded them to the Airborne Forces Museum in Aldershot, where they still remain.

Training soon commenced and Sgt Eric Tims was called in by his Company Commander to be told "Right, we have a lot of night exercises to do". The idea was for instructors to go out on cycles during the daytime to leave map references in various places and troops had to find one in order to find the key to the next. The trail always ended at a public house of course. At night he and his fellow NCOs would go to the pub and wait for the training sections to arrive, when the first men received a free drink. They would then march and double back to camp.

Boxing tournaments were also organised and there were also 'milling competitions' of which more later. Eric Tims continues: "Drill parades were held on Saturday mornings and then the afternoons were free to spend in the Sergeants Mess, which was at the Co-operative hall in Spalding centre. Many guests were invited there, local residents, police and personal friends. Many members of the 3rd Battalion courted and married local girls, and it was possible for wives living away to come to Spalding and spend nights there"

Bill Gilbert rushed off a telegram to arrange for his wife to come to Spalding and then on the day was unfortunately sent on an exercise. He returned just in time but had to rush his clothing and when he couldn't find his proper issue tie, fitted an old brown one and dashed off to meet his wife at the station. They were walking back through Spalding when Bill suggested some refreshment. They entered the White Hart and who should be standing there but RSM John Lord. Bill saw his eyes rivet upon his tie, but nothing was said other than "Good evening" to them both. The following morning Bill was walking through the camp when behind him came the dreaded voice, "Gilbert". "Sir" he replied, coming to attention. "If I ever see you again in public dressed improperly, wife or no wife, you will be on a charge," promised John Lord. Bill appreciated the action as he had not been embarrassed in front of his wife.

A number of ATS girls were also stationed at Spalding and George Thompson met and married an attractive girl named Irene. Bill Gilbert showed me a photograph of them just after their wedding with a very smart Guard of Honour from both the Parachute Regiment and the ATS unit. George recalls that when the ATS unit required drill practice, John Lord took them for this, and it was surely unusual for both George and his wife to be drilled by the same RSM!

Sergeant Wally Morton arranged for his wife Wyn to stay in Spalding, and whilst she was visiting the Sergeants Mess John Lord admired the style of her hat. He grinned and said "Mrs Morton, you come along with that hat in the morning and I will wear it for my parade!" which Wally's wife was almost tempted to do.

At about this time RSM John Lord arranged and took an NCO cadre at Bourne. Andy Milbourne attended the course and on one drill parade was asked by John Lord which Regiment of Foot Guards he came from. He was not at all pleased to receive the reply from Andy "I was never with that shower sir". "Oh" bristled John Lord "and from what famous Regiment do you originate?" "The Fighting Fifth!" exclaimed Andy, and as he walked on John Lord stated huffily "Never heard of them!"

As earlier stated, many of the men married local girls and a great day came for John Lord on 3rd June 1944 when he and Audrey were married. Many Battalion members attended the Church and Sergeants formed the Guard of Honour outside. Eric Tims describes the event. "We sent his wedding car away and replaced it with a jeep. The seats were covered with sheets and we sent for toggle ropes. When John Lord and Audrey came out of the church they had to get in the jeep and we pulled them through the town with smoke bombs going off around. They were conveyed to the Sergeants Mess which had been well laid out, and a party started. John and Audrey left early but the party went on and the wedding was celebrated late into the night". The Chaplain of the 3rd Battalion, Revd E L Phillips officiated at the wedding as he did with several others including at least one of the Company Commanders. Meeting John Lord and his bride – to - be before the wedding was a good opportunity

for the Reverend to get to know him as a person and he says, “John Lord did of course have a very human heart behind his official presence and I believe he saw no conflict between the Guards discipline and drill he enforced on the one side, and the very real concern he had for the well-being of the men on the other”.

Three days after ‘J C’s wedding the conquest of Europe began with the D Day landings in Normandy. The 1st Airborne Division had for some time been in a state of readiness, but it was the 6th Airborne Division which was to land so effectively behind the enemy coastline. The 1st Airborne Division remained ready for action however and rumours of operations soon began to spread around the Division, especially in Sgt Ron McBain’s unit, the 1st Air Landing Light Regiment, which he states was suddenly moved closer to an airfield. The camp was tented and equipment was maintained in an immediate state of readiness. The unit was detailed several times for operations and on one occasion actually taken to the gliders where all equipment was lashed down. Each time however, the word subsequently arrived ‘Operation cancelled’ and the unit stood down. These false alarms also occurred similarly throughout the division. The 3rd Battalion Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. J A C Fitch warned every member of the Battalion what would happen if those allowed weekend leave were late in reporting back. Despite this Sgt Wally Morton and his mate decided to risk returning on the midnight train from Sheffield. They had to make two changes of train en-route and the first was made satisfactorily, but both fell asleep, missed the second connection and had to go on to London. In a high state of anxiety they arrived at the platform for their return journey from London to find not only a third Sergeant – but RSM John Lord! He glanced at them and remarked, “Good morning gentlemen, it appears that we are rather late”. On return to camp both Sergeants were placed on CO’s orders but unaccountably no action was taken, and Wally clearly feels that he had John Lord to thank for that.

After being briefed for many operations which did not take place, few seemed surprised when the operation set for the 17th September 1944 did occur. There had been something very convincing about the briefing and it was after all the classic role for Airborne units to drop in advance of an invading force to secure a vital bridge, or deal with a dangerous obstacle. Bill Gilbert remembers Captain Rutherford, the Medical Officer, briefing the medical section for Arnhem, indicating that it was going to be a tough operation – being in such a built up area. Bill Gilbert believes that RSM John Lord could in fact have avoided further action, if he had wished, as he had knee trouble.

George Thompson recalls the night of 16th September. “The Nissen huts at Spalding were littered with equipment ready for the morrow. A few of us played cards until early morning while the rest attempted to sleep. Parachutes had already been issued and the harness straps adjusted to fit, and these lay on each bed”. The Battalion was ready and eager to go. The fresh replacements were looking forward to their first action, and the older hands had spent enough time training again. Dramatic events were taking place in France and the collapse of the German Army seemed imminent. After months of preparation, 3rd Battalion members were beginning to feel that they would miss the climax of the war, and the mention of two American Airborne Divisions being included in this operation made them feel that this was the big one, an operation likely to end the war.

* * *

CHAPTER FIVE

ARNHEM

The parachute battalions were confined to camp but Corporal Ray Sheriff managed to get out for a time and as a result returned to camp in time to hear reveille being sounded at 5am. He just had time to grab his parachute and equipment, and reflects that another half hour and he would have missed the Arnhem operation and would have been on the carpet again.

It was a beautiful warm sunny Sunday morning on the 17th September and all over the South of England American and British Airborne forces were making for their respective airfields. At Spalding things were well under way and at about 7.30am men of the 3rd Battalion entered a convoy of lorries and set off for Saltby airfield. On the way through Spalding George Thompson watched for his wife as they passed the ATS quarters, but there was no sign of her and when she awoke the battalion had gone. Both the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, The Parachute Regiment assembled at Saltby airport and as they arrived they marvelled at the planes, large numbers of American Dakotas lined up. There were well over 60 and it took a considerable time for the paratroops to be allocated to their aircraft. George Thompson and his platoon settled down to wait in the sunshine. Tea and bacon sandwiches were distributed and it was difficult listening to the casual chat to imagine that they would in such a short time be destined to drop into Holland. George adds, "I remember Barney Kearns, the A Company runner, saying to me the day before that he feared that the next job would be his last, and I had also admitted similar misgivings, after all – of the original A Company that I knew at Bulford I could count only 12 men remaining, and therefore the odds were shortening for us. After Arnhem this number came down to six – and Barney Kearns was not among them."

Les Harrison, also of the 3rd Battalion, felt relieved to be going to Arnhem as only a short time previously he had broken his ankle in a parachute training jump and this had mended only just in time. He was going as batman to Lt. A. Vedeniapiin MM, the Battalion Intelligence Officer, and was quietly waiting for the time to emplane.

Company Sergeant Major Allen Watson was preoccupied with some pieces of body armour which had been issued to some of the men for testing. He hoped that it would not get in the way when landing and fitted it somewhat reluctantly. He noticed that he was to be number three out of the plane and that there would be an American jumpmaster.

Sergeant Eric Tims managed to obtain some newspapers and intended to drop his out of the plane over Holland. In previous jumps Eric had always jumped with a tommy-gun but on this occasion had been issued with a rifle. He also had pieces of body armour fitted and he found them to be uncomfortable. They were formed with plates of steel wrapped in webbing.

At Fairford airfield, approximately 100 miles to the south west, Sergeant Ron McBain was glad to be on the move and away from the sealed camp. There was a good deal of banter among the men with surprised comments that the operation had not yet been cancelled. A large number of gliders with their Stirling aircraft tugs awaited them, and after loading they spent spare time writing personal messages on the sides of the gliders.

RSM John Lord had many last minute administrative tasks to do and spent his time in attendance of the Commanding Officer Lt Col J A C Fitch.

At last the order came to emplane. The men filed into their aircraft, quick checks were made of all equipment, and kit bags were strapped onto the right legs of the troopers (the kit bags would be lowered on lines before they actually landed). At many airfields in England the scene was being repeated as the 101st and 82nd American Airborne Divisions and British 1st Airborne Division prepared to commence Operation Market-Garden.

At Saltby airport troops sat in 'take-off position' in the Dakotas and George Thompson remembers that as

his aircraft began to move he realised that after so many cancelled operations this time they were on their way. Ground crewmen waved as they took off. The Dakotas circled the airport until the large formation was complete, a manoeuvre the local residents had previously watched the American pilots perform in practice without realising the significance. Eventually the force set off in the bright sunshine and the men could see an occasional glimpse through the small windows of their fighter escort. George was beginning to feel better and there developed a feeling of excitement in his plane. As they saw the English coastline below George felt certain that he would see it again and lost any premonition of doom.

At Fairford the Stirling bombers with their gliders in tow began to take off and Ron McBain also noticed that ground crews had lined the runways and were waving as each aircraft and glider took off. He describes the flight: "As we took off I looked at my watch and it was 10.50am. We had a Staff Sergeant pilot and Sergeant co-pilot and they were very good. We were able to look out over the pilot's shoulder and the sky seemed black with aircraft as far as the eye could see. Fighters weaved in between the formations at times. It was a long flight and as we approached the sea I noticed other formations of planes with fighters in between. One or two gliders alarmingly parted company and went down in the sea, but rescue ships were by their sides very quickly. It was an uneventful flight really until we crossed the coast of Holland when we heard ack ack fire. We escaped any damage and before long the pilot told us that we were about fifteen minutes from our destination".

Sergeant McBain's unit were timed to arrive in their gliders before the 1st Parachute Brigade which included the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions. The Independent Parachute Company Pathfinders had jumped by parachute before the gliders arrived, and they placed markers and coloured smoke canisters as a guide to both gliders and paratroops. Ron McBain continues: "As we approached the dropping zone we saw clearly the markers and smoke canisters and soon came the feeling of the glider being released. We approached the ground steeply and the pilot obviously had difficulty in finding a space to land as he swerved and exclaimed to the co-pilot "Good God, did you see that!" as several gliders sought to land on the same spot. The pilot eventually found a space and landed but the nose of the glider went into the ground and we tipped up. After a time we managed to level her off and gradually unloaded the gun and equipment".

There was hardly a shot fired at them and when Sergeant McBain looked towards the direction of Arnhem he could see some smoke rising. The landing area was heathland and although the troops hadn't known there was an asylum nearby they noticed people watching from the edges of the trees wearing nightshirts. The gun was manhandled to the rendezvous point and then when all of the light guns were hitched up to jeeps there was a short wait whilst the 1st Parachute Brigade approached. Ron McBain had in fact a perfect view of the Brigade's arrival and he continues, "There was a gathering sound in the sky and we realised that the Parachute Battalions were coming in on time. They were due to land half a mile away from us and as the formations of Dakotas came into sight, flying straight towards us with little or no ack ack fire, it was a wonderful sight. The Dakotas flew in as if on demonstration, and when they were directly overhead the 'troopers started jumping and the sky was suddenly full of parachutes. Stick after stick of parachutists in regular lines swung down towards the ground. Kit bags were released from the troopers' right legs and lowered on short ropes. There were clusters of container chutes and one or two of these failed to open. Otherwise I saw no men in difficulties and it looked just like an exercise drop in England.

"It was an inspiring sight as the troops landed and moved quickly around seeking equipment and gathering together. Other formations kept arriving and I must have watched 1,500 men drop by parachute. It had been uneasily quiet but as the planes banked to return home some small arms fire came from the distance and obviously things had started."

CSM Allen Watson described a quiet jump with no problems on the journey whatever. The sky seemed full of parachutes and equipment but on landing everyone quietly got on with their tasks.

Sergeant Eric Tims enjoyed his flight and managed to throw his newspaper out of the open doorway when they were crossing Holland. Shortly after this it was time for the jump and as Eric made his exit he lost his grip on his rifle which hit the side of the plane and knocked out some of his teeth. As his 'chute opened he looked around and concedes proudly that the Battalion made a very good drop – one of their best. Upon landing the men gathered quickly into platoons, and there were soon one or two jeeps running around the dropping zone gathering equipment.



Arnhem, 17th September 1944. The Gliders are down and now the Parachute Battalions arrive.

Imperial War Museum Copyright

Bill Gilbert of the RAMC describes “a perfect brigade drop” and he noticed RSM John Lord looking pleased as soon as he landed. There were so many parachutes in the sky that Bill wondered where they were all coming from. Before leaving Spalding his medical unit had received a replacement in the shape of a good looking Irishman. He was a big lad and like Bill had jumped with an attachment for a stretcher. One had to be careful in lowering this before landing. Unfortunately the Irishman lost his on the descent. Bill continues, “The drill was that we would land and make quickly for the rendezvous near some trees. My mate was wondering around the drop zone and John Lord, who had been calling the roll, noticed him. “What are you doing soldier?” he bellowed across the ground, “I’m looking for my stretcher Sir” came the reply. “Well if you don’t get over here quickly you’ll need one” John Lord roared.

Ron McBain awaited the order to start off towards Arnhem but thought he noticed movement on the ground a distance away. Drawing attention to this he travelled in one of the jeeps until he realised that the movement was but the flapping of a parachute on the ground. Turning he noticed RSM Lord getting things organised and heard his voice encouraging speed.

After forming up the Airborne units hurried away and the three parachute battalions with their support units separated to take their respective routes in the direction of Arnhem, which was about eight miles away. CSM Watson comments, “I didn’t see John Lord at all on the drop, but later on when we were on the Utrecht road I noticed him moving along in the company of the Commanding Officer. The wooded roads from Renkum heath to Oosterbeek were pleasant, and as the troops hurried along these shaded avenues clusters of Dutch people welcomed them, laughing and clapping in their joy. The easy brigade drop followed by the good progress towards Arnhem created a light hearted confidence, but as the men along the column were handed refreshments, sudden bursts of machine gun fire sounded from the head of the 3rd Battalion column. Then German mortars opened up and the column stopped whilst the leading company dealt with the opposition. Snipers and groups of Germans held up progress and our companies began to separate as sharp engagements developed along the tree lined roads. We were soon moving in groups but as the Germans allowed one group to pass and fired on the next, the battalion became spread out along the road to Oosterbeek. On being fired at some of our men would go one way, and others another, until after some hours we were of mixed companies, and trying to approach Arnhem by any road presenting itself.”

Les Dakin of C Company writes that, "The battalion became pinned down in the woods outside Arnhem by heavy mortar fire, and our company was ordered to take a flank so that we could get behind the German troops. This was at the crossroads before Oosterbeek and was where we shot up a German staff car killing a German General and his driver. As we went along this road we also shot up an ammunition truck and other various vehicles. We then came across some railway lines and followed these right along to Arnhem station. By this time it was dark and our 9th platoon was leading the way, and Joe Spicer and myself were in front as scouts.

We followed the road past the Police station and in fact saw a policeman on duty at about 11 p.m., and said goodnight to him! We continued through the town and never saw any Germans until we got close to the bridge, then it all started. A burst of machine gun fire killed our platoon sergeant and wounded three of our men. By this time we were approaching a school very close to the bridge which was being held by a group of Airborne Royal Engineers. We joined up with them and held out there until about the following Wednesday".

Sergeant Eric Tims, also of C Company adds: "There were pockets of resistance along the approach road to Arnhem and for a time I went along in company with Major Lewis, but I then struck off with my platoon at an angle, chancing our luck really. We moved along a railway cutting eventually coming to Arnhem at about 10.00 pm. We did get held up for a time by what turned out to be the efforts of only two Germans. We continued through the streets of Arnhem and along by some gardens situated in the centre of a wide road. We entered a shop and I told the others to rest while I went to have a look around. There were German tanks in the streets but we gradually worked our way towards the bridge – arriving there at about midnight. I continued to look around alone for a time, and turning a corner walked straight into a group of Germans. I could do nothing – and after all that bloody way I was caught! How I wished for a tommy-gun."

The full history of the Arnhem battle reveals how the 2nd Battalion fought its way into Arnhem and captured the north end of the bridge over the Rhine, defending it against heavy odds until the 25th September 1944. This is graphically described by James Sims in his excellent book *Arnhem Spearhead*, published in 1978 by the Imperial War Museum.

It is not always realised that C Company of the 3rd Battalion commanded by Major R P C Lewis also reached the bridge at midnight on the 17th September, and fought there with the remnants of other units until the end.

As Headquarter Company of the 3rd Battalion reached Oosterbeek they were joined for a time by the 1st Airborne Divisional Commander, Major General R E Urquhart CB DSO and also Brigadier G Lathbury. General Urquhart writes, "I found myself moving into the town with the 3rd Battalion. Whether as a result of orders from his Commanding Officer or on his own initiative I do not know, but when I joined the column on the march RSM John Lord announced to me that he was to be my bodyguard. For this no doubt I was grateful but I cannot remember what I said in reply. Like me, I expect he was disappointed at the slow rate of progress towards the town, but at that time there was nothing that either of us could do to hasten the movement. No doubt we exchanged words but he was not called upon to protect me physically. Later that day whilst I was still with the 3rd Battalion headquarters in a house along the main road to Arnhem, I think he was in the same building".

With the Headquarters group was Chaplain E L (Bill) Phillips, and he adds: "I was in the house situated near the St. Elisabeth hospital, where the Divisional and Brigade Commanders and our own Battalion Commander were present. All were at that time out of wireless contact, and it was very evident even to an inexperienced (battle wise) Chaplain, that things were not going at all well. Mr Lord was, I recollect, his usual unperturbed self".

Les Harrison remained close to the Intelligence Officer as they made their way through Oosterbeek, and he remembers the column being joined by the Divisional and Brigade Commanders. The Headquarters group remained together for a time and then as the route became blocked by opposition, they branched off to the right across open country until they joined a road taken earlier by the 2nd Battalion. They managed to enter Arnhem from this route but soon met severe resistance and the group became further split up. Les Harrison continues, "Our way forward towards the bridge being barred, the only thing was to make our way down towards the river. This we did and the time must have been around 3 a.m. on the 18th September. This became a headlong dash, dodging German machine gunners at every corner, but we did eventually reach a pavilion on the banks of the Rhine. Here what remained of our group came together, and RSM John Lord held a roll call and made some on the spot promotions to replace those no longer with us. He made privates up to Corporals and some corporals up to sergeants. We were by now only about half a mile from our target, Arnhem Bridge, and decided to approach

this by going along a foot track at the river's edge. We made our way forward and were within about four or five hundred yards from the bridge when we were stopped by rifle fire ahead. I was first hit in the foot by this, and then a heavy machine gun opened up from brickworks on the other side of the river. This took off my right arm. It was time for everyone including the Commanding Officer and RSM Lord to make their way back up the bank, onto the road and back to the pavilion”.

At this time John Lord received a wound in the right upper arm and applied a temporary dressing. CSM Allen Watson came across the group at the pavilion and he remembers seeing John Lord with his arm in a sling. “There were many casualties here, and it was by the river side that Lt Col J A C Fitch was killed and the Adjutant wounded. Soon after John Lord said to me “Sergeant Major you’ll have to take over, I’m going up to the hospital.” And as he left the group began to seek other ways of reaching the bridge. The Germans then attacked and I heard a bang, and felt a burning sensation in my leg and back”.

For many men of the 3rd Battalion the Arnhem operation ended with wounds and capture. Allen Watson continues, “The Germans eventually came along the river bank collecting the wounded and we were taken to a shop where they had a dressing station. I was sitting there as other wounded were brought in including German. Soon we were taken to the St Elisabeth hospital but after one night I was taken on to Apeldoorn, a town situated a few miles from Arnhem. A lot of our men were placed in a barracks there, but I went to one of Queen Wilhelmina’s palaces where the Germans treated us well”.

Bill Gilbert and his medical section accompanied the Headquarter Company through Oosterbeek and on eventually to St Elisabeth Hospital. Casualties had been heavy and in company with David Madigan, he managed to find a stretcher trolley and collected the wounded from nearby. They went on to clear some houses of wounded and by then found that the hospital was becoming full. He adds that “I was walking through one of the hospital wards when I heard my name called and there was RSM Lord sat on a bed with his right arm held in a sling. He looked dishevelled and asked “Gilbert, can you get me a razor, I’ve lost my small pack”. I said that I would try, and searching around in a store managed to find one, I returned and gave it to him and he was very grateful. As I was busy I could not help him shave, but he said that he was alright. Later I noticed that he had somehow managed to shave. Soon afterwards he was taken away with others by the Germans”.



Weary but undaunted, captured men of the 1st Airborne Division are marched away from the Arnhem battle area. Many would be taken to Stalag XIB at Fallingbistel. *Imperial War Museum Copyright*

* * *

CHAPTER SIX

CAPTURE AND AFTERMATH

When Sergeant Ron McBain's gun crew followed the parachute battalions off the drop zone, they spent the first night in some woods and then moved on to Oosterbeek, digging in the guns to the river side of the church. "By that time", he states, "some of 7th Battalion Kings Own Scottish Borderers and 1st Battalion Border Regiment troops were also there. It had been rather a slow approach because of opposition at the front of the column. At Oosterbeek we prepared to provide support for the 2nd Parachute Battalion which had gone for the bridge. Our Battery Commander had gone forward with Lt Col John Frost to the bridge and soon he was passing radio locations of targets for us to fire upon. We settled down and fired all day Monday and Tuesday the 18th and 19th September. By the 20th September we were having to ration our firing because of low ammunition. We then began to find action locally and were shelled by 88mm guns, then mortars which meant that the enemy were close. I lost two men by shrapnel from an air burst, and as another gun ran short of crew we placed two crews together and pooled ammunition.

"The Parachute troops then began to pull back from Arnhem to form a perimeter around us. They dug in about 200 yards in front of our position, and they were named the 'Lonsdale Force' being remnants of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions under Major Lonsdale. Soon German attacks came on to us. My gun faced along the road towards Arnhem and where the road turned a bend I noticed what I thought was a telegraph pole coming around and then realised that it was an 88mm gun on a Panther tank! I shouted to our gun position "Tank alert – on target tanks" and everybody ran to the guns. Behind us was an anti-tank gun about fifty yards away and I screamed to them "There's a tank coming". I heard their No. 1 shout "Take post" and they got off a shot, as they had a better view of it and a better angle. Their shot almost blew us up as we were situated directly in front. Immediately afterwards there was a tremendous bang and the anti-tank gun was hit. They had missed the tank but unfortunately it didn't miss them. Our guns opened up on him and he eventually withdrew. We couldn't harm him because our shells bounced off the side but he backed off.

"They sent a self-propelled gun up the road and we fired at this over open sights. In the artillery it is getting bloody dangerous when open sights are used. Eventually the support gun also backed off. In front of us were some houses and snipers had managed to infiltrate in and began trying to pick us off. We fired on the houses and set them on fire and that smoked them out. We were still being sniped at – and what a feeling it is to hear a 'chunk' near your ear, a horrible feeling. I was kneeling out in the open to the right of the gun, to direct firing. We had earlier seen aircraft from the 2nd lift circle above so we realised that reinforcements had arrived. One or two aircraft were on fire and it seemed certain that they had received a worse reception than we had in the first lift.

"We later saw the Polish paratroops arrive in the third lift and this was awful. They were shot out of the sky. Some of the flak burst right amongst them. They dropped on the other side of the Rhine and in full view of us, we wondered how any survived. By that time there was little or no food and we had all pooled the contents of our compo packs and were down to biscuits. We kept saying – the Second Army can't be long now, we had expected to hold out for forty-eight hours but had now been there for nearly a week. Our gun position officer shouted out that the Second Army Artillery should get within range today, and soon after they did so with a medium regiment, and we could call upon their fire at times. The Polish troops were holding out across the river and later on some men of the Dorset Regiment crossed, and passed through our gun positions. We thought at first that the Second Army had arrived but heard later that they had been sent over to enable our evacuation. I wondered how we would move our guns as the jeep was wrecked and its tyres shredded. In the event the gun was never moved, when the time came to evacuate we removed the breach-block and joined a line of men heading for the Rhine. I dropped the breach-block in the middle of the river.

"Only three small boats were ferrying men across and our unit came out with the remnants of the 'Lonsdale Force'. Eventually a boat arrived but it was full and I went across holding the side. I could swim but it was very cold. On the other side of the river some men of the Dorsets met us, and as I walked along a sunken road with

a fellow Sergeant I suddenly asked “Do you hear that?” It was a pressure cooking stove and that meant tea! On locating it we managed to get a cup and some cigarettes. It was getting lighter as we wandered on and we could hear the heavy German gunfire on the other side of the river. We had a lot of men still on the other side”.

* * *

At Apeldoorn, Major Frank Lindley found himself in a room with about twenty other wounded officer POWs. “We were all dirty and unshaven and in a various stages of dress and undress. The door opened and in came RSM John Lord, also a POW. He was dressed in immaculate battledress, trousers creased, and he had an arm supported in a snow white sling. Without a word he turned his head slowly to look at each individual in turn and then said in his brisk voice “Gentlemen, I think you should all shave!” He then turned about, stamped his foot and marched out of the room. The effect was electric. The motley group of officers, Infantry, Gunners, Engineers, stirred themselves and started to clean themselves up. It was an unforgettable experience”.

CSM Allen Watson remained at Apeldoorn for a time but did not meet John Lord there. He did have the opportunity to see his wounds and was surprised to see a mark in the centre of his back in addition to a wound in his side. It transpired that shrapnel had hit the armour plating fitted before the action, and without it no doubt his wound would have been much worse. He relates: “I never expected to be captured – I thought I might be killed or wounded – but I never dreamed of being captured, it was a terrible feeling. We could hear the guns for a time and thought they might be getting closer, but they were not. All our equipment was taken from us although some were able to keep their red berets. The Dutch treated us very well whilst we were in the hospital. Later the Germans took us down to the railway station by coach and we were placed in twenty cattle trucks. There was only straw to rest on and the majority of men were wounded and bandaged. I was not feeling too bad by then.

“We were left all night and the next day although we were given coffee in the morning. The train moved out on the second night and although we didn’t realise at first there were machine gunners mounted each end of some of the trucks. We set off in the dark and could see little through the slats. The train stopped and started continuously and at one stage we heard a plane coming over. It circled around and the train stopped. We heard the aircraft dive and the machine guns opened fire. I was never so frightened in all my life. It was one of our own planes and we tried to push our faces down into the straw for cover. Three times we heard the plane dive and each time we held our breaths and it was with great relief we eventually heard it leave. At this time one of the POWs must have tried to get out of one of the roofs. We could hear shouting and then shots and some groaning. The train was stopped and the doors were flung open. We were moved out and forced to take off our boots and wondered what the guards were going to do. We could hear this man still groaning and then a shot. The guards were really ferocious. The train set off again and we went on and on for two days until we reached a place named Fallingbostel. We were all very hungry and thirsty and were formed up on the station platform in fives, (easy to count) and were then marched from the station to the prison camp. As we went along someone started whistling and singing. This seemed to annoy the Germans and we were warned to be quiet. There was little to sing about really as we found ourselves at Stalag XIB”.

Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) M H Broadway of Headquarters, RMA Sandhurst writes: “I was at Arnhem as a Platoon Commander in the 10th Battalion, The Parachute Regiment and was captured there and taken to Apeldoorn. As we were placed in cattle trucks for our journey to Fallingbostel I noticed a warrant officer who was put in our truck. He had his arm in a sling but stood out amongst the men. Despite the battle he appeared to be immaculately turned out and he had a ‘presence’ about him that one could not ignore. He was RSM J C Lord. We were almost all wounded men in the truck and the journey took a long time. Eventually we arrived at Fallingbostel where I stopped for only a short time before being moved to another camp”.

Men of the 1st Airborne Division were being transported to various prison camps, and many remained in German hospitals with severe wounds. Hundreds of them were allocated to Stalag XIB where they remained until almost the end of the war. Casualties had been extremely high and of the five hundred men of the 3rd Battalion who so eagerly set out from Spalding, only one officer and thirty-six other ranks returned across the Rhine.

* * *

CHAPTER SEVEN

ARRIVAL AT STALAG XIB FROM JOHN LORD'S RECORDINGS

In 1966 John Lord made a recording of his memories relating to Stalag XIB and the following valuable extracts are included with grateful thanks to Dr John Adair, who retains the copyright. Also by permission of the Imperial War Museum, (Department of Sound Archives), John Lord recalls:

“Stalag XIB was not a British camp; in fact the only British soldiers present when we arrived were a small staff of about 20 or 30 men headed by RSM Sam Wickham. There were large numbers of Russians, French, Belgians, Yugoslavs, Poles, Dutch, Serbians and so on, and the contrast between these different nationalities was most marked. The French were in administrative positions, and seemed to be in good condition. The same applied to the Belgians, Yugoslavs and Poles, but did not apply to the Russians or Czechs. They were in an appalling condition, I never thought I would see anything like it in my life. They were starved, faces lined – the colour of parchment. They were in rags and in a deplorable condition.

“Airborne prisoners arrived and we were placed in huts which had been previously occupied by the Russians. The latrines were broken and blocked and the huts were lice-bound. We were issued with one blanket per man. I would like to read parts of a report made by Major Smith of the RAMC who was a medical officer with the 1st Airborne Division. The report commences by saying that *‘in October 1944 the medical officer had arrived by hospital train at Fallingbistel with 440 British wounded. 360 wounded had arrived previously and this resulted in us having to accommodate the seriously wounded in three barrack rooms in the hospital, and 500 walking wounded in the camp proper.’* The report continues: *‘Food was not supplied for the first day because the 440 wounded did not arrive in time to be placed on ration strength! German orders were that they had to arrive before 7.00 am to get any food at all. If the wounded arrived at camp with more than one blanket the extras were removed. It was not until seven weeks later that the number was increased to two. That was in the hospital alone and not in the compounds.*

‘For four weeks clothing was not issued to patients in spite of the fact that many were quite naked. There was no fuel issued for heating the wards. No lights were provided until November 20th, and then one hurricane lamp for which there was little fuel. The hospital was locked at night and it was almost impossible for a Doctor to visit a sick patient at night in one of the other barracks. The supply of surgical dressings was inadequate for example, 50 paper bandages for one week for one block containing 130 wounded men. There was no heating or sanitary facilities for the 360 wounded received on the 6th October, although these included two cases of spinal injury and one with a head injury. The latter man died shortly afterwards. During four weeks there was no electricity on Saturdays and all surgical work had to cease as lighting and sterilisation of instruments was impossible. No knives, forks or spoons were issued.....’ And so Major Smith’s report goes on. Later it was found that special orders had been issued and put into operation by the Germans regarding men of the 1st Airborne Division. Eventually there were 4,500 British, 2,500 Americans and 10,500 other nationalities, a total of 17,500 men at Fallingbistel.

* * *

“The thing that first struck me of my personal responsibility was I think on the first or second day. In the original hut containing British soldiers of mixed units, someone – I think it was the ‘Man of Confidence’ came along and spoke to an RSM wanting something done. I saw this RSM point to me and say “He’s the senior one - not me - it’s his responsibility”. That’s when I realised I was the Senior Warrant Officer there. It gave me to think of these responsibilities.

“Within a very few days of arriving several very significant things occurred. First, on sending a party to gain our rations, it was found that there was one loaf short. Now this sounds very little but when you take into consideration that seven men shared that loaf this was a considerable blow. I was told that the German in charge of the cook house had agreed to allow an extra loaf but, and this was the significant part, a Frenchman who was second in charge, refused to do so! The next incident was more serious. There was an understandable

order that when an air raid alert sounded, all prisoners of war must go into their huts, there being no slit trenches or air raid shelters. POWs are reluctant to move quickly and when an air raid sounded – I think three days after we arrived, the men went into their huts, but one glider pilot Sergeant was rather slow moving in. He paused in the doorway looking up at the sky. A German sentry did no less than shoot him, and he died. This had a profound effect as the news spread around and I am quite sure that it steeled the men's determination to withstand such treatment. Clearly some order was necessary.

“Another significant thing was that we came across the first ‘long term’ British POWs most of whom had been taken at the time of Dunkirk. Some of these men were apparently fit; they had come by train and had been working out at farms. They gave the impression that they thought our chaps had received a cushy war whilst they had received terribly hard times. Our men were quick to put them right on this.

“At about this time some Polish civilians, men and women who had been taken in the Warsaw uprising were received at Fallingbistel. Now this was a most remarkable sight as – here we were – feeling dejected, and these Poles behaved in a most exemplary way. The Polish women would march up from their compound swinging their arms across their bodies, singing the whole way to collect their meagre rations and then march back. This example again had a most profound effect on the men of the 1st Airborne Division. I became determined that I would make every effort to ensure that the Germans saw the British soldier – as I knew him to be.

“Eventually we moved into the huts which had been previously occupied by the Polish civilians. This was a much better compound and there were six huts planned to hold about 200 men in each. There was also a space which we could use as a football field nearby. As numbers grew, however, each hut had to hold about 450 men. The winter became very severe and food was extremely short, and of course morale varied very much with the supply of Red Cross parcels, those wonderful things which saved so many lives. It became very cold and some of the hut roofs leaked. There was a shortage of clothing and only one blanket per man. There was no sort of heating at all and the washing facilities were ablutions with miserable streams of cold water. Men were ill and sick, and the indoor lavatory, only one per hut soon became blocked and useless. We had to get some huge tins for the men to use at night because dysentery became rife. The smell with all the windows ordered closed at night was beyond imagination.

“There were no cleaning materials so the huts got into a terrible state, but we managed to get some of the working parties – who were going out to get wood, to supply us with some twigs so that the floors gradually became swept. I made sure that every man made his bed properly, and made each man responsible for his bed space. I encouraged each man to keep clean, and to keep his private possessions tidily in a box. I also insisted, although it caused a lot of grumbles at times, that all windows were opened each morning and that every man jack who could walk at all, went out for exercise around the compound in the mornings. This was vital to their health. The British doctors with whom I worked very closely did a wonderful job in most difficult circumstances. I noticed carefully the individual behaviour of the men and as time went by – that of the men of other units also. I could pick out the men coming from good units, those from well disciplined and happy battalions. They tended almost straight away to look after themselves and to keep themselves clean, and to muck in with each other. There were others who had not the same collective self discipline.”

* * *

“The move into the larger compound gave me an opportunity to start some sort of military organisation going under our own steam, and I built a set up with each hut rather like a company. When the time came for the majority of Warrant Officers and NCOs to go to a separate camp I went around and hand picked the six or seven leaders I wanted. I am very glad and proud to say that every man I approached without hesitation agreed to stay at Fallingbistel with me, although he had every right to think that if he moved he would receive better treatment. That was a starting point. We set up this organisation rather similar to the one the men were accustomed to, and in addition I sent Company Sergeant Major Watson to the hospital to do the administrative work, and he did a magnificent job.

“The Germans insisted that there were three roll calls a day and we formed up in five ranks. At the start the Germans merely called the parade up to attention and counted the numbers and that was it. I persuaded the Germans, I cannot remember how, that it would be better if I commanded this parade. All I would do would be to

call them – properly at ease – to attention, and stand them at ease, and maybe make them do it again in the best way they possibly could. They all had to go out – limping some of them without shoes on – or with a crutch if they could get something to make a crutch of. At least then they would hear British words of command. Not until I said “call the roll” and the British Warrant Officer out in front turned about and called the parade to attention, would the German guards go forward to carry out their physical check that all men were present. This was in my mind important because not only were the men being commanded by their own British Warrant Officer, but they saw that a British Sergeant Major was taking some command and getting them organised. They also saw that we had made a start in helping to withstand the cold, starvation and degradation.

“These roll calls had other uses as one could very quickly get a point over. One couldn’t really address them but sometimes could give them a laugh however feeble, and the men gradually came to realise that my intention was not so much to drill them, but to get the parade and roll call over with as quickly as possible. This was not – in the foul weather – the right time for sick men to try and tease and delay the Germans. There’s a time and place for everything. I was otherwise a great believer in withstanding the Germans, and in obstructing them whenever possible.

“I made sure that my personal turnout was as good as I could possibly make it. Without missing, once every evening before the lights went out I cleaned my boots. We managed to get a small supply of polish. I placed my trousers between boards and slept on them to gain a crease. I ‘whitened’ my webb belt with German soap which we had for washing but rarely used because it was useless. There is little doubt that the men gradually tried to make the best of themselves, and their appearance improved over the months. We discovered that the Germans were most interested by the fact that I was a Grenadier Guardsman and we ‘played this hand’ as hard as we could talking about the King’s bodyguard and so on. They were intensely interested in the Royal Family and anything connected with them, and I found that by doing this it helped us to get benefits and small items which were so important to the comfort and well-being of the men.

“After a time I managed to get from the Germans an old Belgian trumpet, and arranged to get the bugle calls, which I wanted, copied out on paper. My previous batman Barlow knew a lot of the calls as he had been a bugler in his previous unit. The calls were written out by someone who had been in the Corps of Drums and these began to be sounded out around the compound. They were very simple bugle calls like the ‘rouse’ first thing in the morning and the ‘cook house’ which might sound ironical and ‘lights out’ after the Germans had turned them out! These were common calls in the normal day to day life of a British soldier in barracks. It gave a military air and it told every man what the time was. Not only were these calls heard in the British compound, but in the compounds of the other nationalities, and some of them were more military minded than were the British soldiers. What with the bugle calls and my orders on parade other people inevitably gained the impression that these parachutists were soldiers! This attitude helped much later when the time came to make plans for our liberation.

“An important aspect of the law is not only that it must be done, but must be seen to be done, and this was particularly so with the men living under these circumstances. The most important things to them were the things which happened in their day to day life and nothing was more important than that the food should be fairly distributed. When we first got into the larger compound I sent parties under German guard to collect our rations. In view of our previous shortages I arranged that when the bugle sounded ‘cookhouse’ the men would come out and the food would be distributed there and then for everyone to see. What was allowed to one hut went to all six huts.

“Then of course there was the question of wood for heating. Earlier all we were allowed to have were roots from trees, and then the supply would completely stop, and here we were in the depth of winter with snow on the ground. Eventually I persuaded the Germans to allow me to send a party of men out of the compound with a cart. I had to get each man to promise not to escape and I thought it right and proper in the circumstances to do so. Only by these means could I get timber for the men’s heating. They came in with the carts laden with trunks of pine trees. Again the bugle sounded and they came out of their huts in turn to get their share. The men saw that everything was being controlled as closely as possible and that there were no privileged classes in the compound.

“When it came to Red Cross parcels the same system applied exactly. Some parcels were special ones in which there was food of special value for men suffering from malnutrition. These were limited and I took the advice of the medical officers in allocating them.

“As time went on and we started a new year, 1945 in captivity, the Red Cross parcels stopped altogether and starvation began to creep in. One of the worst offences one could commit in such circumstances was to steal another man’s ration. This occurred and it was extremely difficult to detect and prove. One day one of the Company Sergeant Majors came to me and said that he was quite convinced that a certain man was stealing food. I discussed this serious state of affairs with a group of Warrant Officers including RSM Bill Kibble who was in charge of the Red Cross parcels and whom I had known in my Grenadier Guards days. Also Don Rice, the RAF pilot who acted as our camp interpreter in so many cases. It was decided that I should question the suspect and I did so one evening by the light of a little lamp. He eventually admitted that he had stolen the food and this raised the question, ‘What to do about it?’ I had no powers of punishment in those circumstances. I could tell him he would be punished after the war but what was the good of that? Rightly or wrongly I ordered him to report to me next morning on parade. We all went out on the morning roll call at 7.00 am in the first light and I made him stand behind me. Then having called the parade to attention I produced this man and said, “This man is a thief.” And told them briefly what had happened. Some people would say nowadays what a dreadful thing to brand a man like that, but which was the more important? I was very worried myself afterwards whether I had acted correctly, but I don’t think we had one more case of theft after that. It may have prevented more theft or what is worse, assault, damage and fighting. The two thousand men on parade saw justice and action and that the punishment would be made to fit the crime.”

* * *

“In the beginning of 1945, we received a large number of Canadian troops, I should think about four hundred of them in all, and they occupied one of the huts in the compound. On the first roll call parade they came out very slowly and were fooling about in some marquees which had been erected on the football field. They held up the parade and we had a job getting them out. I could understand this as they thought they were messing the Germans about and the parade took twice as long as normal. Remembering my objectives in getting my men off parade as quickly as possible I dismissed the parade at the end, but told the Canadians to stand fast. Speaking to them on their own I ticked them off and told them this was not good enough! They must have thought, because the Germans were still present that I was on the side of the Germans but they couldn’t have been more wrong. They started to boo and shout cat calls and this was a very bad moment and a delicate one for me. How assured I looked I don’t know but I certainly felt anything but confident. I explained to them why I wanted them to get out on parade quickly, and put the reasons and the background over to them. I think they understood because from that time they caused no trouble at all and behaved very well. This was one of the only times that I was able to address the men collectively but always I tried to filter news through, and the way I did this was as follows. Each hut appointed two or three men and once a week we would have a meeting, unknown to the Germans, in my hut. I would go through the various matters then off they would go and put it over to the rest of the men so that everyone remained in the picture.

“To illustrate this I remember that there came the question of the men saluting the Germans. Quite rightly and in accordance with the Geneva Convention, the Germans insisted that we saluted the German officers. The fact that this was the only part of the Convention in which they were interested was neither here nor there, but they were within their rights. They also ordered us to salute their NCOs which of course is done in some European countries. This I refused to allow my men to do. The German officers were saluted in a rather reluctant way, and not in the way we would expect in the British Army. As I had been wounded in the right arm at Arnhem and this was in a sling for many weeks, I had not saluted the German Commandant when he made his daily visits to the compound. The day came however when my arm was healed, and I knew that I had no further excuse for failing to salute. As a meeting with the men was due I told them that as my arm was recovered I would be approaching the German Commandant on the next morning parade, and would give him the best salute I had ever given in my life! I could see from the men’s response that they thought I was giving in. I then added “but when I do salute him I shall look him straight in the eye and shall say to myself ‘Bollocks’”. There was silence for a moment and then they cracked out laughing and the meeting ended on this light note. The following morning when the time came for the men to get out of their huts there was no reluctance this day. Everybody was as near to the main gate as they could get, and when the German Commandant arrived I went up to him and to his surprise I saluted him as smartly as I could – of course I said that word to myself.

“From that moment on there was no difficulty about our men saluting the German officers, and I’ve never

seen such good saluting anywhere! They were seeking German officers out to salute in other compounds! The Germans were delighted; little did they know that this was an action of contempt and resistance. Well after all, it obeyed most of the rules of a salute although it wasn't given as a compliment.

"If I had to point to a time when things improved in the way of the men's deportment, I would say that this was probably it, when they squared their shoulders and walked about in a more military manner, more cheerfully and with a light of humour in their eyes. The Germans may have thought that they had won a psychological victory, but of course nothing could have been further from the truth.

"There were other things to lighten the days, for example, the soccer field which was in the compound, and as the men got over their wounds and the weather improved, and when their strength improved from the Red Cross parcels, (in other words during our peak time) it was possible to arrange soccer matches against other nationalities. We had some very good players, they were understandably short of stamina but there were some good matches. The men loved this diversion and cheered and supported their own teams strongly. In addition I was able to get some of our hospital patients down to join us at these games. The Germans finally put a stop to this however, for some reason of their own, possibly feeling that this was boosting our morale too much.

"Another thing we also did in the camp was to arrange concerts. We had very good singers, good comedians also good pianists and we had some community singing. I enjoyed performing in these concerts because I had always been a great admirer over many years of Stanley Holloway, and I would recite 'Old Sam' and various other things he did so excellently. They always went down well. One monologue you will know describes how Sam was on duty outside Buckingham Palace when he somehow or other gets invited in for a cup of tea with the King and Queen. It finishes with Sam taking his leave of Their Majesties saying "So goodnight both your Majesties and God bless both your Majesties, and when thou's next in Lancashire thou'll have tea with me!". As I proclaimed these words I always stood to attention and saluted, looking in the distance above the heads of the men, and this would cause a nostalgic feeling and perhaps one of pride also. Mention of the King and Queen also helped to remind all of us, with the Germans posted at the back of the hall, where our loyalties were.

"As men began to work outside the camp it meant that there was room for more POWs and fresh prisoners were being received from the front. These included men almost completely fit so they joined the working parties as well.

"When we were first captured many men lost their uniforms because of wounds, and were given some Serbian uniforms. Then bale upon bale of Red Cross parcels containing new battle dress came through the Port of Lubeck. We were astonished that these came through and every man was fitted out with a new battle dress. Many took pride in this and managed to tailor their dress to their own requirements, and by keeping themselves tidy and decent again gained a boost to their morale. What I did discover to my concern however, was that some of the 'wide boys' were trading, getting out of the compound and trading with other nationalities. On this black market many of the new uniforms were being traded for cigarettes. I had sympathy for the men wishing to smoke but one must have priorities, and if the Red Cross people could make the efforts to keep us warm and well clad, I felt sure we should not be exploiting it. The problem was how to stop it. To my surprise I gained permission to place a British sentry on the compound gate along with the German sentry. Of course our men weren't armed but I asked the Warrant Officers to select a certain number of men from each hut to run a duty roster during the hours of daylight. These men were empowered to stop British prisoners leaving the compound or at least to find out why. This stopped the bartering and through the committee meetings I explained about the seamen risking their lives to bring clothing etc. This incident did allow us to get a 'foot in the door' so far as supplying British sentries was concerned, and this became very important later on."

* * *

"Now to the more sombre subject of the deaths of British prisoners in Stalag XIB. I have already mentioned the shooting of the glider pilot Sergeant when we first arrived. I went to his funeral and was horrified. The Germans provided a dirty scruffy cart normally used for swill. The coffin was of crude wood and this could not be helped, and the Germans did provide a firing party but they were not good troops and lolled about the graveside. I found this most distasteful and addressed a strong letter to the German Commandant listing the steps I required to put it right. These were accepted by the Commandant and we were able to get hold of the cart for funerals in time to scrub it down. The German firing party was discontinued, and they merely sent guards to escort our party.

I explained to the men how military funerals should be dealt with. That the turn-out must be the highest possible, and that it was our responsibility to ensure this on behalf of the parents, relations or wives of the soldiers we were laying to rest. The men accepted this perfectly and as there were men from our own Parachute Battalions, also some Infantrymen and Guardsmen, we trained on the football field and produced bearer parties able to slow march and go through the funeral parade properly. We had a home made Union Jack and this was placed on the coffin in the mortuary. The cart was made ready, scrubbed clean and was pulled by our men as the bearer party slow marched on either side. An attendance party (we were allowed twenty men) eventually followed the coffin.

“The Padre was with us and we slow marched right through the centre of camp past compounds containing all of the other European nationalities. We sadly had to bury fifty men during our time at Stalag XIB and as this became a regular event it was very moving to see the other nationalities throng the edges of compounds and stand bare headed. Our bugler, Barlow, would sound the ‘last post’ on that lonely hillside with trees surrounding the cemetery, and he would then play Reveille. We would be able to explain to parents that everything possible had been done to ensure that their relative had been laid to rest in a proper and soldierly manner. Even the German Commandant watched from a distance on occasions, and I must give credit where due, he behaved in a very soldierly manner on these occasions. We were later told that we must not display the Union Jack in the compound, also that we must not pass the other compounds but must leave through the front gate. This we had to do, but once out of the gate I halted the procession and produced the Union Jack and laid it on the coffin and from that moment until the coffin was lowered into the ground that soldier had his national flag covering him”.

* * *

CHAPTER EIGHT

ESTABLISHMENT OF A REGIME

Shortly before Christmas 1944, John Lord continues: “We had been told that there were two trucks on a siding containing Red Cross parcels, and a party quickly went to collect these. One of the trucks contained special Christmas parcels including Christmas puddings which raised morale enormously. To our astonishment the other truck was stacked with decorations!

“We took them back to the camp and wondered what the dickens we were going to do with them. The men decorated their huts with streamers and lanterns, and we also spent time cutting out decorations in crepe paper. One of our regimental policemen turned out all sorts of things including national flags, and this included the hammer and sickle, because in those days the Russians were our allies. We put up these decorations and being proud of them, invited the German NCOs to come and have a look. We thought no more about it but within a very short time the door burst in and a security man glared around our room, and without saying a word went out again. We learned however that all this attention was being caused by the Russian flag, so we thought we would take this particular flag down, and I put it between the folds of my blanket.

“It was a good job I did because within a short time the Germans appeared again and every hut was sealed off so that men could not move in or out. They searched our room and asked where the Bolshevik flag was. They were most thorough and going up into the false roof, ripped the wood away, but they found nothing and eventually went away disgruntled. I was feeling nervous as they had picked up my blankets – but had not shaken them. I eventually told them a lie and said that we had burnt it. They didn’t believe me but couldn’t find it. The outcome was that I was sent for time and time again, being grilled as to my Bolshevik activities! An escort would come and take me for further questioning, and at security headquarters many of the questions seemed irrelevant, but constantly revealed was their hatred and fear of Communism.

“During these times the Germans went so far as to suggest that the British should join forces with them in combating Communism. We gradually realised how serious were the Germans in their fear. One of my most useful tools in persuading them that I was not a Communist was the old matter of my being in the Grenadier Guards – the Household Troops. A side issue of all this was the effect my grillings had upon the Russian leader, who may have realised that I was no Communist, but was impressed that we had displayed their flag in our hut, and also that I was standing up to the Germans. This became important in his mind later.

“Two other morale boosters were that we were able to get the BBC news every day. A handful of wonderful Frenchmen, genuine former resistance men of the old days, had a radio set, and they would pass on the latest news. The second booster was again supplied, much to our surprise, by the Red Cross. This was some public address equipment which our technicians soon rigged up, with German permission, both in the open air, and in each hut which received its own loudspeaker. We managed to get some gramophone records and played them during the day, and this was helpful to the British and also other nationalities who could hear from their compounds.

“I was also able to run quizzes and we gave out Russian cigarettes as prizes. Of course with this p.a. equipment one could get all sorts of things across to the men. Later on we used a recording of the ‘Flight of the Bumble Bee’ whenever we had some special news to give, and this urgent music so often preceded an announcement of a further British or American advance.”

* * *

Now as John Lord’s commentary moves on towards the latter days of Stalag XIB, the memories of other men regarding their months of captivity spent there need to be included. Eric Richards of the 4th Parachute Squadron, Royal Engineers writes:

“After a couple of months many of us had to move from one compound to another and this is when I came

into contact with RSM Lord. He saw the condition we were in and knew that our morale was very low, so he set about to change all that. Initially our attitude was that as POWs we were finished with soldiering. Many men were walking the camp in an unshaven, dirty and dispirited state. When RSM Lord saw this he began to issue orders and everyone was formed into companies, with senior NCOs in charge. He managed to get a bugle so that orders could be sounded. He made us all shave even at the expense of sharing a razor blade between five or ten men! We were able to 'blanco' our gaiters with lime used for the ablutions.

"Each morning he took the roll call parade, and if he saw any German soldier being idle he would scream at him – even though the man didn't understand English! If a German soldier below his own rank spoke to him, he would make him stand to attention, and he had many of the German guards shaking in their jackboots. The Germans had a great respect for him, but found him to be a constant thorn in their side, bombarding them with complaints of the treatment of his men. The older POWs did not like this regimentation.

"Once I was on the burial Guard of Honour when a sapper died of his wounds, so I represented my unit at his funeral. There was also a German Guard of Honour present, and a German Army photographer attended to record the event. We found out later that the German Guard of Honour was reprimanded as our turn-out was much smarter than theirs. This was due to RSM Lord's efforts as he transformed dispirited British POWs back into soldiers, and gave them back their pride. I was never a lover of CSMs or RSMs but this man stood out above all others in Stalag XIB, as immaculately turned out as he would have been on parade in England.

"I remember being on parade on morning roll call when RSM Lord shouted out my name, and thinking I had misheard I didn't move. He shouted again and as I hurriedly left the ranks he encouraged me with "Hurry up lad!" It turned out that I was one of the first lucky men to receive letters from home. I had before then been reported missing believed killed. RSM Lord asked me to let him know of any news from home as he had not yet received any himself. Obviously, there were those who did not like J C, but which soldier does like his Regimental Sergeant Major!"

* * *

Andrew Milbourne who had earlier attended an NCO's course under John Lord, arrived at Stalag XIB in mid winter having been terribly wounded at Arnhem. He writes:

"When I arrived at that dreadful place looking like God knows what, John Lord confronted me and demanded to know who had sent me there. I must have looked a sorrowful sight with both forearms missing, my left eye missing and being unwashed, unshaven and dressed in those dreadful striped pyjamas provided by the Germans. I was repatriated home January 1945 more dead than alive, suffering in addition to my wounds, from nasal diphtheria. If I had not been seen by the Medical Officer and a Captain Cooper at Stalag 9C I would not have survived."

Les Harrison whom we left wounded at the pavilion on the bank of the Rhine at Arnhem, also turned up after a time at Stalag XIB, but accompanied other very seriously wounded on repatriation to England in January 1945. Reg Curtis of the 1st Battalion, The Parachute Regiment was badly wounded, losing a leg at Arnhem. He remembers:

"Leaving the comfort of the Queen Juliana Hospital at Apeldoorn, I was taken with about a dozen other wounded to Germany, and we travelled by passenger train. We eventually arrived at Fallingbomel station where we seemed to wait ages, but a lorry finally came and we were taken to a camp where a sentry checked our arrival. The two large gates opened and we moved into the compound. The guards beckoned us to get out and with difficulty we did so. I was feeling weak through contracting pleurisy and dysentery in addition to the loss of the leg. I then noticed these very highly polished army boots! Looking up I saw an RSM who turned out to be RSM Lord. I had heard a lot about him within the 1st Parachute Brigade, but had never met him before. I expected to hear a sharp voice but instead it was a gentle quiet one asking me to "Take it easy son; I'll get someone to help you." Then he called to a couple of Airborne men, "you two give a hand with this man to his sick quarters – quickly now". I was taken to the camp hospital and did not see much more of RSM Lord as I was down for early repatriation. I was grateful for his kind reception and remember him after 35 years."

* * *

Bill Kibble was one of the group of Senior Warrant Officers who volunteered to remain at Stalag XIB, and he writes:

“One incident I well remember in camp was when John Lord and myself, both being responsible for discipline, were ordered to appear before the German Commandant in relation to something which had gone wrong. With our interpreters we went into his office expecting the worst. We stood in front of his table and waited. He then ordered “Remove your berets.” We replied that our custom was to keep our berets on. We had saluted him and proposed to follow our custom and not theirs. This argument went on for some time, the Commandant becoming increasingly angry, until he finally banged the table and shouted “Get out, get out!” We did so and never did find out why he had sent for us.”

* * *

James Sims was captured after Colonel Frost’s 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment had held out for so long at the northern end of the bridge at Arnhem. He writes of his time at the camp:

“I arrived at Stalag XIB as a wounded POW at about the beginning of October 1944. The camp hospital was a collection of huts surrounded by barbed wire and towers in which machine guns were constantly manned. The conditions were pretty terrible, there were practically no medical supplies and there were no German medical orderlies. Myself and another badly wounded man had to do everything for the men in our hut, two of whom had amputations. As we both had leg wounds (mine were to remain open until I returned to England eight months later) we had to hop around as best we could. There was one RAMC orderly who came up from the main camp each day and told us what to do. Naturally we thought that we were pretty hard done by, but Frank our orderly told us conditions in the main camp were terrible. Keep out of the Lager we were advised – even to the extent of making wounds worse to prolong the stay in hospital. There actually was no need for this as the starvation rations were completely useless for badly wounded men and our wounds were slow to heal. I got hold of some crutches which made me more mobile.

“One morning in October I was making for the door of our hut when a vision passed before it. It was a British Airborne RSM – but what an RSM! Tall and slim, immaculate in battle dress, red beret exactly an inch above the eye. Luckily these eyes were not looking in my direction and I automatically adjusted my collar which was undone and put my beret on straight. The vision then noticed me and turned to face me. I had never met RSM Lord but had known of him. Two large but not unfriendly eyes regarded me with some astonishment. I am six feet tall but he was taller than me, and his military moustache gave him an impressive appearance. “What battalion are you from?” he asked. I told him the 2nd Battalion. He asked me about the other wounded men and his expression hardened. Then suddenly he gripped me by the shoulder and said “Don’t let them get you down lad”, and then he was gone. I told the other lads about my meeting with the RSM but rather naturally they were not impressed. He’ll be off to the NCOs’ camp they said, where conditions were thought to be better. But they were wrong because the RSM stayed to take over control of the Lager, and although it remained a very grim place he certainly achieved miracles.

“Some time before Christmas I was moved out of the hospital to make way for a great influx of American POWs. The conditions in the Lager were still dreadful. The first night I had to sleep on the floor of one of the huge huts crammed with men. All night long I was kept awake by things dropping on me from the ceiling. In the morning I found out they were lice! Everyone was lousy and regardless of conditions it was imperative that some attempt was made at delousing every day. No matter how thoroughly this was done however, one was never free from these blood sucking pests as long as one was in the hands of the Germans.

“Within two days I had teamed up with three other Airborne types, two being ex 10th Battalion men, and the other an Airborne gunner. We had to share two bunks – sleeping in pairs fully clothed for warmth. Each morning RSM Lord took the roll call parade, and he was accompanied by a very young and smart German Warrant Officer who wore on his tunic a gold cross. I was surprised at the fitness and youth of this German until one of our lads told me that he was in fact one of Nazi Germany’s Olympic athletes, and was being kept in a cushy place so that they could use him in a future Olympics. He must have upset someone in higher authority however as he was suddenly missing, and we learned he had been sent to the Russian front, which was regarded as being tantamount to a death sentence.

“RSM Lord always treated German officers and NCOs correctly, but did not bother to disguise his contempt for them, referring sarcastically to the Germans as ‘the detaining power’. His task in Stalag XIB was a very difficult one. The Airborne accepted him without question, as did also any Guardsmen, but there were men from almost every unit in the British Army, as well as some Canadians, Australians and New Zealanders. Some of them felt that now they were prisoners they should no longer come under army discipline. They failed in my view to realise that the enemy reacted according to the impression gained, and the Germans were one of the most disciplined nations on earth, therefore they had more respect for well disciplined units – than a milling mob. To be fair eventually most of the British realised this and gave the RSM and his group of Warrant Officers little trouble, but some of the Canadians at first refused to accept his authority and even openly defied him on parade! They didn’t win of course – as trying to out-shout an RSM is a losing battle.

“We had two parades a day when the German guards counted us off in rows of five. As they could never agree the figure and our lads never kept still, we were sometimes on these parades for over an hour. If we messed them about the Germans would retaliate by keeping us standing outside for hours at a time, particularly if it was pouring down with rain or bitterly cold. As the weeks went on some of the wounded collapsed on parade and some died as a direct result of this treatment.

“Enforcing discipline under such conditions was extremely difficult as a man could not be confined to camp, or his pay stopped. Extra duties would have been no punishment, as boredom was our main problem and most of us would have volunteered for any extra work if we could have got it. Extra guard duties could not be imposed, so for the most part the RSM had to rely on the good sense of the men, plus threats of post-war punishment. He did not hesitate to make an example of anyone who transgressed however, and I remember that when one soldier refused to wash or keep himself clean, the RSM had him stood up in a sink and buckets of cold water thrown over him whilst two 3rd Battalion NCOs scrubbed him down fore and aft with yard brooms! He was stark naked and it was below zero. Another incident was when two men were caught after stealing some special Red Cross parcels intended for invalids. They were hiding in a rubbish dump and stuffing themselves with this special tinned food. RSM Lord had them paraded in front of the entire camp population, and their crime was read out and judgement passed. The RSM ruled that for the rest of the time they were in Stalag XIB they would not receive a Red Cross parcel. I well remember the gasp that went up from the assembled men, as this was tantamount to a death sentence.

“We received in food about half a pint of watery swede soup daily, plus three small potatoes at midday, and one slice of sour black bread with a smear of margarine and a spoonful of ersatz jam at tea time. We were supposed to receive one Red Cross parcel each per month, but in fact had only one between four of us. If one was lucky and belonged to a foursome who decided to use some of the articles provided – and trade the rest for bread, then you could just about survive. Even so, in seven months I went from 11 stone 7 lbs to less than 7 stone, and so did many others, indeed, many just lost the will to live.

“There was a recognised rate for black market trading with the enemy, such as 20 cigarettes for a loaf but some of the new American POWs tended to panic when they saw the daily rations, and offered anything – even gold rings for a loaf. Here again RSM Lord tried to get everyone to cooperate and eventually succeeded.

“Our main ‘entertainment’ in the Lager each day became the funerals, and the RSM selected the tallest and smartest men to form a Guard of Honour. He shamed the Germans into providing their own guard but despite being better fed and clothed, they looked a shambles alongside our men. Most of us looked half starved, ill clothed and none too clean I suppose, but the RSM always appeared as though he was just off to mount guard at Buckingham Palace. His badges and buckles shone like jewels, and his black boots were like glass. I was always amazed that even on the filthiest of muddy days his boots never seemed to be smothered in mud like mine! It was as though he moved across the surface of the mud like Christ walking on the water.

“Every morning he would report to the German headquarters and he always marched smartly up to the large wooden gate of the Lager and shouted “Open up” to the German guards and they rushed to obey. One day whilst taking one of our parades RSM Lord shouted out an order and to everyone’s delight some Panzer Grenadiers at drill in the German barrack square opposite – fell out!, much to the chagrin of the German Warrant Officer drilling them.

“Christmas 1944 came round and the Germans – particularly the SS were cock-a-hoop as their initial attacks seemed to be succeeding in the Ardennes offensive. It was the only time that the Germans issued newspapers to

us in our own language, telling us of their great victory, and there was also a paragraph stating that South East England had been practically obliterated by their “V” weapons. Knowing our enemy no-one really believed any of this, until the first batches of prisoners began to arrive from the Ardennes.

“The British put on a concert in the Stalag theatre and RSM Lord sang ‘The Company Sergeant Major’ – a famous old song and I have never heard it sung better. There was then a German choir that sang “Silent Night, Holy Night” and listening to them one could hardly believe that this was the same people who were now acting as the hangmen of Europe.

“One of our lads from C Company of the 2nd Battalion known as ‘Bing’ Brooks because he could do a fair impression of the famous crooner, did a take-off of Churchill making his speech ‘We will fight them on the beaches’. Everyone started to cheer and the Germans started to move towards the stage, but ‘Bing’ Brooks finished off with “but I never thought we should have to fight in the skilly queues”!

“One day in the New Year I went to the RSM’s office to obtain a chit for a haircut. RSM Lord had made an office out of Red Cross packing cases, and on his door was a notice which stated ‘British RSM. Knock and wait’. A German Warrant Officer was in front of me and he walked straight into the RSM’s office. I heard a scuffle and the RSM shouting “Can’t you bloody well read!?” then the German Warrant Officer came hurtling out to land flat on his back, his cap tossed out behind him, and the door was slammed shut. As the German was armed I feared the worst, but he got up – dusted himself down and grinned. He nodded towards the RSM’s office and mumbling to himself walked up to the door and knocked. The RSM shouted “come in” and that was that, except I decided to come back another day for my haircut chit. This incident more than any other, as far as I was concerned, illustrated how good RSM Lord was at understanding the enemy. There is nothing the average German liked more than a good kick up the arse by someone in authority.

“As we were crammed into huts, one on top of the other in the most unhealthy conditions, RSM Lord was insistent that no matter what the weather was like we get ourselves out of these huts and walk around the compound. Of course with winter upon us there was little pleasure in doing this and many tried to hide in the huts, but the RSM would go through them like an avenging angel, and if one stood at the end of a hut it was most amusing to see the delinquents hurtling out through the windows at his approach.

“RSM Lord was always warning us about the danger of getting TB, and I for one took his advice and walked around. The trouble was that we were so hungry and weak, and ill clothed, that once around the compound was more than enough, and twice around was exhausting. This area was about the size of the average park in any English town. I often used to walk around with another Brightonian and member of my platoon, George Hines, and we used to torture ourselves by trying to pretend it was our beloved downs we were walking on, or along the Brighton sea front.

“I was sent out to join a working party before the final days of Stalag XIB, but a friend of mine remained there until liberation, and his name was Ralph Shackleton.”

* * *

CHAPTER NINE

ARRIVAL OF CORPORAL RAY SHERIFF, AND A JOURNEY BY RSM. W. KIBBLE TO LUBECK

Ralph Shackleton lives in Shipley and he writes as follows: “I first heard of ‘J.C.’ in October 1944, when I was in the Stalag hospital and I heard of this formidable man down in the Lager who it seems ran personally the whole show. When in late January 1945 I was moved to the main Lager I was carried into the presence of John Lord by two Germans, and found that he had a small office partitioned off in one of the huts made of cardboard and bits of wood from Red Cross parcels. J.C. dismissed the sentries with a wave of his hand and they respectfully withdrew! He asked me to sit on a box and proceeded to read me his own personal riot act. He began with:

“I charge you in the name of His Majesty the King, (1) To preserve your self respect at all times. (2) To adhere to my orders and instructions without question. (3) To keep yourself as clean as possible. (4) To report to me any signs of sickness or melancholia or otherwise, in your comrades at once. (5) To report and explain to me any escape attempt planned or envisaged and not under any circumstances to attempt to escape without my personal permission. (6) To understand that stealing food, clothing, or medicine from another prisoner will be dealt with personally by me in the form of disciplinary action on repatriation. (7) To adhere closely to German instructions at all times unless otherwise stated by me.

“All this was frightening stuff to me but RSM Lord then pointed out how necessary these steps were for the sake of everybody. After making sure that I understood he delegated someone to find me a sleeping space in amongst the mass of men already struggling to survive in hut number one.”

* * *

John Lord continues: “As the weather improved and both our allied armies from West and East advanced, things became very difficult particularly from the point of view of food. Red Cross parcels stopped completely and other prisoners started flocking into the camp. The problem soon became one of starvation. The camp committee decided that it was absolutely essential that we obtain some Red Cross parcels and we learned that there was a stock of parcels awaiting collection at the Port of Lubeck. How Sam Wickham, the ‘Man of Confidence’, and RSM Bill Kibble managed to achieve this I do not know, but a journey to Lubeck was made. When this great yellow lorry and its trailer arrived back at the front gate of the camp and drove in loaded up with thousands of Red Cross parcels, you could have heard the cheering which broke out miles away as the message was flashed out like wild fire all around the camp – food had come in! We received so many parcels that we were able to distribute some to others as well. Some to the Russians and this must have done an enormous amount of good, not only for their physical states but their attitude towards the British soldier.”

Placing aside John Lord’s account briefly, I was amazed that prisoners of war could possibly undertake such a journey, and after many enquiries I was able to trace RSM Bill Kibble who now lives in Bath, and he kindly sent me details of this unique journey. Bill Kibble writes:

“To understand this journey and how it was done you need to realise that the Port of Lubeck was the reception port for all Red Cross parcels and medical aids. Towards the end of hostilities the Red Cross kept up supplies by sea but the Germans were unable to distribute them because of the bombed state of the railways and roads. The parcels were stored in large sheds on the docks, and the day I went there were thousands of parcels in store.

“The Swiss Red Cross used to send representatives around POW camps to see if they were being run humanely and we had a visit from one representative about two months from the end of our time at Stalag XIB. We complained to him about having no food parcels and he told us that there were plenty of stores at Lubeck if only we could possibly collect them.

“As all senior ranks in camp had been given specific responsibilities it was mine among others to supervise

the distribution of Red Cross stores. This allowed me out of the camp perimeter and sometimes a visit to the local railway station to enquire whether any parcels were on the way. This was always under armed guard. These walks and contacts with the guards were in my favour when I planned the journey to Lubeck.

“The most precious commodity we had in German eyes was coffee and cigarettes, we had at this time a small quantity of parcels, perhaps two dozen which were impossible to issue to hundreds of prisoners. With the co-operation of John Lord and Sam Wickham whose position in camp was Man of Confidence, (a job created by the Germans as a go-between us and them), I started offering the bait about coffee being available to anyone who would help us to secure transport to collect parcels from Lubeck. John Lord and Sam Wickham did the same.

“I put the idea of transport to the guards I was working with. At this time I did not expect anyone to take up the offer, so imagine my surprise when one of the guards told me that he had found someone willing. There were, however, endless snags. Firstly, the transport was a kind of tractor – wood fuelled with two trailers. The driver required a reason to go other than, of course, Red Cross parcels. Then papers of Authority were necessary. There was, however, in camp an officer from the Propaganda Dept. whose job it was to try and indoctrinate the POWs with Nazi propaganda. He could speak perfect English and being married to an American had lived in the USA. He was tackled by John Lord and Sam Wickham to get the correct papers and surprisingly he said he could! All this took about ten days, and now all that was needed was a good reason, an excuse for the journey. This was difficult and the best anyone could do was ‘to deliver a load of sealed boxes to Hamburg’.

“A day was set for the journey and I was picked up by two armed guards and marched to the nearby village. At this stage no one outside of a few senior ranks knew about the journey, and I am sure that some of the POWs wondered what I had done to be taken by two armed guards from the camp. There was no one else with me. On arrival at Fallingbommel we waited for the transport which duly arrived and I was not impressed. I did not believe that the tractor was capable of ten miles, never mind the hundred mile journey. I climbed on board, however, and wrapped myself up in a blanket and sat between my guards for the long journey to Hamburg. The journey was uneventful but on approaching the city I was amazed at the bomb damage. Everything was destroyed except the rail and road bridges and even those had gaping holes through them. The streets were full of rubble and only one main road in the centre was cleared. This clearing work was being done by gangs of Jews and it was pitiful to see. Large tank traps were being prepared around the outskirts of Hamburg and I believe that these people working were displaced persons or some continental POWs. We drove on to the dock area and left our ‘boxes’ there. The difficulty would be in going on to Lubeck. I told the guards to hurry the driver out of town as the air raids were frequent both day and night. We went on to Lubeck and entered the town. No difficulties so far. We found the Red Cross sheds on the dock and drove in to load up. The work was carried out by dock workers – mostly old men who were supervised by our driver. I had an argument with the driver, I wanted to load far more than the tractor and trailer were capable of carrying. He was right of course, I was greedy but with good cause.

“The return journey took longer than the outward one because of the big load. It was also much more uncomfortable as we had left little room to sit among the parcels. This was to lead to discomfort for at least two nights. When we had travelled about one third of the journey we stopped outside a guest house and the guards arranged for me to sleep indoors whilst they took it in turn to guard our load! I paid for this in cups of coffee to the owners and also gave them a little spam and bully beef for supper. I can remember two such nights so I suppose the journey back took three or four days. My arrival back in camp was greeted with delight and I felt pleased with my efforts as lots of POWs were on their last legs.

“I must point out that at the time of the journey the Germans knew that they had lost the war and that it was only a matter of time. At that time they would do anything to help the British. There was no second journey. We talked about one but I believe we were a little scared of doing it again. Perhaps the end of the war was too near. The pay-off to the Germans was made at the end of the journey, the driver receiving the best. I cannot recall how many parcels we gave him but I believe it was four. The Germans in uniform had two ounces of coffee each, a very economic contract I thought.”

* * *

And so John Lord's story continues:

"The battle of the Ardennes saw huge marquees being prepared on the football field at Stalag XIB and any available spare piece of land. Straw was placed inside them as bedding and the German Commandant came to the British compound announcing that we were about to receive immediately two thousand American prisoners. Quite obviously from his attitude he thought that this was the turn of the tide and that the Germans were going to win the war.

"The first American party of prisoners came in and were absorbed into some huts a little way from us and I had no immediate contact with them. I was later approached by our medical officer and he voiced serious concern about their condition, as apparently two men already had died of inactivity. He asked if I could look into the matter. I was doubtful because they wouldn't know me from a crow, and I thought it would be difficult as they would have their own NCOs. Realising the seriousness, however, I went through the door of their hut and there they were with all the windows shut lying on their beds. They looked around at me casually and nothing happened. I walked through the hut, I came back and ordered them in, I suppose, a parade ground voice to "Open your windows! Get off your beds and get outside in the fresh air." I received some very baleful looks but gradually as I went around the hut they started to stir and began to move out of the door and then all went out. I insisted that they did that each day. If someone had not taken control I dread to think what would have happened. It does show the terrible effect that these sort of circumstances can have on men if there is no immediate leadership. We later developed extremely good liaison with the Americans, and they did very well.

"In the Third Battalion, The Parachute Regiment I had a Corporal Ray Sheriff; he was a very good Corporal of great spirit, a good athlete and boxer and he had fought with the Battalion in North Africa, Sicily, Italy and Arnhem. In searching through our men and trying to get accounts of what had happened to them, I could find no trace of Corporal Sheriff.

We had been in the prison camp for three months with still no news when I heard that he was in the German reception hut and was in bad shape. I collected together what few cigarettes I could and using my pass, which enabled me to move around a little, I went to the reception hut.

I can see this long low gloomy hut now, packed with men of different nationalities. I looked around for Corporal Sheriff and eventually saw him to my far left – sitting on the floor with his head hanging down. He was dressed in some strange uniform which had been provided for him. I walked over to him and said "Hello Corporal Sheriff, how are you getting on?" and that Corporal – three months after the battle – with no great cause to love me at all, with great dignity stood up to attention, faced me and said "Hello Sir, it's good to hear your voice." and I realised that he was blind. This was the most harrowing experience, I think, of my whole life. I don't claim, I would not claim that he was saying this to me personally, but here he was for the first time after all the suffering of the past three months, and he heard a voice from the family. Even in those circumstances he felt that he was back with the family."

* * *

Placing aside John Lord's account again, Ray Sheriff writes:

"I was rather a late-comer to the camp as I was dropped off at a couple of hospitals en route to see if anything could be done for my sight and to operate on my poorly leg.

"I shall never forget this day, a bitterly cold day, in mid-January 1945. I was carried into a hut by two Germans who placed me on a pile of straw on the floor of a wooden hut. I gathered from the volume of noise that the interior was pretty full and all the voices were foreign. I learned later that the majority were Polish. I felt alone, helpless and not a little frightened, and I drifted into a half sleep. Suddenly I heard a voice and could I believe it, was it a dream? Instinctively I stood up to attention as the voice of RSM John Lord enquired about me! I honestly think that this instant proved to be the turning point for me. Life would be okay again, and I would describe my meeting on that occasion with J C as a life saver.

"I soon learned that RSM Lord was getting matters organised within the camp although with opposition from the Germans – and understandably from some of the British POWs. No doubt on his orders I was transferred to more bearable quarters within the hospital block. I was clad in varying blends of civvy attire, which offended

J C to the extent that he said “Don’t tell anyone you are from the 3rd Battalion – dressed in that outfit!” From somewhere he conjured up a complete uniform including socks, boots and gaiters – all spick and span. He detailed men to keep an eye on me to help where possible. Each morning I was carried to a wash room, placed on a duck-board and scrubbed down with cold water thus keeping me free from lice. I was helped to have a haircut when a blade became available, which was rather painful at times.

“When my leg became stronger he encouraged me to walk short distances and increased the distance day by day. He would still shout his orders from across barbed wire fencing! I would hear him, “Stand up properly! Do your collar up! Get your hat on straight!” and so on. It was strong stuff – but for my own good. On one occasion he organised some food to be brought to me from the cook house. It was brought in a German mess tin and consisted of a few chunks of fried horse meat, a portion of swede and a potato in its jacket. A super meal. A banquet in fact!”

* * *

“Later on in 1945,” John Lord continues, “we received British POWs from the East, many of whom had marched right across Europe from Poland. The first group came in the New Year and were in good shape. They came in by train and as they had previously worked on farms these men were fit. Some better barrack room accommodation was available and they went into that.

“The next sight to greet my eyes was the arrival of POWs who had marched. I really would not have believed it possible. When I saw them in hospital some of them appeared to be like later photographs of Belsen camp and this second batch were placed in those large marquees with only straw to sleep on. The medical officers went down to see them and one came back to me saying, “I’ve segregated 300 of those men, and if they don’t receive immediately more food and better accommodation, they will die”. He was quite adamant about this. I quickly put around the word to our men about their condition and I shall never forget that they voluntarily decided to give up a little of their own food for these 300 men. That was the first thing. Secondly, I went to see the first group of prisoners who had come in by train and I put the case to them. Three hundred of the fittest immediately volunteered to change places with their comrades in the marquees. It was very cold and uncomfortable and their behaviour was courageous. This meant that the 300 men in such bad condition received extra food, and the majority of their lives would be saved if only we could move them into better accommodation.

“I went with the Man of Confidence to the German Commandant, and stated the case to him quite simply. To our horror he refused to allow the transfer! I pressed the matter and he lost his temper – and we left. I must have gone up three more times to see him, so worried was I about the situation. He would not allow the move, however, and what conclusion can anyone come to – faced with that attitude?. It seemed deliberate, that these men were not worth saving. I went back to my compound and I got hold of Bill Kibble and somebody else and we went down to the two compounds, the one with the marquees with these very sick men in and the one in which the volunteers were waiting. I moved the sick men from their compound bluffing the Germans sentries that I had received permission. I interchanged those 300 volunteers. I had to do it. We were taking an awful chance; the repercussions of the German Commandant were violent – absolutely violent. We succeeded however, and the majority of those men came home fit, or reasonably fit and well. Here we had a typical example of us asking the German authorities for nothing – merely to interchange men. We asked for no other benefits and the case could not have been misunderstood by the Commandant because I was backed up by medical officers. Such things of course, steel one’s resolve – and they also steeled the resolve of all other men of spirit in the camp.”

* * *

CHAPTER TEN

EVENTS LEADING TO LIBERATION

As time went on, “It became clear,” continues John Lord, “that the British and American armies were going to advance as the weather improved. What was going to happen when the German Army suddenly collapsed? What if they did so before we were reached by our own troops? What was likely to happen in the camp? There were several possibilities and some of these were grave. Opposite the camp across the road was a large barracks in which were housed the SS Panzer Grenadiers. If Germany suddenly capitulated what would be the reaction of these men? There seemed a distinct possibility that they could turn their weapons against the prisoners of all nationalities in revenge and exterminate them. Little had been done to plan for this eventuality; were we simply going to sit there hoping for the best? This did not seem to be good enough and I was spoken to by close friends, Bill Kibble, Don Rice and others, who impressed upon me that I must get things organised. I asked Sergeant Major Wickham, who knew so many of the other nationalities, and whose great asset was that he knew who could be trusted. He agreed that we had to set up a camp committee. We had to select absolutely reliable men.

“Sam Wickham sought a representative from each of the nationalities whom he believed could be trusted, and these were invited to a meeting. Previously I had made a map of the camp upon which every sentry post was plotted and everything from a security view was worked out, so I set down on paper what I considered should be done when the time came for us to take control. There were many things to be considered if authority should collapse: food, clothing, heating and many other matters. The committee met several times in secret, and difficulties arose with the language problems. Eventually we worked out a process by which we would take over control if necessary.

“Now I had to set about finding a ‘security force’ and it was agreed that each nation would find so many picked men, who would not be told for what particular reason – but they would know that they might be called upon in an emergency to carry out duties within the camp. We then selected one hundred of our own men, a strength which I had worked out as being necessary from our point of view. It was arranged that the British would carry on with guard duties, and the plan was for us to disarm the German sentries and for each nation to have on the main gate a small number of their own ‘Regimental Police’ to take care of language difficulties.

“Another very important security aspect was the possibility of internal strife, a very real threat as all these nationalities did not necessarily get on well together. The Russians were a danger in the state they were in. Fortunately their leader was a very strong man and was able to control them. As time went on the Germans were getting more and more nervous, and I didn’t fully realise this until they approached me and asked if I would place one British soldier on sentry with each German sentry! Our men would not be armed but this was a tribute to the British soldiers and the impact that our conduct and behaviour had made upon the Germans. They obviously considered that the very presence of the British soldier with a German sentry might prevent attacks by other nationalities who were by now getting into such a tremendously restive state.

“Whilst we were making these contingency plans a large group of Royal Air Force crewmen who had marched across Europe suddenly came into the camp. There was a lot of malnutrition amongst them and they were placed into some tents. They had some very good leaders amongst them but the Germans, after only a few days, ordered the whole group to march out again onto the roads. Now this was inexcusable as there was no reason for it at all. We could have accommodated them and the British and American armies were not far away. These Airmen were later strafed by our own aircraft, and the German authorities must have been fully aware that this would happen.

“I was ordered to leave the camp and march with them. This didn’t suit me at all. I wanted to see the thing through in the camp, and it didn’t suit the book of the leaders of the other nationalities either because I was the only man who knew all of the coordinated plans. Each leader knew his own part and some knew a little of someone else’s, but I was the only one who had all the minute details worked out. So Sam Wickham and the French resistance men acted very quickly.

"I was taken over to a hut occupied by the French and shown down into a slit trench which had been dug beneath the floor. It was very small and I couldn't stand upright, but could just lie down. There was a bench, and light was provided by an oil lamp.

"The aircrews assembled and were marched out of the camp. It had been discovered that I was not on parade with them, and this caused a great hullabaloo but off eventually the column marched. I received the all clear and returned to my hut, but had not been there long when a German guard (who fortunately must have been new as he did not know me by sight) came in and ordered that "Lord must accompany me to the Commandant's office". Those in the room looked around at each other and reacting quickly said that Lord had gone out on the march with the other men. As I say, the sentry did not know me and this seemed to satisfy him and off he went, but within minutes it was seen that German sentries were surrounding our area and it was obvious that the Germans were not satisfied. Choosing his time carefully Sam Wickham escorted me surreptitiously over to the hut where I had gone to ground – and down I went again. This time I was to remain there for the best part of a week. The Germans made a thorough search of the camp and threatened others with shooting etc, but although there was a total community of 17,000 men many of whom must have been fully aware that I was still in camp, all German enquiries were met with the consistent reply that I had gone out on the march with the RAF aircrews.

"I was kept in the picture of course and I was later advised by Major Smith, the Senior Medical Officer, that some of the plans formulated had now been put into operation. German nervousness had increased until our security force had been mobilised under RSM Kibble and other Senior Warrant Officers. Major Smith's news then became more serious: that control was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain.

It was thought that I should emerge and I did so walking across to my hut, where the first thing I did was to get a shave. I wondered what the German reaction would be but they did not make any attempt to arrest me or even question me on the events, not did anyone else suffer. The German sentries were still armed and their officers still in control, but we now had two men on sentry with each German soldier. We now placed our security force in operation, and five days before the first elements of the British Army arrived to liberate the camp we were in complete control. We took over the administration including the feeding, and from some warehouses nearby we brought out food and clothing and poured it into all the nationalities in the camp, and there was no trouble at all that could not be controlled."

* * *

Bill Spittles, who lives in Windsor, is a cheerful little man who served in the Berkshire Regiment. He was serving with units of the Second Army trying to reach the 1st Airborne Division at Arnhem, when he and his section were surprised and captured by a German patrol. They eventually reached Stalag XIB where Bill Spittles met RSM Lord for the first time:

"RSM Lord looked as if he was straight from the Guards Depot and he strolled around the camp with a pace stick, his uniform being so carefully repaired that one could not tell that he had been wounded in the arm. I was on a working party outside the camp when RSM Lord approached me to ask if things were alright and then said quietly, "Take no notice but you've got a couple of Dutch lads going to escape today." They had apparently switched two of our working party with Dutchmen so that the men could make an escape bid. Unfortunately the Dutchmen were caught but lasted several days free."

When John Lord organised football tournaments, Bill would go and watch in company with Ray Sherriff who eagerly grasped his arm and asked "Who's got the ball now?"

Bill remembers on another occasion walking about the compound feeling 'down in the dumps' when John Lord strode up behind him and said "Come on lad, don't let these Germans get you down!" and lifted him out of his gloom. On occasions when liberation was near the German sentries were becoming lethargic and were resting their rifles against the wall. John Lord would come along and soon smarten them up sharply. Bill well remembers the lorry returning from Lubeck with Red Cross parcels and states that these saved many lives – and the men concerned deserved medals. Bill attended the funeral of one of his comrades and was very impressed with the turnout. "There was a bugle, Guard of Honour and everything," he exclaimed. He remembers sounds of gunfire as the British Army approached Fallingbomel and the camp became very restive.

Ralph Shackleton was one of the men selected to form the security force and he remembers the arrangements made for the men to take over the camp as soon as British tanks appeared. Order was to be maintained and the force was to do all possible to keep the prisoners inside the camp. RSM Lord was specific about this, pointing out their duty to protect the German civilian population in the nearby countryside and in the town of Fallingbommel. The men were empowered to open fire if necessary.

CSM Allen Watson had remained in charge of the hospital throughout. He remembers that at about ten minutes to nine on the 16th April 1945, he saw a small tank moving along the road near the camp entrance. In front was a German with a horse-drawn vehicle, one of those flat carts of which there were so many remaining in the German army. The driver was frantically hurrying with the tank in his wake. The tank pulled up at the gates and in a moment it was realised, liberation had come!

John Lord's account also describes the moment: "Early on the 16th April, news was received that the British Army were just along the road. I went to the front gate where everything was ready. Our sentries were there and all the nations in their own compounds under control. Along the road came a Honey tank, I shall never forget this arriving at the front gate and others coming along behind. The barbed wire was thronged with men. The first figure out of the tank was a Corporal of the 8th Hussars and spotting me at the gate he came and stood to attention to report. It was a wonderful moment and I shall never forget it. There was only one privilege which I reserved for myself and this was the moment. I took it upon myself to lower the Swastika of the Third Reich and in its place hoisted up our own home made Union Jack which had been placed on the coffins at so many funerals. As I raised it and looked up the flagstaff I can hardly describe my feelings. I felt thankfulness and relief and in company with everyone I inwardly gave thanks to God for this moment."

The Hussars thought that the 6th Airborne Division had beaten them to the camp as the sentries appeared to be so smart. Whilst the joys of liberation spread through the camp RSM Lord led the Hussars officer to his own office where he gave full details of the numbers of prisoners etc. and their immediate needs in food and help. John Lord continues:

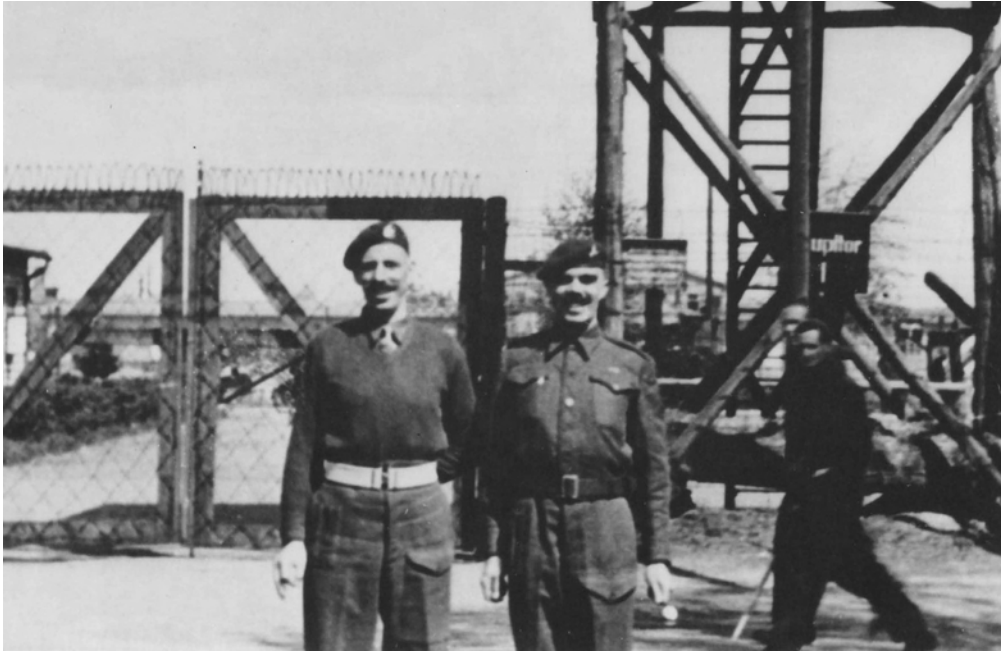
"We thought when the Army arrived that everything would be sorted out and our task would be finished, but of course this was not so because the Army had to push on towards Hamburg and they could not afford to leave forces behind. What inevitably happened was that some of the men got out of the camp and we received reports of some of the other nationalities beginning to set fire to the buildings opposite the camp and to pillage, loot and rape in the outlying farms nearby. I took action very quickly by putting out patrols of my own men and we soon 'contained these matters'. I arranged standing patrols at these farms to prevent some of the appalling incidents which could occur. I am thankful to say that we were successful. The organisation of the British Army for repatriation was quite remarkable and we arranged that the men who had been in captivity the longest went home first. The final group with whom I left departed Stalag XIB nine days after the arrival of the 8th Hussars."

* * *

Former RQMS Bill Ree, serving with the 1st Battalion (Motor) Grenadier Guards told me in a letter:

"On the 21st April 1945 my Battalion was involved as part of the Guards Armoured Division in the run up to Berlin. Information had leaked through the grapevine that Stalag XIB had been liberated and that a number of guardsmen were amongst those who had been imprisoned in this notorious camp.

"As Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant of my battalion I felt it my bounden duty to visit the camp as quickly as possible taking whatever goodies I could to help the men, who had according to all reports, had an extremely uncomfortable period of confinement. Loading my 15cwt truck to capacity I proceeded post-haste to the prison camp. A sentry halted my truck on arrival at the camp guardroom and on enquiring as to whether there were, in fact, any Guardsmen in the camp, I was assured that there were quite a number and to my astonishment he advised me that the British Sergeant Major was none other than John Lord – an old friend of mine. Needless to say, I lost no time in contacting John. He looked much better than I anticipated and his military turn out was quite immaculate; he was in fact wearing the most highly polished pair of motorcycle boots I had ever seen.



RSMs Bill Kibble and John Lord stand outside the gates of Stalag XIB after liberation April 1945.



A happy group of POWs from Stalag XIB, including RSMs John Lord and Bill Kibble soon after liberation. Their smiles clearly indicate – we are going home.

“The prison camp was an enormous complex of buildings each particular group housing its own nationalities. The Polish and Russian camps had apparently suffered considerably from fires started by the prisoners themselves shortly after the camp had been liberated. No such arson had been permitted in the British section! John escorted me around and I was astonished at the ingenuity and inventiveness of the prisoners as evidenced by the improvisations they had made up from old tins, cardboard boxes and other scraps of odd materials they had been able to scrounge.

“The make-shift hospital was a pathetic sight. Luckily there were no more than half a dozen patients but these poor fellows had quite obviously been very short of medical supplies and food for a considerable period.

“John and his group of NCOs had taken over the Camp Commandant’s quarters immediately the camp had been liberated. In addition to his quarters John had also acquired a splendid automatic pistol and leather holster from the former Commandant!”

* * *

For the men of the 1st Airborne Division in Stalag XIB the months of uncertainty were over. No longer the fear that they might be treated as hostages. There would be food, comfort and leave. Then? For many there would be training in readiness for the Japanese theatre of operations, and this promised to be as hard as had been the European struggle.

For now however, the hundreds of British prisoners of war were heading for home, that magic word which had so dominated their thoughts.

Upon arrival in England the men separated in search of trains, and when John Lord was walking through the Kings Cross Station a large group of the former Canadian POWs at Stalag XIB saw him and running over talked to and clapped him on the back. Their good wishes for the future were particularly pleasing to him.

* * *

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE PARACHUTE REGIMENT INFANTRY TRAINING CENTRE

The war in Europe and the Far East eventually ended and following a period of home leave John Lord became the first non-commissioned officer to give evidence in London at the Judge Advocate General's Office. This was to assist the work of the War Crimes Commission in relation to conditions in Stalag XIB.

Then as Allen Watson advises: "After home leave we received our future postings and John Lord went as RSM to the No. 2 Infantry Training Centre for The Parachute Regiment which was based at Ross Barracks, Shorncliffe. The No.1 Training Centre was situated on the Isle of Wight. Before long, with the reduction of the Armed Forces, the No.2 Training Centre would be closed down and John Lord would become RSM of the No. 1 Training Centre at Bulford. I went to Shorncliffe as a Company Sergeant Major, then later as RSM to the Depot, The Parachute Regiment."

Lt. Colonel Reeves Clark MC, Military Knight of Windsor writes as follows: "I think it will be agreed by any regular soldier of that time that a most difficult period followed the end of the war. On the advent of VE Day the relaxation of effort came too suddenly and too comprehensively to allow a planned and orderly return of the Army – and indeed of the country – to normality. I can think of no better simile than that of an obese lady divesting herself at the end of a hard day of an extremely constricting corset! Visions of ease and no further physical danger seemed to prompt everyone to let go. Moral values were rapidly declining and the effect of this of course is still felt today. It was not until shortly after VE Day, 7th May 1945, on which date I had been posted to the No.2 Parachute Regiment Training Centre at Shorncliffe, that I was to again meet RSM Lord. I had known him briefly in the 1st Airborne Division. He was posted to the Centre as RSM and upon his arrival in the early summer of 1945 his fame had preceded him since the press had published news of his exploits in – and on handing over to the advancing Allies – the German POW camp.

"His return to the Regiment rather resembled the addition of starch to a wet shirt, not that the unit was at all sloppy or limp, in fact it was an exceedingly good one, but the vital part of any unit, its backbone of Warrant Officers and Sergeants received just that extra stiffening which he imparted by sheer leadership and example.

"On the occasion of the passing out parade of my company of trainees before General Urquhart, RSM Lord had paid such attention to the preliminary drawing-up of the parade, that the General went out of his way to pay us the compliment of saying he had never seen anything so good in any unit of the Army, not even the Guards. Shortly afterwards, on my taking over Second in Command of the unit under Lt. Colonel Tom Firbank, Coldstream Guards, I became more closely associated with John Lord."

* * *

Raymond Tyler, formerly 6th Battalion, The Parachute Regiment attended an NCO cadre in early 1946 at the ITC Shorncliffe. He writes:

"Without a doubt I can say that the six weeks spent on the course were the most difficult during my service in the Army, although I must add that they made me a better soldier and NCO. The metronome beat out the time during drill parades and I can vouch for the fact that on one occasion RSM Lord had the whole parade doubling around the square with rifles held aloft because someone had displeased him. During this time, on the 10th March 1946, Field Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery received the Freedom of Dover and The Parachute Regiment provided the Guard of Honour. RSM Lord prepared and drilled this Guard as only he could. He excelled at this type of duty for the big occasion. I was extremely proud to be a member of this Guard of Honour and I am sure that RSM Lord who prepared the men so meticulously was proud of them too."

John Alcock, successor to John Lord as RSM of The Parachute Regiment ITC states that he "started in the Coldstream Guards and became a parachutist by joining the Special Air Service. On discharge I spent some

time in the Police Force but re-enlisted and was sent straight to the Training and Holding Battalion as a Company Sergeant Major. They had a Sergeant's Mess function that night when I arrived. I was standing at the bar having a drink when I walked John Lord with the Adjutant. John always peered around when he entered a room, and he looked at me and noticing the Brigade of Guards tie came across straight away. He introduced himself and asked about me. I told him that I had just re-joined the Army, and where I'd been. He replied "You're probably just the man I'm looking for." This was typical of John Lord of course for when he made up his mind he acted. He explained that he was the Regimental Sergeant Major of the Training Centre, which was where they trained new recruits to The Parachute Regiment. He asked if I was interested in going along and taking a Company for a while to decide whether he would have me as Drill Sergeant there. He asked me to attend the Adjutant's office the following morning for interview and that's how I joined the Training Centre still in civilian clothing – indeed – I took over a Company of recruits still in civilian clothing.



The Guard of Honour provided by No.2 ITC, The Parachute Regiment for Field Marshall Sir Bernard Montgomery's Freedom of Dover on 10th March 1946 during Rehearsals.

"I was told "Your Company is due to pass out in three weeks time and providing they do well you'll be my Drill Sergeant." They in fact got very high marks so I was made Drill Sergeant and I stayed with John Lord at the Centre until I was promoted to Regimental Sergeant Major myself.

"The normal way that an instructor came to the Training Centre was by applying for a vacancy which was published on detail boards around all of the units, and in this case they would come to the Centre on trial, and would remain only if satisfactory. Another method would be for John Lord to select the best men attending drill courses and he would fit a man into the next vacancy, or would make a vacancy if he really wanted the man.

"When I came to the Centre I had not taken drill for a time, and I had to cast my mind back to the days when I had been an instructor at the Guards Training Battalion. Not having shouted for a long time I needed to go into the sports field at the Bulford Barracks at night to shout until my voice returned. One had to shout orders 'from the stomach' and often at first at the Centre I would go back into my office, close the door and double up with pain because I was tearing the muscles. It then passed off and drilling became normal again. The Commanding Officer at that time was Lt. Colonel P J Luard and the Adjutant was Major F W Lindley. The RSM of course worked very closely with both CO and Adjutant."

Major Frank Lindley you will remember, met John Lord immediately after the Arnhem battle. He remembers: "My work as Adjutant of the ITC in 1947 was greatly assisted by RSM Lord. He kept his eye on the young officers as well as the recruits, and gave them advice in a most respectful manner regarding their turn-out and especially regarding their haircuts! He lived with his family in quarters opposite the second guardroom, a very strategic position, and many a young soldier on sentry outside the guardroom, in the early hours of the morning, was dismayed to see the head of Mr Lord appear out of his window to admonish him for being idle."

* * *

As a National Servicemen in 1946 each soldier received an initial period of six weeks training at a Primary Training Centre. This acted as a clearing house as soldiers went to every regiment and corps on completing the PTC course. Volunteers were still needed for the Parachute Regiment and a small number were duly drafted from our PTC in Bodmin to arrive at the No.1 Parachute Regiment Infantry Training Centre at Aldershot in October 1946. Other volunteers were to arrive from the various PTCs around the country, and this whole intake was numbered 17 and from then it was known as PR17. First impressions are rarely wrong in the Army as I was to find on my first day at the ITC. Upon arrival we were told to wait outside the main guard room and we did so with our full field service marching order and kit bags, and took stock of our new circumstances.

We could see the sentry outside the guard room but his drill movements were strange to us and were carried out at twice the usual speed. He seemed to shine all over from his silver cap badge down to his glass-like boots. His rifle, bayonet, brasses, everything shone! We compared this with our floppy large khaki berets with plastic General Service Corp cap badges. Then we noticed a squad of soldiers approaching us. They were obviously training and were wearing the Airborne Special Steel helmets, PT kit, boots, jerseys with a webbing belt worn at the middle. As they approached nearer we could sense their fitness and as they doubled they glowed with health and most were grinning at our presence. They doubled past at a good pace, boot studs ringing loudly – and went on running right out of sight along the road. We glanced at each other thoughtfully but then were startled by a sudden bugle call – followed by the sound of many running boots from within the barracks. This placed seemed to hum with activity.

A Corporal came out of the Guard room and glanced at us. He was immaculately turned out and very clipped in speech. He indicated that when our name was called we should enter the guardroom to be posted to a company. Our names were called out alphabetically and as 'Alford' I was to find myself a reluctant 'guinea pig' in a thousand unpleasant situations during the next few months. My name was called and gathering my rifle and kit bag I struggled into the guardroom only to be sent reeling out again by a whip crack of a voice – telling me to leave my kit bag outside and get in again – only this time at the double!

We seemed to be doubling for the next two hours and were not anything like so tired as we thought from our journey. We had a quick kit inspection and were issued with fresh items, and were then taken to our barrack room. We learned that we were in Sergeant Randle's squad of A Company. He later came to look us over and seemed pessimistic about our chances of surviving the three months course. Nevertheless – he explained what was required, and then admitting that he was a man of few words deposited a large tin of floor polish on the table, and pointing to a heavy bumper polisher advised us to have the floor like a mirror by morning!



The Sergeants Mess The Parachute Regiment Infantry Training Centre, Aldershot, December 1946.

We polished and bumpered the floor all evening until it shone – and were told not unpleasantly in the morning by Sergeant Randle that it would do for a start. He showed us how to lay out our kit and then inspected the results. He was clearly unhappy from the start and as he came to me he studied my mess tins which were clean but not polished. "These are filthy objects!" he decided, "I shall see these again tomorrow morning. What is your name?" Well I shall keep an eye on you!" A poor start I thought gloomily but the Sergeant went on to describe the full routine. Everything had to be done at the double and bed spaces had to be kept spotless. Equipment would be

laid out immaculately each day. A cleaning hour would be worked every evening between 6 and 7 p.m. when all equipment would be blanched and polished. We would be allowed out of barracks only when we resembled soldiers, which would clearly take a long time with some of us! We would be issued with a Regimental cap badge but, would have to qualify for a Red Beret, Regimental shoulder flashes, and the Pegasus signs. Any skiving or idleness would be punished by a charge, and three charges could result in our being returned to our parent unit. We would not be allowed to take part in the morning muster parade but would watch for a couple of days. The Regimental Sergeant Major, J.C. Lord, would inspect us at some stage, by which time all of our equipment had to be perfect or God help us! Now in our spare moments we should clean the barrack room table with a razor blade, and polish the coal bucket!

The following morning we were marched to the edge of the barrack square where PR17 assembled, and turned out to be an intake of approximately 150 men. We watched with awe as hundreds of recruits marched briskly to the square in groups, all with rifles at the slope. They halted with a crash of boots, ordered arms and stood at ease. They formed up in squads at the rear of the square and waited. There was a noticeable tenseness about the atmosphere. Our Sergeant glanced back at us saying sharply, "Stand still now – the RSM's coming!"

We watched keenly as footsteps rang out on the tarmac and then two figures strode out through the ranks and out onto the centre of the square. I have never seen such soldierly figures! They marched, halted and turned about with absolute precision. This was Regimental Sergeant Major J C Lord and his Drill Sergeant J Alcock. After a swift survey of the scene J C Lord spoke to the parade quietly yet clearly and we all heard his comments, which encouraged a sharp response on this chilly morning – so that we could soon get warm. Then followed a louder caution, "Settle down – settle down!" There then came the sharpest command I had ever heard and the loudest. "Right... markers! As you were!" came almost as a single order. The group of Instructor NCOs formed on the right of the parade had seemed to move as one, but obviously not quickly enough. There followed a series of sharp orders which galvanised the instructors group into action, marching and drilling at Light Infantry pace – until each NCO stood in position – patterned across the square – in readiness for the training squads to form up against them. RSM Lord then warned the waiting recruits to move sharply on receiving the order to get on parade. There followed a whip-crack order, "Get on... parade! As you were!" and he explained that that was not good enough at all – and that the left foot must shoot out on the word of command. When next ordered to get on parade, the several hundred men marched briskly onto their respective NCO, and with boots crashing came to a halt.

The stage of training of each squad was immediately clear. The junior squads at the rear of the parade were dressed in khaki berets as we were, but as one progressed forwards, the squads had a thicker sprinkling of red berets among them, until the front 'Senior Squads' were immaculately turned out with full Regimental shoulder flashes and Pegasus and their drill was as smart as I had ever seen. It was obviously in the squads situated in the middle of the parade – where the real pressure was on, as one could see the occasional recruit in khaki beret and with no regimental signs, alongside the majority who had obviously qualified. So far as drill was concerned, however, on the first morning the whole parade appeared frighteningly smart to us! Some of the squads were dressed in battle order ready for field training, others in PT kit, and many squads were prepared for drill, and following the muster parade we watched some of the squads going through their paces. They were senior squads and were practising double sentry drill, in readiness (we were warned) for guard duties which would be performed after our ninth week.

Having considered ourselves drill trained, we were ordered to forget everything about PTC drill and then we commenced to learn squad drill from the basic movements onwards. Initially we were humiliated to find ourselves having to 'call out the time' but we soon went on to more interesting ways of learning drill. We played 'O'Grady says.' The Sergeants gave a series of drill orders very quickly, but we were to move only after he commenced with the words 'O'Grady says'. Drill was carried out much more aggressively – with boots punching the ground. The orders were also given in the crisp piercing commands of the Guards Brigade, as many if not all of the drill instructors were Guards trained. '*Esprit de Corps*' was urged constantly upon us and we were encouraged to use 'bags of swagger'. Punishments were very frequent and most of the camp fatigues were carried out by defaulters – and it was remarkably easy to become one! If one was slow or dozy, there came biting sarcasm, but one would be charged for any idleness on parade or equipment fault.



**John Lord when Regimental Sergeant Major. The Parachute Regiment Infantry Training Centre.
(Former Drill Sergeant John Alcock identified the order as being 'Eyes ... Front') Date 1946/47.**

There came a swift escort to the guardroom for any fault noticed by RSM Lord. A common punishment was for the whole squad to be doubled around the square with rifles held aloft. Probably all of these lessons were necessary in the early weeks of training, but as squads gained expertise such punishments became unnecessary and pride and enjoyment developed. We were aware of our status as we became more senior and there really was a vast difference between the junior and most senior squads.

Between the 4th and 6th weeks of the twelve week course, most of the recruits qualified for red berets and regimental flashes and Pegasus signs. One or two members were returned to their units on the grounds of having too many charges, but we were in the main by now - an enthusiastic and confident group - eager to compete against the other squads of our intake. Sgt. Randle then went away on a course, and his place was taken by a stocky, tough instructor named Sgt. Young. He fairly chased us around, and practised a warm up session before each drill parade which made our heads whirl. The evening shining hour was a silent no-smoking parade in which recruits sat astride their beds and methodically blancoed and polished every piece of equipment. Initially the Sergeant made sure that there was silence, but then began to explain various matters to us during that time. Later, however Sergeant Young actually read to us from a book and as this was meant kindly it was greatly appreciated. It was marvellous to hear a seasoned paratroop NCO reading in a crisp parade ground voice, the sensitive bits of the book - relating to the 'girl seductively creeping upstairs to her lover' etc. Sgt Young was tough but kind and he gained a standard second to none in the intake, but then all of the squads claimed to have the best instructor.

Each morning we faced RSM Lord on the muster parade, wondering when the day would come for his personal inspection of our squad. Often it appeared as if he was walking our way – and a running commentary would be given within the squad, “He’s passed B Company, coming for A Company. He’s passed the senior squad – hell it’s us!” and then “No –he’s turned off,” great relief from us all. It is a mystery to me that I cannot remember our squad ever being inspected by RSM Lord!

At a late stage of the course RSM Lord began to drill the whole intake in readiness for the Passing Out Parade. These drill parades and rehearsals were spectacular for young soldiers, and the part most commonly remembered will be the ‘Advance in Review Order’ in which the whole parade in line march forward to the music of the ‘*British Grenadiers*’ and halt on the 15th pace. It was on these rehearsals that we realised to the full the quality of RSM Lord’s instruction. He would demonstrate movements, patiently explaining how and why things were done.



**Regimental Sergeant Major John Lord and Drill Sergeant John Alcock
on the square at the ITC Aldershot**

We also prepared for guard duties by learning double sentry drill. There were two guard rooms at the Infantry Training Centre and the guard mounting for these 24-hour duties provided whole new opportunities for being placed on a charge. I can remember two very different incidents when on guard, the first occurring at 3 a.m. when I was on sentry at the second guard room and felt it safe to have a slight stretch. Immediately J C Lord’s voice filled the area ordering me to “Smarten yourself up sentry – march up and down!” and I did so for at least half an hour. I never relaxed again on guard, indeed, when later on the main guard room sentry – again in the early hours of the morning, I was approached by a kindly Guard Commander with a request that I carry out my about turns – more quietly as I was keeping those off duty awake!

Guard duties were maintained at many places in 1946 as all of the empty barracks in the area had to be patrolled in order to avoid squatters moving in. Other unusual guard duties were mounted at the Airborne Forces Museum, and at the detention ward of the local military hospital. We particularly enjoyed the Museum guard duty as it afforded an opportunity for a good look around. Our Guard Commander was a lover of serious music, and I remember him playing records of a famous Italian tenor throughout our night duty. Many a young recruit may have received an unusual introduction to serious music during this duty.

Our weapon training was excellent and I have always thought that we had some of the finest instructors in the world. Many were ex Arnhem men and knew just what they were teaching about. We went on battle courses in the nearby woods, and enjoyed night schemes. Whenever there was a distance to cover we were trained to run and march alternatively, and eventually we ran as naturally as we would walk. The whole training area resounded with the singing or whistling of squads of recruits marching to or from the weapons ranges. In our squad was an excellent Scots recruit who hailed from a town providing the world championship pipe band, and he taught us most of the pipe marches which we would loudly whistle during all of our route marches. We also had in our intake a popular and philosophical recruit who possessed only one record, but whom nevertheless played that frequently, and after a hard day's training we would often hear the strains of "*Who's Sorry Now?*"

On one occasion the whole Training Centre was ordered to attend a football match to support one of our teams which reached an important final. A very large crowd gathered – indeed so many that most of us could not see the game, so we read – or played cards or simply skived. RSM Lord however circled the area urging us to "Cheer for your Regiment" and a section of the crowd near him would loudly do so. It soon became clear where he was by the cheers as much of the crowd was otherwise quiet. I was amazed at his keenness and fortitude.

During the course at the Centre, every recruit took part in an eliminating boxing competition, and also, as previously mentioned by Eric Tims, a milling competition. The boxing was predictable enough, but the milling was quite fearsome! It called for no boxing skill but an ability to throw punches non-stop from all angles for the 2 minute rounds. These competitions did not usually last for long – but one could ship a considerable amount of punishment before hitting the deck. The finals of both boxing and milling were held near the end of our course, and RSM Lord acted as an excellent compere – indeed he was to introduce some of ABA televised contests in later years.

Eventually came the great day of our Passing Out Parade, and despite the winter conditions this was a high quality parade remembered, I am sure, by every man taking part. I believe that General Sir Frederick Browning inspected our parade, and he awarded the Best Recruit with a 'Browning belt'.

A fellow recruit of those months, Joe Smith who comes from Cumbria, became ill when training with PR12 and therefore had the good fortune to train with PR17. He remembers John Lord asking for volunteers to go out fighting heath fires during the very hot summer, and the RSM actually went out with these groups. This was extremely hard work and on return to camp would organise extra food for them, and on occasion treated some to liquid refreshment.

Joe also recalls the guard duties, in particular one sultry wet night when RSM Lord turned out the guard for inspection. The weather caused bayonets to have a covering of rust upon them, and when the RSM inspected the front rank he placed every man on a charge – and then every man in the rear rank, followed by the Guard Commander. Joe remembers that only one man escaped as he was on sentry at the second guard room – unfortunately that man was not Joe.

Joe describes the Centre appropriately as "knocking everything out of you for a time, and then building you up – in the way they wanted." We completed our parachute training together and were later posted to the 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, in Palestine. After 32 years we met again, and both agree that those three months at the Infantry Training Centre at Aldershot, under RSM J C Lord, were the most memorable months of our lives.

* * *

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE PURPOSE BEHIND THE REGIME

It was fascinating after thirty-four years, for me as a former recruit to meet John Alcock the former Drill Sergeant of the ITC, and I was amazed to find him looking almost exactly the same person. I am sure that he could go on parade now with only minimal preparation. I asked him a great many questions as will be evident from his following comments:

“The muster parades at the Training Centre were very good, but they started so far as John Lord and I were concerned, in the RSM’s office where he and I would inspect each other. There was a long mirror by the side of the door and I can never remember either of us going out on parade without checking ourselves in it.

“John Lord also had a magnetic blackboard in his office and we would formulate drill movements there. He would always discuss his plans with me, and if I had any suggestions to make on drill he would be willing to look at them. We always wore white gloves on parade, and the muster parade really began when he and I left the RSMs office. We would set the pace going down through the barracks to the square. Recruits would have already marched down in pairs or groups to the square marching smartly at the slope. We would march down to the square, turn about, and John Lord would caution the parade with the words “Settle down – settle down.” This was from the Grenadier Guards, as a lot of his orders were. John Lord’s next comment would be remembered by all of the recruits. He would say “We are now going to revel in God’s sunshine!” and he would then proceed to call out the markers and order the recruits to get on parade.

“Another of John Lord’s commands was “Gain height!” Recruits were often very apprehensive on parade, and John’s comments tended to settle them down. His voice was unique and he had a very penetrating pitch. The ITC square was a very difficult one, with nothing for the sound to rebound from. That is why the RSM stood with his back to the sports ground shouting towards the barracks – so that his voice could rebound from it – otherwise the sound would have been lost towards the sports area. Also there was aircraft sound to shout over.

“Going back to the muster parade; after marching on together John Lord and I would march up and down on the flank of the parade before handing over to the Adjutant. We would march up and down with our pace sticks until the Adjutant arrived. This was purely to pass the time and keep the parade alert, but as soon as the Adjutant came on to the square John Lord would say to me “Right, Drill Sergeant, that’s all that’s required.” And I would then go to the rear of the parade until the end, when the squads would march off to their various training periods.

“I believe there were three week, six week and eleven week Passing Out stages, and there was a pattern of rewards at various stages. This system had already been present at the Training Centre before John took over and was, I believe, introduced by the previous RSM, RSM Hamilton. Much of the regime came from the Brigade of Guards and of course RSM Hamilton would have gone through a Guards Drill Course. Actually I cringe whenever I say ‘RSM’ because John Lord would never have that. He demanded the full title of ‘Regimental Sergeant Major’. This was correct as the soldier had worked for that rank and deserved the full title.

“Recruits were subject to ‘back-squadding’ and occasionally to be returned to their parent unit. Woe betide any recruit whom John thought unfit for the regiment, he would be out of the ITC within two hours. It was part of the Guards system that defaulters, those on ‘Show clean’ parades or on extra fatigues would all parade together at 3.30pm. They would be inspected by Sergeant Plunkett, the Provost Sergeant and allocated to work.

“Course instructors of both drill and weapon training were always inspected on muster-parade, and if found at fault would be placed on Adjutant’s orders. This was correct, of course, because recruits were highly inspected so it went right up and down through the ranks. It was all part of the pattern of the training centre, which was to provide pressure to a breaking point to bring out the best in everybody. One actually ended up with the ‘cream’. That’s what the Parachute Regiment wanted, and that’s what it needed for men to get out of planes – after all, you couldn’t ask the man in the street to do that. Most of the training was at the double, and the road run-and walk system covered large distances. During the first few minutes of drill ‘warming up

periods' were used in order to get the best out of recruits. They had to be chased about to get moving.

"Weapon-training instructors did not normally come under John Lord for training but he would have responsibility for their discipline and turn-out. They probably came from the Small Arms School, and the weapon training group were more or less a section of their own. One or two of the weapon-training instructors were also excellent drill instructors. The standard of training at the Training Centre was always very high and we always thought that we had to cater for the best of the National Service volunteers.

"It used to worry me that John would overwork himself on the barrack square. We would often get saturated in the rain, then he would go into the Mess, have a couple of quick rums, and then go back on the square. He drove himself unmercifully and I often wondered whether he undermined his health. He would always be on duty and the reason that recruits were shouted at by him when on guard duty at 3am. in the morning was probably because he himself had been shouted at in a similar way when on guard at Buckingham Palace or at St James's Palace.

"I believe that double sentry drill came into the course during the ninth week of training. It was similar to Guards drill. John and I would rehearse this alone in the drill shed to make sure that we each had the same understanding. I found his approach to be different on occasions as his was the Grenadier Guards approach, whilst mine was Coldstream Guards, of course. There were slight differences.

"I used to drill the Corps of Drums a good deal. Of course the music was not our responsibility. On the Passing Out Parade there was a great deal taken from Trooping of the Colour. The final march off was for the Parachute Regiment alone as the movement represented a parachute canopy opening out. The two columns would turn inwards and slow march off the square to '*Aulde Lang Syne*'. On later passing out parades some movements were made on the tap of the drum. The 'eyes front' might have been so. John was always keen on the 'flicking of the head' to the right or to the front. We used to practice this, as it made a parade.

"The rifle used at the ITC was the new model jungle rifle with flash eliminator. It made an excellent light airborne weapon and was very smart in drill. I think both John and I preferred the steel-butted rifle however, as with the longer heavier rifle came also the long bayonet, and there was nothing nicer on a drill parade than a long row of these bayonets.

"The 'shining parades' were of course taken from the Brigade of Guards and were intended to form a strong habit of keeping one's equipment perfectly clean at all times. There had to be a higher standard at the Training Centre than when serving with battalions. Recruits were not left to think for themselves at the ITC, but in later training and when posted to a battalion would be expected to do so.

"At the Centre, John Lord would insist upon good aggressive hard drill and would be constantly exhorting recruits to "Punch the ground hard with your feet". I had previously worked in the Guards at about 120 paces to the minute but I believe it quickened at the ITC to 140 paces, so that every movement would have to be quicker. The lack of usual 'pause' may have been the influence of Light Infantry drill.

"On the occasions we had a Sergeants Mess evening, John would always be a very good turn, he was a good singer, but his best turn was what he called the 'Chelsea Pensioners drill'. He would sit himself in an armchair and would have all the Sergeants in the Mess lined up in chairs, and would then put the whole Mess through this drill. The armchair would be a 'wheelchair' and he would go through a whole parade, using his parade voice, all the drill being carried out in 'wheelchairs'.

"John Lord would make a point of visiting nearby Airborne Sergeants Messes as he was the Senior Regimental Sergeant Major, and felt it his duty to maintain the standards throughout the Regiment. I would go with him on some of these visits, and I remember an occasion when the barracks RSM came over cordially to us and offered to get drinks. John replied that he would "have a drink after you have had a haircut" and he meant that. This was John Lord. I once heard him say a similar thing to a high ranking officer. He spoke with proper courtesy and said "you should get your hair cut, Sir. " I might have been worried for him at the time, but didn't realise the power of the man. The Regimental Sergeant Major is of course powerful and not only supervises other ranks, but junior officers too.

"If an officer made a mistake or was untidy on parade he would certainly be on Adjutant's orders the following morning on RSM's report. The Regimental Sergeant Major would give evidence and the Adjutant would take the matter off his hands and deal with it. The officer might well receive an extra duty. In the case of Senior Warrant

Officers, they would be called into the RSM's office, and he would always insist that I was present on those occasions. He would simply tell the Warrant Officer where he had gone wrong, tear him off a strip if necessary, tell him what he wanted in future and would expect him to do it. John Lord could be also be very human, and he had a very high sense of responsibility."

* * *

A former instructor at the Training Centre, Sergeant Richard Taylor who now lives in Sao Paulo, Brazil, South America, supplied some excellent photographs of John Lord and of the Sergeants Mess at the ITC. He also remembers when John Lord sought for, and eventually gained the ITC Corps of Drums which was organised by a Guards music instructor, who incidentally wrote the Regimental March. RSM Lord initiated the Beating Retreat which was a joy to the retired 'old sweats' living in Aldershot who came to the barracks to watch the parade and re-live their pre-war Army days.

Richard Taylor well remembers the Passing Out Parades and recalls, "Those young lads parading behind the Flag Company were as proud as punch that they had made the grade, and one felt as an instructor that the effort had been more than worthwhile". He also remembers that John Lord could be a very human person, and when necessary almost a fatherly figure to young recruits.

Former Sergeant Instructor Peter Lovett arrived at the ITC from the Depot in January 1947. He remembers: "Although we had a high standard of discipline in the battalions, it was a different world to enter the ITC, and I shuddered when I felt the atmosphere. I was regimental in attitude, but some of the NCOs were awaiting demobilisation and did not relish RSM Lord's discipline. One or two of them ended up in the guardroom. The training of recruits had to be thorough as they were enlisting in the regiment almost direct from 'civvy street', whereas wartime volunteers had been accepted only after six months service in an infantry unit.

"RSM Lord ran the Centre with a very firm hand but he was as disciplined with himself as others, and he could reveal a fatherly attitude towards the recruits. I will always remember him as a man alone at the top – a man who never wavered".

* * *

Some two years after John Lord left Stalag XIB he received a letter from former Corporal Ray Sheriff and was clearly delighted to learn of Ray's progress at St Dunstons. Ray has kindly allowed John Lord's reply to be included. It reads as follows:

"My Dear Sheriff,

I was delighted to receive your excellent letter and to hear how well you are getting along. Many times I have wondered what became of you, and how things were with you. Your ears should have burned many times since I took over the training of recruits, to whom I have to talk on the subject of discipline. I always mention you and your conduct in Stalag XIB.

Of the inspiration you were to other men and of the way you first came in and I saw you sitting in the straw. After all those months you stood up when I spoke to you. I cannot describe my feelings at that moment but I have always wanted to tell you how I thought it typified our Battalion and the great feeling of comradeship and respect there was mutually between us.

You may not realise the grand job you did in that prison camp. Your unfailing courage, cheerfulness and simple dignity was an example to all men and helped me in a difficult task immeasurably. I do wish you would come to Aldershot for the weekend; I shall be delighted to put you up at my house. Come on Friday and stay for the weekend, you won't meet many of the old boys but there are many who would like to meet you including Sgt. Major Watson, now at the Depot. Practically any weekend is alright except 11th/12th May when I shall be at Portsmouth where we find the Guard of Honour to the Royal Family on their return from South Africa.

Just let me know as early as possible. I am afraid there is no parachute jumping in this area as that has all moved to near Oxford."

Ray became a close friend of John Lord in future years visiting the family on several occasions, and he states: "It was strangely amusing to me to lay in bed and be served a large mug of tea by the Maestro himself, often prepared in ceremonial garb prior to conducting a large parade". It clearly mattered a great deal to John Lord to have regained contact with Ray Sheriff.

In 1964 the 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment were in action with a commando unit in the Radfan operations where one of the Company Sergeant Majors, Tony Arnold, gained distinction and had a ridge concerned in the action named 'Arnold's Spur' in recognition. It is now part of the Regiment's history that Tony Arnold became Depot Regimental Sergeant Major. It is not realised, however, that RSM Arnold trained under John Lord, and he writes:

"When I first came into contact with RSM Lord I was immediately impressed with the immaculate spectacle of the man. Tall, well built, impeccably dressed, handsome, with a strong military face and a voice I thought belonged at least to a Colonel, but with a power that was a delight to hear. A voice that carried across and beyond the parade ground, clear, sharp and with a tone and pitch of an opera star.

"He was already a legend and I a humble private on the day that our cadre formed up on the barrack square for the RSM's inspection. On coming to a young Lance Corporal who was untidy, the RSM said "It's not very often I swear Corporal – but this is a bloody poor show!". In all the twenty five years or so that I knew J C Lord that was the only occasion I heard him swear, and that is why the incident and the exact words are as clear to me today as they were all that time ago.

"I wanted to be an NCO and went to the RSM to ask how I ought to go about it. He said that I would have to take a test the same as many other lads who also wanted to be NCOs. Education tests followed, and I was very disappointed with the results. I thought that having been given the chance and having failed, I was sure to get a rocket from the RSM. Sure enough I was soon detailed to report to his office, and there, standing in front of the great man, expecting the heavens to open with his wrath, I was amazed to hear him speaking to me kindly, telling me that I had not done so well as I would have liked, and therefore would not be attending that NCOs course, but I was to continue studying and working hard and he was sure that I would be an NCO later. I never forgot his encouraging words, nor did I ever forget the wonderful example he set.

"I studied and later became a Warrant Officer and modelling myself upon him I tried hard to become the sort of RSM that J C would have wanted. When I later had the honour to be the Regimental Sergeant Major of the 3rd Battalion of The Parachute Regiment, it was also a great privilege to have as guests John Lord and his wife. We enjoyed his after dinner stories and these often referred to his days in Stalag XIB."

* * *

Having completed their period of training at the ITC, Intake PR17 now moved to Upper Heyford where the Army Parachute Training School was situated. The training routine was entirely different, with emphasis being learning to fall correctly so that injuries did not follow, and the various techniques of controlling a parachute. The parachute course could normally be completed in under three weeks, but because of heavy snow our course lasted for six weeks. We spent a great deal of time clearing snow from the runways, and also digging our way to Bicester in order to obtain our rations. There were virtually no drill parades, but there came a time when the course was at a loose end with no immediate thing to do. Suddenly a voice urged the course to "Settle down, settle down" and this was followed by "Right, we're now going to revel in God's sunshine". One of our recruits could mimic RSM Lord's voice and there followed one of those unforgettable moments when everything was put into a parade which had no relevance at all. Many of the Royal Air Force men stopped to watch this 'parade' which became almost as smart as if at the Centre itself. Our 'RSM' sent us off the parade several times as "Not good enough" and he had the right markers working like Trojans. Joe Smith also remembers this mock parade which surely was a great compliment to RSM Lord and a mark of our respect for the ITC.

Lieutenant Colonel Reeves Clark was at that time the Commanding Officer of the Parachute Training School and when I recently had the pleasure of meeting him at Windsor, he well remembered that harsh winter of 1947 and the consequent pile up of course members, which eventually led to men doing several jumps in a day to complete the course.

The men of PR17 eventually completed their parachute course and were awarded the Parachute badge. Further training followed and finally the course divided up with soldiers being posted to each of the many active Parachute battalions then serving in Europe and the Middle East. Little did we realise that the Training and Holding Battalion would be discontinued in November 1947, and that The Parachute Regiment Infantry Training Centre would close in July 1948.

John Alcock remembers that period, “The Training Centre in John Lord’s day was in full swing. No-one lost by taking the ITC course. Even if a recruit was returned to his parent unit he would shine in another regiment as they would not demand the same standard. With no wish to denigrate other regiments, I am sure that the standard of training at that time was on an equivalent with the Guards Brigade. Other people came to observe the Training Centre, and I remember Regimental Sergeant Major Brand of the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, bringing a party of cadets to watch one of the passing out parades. This was also a social occasion, a great night.

“In 1947 I had been promoted Regimental Sergeant Major of SASTA. I was well involved with this work when I received word that RSM John Lord had taken an appointment at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, and that I was considered to be the only person able to take over his position at the Parachute Training Centre at Aldershot. I was rather apprehensive at first but hoped that I would be able to carry things on. After all, I looked upon myself as a protégé of his.

“In point of fact I followed the same pattern and a similar regime developed. I was in fact to meet John Lord again soon when he organised the first training conference for Regimental Sergeant Majors at the RMA, Sandhurst. I enjoyed the rank of RSM very much and was sorry when the ITC was closed down within a year. I was commissioned but felt after serving as RSM that I had been demoted. Looking back I think without question that the happiest years in the Army for me were spent with John Lord at the Parachute Regiment Training Centre. It was the ultimate to me to be asked to take his place when he left for the RMA Sandhurst.”

Having left the Royal Military College Sandhurst as a Company Sergeant Major in August 1941, to become a parachutist, Regimental Sergeant Major J C Lord returned in August 1947, to what had now become the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst.

* * *

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

JOHN LORD'S ARRIVAL AT ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY, SANDHURST MAJOR L.C. DROUET REMEMBERS THE SELECTION COURSE

At the age of 39 years John Lord replaced RSM Hackett for a short time as Regimental Sergeant Major of New College, Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst.

In June 1948 the Regimental Sergeant Major of the Academy, A J Brand, retired from the British Army having served for thirty-two years. Arthur Brand had joined the Grenadier Guards in France at the age of 20 years in 1915. He remained in the Guards and was awarded the MBE for service in South Africa. He became Regimental Sergeant Major in 1937 and served as RSM at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst for eleven years. Upon retirement he was awarded MVO 5th Class by His Majesty King George VI. His successor was RSM J C Lord MBE and there is no doubt that with this appointment he achieved one of his greatest ambitions.

Colonel M G Farmer, when College Commander of Old College, RMA Sandhurst writes: "A great body of military men would pass through Sandhurst during John Lord's time as RSM; not only Officer Cadets, but members of the staff, Officers, WOs and NCOs. I arrived however, as an Officer Cadet with Intake 4 which was the first intake that RSM Lord had from the beginning. He was associated with Intakes 1 and 2 when the Commandant was Major General Sir Hugh Stockwell KCB CB DSO. I did not know John Lord personally but I certainly came under his spell on the drill square."

General Sir Hugh Stockwell well remembers his time as Commandant at RMA Sandhurst between 1948 and 1951 and writes that "John Lord was the Regimental Sergeant Major during the majority of my time as Commandant and his influence upon all of the Officer Cadets who passed through Sandhurst at that time was quite extraordinary. He was kind and gentle with even the most backward of the cadets, yet firm and exacting in demanding, expecting and obtaining the very best of each cadet.

"He was immaculate and demanded and received the highest standard in the Sergeant's Mess to which on several occasions I had the privilege to be invited. He was an excellent confidante, and someone to whom I could turn at any time for sensible personal and sound advice. In every way he was a fine soldier, probably one of the finest Warrant Officers that the Army has produced throughout its long history.

"Having held command in the Airborne Forces before coming to the RMA Sandhurst, I was glad of his experience as a wartime parachute soldier. He gave me enormous confidence and assisted over a busy period as I had to take over at Sandhurst only a short time before the first intake was due to pass out. Mr. Lord was very much, therefore, the right hand man. It was a privilege to serve beside him."

John Lord soon set about organising a training conference for Regimental Sergeant Majors at the RMA, and the first was attended by John Alcock, who looking back remembers: "I believe it was John Lord's idea to develop the same pattern throughout the British Army for Regimental Sergeant Majors and his first training conference was a real eye opener to me. Each RSM drilled the rest of the course, and there followed seminars when various aspects of drill were analysed and criticised. These sessions developed closeness between the various units. It was easy for one to be posted to a regiment and become so full of pride for that unit that one developed the thought that other regiments were inferior, and these conferences revealed this was not so.

"John Lord soon settled down at the RMA. He became a great after dinner speaker and revelled in this. He loved to be at the head of the table and give a speech and it was always a good one. He would deliberately recognise the most junior rank attending the dinner and refer to him, so that everyone felt close to John Lord."

John Lord's direct links to the Parachute Regiment were not over as in June 1950 he helped to prepare the three remaining regular Parachute battalions for the presentation of their first ever Colours. Extensive drills took place for a period of almost six weeks at Aldershot under the watchful eye and exacting standards of RSM Lord, and then on the 19th July 1950, a splendid parade took place when H M King George VI presented the three Battalions of the 16th Independent Parachute Brigade with their Colours.



RSM J C Lord briefing the College RSMs in his Office in Old College

Former Brigadier Mike Dauncey DSO, Glider Pilot Regiment writes, “I had the honour of serving with RSM Lord at Sandhurst, and was an instructor. I found that he had quite a sense of humour and a great twinkle in his eye. I remember that in about 1949 I met him at the Arnhem Reunion. I was at the time serving in the Parachute Regiment and took a party of men from the 1st Battalion to attend. We were to march through the town accompanied by many ex-service members of the regiment. RSM Lord advised that it would be fatal for such a mixed group to try to march in step without a band. He was quite right, and as it was the effect was excellent. At Sandhurst his reputation was such that the Officer Cadets used to say after they had been commissioned that the only lecture which they remembered was the one given by RSM Lord.”

This is confirmed by Lieutenant Colonel J J Brown RA, Military Attaché, The Hague, who writes, “RSM Lord spread an aura of discipline, gentlemanliness and fair play. He was a legend at Sandhurst – as he had been a legend in places before. All his cadets remember him and the best of them were influenced by him. In those days the last week at the Academy was devoted largely to a series of pep talks. In August 1952 when I passed out, I can remember being told that of all the talks we would receive during our last week, the one to pay attention to was Mr. Lord’s. It was so, his audience in rapt attention, he spoke for about thirty minutes on the subject of morale and discipline.”

* * *

Major L C Drouet, Grenadier Guards was the Range Officer at Alexander Barracks, Pirbright and in his early service was Regimental Sergeant Major at the Guards Depot. Before that he was an instructor at the RMA Sandhurst in RSM Lord’s time. “I consider myself very privileged to have known John Lord, in particular for the following reasons. He taught me a great deal about military matters, and as a comparatively young Company Sergeant Major, on being posted to Somme Company at RMA Sandhurst; he gave me the confidence to believe in myself.

“John Lord had an immense confidence in himself, and the ability to master all aspects of his craft as a Warrant

Officer in the sense of discipline, knowledge, man management, humour and the ability to chat up when other methods failed. I remember so well that he used to say to we Company Sergeant Majors, "If the Officer Cadets ask you a question and you are not sure of the answer, say to them 'Gentlemen, I'm not sure but I will find out.' Make sure you do find out and give them the answer, but never try to bluff it out."

"He had a tremendous ability to teach. He had a good academic background and always persevered with everything. Every drill lesson or movement had to be carefully practised and rehearsed, until the subject matter was perfect, and this applied to any military subject encountered by him. He did not have the old dry as dust approach, but spiced his subject with humour and encouragement. For example – at College massed arms drill, "Now Gentlemen that was not as good as it should have been. I'm going to promote the Company Sergeant Major to Brigadier! And he will walk down in front of you. Let us give the 'Brigadier' a present-arms worthy of his rank, because one day you are going to be Brigadiers." It never failed; the resulting present-arms would be impeccable.

"John Lord's 'presence' was remarkable, the military bearing predominant and in plain clothes always extremely well dressed surpassing the air and bearing of a General. He had clear brown eyes which would look you in the eye and search you out, and his manner and speech were curt and to the point. RSM John Lord had great intuition into character. He could size you up in an instant. Even if you were not up to his standards he could accept this – providing that he considered that you had a quality of loyalty that surpassed any other deficiencies. He always said that loyalty was the greatest of soldierly qualities. Loyalty to yourself, your officers and your men were powerful characteristics in the world of leadership.

"He had an overwhelming belief in the sanctity and exclusiveness of the Sergeants Mess where members were all treated as equals within its portals. To enjoy yourself was the order of the day, and the entertainments of the mess were to RSM Lord always of paramount importance. His late hours would kill men of lesser constitution, but God help you if late hours affected your early morning parade or the standard of your work. His maxim was to work hard and play hard, and he had as a result a happy team which supported him to the full. He was in his day a very good rugby player. He was also a cricketer of good standard and one of our Sergeants Mess highlights was always a game against Brighton Police – his old friends of Police service days. It was always a great occasion at Sandhurst.

"He would annually entertain a Headmasters Convention in the Sergeants Mess, and would often tell of his prison camp days. His was a story of jerking back to reality those who had lost the will to believe in themselves. This could not have been easy as the blow to an individual's pride and manhood no matter what nationality, had always been a subject for psychiatrists. John Lord's story of the prison camp is of course a study in itself, and the award of the MBE for his efforts made all Grenadiers very proud of him indeed. The story of how he sorted out the prison camp and restored morale is rather a lesson in what can be done when a powerful personality exerts itself.

"John Lord's standards in all he did were very high. Nothing but the best was good enough and he never tired of telling us that we owed an immense duty to turn out Officer Cadets who were fit to command. He always said this – "An Officer Cadet going through your hands, as the Company Sergeant Major, for two years will always remember you. To him you are his mentor, father and instructor, and he will rise or fall upon how you do your job. He will remember you as either a good or bad CSM. You see to it that he will always remember you as a good one." I can think of no finer advice than this.

"He had a great knack of the competitive and would play off Regiment against Regiment in the interest it engendered and possibly this came because of his gamesmanship ability. His regimental personality always came over well and he would say, "Stand up in the ranks Gentlemen, get your necks in the back of your collars, look up, press on your rifle butts. Swing your arms up straight, get a move on yourself Mr Brown, you are standing idle Sir!" This never failed to make one realise that out of a thousand men on parade you could not hide.

"He could not bear cheap wit and sarcasm; it had to be the manly approach throughout. With Royalty and Generals the relationship seemed in reverse as J C was held in great respect and awe. He would shout to H M King Hussein, "Mr King of Jordan Sir, pull on your rifle butt!" and this treatment conformed exactly to that given to all Officer Cadets. God help any Warrant Officer who tried to court cheap popularity before prize giving at the Seniors or Juniors Drill Competitions. I always remember the words which used to precede the occasion. "Any manifestation of joy or despair you might have will be left until after this prize-giving gentlemen."

John Lord truly reflected the Sandhurst motto '*Serve to Lead*'. No one could fault his service and he had a natural sense of pride in serving the Sovereign and the British Army. When in the last few years he became a sick man he would not give up. He would take those exacting passing out parades under the coldest of conditions happy to be with the Colour party."

Major Drouet continued in conversation: "When first posted to the RMA Sandhurst, and I'm talking about 1949 time, one's first challenge was that you had to complete a month's drill course under RSM Lord. All CSMs going to Sandhurst had to take this course. One had to learn his method of drill which was 'drill by numbers'. This was difficult as it was not the way we had been used to. We had to be fully prepared for when the new intake of Cadets came and to understand his methods of drill sufficiently well to instruct the Cadets. God help you if you couldn't. You didn't last. Unless you measured up to his standards you were quickly away. The two o'clock train we called it!

"It was a hard course including everything one would associate with the world of drill – turn out, performance and willingness. To pass this course was a qualification in itself, and many people like myself and many other Senior Commissioned Officers, owe our positions to RSM Lord, because we listened to what he said, and during the time spent with him learned a great deal. If one went to Sandhurst and did a good tour of duty one went places on return to one's battalion.

"As a Company Sergeant Major instructor one would do much of the preparation of Gentlemen Cadets for parades, and RSM Lord would take the large parades. Our first hurdle in the first six weeks was the InterJuniors drill competition, and the CSM would do all the drill work at company level. The competition for all Colleges would be judged by a board of outside Officers. The Officer Cadets were receptive to command and discipline, and came from good schools. When one dealt with men of intelligence it was a joy in itself as one gained the response."

When John Lord accepted the post of Regimental Sergeant Major at the RMA Sandhurst, he would realise that he was probably foregoing any opportunity of a commission. The post traditionally went to a Guardsman as there was an expectation of continuity; the rank would normally be accepted until retirement. The rank of Academy Sergeant Major however, being unique, would be more attractive than the commission."

* * *

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE PACESTICK COMPETITION AND RSM W L A NASH STANDS IN

Lieutenant Colonel Walter Robins MBE DWR, the Staff Quartermaster, Headquarters, RMA Sandhurst, recalls, “I was at the Academy from mid-1949 until August 1951 as a Sergeant on the drill and weapons training staff and I am pleased to be able to say that RSM Lord promoted me on our very first meeting! Due to some failure of Unit Administration I was sent to RMA Sandhurst to do the selection course as a Corporal and arrived outside the Old Building by taxi in uniform and surrounded by kit bags. Having declined to get out of the taxi outside the Grand Entrance I was eventually deposited at the East End of the Old Building. RSM Lord came out of his office nearby and asked what I was doing and on being told that I had just arrived to join the selection course I was told to stand still. Very shortly afterwards John Lord returned with a Sergeant, pointed at me with his pace-stick and said “Take that Corporal to the tailors shop, get three stripes on his arm and take him to tea in the Sergeant’s Mess.” I had arrived!

“During my two years at RMA Sandhurst, the Sergeants lived almost in fear of John Lord and we were frequently ‘On Report’ and appeared before the Adjutant. At the same time we all had the greatest respect for him and I can recollect little or no malice from anyone. The final report for me was when I was charged by RSM Lord for ‘stating the rank of a Company Quartermaster Sergeant in an idle manner’ in that I referred to him as CQMS. I knew the rules and I’d slipped up within the hearing of John Lord so it was a fair cop.

“John Lord liked Sergeants’ Mess members to use the Mess and would always speak up on Adjutant’s orders for those who did. “Good Mess Member who uses the Mess regularly and conducts himself well” was a good lifeline for a Sergeant on a report for a dusty bayonet. He liked beer drinkers and let it be known in no uncertain terms that he had little time for ‘Orange Crush and crisp members’.



**Part of the Permanent Staff at the RMA Sandhurst under Maj Gen Dawnay in 1951
RSM Lord is sitting on the Commandant’s left, with Mars and Minerva looking on from above**

“During my time there John Lord would take the Sergeants of the Drill and Weapons Wing on Drill Parade at least once and sometimes twice per week. Normally at 7am in summer. He would also have the whole of the permanent staff on early morning drill once per week, so it was not just the Officer Cadets of the RMA who received his attention.”

The records of the Academy reveal that on the 2nd April 1950, two Officers and 46 Officer Cadets attended the first of the basic parachute courses sent from the RMA to Upper Heyford, the Army Parachute Training School. With the course went RSM John Lord for his refresher parachute course and this indicates that he continued with his parachute descents until at least the age of 41 years. At about this time John Lord took over the captaincy of the Sergeants Mess Cricket Team and there were some very fine matches. A Warrant Officer of the time remembers with humour, “He was an intrepid cricket captain and bowling changes were frequent. If you didn’t take a wicket in two overs, you were off!! He liked winning but detested losing.”

In September 1951 the RMA Sergeants’ Mess was entertained by the Sergeants’ Mess, Airborne Forces Depot, and an enjoyable social evening resulted with the games session being won by the host. In November 1951 the AFD Sergeants’ Mess came to the Academy, and the games tournament was won by RMA, and a shield was competed for on future occasions. On the 19th June a party of Cadets had visited from West Point Academy USA and RSM Lord had welcomed the Cadets presenting them with a miniature pace-stick. It was learned with surprise that there was no parallel in the USA for the Sergeants’ Mess.

Colonel J N Stisted OBE, College Commander, New College, RMA Sandhurst remembers his time as an Officer Cadet: “Our RSM in Victory College was RSM Wood who was a kindly fatherly man. RSM Lord was extremely sharp in comparison and was at his best probably. One of his main qualities was the way in which he could sum up young men.” Colonel Stisted remembers being on parade when he dropped his Mark 4 rifle. He froze as RSM Lord confronted him. “You are idle sir! What is written on Her Majesty Queen Victoria’s statue?” Officer Cadet Stisted quoted incorrectly – having guessed at a Latin inscription. “Double off and look sir”. He ran to the statue and found on the side only the inscription Victoria 1819-1901. He dashed back and reported this to RSM Lord. “Good, well done sir” retorted RSM Lord. Whenever RSM Lord drew close to Cadet Stisted in future parades he would send him at the double to ‘pay his respects to Queen Victoria’ – with his rifle at the port! The benefit came in that Cadet Stisted missed in this way being inspected by RSM Lord. Eight years later when Captain Stisted returned to RMA Sandhurst as a Company Instructor, RSM Lord well remembered with humour his frequent visits to Queen Victoria’s statue.

Colonel R M Brennan, College Commander of Victory College also remembers RSM Lord from Cadet days (1950-1952): “He was of course a man amongst men all of his life, and to a Cadet he possessed a towering personality. As a junior I walked miles to avoid his direct gaze in case some miniscule imperfection in dress, turn out or general deportment should incur his wrath – which could be terrible! It was of course a great act which on the screen would certainly have earned a nomination for an Oscar. He had eyes which could detect the slightest wrong movement on parade and I well remember glancing at the cricket ground (the tiniest of eye movements) to discover the state of play in the Army v Cambridge University cricket match, and immediately being sent at the double from a parade of 1,200 cadets to Queen Victoria’s statue to find out the score! Then breathless after the return run being invited to ‘tell the parade sir’ and losing my name for not shouting loudly enough!

“On another occasion just before the annual Sandhurst v Cranwell rugger match he was warming up the crowd as a cheer leader. The noise was deafening but with one raised hand silence descended, and singling me out from the crowd he complained “You are not cheering at all sir.” The effect was that from then on the cheering reached a decibel level beyond the threshold of pain. Sandhurst won the match quite comfortably.

“At the end of the Intermediate Term when my company won the King George V banner as Sovereign’s Company, it was our honour to Troop the Banner through the ranks after it had been transferred from the Senior Division to ourselves. This is the only occasion when the Sergeant Major draws his sword. On that occasion I carried the Banner for the ‘Troop’. After the parade the Sergeant Major made a point of finding me amongst hundreds of others and thanked me for my part in what he termed a “fine parade Sir!” This was a moment of great pride for one young man.”

* * *



The winning Sandhurst Pacestick Competition Team in 1962. Members: Team Capt.(in rear) CSM Bostock, COLDM GDS; Sgt Mack SCOTS GDS; Sgt Horsfall COLDM GDS; Sgt Sims COLDM GDS; Sgt Clarke GREN GDS

In June 1952 RSM Lord instituted the first Pacestick Competition to be held between the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, and the Guards Depot. Each team consisted of four Sergeants with a Warrant Officer team captain, and a twenty minute test of pace stick drill was carried out in both slow and quick time. On this first occasion three teams entered from each establishment and RMA teams came first, second and third. The Commandant, Major General Dawnay presented the winning trophy. The competition has been held annually since, and it is an indication of John Lord's interest, keenness and training for this event that during the first ten years RMA teams won on all but two occasions. At the time of writing in 1979 the score was 17 wins to RMA, 10 to the Guards Depot and 1 drawn event.

Major E J R (Ted) Rose, Coldstream Guards, Officer Commanding Headquarter Wing RMA Sandhurst, joined John Lord's team of instructors as a Company Sergeant Major in January 1951. He recalls that period: "John Lord always believed that the RMA was only as good as its staff, and therefore he put a great deal of effort into staff work. During drill parades he would often stand behind taking notes and then later might send for an instructor to put certain matters right. He would never rebuke an instructor in front of the Cadets. I would often assist him in explaining the shining hour parade to Cadets. He would take off his belt and crumpled it up in order to show the Cadets how to clean it properly. I remember being sent for by RSM Lord when he explained the idea of a pacestick competition between the RMA and Guards Depot. I entered the competition as a Warrant Officer Team Captain and our team won on more than one occasion. There was another time when a new swimming pool was about to be opened and John Lord was having a quiet look around to see that everything was in order. Without realising it he was standing in an area of the baths that suddenly became flooded. The water went above his boots and quietly looking around, John Lord marched off to get changed."

On the 2nd August 1952, Company Sergeant Major Rose was married to Miss Majorie Standon at the RMA Sandhurst. Fourteen Company Sergeant Majors of the Brigade of Guards formed a Guard of Honour and these included all Regiments of the Brigade. It was a very colourful wedding and the reception was held in the ante-room of the Sergeants' Mess. Ted has kindly allowed me a photograph in which RSM John Lord congratulates the happy bride and groom.

Ted Rose left the RMA in 1954 but returned in 1959 as Regimental Sergeant Major of Victory College. He subsequently became RSM of the Guards Depot until he was commissioned. One of Major Rose's future tasks was in relation to the preparation of a fresh drill book for the British Army and it was his idea to ask John Lord to model the drill movements (as in a previous drill book) but he showed me a letter in which John Lord gently declined. He had retired from the Army and in stating his appreciation for being asked, suggested that it might be preferable to allow a young worthy Sergeant Major to illustrate the drill movements.



**A happy occasion at RMA Sandhurst Chapel on 2nd August 1952, when CSM E J R Rose was married.
Here RSM John Lord congratulates the Bride and Groom**



**With the Commandant Maj Gen Dawnay at the Tree Planting celebrating the Coronation in 1953
and RSM J.C. Lord is awarded the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal in February 1954**

During the following years John Lord's public relations work increased and in November 1952 he received 31 headmasters from various schools and spoke to them on drill and discipline. These were schools from which Cadets were often received for the RMA course. In January 1953 John Lord went to Eton College to speak on the theme '*Warrant Officers and Sergeants of the British Army*'. It is interesting to note that in 1953 the Sergeants' Mess activities were many and were considered to reflect a great deal of work carried out by the Entertainment Committee Chairman CSM L Drouet.

On the 11th February 1954, Field Marshall Lord Alexander of Tunis inspected the Sovereign's Parade and awarded RSM J C Lord with the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal. John Lord maintained a busy social and sporting routine for the rest of the year, but in 1955 was found to be suffering from TB, and for many months required treatment in hospital. In order to assist his convalescence, the three units in which 'J.C.' had previously served joined financially in arranging for him to spend one month in Switzerland and he always appreciated this wonderful gesture.

* * *

Regimental Sergeant Major Bill Nash, Grenadier Guards, was appointed to replace him and Bill Nash, later Master of the Household Department, Windsor Castle, writes about that time:

"In 1955 I was ordered to report to the RMA Sandhurst to take over, as John Lord was already receiving treatment in hospital. RSM C H Phillips of Old College was temporarily standing in. I had met John Lord briefly in 1941 when he, another Grenadier and myself applied for the vacancy in the Parachute Regiment as RSM, but John Lord was selected and went on to serve as a parachutist. The next time we met was in 1948 when he took over as Regimental Sergeant Major from the renowned RSM Arthur Brand, and I was CSM of Dettingen Company of Old College. I served for almost two years at the RMA and then went off to rejoin my Regiment.

"I soon realised that John Lord had during the previous five years made various subtle changes, and introduced several new methods of instruction, which I quickly had to adjust to. One which taxed me and took me totally unaware was on my first Academy Drill parade, when on the Saturday practice for the march past in slow and quick time I gave the command "Break into quick time – quick march" and to my horror Captain G H Stunell (Director of Music) waved to me signalling that all was not well. Some of the Cadets halted and some did break into quick time. The Adjutant galloped over and said "Sorry but you are three years out of date." And quickly explained that John Lord had introduced the system of carrying out this movement over a set number of paces combined with the word of command. I explained to the assembled Academy my error, tried again and got it right, and order was restored, but I noticed Cyril Phillips having a good chuckle at my expense! This command and movement is now standard throughout the Army, like others which John Lord introduced during his term of office, which probably illustrates his farseeing application to the job.

"I must readily admit that having established myself as RSM at the Academy I realised within a matter of days that John Lord had created a tremendous feeling and atmosphere. I felt a complete intruder, so my first move was to visit him at Hindhead Hospital to have a chat. After that first talk I appreciated the need for me to become a 'caretaker' for John rather than attempt to take over. John was Sandhurst and nothing else mattered. He was determined to return and forbade me to alter or change anything! I paid regular visits to him and kept him up to date, whilst at the same time carrying out my job under the direction of the Commandant, Major General Hobbs, the Second in Command Brigadier F C C Graham, and the Adjutant, Major Mainwaring-Burton.

"When John felt fit enough to return he asked to do so, although officially it was felt that he was not strong enough. He was insistent and determined, therefore after some deliberation the Commandant asked me if I was prepared to stay on as RSM for a long term or not. Having given deep and serious thought to this I humbly felt that I was not capable of maintaining over a long period the enthusiasm, drive, dedication and application to the job that John had done so ably in the past. Therefore I opted to leave in order that 'J.C.' should return. I was given the choice of several posts and decided to accept that of RSM at Headquarters Eastern Command at Hounslow.

"On the 28th March 1956, a Mess Dinner was held to mark John's return and my leaving at which the usual speeches were made and the members kindly made a presentation to me. The period I spent in the post of RSM was very taxing, but above all invigorating, interesting and rewarding, balanced with a slight frustration at being unable to expand and expound one's own particular points of view entirely to fruition. The Academy staff were marvellous and with the very odd exception, gave me complete support."

The 'Wand of Office', the Academy Pacestick, which dated back to RSM Arthur Brand's time was officially handed by Bill Nash back to John Lord indicating that he was now back in office.

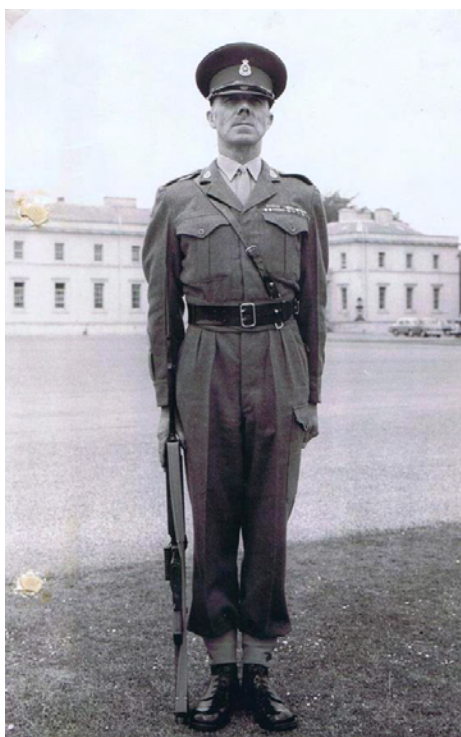
* * *



**Soldiers the World over will remember John Lord's watchful eye on Parade
An excellent photograph taken in 1955**



With RSM John Lord in attendance, Air Marshal Sir Dermot Boyle inspects the Sovereigns Parade on 19th December 1957.



**John Lord demonstrates rifle drill movements for the Army Drill Manual.
A great drill instructor and immaculate soldier.**

* * *

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

CAPTAIN P HORSFALL RECALLS THE TECHNIQUES OF INSTRUCTION

Captain (QM) Peter Horsfall MBE, Coldstream Guards, Quartermaster at the Guards Depot, Alexander Barracks, was on John Lord's RMAS staff as a Sergeant and attended the six week drill course in 1960; he acted as John Lord's Superintending Sergeant at Sandhurst in 1961 and 1962. Peter Horsfall went on to become the last Regimental Sergeant Major at Mons Officer Cadet School where he continued to use John Lord's instructional techniques until he was commissioned in 1972. He provides the following fascinating information:

"I was a Sergeant at the Guards Depot Caterham in 1957. I took part in the early pacestick competitions, at first representing the Guards Depot. I remember after the competition in 1957 when we were in the Sergeants' Mess, RSM John Lord gave an outstanding speech and almost apologised because the RMA Sandhurst had beaten the Guards Depot.

"Later when in 1960 I was serving in Kenya, I was advised that I was to be posted to the RMA Sandhurst. I went in the New Year of 1961 and arriving late in the day, having travelled from Leeds, went to the bar to enquire about accommodation. There was a distinguished looking gentleman wearing a sports jacket nearby, and he looked the part of the Senior man but I didn't know who he was. He made me very welcome and I gradually realised that this was the great man himself, RSM Lord. There was only a few of us in the Mess and when one realises that I was a lowly Sergeant, I was very impressed at this kind introduction to the Mess and Sandhurst.

"Initially a Guards Sergeant received a junior platoon of Officer Cadets, and right from the start the RSM (as he was then) helped in every way possible. He watched you and if something was not quite right he would ask the Company Sergeant Major to takeover on some pretext – and then give you some detailed information or instruction. He never made it obvious to Officer Cadets that you had done something wrong.

"One of the first instructional lessons I heard him give was on the subject of the 'position of attention'. Any young officer on a drill course given this subject would die because he would think that he would have this all wrapped up in two or three minutes and then run out of words. With John Lord putting it over this never happened, because he would emphasise right from the start - the whole of drill revolved around the position of attention. If you didn't get the balance of this correct the rest of the drill didn't work. He proved it in many ways, and was quite amusing as he likened it to the position a baby assumes when learning to walk. He stressed that it is only in adult life that people become 'idle' and start to slump the chest and round the shoulders.

"Another strong impression remaining with me is that of his introduction to young Officer Cadets on the maintenance and cleaning of kit. He would visit each of the three colleges to take the introduction to shining of kit himself. There would be over 100 Officer Cadets in each lecture room, and John Lord would begin by taking off some of his kit without any comment and deliberately throw it in a heap. His Sam Browne belt thrown to one side, his cap and jacket thrown to the other. His eagle eyes surveying the Cadets – he then explained, "Well that is how I would not do it" He then re-dressed and took off the same garments showing how these should be properly and smartly maintained. He rolled up his sleeves and put on an apron, then gave a brilliant introduction to the shining of kit, demonstrating the cleaning himself.

"Throughout my first term at the RMAS I received a succession of memorandums from John Lord. There were almost 40 of these on almost every subject! He developed papers on certain drills, applying only to Sandhurst, one on forming twos and threes, both at the halt, and on the march. Another for 'words of command' and many others. These still exist today perhaps under different name blocks – but they were originally produced by John Lord.

"In the Spring of 1961 I was detailed with several other Guards Sergeants to attend the NCO's Drill and Weapons Course at the RMAS, and this was a marvellous course although we grumbled a bit as no one likes

to be chased about. We gained an enormous benefit from the course as John Lord took the drill himself. He had a Superintending Sergeant who was very smart and they worked so well together that it was phenomenal. As John Lord instructed from the front the Sergeant would be at our side checking faults and it was done so surreptitiously that it did not interrupt the drill movement. John Lord would climb onto a table, gathering the course around him in a tight group. He would begin by giving a lecture on correct breathing! Then suddenly he went around the group asking us to repeat quickly "P.P.P.C.T." and would over the course of the lecture explain that these stood for Power, Pitch, Punch, Clarity and Timing. He instructed us on each of these themes, and then on a second lesson took us down to the lake at Sandhurst, where of course the setting is incredibly good and quiet. No one else but the group was there and we could shout our orders individually. Obviously we made a nonsense of some, and had we been on a square with cadets we would have lost confidence. One could sense the technique of John Lord that he would get a grip of instructors – but not embarrass them. It was in every respect a marvellous course for an instructor.

"John Lord further developed the lecture on 'word of command' by adding a 'P' to P.P.P.C.T. This was for Personality and he explained "For goodness sake do not copy others – develop your own style and stick with it. By all means use some of the best qualities of others –but do not lose your own personality." John Lord would use a blackboard when talking about drill; he would gather us at the bottom of the steps to the Grand Entrance of Old Building and lecture from the top. He was a great one for getting above us and talking down. On the blackboard he wrote four letters "I.D.E.A." He would eventually explain that these letters stood for Introduction, Demonstration, Explanation, and delaying the last letter – he sharply explained Action! He then added the letter 'L' which he explained "could be for 'Learning' – the years of experience you bring to bear – but also gentlemen – Leadership!" In the space of forty minutes he covered clearly the technique of instruction and one could use his headings on almost any subject matter.

"Early in 1962 my Company Sergeant Major sent for me and said that the Academy Sergeant Major wanted to see me. I wondered what I had done wrong but went to report to him and he immediately came round the table and shook my hand congratulating me upon being appointed the Superintending Sergeant for the next drill course. I was quite overwhelmed but he soon stopped me getting complacent by then advising me of some things I could do to improve my drill! He suggested that I go somewhere quiet and practice before the course started and I did just that.

"When John Lord was taking the instructors drill parade he asked me to demonstrate some of the movements; this was usually the more difficult movements such as the fixing and unfixing of bayonets. I would go to his office beforehand and we would spend half an hour rehearsing the drill he was going to do, with me carrying out the demonstrations as he gave the orders. It was amazing how soon his personality rubbed off as in a little while we could go straight on to the instruction hour without a rehearsal. People would say to me, surely that had been practiced – and would not believe me when I said that it had been carried out straight off the cuff.

"One Saturday morning the whole Academy was on parade and John Lord announced that for the first time ever there were over 1,000 Officer Cadets on parade – plus staff which numbered 70 or 80. He obviously had something in mind and we were not sure what this was. We would probably end up marching past in line because that was the build-up to the Sovereigns Parade. When the inspection was over John Lord formed the Academy in close ranks almost ten deep and very large width. He split the parade down the middle and said, "Right – we are going to do double sentry drill to music!" Well this drill is not easy at the best of times – but we made a start. We marched outwards and at first J C was very cautious sending us out 21 paces and back again with a halt and salute. In half an hour he had us doing a 105 pace beat! This means that each half of the parade were a couple of hundred yards apart when they reached the far ends. We were admittedly drilling to music which made it easier but even then to get over 1,000 men to march outwards, come back, halt, turn to the front, salute and go back to the 'at ease' position without orders was phenomenal. We instructors who thought we knew all of it were quite overwhelmed by it. Mind you, there was some leg pulling! Obviously the staff were trying to help the Cadets to count the paces – especially on the 105 pace beat. Some of the Company Sergeant Majors, when they couldn't be heard by the Academy Sergeant Major, purposely called out the wrong number of paces. There were some hiccups! Fortunately they were not obvious in the ten deep ranks, and we were able to get away with it in the depth of the parade. It was all good stuff!

"So far as the Pacestick Competitions were concerned, it was John Lord who was responsible for them

being taken so seriously, not only at the Academy but in the British Army because he instructed the courses and obviously NCOs went back and passed it on to their Regiments and so it went on right through the Army. John Lord had a very thin pace-stick himself and hardly ever used it. He was one of those chaps whose instruction was so good that he didn't need to demonstrate. Like swimming instructors who never get their feet wet. Before the Pacestick Competition he would line up each of the teams near Old College Square and would have a few words with them before the competition started. Just as we were about to march on he would say, "Now come on gentlemen – a few deep breaths, get ready now, if you get nervous during the test, just take a long slow deep breath and exhale slowly and you will be amazed how it will settle you down." It was surprising, you may be smart at drill but the nerves on this competition were really something. It really is the most nerve racking occasion – just four of you marching it seems with the whole world, at least the whole world of experts – watching you in addition to the judges. It was John Lord's instruction which kept Sandhurst so good at the Pacestick Competition for so many years.

"He took part in almost everything that happened in the Academy, and out of the Academy for that matter. He would be sent out to judge drill competitions and give lectures. I believe he went to West Point in America on one occasion. He was a first class Rugby Union referee. Each Wednesday he would expect us to watch sport, preferably our own company, but if they were not playing he expected us to support the Cadets or Staff if we were not playing ourselves. When he was not refereeing John Lord would try to see as many games as he could by walking from one match to another. I doubt if many people realise that he had a tremendous sense of humour. I had a practical joke played upon me – although at the time it seemed like the end of the world! I had a waxed moustache as can be seen from the photograph of the Pacestick Competition. On one long summer leave I shaved it off at the request of my wife. It seemed to take years off as moustaches always make one appear older. I returned from leave and saw the Academy Sergeant Major glancing at me on a couple of occasions when I was drilling the junior Cadets, and he eventually spoke to the Company Sergeant Major. I learned afterwards that he asked CSM Peter Clifford who the tall thin Sergeant was!

"I was later ordered to attend the Adjutant's orders and I wondered why. I couldn't remember doing anything wrong or for that matter anything that was likely to happen to me such as a course or posting. I reported as directed and was the only one present apart from the Academy Sergeant Major. He said promptly, "Right! stand there and I will march you in." He marched me into the Adjutant, Major Phillip Ward, halted me, shouted out my name and I answered. Major Ward looked up and stared at me and said the single word, "Why?" I didn't answer, having no idea what he meant. He asked me again, "Why?" and I slowly realised that he was staring at my lack of a Moustache. I replied, "I just wanted a change sir." "Oh", replied the Adjutant officiously, "I hope you are going to grow it again." Of course I said, "Yes sir." The Academy Sergeant Major marched me out again, and I had to grow the moustache again and kept it until the day of my commission. I found out later that it was all just a little joke.

"Other bits of his fun come to mind. He used to refer to Mars and Minerva which are the statues above the Old Building, and when it was raining he would get the Cadets to look up at them and say, "they are crying gentlemen, that's why you are getting wet; they are disgusted with the standard of drill."

"On another occasion we were practicing the 'ground arms drill' and were having quite a lot of trouble with the new self-loading rifle which replaced the old Mark 4 Lee Enfield. Movements such as the 'slope arms', 'present' and others were difficult, but the worst movement was the 'ground arms', and we tried all sorts of methods to improve the drill. At the commencement of the junior term all of the Sergeant instructors used to take part in a drill demonstration. We had a rather large Sergeant whom we would place in the centre of the front rank and he would call out the time for the movements. After a great deal of difficulty the Academy Sergeant Major arranged for the Sergeant to do a slow count of 'four' and that would give everyone plenty of opportunity to place the rifle in a good position on the ground, and we would work with him to rise back up again. It went reasonably well in rehearsal and we later commenced the full demonstration in front of the Cadets. A large intake of over 200 Cadets were lined up on the edge of the Old College Square watching us, and we came to the 'ground arms'...we bent down and grounded our rifles and we remained down – for an eternity. Our caller could not rise! We stayed down with an eye upon him but gradually began to rise individually to a position of attention. It was a shambles! Instead of RSM Lord blowing a gasket, as we expected, he said it was one of the funniest things he had ever seen and made a joke of it to the Cadets on the de-briefing talk afterwards.

“RSM Lord’s best lecture in my opinion was his ‘*Introduction to Military Music*’ and he used to have us all in the vicinity of the Old College Grand entrance steps, with the band located on the steps. He had a programme worked out with the Director of Music and would show numbers to the band. This was because his voice could not be heard by them.

“He would begin his lecture and the band would play a march. He would explain how each march had a definite ‘left’ and ‘right’ pace and would demonstrate the correct and incorrect step. He then lectured on the band itself and would have them play without the base drummer or time-beater as is the correct title. He asked eventually what was missing and a Cadet would point out no big drum. “Correct” said J.C. and brought in the euphoniums and finally the base drummer. We had a superb base drummer who remained there for many years, Staff Sergeant Alan Lewis, who used to emphasise the left and right step with a masterly touch. John Lord would complete his talk by pointing out that if anyone could not march to such music they should pack their bags and go home!

“I used much of John Lord’s material when I was Regimental Sergeant Major at the Mons Officer Cadet School and I kept all of his drill memorandums, his photographs and notes of some of his speeches etc. I used variations on his ‘*Introduction to Military Music*’ P.P.C.T., his methods of instruction, I.D.E.A. and others. A great deal of what John Lord taught has remained with me and that is I hope a great compliment to him.”

* * *

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

BBC PROGRAMME - “THIS IS YOUR LIFE”

The RMA Sandhurst Band forms the smallest Army Corps in the world. Many present day members of the Band remember John Lord well including Director of Music, Captain Brian Smith. During an enjoyable visit I met Ken Dale, Derek Purslow, Dave Davies, John Hare, Staff Sergeant Alan Lewis and Staff Sergeant Gordon Saunders who voiced many memories of service shared. I witnessed a marvellous demonstration afterwards when Academy Sergeant Major R P Huggins MBE, gave a lecture at the WRAC barracks on the history of the Military Band.

One of the band told me the story which is still frequently repeated at the RMA Sandhurst. RSM Lord on parade considered one of the Officer Cadets to be idle, and ordered him to double to Queen Victoria’s statue, pay his respects to Her Majesty and wait until the parade was over. The Cadet doubled away, but soon returned and asked permission to join the parade. John Lord reminded him of his original order but received the reply, “Yes sir, but when I paid my respects to Her Majesty she said it was the finest salute she had seen that day, and that I should get back on parade...!”

One of the Band Sergeants told me that the Band had played for a drill competition that lasted all day, and when it was getting dark the Sergeant had failed to stifle a yawn, which unfortunately was noticed by RSM Lord. He immediately doubled the Sergeant off to pay his respects to Her Majesty calling after him that it “was extremely bad manners...!”

I thought after hearing the RMA Band that their performance was tremendous and their attitude and sense of enthusiasm, both towards John Lord and Academy Sergeant Major Ray Huggins MBE, was most heartening, and their obvious loyalty to the RMA Sandhurst.



**“You are idle Sir ... You will double and pay your respects to Her Majesty”
Many will remember the distance from Old College Square to the Statue of Queen Victoria.**

* * *

In October 1958 the BBC Television programme, ‘*This is Your Life*’ featured Andy Milbourne, who was so badly wounded at Arnhem. Many members and former members of the Parachute Regiment took part in the programme; also I believe a member of Parliament and a former German paratrooper. Both Academy Sergeant Major John Lord and Regimental Sergeant Major Allen Watson (then serving with the Highland Light Infantry) took part and paid tribute to the magnificent example set by Andy Milbourne during his time in Stalag XIB.

Soon afterwards on the 30th November 1959, Audrey Lord was approached by the BBC for consent to John Lord appearing again in the programme, but this time as the subject. John Lord was not of course aware of this but the Commandant also gave consent believing that it would be a good thing for the Academy. Audrey Lord made only the condition that she would not appear herself. This is no surprise when one meets Audrey as she is an extremely quiet and retiring person. I believe in fact she would have managed very well but I feel sure her presence in the programme would have so moved John Lord, who was very sensitive about certain things, that perhaps it was for the best.

John Lord and the audience in fact attended initially what they thought was a panel game and the show started by the actor Derek Bond, a former Grenadier Guards Officer who had trained at the Royal Military College in 1940, referring to his experiences, but the programme suddenly developed in the familiar way to become Eamonn Andrews taking *'This is Your Life'* from the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. Apologising for the panel game that never was, Eamonn Andrews introduced as the subject RSM John Lord! His amazement was genuine but became more so as an excellent number of guests appeared with memories of service shared. First came John Lord's original Company Sergeant Major from the 3rd Battalion, Grenadier Guards, Harry Oulton and memories flowed back. These were extended by a fellow Guardsmen from the 1930s, former Guardsman Entwistle. The next guest was from John Lord's Brighton Police days and Chief Inspector Bill Flack recalled those days. There followed a moving contribution in the form of a film message from John Lord's first Commanding Officer in the 3rd Parachute Battalion who was now Director General of Military Training, General Sir Gerald Lathbury.



Men of the original 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, gather in the 1960s. John Lord is flanked by Jock Boe and Ray Sheriff, whilst George Thompson stands at the end right. Seated in front are David Madigan (left) and Les Harrison (right) all of whom have contributed information to this story.

Andy Milbourne then turned up to repay the courtesy – and John Lord was by now probably feeling quite shattered. There then appeared however, three former Parachute Regiment POWs from Stalag XIB, Les Dakin, Alan Davies and Albert Kinning. Les Dakin provides two photographs of the programme and with kind permission of the BBC these are included in the book. I always view with pleasure the photograph of Eamonn Andrews, the three former Paratroopers and RSM Lord chatting obviously so happily. I believe they were relating how John Lord would pull up any German soldiers failing to act in a soldierly manner!



In October 1958 the BBC TV Programme 'This is Your Life' featured former paratrooper Andrew Milbourne as the subject. RSM John Lord and RSM Alan Watson (then Highland Light Infantry) were invited as guests, and they paid tribute to the courage and example shown by Andrew whilst in captivity at Stalag XIB. Eamonn Andrews was the compere



'This is Your Life' 30th November 1959, John Lord – this time the subject of the programme, grins at the memories of former paratroopers Les Dakin, Albert Kinning and Alan Davies, as Eamonn Andrews deals with the period of captivity following Arnhem.

Photographs shown by consent of Eamonn Andrews, BBC Copyright



It was a moment of shock and great pride to RSM John Lord when the final guest was introduced by Eamonn Andrews. Representing Officer Cadets past and present, His Royal Highness King Hussein of Jordan travelled especially to be present, a tribute indeed to the RMA Sandhurst and to the Academy Sergeant Major.

Photographs shown by consent of Eamonn Andrews, BBC Copyright



The subject and guests of 'This Your Life' staged at the RMA Sandhurst on 30th November 1959. Left to right: Les Dakin, Andy Milbourne, Chief Inspector Bill Flack, John Lord, Former Grenadier Guardsman Entwistle, HRH King Hussein of Jordan, Major Ralph Cobbold, Alan Davies, Former CSM H. Oulton, Albert Kinning, Major General Urquhart, Commandant RMA Sandhurst

BBC Copyright

The next guest to appear was the 8th Hussars Officer who liberated Stalag XIB, and this was Major Ralph Cobbold. Audrey Lord did not quite escape attention as the camera then revealed Audrey and John's three grown up children, Tanya, Jane and John. With John Lord's sense of loyalty he must have received a severe jolt when the next guest was introduced. As representative of Officer Cadets, past, present and future His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan came on stage having travelled especially for the programme. A photograph from the '*Wish Stream*' magazine reveals John Lord greeting King Hussein. The programme ended with a general photograph taken of all guests and on the far right is Major General Urquhart, Commandant RMA Sandhurst at that time.

* * *

Mr C A J (Jimmy) Cox MA, Senior Lecturer in the Language Dept, RMA Sandhurst, kept a photographic history of events during his many years at the Academy, and this is now known as the 'Cox Collection'. Many excellent photographs included in this book were taken by Jimmy Cox who writes, "As a lecturer I had of course relatively little contact with RSM Lord, but one thing which always impressed me tremendously was that whenever I met him in the grounds of the Academy, I always received from him just as smart a salute as if I had been an Officer in the Guards Brigade.

"The one time I did have a chance to talk to him more than usual was in December 1960 when some Officer Cadets were going through overseas training in Portugal. Since Portugal is our oldest ally it was arranged that the Cadets should parade through the streets of Lisbon with some of their opposite number from the Lisbon Academy. RSM Lord came with us to take part in the parade with the Academy Colour. I was talking to him one day when a small Portuguese boy came up and watched. With a typical warm gesture John Lord took off his cap and placed it on the boy's head – and I secured one of my favourite photographs."

David Ginch writes, "I am an ex Gunner Officer and was an instructor at the RMA Sandhurst during the 1960s. As a Captain (and I am sure my attitude to him was reflected by my fellow officers) one approached RSM Lord as if he were a more senior rank, certainly of Field rank! He was so aware of one's turn-out that even if he didn't actually say anything, there was the feeling that those piercing eyes of his had noticed any irregularity. His own turn-out in uniform was of course immaculate, but even in mufti, if you didn't actually know who he was, John Lord could so easily be mistaken for a Company Commander.

"During their final days at the RMA Officer Cadets received a talk by the Academy Sergeant Major. On one occasion he entered the room, removed his cap and placed his pace stick on the lectern. "Gentlemen," he said "let me introduce myself; my name is Lord – J C Lord." From the back of the room a small voice piped up "Jesus Christ."

The Academy Sergeant Major was often telephoned in his office by various officers; normally the Adjutant, or Assistant Adjutant. In discussion in the Mess one day they both remarked that having announced to him who was on the telephone, there would be a short sharp swishing sound from the other end. Baffled by what it might be the Adjutant suggested that the Assistant Adjutant should position himself outside the Academy Sergeant Major's window – while he himself put through a telephone call. Later when the Assistant Adjutant reported what he had seen, it transpired that in response to the Adjutant's "Good Morning Mr. Lord" the Academy Sergeant Major replied, "Good morning, sir", snapped to attention and saluted! What an example of discipline."

* * *



During a training visit by Officer Cadets to Portugal in December 1960, a young boy receives a kindly gesture from John Lord, and Jimmy Cox secures one of his favourite photographs.

* * *

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

DANIEL OXBERRY TAKES THE COURSE WITH INTAKE 33

As the aim and purpose of the Parachute Regiment Infantry Training Centre in the 1940s was to complete the process of selection, and to train all recruits for the Regiment, preparing them for the Army Parachute School and Advanced Battalion Training, the aim and purpose behind the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, is to train the Officer Corps for the whole of the British Army. The most important person at RMA is the Officer Cadet. Daniel Oxberry lives in London and trained in Waterloo Company, Old College, with Intake 33. He was invited to extend his contribution, providing memories of Academy Sergeant Major John Lord, with details of his two year period of training at RMA Sandhurst. The result is the following fascinating account:

“Jackie Lord, as he was universally known to the Cadets, had been at Sandhurst for many years when I arrived, and he quite clearly loved the place and its people with a passion. I remember as we formed up for an Academy Parade on Old College Square he stood at ease and said, “Before we go on I want you to listen - just listen to the sounds of Sandhurst, the finest military academy in the world.” And we listened, several hundred of us, to the birds singing, the distant clatter of the groundsmen cutting the cricket pitches, the church clock chiming the hour, and so on. It was really quite a moving experience – very un-Sergeant Majorish, but typical of the man.

“Over the Grand Entrance to Old College there are statues of Mars and Minerva (War and Learning), and I remember more than once Jackie Lord saying something like, “Now work hard. You are being watched by Mars and Minerva and they’ve seen every parade since Old College was built, so they know what to look for.” Then, following a drill movement that did not please him, he would halt us and say, “Mars has just looked at Minerva and is shaking his head slowly from side to side – and I agree with him – we’ll do it again!”

Daniel Oxberry remembers, “I was not quite eighteen when on the 18th September 1962 I arrived at Camberley station at the end of a long train journey from my native Yorkshire. I had been in the army for twelve days following formal enlistment at the Recruiting Office in York, had signed the forms, taken the oath, accepted the Queen’s Shilling and had left with one piece of advice from Recruiting Sergeant J Bell which I never forgot. He said “Just remember to lead ‘em and not push ‘em and you’ll be alright.”

“*‘Serve to Lead’* exemplified the purpose and the spirit of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, as it rapidly became clear. The theory was, and I hope still is, that to understand the responsibilities implicit in the gravity of Her Majesty’s commission, an officer had to experience, and do, all those things which, in future he would be requiring his men to do. The difference was that the officer cadets had to achieve standards in all aspects of their training which neither they nor their soldiers would ever be required to achieve again. What was important was that an officer cadet should know, by experience, what could be achieved and we were frequently to hear from instructors that “the best is only just good enough”.

“A three ton truck met the train and with a minimum of formality, a group of about twenty young men gathered in the back, all dressed in suits as I recall and looking somewhat self-conscious. The vehicle deposited us at the Grand Entrance of Old College, where we were met, checked in and ushered into a room where we signed the Official Secrets Act and, though I cannot remember, I suppose we were taken by staff members to our quarters. We were allocated two to a basic but comfortable room.

“At that time there were three Colleges; Old, New and Victory. Each College was sub-divided into four companies. Old College had Blenheim, Dettingen, Inkerman and Waterloo. New College had Gaza, Marne, Somme, Ypres; Victory College commemorated the more recent victories of Burma, Alamein, Rhine and Normandy. Each company had four platoons of officer cadets, distinguished by their position on the two year, 6 term course. There were Juniors (us), Inter-Juniors, Inter-Seniors and Seniors. As I remember it, officer cadets were Juniors for one term, Inter-Juniors for the next two, Inter-Seniors for the following two and Seniors for the final term.

“The Company unit was administered and trained jointly by the permanent staff and by officer cadets who, in their senior term, had ranks which paralleled the staff. The Company Commander was invariably a Major and he was shadowed by the Senior Under Officer. The Company Sergeant Major, always from the Brigade of Guards, was matched with the Cadet Colour Sergeant. The three Platoon Commanders, usually Captains from various regiments, including some Royal Marines, had overall responsibility for training a platoon, with a Junior Under Officer reporting to him. Each platoon had a Regular Army Sergeant instructor and was overseen also by a Cadet Sergeant and one or two Cadet Corporals.

“The power of the senior officer cadets was, particularly in the junior term, absolute. They were responsible for virtually all the out-of-normal-hours activity such as extra fitness training, kit inspections, room inspections and discipline. The first six weeks were a considerable shock to the system. I was posted to Waterloo Company as one of a twenty-three man platoon, and we were housed in the Old Building. The regime hit us with all its might and we were told by Company Sergeant Major Page, Grenadier Guards, that we could expect to be “moved” and “moved fast” in the next four weeks, and that if any of us wanted to write to our fathers and MPs by way of complaint that “we can very soon have your fathers and MPs on the square with you.” There were one or two nervous laughs but Page proved to be a man of his word.

“Our aim in life, it was explained, was to win the Juniors’ Drill Competition, because this was crucial to the Company winning the Sovereign’s Competition which meant the best Company all round in the Academy. Consequently under the enthusiastic control of Sgt. John France, Scots Guards, we began our drill training on the second day – before we had any uniforms! I remember thinking how my calf-leather shoes were standing up to the punishment. Every opportunity was taken for a few minutes drill as we waited, for example, for kit issues.

“The training got under way. Two periods of drill a day, two of physical training, the next made up of weapon training, map reading and basic infantry skills. We were up at 6.30, washed, shaved, beds made and dressed for BRC or Breakfast Roll Call Parade, at 0700hrs. On this parade we had to be immaculate or be punished.

“During the first six weeks there were many ways in which we could get into trouble – from BRC to lights out at 11.p.m. we negotiated what seemed to be a continuous minefield of potential disasters. The smallest fault in turnout meant ‘show parades’. The inspecting NCO would pick a fault and say, “Show belt brasses” or “Show boots” as appropriate and that meant that in addition to the rigours of evening work, the unfortunate junior would parade in a specified uniform at 10 p.m., carrying the offending article suitably prepared for a second inspection. Failure to get on parade on time, or being generally scruffy and disordered in dress were the juniors’ ticket to ‘changing parades’. The senior cadets would stand after supper in ‘Picadilly’, the concourse of the four platoon corridors, in the company block, and the first parade would be called. Out would come the juniors from their doors - “Stand to your doors juniors” was the call –and be inspected. Then they would be told the next form of dress and to parade in five minutes for another inspection. Usually it would go from Service Dress to Combat Dress to PT Kit to Battle Order and so on. In each inspection you could be checked and given extra changing parades as a result. When we got to rifle inspection the situation became even more precarious. We had to parade with rifles ‘dry cleaned’ meaning not a scrap of oil on them anywhere and achieved by using liquid stain remover ‘thawpit’, and a stiff brush. On the order “Strip the rifles for inspection” we had to take it apart without putting any of the eight basic pieces down. Always somebody dropped a component and, depending on the mood of the Cadet NCO, he or the whole platoon had to do it again. Having satisfied the inspection team, rifles had to be re-oiled and re-inspected along similar lines of discipline.

“All this ‘harassment’, as the Americans call it, went on after a full and exhausting day’s work and was in addition to room inspections and cleaning muddy gear after periods on the training area. I remember noting the ironical comment of our Sergeant Major, when he was showing us how to polish boots. He said that best boots had to be polished all over to a glassy shine, including the welts, and the soles had to be brush polished. However we were on no account to polish the studs, because that was ‘bull’ and not allowed in the Army of the 60s!

“After work we would spend hours polishing boots. We had three pairs –weapon training (brush polished only), drill (toes and heels polished) uppers (brush polished) and best – every bit polished. We were not allowed out of uniform any time during the day. We wore plain clothes once, after about four weeks, when we were allowed a couple of hours on Saturday afternoon to attend the Horse Show in the grounds – then back into it. Seven days a week and church parade on Sunday. No old soldier will need to be reminded of the methods used to

clean uniform and equipment but for the record and for the uninitiated, the glassy shine was achieved on leather boots with a polish painstakingly applied with the index finger cloaked in a yellow duster. The technique was to dab the duster in polish, spit on the boot and rub in the polish in a small circular motion until, after what seemed an eternity, a shine would begin to appear. It took hours and was not just confined to boots. We had brown leather belts and bayonet frogs which had to be equally glassy. My intake was the last to wear khaki battledress, and this presented additional joys in that it included webbing anklets with brass buckles and leather straps. The webbing had to be blanched the straps polished to a high shine and a scrap of polish or blanco on the brasses meant trouble on inspection.

“The rifle was no exception; the sling was of webbing and was bound in brass at each end. Similar rules of perfection were applied. The wooden parts of the rifle were polished with what was universally known as ‘the brew’, of which each company had its own closely guarded recipe. We agreed amongst ourselves that it was basically French polish, with methylated spirit and one or two extra touches. It was doled out by the seniors from the brew bottle shortly before the juniors’ competition with a view to giving us the edge on the other eleven platoons competing. It must be said that when we went on parade, once we had become familiar with the uniforms and equipment, we sparkled. We were absolutely immaculate from top to toe, and in an odd sort of way the work we had put in seemed worthwhile. We began to swank a little. There were times when I wondered if it would ever end. As we flew from one end of the Academy to another we would pass more senior cadets in plain clothes, going to their academic studies in the manner of university students, which in effect they were. Would we ever reach that stage of languid serenity or were they a race apart? Of course, a few months before these young men had been through the rigours we were experiencing, but it was difficult to believe.

“Passing off the Square was the first milestone in our cadet career. It occurred about the sixth week, though I cannot clearly recall. This was the individual test to ensure that you had achieved a basic level of competence in drill, and the wearing of uniform. In brief, you had to march from your squad when your name was called, come to a smart halt in front of the Academy Adjutant, salute and give your number, rank, name and company. The officer would then ask you a question about the Academy which you had to answer. “What is the name of the square on which we are standing?” “How many steps are there up to the Grand Entrance?” “What is the name and rank of the Commandant?” and so on. Assuming you had passed the inevitable inspection you were then “passed off the square” which meant you could move from place to place without being marched in a squad and could wear plain clothes on a restricted but slightly more liberal basis.

The Juniors Drill Competition was upon us shortly before Christmas 1962. The previous week was an organised furore of inspections, kit cleaning and more inspections. The platoon drill instructors seemed to work themselves and us to a fever pitch in rehearsals, or polishing the drill movements and so on. The atmosphere was tense to a point, but I recall the staff at all levels willing us on to victory. A great deal depended on us. We botched a few rehearsals. Always somebody made a mistake in a sequence of drill where one mistake could mean losing the competition. On the day we turned out and were inspected three or four times before the parade itself. We went on with stiff feet, trying hard not to crack our polished boots. We glittered in the winter sunshine, and we drilled with a precision which took us flying to the winning position. We went from underdogs to heroes in a day and the congratulations of the Senior cadets and staff were rained on us as never before. That night a coach was arranged and we went to the Old Rose at Wokingham, where I was not the only one to get drunk for the first time in his life.

“During these hectic first few weeks the characters of the platoon began to show through, or assert themselves vis a vis each other. We had, as did all platoons, a mixture of several types of officer cadet. The major public schools were well represented, along with minor public and grammar schools. There were those who had not come direct from school, but from ‘S’ type engagement, whereby they had joined as private soldiers with an option to leave if they were not selected for officer training. These were mostly those who failed their ‘A’ level exams so could not enter direct. Others were the Welbeck entry, who had gone from their first schools at 16 to Welbeck College, an army school which specialised in science subjects as a breeding ground for technically qualified officers for the supporting arms – Signal, Engineers and Mechanical Engineers. A fourth group were the Overseas Cadets, and we had a Rhodesian, a Jamaican and a Tanganyikan in our platoon. All groups and sub-groups had their characteristics and foibles and there was some degree of overt and covert snobbery between them, at least at first. The training however was a great leveller and those who took positions initially were often somewhat embarrassed as they were out-performed by those whom they had looked down upon.

“On reflection there was some considerable logic behind the harassment of the early stages of Junior term; the pace of work was such that it was possible that we could come off the Assault course, run the half mile or so back to our rooms, change to drill uniform and be on parade in fifteen to twenty minutes. Without the skill of dressing correctly automatically, we could never have done it, so changing parades made some sense. I will never forget one of our platoon who raced off the drill square to change for PT, but made the mistake of tripping, falling flat on his face, whereupon a dozen equally pressed cadets leapt over him to beat the deadline. So much for comradeship! There was of course a rich sense of humour running throughout, which fed on the ridiculous nature of some of the things we had to do. Bicycle drill is probably the classic. If you can laugh and ride a bike, you can do bicycle drill. If you cannot do both at once the result can be disastrous. Army bikes were ‘drawn’ from the stores whenever a training session took place on the nearby Barossa Heath. They were big, hefty wide-tyred machines, khaki painted and of the sit-up-and-beg variety. Having drawn our bikes for the first time, we were paraded on Le Merchant Square, (to the left of Old-Building) by Sgt. France, who then proceeded (deadpan) to teach us how to mount and ride a bike in military fashion and we were in stitches in two minutes! Basically the squad lines up abreast, with bikes at their right side, hands on the handlegrips, facing front and standing to attention. On the order “number”, you numbered off in twos. The next order was “Half sections – right” at which the front wheel is inclined to the right at an angle of 45 degrees. (This is true!) Then comes “Half sections in to line – right form” and you shuffle smartly to the right to form a column of pairs, “Quick March” is given, and off you go, rapidly followed by “prepare to mount – mount” when you deftly kick the pedal to the top of its circle and place the left boot smartly on it, press down, throw the right leg over and wobble off. That was only the beginning. A late order to mount could have you with the left boot poised and you hopping along on the right. Some could not ride a bike, notably some of the African cadets who became fair game for certain evil tricks. It always amazes me that the punishment for fooling about was severe but we nevertheless always fooled about. With regard to bicycle expeditions, the skilled rider could unseat the man in front with a deft flick of the handlebars against the rear wheel of the unfortunate recipient. By the same rule, a neat application of the brakes could cannon four or five bikes behind and leave the perpetrator pedalling innocently as the ‘staff’ looked round from his mount. The return from the training area became aptly known as the ‘Barossa Grand Prix’ as it was downhill with one or two sharp bends. I will never forget one fellow cadet, a huge Tanzanian, hurtling for a sharp right hander with white eyed horror etched on his face and the look of triumph of the cadet who nudged his rear wheel at the crucial moment. The massive frame, all arms and legs, was airborne in a trice, and came to rest head first but unscathed at the foot of a tree on the apex of the bend.

“Officer Cadet Brennan became the victim of the wit of one of his colleagues when just before a drill parade he could not find his peaked cap, worn invariably on such occasions. Brennan searched high and low as the Platoon vanished to be on parade on time. We were all lined up in our usual formation and Brennan being the tallest was right marker. We simply formed up leaving a space for him. Looking stiffly to our front we heard boots clattering across the square and the ire of the drill instructor being visited upon him. On the order “Right dress” we stepped one pace forward, turned our heads right in the usual way and spluttered with laughter to a man as a red faced and very sheepish looking Brennan stood there in an immaculately worn but totally inappropriate beret! I don’t think he ever discovered who had hidden his cap.

“At the end of our first term came our first Sovereign’s parade – the final parade of the Senior Division as they were commissioned as Second Lieutenants in their various Regiments or Corps. With this done we could look back at our first three months in the Army. Through the sweat and hardship we had emerged as trained soldiers. We could march, shoot, run, dig, map read, navigate, attack, defend, withdraw, patrol and so on. We were all fitter than we had ever been before. We stood up straight and not a little proud of ourselves. One of our platoon had packed his bags in the first month, otherwise we were intact as we had begun.

“Our introduction to the Christmas spirit was a final exercise called Climax. All our military skills were tested on Salisbury Plain. The thermometer registered 14 degrees below freezing and we were two nights in holes in the ground. I recall counting twenty five items of clothing on my person and my feet still froze. Two of our overseas cadets had frostbite and my toes were numb for several days afterwards. When we returned to the RMA everything was white from Salisbury chalk and cleaning up was an awful job.”

* * *

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE COURSE COMPLETED

The next four terms”, continues Daniel Oxberry, “were largely of academic studies, with enough military work to keep us fit and competent. We were streamed into academic groups – some to go to university, others really just to keep the grey matter working. I was on the pre-university course and studied English, French and Economics with Military History and Military Science as additional subjects. We wore uniform in the morning and plain clothes in the afternoon. Life became much more fun as we began to test the boundaries of our new found freedom. Basically you had to be in by ‘Rounds’ at 11 o’clock unless you had a late pass until 0700hrs the next day. At weekends you could usually obtain a pass from Saturday after Academy Parade (lunchtime) until 0700hrs Monday morning.

“A social life began to emerge. There were three major balls each year. The Beagle Ball at Christmas, the Sailing Club Ball before Easter and the June Ball. It was considered essential to have a partner for these, but finding one was not always easy for those many cadets, including myself, who were still unfamiliar with the fair sex. We used to say that the RMA had a pamphlet or précis on everything except women, and that was a notable requirement to many of us, though few confessed it at the time. To our peers we were invariably ‘old hands’ but many a hearty of the rugby or football field was reduced to folly when confronted with a woman. We got by: parties were given in the area and we got there through friends. Parties happened in London and we would turn up with a bottle at 11pm on a Saturday night to chance our luck. There were a couple of finishing schools within striking distance and we self-consciously paraded at these from time to time. We were introduced to the WRAC officer cadet school at Hindhead and half a dozen of us went to meet them one evening ”with a view to the Beagle Ball” or something. They were a great disappointment. We talked about polishing shoes and drill and exercises and things military. We were bored and soon left with the usual hilarious post mortem on the way back to the RMA. We had the occasional Company party, to which a gang of girls from Hindhead or one of the finishing schools would come to make up the numbers. The stories – tall and short – which followed such events were often more enjoyable than the events themselves.

“Financially we were neither rich nor poor. We had a starting salary of £22 per month net, paid into the Academy Bank, which was essentially pocket money, since our food, accommodation and uniform were of course free. £5 a week in the early 60s was manageable and parents were positively discouraged from subsidising their sons beyond £20 a term, a figure put out in a letter to all parents when we joined. Those who had no subsidy found life a little lean, but I had £50 a year from my father and that made life easier to enjoy. If we overdraw our Academy Bank account, we were disciplined, usually with Restriction of Privileges, until credit was restored. Although irritating, it was a sensible system, and no doubt gave us all a good start at personal financial management. A treat during the week was to go to the Roses Café, a room above a fish and chip shop in the main street where we could sit in old armchairs and watch television, and devour a ‘special’ – a huge plate of eggs, chips, bacon, liver, beans and sausages, for 7/6d. A Saturday trip to London could be done for about £3 including a meal out at a reasonable bistro and drinks in the Denmark or the Australian beforehand. We had no money, but never really felt poor – probably because most of us were in the same straits.

“Cars were a luxury, but essential to really enjoying life. I had an Austin A30, bought for £100 by my father and much envied by those less fortunate. Some managed to buy cars out of their pay, which was more indicative of the car than the salary. You could buy a reliable ‘banger’ for £25, and one cadet in my platoon bought a 1947 Rover for less than that. It was an excellent machine and in near spotless condition, and of course a gallon of petrol was then about three shillings (15p). You could also rent a bicycle for 2/6d a week, which made getting around to studies in time a much easier task.

“Periodically the military side of Sandhurst would reassert itself, just to keep our feet on the ground. We had an annual overseas exercise in Germany, where we spent two weeks in a most delightful area known as the Eifel, near the Dutch border. It was scorching hot, and hard work, but enjoyable nevertheless. We had ‘platoon weekends’, where we would go off on ‘adventure training’ with our platoon instructors. These were

thoroughly agreeable occasions and we spent two separate weekends canoeing on the Thames. Part of the fun was the inevitable pub session on Saturday evening, which was very informal and gave us a chance to get to know our instructors for the excellent characters they were. One less fortunate affair took place when we were sent off to attack Jersey by landing craft from Portland. Three of us travelled to the dock in a minivan owned by one of the cadets, which was acceptable to the staff as long as we made it. We arrived at Portland to see the landing craft heading for the horizon and our careers came immediately into question. Using our much encouraged initiative, we decided to take the next steamer to Jersey, borrow a car from one of the cadet's family and drive to meet the invading party as they hit the beach early on Saturday morning. We managed to arrive as they emerged panting and soaked at the top of the cliff. "And how many bloody punctures did you have then?" was our platoon commander's opening gambit. Fortunately the landing craft had sailed early. So we were absolved of blame, and the route to Generalship remained open.

"Our sixth and final term came at last; the end of the fifth had been our final academic exams, and we were now the senior platoon. I became a Senior Cadet Corporal, which meant very little except that I wore two gold bars on my No.1 dress uniform and had one or two minor duties to perform in the running of the Inter-senior platoon. Not an onerous task by any means.

"Sixth term was all military, and the pace was fairly hot after the somewhat languid nature of the academic phase. After a final camp in Germany came the order of merit, the list which seals the seniority of an officer from his date of commissioning. I was 140th out of about 240, and in fact had dropped 40 places from the first year, but I was not displeased. The Order of Merit took account of military and academic performance and of a complicated system of character grading, known generally as your 'Charlie George'. It was searching and scrupulously fair.

"Then came the day of days – the Sovereign's Parade. The Parade itself was not new – we had participated in three before ours, but this was the big one, as it was to mark our passing out from Sandhurst, to be commissioned the next day into our regiments.

Princess Alexandra took the salute, and to the strains of Auld Land Syne, we slow- marched off the traditional way, up the steps of the Grand Entrance, followed by the Adjutant on his huge grey, and as the doors closed, broke off in a flurry of back slapping, hand shaking and mutual congratulations, while the remainder on parade were dismissed to wait their own turn. It was a feeling of great happiness and, for most of us anyway, a sense of achievement the like of which we were unlikely to enjoy again.

We half-heartedly paraded in Chapel Square having handed in our rifles for the last time and College Sergeant Major Sullivan, Irish Guards, called us to attention. We were not sure what he was parading us for, but it soon became clear. He stood before us and said, "Gentlemen, may I be the first" and put up a cracking salute. He wished us luck, and marched off into our memories.

That night we took our girl friends to the Dorchester for the Commissioning Ball bedecked in our new regimental mess kits and one small pip on each shoulder. The short walk from the Hilton where we had our pre-dinner drinks, to the Dorchester, raised an eyebrow and a comment or two, but we were past caring. This was our day and our night, and the world was at our feet.

I was not yet twenty years old!"

* * *

CHAPTER NINETEEN

A LECTURE ON 'DISCIPLINE' TO THE ARMY STAFF COLLEGE

RETIREMENT

Captain Peter Horsfall remembers John Lord becoming ill in 1963, and information received from the hospital was not good. "We wondered whether we would see him back before the end of his service, but we misjudged his strength of character and will-power because he came back some six weeks before his final parade. Not only did he play a huge part in the preparation of the parade, but completed duties which only the Academy Sergeant Major could perform. At about that time he dined out in the Sergeant's Mess and afterwards gave a speech. All of his speeches were full, but this one was long and detailed. He rarely used notes, and to digress a little – he used to try to memorise what he was going to say. He admitted to me that before giving a speech he would feel physically ill and often required a couple of stiff drinks beforehand with which to prepare himself.

"On this day the speech was going well until he reached the stage where he intended to make reference to his wife Audrey. He suddenly stopped and we could see that he was in difficulty, and the silence went on for some time. One or two of us were commenting that he would be unlikely to continue when he took a deep breath and went on as if there had been no pause, and continued right to the end. As always he finished off strongly and received a tremendous ovation.

"After the dinner there followed a presentation in which tankards or other gifts were given to NCOs completing their tours of instruction. There were about fifteen of us, and without notes John Lord had something to say about each of us, and this illustrates the way he did his homework. He would make each of us feel ten feet tall."

In July 1963 John Lord received the compliment of an invitation to lecture the officers attending the Staff College in Camberley on the subject of '*Discipline*'. This was the first occasion upon which a Warrant Officer was asked to perform this task, and at the outset he modestly admitted some nerves. The lecture was recorded and later printed so that many soldiers became aware of its contents.

"There seems to be a great deal of confusion", John Lord began, "in the minds of many soldiers, whether officer, sergeant majors or sergeants, about discipline and leadership. And it would be strange if it were not so with all of the changes taking place nowadays.

"I always tell people to try to get away from clutter and the doubt by reminding themselves of what is the first duty of an officer. It was clearly defined by the great Duke of Wellington. He was a very wise man. When he was protesting that the amount of paperwork in Spain was stopping his officers from carrying out their duties, he said: "*The first duty of an officer is, and always has been, to so train the men under his command that they may, without question beat any force opposed to them in the field.*" I believe that it is true and always will be true. That is the most important thing. It cuts away a lot of the fog of doubt.

"Nowadays, a lot of people regard discipline as a water-tight compartment. You hear of it in the other two services, you hear of it in some of our corps, you hear it said in the Sergeant's Mess, 'Oh, he's on the discipline side'. Now to me this is arrant nonsense.

"What is discipline? Well there is a definition which I always quote. "*A moral, mental, and physical state in which all ranks respond to the will of the commander whether he is there or not.*" The key word is 'respond'.

"It was Napoleon I think who said that there are two levers for moving men, interest and fear and you can take your pick. Now obviously in young men and young soldiers there is bound to be a certain amount of mild fear which doesn't do any harm: fear of letting down himself or the team or squad and fear of being late; but these are minor fears.

"The instructor has to get the response he wants if he is going to achieve the ultimate, which is self-discipline. I believe that the great thing about the British Army today is the encouragement to the young man

to give of his best, to do well and be interested. There is far more of that in the Army today than in my opinion there ever was.

“There are some armies which believe this awful principle: that to make a soldier, you must first unmake the man. They say it. This is their policy. This is what they do. The result may produce a soldier of sorts but he would be a soldier of narrow outlook and it wouldn’t work with the sons of this country, I’m sure. If anybody does follow those principles in my opinion, they are out for a great deal of trouble and very often get it. We believe that if you take the positive qualities of the soldier and develop them along the right lines, to get the proper response and encouragement, you will achieve the results you desire – the flexibility and cheerfulness which is so important in the soldier.

“Thank goodness for a sense of humour, one of the characteristics of the British Army, and the British soldier. There has never been a good instructor yet, a good sergeant major or sergeant, who didn’t have a twinkle in his eye, however fierce he may be. I must admit in mine it’s lurking a bit far back these days ... but it has got to be there somewhere.

“Then there is this doubt about orders. First of all we must make sure that the orders are as few and as simple as possible and that the men understand what the leader is after. There is a great deal of lip service paid to this telling men ‘why’. It doesn’t mean to say you’ve got to explain every single action that you want them to carry out. But if the explanation is made, if they are with you and understand your mind and what you are working for, they will obey the orders and they will see the sense behind them.

“We now get on to leadership of those who have learned their own self-discipline and appreciation of it. That great man General Eisenhower gave a definition of leadership. *“The art of leadership is getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.”* Here again, we find the same themes, the same thought, the same background to discipline and leadership. The soldiers are being brought along, they are being encouraged and they want to do these things.

“I agree with Emerson when he said, *“Trust men and they will be true to you. Treat them greatly and they will show themselves great.”*

“It’s jolly easy to say that, and it’s jolly easy to think that all you’ve got to do is give an order, and they get on with it. Well, it’s not so, because to do that, you’ve got to train with them, you’ve got to get to know one another, you’ve got to give of your best, and set standards. Then you can trust them and they will trust you. You treat men greatly by briefing them properly or working with them or bringing them along in the right lines. Now that, I firmly believe, should be the approach of soldiers and leaders throughout all armies and all services. It may be airy fairy and it may be wide in its approach, but if that basic principle is true then I believe that the other essential and probably the greatest essential in the officer is this: having got all the things I’ve already mentioned, there must be one other quality in the leader, and that is honesty. He must be an honest man, and I’m not talking about financial affairs or anything like that now. He must be an honest man – his belief must be well based – and then by practicing what I have said about discipline and leadership all will be well.

“Nowadays we get worried about being ‘idle’. People are very suspicious about it in some places these days. Let’s have a look at it. Outside of the Services it means that a factory is shut and the machines are not turning over at all, or that a man is out of work. We don’t mean that in the Army. Goethe put this right. He gave the finest definition of idleness in the Army when he said, *“That man is idle who can do something better.”* All the time in the drill we are trying to persuade the cadets or soldiers to give of their best, and they do. The split second thought and the split second action, how important are they? Loyalty to command – how do you learn loyalty to command? You get a sergeant, a fire eater, taking these young soldiers and making them get a move on doing them a world of good, giving them mental shower-baths, a series of them several times a day!...(There was much laughter at this as Senior Officers no doubt recalled their own particular training days and experiences under a Sergeant Major.)

“But they find very quickly, these young men, and they are the quickest to pick up, that this very chap is the one who has their interests at heart and is the one who’s going to look after them and their welfare. He’s the one, and probably for the first time in their lives they learn loyalty to command in drill if it is properly handled. That loyalty to command will become a habit and they will gain loyalty to the commanding officer and company commander.



On the eve of retirement John Lord's story was featured in the '*Soldier*' magazine and the Picture Editor has kindly allowed this study to be reproduced.

“They learn directly and indirectly the value of censure and praise which is very important indeed and how to get the best out of young men. Some people say that it’s very wrong to say “well done” to anybody. You give them a swollen head. Of course that’s nonsense. As long as it’s not done too often, as long as it’s due to them, give them a pat on the back and it does both sides a world of good.

“We must have cheerfulness and endurance in all circumstances. We don’t want long faces walking about all over the place, everybody so highly technically skilled and so intense that there isn’t a smile to light up the dull day.

“Many young men have no sense of awareness at all. They see, but do they observe? You can prove to them that they don’t and you can get them trained to. In these days with our ears bombarded with traffic in the cities, juke boxes, radio and television sets blaring out, very few people listen anymore. They hear but they do not listen. I get them on the square up here, standing at attention or at ease and I say, “Now listen to the sounds of Sandhurst.” It’s amazing what you can hear. Try it someday.

“In all this training, of course, we have the sergeant majors and the sergeants. I think there is grave danger of captains trying to do sergeants jobs. The core of the British Army, the sergeant major and sergeant, has been built up over generations and centuries. The officer, with all his other interests, quite rightly and properly, lays down the policy and the sergeant major and the sergeant get on with it. If they do not get on with it and something goes wrong, woe betide them, and that’s fair enough because they were probably idle. This has built in the sergeant and sergeant major of the British Army, probably without them realising it, a tremendous feeling of a sense of responsibility towards the regiment. If this is ever taken away, and if you don’t trust men, they may not be true to you. If you don’t treat them greatly, they may not be great. If this is interfered with then it may be very dangerous for the future of the Army. Now I’m not taking away from the officer’s duty at all. There are greater problems these days than ever and officers must be free to take care of them.

“In all those ranks, whether they are Regimental Sergeant Major, Company Sergeant Major, Colour Sergeants or Sergeants, we have this one word which is common to all – ‘sergeant’, which is derived from the word ‘to serve’. We are the servants of the regiment. We are the servants and proud to be so. We cannot claim to be members of the family but we do proudly claim to be the retainers and to serve the family to the best of our ability. We are responsible to the country, to parents and to relatives that no effort of ours shall be spared to fit these young men for their first duty as an officer because we are dealing with simple, straightforward and good soldiering things. Therefore, you could say that the Regimental Sergeant Major is the chief servant of the regiment, and is the link between the Commanding Officer and the others. I mentioned that very important subject of honesty, the honest man, and if those things happen, then you will get as a product possibly the greatest quality of all, which is respect – two way mutual respect and understanding. I am going to relate to you something that happened to me which I think highlights this business.”

John Lord went on to describe the moving circumstances in which Ray Sheriff arrived at Stalag XIB [Chapter Nine], a memory always recalled by him with great emotional strain.

He went on to close his lecture with the words, “Even in those circumstances Corporal Sheriff felt that he belonged again, and he was back in the bosom of the family. Now that’s soldiering, that’s spirit, that’s understanding. That’s all the things I’ve been trying to say.” Very unusually in such a military setting, the audience of senior officers afforded John Lord a standing ovation as he left the lecture room.

Another rather special occasion came in July 1963 when he was featured in ‘*Soldier*’ magazine, and an excellent short account of his life was included under the heading ‘*Portrait of a Soldier*’. Rehearsals had been continuing for the Sovereign’s Parade to be held on the 1st August 1963, and John Lord put his usual preparation into this. The final rehearsal was well under way when he was suddenly ordered to report to the Grand Entrance steps, and there he was presented with gifts by one of the Officer Cadets, and also by the Director of Music of the RMA Band. He was clearly moved by these gestures but gathering himself he replied, “Gentlemen, thank you.” He then marched smartly back to his position.

The Sovereign’s Parade was immaculate as always and ASM Lord was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal. The end was marked by the Officer Cadets slow marching up the steps of the Grand Entrance and as John Lord followed them he turned and made his last salute as a serving soldier. Jimmy Cox was able to capture both of these moments with his camera.



The final rehearsal for John Lord's last Sovereigns Parade and proceedings are halted as John Lord receives retirement gifts from the RMA Band, the Officer Cadets, and his Sergeants Mess. 30th July 1963



Academy Sergeant Major J.C. Lord makes his departure from the Sovereigns Parade on 1st August 1963, and ends a very distinguished career.

To mark the end of his service John Lord was appointed MVO (5th Class). On 13th September 1963 he asked if the 'Wish Stream' magazine would convey the following communication:

"At the end of this summer term it was quite impossible for me to say thank you, and because of emotional stress – sometimes not even that, to those many, many friends who wished me well, and who contributed so generously towards those beautiful presentations to mark my retirement. This is my brief inadequate attempt to do so.

"First, to the members of the Officers Mess for the lovely cigarette box. Like all the others it seems to me to be symbolic of something true and essential to Sandhurst. Clean and honest in design and craftsmanship without trimmings, it typifies the relationship between Officer and Sergeant Major so peculiar to the British Army.

"Secondly to the Officer Cadets for the most beautiful clock I have ever seen. Again simple, flanked by the Officer Cadet and the Sergeant Major – a Grenadier Guardsman whose regiment has provided the Regimental Sergeant Major of Sandhurst in an unbroken line for the last 33 years and 38 years in this century. Side by side they stand calm and resolute ready for duty, the time marked between them as if to record and appoint things done and to be done.

"Thirdly, to the Band. That unique Corps giving that unique inkstand made up of two silver drums emblazoned to perfection, the one of Sandhurst, and the other of the Grenadiers, and the final touch, the engraving saying simply 'To John Lord'. Our liaison has been close and harmonious. Come rain, sleet, ice, snow, north east wind, and praise be – warming sunshine, together we have worked, harangued, driven, led, laughed and above all – enjoyed our efforts with the Cadets.

"And finally to the members of my beloved Sergeants Mess, with whom I have been so close. The writing bureau and period chair are so exactly in keeping, and are just what we would have wished. They have the tone, comforting endurance and 'richness' so typical of the most famed Mess in the world and as if this was not enough a tankard was added, engraved 'Health and Happiness', what more can a man ask!

"So to all the Sons of Sandhurst, their tutors, mentors and retainers privileged to share in 'Serve to Lead', to Dastur and to Mars and Minerva, who have benignly watched over us, to my wife who has cared for me in sickness and in health, I say, thank you all. It has been a tremendous privilege and honour to have served with you for so long and what is more...it has been great fun."

* * *

CHAPTER TWENTY

JOHN LORD'S DEATH IN JANUARY 1968

OBITUARIES

When John Lord retired from the RMA Sandhurst, he had held the rank of Warrant Officer Class 1 for 22 years, and was the Senior Regimental Sergeant Major in the British Army. He had with two breaks for serious illness been with the RMA since July 1948, and in December 1960 his rank had been up-graded to Academy Sergeant Major.

On retirement he continued to serve Sandhurst in the Sports and Estate office, and for a time he was a familiar figure about the Academy, as smartly dressed as a civilian member of staff as he had been in uniform. Daniel Oxberry was one of the Cadets of the transitional period after which Academy Sergeant Major C H Phillips took over. Cadets could not get used to John Lord being a mere administrator and Daniel Oxberry was always cautious upon meeting him around the Academy. He recalls arriving on one side of a glass door as John Lord arrived at the other, so he opened the door to let J C through first, and as he passed received a smart "Thank you sir." Daniel found himself replying "Good morning Mr. Lord", then immediately he worried that he would get a rocket for not calling him "Sir". John Lord just grinned and walked off as if it was the most natural thing in the world.

Joe Flanagan, a close friend of John Lord since 3rd Battalion Grenadier Guards days, was also working at the RMA Sandhurst and he spent much time with John off duty. Joe remembers indeed advising him to seek an easier post before retirement, because of the effect upon his health, but John wanted to carry on. Joe would pull his leg after his illness and take away his cigarettes saying, "Hey, John, you shouldn't be smoking these, you drink your milk!"

John Lord continued to take part in the Arnhem Reunions each September, keeping in touch with former members of the 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment and many friends from the old 1st Airborne Division. With his health still giving trouble he was then found work in the Airborne Security Fund by Colonel E Lough MBE, and worked happily for two years helping organise assistance for former Airborne men in difficulties.

In 1967 John's health unfortunately worsened and it became necessary for him to receive hospital treatment. A letter received by Eric Tims in May 1967 includes the following extract:

"Dear Eric (Tiger),

"Many thanks for your kind letter received last week. I am told that my treatment will last about six weeks when, fingers crossed and touchwood, all should be well. So far they are allowing me to travel up daily by road, which saves staying in the hospital ward as was necessary for a time. It all depends how the treatment affects me as the results build up, for it can have some side effects, but I am hoping for the best and am keeping cheerful. After all, as the old saying is, "The devil will look after his own!" and as soldiers in the Old Battalion used to say – mine is a holy name for an unholy man!"

* * *

Ray Sheriff maintained close contact with John Lord and visited Arnhem with him in September 1967 when his health was obviously poor. Following his visit John removed a set of gold plated Parachute Regiment blazer buttons saying to Ray, "You must wear these. I shan't need them any more." Ray has been the proud owner ever since.

Jock Boe, a well known former member of the 3rd Battalion was instrumental in setting up the Reunion Dining Club of the 3rd Battalion which meets each year in Spalding, the town with so many memories for the 3rd Battalion in 1944. Jock Boe remained in touch with his former RSM and visited him in Queen Alexandra's Hospital, London in late September 1967. He received a letter on the 28th September of which extracts are as follows:

"My dear Jock,

"Many thanks for your letter received this morning. My dear chap, you mustn't worry about staying late, such was not the case by any means and the staff do not mind one little bit. I thoroughly enjoyed your stay which passed so quickly and pleasantly.

"I saw the Consulting Doctor at Westminster this morning about my treatment which is about half way through. He reckons they can control my illness. I am hoping that at last this will be the final dose for me. Reckon I've had my share! Not that I go around belly-aching, far from it. It is good to have a shoulder to cry on occasionally and whose better than an old and valued friend and soldier.

"The Parachute Regiment has been very good to me. A staff car picks me up at home on Monday, deposits me here and collects me again for the homeward drive on the Friday which is a tremendous boon.

"Again, many thanks for coming; you did me good, a mental shower-bath, to use one of my old sayings."

Joe Flanagan visited John Lord in hospital and noticed he had two small black crosses painted on his neck and asked him if these were his war paint. He was told that the radiation treatment had to be absolutely accurate and was aimed at those crosses.



This final photograph, taken at The Parachute Regiment ITC Aldershot 1947, emphasises the influence which RSM John Lord and former Corporal Ray Sheriff, blinded at Arnhem, had upon each other

John returned home soon afterwards but sadly died on the 21st January 1968. On the 25th January his funeral took place privately with only members of his family and very close friends present.

John Lord's death was widely reported by the press and full accounts of his previous service were given. He was in fact referred to as *'The Voice of Sandhurst'* and I recall that this term was also used by the press when Regimental Sergeant Major A J Brand retired from the Royal Military Academy in 1948.

* * *

The following obituaries appeared in the RMA Sandhurst 'Wish Stream' magazine in 1968, firstly from the former Commandant (1956 to 1960) Major General (Tiger) Urquhart:

"John Clifford Lord must have reached during the last years of his service a position of importance to the Army attained only by a few, for his influence operated at a critical point at Sandhurst and it was not only very good but it will undoubtedly spread itself throughout the Service for many years to come. This influence was not confined to Officer Cadets

"He was a deeply dedicated man of great wisdom and understanding, and his love for his comrades in arms embraced all ranks and all ages. Anyone, privileged to watch the care he devoted to building up the attitude, efficiency and self confidence of his NCO staff or to hear him talk to school sixth formers about a career of service, was left in no doubt that there was a man of exceptional conviction and faith, quite apart from being gifted with the power of understanding.

"He knew quite well where his strength lay and in which field he could help the Army best. At considerable financial disadvantage to himself and his family, he twice declined to be considered for a Quartermasters commission, which he would undoubtedly have been awarded, preferring to keep his sights on Sandhurst or one of the senior RSM appointments in his beloved Brigade of Guards. It was most distressing for those who knew him to learn from the press and other media of his death under the caption 'The Voice'. No one was more concerned than John Lord himself to rectify the public image of the Sergeant Major of being a glorified bully. No one deserved the accusation less than he did. True he was a magnificent drill instructor but he was a very great deal more than that. No - he was not known as 'The Voice' by the vast majority of the Officer Cadets, he was known as Jackie Lord with affection and respect."

From Lt. Lichtenwalter, U.S. Infantry then serving in Vietnam:

"While I was a Cadet at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, I was one of 25 Cadets privileged to visit Sandhurst in the summer of 1950. The many courtesies shown to us by our hosts and by people wherever we visited, the excitement of a first visit overseas, and the beautiful English countryside are memories that have never faded. One of my strongest memories is of Sergeant Major Lord. His example to the Cadets was a tremendous one and we Americans were absolutely stunned by the impressive leadership provided by this fine soldier. One clear memory held is of a 'bull session' in the barracks one night. One of the Americans said about Sergeant Major Lord "He'd be a General in the U.S. Army!" One of our hosts, showing wisdom beyond his years, replied "No - he'd be wasted as a General." We laughed then, but it took a few years in the Army to really appreciate the truth of that statement. I am sure that many of my group will not see this announcement of Mr. Lord's passing, so may I express for all of us who visited there our sincere regrets. He will always be the model of the Sergeant Major!"

* * *

On Friday 16th February 1968, a Memorial Service was held for John Lord at the Royal Memorial Chapel, RMA Sandhurst. Almost five hundred people including sixteen Generals, many of whom arrived by helicopter, attended the service which was conducted by the Chaplain General, the Venerable Archdeacon J.R. Youens. The address was given by former RMA Padre, the Reverend Guy Whitcombe. The RMA Sandhurst Commandant, Major General Peter Hunt was present and three Senior Under Officers represented the Academy Cadets. There were many Officers and men from the Grenadier Guards, and from The Parachute Regiment, but large as the congregation was there were many thousands of former recruits, soldiers and Officer Cadets who thought of RSM Lord that day. The day was inevitably an ordeal for Audrey Lord and her family but there must also have been great pride in this outward illustration of the wide respect and feeling for John Lord.

Few people associated with him would now visit the RMA without visiting his grave in the quiet cemetery within RMA grounds, or to view the bench in the Chapel of the Academy which is inscribed to John Lord.

* * *

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

DETAILS OF RESEARCH

John Lord did not write his autobiography but perhaps would have done so if his health had permitted. The tape recording made of his memories of Stalag XIB is of great importance and it would have been valuable to have his memories of service in the 3rd Battalion Grenadier Guards, and of his experience with The Parachute Regiment.

When it became clear that a biography was not being prepared I contacted Michael Wright, Deputy Librarian of the RMA Sandhurst and also Tom Fitch who is in charge of the Airborne Forces Museum at Aldershot. Their encouragement and helpful suggestions led me to discuss with Audrey Lord the question of a book about her husband's military career, and I was very grateful to receive her consent.

Initial enquiries were made with Allen Watson, John Alcock and Joe Flanagan, and the information given was so full and interesting that the book seemed launched from that moment. Over the course of the next two years a great many of John Lord's friends and former comrades were to contribute information.

I was later invited as a guest to the 3rd Battalion 1941-45 Dining Club at Spalding and met many tremendous characters of the original 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment who were enthusiastic in their wish to support a book on John Lord. I met Ray Sheriff whose quiet, confident and likeable personality supported fully the tremendous impression made by him upon John Lord. One of the most moving experiences came when Ray gave the toast 'The Parachute Regiment'. The response was not only for a beloved Regiment but for a man obviously held in affection and great esteem by the original soldiers of the first large parachute formation to be formed in the war. This most exclusive club does a great deal behind the scenes to assist former comrades in difficulties. Ray Sheriff offered his help in tracing former friends and comrades of John Lord and I was astounded at the result of his amazing research and enquiries. He traced members of the 3rd Battalion who had been unheard of since 1945.

Research into the 3rd Battalion Grenadier Guards took me to the Regimental Headquarters, Regents Park, where I could cheerfully have spent months. A beautifully hand-written letter was then received from Harry Oulton who served 31 years with the Grenadier Guards, seeing service in both World Wars and able to provide such valuable information about John Lord's early service. Harry Oulton is surely a wonderful example of when once a Grenadier Guardsman one is always so. He retains a great loyalty towards his Regiment, and without a doubt would have exerted a considerable influence upon John Lord.

George Kirby of the 3rd Battalion Grenadier Guards became a major resource and he is responsible for most of the information relating to John Lord's service with the Grenadier Guards. George is in reality a 'walking memory bank' and when he was approached regarding the most obscure details from the 1930s he would come back with a crystal clear account of incidents as if they had occurred the day before.

There followed the extensive and excellent contributions from Major L. Drouett, Captain Peter Horsfall and of course Daniel Oxberry whose account of Intake 33 at the RMA Sandhurst underlines the aim and purpose of the RMA.

I set out to retrace the journey made by the 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment from Spalding in 1944, but found little sign existing of the old Folkingham airfield. I received a great deal of willing help from Mr. Frank Foster and his son-in-law Alan Cooper in tracing what does remain of the tarmac area of the airfield, but this is now being broken up and removed. One or two of the perimeter buildings exist but very soon there will be no remaining sign of this wartime airfield.

My next journey took me to Arnhem in September 1979, with the great help of my sister, who lives in Paris. We had difficulty in finding the drop zone of the 1st Parachute Brigade but were eventually successful, and stood on the landing zone just 35 years to the day after the event. We attended the anniversary service at the Airborne cemetery in Oosterbeek where hundreds of the veterans of the 1st Airborne Division were present. It

was moving to see how beautifully the Dutch people keep the cemetery. It was also a commendable gesture on the part of the German Army to send a magnificent wreath.

We then went to Fallingbommel where it was possible to go on to the site of Stalag XIB. At Fallingbommel the Station Staff Officer Major (Retd.) W.R. (Bill) Mathie, Royal Highland Fusiliers had for some months been conducting his own enquiries in order to trace the whereabouts of Stalag XIB and he was able to provide me with a diagram and also photographs of the area taken from a helicopter.

Bill Mathie arranged for me to talk to Grete and John Nightingale, and also with Grete's mother Mrs. Emma Fricke, who had lived close to the camp area many years - indeed, could remember when the camp was originally built in order to house the workmen building the large military camp nearby. This was before 1939 but when war began the workmen's huts were made into a prisoner of war camp. A large wire was placed around it and residents could never approach the camp or learn much about its purpose. When liberation came there was a great risk of foreign prisoners running amok around the country, but the parachutists in red berets acted as police. Indeed if Mrs Fricke or her neighbours became alarmed they contacted the Airborne leader who would quickly send help and keep order. They were always very clean and tidy. Residents occasionally heard bugle calls from the camp. Mrs Fricke and her daughter were therefore able to confirm from a very important source the excellent behaviour of the Airborne troops and the effect of RSM Lord's measures to safeguard the civilian population. Both John Nightingale and Major Bill Mathie had made every attempt to trace the former location of Stalag XIB but no sign exists and a pleasant estate of houses is now built over the area of the old British compound.

* * *

I was allowed to visit Royal Military Academy Sandhurst on several occasions and was a guest of Academy Sergeant Major R P Huggins MBE on one occasion, staying at the Sergeant's Mess overnight. This was a tremendous experience for a civilian and one time National Serviceman. A great deal of support came from the (then) Commandant of the RMA Sandhurst Major General Sir Philip Ward KCVO, CBE, and I was to learn that the Academy Sergeant Major could perhaps influence change within the army – by virtue of his long appointment – more than could sometimes more senior Officers. John Lord was considered very instrumental in seeking a uniform method of training RMA staff. He had also within his service experienced a great increase in public relations work on the part of the Academy Sergeant Major. The upgrading from RSM to Academy Sergeant Major in December 1960 had been to recognise the fact that this long-term post could mean foregoing any likelihood of a commission. It was also an appropriate rank for one of the most senior RSMs in the British Army. This required a special design of an arm badge in which Major General Sir Philip Ward had taken a decisive part.

Academy Sergeant Major Huggins showed me around RMA, and I was amused to note that he was being saluted by Officer Cadets, an understandable error, as he has a most impressive appearance. AcSM Huggins stopped the cadets explaining, "No gentlemen, you don't salute me – I salute you – but not yet ... much later!" The tradition goes on.

I was allowed to watch AcSM Huggins taking a large drill parade in preparation for the next Sovereign's Parade. A down-pour of rain did not prevent an excellent 'Advance in Review Order' followed by a slow march up the steps of the Grand Entrance to the Old Building. This was most impressive and I was delighted to hear AcSM Huggins growl "You in the rear ranks had better get a move on on the day or the Adjutant will be amongst you with his sword!"

Academy Sergeant Major Ray Huggins spoke highly of John Lord and suggested many members of staff who might help with information. I was reminded however that one's own RSM remains indelibly in mind forever when AcSM Huggins explained with awe the qualities of *his* RSM, Regimental Sergeant Major Arthur Spratley. I learned subsequently why AcSM Huggins should feel such admiration, but unfortunately this was by reading the Obituary of the late Lieutenant Colonel A J Spratley MBE MM Grenadier Guards. The obituary revealed that Arthur Spratley had served from Grenadier drummer – to Military Knight of Windsor. A splendid story in itself.

I remembered also that while Tom Fitch recognised absolutely the impact which John Lord had made on the British Army, he still reserved that special respect and admiration for *his* RSM, Regimental Sergeant Major John Alcock. The message is quite clear therefore, that given the necessary standard and quality, there is no fear of a

change in attitude between the soldier, who remains of maximum importance, and the Warrant Officers of the British Army.

Mr. D Combes, Mess Superintendent, Old College RMA Sandhurst, has memories of the Regimental Sergeant Majors dating back to Arthur Brand's time and is aware of the changes brought about by the change of attitudes in society. He explains "John Lord came to the Academy at the right time, things are so different now. I do not really think he could have run things the same way now, and this is important to remember. Academy Sergeant Major Huggins has, in my view, many of the qualities of John Lord, both men being able to talk to soldiers and get through to them."

Many men, including John Lord, I am certain would wish me to express their great admiration for the population of Arnhem and Oosterbeek. They suffered enormously in September 1944 – indeed, after the operation the whole population was forcibly removed by the Germans and returned to what was left of their homes only after the area was liberated in 1945.

This was bought home to me by Bart Roelofson who now lives in Paris. He explained briefly that he was 9½ years of age when he lived with his parents near Wageningen, which was close to the Arnhem dropping zones at Renkum Heath:

"Our village was heavily bombed just before the paratroop landings. There was no obvious target as there were only houses, and some people were killed and much damage caused. My father moved the family to a large building which served as a shelter. We then saw hundreds of planes flying low, some of which had gliders in tow, a large number of paratroops then dropped nearby. We later made good use of some of the glider cables for towing cars. Fighting and shooting went on for days and Airborne troops remained in the area presumably keeping the dropping zone clear. I saw other Airborne troops being led away captured. My father did something to annoy the Germans and was arrested. We in his family were placed in a camp several kilometres away. We watched planes dropping supplies but several of these were shot down. We remained in the camp after the Arnhem action ended. We found out eventually that father was safe and being held in a house with others.

In May 1945 shooting broke out one night and bullets were flying about everywhere. The Canadians advanced in our area and I was hit in the right upper leg by a bullet, but actually felt nothing. My only memory is of lying in hospital and being given some chocolate. In retrospect I have always thought that there must have been an easier bridge to gain further to the west, than the one in Arnhem."

* * *

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

FINAL TRIBUTES

Special thanks are due to the six volunteers of the 1st Airborne Division whose actions we have followed, Bob Rothery, Eric Tims, Bill Gilbert, Ron McBain, Allen Watson and Ray Sheriff.

Bob Rothery returned to his native Cumbria and remains an active, healthy and enthusiastic member of the Parachute Regiment Association. He is a natural survivor and went through many difficulties after capture by the Germans in North Africa. He was taken to an Italian POW camp, and when the Italians capitulated; he escaped for a time but was recaptured by the Germans. Bob later made another escape bid, but gave up when the Germans commenced firing into the roof of a building in which he and others were hidden. He ended up in a camp in East Germany where he developed pneumonia, and recovered only, he states, because of his fitness gained as a paratrooper, and by avoiding moving into the camp hospital where typhus was rampant.

On the approach of the Russian Army the German guards suddenly disappeared, but the Russians in turn placed the POWs in a camp. After many dangers Bob managed to make his way to American lines, and was eventually flown home.

In 1964 Bob was working in the Spalding area when he was surprised to notice many men walking around the town with the parachute badge showing on their blazers. He asked what was going on and found to his amazement that a reunion was being held by men of the original 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment. He promptly joined in and met many old friends.

Eric Tims who was captured at Arnhem also ended up in East Germany. His adventures also involved having to escape from the Russians, and he was successful in reaching American lines. After home leave he joined RSM Lord at the ITC Shorncliffe as an instructor, and subsequently was promoted to Company Quartermaster Sergeant in the 1st Battalion, The Parachute Regiment.

Bill Gilbert of the RAMC Parachute Medical Unit remained at Oosterbeek until all the walking wounded had been removed to POW camps. He then stayed with the more seriously wounded at Apeldoorn until he was eventually placed in a prison camp near the Polish frontier where he remained until the end of the war.

Ron McBain slept for a solid 48 hours after being evacuated over the Rhine from the Oosterbeek perimeter. He then had the utmost difficulty in shaving off a ten day old beard. Returning with the few survivors of the 1st Airborne Division along the corridor gained by the Second Army in their attempts to reach the beleaguered Airborne troops at Arnhem, Ron could well appreciate why they had been unable to advance quickly, as there were smashed vehicles all along the route. Soon afterwards the survivors of his unit were flown back to the Spalding area, and Ron returned home to Whitehaven where he received a number of sad enquiries from relatives of men who had served with the 1st Battalion of the Border Regiment, many of whom failed to return from the operation.

Regimental Sergeant Major Allen Watson remained with the Highland Light Infantry until 1958, when he was made RSM of the Army Staff College in Camberley, and renewed his long friendship with Academy Sergeant Major Lord. Allen was present on the occasion of J.C. giving his lecture to Senior Officers of the Staff College, and can remember him receiving the standing ovation. Allen remains a very active and cheerful man who has just retired to spend more time in one of the most attractive gardens I have seen.

Finally Ray Sheriff lives in Gloucester and works in a telephone exchange. As with a great many of his close friends both in this country and abroad, he will remain a very special person in my mind. Courageous and staunch, a member of organisations which help others, Ray takes part, although blind, in some very difficult pursuits, including rock climbing. As you would quickly gather from any of his friends, he remains a most popular and respected man.

The final four tributes to John Lord should come from soldiers. From Joe Flanagan, who knew him for most of his life:

“John was a grand fellow Guardsman, a great Regimental Sergeant Major, and a missed friend.”

Fred Radley of the 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, concludes:

“Johnnie Lord was a remarkable man and a really great RSM. I will always consider it a privilege to have been able to serve under him, and I am certain that most of the old 3rd Battalion men will feel the same way.”

Eric Richards, ex POW, 4th Para Squadron, Royal Engineers:

“Whenever I am asked my idea of a perfect soldier I state that I knew a soldier once – named Johnnie Lord who was every inch a soldier from his head to his heels. He was tall, a man among men. One had read of great leaders and of great politicians, but now we have read of a soldier’s soldier.”

From Daniel Oxberry, Officer Cadet in 1963:

“Jackie Lord remains stored away in my memory as one of the most impressive human beings I have ever met. The respect of all ranks for him at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst was unbounded.”

...John, Johnnie or Jackie Lord ... most of us remember him as ‘J.C.’

* * *

APPENDIX 1

TRANSCRIPT OF ACSM J.C. LORD'S SPEECH TO THE ARMY STAFF COLLEGE, CAMBERLEY JULY 1963

'DISCIPLINE'

There seems to be a great deal of confusion, doubt and uncertainty in the minds of many soldiers, whether they be officers, sergeant majors, or sergeants, about some age old and important topics such as discipline and leadership, and it would be strange if it were not so with all the changes taking place nowadays.

When we discuss these matters, I always try to get away from clutter and the doubt by reminding ourselves of what is the first duty of an officer. It was clearly defined by the great Duke of Wellington. Now as soon as I say that, up go the eye-brows and they say, "Hello, here we go again, we're back at Waterloo! "But he was a very wise man. When he was protesting that the amount of paper work in Spain was stopping his officers from carrying out their duties, he said, "The first duty of an officer is, and always has been to so train the men under his command that they without question beat any force opposed to them in the field." I believe that it is true today and always will be true. That is the important thing. It cuts away a lot of the fog of doubt.

Nowadays, a lot of people regard discipline as a water-tight compartment. You hear of it in the other two services, you hear of it in some of our corps, you hear it said in the Sergeant's Mess, "Oh, he's on the discipline side." Now this is to me arrant nonsense.

What is discipline? Well, there is a definition which I always quote: "A moral, mental and physical state in which all ranks respond to the will of the commander whether he is there or not." The key word there is "respond".

It was Napoleon, I think, who said that there are two levers for moving men, interest and fear, and you can take your pick. Now obviously in young men and soldiers there is bound to be a certain amount of mild fear which doesn't do any harm: fear of letting down himself or the team or the squad and fear of being late; but those are minor fears.

The instructor has to get the response he wants if he is going to achieve the ultimate, which is self-discipline. I believe that the great thing about the British Army today is the encouragement to the young man to give his best, to do well and be interested. There is far more of that in the Army today than in my opinion there ever was.

There are some armies which believe this awful principle: that is to make a soldier, you must first unmake a man. They say it. This is their policy. This is what they do. The result may produce a soldier of sorts, but he would be a soldier of narrow outlook and it wouldn't work with the sons of this country, I'm sure. If anybody does follow those principles, in my opinion, they are out for a great deal of trouble and very often get it. We believe that if you take the positive qualities of the soldier and develop them along the right lines to get the proper response and the encouragement, you will achieve the result you desire - the flexibility and the cheerfulness which is so important in the soldier.

Thank goodness for a sense of humour, one of the characteristics of the British Army and the British soldier. There has never been a good instructor yet, a good sergeant major or sergeant, who didn't have a twinkle in his eye however fierce he may be. I must admit in mine it's lurking a bit far back these days, but it has got to be there somewhere.

Then there is this doubt about orders. First of all we must make sure that the orders are as few and as simple as possible and that the men understand what the leader is after. There is a great deal of lip service paid to this telling men "why". It doesn't mean to say that you've got to explain every single action that you want them to

carry out. But if the explanation is made, if they are with you and understand your mind and what you are working for, they will obey the orders and they will see the sense behind them. If any order later on is not explained, they will at least believe and know that you have done it in good spirit and for the mutual benefit of all concerned.

As parachutists during the war, we were not allowed to carry marked maps when taking part in parachute operations or exercises. The reason is obvious. From a very interesting document, which is the translated German war diary of the Panzer Grenadiers and never meant for British eyes comes the following account.

On Sunday, 17th September 1944, when the first drops had been made and when he is thin on the ground in the town of Arnhem, the German commanding officer is wondering where to deploy his forces, where to hit us hard and quickly. He does not know whether we are going for a railway bridge or another bridge over the river, he does not know if we are going for the airfield.

Then we read: "Sunday- Battalion Headquarters- From maps found a captured British dispatch rider, we discover that the enemy has two main lines of advance: one along the railway cutting and one in the direction of the hotel to the north-west of Oosterbeek." He continues; "To be forewarned is to be forearmed."

One private soldier neglected to obey an order. I won't go into all implications of how it could have happened. Had the soldier had the habit of obeying orders, and had it been that orders were seen to be obeyed in day to day life in the battalion, the chance of this happening would have been reduced a thousand-fold. Who can say by that one man disobeying an order how many lives were lost. What it cost the 1st Parachute Brigade in their effort to get to the bridge. There you see why we stern sergeant majors, the purveyors of the orders of the commanding officers, are so insistent that the orders, once issued, are intelligently obeyed to the letter.

We now get to the leadership of those who have learned their own self-discipline and appreciation of it. The great man, General Eisenhower gave a definition of leadership, "The art of leadership is getting somebody else to do something you want done because he wants to do it." Here again, we find the same themes, the same thought, the same background to discipline and leadership. The soldiers are being brought along, they are being encouraged, and they want to do these things.

Let me tell you a story of something that happened to me in the prison camp after the battle of Arnhem at Stalag XIB. Things were pretty bad and the men were in bad shape. It was a tremendous blow of course- a thing that never happens to you, like being run over by a bus- and the more spirited the soldiers are the bigger the blow it is to their pride. They were all wounded except a few, and I was very disturbed that they were not behaving as the British soldier normally behaves. They were doing, of course, exactly what the Germans wished them to do, and I wondered how we were going to get over this, but I didn't know. I'd been wounded in the arm and hadn't been able to salute the German officers which quite rightly, by the Geneva Convention, they insisted that we do.

The time came when my arm was all right and the next day I would have to salute so I thought that I had better explain to the little committee which always met quietly in one of huts that they would see me do this the next day, otherwise they might get the wrong idea. So I said, "Tomorrow I'm going up to the German Commandant when he comes into the compound and I'm going to pull in my tab and I'm going to salute him." They looked at me a bit suspiciously, these chaps. We had got to know each other fairly well by then, I said, "Do you know, I'm going to give him the best salute I've ever given an officer in my life," and the doubt increased in their eyes. I said, "But mind you, when I salute him I'm going to be saying something to myself: I shall look him in the eye and when I salute I shall say to myself 'Bollocks'". Well, I know it's childish and crude, but spontaneous, and their eyes lit up and off they went.

Next morning the compound was full. I dressed up for the Commandant and saluted him and off the prisoners of war went and you'd never seen such saluting in your life, never. They were seeking out and saluting German officers a compound away. The Germans thought this was marvellous. But this is the point: from that moment on their shoulder squared back, their heads came erect and the light came in their eyes and the rehabilitation, the spirit and so on had started so that eventually we finished by taking over and controlling the camp. Five days before our relieving forces arrived, the good old 8th Hussars, we took over the camp from the Germans including the German Guard, and we handed the whole thing over as a going concern.

In these definitions which I have given you- the moral, mental and physical state in which all ranks respond to the will of the commander, whether he's there or not, and getting somebody else to do something you want done because he wants to do it there are always snags.

I agree with Emerson when he said, "Trust men and they will be true to you. Treat them greatly and they will show themselves great." Its jolly easy to say that and its jolly easy to think that all you've got to do is give an order. and, we go out and they get on with it. Well. It's not so, because to do that, you've got to train with them, you've got to get to know one another, you've got to give of your best, and set the standards. Then you can trust them and they will trust you. You treat men greatly by briefing them properly or working with them or bringing them along in the right lines. Now that, I firmly believe, should be the approach of soldiers and leaders throughout all armies and all services.

It may be airy fairy and it may be wide in its approach, but if that basic principle is true then I believe that the other essential and probably the greatest essential in the officer is this: having got all things I've already mentioned, there must be one other quality in the leader, and that is honesty. He must be an honest man, and I'm not talking about financial affairs or anything like that now. He must be an honest man - his belief must be well based - and then practicing what I have said about discipline and leadership all will be well.

Nowadays we get worried about being "idle". People are very suspicious about it in some places these days. Let's have a look at it. Outside the service "idle" means that a factory is doing no work at all, it's shut down and the machines are not turning over at all, or that a man is out of work. We don't mean that in the army. Goethe put this right. He gave the finest definition of idleness in the Army when he said, "That man is idle who can do something better". All the time in the drill we are trying to persuade the cadets or soldiers to give their best, and they do.

The split second thought and the split second action, how important are they? Loyalty to command - how do you learn loyalty to command? You get a sergeant, a fire eater, taking these young soldiers and making them get a move on, doing them a world of good, giving them mental shower baths, a series of them several times a day. But they find very quickly, these young men, and they are the quickest to pick up, that this very chap is the one who has their interest at heart and is the one who's going to look after them and their welfare. He's the one, and probably for the first time in their lives they learn loyalty to command in drill if it's properly handled. That loyalty to command will become a habit and they will get loyalty to the commanding officer and company commander.

They learn directly and indirectly the value of censure and praise which is very important indeed and how to get the best out of young men. Some people say that it's very wrong to say "well done" to anybody. You give them a swollen head. Of course that's nonsense. As long as it's not done too often, as long as it's due to them, give them a pat on the back and it does both sides a world of good.

We must have cheerfulness and endurance in all circumstances. We don't want long faces walking about all over the place, everybody so highly technically skilled and so intense that there isn't a smile to light up the dull day.

Many young men have no sense of awareness at all. They see, but do they observe? You can prove to them that they don't and you can get them trained to. In these days with our ears bombarded with traffic in the cities, juke boxes, radio and television sets blaring out, very few people listen anymore. They hear but they do not listen. I get them on the square up here, standing to attention or standing at ease, and I say, "Now listen to the sounds of Sandhurst." It's amazing what sounds they pick up. Of course, you can see the importance of that quality in the platoon commander in the field.

In all this training, of course, we have the sergeants major and the sergeants. I think there is a grave danger of captains trying to do the sergeant major and sergeants' jobs. The core of the British Army, the sergeant major and the sergeant has been built up over centuries and generations. The officer, with all his other interests, quite rightly and properly lays down the policy and the sergeant major and the sergeant gets on with it. If they do not get on with it and something goes wrong, woe betide them, and that's fair enough because they were probably idle. This has built in the sergeant major and sergeant of the British Army, probably without them realizing it, a tremendous feeling of a sense of responsibility towards the regiment. If this is ever taken away, and if you don't trust men, they may not be true to you. If you don't treat them greatly, they may not be great. If this is interfered with, then it may be very dangerous for the future of the Army. Now I'm not taking away from the officer's duty at all. There are greater problems these days than ever and the officers must be free to take care of them.

In all those ranks, whether they are regimental sergeants major, colour sergeants or sergeants, we have this one word which is common to all- "Sergeant" which is derived from the word "to serve". We are the servants of the

regiment. We are the servant and proud to be so. We cannot claim to be members of the family: but we do proudly claim to be the retainers and to serve the family to the best of our ability. We are responsible to the country, to parents and to relatives that no effort of ours shall be spared to fit these young men for their duty as an officer because we are dealing with simple, straightforward and good soldiering things. Therefore, you could say that the regiment sergeant major is the chief sergeant of the regiment, and is the link between commanding officer and the others. I mentioned that very important subject of honesty, the honest man, and if those things happen, then you will get as a product possibly the greatest quality of all, which is respect - two way mutual respect and understanding.

I am going to relate to you something that happened to me which I think highlights this business. In my parachute battalion we had a Corporal Sheriff. He was a good corporal, but he had his share of rockets and so on. He didn't make sergeant when there was plenty of promotion flying around about, but he was a good battalion and a good company man. He joined us in '41, fought with us in North Africa, Sicily and Italy and finally at Arnhem, and it was at Arnhem that he was wounded. We had been in the prison camp for I should think about three months with no knowledge of him at all when I was told that he was in the reception hut, and so I scrounged a few cigarettes which were available, because I was told he was in bad shape, and went up to the hut.

I shall never forget it. As I opened the door everything stopped; there was a deathly silence and everybody looked round as they do under those circumstances. The hut was full of foreigners of various nationalities, a smell of unwashed bodies and a strange atmosphere. I looked around and saw Corporal Sheriff in some strange uniform - if you could call it a uniform - which had been supplied to him. He was sitting cross-legged on the floor, head hanging down, looking very dejected.

I walked across towards him, and you could have heard a pin drop. I went up to him and I said something to the effect, "Hello Corporal Sheriff, how are you getting on?" In front of all those foreigners he stood up. It was three months since we had seen one another and he had no particular cause to love me. In front of all those foreigners he stood up and he stood to attention and you could almost hear their astonishment. He turned his head towards me and said, "Hello Sir, It's good to hear your voice." He was blind. Even in those circumstances he was a member of the family, he felt he belonged again and he was back in the bosom of the family, Now that's soldiering, that's spirit, that's understanding. That's all the things I've been trying to say.

* * *

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

[Editors Note: In reformatting and revising the book, page numbers and photographs have changed. Some pictures have not been used and have therefore been removed from the acknowledgements.]

Firstly, my profound thanks to all contributors for such interesting written and dictated material. Also to the following:

Mr. Eamonn Andrews for his kind consent to the inclusion of photographs relating to the TV programme '*This is Your Life*' on pp 76 and 77 and to the BBC for copyright permission to include these photographs.

Mr. Jock Boe for the photograph on p 75.

Mr Alan Cooper for help in tracing Folkingham Airfield.

Mr. Jimmy Cox for allowing me to include such excellent photographs from the extensive 'Cox Collection' on pp 66, 69, 79 and 99.

Mr. Les Dakin for his account of the '*This is Your Life*' programme and photographs on pp 76 and 77.

Messrs. E F Dowty Ltd, Windermere, for most of the original photographic work.

Mr. Christopher Duffy, Dept of War Studies, RMA Sandhurst for help relating to the tapes recorded by John Lord.

Mr. Tom Fitch, Airborne Forces Museum, Aldershot, for his kind help with research.

Mr. Frank Foster, Folkingham for his local enquiries.

RQMS M Grime, Regimental Headquarters, Grenadier Guards for help with information regarding the 3rd Battalion Grenadier Guards of 1933-37; also the photograph of WO1 (RSM) Turner GREN Gds on p 5.

Captain (QM) W J Holbrook, for gaining clearance for the inclusion of RSM John Lord's lecture on Discipline.

Captain (QM) Peter Horsfall, for the photograph on p 65.

WO1 (AcSM) R P Huggins for his kind help with research and permission for inclusion of the photographs from the Army Drill Manual on p 69.

Imperial War Museum, Keeper of the Department of Sound Archives, for use of John Lord's tapes; also Mr John Adair's copyright permission; also copyright permission of the Imperial War Museum for the photographs on pp 16, 22 and 24.

Mr. Bill Kibble, for the photographs on pp 3, 4 and 45.

Mr Richard Taylor of Brazil for the use of the photographs on pp 49, 51 and 52.

Mr Raymond Tyler for the photograph on p 48.

Mr. George Kirby for the photograph on p 5 of WO1 (RSM) Hawkins GREN Gds.

Mr. Reg Litt, for kind help with photographic problems during the preparation of the original book.

Major C Millman, Regimental Headquarters, The Parachute Regiment, for consent to use the Regimental cap badge.

Major Bill Mathie, Station Staff Officer, Fallingbostal, for his kind help in research on STALAG XIB.

Mr. John Nightingale, Grete, and Mrs. Emma Fricke, Fallingbostal, for kind hospitality and help with research of Stalag XIB.

Major Ted Rose, for the photograph from his wedding in 1952 on p 66.

Mr. Ray Sheriff for such help in tracing many members of the former 1st Airborne Division.

Soldier magazine for the photograph on p 88. *[Editors Note: Updated digital colour copy provided by Soldier*

Magazine for this edition]

Sussex Constabulary, for kind help on John Lord's career in the Brighton Police Force

Mr. Allen Watson, for the photographs on pp ii, 17, 76 and 93.

The Editor of *Wish Stream* at RMA Sandhurst, for help with research and photograph on p 77.

Marshalls of Camberley, for kind permission to use the photograph for the front cover, and also on p 68.

Mr. Michael Wright, Deputy Librarian, RMA Sandhurst for kind help with research.

Dr Anthony Morton, Curator, Sandhurst Collection, RMA Sandhurst for allowing the publication of the photographs on pp 60, 63 and 66 (Maj Gen Dawnay and AcSM Lord) from the Collection in this latest Edition in 2013.

The photograph on p 74 by the author.

[Editors Note: Digital images of photos on pp 16, 51, 52 and 69 provided by <http://www.paradata.org.uk/> for this edition.]

Sincere thanks and regrets are extended to those contributors who forwarded photographs which, due to limited space, could not be included.

The research and preparation of this book could not have been completed without the assistance of Mrs. Doreen Woodend, my daughter Valerie and sister Kathleen, nor without the tremendous support and encouragement of my wife Eileen.

* * *

INDEX

Page Numbers in Bold indicate photograph

A

Adair, Dr John - 27
 Airborne Division 1st - 11, 16, 19-20, **23**, 26-28, 43, 46, 95
 Airborne Division, 6th - 11, 19
 Airborne Division, 82nd - 19, 20
 Airborne Division, 101st - 19, 20
 Airborne Forces Museum - 18, 52, 95, 104
 Airborne Security Fund - 92
 Alcock, John - 47, 51-52, 54, 58, 59, 95, 96
 Alexander of Tunis, Field Marshall Lord, - **66**, 67
 Alexandra, Her Royal Highness Princess - 85
 Andrews, Eamonn - 75, **76**, **77**, 104
 Apeldoorn - 24, 26, 34, 98
 Ardennes - 37, 40
 Army Staff College - 86, 100
 Arnhem - 19-26, 30, 34-35, 40, 43, 48, 53, 60, 74, 76, 92-93, 95, 97-98, 101, 103
 Arnold, Tony - 57

B

BBC News - 33
 Bell, Sergeant J - 80
 Bingley, Richard - 11, 15
 Boe, Jock - 75, 92, 104
 Bond, Derek - 75
 Bone Airport - 12
 Border Regiment, 1st Battalion - 25
 Brand, R.S.M. A.J. - 59, 93
 Brennan, Colonel R.M. - 64, 83
 Brighton Police Force - 1, 6, 61
 Britten, Colonel C.R. - 6
 Broadway, Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) M.H. - 26
 Brooks, 'Bing' - 37
 Brown, Lieutenant Colonel J.J. - 60
 Browning, General Sir Frederick - 11, 53
 Bulford - 10

C

Cameronia, Steam Ship (S.S.) - 5
 Chelsea Barracks - 2
 Churchill, Winston - 10, 37
 Clark, Lieutenant Colonel Reeves - 47, 57
 Clifford, WO1 (RSM) Peter - 72
 Cobbold, Major Ralph - 77, 78
 Combes, Mr. D. - 97
 Cooper, Alan - 95, 104
 Cooper, Captain - 34
 Corbould, Colonel William - 7
 Corps of Drums - 29, 55-56
 Cox, Jimmy - 78, 89, 104
 Creasy, Corporal - 17
 Curtis, Reg - 34

D

Dakin, Les - 23, 75, **76-77**, 104

Dale, Ken - 74
 Dauncey, Brigadier Mike - 60
 Davies, Alan - 75, **76-77**
 Davies, Dave - 74
 Dawnay, Major General - **63**, 65, **66**
 Dorset Regiment - 25
 Drouet, Major L.C. - 60-62, 67
 Dunkirk - 28

E

Eaton Hall - 7
 Eisenhower, General Dwight D - 13, 87, 101
 Entwistle, Guardsman - 75, 77
 Egypt - 3-5

F

Farmer, Colonel M.G. - 59
 Firbank, Lieutenant Colonel Tom - 47
 Fitch, Lieutenant Colonel J. A. C. - 19-20, 24
 Fitch, Tom - 95, 96, 104
 Flack, Chief Inspector Bill - 75, 77
 Flanagan, Joe - 2, 5, 17, 92-93, 95, 99
 Folkingham Airfield - 95
 Foster, Frank - 95, 104
 France, Sergeant John - 81
 Fricke, Mrs. Emma - 96, 105
 Frost, Lieutenant Colonel John - 25, 35

G

Gale, Brigadier Richard - 11
 Gilbert, Bill - 8-10, 13, 18, 19, 22, 24, 98
 Ginch, David - 78
 Graham, Brigadier F C C - 67
 Green Hill (Tunisia) - 13
 Grenadier Guards, 1st Battalion - 44
 Grenadier Guards, 3rd Battalion - viii, 2, **3**, 92, 95, 104
 Guards Depot, Caterham - viii, 1, 70

H

Hackett, WO1 (RSM) - 59
 Hamilton, WO1 (RSM) - 54
 Hardwick Hall - 8, 9, 11, 14
 Hare, John - 74
 Harrison, Les - 20, 23, 34, 75
 Hawkins, WO1 (RSM) W.E. - 3, **5**
 Hawkins, Gdsm - 3
 Helouan Camp - 4
 Hines, George - 37
 Hobbs, Major General - 67
 Horsfall, Captain P - 70
 Huggins, WO1 (AcSM) R.P. - 74, 96, 105
 Hunt, Major General Peter - 94
 Hussars, 8th - 44, 78, 101
 Hussein of Jordan, His Majesty King - 61, 77, 78

I

Imperial War Museum - 16, 22-23, 27, 105

Infantry Training Centre - 47-**48**, **49**, **51**, **52**, 53, 54-58, 93
Italy - 15, 17, 40, 103

K

Kairouan - 13, 16
Kasar-el-Nil Barracks, Egypt - 3
Kearns, Barney - 20
Kibble, WO1 (RSM) Bill - 30, 35, 38, 41, 42, **45**, 105
King George VI, His Majesty - **16**, 38
Kings Own Scottish Borderers, 7th Bn - 25
Kinning, Albert - 75, **76**, **77**
Kirby, George - viii, 1, 3, 5, 95, 105

L

Lampson, Sir Miles - 3-4
Lathbury, General Sir Gerald - 23, 75
Lathbury, Lieutenant Colonel G.W. - 8
Lewis, Major. R.P.C. - 23
Lewis, Staff Sergeant Alan - 73-74
Lichtenwalter, Lt. - 94
Lindley, Major Frank - 26, 48
Lisbon Military Academy - 78
Lonsdale Force - 25
Lord, Audrey - 75, 78, 94, 95
Lord, Tanya, Jane and John - 78
Lough, Colonel E. - 92
Lovett, Peter - 56
Luard, Lt. Colonel P.J. - 48
Lubeck, Port of, Germany - 31, 38-39, 43
Lynch, Capt. Desmond - 7

M

Madigan, David - 12, 24, 75
Mainwaring-Burton, Major - 67
Manchester Regiment - 8
Market Garden, Operation - 20,
Mathie, Maj. (Retd) W.R. - 96
McBain, Ron - 8, 11, 15, 17, 19, 20-22, 25, 98
Milbourne, Andy - 18, 74, 75, 77
Mons Officer Cadet School - 7, 70, 73
Mollineux, Bill - 11
Montgomery, Gen, later FM Bernard - 12, 16, 48
Morton, Sergeant Wally - 18

N

Nash, WO1 (RSM) W.L.A - 67
Nightingale, John - 96, 105
North Africa Operations 1942-3 - 11-14
Nye, Charlie - 14-15

O

Oosterbeek - 22-25, 95, 97, 98, 101
Ormerod, Ernest - 5
Oulton, WO2 (CSM) - 3-6, 75, **77**
Oxberry, Daniel - 80, 84, 92, 95, 99

P

Page, WO2 (CSM) - 81
Penfold, George - 6

Phillips, WO1 (AcSM) C.H - 67
Phillips, Rev. E.L. - 16
Plunkett, Sergeant - 54
Primosole Bridge - 15
Prosser, Ken - 10, 12
Purslow, Derek - 74

Q

Queen Juliana Hospital, Apeldoorn - 34

R

Radley, Fred - 16, 99
Randle, Sergeant - 49
Ree, WO2 (RQMS) Bill - 44
Red Cross - 28-31, 36-39
Rice, Don - 30, 42
Richards, Eric - 33, 99
Robins, Lieutenant Colonel Walter - 63
Roelofson, Bart - 97
Rose, Major E J R (Ted) - 65
Rothery, Bob - 8-13, 98
Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst - vi, viii, 7, 58-62, 63-69, 70-73, 74, 78, 80, 83, 84-85, 89, 90-91, 92-94, 96-97
Royal Military Academy Sandhurst Band - viii, 73, 74, 89
Royal Military College, Sandhurst - 7-8, 58, 75
Rutherford, John - 14, 19
Ruskington - 17

S

St Elisabeth Hospital, Arnhem - 24,
Saltby Airport - 20
Saunders, WO2 (CSM) Gordon - 74
Shackleton, Ralph - 37, 38, 44
Sherriff, Cpl Ray - 8-9, 13, 20, 38, 40, 56, 92, **93**, 95
Sicily - 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 40, 103
Sims, James - 23, 35
Smith, Captain Brian - 74
Smith, Joe - 53, 57
Smith, Major - 27, 43
Soldier Magazine - 105
Sousse - 13, 14, 15, 16, 17
Spalding - 15, 17-20, 22, 26, 92, 95, 98
Special Air Service Battalion, 11th - 8
Spicer, Joe - 23
Spittles, Bill - 43
Spratley, Lt Colonel A.J. - 96
Stalag XIB - 23, 26, 27, 31-40, 43-47, 56-57, 74-76, 78, 89, 95, 96, 101, 105
Stisted, Colonel J.N. - 64
Stockwell, General Sir Hugh - 59
Stokes, WO1 (AcSM) A.J. - vi, vii
Stunnel, Captain G H - 67
Sullivan, WO2 (CSM) - 85

T

Tamera Valley - 12
Tatton Park - 9
Taylor, Richard - 56
Thesiger, Captain - 17

Thompson, George - 10, 14, 18, 19, 20, 75
Tims, Eric - 8, 9, 12, 15, 18, 20-21, 23, 53, 92, 98
Tunisia - 12, 14, 107
Turner, WO1 (RSM) G.F.G (Freddie) - 1, 5
Tyler, Raymond - 47

U

Upper Heyford - 57, 64
Urquhart, Major General - 23, 77-78, 94

V

Vedeniapiin, Captain Alec - 11
Victoria, Queen (Statue at RMAS) - 64, 74

W

Wall, General Sir Peter (CGS) - v, vii
War Crimes Commission - 47
Ward, Major Phillip - 72
Ward, Major General Sir Phillip - 96
Watson, Allen - 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 18, 20, 21, 24, 26, 44, 47, 74, 95, 98, 105
Wentworth Woodhouse, Nr Barnsley - 10
West Point Academy - 64
Wickham, WO1 (RSM) Sam - 27, 38-39, 42-43
Wish Stream Magazine - 78, 91, 94
Wood, WO1 (RSM) - 64
Wright, Michael - 95, 105

Y

Youens, Venerable Archdeacon J.R. - 94
Young, Sgt. - 51

Courage

Discipline

Respect for Others

Integrity

Loyalty

Selfless Commitment