APRIL 1959 – MAY 1960



Lionel Victor (Vic) Kerry

Prior to me enlisting with the RAOC in April 1959 my ambition in those days was to join the Royal Marines School of music but unfortunately it was not to be.
After passing all the exams and medical then going all the way to Chatham Dockyard with my late father, on a Steam train in those days, I had to go to London for a music test and interview on my 15th Birthday and unfortunately I had a bad cold on the day and trying to sing notes to a piano did me no favours and I never got in.

I then went to Canterbury, to the then Army recruitment office no 2 Roper Road, and signed up for 9 yrs, 6 regular service and 3 with the Colours.
Sadly I only completed 1yr 30 days.

I left home then in Ashford Kent leaving all my School friends behind plus my girlfriend Tessa who I was in love with in those days.
When arriving we were all ushered together to the camp dining hall me in my Blue Teddy boy suit with Black Swede Chukka boots, only to then have a rude awakening by queuing up for a Uniform and a short sharp hair cut.

One of my first tasks when joining Hill House was being shown how to make a bed pack by one of the Corporals on duty at the time.
The person I first palled up with was a lad called Dick Giddens who new all the ropes somehow, he reckoned he had something to do with the Royal Artillery prior to becoming one of us and I could never work that one out?

After passing out I then started to settle in a bit although nobody came up to see me, and that was bad for my morale to say the least in those days and being so young.

When I joined the Core of Drums it was quite a proud moment for me, although “Drummy” King a regular Soldier said I would never make a Drummer because I was so small but yes I proved him wrong and went on.
We led all the Parades in those days and were all proud lads, being led by “Chippy” Chandler the Drum Major or Junior CSM.

Because a new found friend of mine Chris Manning was about the same size, we were then singled out to become stick orderlies and we led all the parades by escorting Generals, Colonels etc around on inspections.

Another person who became a friend was Stalkie Badley, we followed him around with the boxing team even to watch him at the ABA at the Albert Hall in London.

I also knew Johnny Dunbar, another boxer of repute, as I was due to fight him but unfortunately I was under his weight in those days.

I recall on the first night of at the Isle of Wight Camp at Sandown leaving my boots outside all night and waking up next morning after it had rained hard, a lesson I soon learnt when they were filled up with water the next day.
On manoeuvres I remember the thunder flashes caught a lot of the under-growth alight and the local fire Brigade had to be called to extinguish it all out

Also in the same year we were all driven down to Fort Tregantle by lorry, quite a journey in those days I learnt many a good song though to remember.

Whilst my stay at the Fort we also saw the Royal Marines invade the beach by Landing Craft on their manoeuvres quite a spectacular site to a young boy soldier in those days.

Our encounters with Bodmin were quite exciting to say the least, I can remember vividly even to this day when our patrol had sited Brown Willy in the distance, but the closer we got to our destination became bizarre due to the surrounding mist coming down.
Luckily for us, though in the distance, we saw a native of the area who after a lot of shouting came to our aid and very kindly gave us a lift in what I remember as being an old Austin Ruby car, (bit cramped I might say).
Of course when we arrived at the camp we lost out on valuable points as a group, but when you are cold and quite damp as you might say you don't give a dam.

I also remember my time out and around the Moors being glad of a drink of milk in the mornings from the local farmers milk churns, then left out ready for collection.

Another memory that sticks in my mind is two of us Hitch-Hiking down to Bath on a hard fought for weekend pass, and walking past Stonehenge in the middle of the night quite a frightening experience to say the least I might add.

My greatest disappointment to me was when I trained hard for the march into Nijmegan, and that was because they were one person over and they went to the bottom of the list and pulled names out of the hat it was between J and K… guess who lost so they granted me an extra days leave to compensate.
Sorry, but I was not impressed by this, it pulled me right down and I decided to end my career as a Junior Leader.

I could go on forever but will just list a few of the names that I came across and got to know whilst in the Army.
Johnny Dunbar (Boxer), Wally Ince (Good Bugler), William (Bill) Sissons, Dick Giddens, Chris Manning, Bob Martin, KFA Adams, Gerald Thorpe, RF Larkin(Biff), D Baddeley, and Bob Lawrence (met Bob on the Channel Tunnel back in the 90s whilst working for Group 4).
Saw Drummy King at Ashford market many years ago and I regret not making myself known to him at the time.

Vic Kerry