The Brave SSgt Scott or "attack on a tradesman"
By Keith Reed



Parsons House 1960-1962

I had joined the battalion in the September 1960. I weighed next to nothing and was measured in at 5' 6" in height. At the end of training, and my induction into Parsons House, my height had increased to just under 6 feet - an increase of nearly 6 inches in less than 3 months!

In the early part of 1961 I developed an inclination to collapse on the parade ground, normally just before the inspecting officer reached me. Sgt Bill (Geordie) Luke was aware of the problem and tried to teach me various tricks, like wiggling toes and/or fingers or to try and concentrate on something going on outside of the drill square, in an attempt to stop the brain seizing-up. In fact, it could be quite funny being on the square with the Pln P/Staff Sgts standing off the square and Bill Luke trying to gesticulate to me to carry out what he taught me - this normally just before I keeled over!

So, fast forward later into 1961. Bill Luke was transferred to take over Recruits Platoon, leaving Parsons without a rudder. Eventually, a replacement was found in SSgt Scott, who was transferred in from Trade Training Wing and was a really decent and nice guy, but, as far as teaching Regimental matters to a bunch of hairy-arsed youths was concerned, he was somewhat out of his depth - and that's putting it mildly.

LCpl Taff Coombs was a likeable rogue with a constant twinkle in the eye. Recognised as having NCO potential, he was promoted relatively quickly, but his love of the ridiculous constantly threatened to bring him back to 'ground level' at any time. This state affairs was not helped by his great friendship with J/Pte Mick (Alice) Harris. Alice was so-called because of his thick brummie accent and the inability for others to understand a damn word he said. Hence, on being asked by an NCO as to what his name was, all that could be understood by said NCO was "Alice, Corporal".

Alice's claim to fame was explained when he had been asked to tell why he had decided to join the army. It turns out that his dad owned his own building company and had given a 15 year old Alice an apprenticeship. However, a string of disasters forced "Dad" to give son a final warning and allotted him the job of building a diagonally shaped fireplace and chimney across the corner of a room in new-build bungalow. This was to be his last chance.

Determined to show his dad what he was made of, Alice set to and worked, non-stop, throughout the day, in order to get the job done. On completing the job, Alice stood, stretched his back and looked up to find that he had bricked himself into the fireplace. He had no

choice other than to knock down his day's work in order to allow him to escape and to go and get his P45 from his dad!

One of the first platoon drill parades undertaken by SSgt Scott was held on the main square, sometime between 9 and 10 a.m. It was pretty mundane and, compared to what we were used to from Geordie Luke, was a bit boring. Scott's method was to drill the platoon and then stop them and explain improvements etc. At one of these stops, Taff Coombs leaned to me and said, "At the next stop, you pretend to faint". This duly happened and Taff called the good SSgt and explained the fact that I had fainted and gave him some of the history behind it. Taff was instructed, with one other, to carry me to the side of the square. (You've guessed it!!) The assistant was nominated as Alice and they bravely tried to lift me and carry me off.

The whole thing, as far as I was concerned, was now absolutely rediculous and I could do nothing other than burst into laughter. Fred Carnot had nothing on this bit of theatre! To most people it was obvious what was happening but, before SSgt Scott had grasped the nettle, Taff exclaimed, "Staff, it's really bad now, he's becoming hysterical!" This made me even worse and gave me the fear that, because of the situation, anyone trying to carry me was liable to drop me - probably on my head. Eventually the good SSgt got control of the situation and told them to take me into the cookhouse and get me a cup of tea.

The three of us sat, warm and snug, in the cookhouse and drank tea whilst our colleagues continued drilling up and down the main square. We never repeated this exercise, I think, for fear that one of us would get a heart-attack from too much laughter!

Keith Reed February 2013