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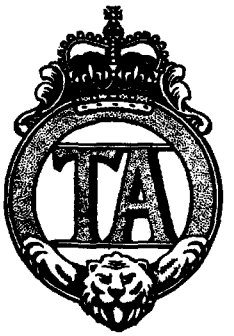
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43rd Wessex Divisional Column R.A.S.C. (T.A.)



1904-1964

Sixty

Glorious Years

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WITHOUT THE HELP and hard work of a number of people this book would not have been possible.

Grateful acknowledgements and thanks are made to everyone who participated, and particularly to Colonel G. E. Moulder, O.B.E., T.D., whose painstaking and excellent research resulted in his book *History of the 43rd Wessex Infantry Divisional Column R.A.S.C. (T.A)*, from which a synopsis of the earlier years has been made to form the basis of this Jubilee Booklet.

To Captain R. S. Pickard, the Adjutant, for all his toil and interest in summarising Colonel Moulder's book; for obtaining and assembling photographs; and for arranging publication.

To Major Ratcliffe and 504 Squadron for their generous financial assistance.

FOREWORD

by

MAJOR-GENERAL A. F. J. ELMSLIE, C.B., C.B.E., M.I.MECH.E., M.INST.T.,
Honorary Colonel 1960–1965

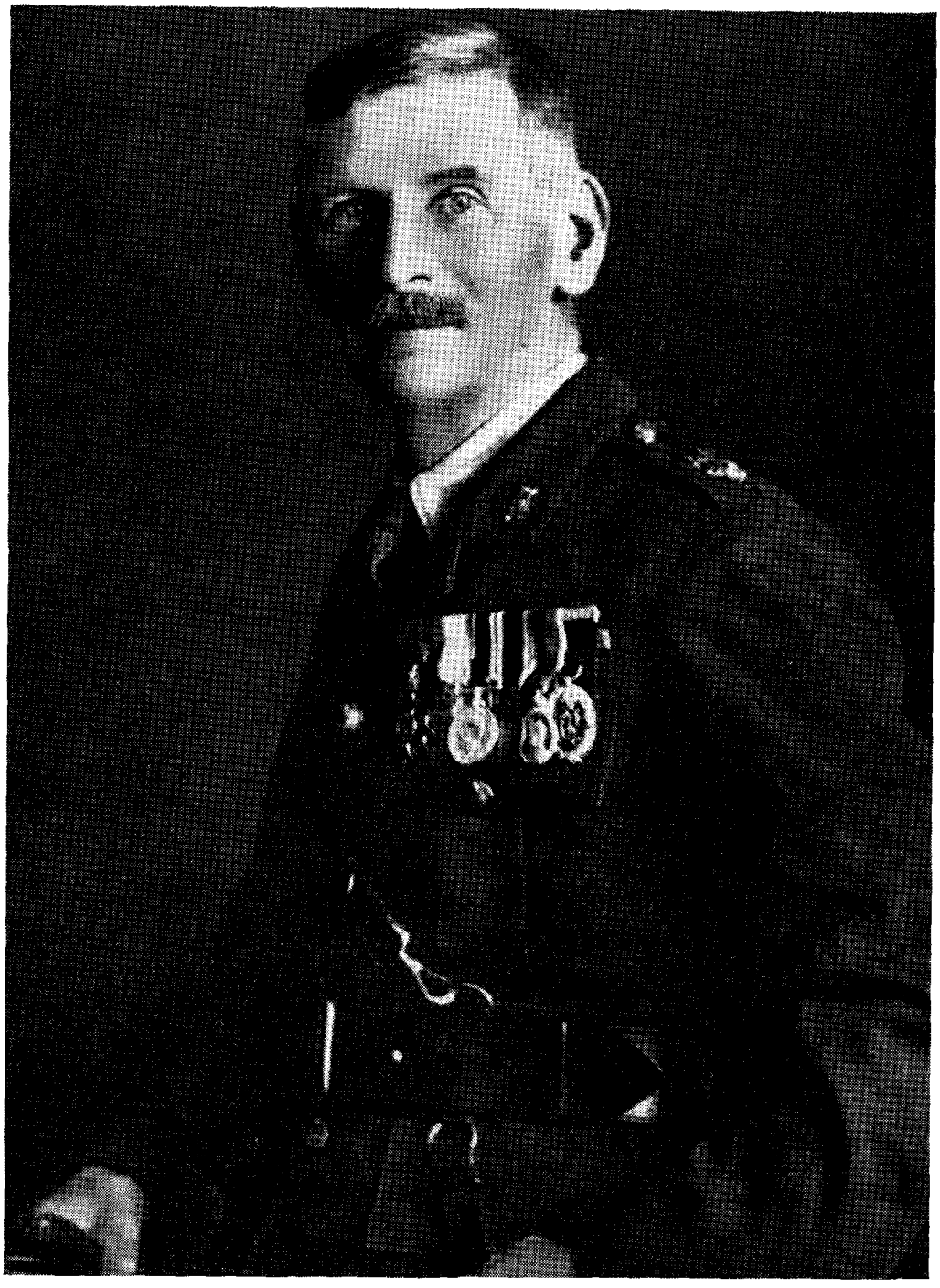
THIS IS A record of outstanding service and devotion to duty in peace and war of which all who served in or with the Column can be justly proud.

It covers two world wars and the intervening periods, when interest and enthusiasm and efficiency have been hard to maintain in the face of many difficulties. That these difficulties have been overcome, and that as a result the Column keeps a state of high morale because they are soldiers who know their job and are able to meet all demands, is a measure of the determination and steadfastness of all ranks.

This is a Column with character. Its members take the rough days with a laugh and better days as a measure of their good fortune in belonging to such a family. With this excellent spirit the Column goes forward into the future confident of work well done and ready for anything.

I have been honoured and proud to be its Honorary Colonel and wish all members – past, present and to come – every happiness and success in the future.





THE LATE BREVET COLONEL M. C. COLLIER, O.B.E., T.D., WHO FOUNDED THE 43RD DIVISIONAL COLUMN R.A.S.C. AT PLYMOUTH IN 1904

He joined the 3rd Volunteer Battalion Devonshire Regiment in 1897, he was on the Devon and Cornwall Brigade Staff from 1898 to 1901, and transferred to the 2nd (Prince of Wales's) Volunteer Battalion in 1903, and he raised the first Volunteer Army Service Corps Company in 1904. During the First World War he served as senior supply officer, 29th Division, in Gallipoli and he was mentioned in despatches for his service there. He was promoted to the rank of Lieut.-Colonel in 1916 and voluntarily reverted to the rank of Major on rejoining the unit after the war. He commanded the Divisional Column for five years and brought to it all his enthusiasm and the experience which he had acquired over long years of service. In 1929 Colonel M. C. Collier, O.B.E., T.D., retired, after thirty-two years' service.

Chapter one

THE EARLY DAYS

1904 – 1914

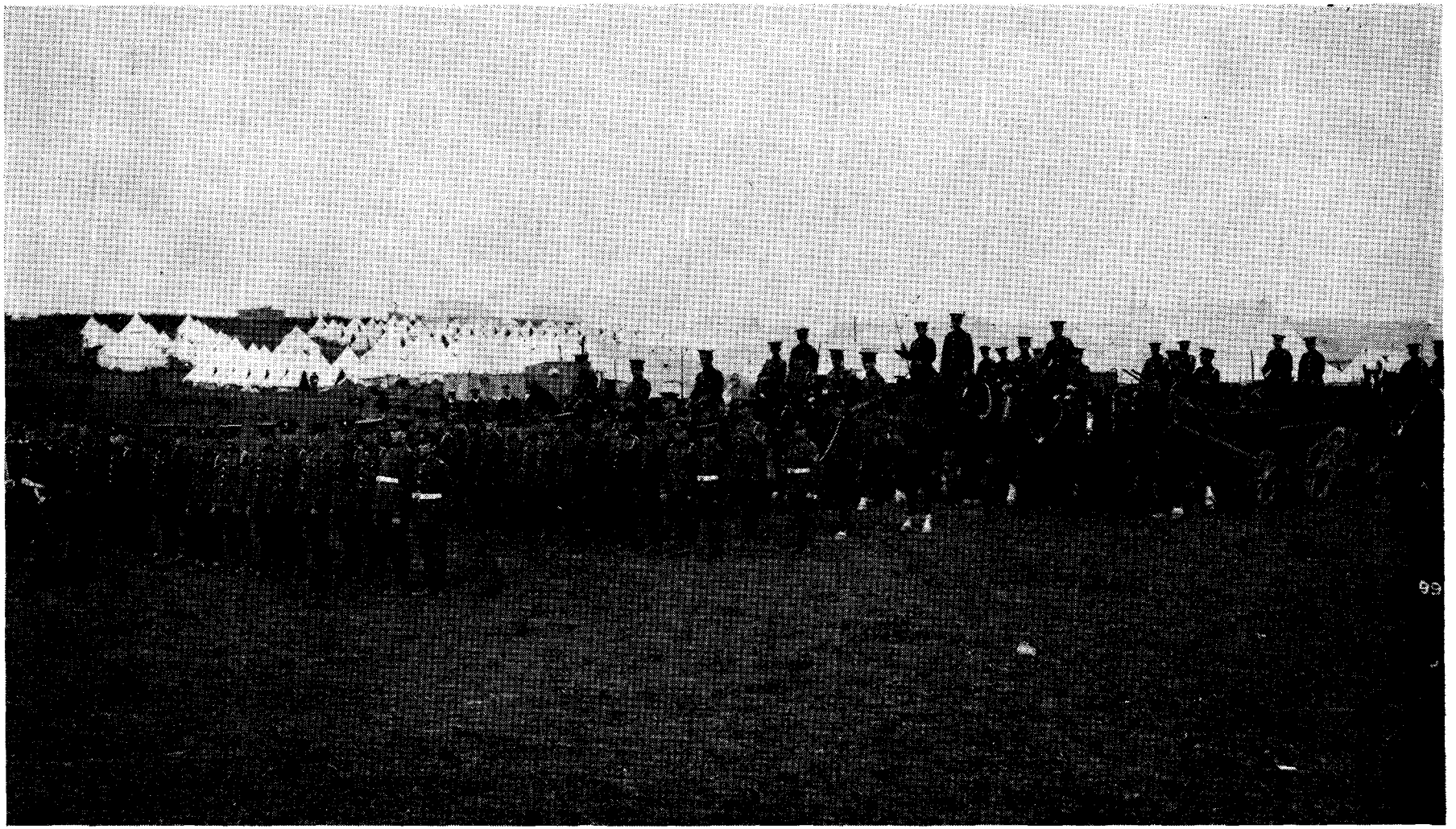
TRANSPORTATION in a military force is, of course, nothing new, and ever since armies have been formed methods of moving and supplying the fighting soldier have been to the fore of the commanders' planning. So it was in early 1904, when the decision was made to form an A.S.C. Company from within the existing ranks of the 2nd (Prince of Wales's) Volunteer Battalion, the Devonshire Regiment, and further emphasis was given to the need for a separate Transport Service in the Volunteer Army. The command of this newly formed volunteer unit was given to Captain Mortimer Collier (later Brevet Colonel Mortimer Collier, O.B.E., T.D.). This, then, was the foundation of the 43rd (Wessex) Divisional Column R.A.S.C. Territorial Army, whose members are still proud to serve their sovereign and country in peace and war, as were their predecessors sixty years ago.

The change from infantry required the Company to adopt the uniform of the regular A.S.C., which at that time was Service dress, with breeches, puttees and spurs, and a bandolier worn across the chest. A walking-out dress was provided in the form of a blue jacket with white facings, overalls and wellington boots, but the Company had the distinction of wearing silver buttons.

In 1908, as the result of the Haldane Committee report which transformed the Volunteer Forces into the Territorial Force, the Wessex Division came into being. This Division consisted of three brigades:

Devon and Cornwall
South Western
Hampshire.

In addition, the Divisional order of battle included supporting arms and services, of which the Wessex Divisional Train A.S.C. was not the least. The Divisional Train was formed with a Headquarters



ANNUAL CAMP AT BRIDESTOWE, 1908

Company and three Brigade Companies, and Lieut.-Colonel Hewett, V.D., was appointed to command. The A.S.C. order of battle on the formation of the Territorial Army in 1908 was as follows:

Commanding Officer: Lieut.-Colonel Hewett, V.D.

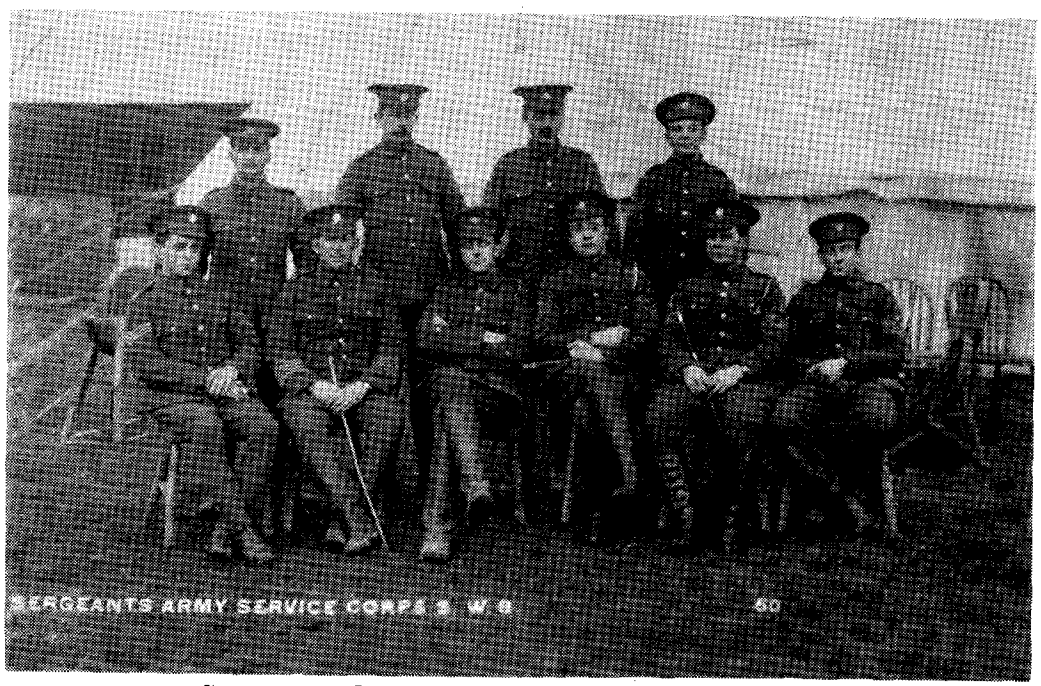
No. 1 (Headquarter) Coy
(late 1st Vol. Bn. Hants)
O.C.: Major H. Longfellow-Cooper

Andover

No. 2 (Devon and Cornwall Bde) Coy (late 2nd Vol. Bn. Devons) O.C.: Capt. M. C. Collier (Plymouth)	No. 3 (S.W. Bde) Coy (new formation) O.C.: Capt. A. H Peace (Bridgwater)	No. 4 (Hants Bde) Coy (late 1st Vol. Bn. Hants) O.C.: Capt. J. Atkinson (Aldershot)

In addition, the A.S.C. supported in company strength the 1st and 2nd Yeomanry Brigades, although these companies were not under the command of Colonel Hewett.

It is interesting to record that the companies first camped as a complete train at West Down on Salisbury Plain in the year 1910.



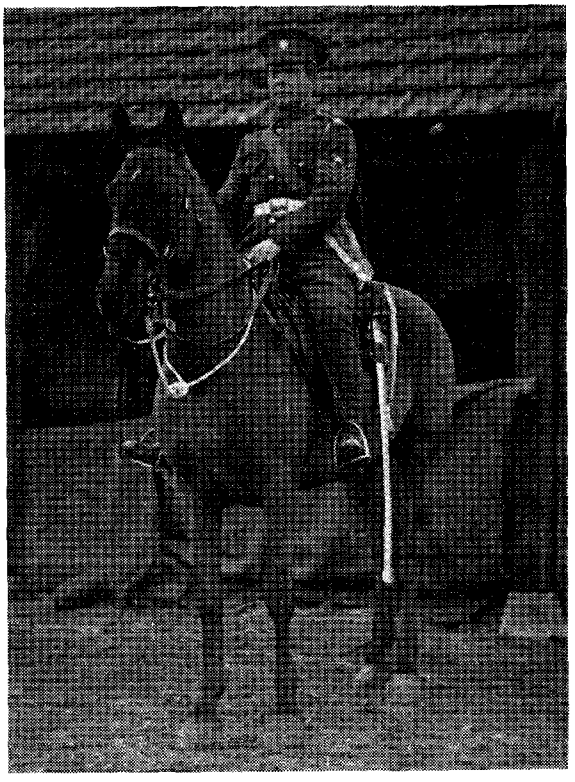
SERGEANTS' MESS, BRIDGWATER COY (about 1913)

How keen and zealous were the drivers of those bygone days, when spit and polish was no mere phrase and where the driver's affection no doubt leaned more towards his horse than his fellow-man.

During the ensuing years of peace opportunities were taken to train all ranks in their varying roles, and considerable assistance was given, and readily accepted, from the Regular Adjutant and Permanent Staff Instructors, who had become an integral part of the establishment of Territorial Units, the A.S.C. being no exception.

Many changes and promotions took place. Major Longfellow-Cooper succeeded Lieut.-Colonel Hewett as the Train Commander and Captain Holman assumed command of No. 1 Headquarter Company.

By the time of Annual Camp at Woodbury, and Salisbury Plain in 1914, rumours of pending trouble in Central Europe were rife, and there can be no doubt the Train carried out its exercises with more determination and, from all accounts, all ranks were ready and eager to undertake their allotted tasks in war.



FARRIER STAFF SGT. PITMAN
BRIDGWATER COY
(about 1913)

Chapter two

THE GREAT WAR

WHEN the Government proclaimed its intention to go to the assistance of the Belgian Government and orders to mobilise the Forces were issued on 3rd August, 1914, the 43rd Wessex Divisional Train was still at Annual Camp. All companies were ordered to return to their permanent home locations, where immediate steps were taken to move to the Salisbury Plain area, where the companies performed their normal task of maintaining the Division.

Early on the Wessex Division was ordered to India to release Regular Army units, but the Divisional A.S.C. was destined to remain in England, where it carried out transport and supply duties with the newly arrived Canadian Forces and other military formations in the Salisbury Plain and Bovington areas.

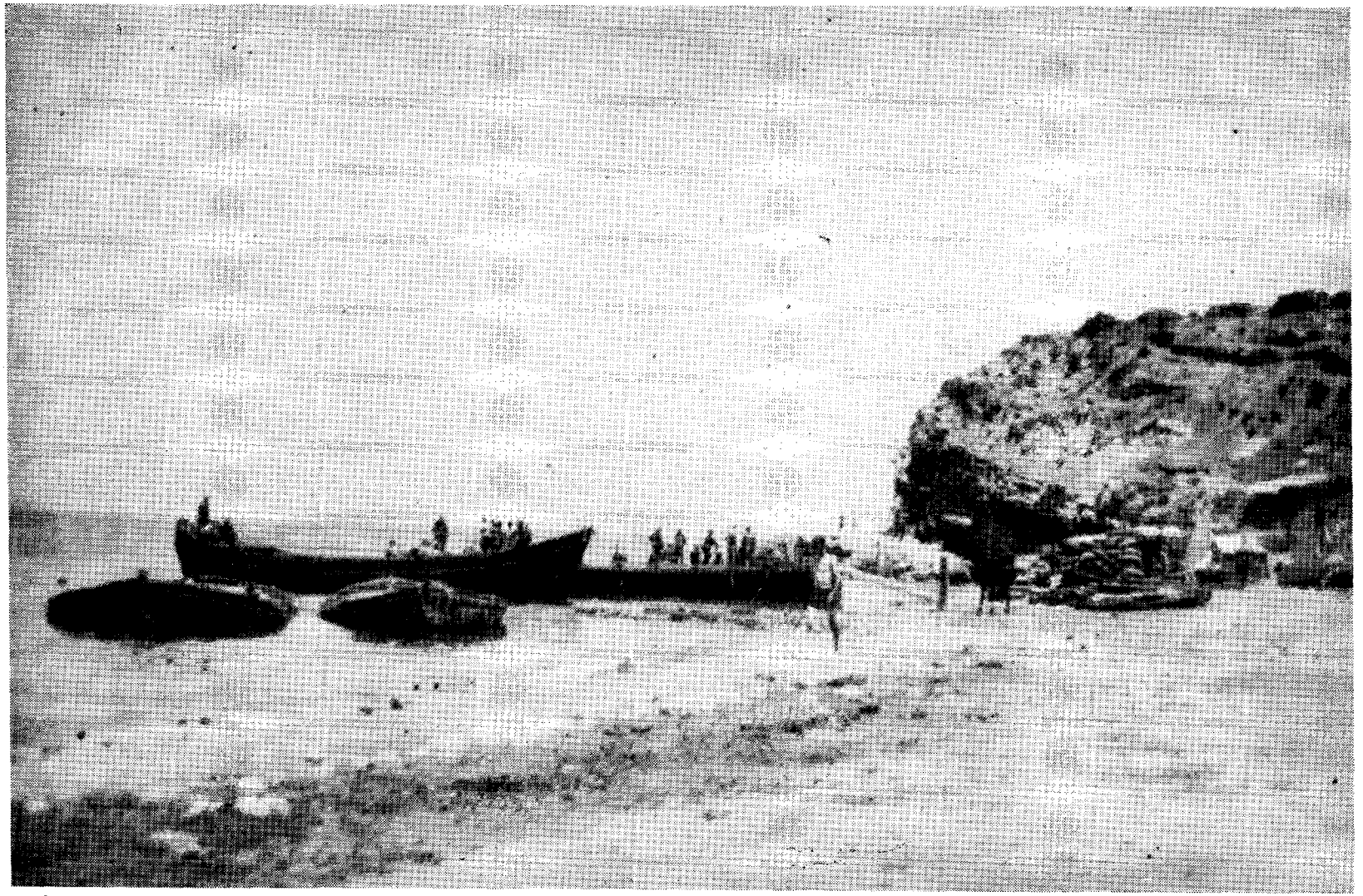
In January 1915 the 29th Infantry Division was formed by the use of Regular battalions from India, and the Wessex Divisional A.S.C. was ordered to the 29th Division as the Divisional Train. This was, of course, a great compliment in that it implied the Train was capable of moving into a Regular division without further training.

The existing companies were now renamed:

No. 1 H.Q. Company became 246 Coy A.S.C.
No. 2 Devon & Cornwall Bde Coy became 247 Coy A.S.C.
No. 3 South Western Brigade Coy became 248 Coy A.S.C.

but No. 4 Coy (Hampshire Bde), not having elected to accept a Regular status, was replaced by 249 Coy A.S.C., which was formed from reinforcements from the depot at Aldershot.

In the middle of March orders were received for the Division to move to the Middle East under command of Major-General Hunter-Weston. The Divisional Train had meanwhile been re-equipped with mules and lighter transport, although there was every indication that the Division would be proceeding to the Dardanelles and that pack-horses would be required in view of the absence of roads. After a change of plans, the Division arrived at Alexandria, where the ships were reloaded on a tactical basis with the proposed campaign in Gallipoli in mind.



29TH DIV. TRAIN A.S.C. LANDING SUPPLIES ON 'W' BEACH, GALLIPOLI, ON 26TH APRIL, 1915 – THE DAY AFTER THE LANDING

The Gallipoli Campaign, now acknowledged by the historians to have been hastily conceived, was to be an attempt to bring military pressure on the Balkans and so ease the situation on the Western Front. The 29th Infantry Division formed part of an expeditionary force under General Sir Ian Hamilton, together with the Australian and New Zealand Corps (the famous Anzacs) and the Royal Naval Division.

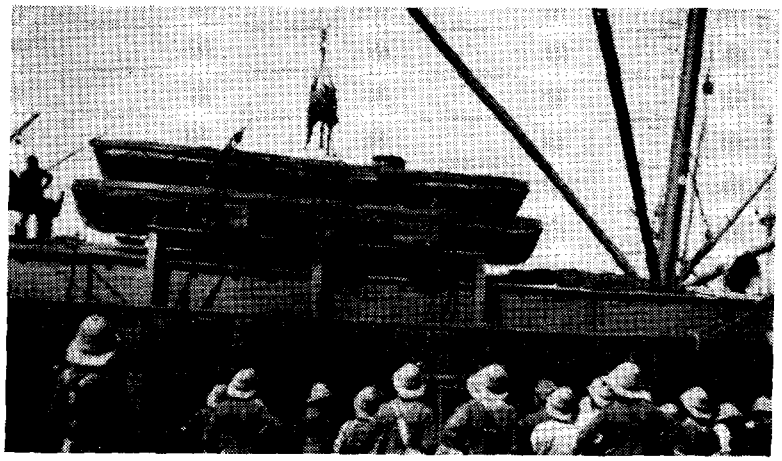
Early on the 25th August, 1915, 86 Brigade of 29th Infantry Division assaulted Cape Helles, and part of the 29th Divisional A.S.C., under command of Lieut.-Colonel Longfellow-Cooper, immediately landed and set up supply points on the beach under terrible conditions. All ammunition and other supplies being man-handled over soft beaches under heavy shell-fire to form the dumps on a very narrow foreshore.

The remainder of the 29th Divisional Train remained at the base at Mudros, waiting to assist as the landing developed. Eventually it became clear that they could not be used, and they returned to Alexandria.

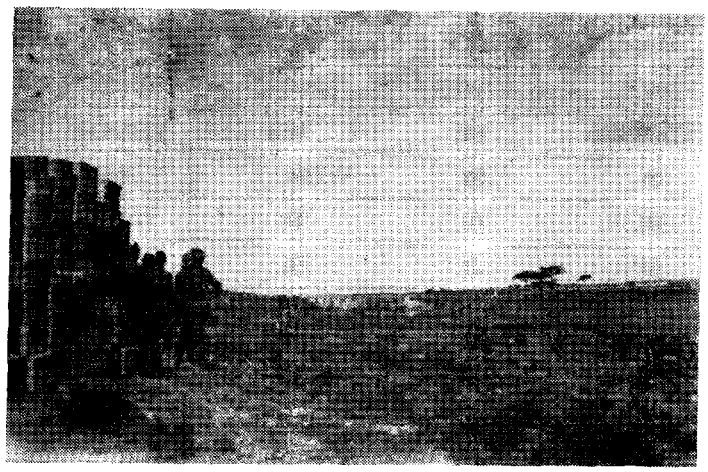
Those men of the Divisional Train already in the Peninsula carried on alone, casualties were evacuated to Egypt with replacements from that part of the Train which did not land. Throughout the operations of the 29th Division the Train carried out its role of supplying food, water and ammunition to the fighting troops. However, in January 1916 the Division was evacuated to Egypt and after a short stay was despatched to France. Only the Supply personnel of the Train accompanied the Division to France. Some transferred to other formations, but eventually the remainder of the 29th Divisional Train joined the 53rd Welsh Division to assist the Eastern Force facing the Turks in Palestine.

As can be understood, considerable reorganisation of both personnel and equipment became necessary to meet the new conditions to be faced in Palestine, Jordan and Syria. The command of the Train was assumed by Lieut.-Colonel Cox, and under his command the Train supported the 53rd Welsh Division throughout the campaign, until the final defeat of the Turkish Army in the autumn of 1918.

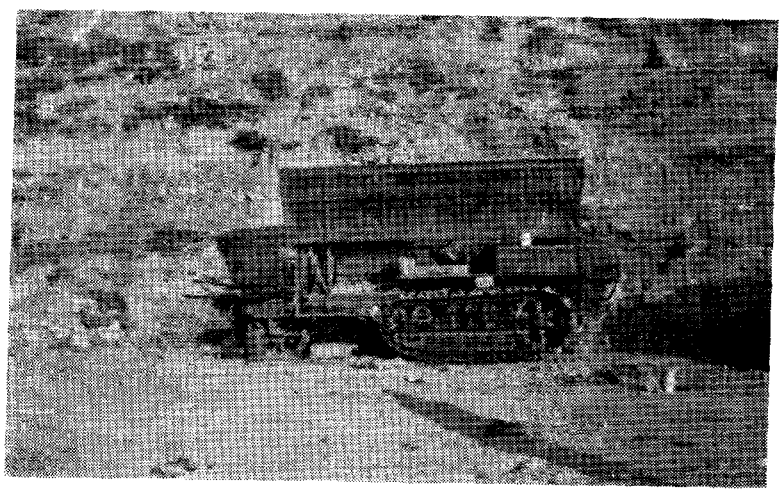
And so came the end of the Great War; final victory was proclaimed in November 1918, and at the end of the year the 53rd Welsh Divisional Train A.S.C. returned home for demobilisation, many of its soldiers having become Territorial Volunteers in 1914 and having left England in 1915.



UNLOADING HORSES – ALEXANDRIA, APRIL 1915



A 29 DIV. TRAIN SUPPLY POINT AT GALLIPOLI, 1915



A HALF-TRACK VEHICLE, CAPE HELLES, 1915

Chapter three

THE PEACETIME VOLUNTEER
1920 – 1939

AFTER the strains and trials of a major war, it was only natural for there to be a period when the Territorial Force was not active. Many of its original members had ended their terms of service and the original Territorial organisation had not been re-formed. However, in 1920 ideas of reviving it were conceived and a nucleus Headquarters of R.A.S.C. was formed at Exeter in preparation for the re-establishment of the Wessex Divisional Train in 1921, under the auspices of the Territorial Forces Act of the same year. By this Act the title of the Force changed to Territorial Army and allowed for the formation of complete divisions, of which the 43rd Wessex Infantry Division was one. Under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Pearce the Divisional R.A.S.C. Train formed as part of the 43rd Division and, quite naturally, many of the soldiers who had served with the Train before and during the war rejoined. A point of interest worthy of note is that on this re-establishment the Train had for the first time a few motorised vehicles in the form of three-ton Albion lorries.

In 1924 Lieut.-Colonel M. C. Collier, who had formerly commanded the first A.S.C. Company at Plymouth in 1904, assumed command of the Train, and in 1926 an important War Office decision was made to mechanise the Territorial Army, necessitating consequential reorganisation of the 43rd Wessex Divisional Train. The brigade system was abandoned and a Divisional second line supply column brought into being with the following establishment:

H.Q. 43rd Wessex Transport and
Supply Column R.A.S.C. T.A.
Lieut.-Colonel M. C. Collier

504 Company | 505 Company | 506 Company

The whole Column was established at Plymouth, and it became necessary to promote a vigorous recruiting drive in that city, as it will be remembered that the original Companies of the Divisional Train had been centred at Aldershot, Andover and Bridgwater.

In 1929 Lieut.-Colonel J. T. P. Clarke assumed command, and under his guidance and leadership training of all ranks was progressed to accord with the modern developments of the Army. This was, of course, during the time of the 'Depression Years', when financial stringency was uppermost in many governing circles. However, the Column progressed, recruiting gathered momentum, although this was then naturally small (100 all ranks) and, of necessity, a waiting-list was maintained.

It was during this period that the Column instituted a Regimental Day to commemorate the anniversary of the Gallipoli landings, an anniversary still remembered with due ceremony to this day by the companies stationed at Plymouth.

In 1933 Lieut.-Colonel N. C. Hamilton assumed command, and during that year the Column was honoured by the appointment of the Rt. Honourable Leslie Hore-Belisha as Honorary Colonel. By 1936 the political situation in Europe was worsening and Territorial Army units were increased in establishment strength. The Divisional R.A.S.C. establishment went up to 250 all ranks. This increase caused a reshaping of training plans, but the new Adjutant, Captain F. A. Shaw, ably assisted by his Regimental Sergeant-Major, R.S.M. Haughins, provided training cadres and exercises, to bring the new recruits up to the standard of training required by the Column Commander.

In 1938 Lieut.-Colonel W. V. Pearce accepted command of the Column. The Munich crisis came and passed, with the result that the establishment of the Divisional R.A.S.C. was increased from 250 to 1,300, and it is a great credit to all concerned that by the Summer Camp of 1939 the strength of the Column was 800 all ranks, most of whom were already capable drivers.

During the last week of August 1939 orders were received for the Column mobilisation key parties to be called up, and preparations were then put in hand for general mobilisation. By the outbreak of war on the 3rd September, 1939, the 43rd Wessex Divisional Column R.A.S.C. T.A. was again ready to take its place in support of king and country.

The command of the Column and companies at the outbreak of war on 3rd September was:

Commanding Officer .	Lieut.-Colonel W. V. Pearce
Adjutant . . .	Captain F. A. Shaw
504 Company . .	Major Talbot
505 Company . .	Major Martin
506 Company . .	Major R. Kimber

Chapter four

FOR KING AND COUNTRY
1939 – 1945

ON COMPLETION of mobilisation plans, into which a lot of hard work and long hours had been put by all ranks, the Column was ordered to move to Gillingham in Dorset, where the main 'settling-in' process began, and where intakes of reservists and recruits were received from the R.A.S.C. Depot at Aldershot. It would have no doubt been interesting, and somewhat perplexing, to listen to the soft West Country accent in opposition to the London 'Cockney' and also to keep pace with the Birmingham wit. There is no doubt it was a great credit to all that the merger was such a success and lasted throughout the campaign years.

Vehicles were impressed from civilian sources, but most of the transport was in a poor state, requiring much workshop attention. During those initial days there were overseas drafts to maintain, and many of the Column stalwarts left and were not to be reunited until the final cessation of hostilities. Also, it was natural for the rapidly expanding Army to require more units, and to this end the Column was required to duplicate itself, and in fact the nucleus of R.A.S.C. personnel for the 45th Infantry Division was formed from the 43rd Divisional Column.

After the 'phoney' war period, and just prior to Dunkirk, the Column moved to Hertfordshire and settled down within the Divisional formation to a defensive role, covering the coast from London to the East Coast area. Exercises were the order of the day and gradually the Column was being brought up to an efficient standard.

In September 1940 the Column, now under command of Lieut.-Colonel Bright Holme, moved to Kent, where it carried out its role of supplying and maintaining the 43rd Division, which by now was committed to a defensive role in the south-east. In 1941 Lieut.-Colonel Goodyer Paine assumed command of the Column, at a time when many changes were either taking place or imminent. One of the principal changes was in the R.A.S.C. organisation: existing individual Company establishments were superseded and

replaced by the platoon system, each platoon having five sections of six load-carrying vehicles. This meant that each Company had two or more transport platoons in addition to a Headquarters composite or supply platoon and, of course, a Workshop platoon. Furthermore, the Infantry Divisional Columns changed from operating on a commodity basis to a composite system, so that in effect a company was required to carry all the commodities required by its parent brigade.

Also at this time another important change took place within the 43rd Infantry Division. 128 Brigade moved away and in its place came the 54th Tank Brigade, thus causing a major reorganisation in the Divisional Column to meet the new requirements of maintenance. The Column order of battle and responsibilities now comprised:

129 Infantry Bde	130 Infantry Bde	54 Tank Bde
504 (Inf. Bde) Coy (2 Tpt platoons)	505 (Inf. Bde) Coy (2 Tpt platoons)	54 (Tank Bde) Coy (3 Tpt platoons)

Early in 1942 there was a quick succession of command, and eventually Lieut.-Colonel T. Leland succeeded Lieut.-Colonel Huxham and assumed the responsibility of the Column. It was under his firm direction that the Column trained for its role in the force being prepared for the invasion of North-West Europe.

By 1943 the 43rd Wessex Division, under Major-General G. I. Thomas, was vitally concerned in serious and realistic training, including moving to concentration areas and embarkation exercises, all with the ultimate aim of training for battle and the opening of the long-awaited Second Fronts in Europe.

Towards the end of 1943 the Divisional Order of Battle was once more changed and 54th Tank Brigade was given an independent role, but to replace it came 214 Infantry Brigade. As a result, the Tank Brigade Company of the R.A.S.C. moved with its parent brigade and 54 Company R.A.S.C. joined the Divisional Column.

Early in 1944 General Bernard Montgomery returned to England from his successful Eighth Army and took over the command of the 21st Army Group and, as was to be expected during the early part of 1944, the preparations for the invasion of Europe were rapidly brought to perfection. Eventually, on 6th June, 1944, the long-awaited Second Front opened up. Naturally, the Divisional Column, after its past eighteen months' hard training, was well prepared to move, and on the 13th June the main party of the Column moved to its embarkation port at Tilbury, and for the second time in its history made its way into battle.

The first of the 43rd Divisional R.A.S.C. units to land was 504 Company, who had suffered a notoriously bad crossing. They, however, assembled at Bayeaux, and for six days, owing to the atrociously bad weather in the Channel, which held up the landing of the other R.A.S.C. companies, fully maintained all the units of the Division already in Normandy. A task which showed how well the Divisional R.A.S.C. had responded to hard training.

On the 26th June the Division started its first major operation, supporting the 15th Scottish Division in the Battle of Odon; and by the first week in July the companies were hard put, to ammunition dumping for the 25-pounder guns and in moving troops forward in the Bayeaux–Caen area. It was at Hill 112, where units of the 43rd Division fought so magnificently and suffered terrible casualties, that due respect was given to the Divisional Column for its magnificent efforts in supporting the Division throughout this hard-fought battle. It is on record that over 200,000 rounds of 25-pounder ammunition alone was lifted forward to gun-sites, to say nothing of all the other commodities and rations which were handled with great expediency.

After this battle it became apparent, and necessary, that the Column be reorganised to meet the requirements of the type of battle being fought, and as a result 54 and 504 Companies were made responsible for the supply of all gun ammunition, and 505 and 506 Companies for the small-arms ammunition. Also, its planning staff at Column Headquarters had begun to plan well ahead. All this had its well-merited effect throughout the remainder of the Second Front operation. The Column took part in many operations, from the breakout from the Normandy bridgehead to the crossing of the Rhine. A number of individual awards for gallantry and devotion to service were gained and eventually, on the cessation of hostilities, the Column was to the north of Bremar. The end of the fighting did not, however, bring any easing in the employment of the Column. It must be remembered that, for all practical purposes, the German supply and transport system had been completely disrupted and the Column Transport was very much a priority requirement. In addition, personnel were being required for service in other arms and were also drafted for service in the Far Eastern campaign.

Eventually, demobilisation was in full swing and the Column was disbanded in 1946.

For a much fuller and detailed history of the Column to this date reference should be made to Colonel G. E. Moulder's book *History of the 43rd Wessex Infantry Divisional Column R.A.S.C. (T.A.).*

Chapter five

1947 – 1957

TWICE A CITIZEN

IN THE AUTUMN of 1946 the War Office issued instructions that the Territorial Army was to be reconstituted on 1st January, 1947, and recruiting would start on 1st April, 1947. The 43rd Wessex Division was to re-form and with it, of course, the Divisional Column. The initial order of battle revealed the intention that H.Q. 43 (Wessex) Infantry Divisional Column R.A.S.C. would be located at Taunton (near to Divisional Headquarters), 504 Company at Swindon, 505 Company at Didcot, 506 Company at Plymouth, and a new company (1567 Company) at Stroud.

The Column re-formed under the command of a Scotsman, Lieut.-Colonel G. A. T. Thomson, O.B.E., T.D., whom many had met in Europe. He had a difficult task on his hands, but he carried it out with firmness and understanding.



THE LATE S/SGT. 'BUTSEY' PEARCE

Recruiting was slow, but at Plymouth 506 Company had a distinct advantage with so many of the old volunteers to draw upon. Major Moulder was given command of 506 Company. Majors Niles, Emerson, Taylor and Mellor all willingly returned as Captains. Many old friends came back: Sergeant 'Butsey' Pearce (who had joined as a boy in 1923), Staff Sergeants Kerslake and

Blandford, Sergeants Weeks, Mitchell and Davies, and many other noted names could be found on the nominal roll.

504 Company looked promising at the beginning, but recruiting was dreadfully slow, and the few like Captain Plaister had a tough job on hand. Similarly, at Didcot 505 Company experienced even greater difficulty. Stroud produced two officers – and stopped at that!

The first camp was held in June 1948 at Lee-on-the-Solent. Numbers were small but there appeared to be no doubt that a good spirit was still present, and everyone set out to make a firm foundation for greater things to come. It was to this camp that Brigadier White came for the first time as Honorary Colonel of the Column.

1949 followed much the same pattern, even to the same location for annual camp, but the numbers were gradually increasing. Major Perkins had taken over 504 Company and was licking it into good shape. Lieut.-Colonel Thomson now left the West Country and was succeeded in command by Lieut.-Colonel G. E. Moulder. The Regular Adjutant, Captain Meckiff, also left, and Captain W. C. Rees came in his place.

In the two and a half years since it had re-formed the Column had succeeded in re-establishing itself, and the time had now come for a new appreciation of the situation in the light of the experience gained and the known requirement for the future.

The Company at Stroud had failed to produce a single recruit, and it was now closed down. In its place 1569 Company (104 Transport Column T.A.) at Taunton was placed under the command of C.R.A.S.C. 43 Division, but this company, although well recruited, fell under the War Office axe and was disbanded. The Divisional Column thereby was reduced to three companies.

The situation at Didcot with 505 Company was still far from satisfactory. The few who had joined were good sound men, but the strength was quite insufficient to form a company. It was therefore decided to reduce the establishment to a platoon and place it under command of Major Perkins at Swindon. Although at first this removal of company status at Didcot was not popular with the men there, it soon became evident that it had been the right thing to do. It gave 504 Company better strength and balance and made Didcot far more able to carry on and develop with all the help that the officers at Swindon could give it.

With the cessation of 505 Company at Didcot there remained only two companies in the Column. To rectify this 1570 Company (104 Transport Column), stationed at Christchurch, was asked for, and just before annual camp in June 1950 this company came under command and became 505 Company. This was a particularly happy event, because it brought to the Column a first-rate company as well as re-establishing historic associations with the county of Hampshire. Lieut.-Colonel Moulder went to Christchurch and presented all ranks with the Wessex Wyvern, and it was clearly evident that these men of Hampshire were delighted to be back in the 43rd Division.

The annual training at Braunton in June 1950 was a considerable success. The strength of the companies had increased considerably and the over-all situation was most encouraging. Training was hard, but all took it in their stride, and it soon became evident that a good healthy rivalry existed between companies.

At the camp there were also three battalions of the Women's Royal Army Corps (T.A.), the Divisional Column being responsible for assisting them in their M.T. training. The girls certainly showed great enthusiasm and their bearing was of a very high standard.

At this time Colonel W. V. Pearce was appointed Honorary Colonel of the Column – a significant honour for both. Colonel Pearce had joined the Divisional Train as a horse transport driver before the First World War and, except for a period in the Royal Flying Corps, he had served with the unit until 1940.

The men who had completed their National Service with the Regular Army now started to arrive. It must be said that the introduction of compulsory service in the T.A. was far from popular, but prejudice is no ally in solving any problem.

Considerable time was given to explaining to all ranks the reasons and the need. The main part of the British Army's fighting potential lay in the ten divisions of the Territorial Army, and most of the effort of the Regular Army was engaged in preparing the National Servicemen to come to those T.A. formations. The whole defence of the N.A.T.O. countries was bound up in this.

Britain has the best-organised, the best-prepared and the best-trained reserve army in the world, yet how many outsiders ever give a thought to what the Territorial Army is or what it does or what it will do should the need arise.

With knowledge comes understanding and, to recognise a problem is half-way to solving it. The resulting effort was, in due time, to bring upwards of seventy per cent of the National Servicemen

intake into voluntary commitments and placed the 43rd Divisional Column at the head of the R.A.S.C. list in this field of achievement.

Following the 1951 camp the tempo of training was stepped up even more. Officers and non-commissioned officers alike gave all their free time to training and administration and rarely found time for a week-end with their families. A similar tribute must be paid to their wives, who understandingly accepted the situation and so often helped in the social work of all the companies. A Territorial unit is indeed a family affair, and quite rightly should be.

By 1952 Britain was fast rearming. National Servicemen had now to do two years' full-time service. The release of Regulars was deferred and the Class 'Z' Reserve was being called up for fifteen days' refresher training. At Chickerell Camp at Weymouth that year a sufficient number of the Class 'Z' Reserve were posted to the Column to bring it up to full war establishment.

They arrived at the camp cheerfully and in great numbers. Each Company documented and equipped its own men, and within forty-eight hours all the Reservists had settled back into military routine, and it soon became obvious that within a short time the Column could well perform its tasks in support of the Division in the field.

Many changes in senior ranks had taken place. Major J. V. Simpson, Column Second-in-Command, left to join the Regular Army, and Major Edwards, a Regular officer, came in his place. Major R. C. Niles left for reasons of business, and command of 506 Company passed to Major S. Taylor, T.D. Major T. J. Emerson, M.B.E., T.D., became Senior Supply Officer. Captain Childs succeeded to the appointment of Adjutant, and Major Clare, M.B.E., assumed command of 505 Company. R.S.M. Wort had replaced R.S.M. French.

It is worth taking a look at the responsibility and territory now covered by the Column:

H.Q. 43 (Wx) Div. Column .	Bristol
Div. H.Q. Tpt Pl. . . .	Bristol
504 Coy R.A.S.C. . . .	Swindon
504 Coy R.A.S.C. . . .	Didcot
505 Coy R.A.S.C. . . .	Christchurch
505 Coy R.A.S.C. . . .	Totton
506 Coy R.A.S.C. . . .	Plymouth
506 Coy R.A.S.C. . . .	Tavistock

In addition, there existed some responsibility for R.A.S.C. personnel with 128, 129 and 130 Field Ambulances R.A.S.C. at Exeter, Bristol and Portsmouth.

During the winter of 1952–53 the way was clear to set the full-scale exercise (Titan) which was the aim for annual training in 1953. The area of the exercise was to be between Bulford in Wiltshire and the battle training area at Stanford in Norfolk.

Exercise 'Titan' commenced on 13th June, 1953, when Column Headquarters and all companies concentrated at Bulford. After preliminary preparations, taking over vehicles, etc., the Column moved by night to a corps concentration area near Dunstable, and from there, on the following day, advanced to contact, east of Newmarket.

There the 'battle' opened and the next few days and nights were taken up in practising all the various maintenance and transport tasks required by a division in action. This included a full-scale 'dumping programme' for the Divisional Artillery. Major-General Firbank came to see this at 0400 hours and seemed pleased with things, despite the fact that dawn was only just breaking.

For one whole day, at the height of the 'battle', arrangements had been made with a fighter squadron of the Royal Air Force to keep up low-level attacks from dawn to dusk on all road movements and on locations occupied by R.A.S.C. platoons. The pilots did this superbly. They were called down on pin-point targets by radio, and they flew below tree-top height to 'shoot up' vehicles on the roads. As they swept along the Thetford–Newmarket road the noise made by these Gloster Meteor jets was frightening, even without cannon-fire! This was a lesson in itself and a grim reminder of the Falaise Gap in 1944.

The exercise was suspended at the week-end to give everyone an opportunity of visiting Yarmouth, or wherever else their fancy took them.

At first light on the Monday the exercise was again in full swing and comprised a series of withdrawal actions from Thetford back to Berkhamsted.

It will be appreciated that this had been no mere 'swanning' trip but that all movements were 'operational' and all normal tasks of Divisional maintenance had been kept going and fitted into the varying phases of the exercise.

The Column had exercised at about three-quarters full strength in men and vehicles. The 43rd Divisional Provost Company R.C.M.P. had been under command, and their help during the considerable road movement proved invaluable.

During the whole fortnight only two vehicles went astray. One Company lost its N.A.A.F.I. truck in the maze of Bicester Garrison and one driver turned south instead of north on Watling Street and finished up outside the War Office in Whitehall and decided to report himself 'lost'.

At the conclusion of the exercise it became quite clear that the Divisional Column was quite ready to undertake its tasks in the field.

In the spring of 1954 a regimental dinner was held at the Castle Hotel, Taunton, to celebrate the fiftieth jubilee of the founding of the Column by Captain Collier in April 1904. This was also the occasion for 'dining in' Major-General H. C. Goodfellow, C.B., C.B.E., lately D.S.T. and then Honorary Colonel of the Column. Major-General W. H. D. Ritchie, C.B., C.B.E., was an honoured and welcome guest, for at one time he had served as a Territorial officer in the 43rd Division.

In June a similar exercise was held as for the previous year, but this time it was confined to the West Country and the initial emphasis was on the operation of a brigade group.

The Column concentrated at Yelverton, and from there each company set off on its own.

Column Headquarters moved up to the Blackdown Hills. 504 Company went to Woodbury Common, Exeter, where it became exposed to the sabotage attacks of the Royal Marines from Lympstone. 506 Company ran into rainstorms in Exmoor and had considerable exercising in 'debogging' vehicles. 505 Company were situated on the south-west side of Caradon Hill on Bodmin Moor, where for forty-eight hours they were subject to unceasing heavy rain, wind and fog.

Although this exercise had not been quite so ambitious as 'Titan' held in the previous year, it had been the more testing. The weather conditions had been very bad, few had been able to keep dry or warm. The physical effort involved in debogging vehicles had been very tiring. It had all been sheer hard work, with very little respite, yet there was an over-all sense of worthwhile achievement and spirits remained very high. All ranks in the Column were highly commended by the Divisional Commander.

In October 1954 Major R. V. Hatherley joined the Column as Second-in-Command, Major S. Taylor, T.D., became Senior Supply Officer, and Major L. Mellor assumed command of 506 Company at Plymouth. W.O.I. (now Lieut. (Q.M.)) Doran joined Column H.Q. as R.S.M.

In 1955 the Column was at annual camp with the whole of the 43rd Division on the Plain, culminating in the full-scale Divisional Exercise 'Ethandown'. This recalls the famous battle of Ethandown in the ninth century, when Alfred the Great and the men of Wessex defeated the Danes. During this great Exercise the Column carried out its full commitments as in war, breaking bulk and issuing supplies, petrol and ammunition, also troop-carrying on a large scale and lifting R.E. stores. The Directing Staff reported afterwards that they had set out to stretch the Column's capabilities to the utmost in expectation of an eventual breakdown, and admitted they had failed in their attempt! It was a great honour when C.R.A.S.C. was told by the Army Commander, General Sir E. E. Down, K.C.B., K.B.E., 'Give the Column a big pat on the back for their achievements during the Exercise'. The Divisional Commander, Major-General E. K. G. Sixsmith, C.B., C.B.E., also congratulated the Column when he addressed all ranks at the conclusion of the Exercise.

The year's training, which had been largely spent in studying warfare under atomic conditions, including 'dig, dig, dig' (all companies had well dug-in their operational H.Q. during 'Ethandown' to a remarkable extent), came to a successful conclusion when the Column Rifle Team, under the captaincy of Major Mellor, won the R.A.S.C. (T.A.) Challenge Trophy for the second year in succession.

All ranks of the Column mourned the passing of Lieut.-Colonel W. V. Pearce, T.D., at his home at Thurlestone, Devon, on 27th July, 1955. He had served in the Column with distinction for many years, becoming C.R.A.S.C. and, subsequently, Honorary Colonel. Many of those still serving had served under his command, and all remember him with affection.

Early in 1956 it was learned, with great sadness, that Colonel Mortimer Collier, O.B.E., T.D., had passed away at his home in Plymouth. He was the founder of our Column and details of his great services are already recorded in this History. Later in the year Mrs. Mortimer Collier, at a ceremony in Plymouth, graciously presented to the Column a very fine silver cup in memory of her husband, and it was decided that this should be a perpetual challenge trophy for the Inter-Company Safe and Skilled Driving Competition.

During the year exercises were held on all aspects of atomic warfare, civil defence, and on the air-lift of the Column. Annual Camp took the form of a series of exercises from Bulford to the north of Nottingham, thence to Stiffkey in Norfolk, south to Berkhamsted, and finally back to Bulford. The Divisional Commander, Major-General Sixsmith, flew to Berkhamsted in the latest R.A.F. jet

fighter aircraft and inspected the Column on location at Ashbridge, subsequently lunching with the senior officers at Column H.Q.

Major E. S. W. Perkins, M.B.E., E.R.D., became Second-in-Command upon Major R. V. Hatherley's posting to Cyprus, Major G. M. Williams joined the Column as Training Major, Major R. G. Plaister assumed command of 504 Company at Swindon, and 928 Coy R.A.S.C. (T.A.) from Reading, under the command of Major C. S. Brown, T.D., joined the Column.

The Column Rifle Team again won the R.A.S.C. (T.A.) Rifle Challenge Trophy, the third year in succession, and came second in the L.M.G. Pairs Competition. This was the only occasion that the Rifle Challenge Trophy had been won for three years in succession by any team, and it should be recorded that all members of the winning team had come from 506 Company.

In 1957 it was with the deepest regret that we learned of the passing of Lord Hore-Belisha, who had been Honorary Colonel of the Column from 1933 to 1943.

Camp this year was held at Plasterdown in Devon, a complete change from the mobile camps and battle exercises of the previous four years. Inter-company competitive events took up a great deal of time and included Safe Driving, Motor-cycle Trials, Athletic Sports, Rifle Meeting, Drill Competition, Football Competition, and the like. Staff courses were held for Officers and also Senior and Junior N.C.O.'s Cadres. A night exercise, Exercise 'Breakout', produced great ingenuity on the part of many of the participants.

The Column was honoured by a visit of the D.S.T., Major-General W. G. Roe, C.B., C.B.E., who, accompanied by the D.D.S.T., Brigadier W. E. MacDermott, O.B.E., watched the training and spoke individually to almost every member of the Column. Both 928 Company R.A.S.C. (T.A.) and 915 Company R.A.S.C. (T.A.) had fitted into the Column, showing great enthusiasm and a good T.A. spirit. 915 Company at Bristol, commanded by Major K. L. C. Wright, had come under command of the Column earlier in the year and at camp had been the first winners of the Collier Cup for Skilled Driving.

In the Queen's Birthday Honours Major L. Mellor was appointed M.B.E.

Captain P. E. Gray, M.M., after four years as Adjutant, left on promotion in March and Captain G. Dale, R.A.S.C., assumed the appointment. In October Major E. S. W. Perkins, M.B.E., E.R.D., left the Column on retirement and Major J. F. H. Clare, M.B.E.,

became Column Second-in-Command. Major L. W. Taylor, T.D., assumed command of 505 Company R.A.S.C. (T.A.).

Out of camp training dealt largely with the maintenance of an air-transported infantry division, Column organisation, and wireless procedure. The Column Small-Bore Rifle League continued with unabated success.

Column achievements, in brief, were as follows: winners of the R.A.S.C. (T.A.) L.M.G. Pairs Trophy; R.A.S.C. Southern Command Machine Carbine Cup; R.A.S.C. Southern Command Small-Bore Competition, both individual and team awards; Plymouth Area 'Lorry Driver of the Year' Competition, Class 'C', team award. Runners-up in the R.A.S.C. (T.A.) Rifle Challenge Cup and R.A.S.C. (T.A.) Machine Carbine Cup.

During the latter part of the year all companies commenced a recruiting drive with marked success, and the Keith Holman Cup was reallocated to be awarded to the company with the highest number of approved recruits for each year. This proved to be 915 Company with 504 Company, the runners-up.

Chapter six

1958 – 1964

1958 OPENED WITH a T.E.W.T. at Taunton on the latest maintenance procedures in the field, and companies practised movement by night into locations in preparation for a four-day exercise to be held at Annual Camp, which was to be at Chickerell near Weymouth. A team was entered in the M.C.C. London to Land's End Trial, and finished complete, though not among the prize-winners.

The Column was now spread over the Southern Counties from Reading to Plymouth, with Column Headquarters at Taunton, with a detachment at Clevedon, and the five companies located as follows:

504 Company R.A.S.C. (Inf. Div. Tpt) – Major R. G. Plaister
H.Q.: 'A' Pl. and L.A.D. R.E.M.E. at Swindon
'B' Pl. at Didcot.

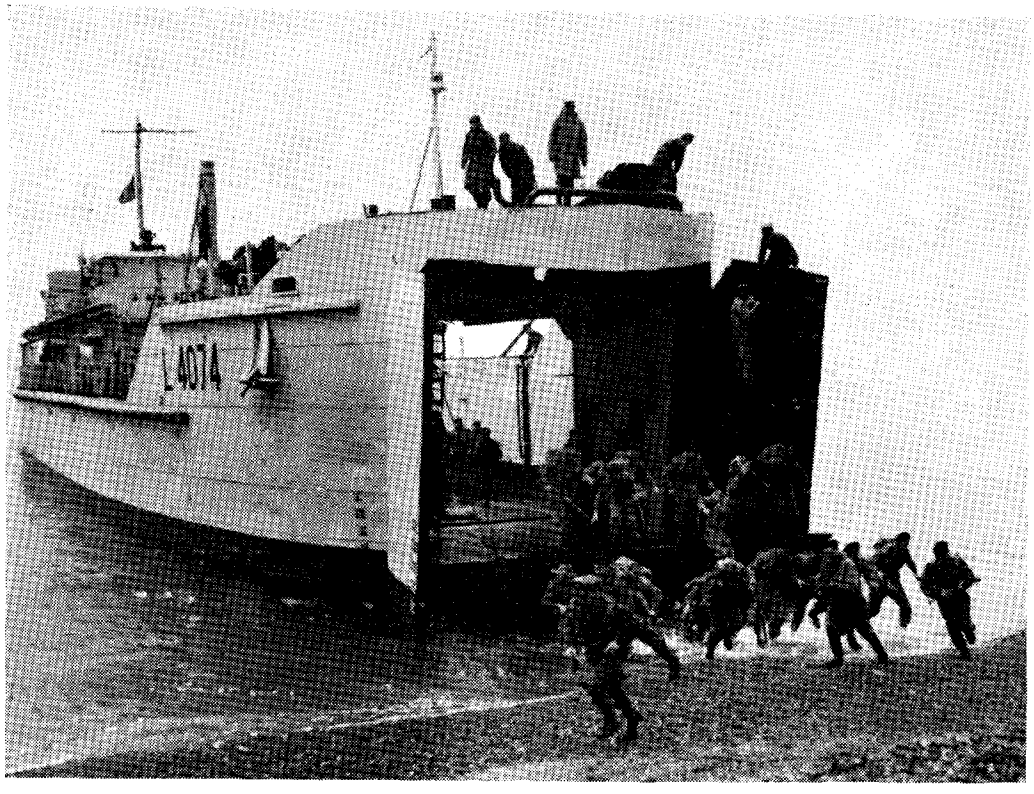
505 Company R.A.S.C. (Inf. Div. Tpt) – Major L. W. Taylor, T.D.
H.Q.: 'A' Pl. and L.A.D. R.E.M.E. at Christchurch
'B' Pl. at Totton.

506 Company R.A.S.C. (Inf. Div. Tpt) – Major J. Mellor, M.B.E.
H.Q.: 'A' Pl. and L.A.D. R.E.M.E. at Plymouth
'B' Pl. at Tavistock

915 (Bristol) Company R.A.S.C. (Arty) – Major K. L. C. Wright
164 and 165 Arty Pls at Bristol.
928 Company R.A.S.C. (Armd Div. Tpt) – Major C. S. Brown, T.D.
H.Q.: 'A', 'B' and 'C' Pls and L.A.D. R.E.M.E. at Reading

The Territorial Army Golden Jubilee was celebrated with an inspection by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in Hyde Park, followed by a March Past in torrential rain. The Column was very well represented on the Parade and got exceedingly wet.

Highlights of the year were the Beach Landing Exercise which took place in Worbarrow Bay, Dorset, during Annual Camp, and a useful live ammunition supply exercise – one of a series, aptly named 'Powder Monkey' – which was carried out on Salisbury Plain in September. On this occasion three companies combined to supply the Divisional Artillery with the ammunition for their Annual Shoot.



WORBARROW BAY, 1958

In October Lieut.-Colonel T. J. Emerson, M.B.E., T.D., was succeeded as Commander by Major J. F. H. Clare, M.B.E. Major Leslie Mellor from 506 Company was appointed Second-in-Command and was himself succeeded at 506 Company by Captain Alec Blandford.

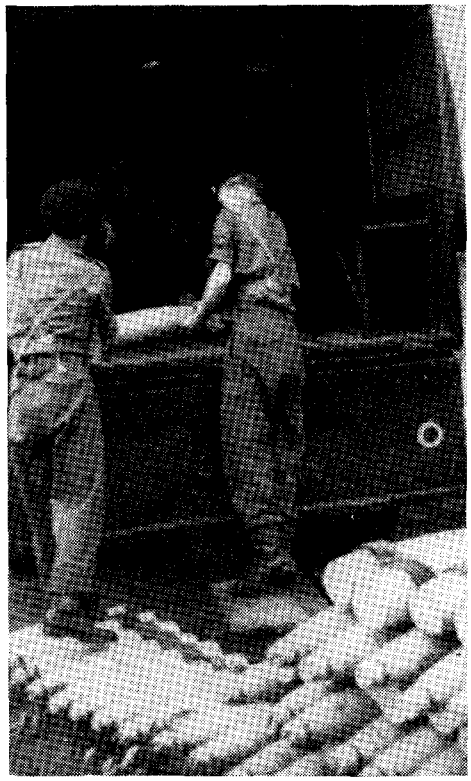
Further changes came about early in 1959, when R.S.M. Doran was relieved by R.S.M. Newton. Out-of-camp training followed the pattern set in the previous year, i.e. Second-Line Maintenance in the Field, Wireless Procedure, and a very real emphasis on Recruiting. The 'Keith Holman' Cup for Recruiting was won by 915 Company for the third successive year.

Annual Camp at Browndown/Gilkicker took the form of a 'Through Running' Exercise, throughout Hampshire, Wiltshire and Sussex (i.e. Horsham) of three hundred miles, with staging-posts at hundred-mile intervals. Both men and vehicles were sorely tried but proved that this method of conveying supplies forward – namely, by resting the drivers but keeping the vehicles running for twenty-four hours in the day – was well worthy of consideration when there were extended lines of communication and the right terrain.

In July 1960 Lieut.-Colonel Clare retired and Major Leslie Mellor, M.B.E., T.D., assumed Command of the Column, with Major Ken Wright, M.B.E., of 915 Company, filling the appointment of Second-in-Command. Captain Reg Matthews succeeded to the Command of 915 Company. R.S.M. Newton was in turn succeeded by R.S.M. Welsford.

Further structural changes made virtually a clean sweep of Column Headquarters with the posting of the Training Major, Major Donald Barker-Simson to 38 Group R.A.F., whose replacement was Major Charles Murray, the amphibious expert from Fremington. The Adjutant, Captain Tim Start, was appointed as Adjutant of 6 Training Battalion R.A.S.C. in Yeovil, and was succeeded by an old friend of the Column, Major 'Lou' Edwards, who had previously served as Training Major.

During the years 1953 to 1960 the Column had been very privileged to have as its Honorary Colonel Major-General H. C. Goodfellow, C.B., C.B.E. (late Director of Supplies and Transport and Colonel Commandant R.A.S.C.). When the time came for him to relinquish the appointment it was with real pleasure that it was learned that Major-General A. F. J. Elmslie, C.B., C.B.E. (late Inspector R.A.S.C.) had graciously consented to be the new Honorary Colonel. So it was that General Elmslie commenced his very many visits on the 22nd October, 1960, the date of his appointment, which so happily coincided with the Column Annual Autumn Exercise and Officers' Cocktail Party.



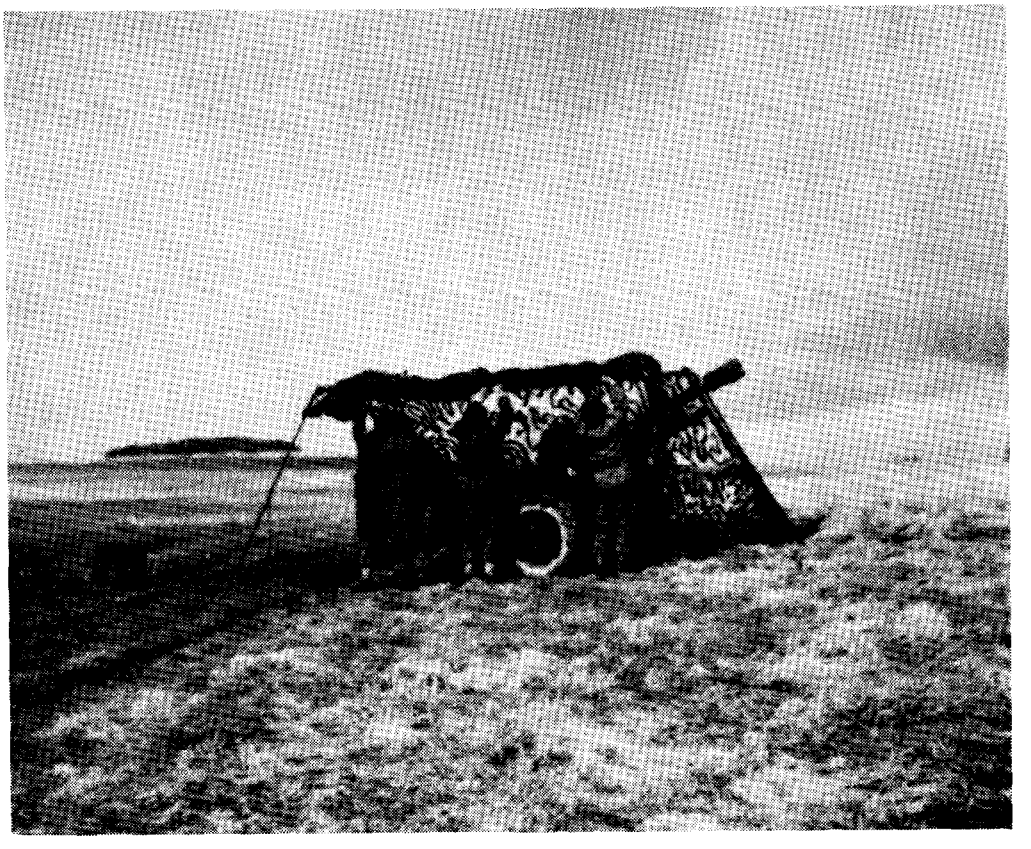
EXERCISE 'POWDER MONKEY' 1961

The 'Keith Holman' Cup for Recruiting was finally wrested from the grasp of 915 Company by 928 Company.

Annual Camp had again seen a 'Through Running' Exercise, but on a much grander scale, and which was the bane of the new Training Major's life, for it was his task to pre-position all the vehicles at the appropriate staging-posts between Taunton and Thetford to put the exercise into motion.

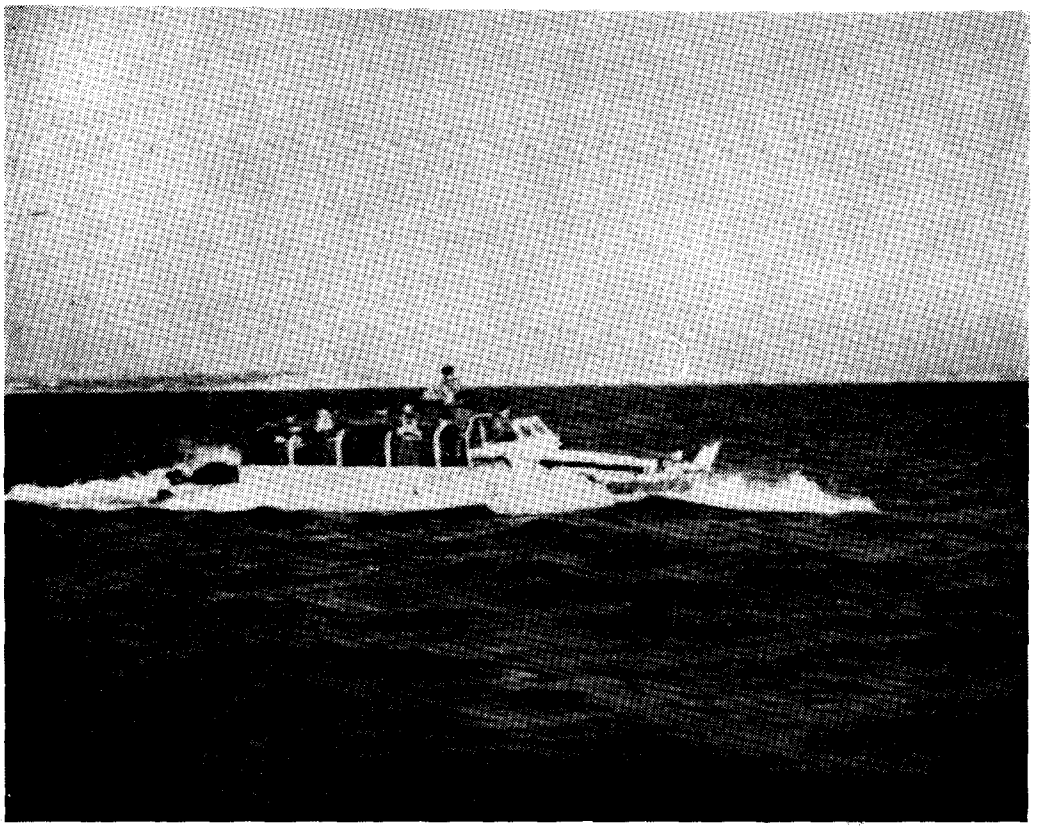
A touch of realism was added by the physical handling and transportation of supplies from 3 Supply Reserve Depot at Taunton to the Command Supply Depot at Thetford.

Appropriately enough, 506 Company were supplying their own Brigade (130) at Thetford, with supplies drawn from the 'Through Running' Exercise. A round trip of 360 miles held no terrors after the previous year's trial run, and everything smoothly clicked into gear, with the exception of communications, despite first-class efforts by Royal Signals.



A 25-POUNDER FIRES BY COURTESY OF 43 DIV. COLUMN

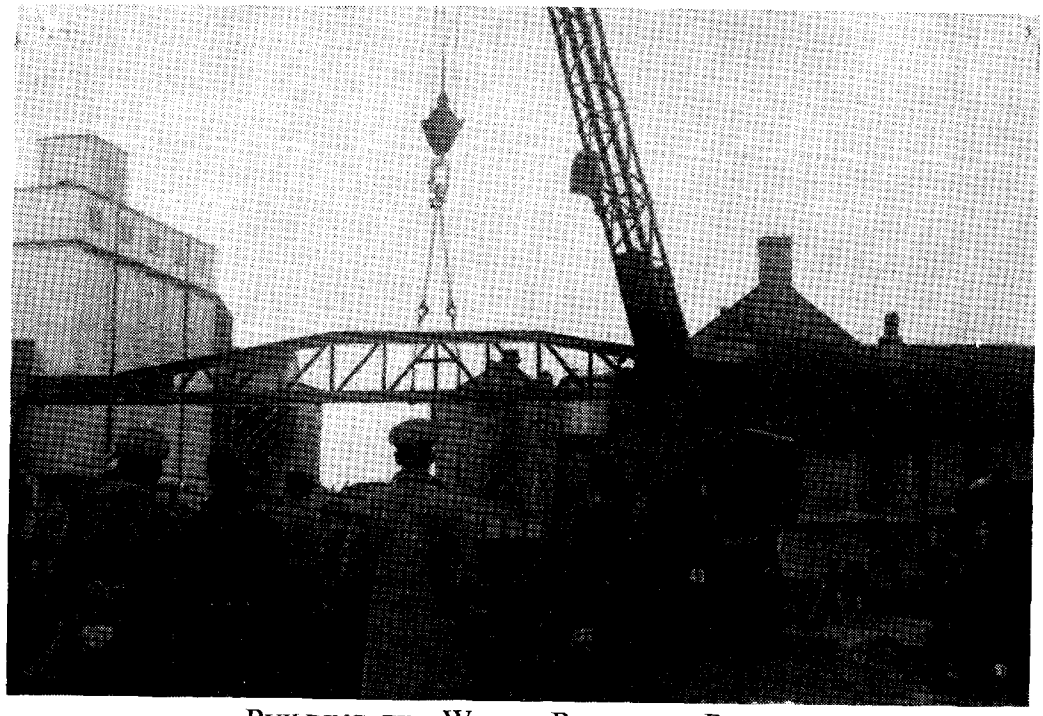
The Second-in-Command, Major Ken Wright, set off to inspect the 'sharp' end, but had his airplane commandeered by the G.O.C., whose own had broken down. To keep in favourable contact with the Heavenly Powers, the Column Padre, the Reverend Martin Cooper, was shanghaied into the rear seat of the Auster which was eventually produced, but it was not to be. Head winds and a thirsty pilot, restricted the flight to Middle Wallop; a two-minute visit to 928 Company at Ogbourne St. George, and occasioned a somewhat overdue return to Merrifield Airfield at Taunton.



AMPHIBIOUS TRAINING IN WEYMOUTH BAY, 1958
Admiral The Rev. Martin Cooper in Command

The second week of camp that year was spent licking wounds at Penhale and, incidentally, collecting up all the vehicles which had been scattered far and wide over all the counties between Somerset and Norfolk.

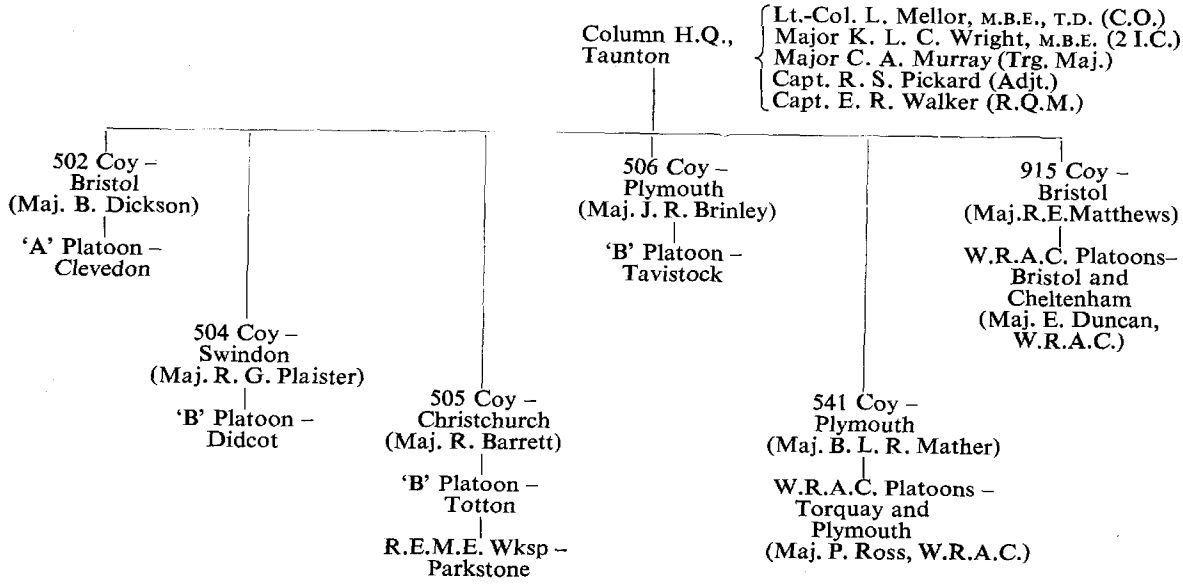
In March 1961 a fine example of civil and military co-operation was instanced when 504 and 915 Companies participated with the Divisional Engineers in the erection of the Wessex Bridge over the River Avon at Bath. Hot on the heels of this came yet another Territorial Army Reorganisation, the net result of which was the loss of 928 Column at Reading to the newly formed Aldershot District Column and the formation of two new motor ambulance companies. Column Headquarters establishment suffered a considerable reduction, most notable of the absentees being the post of Senior Supply Officer. Of the two new companies, one – 502 Company – was formed at Headley Park, Bristol, under the command of an old friend from Divisional Headquarter Company, Major Ben Dickson. The other – 541 Company – was formed in Plymouth, at the Lambhay Hill T.A. Centre, absorbing some disbanded gunners, under the Command of Major Alec Blandford, who transferred from 506 Company, and who was succeeded by the



BUILDING THE WESSEX BRIDGE AT BATH

first National Service officer in the Column to achieve Command, Captain Jeff Brinley. Thus, for the first time in its fifty-six years of history, the Column found itself with six companies under command; two of these Companies, 541 and 915, each having two platoons of W.R.A.C. In April also Major 'Lou' Edwards, after only ten months as Adjutant, was appointed to a R.O. post in Hong Kong and was succeeded by yet another Amphibious Officer, Major R. S. Pickard, from command of 920 Company.

The Column Order of Battle was now:



Colonel Mellor's first act as C.R.A.S.C. was to decree that henceforth the Column would go for very early camps. Thus, in 1961 came that memorable camp in mid-April at Castlemartin, in 'Little England beyond Wales'. Who will ever forget the knee-deep, clinging, squelchy Welshy mud in which the Column survived whilst doing its level best to live up to the Training Major's exercise 'Welsh Rarebit' (which had to start twenty-four hours behind schedule while the vehicles were dug out of the mud)? Or the memorable odours which assailed the Column nostrils as, on the sixth day, the sun reappeared and dried out all the fertilizer present in the ground and – attracted by the effluvium – quite the largest horseflies in living memory? Anyone who had in the past been slightly contemptuous of Column Headquarters' effort in the field must have been struck with sheer admiration when, through an unidentified brainwave, they housed themselves in a farm cottage at Castle Byth for a small rental of £4 per week, and thus set up an efficient, comfortable, warm and dry headquarters, worthy of such a gallant G.O.C. as General Cubbon, who rewarded these efforts with the comment that 'Any b—— f—— could be uncomfortable'!



COLUMN H.Q., CASTLE BYTH, DURING EXERCISE 'WELSH RAREBIT'
(*Left to right*) Capt. Scatchard (928). Major Pickard (Adjt.). Lt. Percival (A.D.C. to G.O.C.)

The small hours of the morning produced all sorts of mirages, but none so real as a local inhabitant with his coracle on his back on his way to fish – this was witnessed by one Major-General, one Lieut.-Colonel and one Major for certain. Vehicles were turned

upside down regularly, much to the envy of General Cubbon, who said that it was 'good training'. R.E.M.E. were hard put to it to recover all the vehicles, but made a first-class job, as usual. The D.D.S.T. Southern Command was reported 'delayed' *en route* to visit the Column, his plane having made a forced landing at Pembrey. Here he was 'taken into custody' by the local policeman, until such time as a more reliable form of transport could be produced. Current comment in the Column was that 'Well, anyway, wallabies can always jump'! The officer in question was, of course, Brigadier 'Wallaby' Bruton.

With the advent, too, of Lieut.-Colonel Leslie Mellor, himself a marksman of no small renown, Rifle Shooting took a turn for the better – so much so that for the first time in post-war years Lieut. Allen Wise of 915 Company, and his team of 'Merry Musketeers' (C.S.M. Cole, P.S.I. 506 Company, Corporal Mitchell, 504 Company and Lance-Corporal Dawson, 915 Company) won the Territorial Army Team Championship at the Corps Week Rifle Meeting for the third time, the previous occasions being 1937/38, and, most notable success of all, Lieut. Wise became the first Territorial Army soldier ever to win the Individual Pistol event, which is open to both the Regular and Reserve Armies.

The Annual Skilled Driving and Motor-Cycle Trials took place at Bovington in Dorset and happened to be the venue for the first



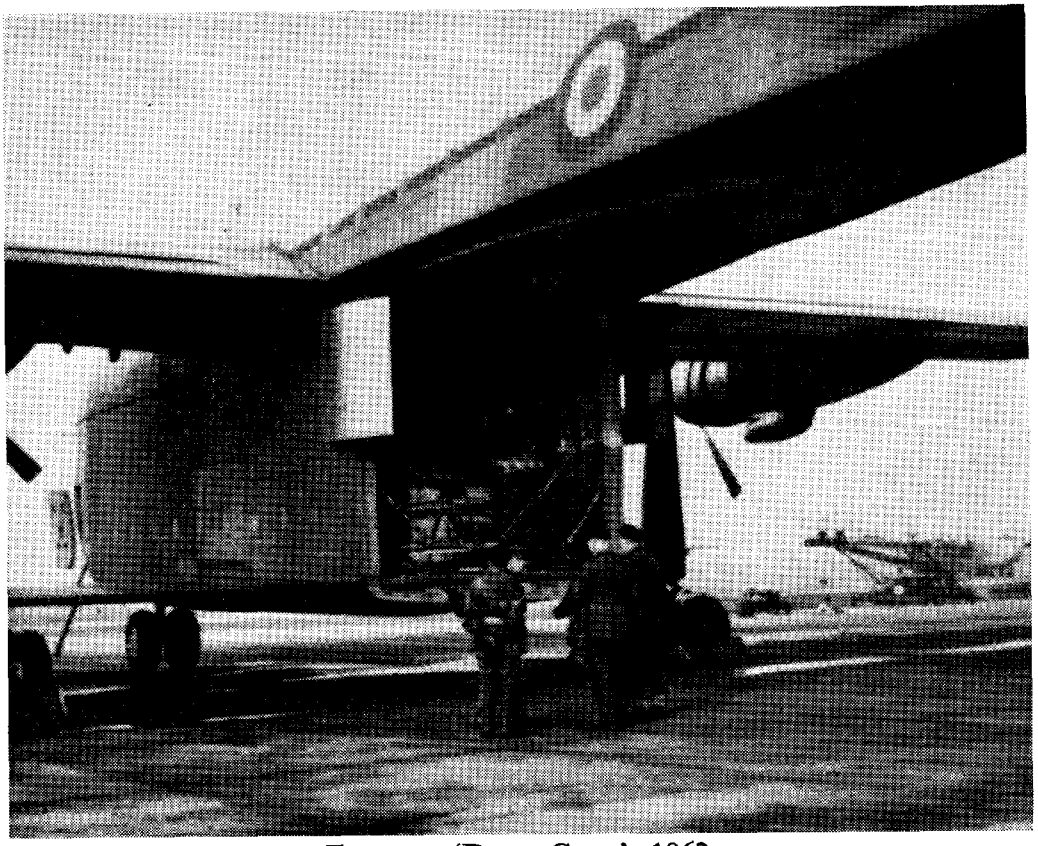
MOTOR-CYCLE TRIALS – 504 COY R.A.S.C.



43 (WESSEX) DIV. DIST. COLUMN R.A.S.C. (T.A.)
RIFLE TEAM, 1961
(*Left to right*) L/Cpl. Dawson (915). Lt. Wise (Team Captain) (915). Lt.-Col. Mellor (C.O.). C.S.M. Cole (506) Cpl. Mitchell (504).

visit to the Column of R.S.M. Lawrence, then just about to succeed R.S.M. Welsford, who, like his predecessor, R.S.M. Newton, had 'gone for to be an officer'. 'How do you like the idea of a posting to the Territorial Army?' said the Second-in-Command, Major Ken Wright. 'Not much, sir', said R.S.M. Lawrence. The resultant roar, compounded of mingled rage, hurt pride, injured feelings and a temperament not then noted for the quality of its patience, out-R.S.M.'d even the R.S.M.! But it must be placed on record, however, that some two years later, when R.S.M. Lawrence was posted to B.A.O.R., he was reminded of this episode during his final interview and avowed to the C.O. (now Lieut.-Colonel Ken Wright) that he had come as a 'Doubting Thomas' but that he left a firm supporter of the Territorial Army in general, and the Column in particular, having learned more than he had ever dreamed possible. In December 1961 Major Bobby Barrett relinquished command of 505 Company at Christchurch in favour of Major Gay Pickard, who had been formerly D.A.Q.M.G. of 128 Brigade and who had originally served in the Column with 506 Company.

1962 was a very busy year. After many visits to the Air Despatch Company at Watchfield, all of which were abortive so far as the



EXERCISE 'DROP GOAL', 1962

arranging of an actual Supply drop was concerned, in the end repeated efforts met with success. A Beverley really did take-off with the C.O., 2 I.C. and R.S.M. aboard and duly dropped its cargo on the DZ. One pannier made a heavy landing with a 'candled' parachute and nearly demolished Captain David Hobbs of 506 Company, who was filming. Shortly after this, and a cause of much pleasure throughout the Column, was receipt of the news that Colonel John Emerson had been appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of the County of Devon and a Justice of the Peace. Lieut. Allen Wise, Captain of the Column Rifle Shooting, became Champion Shot at the Divisional Meeting at Sydling St. Nicholas, and the Column Rifle Team repeated its success at the Corps Week Rifle Meeting by once again carrying off the Territorial Army Team Championship. Major Ben Dickson handed over Command of 502 Company at Headley Park in Bristol to Major Dick Honeywell, who had rebadged from R.E.M.E. He, too, like Major Gay Pickard, had previously served with the Column in 506 Company.

Colonel Leslie Mellor was determined to do a 'Greenfields' Camp, and so it was that some three hundred vehicles set off on east and west routes to invade the territories of Yorkshire and County Durham, based on two disused camps at Barnard Castle. *En route* a water-truck belonging to 915 Company overturned, caught fire and burned out.



915 COMPANY WATER TRUCK 'BREWING UP', ANNUAL CAMP, 1962

One could hardly have been overcome by the welcome received at the hands of the inhabitants of the Northern Territories, usually so hospitable, but the Column visit coincided with the nesting of the 'birds', and thus an exercise was, perforce, produced for foot soldiers instead of drivers. Not that this did any harm, except to the injured feelings (and feet) of the participants. If a vehicle so much as pulled up at the side of the road, let alone on the verges, the driver was faced with an angry mob, brandishing guns and the like, prepared to defend the 'birds' to the last. As might be expected in Yorkshire, much cricket was played, but in the most outlandish and unlikely places. Every isolated farm seemed to have a much-used pitch.



EXERCISE 'WANDERLUST', 1962
541 Company Team

Colonel Mellor's newly acquired bull terrier, 'Kelly', blotted his copy-book, and a good many other things too, including the interior of the G.O.C.'s caravan. He was banned for life from revisiting Yorkshire and Durham, due to a slight case of mistaken identity, in which he fondly imagined he was a sheepdog and promptly rounded up all the sheep on the Moors around Barnard Castle and held them at bay in the corner of a convenient field – and all this without a word of command too!

Another change in Command: Major Alec Blandford relinquished Command of 541 Company and handed over to Captain Bernard Mather.

September saw the formation of the much-discussed and long-awaited Column Officers' Club. Formed to keep past and serving officers in touch, some twenty-five officers joined immediately, and this number was gradually built up by the efforts of Major Alec Blandford, who was appointed Honorary Secretary. Major-General Elmslie, the Honorary Colonel, kindly consented to be the first President and Lieut.-Colonel Joe Bridge, O.B.E., T.D., a former Adjutant of the Column, accepted the Chairmanship. September 1962 also featured the Annual Hoe Parade at Plymouth, where Major Ken Wright, the Second-in-Command, was formally presented with his Territorial Decoration at the hands of the C.I.G.S., General Sir Richard Hull. Driver Piper, of 506 Company, was presented with the Territorial Efficiency Medal and Sergeants Tucker and Worth were presented with Lord-Lieutenant's Certificates.

In November the War Office finally decided that it was time that an 'evergreen', Captain Jack Spanner, should retire from the Active List, and so it was that he transferred, much protesting, to the Territorial Army Reserve of Officers.

1963 found the country in the grip of some of the most atrocious weather in living memory. But it is an ill wind that blows nobody good, for this was to prove a golden opportunity for the Terriers to show their mettle – and seize it they did. Urgent calls were made on the Column to deliver animal feeding-stuffs to remote areas cut off by the deep snow, and in Princetown on Dartmoor, urgently needed fuel supplies were delivered to the Central Electricity Generating Station by the P.S.I.s of 506 and 541 Companies.

Annual Camp took the form of a Regimental fortnight, and was held at Crowborough in Sussex. After some early apprehension, this was voted to be an outstanding success by all ranks, except perhaps for some members of the W.R.A.C. from Bristol, who were smitten with a mysterious ailment which sent them off into frequent trances. Ambulances improperly loaded with stores for return journeys to unit locations had to be hastily unloaded and utilised in their proper role – that of conveying the casualties to hospital. The illness persisted in some of the W.R.A.C. long after their return from camp, and made headlines in the national press.

An assault course for all ranks was constructed at Crowborough Camp and proved to be both challenging and popular. It will not come as a surprise that the officer who performed the fastest time

over the Assault Course was the Padre, the Reverend Martin Cooper!

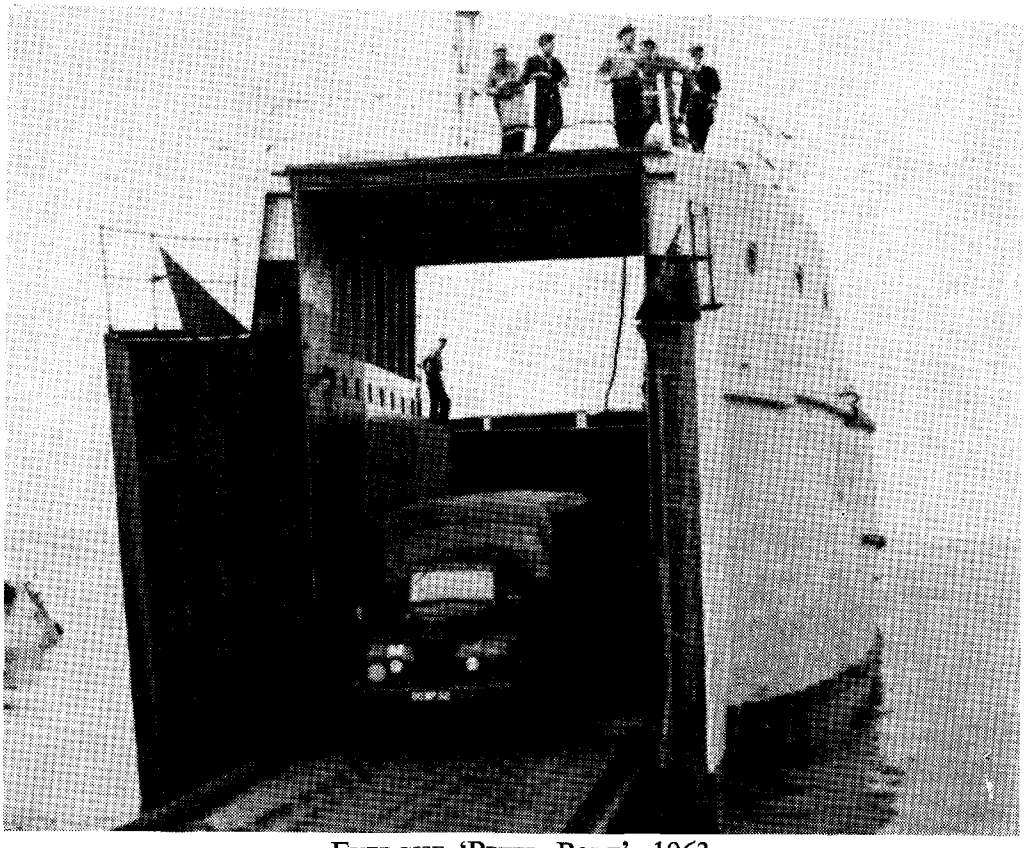
Some twelve N.C.O.s and soldiers of 502 Company attended Annual Camp in B.A.O.R. Whilst the visit proved of inestimable interest, the training value to such a small body was slightly suspect, but at least heralded a new outlook on the part of the powers that be so far as Territorial Army training was concerned. Sergeant Hiles, A.C.C. of 504 Company, thought the 'Ever Ready' Scheme most excellent, for, apart from the lure of the £150 bounty, he was able to perform his annual camp training in Hong Kong.

On July 31 Colonel Leslie Mellor laid down the reins, leaving the Command of the Column to Major Ken Wright. It should be mentioned in passing that Colonel Leslie commenced his service with the Column in 1937 as a private soldier in 506 Company and, after a distinguished war career, returned in 1947, eventually to Command not only 506 Company, in which he began, but also the Column.

The newly appointed Second-in-Command of the Column was Major Ray Plaister, fresh from seven years in Command of 504 Company, who, in turn, was succeeded by Captain Bobby Ratcliffe. In 505 Company, too, change was the order of the day, and Major Gay Pickard handed over to Captain Jack Bolt.

The Autumn Exercise consisted of a motor rally organised for the whole Division, and a great number of Regular non-divisional troops as well, including the Ghurkas. It was aptly named 'Wyvern Rally', and took place in the Culmstock/Blackdown area. The nightmare of preparation was suffered in the usual sense of good humour by the Headquarters staff, of whom, in particular, Major Charles Murray vowed afterwards he would never do it again – and he didn't!

In October the 'best laid plans . . . etc.' really did come to fruition, after several false starts, when Exercise 'Peter Port' took the Officers and Senior N.C.O.s of the Column by LCT to Guernsey in the Channel Islands. If the training value was just a little suspect on this occasion too, none the less the exercise did a lot of good in the Column. The hospitality experienced at the hands of the Royal Army Service Corps Association in Guernsey was overwhelming, and the C.O. was invited to lunch with the Governor of the Island, which left the Column free to explore all the places they wanted to explore – and they did just that. Mention must be made here that it was on the return trip from Guernsey that it was decided that the C.O. just was not cut out for life at sea! His efforts at steering were worthy of wartime zig-zag convoy courses.



EXERCISE 'PETER PORT', 1963

Very gratifying news was received of the brevet promotion to Colonel of Lieut.-Colonel Leslie Mellor. 504 and 915 Companies engaged themselves in Operation 'Wyvern Bridge', which entailed the building of a second bridge over the River Avon, at Bath, by the Divisional Engineers. The bridge in its entirety was delivered from Swindon to the site at Bath by the two companies.

With the departure of Major Charles Murray, the Training Major, to Bahrein, and the arrival of his successor from Cyprus, Major Jimmy Bayman, 1964, the sixtieth year of existence of what is now known as 43 (Wessex) Divisional Column R.A.S.C. (T.A.) was born. It was unanimously agreed that training and festive occasions to match this all-important milestone should be the basis of the organisation for that year. The Permanent Staff at Column Headquarters were charged with the production of an exhausting and interesting exercise at Annual Camp as one of the highlights. Full credit must go to the new Training Major, Major Jimmy Bayman, for producing a massive exercise which was a masterpiece of detailed planning and organisation. Nothing quite like it had been seen before and, as events proved, no one in the Column had taken part in one like it before either. Camp was to be at Chickerell, Weymouth, and it was the C.O.'s decision that everyone would be

plunged into the exercise at the deep end soon after arrival and settling down in camp. Five companies were to be exercised – 505 Company being earmarked for Brigade training that year. A lot of room was required to move all the transport engaged, and the only possible venue providing adequate locations and admitting of full movement was Salisbury Plain – or, at least, so it was thought at the time. The fact was that so many other units of both the Regular and Reserve Armies were bidding for its use at the same time, that although a fair number of areas were allocated they were insufficient for the Column needs, and permission was obtained from the Earl of Cardigan (a wartime Corps officer) for the use of part of Savernake Forest and from the Marquis of Bath for part of the Longleat Estate. Thus it was that companies were able to 'up sticks' and move to new locations, even though many arguments developed between various arms of the Service, principally tanks, as to who should be where, and when. Even Column Headquarters, having dug themselves in for the full period of the exercise, or so they thought, were completely shattered by a snap move in the middle of the night. All movement was restricted to night to make the task more difficult and to add a touch of realism. The efforts of the Permanent Staff produced two LCTs for a seaborne landing. Advance parties complete with vehicles went to Plymouth on the Monday and embarked from the hards, and after a ten-hour voyage were landed on the hard at Portland. From there they moved up in the evening to lay out the first locations on the 'Plain', followed closely, some two hours behind, by the main bodies. The object of the exercise – namely, maintenance of the Division in the field – was rapidly put into practice that same night, delivery points were set up, and drawing units provided by the W.R.A.C. came in for supplies.

In the middle of the exercise, which lasted for five nights, a 'dumping' programme was introduced necessitating the actual transportation of 180 tons of live ammunition from the Command Ammunition Depot at Bramley to the Ammunition Depot at Fargo on Salisbury Plain. Unfortunately, the long pre-planned supply drop did not materialise owing to the need for all the Beverleys to be concentrated in one of the world's trouble spots. The helicopters laid on by the Royal Navy were unfortunately reduced to two, due to the presence in the area of a Very Important Naval Officer, and took to the air at Portland with the C.O. in one and the Adjutant in the other. It is perhaps significant that the helicopter containing the Adjutant, Captain Bob Pickard, had to return to base due to overheating

POST-WAR COMMANDERS OF 43RD (WESSEX) DIVISIONAL COLUMN R.A.S.C. (T.A.)



COL. G. A. T. THOMSON
O.B.E., T.D.
1947 – 1949



COL. G. E. MOULDER
O.B.E., T.D.
1949 – 1954



COL. T. J. EMERSON
O.B.E., T.D., D.L., J.P.
1954 – 1958



LT.-COL. J. F. H. CLARE
M.B.E., T.D.
1958 – 1960



COL. L. MELLOR
M.B.E., T.D.
1960 – 1963



LT.-COL. K. L. C. WRIGHT
M.B.E., T.D.
1963 – to date



THE COLONEL ARRIVES AT 502 COMPANY LOCATION, EXERCISE 'NIGHT CAPERS', 1964

caused, it is said, by the said Adjutant being considerably overweight! This he strenuously denies, even to this very day. Meanwhile, the C.O. in his helicopter (he swears he piloted it himself) landed safely at the location of 502 Company, and one 'overdressed' (in the medical sense) casualty was evacuated. Some ten thousand miles were covered without accident on what turned out to be an exercise of first-class value. After a two-day breather, sorely needed by both men and vehicles, training went on with a swing. To Major Jeff Brinley, of 506 Company, fell the task of running a learner and skilled driving school, during which an impressive demonstration of their amphibious and cross-country capabilities was given by two of the Army's new Alvis Stalwarts from the D. & M. Wing at Bovington. R.E.M.E. played their full part by staging an excellent recovery demonstration; range courses were fired and annual competitions decided until the final Friday came all too soon. 504 Company emerged worthy winners of the drill competition, much to the delight of Major Bobby Ratcliffe. The final muster parade was inspected by the Honorary Colonel, Major-General Elmslie, and so closed one of the most memorable camps in the long history of the Column. The editor here makes



DEMONSTRATION OF THE STALWART DURING CAMP, 1964

apology for the amount of detail included on the subject of the 1964 Annual Camp, but wanted to emphasise that the Territorial Army soldier is always prepared to accept a challenge and is happiest when working hard. It was deemed appropriate to round off that memorable year with a Grand Officers' Ball, to be held at the Guildhall, in the traditional home of the Column, in Plymouth. The Corps Staff Band was engaged, and the great day dawned on Friday, 25th September, 1964. The Adjutant had made contact with Mrs. Collier, widow of the late Colonel M. C. Collier, the founder of the Column. She was persuaded to honour the Column, and so set the seal of sixty years of its existence by attending the Ball. She graciously appeared, amidst a great welcome, and was presented with a bouquet by the C.O. Contact had also been established with Staff Sergeant-Major Tommy Woods, who had landed with the then Captain Collier on a Gallipoli beach some fifty years previously. Unfortunately he was unable to be present at the Ball but sent his best wishes.

And so this memorable year drew to a close, when old memories were revived, when old and household names were on everyone's lips

S.S.M. 'TOMMY' WOOD

THEN 1914



. . . . AND NOW - 1964



in the messes and the canteens, and every soldier walked with a jauntier step, conscious and proud of the records behind him, and confident that he would uphold the past glories when the time came. Now, with the advent of the New Year we look forward to a new era – to the final chapter in the history of the Royal Army Service Corps, to the exit of 43rd (Wessex) Divisional Column R.A.S.C. (T.A.) and to the birth of the 43rd (Wessex) Divisional Regiment, Royal Corps of Transport (T.A.), with its six supporting squadrons and their troops.

It is of interest to record the Establishments and Strengths of the Column as at the 31st December, 1964:

UNIT	ESTABLISHMENT		TOTAL	STRENGTH		TOTAL
	OFFICERS	OTHER RANKS		OFFICERS	OTHER RANKS	
Colm H.Q.	5	18	23	5	15	20
*502 Coy	10	367	377	8	101	109
*504 Coy	9	181	190	6	116	122
505 Coy	9	181	190	6	69	75
506 Coy 21 Comp. Pl.	11	208	219	6	119	125
†541 Coy	10	213	223	7	154	161
22 Comp. Pl. †915 Coy	12	240	252	12	151	163

* *Includes one R.E.M.E. officer.*

† *Includes two officers and eighty W.R.A.C.*



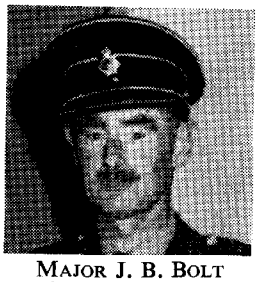
MAJOR R. G. PLAISTER,
T.D.
Second-in-Command



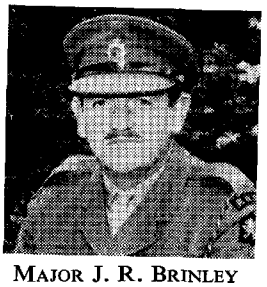
MAJOR R. J. HONEYWELL
T.D.
502 Coy R.A.S.C.
(Mot. Amb.) (T.A.)



MAJOR R. H. RATCLIFFE
T.D.
504 Coy R.A.S.C.
(Inf. Bde) (T.A.)



MAJOR J. B. BOLT
505 Coy R.A.S.C.
(Inf. Bde) (T.A.)



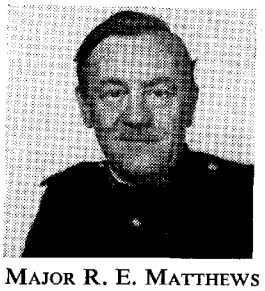
MAJOR J. R. BRINLEY
T.D.
506 Coy R.A.S.C.
(Inf. Bde) (T.A.)



MAJOR B. L. R. MATHER
541 Coy R.A.S.C.
(Mot. Amb.) (T.A.)



CAPT. D. CLARK THOMAS
71 Coy W.R.A.C. (T.A.)



MAJOR R. E. MATTHEWS
T.D.
915 Coy R.A.S.C.
(M.T.) (T.A.)



CAPT. E. M. CHOWN
T.D.
74 Coy W.R.A.C.
(T.A.)

SECOND-IN-COMMAND AND COMPANY COMMANDERS, 1964



MRS. MORTIMER COLLIER

Honorary Colonels and Commanding Officers of 43rd Wessex Infantry Divisional Column R.A.S.C. (T.A.)

HONORARY COLONELS

1928–1933	Major-General G. F. Davies, C.B., C.M.G., C.B.E. (late D.S.T.).
1933–1942	Rt. Honourable Leslie Hore-Belisha (Baron Hore-Belisha), M.A., Privy Councillor, Secretary of State for War.
1942–1950	Brigadier W. N. White, C.B. (late Inspector R.A.S.C.).
1950–1953	Colonel W. V. Pearce, T.D.
1953–1961	Major-General H. C. Goodfellow, C.B., C.B.E. (late D.S.T.), Colonel Commandant, R.A.S.C.
1961–	Major-General A. F. J. Elmslie, C.B., C.B.E. (late Inspector R.A.S.C.).

COMMANDING OFFICERS

1908–1909	Lieutenant-Colonel R. Hewett, V.D.
1909–1915	Lieutenant-Colonel H. Longfellow-Cooper, V.D. (29 Div.).
1915–1918	Lieutenant-Colonel Morgan (53 Div.).
1920–1923	Lieutenant-Colonel Aglen Peace, T.D.
1923–1929	Brevet Colonel M. C. Collier, O.B.E., T.D.
1929–1933	Brevet Colonel J. T. P. Clarke, T.D.
1933–1938	Brevet Colonel N. C. Hamilton, O.B.E.
1938–1940	Lieutenant-Colonel W. V. Pearce, T.D.
1940–1941	Colonel G. Bright Holmes, O.B.E.
1941–1942	Colonel F. C. J. Goodyer-Pain, O.B.E.
1942–	Lieutenant-Colonel H. Huxham.
1942–1944	Lieutenant-Colonel T. Leland (killed N.W. Europe).
1944–1945	Colonel E. H. Reeder.
1946–	Brigadier F. K. Barnes, O.B.E.
1947–1949	Colonel G. A. T. Thomson, O.B.E., T.D.
1949–1954	Colonel G. E. Moulder, O.B.E., T.D.
1954–1958	Lieutenant-Colonel T. J. Emerson, M.B.E., T.D.
1958–1960	Lieutenant-Colonel J. F. H. Clare, M.B.E., T.D.
1960–1963	Colonel L. Mellor, M.B.E., T.D.
1963–	Lieutenant-Colonel K. L. C. Wright, M.B.E., T.D.

Adjutants of 43rd (Wessex) Infantry Divisional Column, R.A.S.C. (T.A.)

1908–1910	Captain W. H. P. Law (R).
1910–1912	Captain C. H. Furneaux (R).
1912–1914	Captain Kelly (R).
1914–1915	Captain Wetherall (T.A.).
1915–	Captain Cook (T.A.).
1921–1923	Captain C. J. Martin, O.B.E., M.C. (R).
1923–1926	Brevet Major A. P. B. Pereira, D.S.O. (R).
1926–1929	Captain W. R. V. Warren, O.B.E., M.C. (R) (Lieut.-Colonel).
1929–1932	Captain E. D. M. Herriot-Hill (R) (Lieut.-Colonel).
1932–1937	Captain G. Bright Holmes, O.B.E. (R) (Brigadier).
1937–1939	Captain F. A. Shaw, O.B.E. (R) (Brigadier).
1939–1940	Captain D. Berry (T.A.) (Major).
1940–1940	Captain J. E. Bridge, O.B.E., T.D. (T.A.) (Lieut.-Colonel).
1940–1941	Captain Taylor (R) (Major).
1941–1942	Captain T. J. Emerson, M.B.E., T.D. (T.A.) (Lieut.-Colonel).
1942–1943	Captain J. Lockwood (Emergency Comm.) (Major).
1944–1945	Captain A. V. Gibson (Emergency Comm.) (Major).
1947–1949	Captain A. L. S. Meckiff (R) (Major).
1949–1951	Captain W. Rees (R) (Major).
1951–1953	Captain D. A. Child (R) (Major).
1953–1957	Captain P. Gray, M.M. (R) (Major).
1957–1958	Captain G. Dale (R).
1959–1960	Major D. G. W. Start, M.B.E.
1960–1961	Major L. G. Edwards.
1961–	Captain R. S. Pickard.

POSTSCRIPT

BY

LIEUT.-COLONEL K. L. C. WRIGHT, M.B.E., T.D., R.A.S.C. (T.A.),
COMMANDING 43RD (WX) DIVISIONAL COLUMN R.A.S.C. (T.A.)

IT FELL TO my honour and privilege to be appointed to Command the 43rd Divisional Column R.A.S.C. (T.A.) on 30th July, 1963, succeeding a long list of Commanding Officers who have all in their turn added more and ever more lustre to this thriving Territorial Army unit.

I quickly felt the pulse and strong heartbeat of a most healthy, enthusiastic and knowledgeable Column, which immediately put me on my mettle, to give of my utmost to a military organisation so deserving of nothing less.

It was a proud year in 1964 when we celebrated the completion of sixty years of our being, when training was intensified, recruiting stimulated, and fine social functions were held to mark this milestone in our history. A most particularly gratifying and poignant moment was the appearance at the Officers' Jubilee Ball in the Guildhall, Plymouth, of Mrs. Collier, wife of the late Colonel Collier, founder of this Column. We remember with gratitude her splendid gesture.

We now hear whispers of the reorganisation of the Corps by the transfer to the Royal Army Ordnance Corps of certain of our duties and the absorption of certain of the commitments of the Royal Engineers into our Corps, which is to be redesignated The Royal Corps of Transport.

Though changes are often unwelcome, we have no hesitation in accepting the new concept, and we look forward eagerly to the wearing of the new mantle and the challenge of the

43RD (WESSEX) DIVISIONAL REGIMENT, ROYAL CORPS OF TRANSPORT.

K. L. C. WRIGHT
LIEUT.-COL.