



MUSA QAL'EH MAIL



2nd Battalion,
The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers
OP HERRICK 10 (Apr-Oct 2009)

Issue 1

Battle Group (North West)

April 2009

EDITORIAL

Education Officer/
Unit Press
Officer: Capt Verity
Smith

Editor/Design:
Sgt Mark Duckett

Contact the
Editor:
Sgt Duckett
Op Herrick 10
MSQ DC
BFPO 792

Phone: Ext 5516

E-mail:
3640ducke@armymail.mod.uk

MS:
ISAF MS GBR BG(NW) MEDIA OFFR

Inside this issue

CO's Introduction	1
Fusiliers arrive in Afghanistan	2
Out stations /	3
FOB & PB	4
Locations	5
Tour of MSQ DC	6
Photos	7
Attached Arms	10
Misc	12

COMMANDING OFFICER'S INTRODUCTION

SECOND FUSILIERS BATTLE GROUP COMPOSITION:

Battle Group Headquarters
B Coy Group
C Coy (Influence Group)
HQ Coy
Fire Support Group
LAD (REME)
RLC (CHEFS)
RAMC
AGC (SPS)
AGC (ETS)

Attached Arms

C Coy 2 Royal Welsh (Warrior group)
206 Pioneer Sqn RLC (Mastiff Group)
5 RRF (TA)
3 SCOTS Operational Mentoring Liaison Team (OMLT)
52 Niagara Bty 19 Regt Royal Artillery
33 Armd Engineer Sqn
216/16 Royal Signals
Royal Military Police
OCC-D

Detached members of 2 RRF

A Coy Gp attached to 2 Rifles BG



Lt Col C Calder CO 2RRF receives the keys to the MSQ DC from Lt Col C Darby CO 2RGR

Introduction:

2 RRF have now been in charge of Battlegroup North-West for 18 days, following an excellent handover from 2 RGR. Within BG(NW) we have our own B Coy, as well as C Coy 2 R Welsh who are equipped with Warrior, and also the Mastiff Sqn furnished by 206 Pnr Sqn RLC.

Supporting the Battlegroup are 52 Bty TAC Gp and 105mm Light Guns from 40 Regt RA, 8 Tp from 33 Armd Engr Sqn and a Desert Hawk Det from 12 Regt RA. We have arrived at a quiet time in Helmand with the majority of the population focussed on the poppy harvest. This has at least given us a lull in the battle to get properly settled in. We expect the level of activity to return to 'normal' within the next 10 days, but there is nothing going on out here that we have not prepared for in training.

In many ways Musa Qal'eh has turned out to be something of a success story. A combination of British and Afghan troops now hold a fairly robust ring of patrol bases which are providing a high level of security around the District Centre. Our principle task is to maintain security to allow the Provincial Reconstruction Team to go about the business of developing robust governance structures and delivering reconstruction. In providing security we work extremely closely with the Afghan Security Forces so that they are seen to be in the lead. A Coy have settled in well to Forward Operating Base Nalay and have detached 3 PI to Sangin to work under A Coy 2 RIFLES. Both groups are doing an excellent job. Between them they have had some significant finds which are a great credit to their alertness and high standard of training. B Coy are just finding their feet in the rather more austere Patrol Base Woqab, but they have been given a first class handover and now have a detailed understanding of the Green Zone in which they will be living and operating. St George's Day was celebrated by all Fusiliers in theatre. In Musa Q'Ala DC we wore roses, had gunfire in the morning followed by a small church service. The QM down in Bastion organised a BBQ which included the RRF capbadged soldiers from the 4 MERCIAN TA Coy. In addition we have recently hosted a visit from The Times and you may have seen an article which recorded the experiences of Fus Smith from B Coy who at the age of 19 was on his first trip abroad.

In summary all are well out here and if the reports from the first Family Sunday Lunch are anything to go by you are all managing extremely well back there.

FUSILIERS ARRIVE IN AFGHANISTAN



Welcome to the first edition of the Musa-Qal'eh Mail! The aim of this newsletter is to keep all those at home and on tour updated with the latest news from both the UK and Afghanistan. Pictures, messages and short articles from those at home or on tour are always most welcome. Feel free to email the editor with any suggestions. This newsletter will also be published on the 2 RRF web page (located on the Army Net) and will be available at the

2RRF welfare office in Hounslow.

As the tour of Second Battalion the Royal Gurkha Rifles draws to a close, The Second Battalion the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers were flying out from the UK to take over Battle Group North West Area of Operations (BG (NW) AO). On arrival in Camp Bastion there was no time for sightseeing it was straight onto the in-theatre training package to refine skills already mastered during the pre-deployment training. Once complete, the officers and soldiers of the Battalion were flown forward to their relevant Forward operating bases (FOBs) and Patrol Bases (PBs) to meet their counterparts for the first time. The hand over process has taken some time, with several members of the BG arriving up to six weeks in advance. On the 10 April 09 with the handover nearly complete the Regimental Sergeant Major WO1 (RSM) Paul Bland ensured there was a small ceremony (in fact he was the only one present) to ensure the Regimental flag was flying high and proud in Musa Qal'eh DC.



WO1 (RSM) Paul Bland with his open invitation.

The majority of the Battalion have now arrived in the hot and sandy area of Helmand province, to start their six month tour. We needed to get a firm understanding of the ground, the people and the environment. A small overlap with 2 RGR has helped us to achieve this. The first few Patrols have been made up of a mixture of 2 RGR and 2 RRF covering the area by foot or by vehicle, in the heat and the rain, carrying a lot of equipment in excess of 70 lbs



On Patrol near Roshan Tower

It seems that the soldiers from the BG are fully prepared for what lies ahead of them in theatre. They are determined and are familiar with the territory. For the majority of them, this is not their first tour in Afghanistan. 2 RGR said they "had an outstanding tour". *I can't say that they had an easy time but they certainly did well*. While fresh food is limited due to the logistical implications of re-supplying the isolated locations, the chefs do a commendable job with what is available. I am now happy to report that we are all now established and looking forward to the tasks ahead.



The RSM asking directions to the night club !

Fusiliers Rear Echelon in Camp Bastion

Since arrival in Camp Bastion the Combat Service Support team have been kept fully occupied. Our main aim is to provide all types of support to the Battalion located forward everything from J1 (manning and pay) through to J4 (stores, fuel and food). The first few weeks have been comparable to a sleep deprivation exercise; whilst we completed our own RSOI (in theatre refresher training) at the same time as providing reception for the flights arriving in the small hours, as well as trying to take over the accounts! The handover / takeover is almost complete and things are looking good. The Gurkhas have been extremely helpful and continue to assist as required. We have a few more key personnel to arrive so that by the end of the month we will be fully manned.

Insert Provided by Maj M McCarthy Quarter Master 2 RRF



Fusiliers Forward Echelon in FOB Edinburgh



Greetings from FOB EDINBURGH! Or FOB EDI as the place is affectionately known to those who live here. The FOB is located close to the MSQ AO. Facilities, although basic are comfortable and those who live here have quickly settled into their daily routine. The Gurkhas left a settled pattern of life and we have had little trouble in getting to grips with the busy periods that we frequently face. The Regimental Flag is now flying high over FOB EDI. A huge spread of cap badges can be found in there, from gunners to RAF refuellers. Although facilities are minimal as you would expect, the Fusiliers are making the most of the opportunity to use the gym, internet or phone home.

Unseasonal downpours over the first few weeks has led to the Fusiliers looking like farmers in their inherited Wellington boots, although not many of the Gurkhas had feet of a similar size to the CQMS! The CSM is now insisting on bulled Wellington boots.

Insert Provided by Maj J Skelton OC FOB EDI 2 RRF

BG (NW) FSG PB Roshan Tower

By the 9 Apr 09 all bar one of the Fusiliers had arrived in Helmand Province's most Northerly outpost for British soldiers; Roshan Tower. The Tower is a now defunct mobile phone tower formally transmitting for the Roshan Mobile Network. What the tower lacks in size (it is only 50m x 60m) it makes up for in firepower. With Mortars, Javelin, HMG and even a 105mm light gun it has over the last year become a thorn in the side of the Taliban in Northern MSQ.

We have arrived in the middle of the poppy harvest which is a relatively quiet period for us. As a result our professional working activities have been limited to only 81mm smoke and illumination.

The majority of our time has been spent studying and learning the ground from our observation post and making improvements to the force protection and living conditions of the camp. Living conditions are austere, and re-supplies are infrequent. There are no fresh rations, internet, or BFBS TV. However the troops have really embraced the frontier spirit and morale is high. The views are fantastic and I challenge anyone to show me a better place to see the sun rise in the whole of Helmand Province.

Insert Provided by Capt M Hedley OC Roshan Tower 2 RRF



A Company Group FOB Nolay Sangin



A Coy deploy to FOB Nolay

Arriving in the middle of the night does not prepare you for the scale of Camp Bastion. There is already a Bastion 2 and the ongoing construction and influx of American troops will eventually create a Bastion 14. Following a full day of death by Power-Point in the RSOI hangar and visits to the ranges the A Coy Advance Party was lucky enough to visit most of the assets and attached arms based in Bastion which provide vital support to TFH. The world class hospital and A&E was particularly impressive. After a week enjoying the amenities of Bastion, which on top of hot and cold running water include a Pizza Hut and an Indian restaurant, we moved forward to FOB Nolay, 5km south of Sangin DC. Nolay is the newest FOB in theatre and is superbly situated, dominating the surrounding area and route 611 which runs parallel to the Helmand River.

The FOB itself is well equipped and there is no shortage of space. Fresh food is available daily and an enormous plasma screen in the cookhouse, normally tuned to news or sport and the occasional film keeps us in touch with the world. Downtime is filled with a trip to the gym, reading, and of course bronzing (or in some cases burning) under the sun. Initial patrols have enabled familiarisation of the area and allowed us to meet some of the local characters. At the time of writing the poppy harvest is in full swing and the majority of locals are in the fields all day. Some places are more cut off than others. Recently a patrol came across a man, who when asked, said the last patrol he'd seen through that area was the Russians. Apart from the camel which exploded after treading on something it shouldn't have it has been initially fairly quiet, though this will undoubtedly change. There is much work to be done in the months ahead but everyone in the Coy Group is looking forward to the challenge.

Insert Provided by Lt Chris Danby – OC 2PI, A Coy Gp 2 RRF

B Company Group Woqab

B Company took over responsibility for Patrol Base WOQAB on Gallipoli Day (25th April) 2009 from B Company of the 2nd Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles. Both Regiments fought in Gallipoli, so following a short ceremony to commemorate the events of 1915, the two regiments undertook another joint operation in order to complete the handover from the Gurkhas to the Fusiliers. Patrol Base WOQAB is the northern most ISAF (and therefore British) outpost in Helmand Province. It lies 3.5 km north of Musa Qaleh District Centre and the Battlegroup headquarters and lies in the centre of a narrow strip of Green Zone, or irrigated farmland with the wide Musa Qaleh Wadi (river) to the west and the desert and mountains to the east. The patrol base was established in November 2008 in a pair of farmers' compounds straddling a canal. Since then, the infrastructure has been developed to create a location capable of delivering life support to the considerable number of people now resident in WOQAB. Having said that, conditions are basic. 24 hour rations provide the staple diet, supplemented by bread, chickens and goats purchased from the locals. Water from the canal is used to hand wash clothing and for showering, and post and other essentials are delivered by foot through the Green Zone. The patrol base is surrounded by poppies, currently being harvested for opium. The local Taliban have undertaken a self imposed ceasefire to facilitate the harvest, so there has been very little enemy activity so far. This has enabled the hand over to be completed in relative peace and quiet. The most significant event to have occurred so far has been the visit of Michael Evans of The Times and his photographer Richard Pohle resulting in an article on the front page of the World section!

Insert Provided by Maj J Lamb MC – OC B Coy Gp 2 RRF



7 Pl B Coy Prepare to move from MSQ DC to PB Woqab

C Company Influence Group



10 Pl C Coy take an earned rest at Ybaraj

At the time of writing C Company are now complete in Afghanistan. As many of you will be aware 9 Platoon under 2Lt Jamie Piper are supporting B Coy based in WOQAB just North of Musa Qal'eh, and 11 Platoon have deployed with A Company to Nalay under 2Lt Tony Purvis. The remainder of the company, company HQ and 10 Platoon, will be heading up the influence activities for the Battlegroup whilst working closely with the Military Stabilisation Support Team. The company advance party (the OC, 2IC and CQMS) arrived in theatre in the early hours of 2 Apr 09. After a shortened RSOI package we moved forward to Musa Qal'eh to begin the handover/takeover of the Influence operation. This is an emerging area of operations in Afghanistan primarily focusing on the non-kinetic activities that could bring about real change

for the local people. 2RGR have made significant in-roads over the last six months, and the Influence Group will be looking to build on the good work already in place. Sadly we had to say farewell to C/Sgt Clark early on, as he is now manning the BUZZARD desk directing aviation operations in and out of the base. This is a vital task that requires attention to detail and will be key when R&R starts in a few weeks time. 10 Platoon under 2Lt Nick Beavitt, accompanied by WO2 Miller, arrived 10 days after the advance party and no sooner had they set foot in Musa Qal'eh found themselves forward mounting to patrol base MINDEN, in support of the Battlegroup's armoured infantry company (C Coy 2 RW). They have been there nearly two weeks and are doing a sterling job of manning and protecting one of the Battlegroup's most forward bases in our area. With the poppy harvest in full flow activity levels have been low, which has allowed the chaps to settle in and get used to the environment. The company 2IC, Capt Clive Musson, is now permanently based with the RWELSH in MINDEN extending the Battlegroup's influence envelope to contested areas. This has proved successful and has been replicated with the CSM moving up to WOQAB to join B Coy. Thus far the weather has been indifferent with plenty of rain interspersed with some hot days. However, this is nothing compared to what we are expecting in terms of heat come June. Overall the boys are in good spirits and getting on with the job in hand. As ever the Fusiliers adapt and make the best of pretty austere conditions, although it has to be said Musa Qal'eh is positively palatial compared to other locations. Parcels and letters from home are welcome relief, and really boost morale, so please keep them coming. Finally we have had one birthday in theatre, thus for Fus Collins, who celebrated his birthday on 16 Apr 09.

Insert Provided by Maj S Mason – OC Influence Gp 2 RRF

Reconnaissance Gp

The Recce Gp arrived in Afghanistan late on the 3 April. Following RSOI (Reception Staging and Onward Integration) in Camp Bastion, an advance party deployed to Musa Qal'eh DC on Thursday the 9th, with the remainder of the C/S arriving a couple of days later. Following a hand over take over of equipment, vehicles and most importantly, ground knowledge, we all deployed on a three day patrol to shake out and get used to the environment, whilst trying to establish an idea of enemy presence and influence in an area mostly unknown to BG(NW). We are all settling in well to the DC and the daily routine and tasks, and I think are surprised by the relatively good set up that exists here. We are able to shower daily and there is a dining tent for meals. Food is prepared centrally by the chefs, who are doing a great job trying to disguise the 10 man rations which is all they have to work with. (Although we did have roast goat last night which was surprisingly good). In between patrols, the routine is maintenance of the vehicles, weapons, some down time, and then planning and preparation for the next outing. With the poppy harvest here due to be finished by the end of the month, which is diverting the attention of both the locals and the Taliban, we expect things to become somewhat busier shortly. We all miss our families, wives and girlfriends very much - you are always in our thoughts. Thank you for the support you show, all the letters and parcels, it is very much appreciated and makes a huge difference.

Insert Provided by Capt N Groves – OC Recce Gp 2 RRF



The Wadi is no match for the Fusiliers Recce Group

Facilities within MSQ DC



Aerial View of Musa Qal'eh DC



Up to 4 Star Accommodation available



Battalion Headquarters



Medical Facilities available



A-La Carte Menu



Silver Service Restaurant



Full Laundry Facility (NOT)



Full Gym Facilities



Toilet Facilities

Next Month FOB EDI's Facilities !

Soldiers in Action

Photo Competition:

There will be a photo competition run once a month for all you budding photographers out there. The images are to be based around *Fusiliers in Action* whilst out here on operations. The first entries are to be with the editor no later than 14th May 2009 and then the 14th of each month whilst in theatre. The winning picture will be judged and prizes awarded to the best images. All images are to be saved in JPEG and with the name of the photographer and a description of the photo (who, when and where).

Take a look below at some of the standards already submitted, Remember you have got to be in it to win it !



St Georges day gets a bit much for the Ops Offr to handle



Captain Matt O'Hare on patrol in the desert compounds



Cpl Mole interacts with the locals



Fusilier Routledge leads the way on the Wadi crossing



Fusiliers clear the route



Fusiliers prepare to clear the route



Cpl Miller on patrol in the Green Zone



Cpl Davidson - 7pl