



4. THE DIVIDED CITY - BERLIN 1965-67

The Battalion went off to Berlin in September 1965, leaving me behind to complete the Regimental Signal Officers' Course in Hythe. Their destination was Brooke Barracks, Spandau, where they had already been stationed in the mid-fifties! The whole Bn went in a standard move taking families, children and pets with them! In those days, few soldiers had cars and only some officers, so most of them went by air, and others by ferry and train.

I arrived in Berlin in late November, to a cold and icy city. As my first time stationed in Germany, in its old capital, it was going to be quite a special experience. I knew about The Wall and the divided nation, and the Four Power agreement, and that it was a very old, very grand, very proud capital city. I spoke little German at that time, and had a view about Berlin acquired from my mother who came from Hamburg! However, I realised it would be useful to know some German phrases, so she taught me enough to get going. One gem I remember especially is not exactly vital, but is amusing: 'Ich muss mal auf clo gehen!' which means 'I must go to the loo'!

On arrival at Tempelhof Airport in the centre of Berlin, from Gatwick, I was most impressed with the modern art-nouveau design, so new and modern after the utility-post-war-style of Gatwick and Heathrow. The airport was very clean and spacious. There seemed to be many cleaners about to keep the place going! It was all very exciting and interesting, even though I had already travelled to Belgium, Austria, Switzerland and France, but Berlin was Berlin! Having enjoyed Christopher Isherwood's book 'Goodbye to Berlin', I could now actually experience some of this atmosphere. What a chance! There was so much to see and to do, and was the fabled night-life still alive in the sixties? I was met by unit transport, probably a lowly DKW, but it may have been a military VW Beetle! Next stop was to be my new home in Brooke Barracks, Spandau... and exploring Berlin!

Brooke Barracks

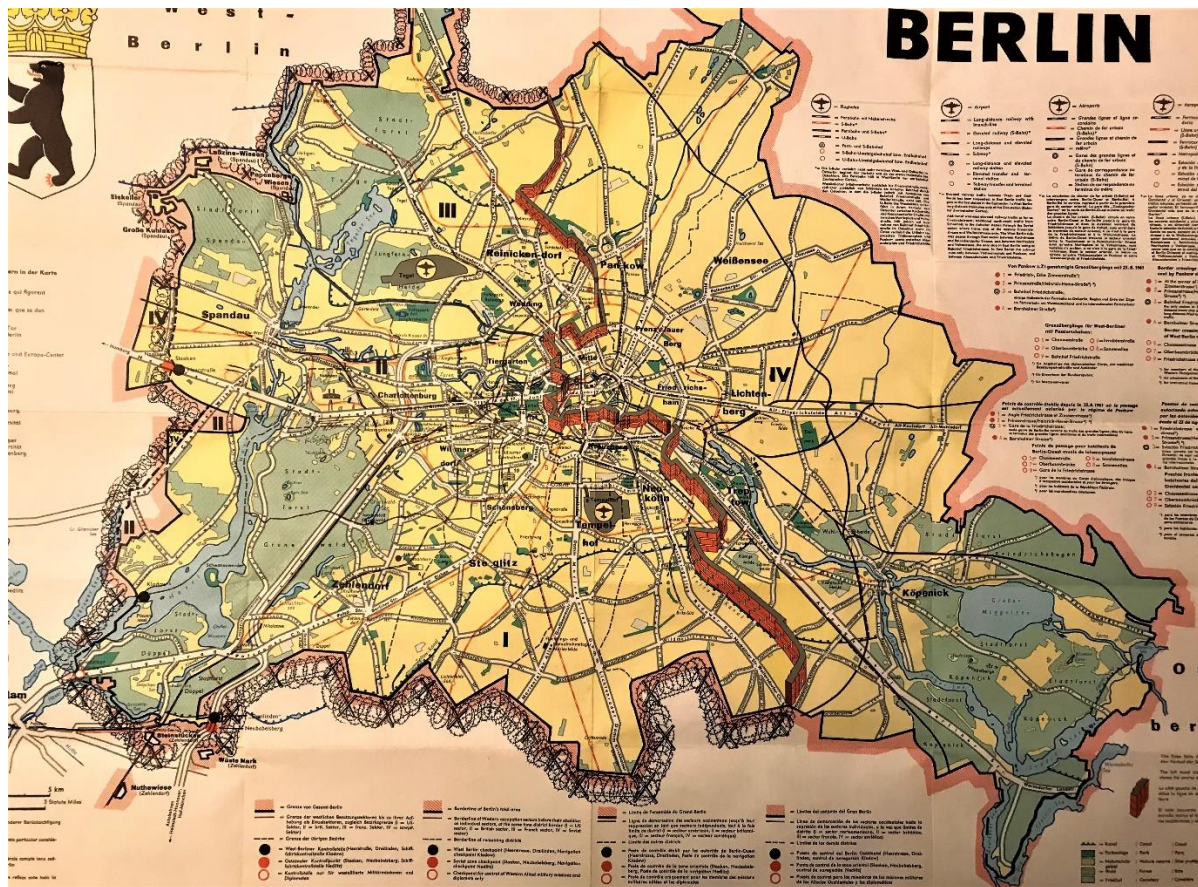
Brooke Barracks was situated in Spandau, to the far west of West Berlin, very near the wire fence separating the City from East Germany. It was also next door to the infamous Spandau



Prison, where Hess, Speer and von Schirach were incarcerated since their trials in 1946. Brooke Barracks was part of a huge barrack conglomeration built in the 1930s to house a cavalry brigade and an infantry brigade. Our neighbours in Wavell Barracks were another infantry battalion, and just to the north was the armoured squadron and the workshops, and the ordnance and supply depot. Spandau had become a huge military area – der Zitadelle – in the early years of Nazi

Brooke Barracks – sports field and square, MT on the left, cookhouse ahead!

expansion, and we now used their very fine barrack blocks and buildings.



A tourist map of Berlin, produced in the west!

Brooke Barracks was built in a rectangle around the square and the sports field, with the MT, workshops, and chapel to one side, the cookhouse and sergeants mess on the other. Married quarters for the soldiers were separated from the barracks by a high wall and small wicket gate. Barrack blocks were 3 stories high, with cellars beneath and huge attics in the roof void. The soldiers' accommodation was on the first and second floors, in 10-man rooms along wide corridors, with recesses in the corridor walls for rifles to be stored. Needless to say, this did not apply to the British, as all weapons were stored in company armouries under lock and key on the ground floor! Corridor floors were tiled, and the blocks were efficiently heated from huge boilers in the cellars. Ablutions and showers were provided in each block. For some reason, German urinals were extraordinarily smelly, and the others were old-fashioned, and peculiarly German, 'flat-pan-front-flush' design! Quite a performance to get used to after good old deep-drop crappers in UK!! However, the chaps seemed to be reasonably comfortable .. much more so than in the Victorian barracks in Gravesend! Something I also remember so well, was the particularly pungent smell of German cigarette tobacco, with a whiff of cigars. It seemed that everyone smoked! Being a keen smoker myself, I did not mind, but German tobacco had this very different smell from British or French, and so all crowded or enclosed spaces had a unique and interesting odour!

So, there I was in the new barracks, given my own room on the second floor of the Officers Mess. It was large and comfortable, and furnished as usual for a junior officer, with bed, armchair, desk and chair, bookcase and washbasin. The bathroom was down the corridor and shared with others. However, my faithful batman or the mess staff came with a cup of tea at 0700 hrs every morning to wake me for the excitements of the day!!

The officers mess was at the western end of the barracks, backing onto Schmidt Knobbelsdorf Strasse, the main road running past the Barracks. It was a converted soldiers' barrack block, but our rooms were always warm and comfortable. The ground floor contained the anteroom, dining room and of course the ladies' room at the rear, next to the kitchen, with its separate entrance. We still had no bar and relied on the good offices of our hard-worked staff to supply drinks on demand by application of the bell, when a white-coated Fusilier would appear to take the order. We had a 'kellar bar' in the cellar, accessed through the side entrance to the mess for the 'ladies' room'. The anteroom and dining room were out of bounds to ladies for fear of upsetting the bachelor residents! The kitchen was the preserve of our German chef, Gunter, who played a mean hand with a Spanish omelette when asked for an early supper!

Many of us had cars which were parked near the mess, and beside the piggery. Yes, the Bn had its own pig farm in Berlin. At that time, it was the norm for the food waste and plate scrapings from the messes to be collected in large dustbins and sold to a local pig farmer. This produced income for the improvements of the food in the soldiers dining hall. However, every so often, a unit found it had a soldier well versed in the life of pigs, who could be misemployed to become the Pig Major, and run a small pig farm. The animals were fed daily on bin loads of food from the messes and became large and fat. At the appropriate time, some were sold on the open market, and some reused by the regimental butcher! It was a superb system of 're-cycling' waste produce!

Our pigs were looked after by Fus Dougie Gillespie, a stout man who had learned his trade in the piggery of the Earl of Caledon in Co Fermanagh! He lived among them all day, and took great care with their diet and health and produced some excellent specimens, fetching good prices when sold. He was also a talented car mechanic and kept the subalterns' cars on the road, for which he received reimbursements set at his own rates!

HQ Company and Signals Platoon

Enough of this frippery about the barracks, and now on to my job in HQ Company as the Regimental Signals Officer. My office was on the top, 3rd floor of HQ Company block, adjacent to the officers' mess. The office and stores were on this floor, with most of the living-in troops as well. The barrack blocks were indeed very big! My office had a wonderful view to the north, right over Spandau Prison and the dreaded high walls and watchtowers. My company commander was John McFrederick, hot from Staff College and bristling with newfound knowledge! He was great fun, with a light touch, and a wicked sense of humour! He was a kind and confident man who let us specialist commanders get on with our platoons or departments but was always there for intimate support when the going 'got tuff'!! He had attended the German Staff College ... so he spoke fluent German!

Our CSM was WO2 'Psychie' O'Neill, a smart and friendly man who ran HQ Coy with a quiet discipline. He seemed to be a friend to all and was a great support to platoon commanders when added discipline was needed at the lower level!

One day, the armoury storeman, who worked on the ground floor, had ‘drink taken’, and on his way to bed decided to smash several of the windows on the stairwell! On Monday, he was charged with ‘wilful damage to Army property’, a heinous crime, and was locked up in the guardroom. While emptying his personal locker, it became apparent that he collected ladies’ undergarments! The locker was full of knickers and brassieres! On further enquiry, it transpired that he wore these items under his uniform, and everyone knew about it, except the officers of the company HQ! There had been a string of thefts of ladies underwear reported from clothes lines in the soldiers married quarters, and from neighbouring German houses. The thief had now been found, and the ‘Phantom Knicker-Nicker of Old Spandau Town’ had been discovered and eliminated!!

The Signal Platoon

The RSO was Paddy Barnhill, who I had known since arriving in the Bn, and from whom I had now to take over the platoon. We examined the G 1098 schedule of equipment, and I was carefully briefed by the QM, Jack Mahaffey, about the need for thorough and regular checks and inspections to account for the items on charge.



1st Bn the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers Signal Platoon in 1966!

(Rear: Fus Walshe, Byrne, Caffrey, Kidney, Dullaghan, Callaghan, McCormack, Glasgow)

(Middle: Fus Thompson, Farmer, Mclean, Coyle, Lamb, Ahern, McGonigle, Murphy, Jones)

(LCpl Rooney LCpl Chapman Cpl Pattinson Cpl Borland Sgt Jimmy Reid Lt JHST Sgt Hawes Cpl Magill LCpl Duffy LCpl Green)

This was followed by a meeting with the MTO, the famous Dick Rafferty! He had been an outstanding RSM in Kenya, now back as Bn MTO. He presided over the cleanest and most

efficient MT section, all the vehicles well maintained and serviced. His office overlooked the main barrack gates and the drill square, so he could see everything that occurred in the barracks with ease! He was a mine of information and advice, which he offered frequently and very wisely! Only the foolish ignored his sage comments and he quickly became a valued friend and adviser!

The signals platoon had about 15 DKW (small 'jeep-like' vehicles) and two larger Unimog trucks! All our transport was German, paid for by the Berlin Government. Only much later did we receive some LWB Land Rovers, to replace the very old DKWs. The DKW vehicles were small German variants of a US jeep, powered by a 2-stroke engine! They ran at a high torque, were very noisy and extremely smelly. The exhaust was at the right rear of the vehicle, and vertical!! They were built by Audi, I think, and were capable of floating in calm water. However, they were very small and with a C42 radio set in the rear and a driver, there was scant space for an operator. They were unique to Berlin, and also used by the Berlin police. The Unimogs were 1 ton vehicles designed by Mercedes Benz, ran on diesel and were very reliable. Our 3-ton was the Merc 2 1/2 ton vehicle, all old but tough. It was rumoured that many of these vehicles were those used by the Bn in '57/9 during their previous tour in Berlin.

We were issued with the Larkspur range of VHF radio sets which had also to be counted and checked. These were large and heavy, powered by disposable batteries of considerable size and weight. The A40 was the section set with a range of about 1.5 miles on a good day, with 6 pre-set channels. The A41 was bigger (ie heavier) for pl to coy HQ communication with a range of about 5 miles, and a free frequency range to get wider choice of channels. For communication with higher levels, we had the B47 and the C42 sets, with increased ranges, but used in vehicles. We also had field telephones, a manual 10-line exchange, and our only HF sets were the ex-WW2 antique 62 Set. These sets were very old and relied on glass valves, operated in the HF frequencies band, and had to be tuned by ear and much twiddling of knobs! The art was to listen for the 'lowest mean beat' and then fix on that frequency. You might then stay in touch for some time ... if the weather was good and the antenna was tuned to the right frequency and facing the correct direction! The 62 sets were a real art to use, not much use at night, and so not popular at all!! We also had the mule harnesses and tack for these sets with the wet batteries, so that you could (in theory) link the sets to the batteries and operate them while moving! As we had no mules, we never tried that, but used them a few times in vehicles.

Once I'd taken over the stores, vehicles, and radio sets, I was off as the new RSO of the 1st Inniskillings, in an operational zone ... Berlin! We were responsible for all the radio communications within the Bn and up to Bde HQ. It was an important job, usually entrusted to a captain! Every week the Bde HQ issued the operational and training radio frequencies, at a personal meeting with all the other signal officers, some only for use when war was declared! This information was kept under lock and key, known only to me and the platoon sergeant. We planned signal cadres to train the company signallers, and our own men in the various grades of regimental signaller. These entailed careful planning, which had to be flexible to coincide with coy training and any Bn or Bde plans for larger exercises! The Alert Pl was the bn immediate response pl, and was supplied daily with working sets, radio frequencies and replacement batteries, while the recce pl was always ready for patrols of the wall and the wire with their B47 and A41 sets. We maintained an ops room and telephone exchange inside the barracks, manned every day especially whenever any patrols were out on the wall, or the wire, or in the East Sector.

Rocking Horse!

Among our many training duties was the dreaded “Rocking Horse”. This was the nickname for emergency deployment for war, and could be called whenever desired by the CO, Bde Comd, or the Commander British Sector, Maj Gen Sir John Nelson, in the middle of the night or day, at no notice. These alerts were used by the CO and the Bde Comd to ensure we were ready for war at short notice. Normally the Bde HQ called them about every 3 months, but our CO liked to show how alert we were and used to call them about once a month. On one occasion he called one after an officers’ mess guest night! On another occasion, I remember chasing up the Heer Str at about 3.00 am, after Colonel Terry had called a ‘Rocking Horse’, only to find him in his staff car just ahead of me! A problem arose: should I overtake him to get to barracks before him and risk the CO seeing me pass; or follow him and hope to get to my room while he went to the ops room in Bn HQ! The latter course prevailed, and I got away with it. However, more drama followed as the night went on!

This RH was one when we deployed to our practice positions, mainly in the Grunewald forest. The signal pl had been caught on the hop, as we had called in all the radio sets in the bn for the quarterly check that all were present, complete and working! The stores were full of sets and bits and pieces, and the companies and Bn HQ had no sets in the vehicles, nor for issue to platoons and sections! Ordered chaos ensued, controlled with great patience by Sgt Reid and Sgt Hawes, while Bn HQ were calling for action, and for immediate radio checks. The issue of all the kit took some time, and then the vehicle sets had to be fitted in the vehicles and tuned to the day’s frequency. Establishing communications was taking for ever, as companies and platoons deployed all over the place, when they were ready to move. Finally, Bn HQ moved out to our location deep in the forest. We spent ages trying to get through to all the companies, with very limited success. After an hour, the CO was steaming, and called to me to get through within the next half hour, or I would be sacked and sent home to the Depot! With great presence of mind, the Sgts managed to get through to all companies in time, and my face was saved!! I lived in debt to them for the rest of my tenure as RSO!! It had been a worrying and very busy night, not helped by my suffering from an over-indulgence of the hop!

RMP patrols would go around West Berlin to call us out whenever Rocking Horse was called, to ensure that everyone knew. It was announced in the force’s cinemas, flashed on the screen as the film came to a grinding halt! Gen Nelson called one after a reception at his residence once! They became a part of life in Berlin, and the Inniskillings were well known for calling more than any other unit and deploying faster than anyone!

Berlin Operational Duties and Training

Berlin Garrison was an operational theatre, as the City was encircled by a wire fence dividing us from East Germany around the north, west and south sides, while the centre was divided by the infamous Berlin Wall. As I write in 2016, all this has now disappeared, except some vestiges of the Wall retained as a peculiar souvenir of the Cold War.

In our day, both Wall and Wire were a daily presence, and West Germany was known as 'The Zone', ie The British Zone of the German Federal Republic. We were very isolated in Berlin and knew that chances of survival if the Soviets invaded were very slim! However, we played the part with enthusiasm and diligence, and no little pride at being over 100 miles inside East Germany, nearer to Warsaw than to Bonn! It gave Berlin a measure of glamour and excitement



that we Inniskillings played up to fully! We worked very hard operationally, ceremonially and socially, and played our part in everything that occurred in the City. Derek Lance had a good wheeze for the time when the Soviets arrived. He kept an old cycle and a road sweeper's broom to hand, and with the addition of a peaked cap, planned to start sweeping the autobahn from Berlin heading west, claiming to be an innocent worker!!

With the 47th Inf Regt, French Army (Note DKW jeep, half-track and Unimog vehicles)

We made good friends with the Americans and the French and exchanged officers and soldiers from time to time. We exercised with all the nations and with the Berlin Police Force B, which was the quasi-military wing of the police force. We undertook other duties on the Military Train, the Flag Tours, the WVS Bus Tours, visits to East Berlin and recces of all the salubrious and not so salubrious night life of Berlin! Interspersed with all this was the never-ending round of ceremonial duties for the Queen's Birthday parade, the Allied Forces Day parade, and other visits of VVIPs to Bde HQ and the units in Berlin.

Any field training was undertaken in the Grunewald forest or on the small training area at the Ruhleben range complex. There was an area for FIBUA (fighting in built-up areas) where some old, ruined houses (Probably from the Great War officers prison camp) were available for urban warfare and house-clearing drills. The chaps had a wonderful name for this training, something about 'having a good time in town'!! There were ranges here too, but I think only 300 metres long, as the land available in West Berlin was limited. The ranges conformed to German design which included baffles at every 25 metres, to deaden the sound of the rounds being fired! This was a whole new concept for us, as normal live firing ranges were built well out in the countryside!



Endex ... marching home down the Heerstr

(Sgt Pedan, John Eldridge, Jim Condon, Malcolm Vining, JHST, RSM Andy Nelson, Adjt Derek Dowey, CO Lt Col Terry Troy)

We used to march all over the place, and runs were a regular feature of fitness training. After one exercise in the Forest, in late January, we had been under canvas or in trenches for about 4 days and manoeuvred about the undergrowth with usual enthusiasm. We had suffered well below zero temperatures, snow and ice, and some chaps had suffered frostbite to fingers and toes. After these adventures and patrols, and advances to contact and defence works, we were pretty bushed, and looking forward to a nice lift home in Bn trucks. However, Colonel Terry had other plans. He decided we would march back home from the Olympia Stadion to Brooke Barracks, by way of the Heerstr, with the Band Pipes and Drums meeting us near the barracks to lead us in. We were the only bn to march home from exercise, along the Heer Str to the fine old regimental marches and the pipes and drums and band belting them out for all to hear. It caused quite a bit of interest to the Berliners going to work, and no doubt some wonderful tales in the Soviet offices in East Berlin!

Convoy Drills ... Again!

Twice a year the whole Bn went down to the Zone for field training and range work. Both sorties were for two full weeks, in the spring to Sennelager for range work, and in the late summer to Soltau for tactical field training, sometimes with armoured support. Reinforcements were sent up from lucky units in the Zone, so that the strength of the Berlin Garrison remained at a suitable level. The Bn went down by the Berlin Military Train and the heavy baggage and weapons went down by road convoys. As RSO, I was always a convoy commander and had the responsibility of ensuring that each convoy had suitable and serviceable radios for their security in passage through the Eastern Zone. The convoys were commanded by subalterns or captains, and consisted of the signal vehicles, some baggage and stores vehicles for each company and the QM and MTO and Light Aid Detachment (REME) vehicles. During my two years as RSO I took about six convoys either from Berlin to the Zone, or back from Sennelager or Soltau. We drove down from the barracks in Spandau, using part of the old Avus racetrack to Check Point Bravo near Gatow. Briefed in great care by the RMP on the route through East Germany, the speed and the time allowed, (about 4 hours to reach Helmstedt RMP Post) given maps of the route and drawings of the signboards at which to turn, we set off.

My driver, Fus Thompson, was very good and took his time as we led the convoy. We could not exceed 30 mph or the last vehicle would be racing at about 50 mph to keep up with us, or so we were told!! It was a long, slow and very tedious journey, normally uneventful and we reached the end at Helmstedt in the right time. On one occasion, I came home in about 2 hours, and was questioned by the RMP about my convoy speed and safety, as the CO had passed me and warned me about going too fast with the MOBAT anti-tank guns on tow. They were towed by the muzzle, and if travelling too fast, the sway on their small wheels could cause the barrel to bend!



Signal Platoon rogues at Sennelager ranges!

(Fus Byers, Byrne, LCpl Dullaghan, Fus Farmer, Ahern)

Normally all went well, but on my last convoy in April 1967 from Sennelager, we managed to get temporarily lost! I think I had fallen asleep, and Fus Thompson had continued driving, waiting for my instruction to turn here, or deviate there. However, I fear he had missed a crucial turn and on we went ... and I woke up. Rather disorientated, I quickly tried to assess where we were with map and observation. It rapidly became clear that we had passed a turn, or so I thought. What to do? At the next junction, I came off the autobahn with my 12 trucks one behind the other, nose to tail now! Down we went on the run-off road, and I then had another thought! Maybe we were right and had still to get to the turn! We stopped. I dismounted, we discussed the route, the time, the junctions and turns, and decided that we were on the right route, and had to regain the autobahn and continue to Berlin. We now had to turn the whole convoy round at the end of the run-off road, and rejoin the autobahn. However, as I glanced up at the Autobahn bridge above us, I noticed 2 VOPOs (East German police) looking



down and pointing excitedly! Now the cat was out of the bag and they were rapidly joined by a Soviet patrol, and under their glare and laughter, I managed to turn round the convoy with difficulty, and off we went towards Berlin again. This manoeuvre had lost us about 45 minutes from our timed programme and would mean a late arrival in Berlin. I knew this was a punishable offence in the Inniskillings, and so we moved on as fast as possible.

Leaving Sennelager with the convoy wot I nearly lost!

At last, we reached CP Bravo, to be greeted by the Adjutant and the CO, initially very warmly! However, after I had been debriefed by the RMP as to our late arrival, received a rocket from them at having left the autobahn, I reported to the CO. Suddenly, a very cool wind swept over me and the RMP office! The CO was not pleased, the Adjt was not pleased, and I was invited to see the Adjt the next morning.

After a very frosty night, and much ribbing by my peers in the Mess, I saw the Adjt in the morning and was invited to see the CO. No coffee for me, nor a seat! I was given the blast of a lifetime for embarrassing the CO and letting down the Bn in front of the RMP, and the whole of Berlin Garrison. I was severely warned as to my future conduct and given about 2 weeks of extra duty officers to atone for my sins. It was a very embarrassing moment, but quite a unique occasion to get lost on the autobahn .. not many managed that! And, I was never really lost, only asleep at the wrong time!

It seems that I was not very good with convoy control, but Dick Green managed even better! He entered West Berlin through CP Charlie, having circumvented the whole of Berlin to gain access through the east!

The British Military Train

Access to Berlin was by road from Helmstedt in West Germany, or by air to Gatow in the south west, or by the British Military Train, all using the Four Power agreed corridor. Each of the western nations, British, American and French had their own 'corridor' to their own airport and ran their own trains. Our train ran daily from Charlottenburg station to Helmstedt, and then on to Braunschweig and Hannover. The journey took about 4 hours and after an hour wait at Hannover, another 4 hours to return. The trains were still under steam, with most impressive German steam locos to take us down to the Zone and back again.



A BMT engine at rest (photo taken in 2012 on 21st Anniversary re-run)

The engines were DDR (East German) from Berlin to Helmstedt, when a West German one took over. The trains usually consisted of passenger carriages, a freight wagon, and a dining-car from the Wagons Lit)company. Most of the trip occurred in the East German Zone, and so the train had to run under an armed guard, to ensure no refugees joined it. This was commanded by a subaltern from one of the Berlin units, and frequently by the Inniskillings. The Train Guard consisted of about 8 men from the Bn and an interpreter (German and Russian), and a RCT Train Conducting Warrant Officer or NCO, who saw to the passengers' problems and supervised the transit of freight. The military escort was armed with weapons and ammunition. Extra food and water was also stored in case of ambush or hold-up, and all doors were locked and shored up on leaving Berlin, and only unlocked after crossing the border into West Germany at Helmstedt.!

PRICE LIST		
THE BERLINER		
MEALS		
Meals are provided to non-entitled passengers on re-payment.		
	ADULT	CHILDREN
LUNCH	DM 1,25	DM 0,80
TEA	DM 0,50	DM 0,30
DINNER	DM 1,30	DM 0,85
WINE LIST		
Sherry	Dry Sac	DM 0,35 per tot
	Bols	DM 0,30 per tot
Wines	French red	DM 2,70 per half bottle
	French white	DM 2,80 per half bottle
Liqueurs	Cointreau	DM 0,45 per tot
	Brandy — Martell	DM 0,50 per tot
	Brandy — Castillon	DM 0,25 per tot
Spirits	Whisky	DM 0,30 per tot
	Gin	DM 0,20 per tot
	Rum	DM 0,20 per tot
	VODKA	DM 0,15
Beers	Schultheiss Pils	DM 0,35 per bottle
	Guinness	DM 0,90 per bottle
Soft Drinks	Cordial	DM 0,10 per tot
	Cider	DM 0,90 per bottle
	Soda Water	DM 0,30 per bottle
	Tonic Water	DM 0,35 per bottle
	Ginger Ale	DM 0,35 per bottle
	Lemonade	DM 0,20 per bottle
	Bitter Lemon	DM 0,35 per bottle
	Coca Cola	DM 0,35 per bottle

The Berliner bar price list 1966!

The military escort was armed with weapons and ammunition. Extra food and water was also stored in case of ambush or hold-up, and all doors were locked and shored up on leaving Berlin, and only unlocked after crossing the border into West Germany at Helmstedt.!

Train Guard Commander was a very popular duty, as there was a chance to see the opposition close to, while in charge of the train. The passports of all passengers were examined by the Soviet office at Marienborn, and there was an hour or so in Braunschweig or Hannover until the return trip. Meals were provided on the train, at no cost to the duty personnel. The terrific tea on the return journey, with the obligatory boiled egg, is not to be forgotten. This was followed by a three-course, silver-service dinner, which usually involved a steak of some sort! Drinks were available from the bar at ridiculously low cost, because they were duty free. A glance at the menu, when we were changing DM10 to the £1, will back this up!

The most important duty was the Soviets' inspection of our passports and Berlin Travel Documents. All personnel on the train required a passport and BTB, and the names on both had to tally exactly. If not, and the Soviet officers could not read them, the whole train could be held up for some time until replacement BTBs were produced.

There was a little procedure at Marienborn station when the train arrived, from either direction. The Train Commander, interpreter and TCWO all dismounted with all the documents, marched the length of the train to the Soviet duty officer, his NCO and his escorts. The box of documents was offered and after one or two pleasantries (if the Sovs were in a good mood), they disappeared into their little office. The British group remained outside in whatever weather! We waited and waited, and finally the box of documents was passed to us through a small shutter in the office window. The BTBs had then to be checked to ensure they were all stamped and that all the passports were returned unstamped! What a performance, and often the interpreter had to seek advice or comment from the Soviets. His presence was essential.

Occasionally there were mistakes, but that is another story!


The Wrong BTB?

The Berlin Military train ran every day from Charlottenburg Station in West Berlin to Braunschweig and Hannover in West Germany from 1945 until 1991. It was the main form of land transport into West Berlin for all British personnel, military, families, and support staff. As it ran for about 100 miles through East Germany, there was a military escort commanded by an officer from the Berlin Garrison, and on 8th May 1966 I had the privilege of commanding the Train Guard! This was a popular duty for young subalterns, as you got a day out of Berlin playing with trains, excellent meals and service, met the Soviets face to face, and with a short visit to The Zone!

The Berlin Travel Document (BTB) was a vital part of life during the Cold War, as it was the only authority for entry to Berlin for all official visitors or duty personnel. It required the authorising stamp of one of the Commandants of the Four Powers occupying the City. Neither the Berlin City Government, nor the West Germans could authorise access .. only the Allied Commandantura in Berlin.

This BTB is scrutinised meticulously by the Soviets before they apply their authorising stamp to allow exit from, or entry into East Germany. This examination and the stamp was applied at the Inner-German Border crossing point at Marienborn by the Russian military, with great care to ensure the appropriate stamp was applied in the right direction of travel! Normally there were no mistakes, but on this day, there was one on my BTB. On our outward journey from Berlin, the Russian military officer has stamped it: 're-enter', rather than: 'leaving', but has amended it in manuscript. The lower stamp is correct for: 're-enter', applied as we returned later that day. In Cyrillic lettering, the two words are different by one letter only.

An error on a BTB is extremely rare, as the Russians were meticulous in everything they did at the crossing point at Marienborn .. from their uniforms; where they stood; where the train escort met them on the platform; and the details on the BTBs. These were compared with the passports of passengers and escort and had to comply in every single letter to be acceptable, and the exit and entry stamps applied by the Soviets had to be correct.


 UNITED KINGDOM
 ROYAUME UNI
 СЪЕДИНЕННОЕ КОРОЛЕВСТВО
 MOVEMENT ORDERS
 LAISSEZ-PASSER
 ПУТЕВКА

Name
 Nom, Prénom
 Фамилия, Имя
 THOMPSON J.B.S.

Rank
 Grade
 Чин
 LT

Nationality
 Nationalité
 Гражданство
 BRITISH

Identity Document No.
 Pièce d'identité No.
 № удостоверения личности
 B 319120

is/are authorized to travel from
 est/sont autorisé(s) à se rendre de
 уполномочен/уполномочены
 из/от
 BERLIN

to
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 HELMSTEDT

and return
 et retour
 и обратно
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by train or by vehicle No.
 par le train ou par voiture No.
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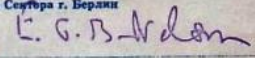
from (date)
 du (date)
 от (числа)
 8 May 66

to (date)
 au (date)
 по (числа)
 10 May 66

inclusive
 inclus
 включительно

by
 par


 Commandant British Sector Berlin
 Commandant du Secteur Britannique de Berlin
 Командантом Британского Сектора г. Берлин

Signature
 Маниака


Title
 Qualité
 Звание
 COMMANDANT, BRITISH SECTOR, BERLIN.

Date
 Число
 8 May 66

*A Russian took - very rare.
 Hadt rendered protest -
 flags on engine*

КПП Мариенборн
 - 8. MAI 1966
 - ВЪЕЗД -

КПП Мариенборн
 - 8. MAI 1966
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The error probably occurred because this was a special day. It was on this day that the East German engine (DB) of the Berliner bore DDR flags and badge with a floral wreath on the front, to commemorate the End of the Great Soviet Patriotic War in 1945. The flags appeared every year on this day, and an official protest had to be made to the Soviets. This was normally done by the Army interpreter at the hand-over of passports at Marienborn station. However, on this occasion, I decided, as Train Guard Commander, to render the protest to the Soviet officer myself. I had studied Russian language and history at Sandhurst, and thus could greet them and read out the official protest to the Soviet officer in fluent Russian. It was very apparent that he and his escort were caught off-guard! This was not normal procedure, but the protest was

My BTD of 8 May 1966, with the wrong stamp, amended by hand (Top right)!

accepted by the Russian Duty Officer and off they went to their office. After some time, the passport clearance procedure was fulfilled, and they returned.

Back came the BTDs duly stamped for exit, with the passports, and we later found this error on my BTD. Despite the official protest, the flags remained on the DDR engine, which was changed at Marienborn for a West German (DBB) engine for the journey on to Braunschweig and finally Hannover. When the engines were changed again on the return trip, the flags were still on the front of the DDR engine for our arrival back in Berlin. It seemed our official protest, on behalf of the western Allies had been in vain!

Flag Tours

Flag Tours were another popular duty for us spending a morning or afternoon exploring East Berlin, on behalf of the 'sneaky-beakies' at Brigade HQ. The tour was a way of maintaining contact with the Soviets and letting them know that we were confirming our rights of access to all Sectors of the City. Certain places were identified for a visit during the tour, and reports were made on our return. Often these were Soviet barracks or training areas, and sometimes shops or residential areas.

The Flag Tour started and ended at Bde HQ with a detailed briefing. An interpreter with a radio was the escort, and a driver was provided for the army VW beetle. Later, we were provided with Morris Minor Travellers for this duty! We had no weapons, merely a radio in case of

emergency. We usually visited certain barracks in East Berlin, observing the front gate for coming and goings! Our arrival usually precipitated angry reaction by the Soviets, who soon came to move us on, with much posturing by personnel and weapons! On one occasion, I went out to a firing range on the eastern edge of Berlin, to watch a Soviet Army platoon under training. This was not popular with them, and after a short face-to-face with an armed sentry, and a visit by an angry officer, we were chased from the area by an armoured vehicle! Some quick driving got us away safely, with a lengthy report for Bde HQ afterwards!

Several Flag Tours went into East Berlin on May Day every year, to see the parade and to view at close range some of the Soviet and East German armoured vehicles. In 1966, I remember getting boxed in by a tank and a 4-ton truck, because we were too close to one of the FUPs for said parade! The vehicles were Soviet and so we protested as normal through a slightly opened



window in our tour car. The Russians came and listened, and then just hung around the car. After a wait of about an hour the tank moved off and we were free to go. It was uncomfortable, and mildly worrying, but not dangerous, as we were in contact with Bde HQ by radio anyway!

A larger party was sent over for May Day in 1967, of about 5 officers and Cpl Perrin from the Bn Intelligence Section. We had cameras and were tasked with taking pictures of Soviet and DDR

East Berlin Flag Tour May 1967:

(Dick Green, John Eldridge, Jim Condon (Asst Adj), John Cochrane (IO), Cpl Perrin (Int Sect)

vehicles in the parade. I think we did this, but we also had a good snoop around while walking in the East. John Cochrane spoke fluent German; John Eldridge was very observant, and Dick Green and Jim Condon came for the ride! I also spoke some German and a little Russian. Cpl Perrin came to keep us in control and to take proper photos of whatever we saw. It was a good tour, and we took plenty of piccies with plenty to report on return home! We did the whole patrol on foot, as a group, and managed a bit of light shopping too!

WVS Bus Tours

Another very enjoyable tour was the regular Saturday morning Women's Voluntary Service



Berlin Tour. A volunteer subaltern was the guide and escort for these tours, which were organised by the WVS for visitors to Berlin. They started and finished at the NAAFI run hotel, Edinburgh House in Theodor Heuss Platz, and the bus was provided by the RCT sqn with one of their drivers. The tour took visitors to both West and East and we had to mug up on the route and the main things to be seen. We gave a running commentary of

The ruined Reichstag building in the West

what we saw, as we could not leave the bus until later in the East. We showed the visitors all around West Berlin, to the places of interest .. Spandau Prison, Soviet War Memorial, Charlottenburg Schloss, Olympic Stadium, the Wall at the Brandenburg Gate and the area in front of the still ruined Reichstag, and other barracks and places of interest such as the Kurfurstendamm and the Kaiser Wilhelm Gedechtnis Kirche, the post Second World War national Memorial.

We then went through Check Point Charlie and the necessary scrutiny by the DDR VoPos (police), then the document check by the Soviets, and finally on into the Eastern Sector. We toured round Karl Marx Allee, the east side of the Brandenburg Gate, the GUM store (for Russian personnel only), the ruined Dom, the ruined church and theatre in Gendarmenmarkt and finally the truly impressive and magnificent Soviet War Memorial at Treptow Park.



The ruined Berliner Dom in the East

This was the only place the visitors were allowed off the bus, and could walk through the Park. Often there were groups of Soviet soldiers also visiting and sometimes Germans. The Park



Soviet War Memorial in Treptow Park, East Berlin

contains the bodies of thousands of Soviet troops killed during the assault on Berlin in 1945, in several plots in the centre and along the sides. Between the plots are huge walls carved with bas-reliefs of Soviet military and civilian heroes and women war workers. It is an amazing memorial and the most impressive piece of Soviet heroic art. At the far end of the park, surmounting a small mound is a chapel of rest with an enormous

statue of Mother Russia, weeping over the body of one of her fallen heroes. It is a classic piece of Soviet 1940s design and art, and merits viewing even today. The cost to the Soviets of taking Berlin was immense. There are thousands buried beneath the central grassed mounds. We enjoyed these trips showing our knowledge of Berlin to the new-comers, an opportunity to see the Eastern Sector at leisure and with a very interested group.

Berlin Peculiars!

Berlin was a unique posting. It was over 100 miles behind the Iron Curtain, surrounded by a large wire fence, guarded by trigger-happy DDR troops and border police, and a wall, supported by about 2 or 3 divisions of keen Soviet armoured troops! It was the spiritual capital

of Germany. It was a magnificent and badly damaged City. It was divided into four parts, each under the control of a different nation. It was, above all, Berlin, the fun capital of pre-war Europe, the naughty city of Europe, and the Berliners had a basic and very cheeky sense of humour and fun!

There was a British, American and French Brigade of troops stationed in the western half, for the defence of the city in the event of a Soviet/East German invasion. If that occurred, Berlin would have been defended to the end, which would have arrived probably quite soon after hostilities were announced! However, part of the duties of a unit in Berlin were ceremonial, to try to outflank the other nations. Among these was the Spandau Prison Guard.



Brandenburgertor and wall from the west

Spandau Prison was across the road from Brooke Barracks in the Spandau Zitadelle area to the extreme west of Berlin. The prison was a typical 19th C design, and the sole occupants now were Hess, Speer, von Schirach and Doenitz. These four had been incarcerated here since 1946, as punishment for the atrocities undertaken by the Nazis between 1935 and 1945. They had to be guarded day and night. Their close protection was the responsibility of the Control Commission Germany who provided the warders. To protect the prison from surprise



attack. from without, or from external riots, a military guard was imposed around the perimeter. The guard was commanded by a Capt and involved soldiers manning several posts on the top of the perimeter wall with good observation around the walls and into the prison itself. The armed guard remained on duty for 48 hours and changed with another element from the same nation.

Spandau Prison from my office window!

Each of the four powers took responsibility for the Prison for a month in strict rotation. We usually took over from the French. The duty was simple and the accommodation in the Prison was good and the food excellent! Speer and von Schirach were released in early 1966, and Doenitz a few months earlier.

It was here that I had the chance to see Hess in the prison yard, when Guard Commander. He walked alone, in a small plot in the old exercise yard which he had made into a garden, escorted by a warder from the CCG. He never spoke to anyone and remained alone and aloof from all the activity in the prison. They say he was courteous and quiet and well behaved, a very sad sight in his isolation.

The Guard change was a splendid ceremonial occasion with both guards in fine fig, bands, and pipes of course, and a lot of marching and counter marching and exchange of keys. Finally, the

old guard marched out of the gates, and the new marched off to take up their posts. After this, there was a formal lunch in the CCG Mess at which the 4 powers were represented and could invite guests. I remember this was an early occasion to meet Russian officers at close quarters, and over a drink. The 2 Russian captains I met were much older than our captains and only one could speak English, while the other just watched and listened! They were hard work, but I could try out some of my Sandhurst-learned Russian on them, which they actually understood, and asked about my learning the language, but I said little, as advised by the IO!

The Control Commission Germany was set up in 1945 to assume control of all the normal civil functions of the state, after the war was over. They were volunteers from UK and other countries, and fulfilled the police, prison and most civilian admin jobs. The CCG personnel wore a pale grey uniform, with a side-hat bearing the unique brass badge of 'CCG'. They were originally found all over Western Germany, and they ceased responsibilities in about 1950, except for Spandau prison in Berlin. This was the last post run by CCG, until Hess finally died, and the prison was closed and demolished in the 1980s. All the rubble was removed at that time, far away to negate the area becoming a site of interest, and a shopping centre built there instead!

Shortly after I arrived there was a parade to say farewell to the GOC, Maj Gen David Peel-Yates. As this was in winter, we paraded before his HQ in great coats. What a palaver it was to get the hems of all those on parade at the same height from the ground. I had a very long coat which had to be shortened by about 3 inches. I still have it! Capt Bob Boulton had a great idea of folding a paper clip around his blackthorn cane at the appropriate height, and he checked us for correct hems!! The parade went very well, but my word it was cold! I am reminded by Jim Condon that the instruments of our Band and pipes froze in the cold, and the Green Jackets raised their 'Three Cheers' at the wrong point! A truly memorable parade for the GOC! The new GOC was Maj Gen Sir John Nelson, late of the Grenadiers. He was a very smart officer, who we saw from time to time when on exercise in the Grunewald. He was a keen rider, and often appeared during training on his horse, preceded by his faithful spaniel. This was a good thing, as it gave us warning that he was about, and also time to prepare for his arrival. He was very good at talking to one and all, and quickly put us at ease.



Check Point Charlie looking east

There were only 3 access routes to and from the city, and all entered Berlin at Marienborn in the southwest/American sector, through Check Point Bravo. When the Soviets closed the border between the east and western Zones of Germany, a corridor had to be created for access to the City. This started at Helmstedt in the west, ran through East German territory to Berlin. The check points were lettered going from the west: A in the west at Helmstedt, B on entering Berlin and finally C from west to east Berlin.

Very logical and very military!! CP C became the most famous, but CP B was also much used for other purposes out of public sight, such as the exchange of spies etc, the passage of the BRIXMIS tours and their personnel to the base in Potsdam.

There were several points of access through the Wall, but the only point authorised for the Allied military in the west was CP Charlie. This became very famous as the main point of any regular contact with the East Germans and with the Soviets. Acknowledgement of the East German Volks Polizei (VoPo) was not allowed, and all conversation had to be with the Soviets. It was a very strange place, as the Germans had built up a great wall and barriers, huts, chicanes and filled barrels to protect themselves from Western advances. On our side, a small wooden hut was shared by the British, French and American Military Police to control all access by military and civilian visitors, under a simple scaffold-pole barrier. Our side was to ensure that all personnel were accounted for into and out of East Berlin. Theirs was to offer defence against attack! They lived in constant fear of an attack from the West, as advised by all the Soviet and Communist propaganda!

BRIXMIS was a specially selected team of highly trained officers and senior NCOs/WOs, commanded by a brigadier, who made up the British Commander in Chief's Mission to the Soviet Commander in Chief Germany! Their purpose was to maintain some open access by the Allies to all parts of Germany, as agreed at the Potsdam Conference of 1945. They did this by regular unarmed patrols of East Germany with specific targets of barracks, training areas, certain towns and certain localities, to observe and contact Soviet troops and training. Their activities are shrouded in secrecy and rumour, but they did exist. The personnel were all accompanied and lived in married quarters in the British Sector of Berlin. We met them occasionally in the officers' club or the NAAFI shop, but they kept themselves well clear of the Berlin Bde units. They had a base in Potsdam in East Germany on the western outskirts of Berlin, near the Wannsee, where they kept all their patrol gear and their vehicles. The vehicles were German and well prepared for very long journeys, and for staying out overnight whenever necessary. They had messes for overnight accommodation, with East German staff provided by the Soviet forces, relied upon to listen to all conversations and discussions! There was also a similar arrangement with the Soviet Forces, and their equivalent unit was called SOXMIS, based in Bunde in the British Zone.

The Soviets had two war memorials in Berlin. Their main one in the east in Treptow Park, but they also had a smaller one near the Brandenburg Gate, on the 17 Juni Str. This memorial had a permanent Soviet guard on show, with a small guard-house behind the memorial. They changed the guard every day, and so managed to keep a foothold in the western zone of the city. As the memorial was in the British Sector, a permanent guard of RMP was also maintained to keep visitors away from the Soviets. This memorial is very



Soviet War memorial in the British Sector, West Berlin

impressive flanked by 2 ancient T34 tanks reputedly the first to enter Berlin in 1945.

There were other strange folk in Berlin who lived in No 1 Mess in the Grunewald. They were seldom met, mainly civilians who claimed to be salesmen. Sometimes, those who knew them were warned not to go to the cellars for a few days ... 'for operational reasons'. No-one really knew what they did, but it was assumed to be something to do with subterfuge and intelligence gathering!

The infamous Berlin Wall was erected in 1961, well before we arrived, to safeguard the East Berliners and East Germans from the bourgeois delinquency of the West! It had been erected overnight by troops of the East German People's Army and was a very rough botched job! However, it separated the western half from the Soviet sector, and was a very evident and permanent reminder of the Cold War, including bricked-up houses and shops in the Wall.

Along Bernauer Str in the French Sector, the houses were incorporated into the Wall. The occupiers had been forcibly removed overnight, and the windows and doors of houses and shops were bricked up as part of the Wall. There was a high wire fence, raked strip, watch-towers, search lights and dog-runs between Berlin and East Germany to close the ring around the city. The wire was patrolled and guarded all the time by unwilling East German Army conscripts, but with active Party members in all their groups to ensure no one tried to escape!



The Wall of houses and church in Bernauer Str

(Note memorial shelter to a martyr, shot while escaping over the Wall)

In Spandau, the dividing line ran along the centre of a disused road, demarcated by a thin and wobbly line of twine strung between short metal poles! The Berliners still lived in their houses



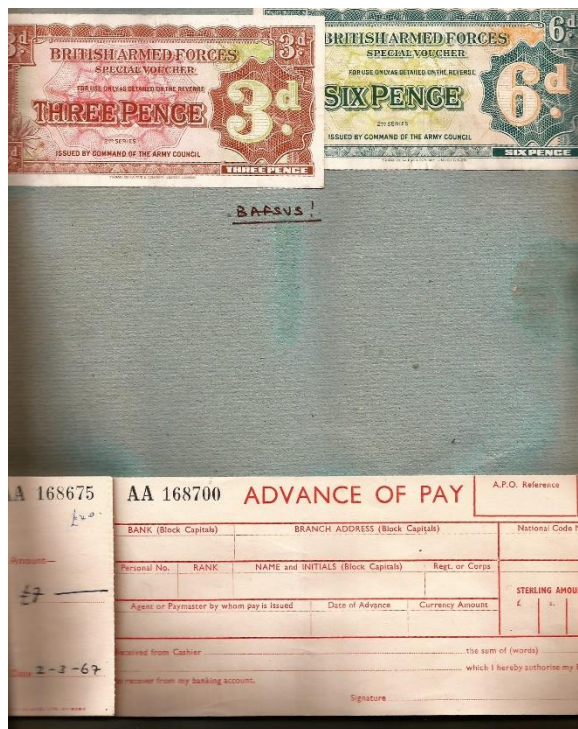
on one side, but on the eastern side, all had been demolished and the view was to the raked strip and more watch-towers! It was a chilling aspect to actually see the Wire and Wall in close contact. We, the western Allies were really bound into a very small place, with scant room for manoeuvre. You soon realised why you were there, and the threat so near and so strong, right on your doorstep.

The divided road in Spandau – left is West Berlin and right is East Germany

(Note the fence, the lights, the raked strip and abandoned half of the road)

BAFSVs!

Another anomaly of Berlin was the method of payment and the type of currency in use. As this was an area of active service, we were paid in BAFSVs (British Armed Forces Special Vouchers) which were paper notes of low denominations in sterling, produced for use only by the military and their civilian support in service shops and clubs. The purpose was to restrict the use of sterling in enemy or occupied areas, and to ensure the locals could not use our facilities, which sold many restricted items at tax reduced prices. Coffee, tea and spirits and tobacco were all rationed and sold through the NAAFI, or the mess, at tax reduced prices. Similarly, our cinema was operated by the Services Kinema Corporation under a military subsidy, and so was cheap compared to Berlin prices. The BAFSVs were paper notes and could only be used in service or NAAFI run outlets in Berlin. For payments in Berlin proper, we had to use DM, and the exchange



Small denomination BAFSV and AOP cheque book

rate was about 11 DM to the £1, so we were very well off!! To get DM from our pay, we had to take an Advance of Pay cheque to our pay office, make it out in sterling and receive the cash in DM! Our accounts were then debited in sterling! Of course, the French used francs and the Americans used dollars in their own outlets, and so we used to have a great pile of various currencies in our pockets when out and about, as well as East German marks whenever in the east sector!! We learnt to convert currencies very quickly, and to get east marks at the Zoobahnhof railway station, for a better rate of exchange.

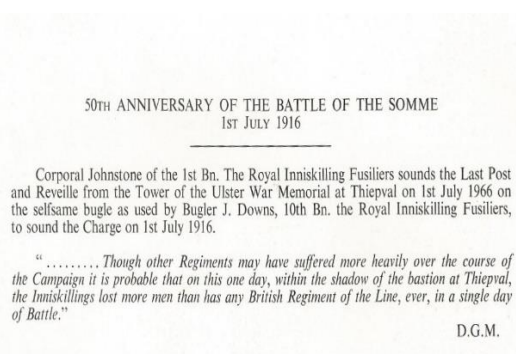
The Somme Bugle

The year 1966 was the 50th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, and there was a commemorative reunion of old and bold, and young and eager at Thiepval in Belgium. About 70 old comrades who had fought at the Somme came over from UK, and the Inniskillings sent a representative party down from Berlin. The Guard of Honour was commanded by Major Bill Hiles, and among that party was Cpl Johnson, the senior drummer, who carried the actual bugle which had sounded the advance for 10th Bn of Inniskillings on 1st July 1916. He sounded the bugle again on 1st July 1966 from the top of the Ulster Tower.

Another officer at The Somme for this memorial occasion was my good friend Lt Derek Charles Lance, famed in Berlin for his dancing ability (Russian style), Train Guard commander and an enthusiasm for additional duties! I used to dance with him, and once we were offered a job Russian-dancing in a night club! We did not take it up!! Anyway, Derek was given the responsibility of returning the bugle to Berlin in pristine condition. However, en route there

was an accident, and the bugle became dented. What happened to DCL and the driver no one knows, as the Bugle was the prize, but they did survive the incident! On their eventual arrival home in Berlin, an explanation had to be given to the CO, Lt Col Terry T, who, knowing the value of the Bugle, was not amused. Repairs were made, Lt DCL paid up and spent some considerable time on additional duties with the Alert Pl! He became everyone's best friend after that!!

The Bugle now takes pride of place in the Somme display at the Inniskillings Museum.



The Bn Christmas card for 1966, with Drum Cpl Johnstone sounding the bugle, on the Thiepval Tower.

The Drowning of a Yak!

In the summer of 1966, something much more serious happened, which brought the Inniskillings face-to-face with the Soviets. On a quiet Friday afternoon in June, a Russian fighter, a YAK-28 (Firebar) aircraft crashed into the Havel Lake near the Stossensee Bridge. At that time the Soviets regularly terrorised the Berliners by flying low over the city and causing sonic booms. Lt David Conlin, the Mortar Officer was on the Ruhleben ranges at the time, and saw the 'plane starting to break up and plummet towards the bridges. Immediately the Inniskillings Alert Platoon was deployed from the barracks in Spandau to the nearby eastern shore, whilst divers from 38 Sqn RE (the Berlin Brigade sapper unit) attempted to locate the wreckage. Meanwhile, certain technical experts were flown out from UK!

The CO, Lt Col Terry Troy reinforced the Alert platoon and Capt John Heard was sent down as the Guard Commander. The platoons were deployed on shore in a defensive posture with loaded weapons, and orders to prevent any attempt by the Russians to interfere with the wreckage. They also provided waterborne patrols in RE crewed assault boats. It was thought that the Russians might use frogmen to blow the wreckage up before any of our experts could examine it and remove any equipment. 2 Lt John Sankey was one of the platoon commanders lurking in the bushes as part of the cordon for 48 hours. As it was a bank holiday weekend, he had to miss a party (John was a leading party-man in the Mess!!).

The wreckage was quickly located and both crewmen found dead in the cockpit. A fairly lengthy stand-off ensued whilst the experts did their job. The bodies of the two crewmen were eventually removed from the wreckage and handed over to the Russians at a night-time ceremony. Capt Derek Dowey, the Adjutant, commanded our Inniskillings Guard of Honour. The Russians arrived with a Band and a Guard of six-footers, all apparently from Mongolia, dressed in furry hats, greatcoats and big boots!! They came up the slope through the mist from

the river, playing Handel's 'Death March from Saul', with their two coffins. After a smart salute and present arms from the Inniskillings, the bodies were marched away. The Pipe-Major played 'Danny Boy', as the Russians left, and the Inniskillings repaired to the QM wagon for char and wads, while Maj Jack McHaffey had to decide how to account for the GS blankets covering the bodies! I was not involved in this ceremony, being RSO. This story is from Derek Dowey and John Heard, with many thanks.

The wreckage of the aircraft was eventually raised onto an RE Mexe-Float or similar, and later handed over – presumably minus various bits of intelligence interest. The whole incident was well covered by SFB the local radio and TV station. If nothing else, Inniskilling life in Berlin, was varied and interesting!

Allied Forces Day Parade

Every year in mid-May there was the Allied Forces Day Parade, to celebrate the deliverance of Berlin from the Nazis on 8 or 10 May 1945, and the end of the War. The Soviets had done all the work to liberate Berlin, at the agreement of Gen Eisenhower and Churchill. It was not a popular move, as they liberated the city very cruelly and very crudely, and many were killed on both sides. The civilian casualties were also very high. However, every year this great parade to celebrate the might of the victorious Allies was performed down the length of 17 Juni Str and the Heerstr to show our wares and for the benefit of the Berliners, with bands and colours and flags to the fore!



Allied Forces Day Parade 1967 - Tripartite Colour Guard

It was a fine sunny day, and the Berlin crowd was out in force for us. The parade included a representative group from all the Allies, but the Soviets never took part. They had their own parade on 1st May in East Berlin, to which we western Allies were not invited! So, a bit of tit-for-tat and we had a great time with the enthusiastic support of the West Berliners. The Bn paraded a group of the vehicles and weapons we had for the defence of Berlin, and in the middle the Allied Tripartite Colour Guard, which I had the privilege of commanding in 1967.

The Allied Colour Guard consisted of representative parties from the French, British and Americans in best ceremonial uniform, carrying our national flags. We did not carry swords, and this was the only time I have paraded wearing sam browne belt with a pistol and leather holster. It was very smart and reflected the similar accoutrements worn by the French and the Americans.

David Conlin commanded our anti-tank detachment in the parade, with his platoon in their Unimog 1 tonne trucks towing Mobats behind them. These were our main source of anti-tank defence, recoilless guns, loaded manually with very long and very heavy rounds! How



successful they would have been against the might of a Soviet Shock Army is anyone's guess! The mortar platoon was on parade in vehicles as well.

The parade route was along the 17 Juni Str to the Heerstr in Theodor Heuss Platz .. quite a good trot in the midday heat in No 2 Dress uniform! Annie came to watch and took the photos!

David Conlin and Ant-Tank Det towing MOBAT guns!

(photo D Conlin)

The Queen's Birthday Parade

In June each year the Queen's Birthday Parade was celebrated by the whole Bde. The battalion about to leave Berlin had the privilege of 'trooping the colour' through the ranks of the whole Brigade. This was a major occasion in the social calendar for all units in Berlin. It was probably the biggest and best of all the national parades, and certainly involved a lot of preparation and rehearsal. We began preparing for the parade in April, and the parade date always coincided with the Queen's Birthday Parade in London.

Our parade took place on the Maifeld beside the Olympiastadion, built by the Nazis for the 1936 Olympic Games. The stadium was massive, very typical of 1930s design and construction, with a massive, grassed area beside it for playing all manner of games: football, rugby, cricket, hockey and suitable for show-jumping and polo! It was a large area with a magnificent backdrop of the stadium behind, easily lending itself to a great ceremonial parade.

For the first year, we were troops on parade, in the centre guard. The Royal Anglians, to our right, were trooping their colour, with the Green Jackets on our left, with no colours, itching to get cracking in their superbly fast step! The Parade commander, the CO of the Anglians, Lt Col Peter Leng and his Adjutant were both mounted on well-trained Berlin police horses. We were all on foot. I was a subaltern on parade right in the centre of the front rank, three paces in rear of the marked spot for our CO. Well, during the march on, one of the horses had dropped a big-un right on the CO's spot. I heard the sniggering behind me, as the Fusiliers joked about Colonel Terry halting on top of the steaming load!

He marched on, with the other CO, to assume command of his Bn, and came towards us at a cracking pace, as smart as a button stick, and halted .. right on the spot, with a lot of splattering of the etc nearby!! Despite its origin, it didn't do anyone's boots any good!!

The second year, in 1967, we trooped our Queen's Colour before guards from the Queen's Own Highlanders and the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. This time our CO, Lt Col Bill Copinger-Symes and the Adjutant, Derek Dowey were mounted. I had the honour of carrying the Regimental Colour on parade after the Troop.

Both CO and Adjutant undertook riding lessons at the Saddle Club and with the Berlin Police mounted force, while we paraded again and again in barracks to get the form right.

When we came to the first rehearsal on the Maifeld with the screen of tanks and mechanised vehicles behind us, I think we heard the sounds of a horse galloping from the left flank to the



right flank of the parade, when we fired the 'feu de joie'. I cannot be sure, as I was facing to the front. The horses were beautiful, large chestnut animals, groomed to within an inch of their coats to a fine chequered pattern on the rump. They shone as if polished, they were so well prepared.

March on the Regimental Colours in part 2 of the QBP. I carried the Colour!

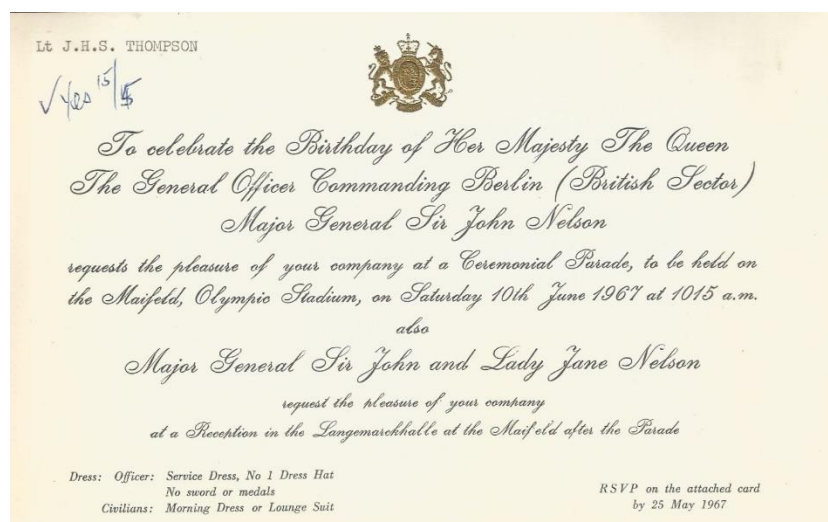
(Left KOYLI, centre Inniskillings, right Q O

Highlanders, and Bill Roche our 2IC on the extreme right.)

This was also the year when I managed to embarrass myself in front of the whole Bn! One of the rehearsals on the Maifeld took place on a very hot day. I think we were all in SD and the Garrison RSM decided to allow us to remove our jackets and continue in shirt-sleeves. We were ordered to remove our jackets and place them in a neat pile behind the parade. This we did without problem, except for me! I had found the shirt and service dress jacket too hot in summer, so decided to ease the situation by cutting down one of my shirts to a collar and very small 'dickey' in front. Beneath this I wore a t-shirt, and my fine army-issue braces! So, I was revealed as being thoroughly improperly dressed on parade! I think I had to remain with my jacket on, as I was carrying the Colour!!

The parade was usually inspected by the British Ambassador or the C-in-C from The Zone, and the officers on parade each received a gilded invitation from the GOC Berlin to parade for HM on the specified date. Quite a do, to which an official reply was expected. After the Parade, there was a champagne reception in the Stadium to which all the good and gracious were invited, and which we subbies much enjoyed! It was a terrific honour and a privilege to

represent the Bn on such a parade in Berlin. I thoroughly enjoyed it all from the early drill to the endless rehearsals and the final parade on The Day. Something never to be forgotten, and I am always grateful to my batman, Fusilier John Farmer for all his hard work in pressing my uniform and polishing my leather to keep me so smart!!



GOC's invitation to the Queen's Birthday Parade 1967

Social Life

We had a very thriving social life in Berlin, centred about our messes, the British Berlin Officers Club and the KuDamm area! Each unit had an officers' mess to which we had open invitations, and there were also various teachers and civilian messes. The Officer's Club was situated in Theodor Heuss Platz, and had been a very select Berlin gentleman's sporting club before the war. It was now run by the NAAFI, with many local staff from 'former' times. In the grounds were tennis courts and a swimming pool beside the grand patio at the rear of the clubhouse. Inside, there was a large dining room on the ground floor, overlooked by the balcony of the bar on the first floor. This balcony, and its proximity to the bar caused frequent displays of outrageous behaviour!

Who remembers ... 'bombing' the tables below with empty wine glasses? ... What about sending certain visitors down the stairs in the armchairs? ... Mike Johns and others attempting to circumnavigate the dance floor using only the picture rail and window ledges? Removing ones shirt at the bar .. for a bet? ... Derek Lance and me showing our skill at complicated Russian dancing moves on the dance floor? The singing of Irish and rebel songs at the bar was always second to none, often to the anguish of other members! However, at all times, despite our behaviour, the CO had a wry smile as he admonished us afterwards.



Officers Club dining room and balcony in 2012

The dance floor was very well used, as it was in the centre of the dining room. The band was all German, many had been there from before 1945, and they remembered the Inniskillings in the 1950s. They were a very fine ensemble, dressed in black tie, who played almost anything requested, including all our rebel tunes! Their skill with modern and traditional music was also much appreciated. We enjoyed visits to the American and the French officers' clubs from time to time. The American, Harnack House, was on their airfield in the south west, near Gatow. The French had a very fine 'cercle des officiers', Le Pavillon du Lac, on the shore of Tegel Lake in their zone. It was excellent for good food and very good wines, and where I first tasted escargots, thanks to John Cochrane's offer!

We had a heavy social load in the Officers Mess too. Being in Berlin, everyone wanted to visit the Bn and so many regimental friends came to visit, as well as official visitors from MOD from the Zone and from other units. We had a Band or Dinner Night every month, in full mess kit and full fig with a complete and long dinner with much brandy and many cigars at the end! The Pipers always played after the meal, and the Band played before, during and after. Irish dancing was always in the evening's activities, either to test our guests or to have a good, relaxed get-together!

We became quite good at the Dancing, mainly through the good efforts of our Adjutant, Derek Dowey, who was a stickler for performance, and it was rumoured that he spent many hours in his room learning all the dances, to lead the practices which became part of our weekly life.

Colonel Terry was very keen that we should show a good knowledge and nice steps of Irish dance to our neighbours in Berlin, especially when the Queen's Own Highlanders arrived! Every officer had to attend weekly classes/parades, and the Pipe Major and the Adjutant taught us all the dances and jigs .. Haymakers Jig, Waves of Torey, Siege of Ennis, and many others. We even had to practice when we took our annual training trip to Sennelager, and the dancing boards were taken down with great pomp by the Mess Sgt. We had early morning dance practice in the Mess Tent every other day. We got a bit over-excited one morning, and during the Siege of Ennis, when we should have taken four steps right and four steps left, some took about twenty steps left and exited the floor and the tent! Derek was not as amused as he might have been, and we had extra practice afterwards!!

Blessed with a full military band as well as pipes and drums, we were never short of music in the Inniskillings. A piper woke us every morning with Reveille, and the barrack day ended to Last Post at 9 pm played by a bugler/drummer and a piper.



Beating Retreat, June 1967

The Band was used regularly at events in Berlin, and on local radio and TV. They played in the cookhouse at lunch on Fridays for the benefit of the soldiers. They played for all our own parades, Waterloo Day (18th June), St Patrick's Day (17th March), Orangeman's Day (12 July) etc, and we enjoyed many performances of Beating Retreat with cocktail parties or dinners or at open days. Our daily life was imbued with Irish tunes all over the barracks, usually with pipes and bugles. Of course, some of the Band came with us whenever we went down to train



in the Zone each year. We were very lucky in having a devoted and brilliant Bandmaster, Mr Horn, and an excellent Pipe Major Adlington.

In June of 1967, the Queen's Own Highlanders held a truly magnificent ball and ceilidh in their mess. There were pipers everywhere, with flunkies galore and all their silver was out on display, with their Colours. There was dancing in the anteroom to their Regimental dance band, and on an outside floor to an American army dance band, a huge buffet in the dining room, a disco in the kellar-bar, and breakfast could be had in the attic! It was a full mess kit and ball gowns affair, and you had to know your Scottish reels to be really at ease. Luckily, we passed muster, with Ann knowing all the dances and we secured an invitation, helped a bit by knowing James Cassels from my Marlborough days, now a Highlander! Ann and I also belonged to the

Off to the Ball!

‘Cross Country Dancing Club’ run by the logistics officers in their Mess every week. You could not buy a drink unless you had danced properly!! It was a relaxed and friendly way to learn Scottish dances, with other friends! Ann remains a beautiful dancer to this day. What a night that was, and such delight to eat so well and to dance all those wonderful Scottish reels. The ladies were presented with a dance card for the evening, such a wonderfully old-fashioned gesture. What a night, and what memories of a truly grand affair. What it cost me and the Jocks, I do not remember, but getting home at about 4 in the morning after all that dancing, eating and drinking meant one was pretty knackered the next day, even though it was only a short walk!

I have a very enquiring family, and so they all came over to visit me in Berlin, especially as my Mother was German, and did not know the City well. Travel was easy to Tempelhof Airport, and good accommodation in Edinburgh House was readily available. They could not stay in our Mess, unfortunately. My parents came in summer 1966, and my sisters, Caroline and Vicky each came individually in 1967.

My parents took me to a performance of Rigoletto, and I fell asleep! My sisters went all over West Berlin in my trusty Opel Rekord, and I took them into the East on the WVS Tour, and to some of our favourite clubs! A busy but amusing time, showing them this amazing City and some of the work of the units in Berlin. My mother came from Hamburg and considered Berliners rather comical and parochial folk!



Parents at the Brandenburg Gate 1966

We had a change of command in February 1967, when Lt Col Terry Troy handed over to his 2IC, Bill Copinger-Symes, which entailed visits all over the place and inspections, followed by a rather heavy and exuberant dinner!



Lt Col Terry Troy lofted by Paddy Chambers, Steve Jones and Jonnie Cargin



Maj Bill Coppinger-Symes lofted by Ian Holmes and Cargin, John McFrederick and Dick Rafferty

Clubbing!

Some time was spent when off duty at various welcoming watering-holes in the City! There were many in Berlin! Not only our mess, but the Officers Club and then other messes, the Heerstr Teachers mess, in the shadow of the BMH, the BMH mess, the Loggies' mess, where

lodged the RASC, REME, RAOC and RE officers. We got to know them very well, so that many friendships last to this day!! It was here in the RASC Attic Club that we joined the Scottish Country Dancing Club, known as the Cross-Country Dancers. They had a bar, but a drink could only be had after a full dance. So, it was no good hoping for a cheap drink .. you had to work for it! The Teachers Mess was midway between our mess in Spandau and the Club, so a useful place for a wet en route! It was here that I met Miss Johann Moncur, who later became my wife, during the production of a play, 'The Happiest Days of Your Life', appropriately concerning schools during the war! Ann turned out to be the Wines Member of the Teachers' Mess, and so a great ally for the young Inniskillings! Her Mess was the next port of call from our Mess, as we moved up to the Officers Club, and on into Berlin, of an evening!

The Teachers ran a very good Mess, and we got to know a good number of Ann's friends there, two of whom remain firm friends to this day .. 50 years on! Viv Thornton (nee Thomas) and Jenny Searle (nee Goodyear) have remained special friends all this time. My word we had fun with these wonderful girls in Berlin. How we all managed it, I dare not remember!

Besides the home-grown drama, Berlin was full of other entertainment, bars and of course clubs of nefarious reputation! Our Inniskilling favourite was the Scotch Club Thirteen, where the beautiful Jackie Lee and her lovely friends would entertain us with fewer and smaller clothes, as they danced on the small stage area! The place was minute, the stage was surrounded by seats of eager punters, the beer was costly, and the entrance fee very small, rather like the dancers' clothes! The lady dancers had to change in a cubby-hole beside the loo; as a patron, you had to squeeze by these lovely, semi-accoutred damsels to get there. Jackie Lee had a very low- key voice .. we were never absolutely sure of her gender!! Our other favourite was Chez Nous, the infamous transvestite club, well known throughout the club and entertainment world. This was costlier to enter, usually only men within, and a splendid floorshow of outrageously decorated men, dressed as women! They sang, they told stories and removed some clothes! No wonder we were often tired .. night clubbing is hard work!! We also danced the nights away at the Old Eden or the New Eden clubs, the Riverboat was another, and we did some serious drinking and singing for Ireland at the Munchener Hofbrauhaus.

In March, Berlin held the Grunewoche (Green Week), a week of drink and food displays, which we needed to attend! Mike Johns took the whole of his recce platoon down, and they certainly learnt a lot, when a party of young Inniskilling officers came along in the early afternoon! Being a Saturday, and having paraded that morning, we felt in need of liquid sustenance, so partook of much Guinness at the British-pub. When all the Guinness had gone, we began on Berliner brews, and the singing began in earnest. Very soon a worried stallholder had secured the help of the RMP, who approached with much pomp. When it was suggested that the subalterns should move on, a certain officer addressed the RMP Duty Corporal:

"Why don't you and take some vehicle numbers instead!"

This is not the recommended way to talk to RMP JNCOs, and they began to write in notebooks. The subalterns were escorted gently from the Grunewoche by the kind RMP! The result was a report to poor Derek Dowey, the Adjutant, and several subalterns confined to barracks for some days, and a hasty adjustment to the orderly officer roll.

Souvenirs of a good evening out were often taken on the way home .. the sheepskin seat covers from Scotch Club 13 .. flags from the poles outside the Funkturm .. the VW car driven up the

Funkturm steps .. making the footbridge on the EuropaCenter swing while we marched over it in step .. dodging the traffic on KuDamm! And the final 'bier und bratwurst' at the stand just outside the barracks, at about 2 in the morning, usually with some very surprised Fusiliers!!

Berlin Bde boasted a very fine family's hostel, Edinburgh House, for short-term accommodation for families in transit when units were changing over. It was run by the NAAFI, and when not full of families in transit, rooms and facilities were available for our visitors to Berlin. The costs were very reasonable, and the standards very good. Edinburgh House included single, double and family rooms, bars and a restaurant, and all meals and drinks were at duty free prices. Attached to it, was the great NAAFI Shop and Soldiers Club, with the Jerboa Cinema run by the Army Kinema Corps. The WVS had a club for soldiers here, where quiet and calm could be enjoyed in a teetotal environment, and letters written home. There was also a homely welcome for the younger Fusiliers, who were perhaps away from home for the first time.

This NAAFI Club building also housed a very well-appointed theatre in which plays, and



concerts were produced. I became involved with the drama club, appearing in about 4 plays during our time there. Spot Swaffer, wife of one of our officers, produced *Pygmalion*, and later we did *The Happiest Days of Your Life*, where I met Ann Moncur, my future wife! The drama club was a good source of fun and personal drama, as well as allowing you the thrill of treading the boards!!

The Happiest Days of Your Life! 1966 (Ann is the Headmistress; I am on her left!!)

Sport

The sporting facilities in Berlin were outstanding, starting with the 1936 Olympic Stadium, and the huge Maifeld beside it for football, hockey, rugby, and cricket. There were tennis and squash courts in every barracks, and at the Officers' Club, a fine Olympic-size swimming pool and diving boards at Bde HQ, and excellently managed stables. We were spoiled for choice and took full advantage of them

The Bn had been runners-up in the Army Boxing Finals in 1965, and so were out to emulate the success from Berlin in 1966. It became the main effort during Berlin. Our teams were fed extra rations (so I heard) and trained really hard and extensively. We went down to meet the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers in the BAOR finals, and won after an excellent evening's bouts. They looked after us very well at a splendid dinner night (with mess-rugby afterwards), and all our 100 supporters who came on the train as an official visit to the Zone!! We went on to meet the Irish Guards in the Army Final in London, and succumbed to their height and weight .. but only just!! The inter-company novices boxing competition was held in the spring of 1966. What a week of bouts that was. I fought 3 bouts in 2 days, succumbing to cracked ribs after the first, and met Fus Hollinger (an officers mess waiter) in the semi-final of the light welter weight. After 3 really hard and seemingly endless rounds, and utterly exhausted,

Hollinger was deemed the winner on points. I was utterly knackered and he went on to meet John Sankey in the Final. I cannot remember the result as I was still exhausted!!

The Bn fielded football and rugby teams against all the other units in Berlin and some from the Zone. Hockey was high on the list of sports, as well as the annual Inter-Unit Athletics Competition, at which Jim Condon and Derek Dowey and Mike Moody used to vie for the honours over the high jump! They were all very slim, very light and tall with long legs! They might have been called elegant at that time!! What a sight as they hopped up to the jump!! We now meet every month for lunch to talk over the Good Times of yore!!

Derek Lance and I went skiing one Sunday afternoon on the Teufelsberg Hill in Berlin! Some others had already been, but they wore the proper skiing attire, and went by car. However, Derek and I dressed in our finest tweed suits and waistcoats, donned our trilbys and took the tram from the barracks all the way to the hill one snowy Sunday afternoon! There were some raised eye-brows from other Berliners, as we stood on the tram in normal Sunday best clutching a pair of skis each! There were even more when we appeared on the slopes and began to ski, actually quite well! We had a great afternoon, and many Schultheiss beers after the event!!

We also used to go riding on many summer Sunday afternoons in the Grunewald. It was a wonderful way of spending a sunny afternoon. The horses were ready at the stables at the Olympiastadion (beside our Bde HQ offices) when we arrived, the grooms having prepared them. We set off into the forest at a steady trot, once over the Heerstrasse we raised this to a canter then a gallop, as we enjoyed the freedom of the great rides through the forest. I am not sure all the 'liebe muttis' enjoyed our presence as we swept by in a cloud of dust, as they scattered like chickens into the undergrowth as we thundered down the tracks. When we returned, the horses were taken off us by the ever-present grooms and taken away for de-tacking and grooming. We were very lucky, and the cost to hire them for an hour was very reasonable. Some of the horses were duty remounts, authorised for the RMP to patrol the forest, the training areas and the married quarters!

Polo was played on the Maifeld again, when the GOC, Maj Gen Sir John Nelson, hosted the BAOR Polo Tournament. That was a great day out for us all, as about 8 teams played, most from units in the Zone and one German team. Maj Ronnie Ferguson was the Chief Umpire for the day, later well known as the father of Sarah, Duchess of York. He had, incidentally, been sqn leader of A Squadron The Life Guards in Cyprus with us in 1964!

Finale!

Berlin was something quite unique and special. Other units used to whistle about 'Berlin'. WE were something special, different from BAOR. WE were aware of the imminent danger of being in Berlin, were war to be declared. The atmosphere in the City was very different from that in West Germany, and even more different from that in the East, the DDR (German Democratic Republic). We in the West were free. We were not occupied. We were democratic and could choose what to do freely. As far as the Forces were concerned, we were well paid, and much of the cost of stationing Allied Forces in Berlin was paid by the Berliners and the West German government. We played very hard and worked very hard for long hours. I had a wonderful time there, and met my future wife - Ann, who was a teacher with the Forces Schools, and Bar member of the teachers' mess on the Heerstr ... our favourite watering-hole

en-route to FUN! She has been my pillar ever since, and a wonderful mother to three children. I was one of several who left Berlin with a new wife in tow.

All this came to an end in July of 1967 when I handed over the duty of RSO to Mike Moody, and after never ending checks and inspections, finally left for the Depot, Ballymena in Northern Ireland. It was on 11th July, that I was swept off from the Mess in a huge Opel Kapitän staff car all to myself, provided by my good friend Steve Thornton, the RASC subaltern in charge of the staff car pool for Bde HQ!

What a way to end my wonderful tour in Berlin. What a time I'd had!



Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers - Officers in Brooke Barracks, Spandau, Berlin - summer 1966

Jim Howcroft, David Philip, Derek Lance, Jim Condon, Duffy Cunningham, John Robertson, Mike Johns, Dick Green, John Sankey, Ian Holmes.

Johnnie Cargin, Brian Hogan MO, John Heard, Dick Rafferty, Nigel Lefroy, Peter Jones, JHST, Peter Reade, Martin O'Sullivan, John Cochrane.

Binks Williams RAPC, John MacFrederick HQ, Bill Roche C, Bill Coppinger-Symes 2IC, Lt Col T M Troy MBE, Derek Dowe Adj, Bill Hiles A, Clive Brennan B, Jack McHaffey QM



(Guess who? St Patrick's Day games 1967)