



16 Air Assault Brigade Headquarters and Signal Squadron (216)

Merville Barracks

COLCHESTER

Essex CO2 7UT

Telephone: 01206 81 5527

Facsimile: 01206 81 5487

Mil Net: 94660 5527

Facsimile: 94660 5487



File: 04.04.06

Airborne Signals Association Members

Date: Jul 12

THE AIRBORNE SIGNALS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER 2013

Foreword by

Officer Commanding 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron Major Mike Fayers ROYAL SIGNALS

I can report that the Squadron is in rude health. It has been another hectic and demanding period, but we are raring and ready to go. The past year has seen the continued broadening and deepening of our expeditionary and special to arms skills. There has been considerable change, both on the personnel front and the introduction of new CIS capabilities. The personnel churn continues and includes:

OC: Major Mike Fayers hands over to Major Graham Clarke.

2IC: Capt Nelson Reynolds hands over to Capt Dave Phillips.

OpsO: Capt Paul Johnson hands over to Capt Charlie Jones.

QM: Capt Paul Jordan moves from MTO to the Squadron's QM, with Capt Fred Fensom moving to 1st Sig Regt as QM(T).

MTO: Capt Kent Oliver returns to the Sqn to replace Capt Paul Jordan as MTO. This appointment continues as the Squadron's linkman to the OCA.

Bde RSM: We welcome back WO1 (RSM) Paul (Eggy) Henderson vice Peter Watson who leaves on commissioning to 2 Sig Regt as UWO.

Bde FofS: WO2 (FofS) Glenn Roscoe returns to the Sqn to replace WO2 (FofS) Scottie Davies who leaves on promotion to 14SR(EW).

Bde YofS: WO2 (YofS) Neil Port hands over to WO2 (YofS) Bob Hosking.

Air Ops Warrant Officer: WO2 Bomber Lancaster, into a new appointment responsible for the Squadron's air delivery capabilities and J7.

On the operations front, we continue to be held at very high readiness for three operational task lines: Air Assault Task Force, the NATO Reaction Force and the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force which is with our French counterparts 11 Parachute Brigade. In effect we are supporting HMG's 'break glass in emergency' force! This level of concurrency has certainly kept the Squadron busy, with training and exercises in France, US, Kenya – plus operational deployments within the UK, the South Atlantic and Africa.

Against this operational imperative, the Squadron has moved to its new Army 2020 establishment of 166 personnel. In the new world order of Army 2020, 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron, will be the only Brigade Signal Squadron on the Corps' ORBAT, and one of a handful of units to retain both a CIS and life support task. Whilst we are inevitably now slightly smaller, I believe we are better shaped for contingency operations and the air aspects of our role including parachuting have not diminished. This summer will also see the re-formation of Charlie Troop, which has been in suspended animation since 2011 due to manning pressures associated with Afghanistan; I anticipate this will help to put the Squadron on an even keel. We are also in the process of launching a determined recruiting drive with new propaganda, a new PD 206 and the introduction of a briefing course which is run at a tactical bound

prior to Pre-Para. The recruiting cell's number is 01206 815497 if you know of anyone interested and suitable, or would like Squadron recruiting material.

Whilst squadron has not been tested in the banner battle this year, we have continued to be successful in the sporting arena, and punching well above our weight. We have secured silverware again at rugby, cross country and athletics on a collective basis. On an individual level we have had representation at Corps, Army, Combined Services and GB level in sports ranging from Rugby, Shinty, Basketball, Water Polo, Swimming and Football. We also recently secured the Lanyard Trophy for the third year on the trot and look forward to hosting the event next year.

Two updates on the Squadron's heritage. The Squadron has now secured official approval from the Army Dress Committee to use the 'Winged Jimmy' as its emblem. We now await the emblem to be released by the Army Design Studio, once received we will promulgate to the broader Squadron so that it is the only version which is used. Thanks goes to Mr Ray Duffy for letting the Squadron use elements of his original design. Secondly, as many readers will be aware, the Squadron proudly supported a thanksgiving service at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst for the late Major General Deane-Drummond CB, DSO, MC and Bar. Readers will be please to hear, that the Squadron has been able to mark the General's life with the commissioning of a bronze bust similar to that housed in the Headquarters Royal Signals Officers' Mess. The bust will form both a superb center pieced and importantly provide a visual inspiration for Airborne Signals and the Squadron. Now that we have finished paying for the second Caythorpe window and the Airborne Signals book of remembrance, we obviously needed a new challenge and a bust of General Tony seemed appropriate. Fortunately HQ R Signals has given the Squadron a generous grant which pays for half of the £6.5k target, however, if you see collection buckets at Caythorpe please give generously.

Finally two dates for your diary:

- Caythorpe weekend 5-7 Sep 13. POC is the MTO on 01206 815527. This year will be the first without an Arnhem legend in attendance. But will we continue to embrace the broad church of Airborne Signaller, whatever their background or era.
- Airborne Officers Dinner Night. 7 Nov 13 in Headquarters 16 Air Assault Brigade Officers' Mess, Colchester. POC is OC B Tp on 01206815581. Please pass the word.

We hope you can make these important events in the Squadron and Airborne Signals' calendar. Until then, I wish you safe descents.

Certa Cito - Go to it.

OC 216.

Mike

Major MJ Fayers, Officer Commanding, 16 Air Assault Brigade Headquarters and Signal Squadron (216)



Op Olympics- LCpl Tyson

On Monday 23rd of July 2012 our sub unit received the call that they would be needed in support of Operation Olympics within 48 hours. All elements from the Squadron already had kit packed waiting on the call to deploy! We finally deployed on Wednesday 25th of July where we set off to Longmoore Camp in Hampshire to receive a 24 hour compact training package to prepare us for our role. The following morning we travelled up to our venue which we were set to provide security for Lords Cricket ground. We spent three hours here taking part in a comprehensive familiarisation package before being utilised as QRF.



Arriving at Tobacco dock there was a sigh of relief our accommodation was good with decent showers and hot running water. The next two days consisted of lots of waiting around at Regents park barracks for a call which never came, turns out G4S actually done their job after all.

We operated out of Tobacco dock on 15 minutes to move between 6-8 both morning and evening, giving the lads a chance to explore London in the day. The head shed managed to get some accreditation passes for some of the venues, I personally got one for the Rowing but we never made it due to location and time restraints. This didn't stop our determination to see an event so we travelled to the Olympic park in Stratford to try our chances there. Luckily it worked me SSgt Benton, Sig Mummery and myself found ourselves in VIP seat watching the Female hockey, the favourites Holland v China. It was a very entertaining game with Holland coming out the victor's some of the things they could do with a ball and stick was amazing.

A few of the lads had got tickets to watch the Tennis at Wimbledon which I hear they had a great time. Over the next few days personnel managed to get into several places around London for free, the capital was really accommodating for the British Soldiers, with venues such as London Eye, The London Dungeons, The London Aquatics Centre, The famous London Tower and Madame Tussauds offering free entry. Cpl 'Gaz' McHugh's brother works at Downing street so thanks to Gaz we managed to get a photograph outside 10 Downing street.



ARMY ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS- 2nd Lieutenant Franks

On Wednesday 27 June 2012, **16 Air Asslt Bde HQ and Sig Sqn (216)** took part in the Army Athletic Championships held in Aldershot. Having previously won the 16 Air Assault Bde Athletics championships in May, the team had qualified to represent the Brigade as the minor unit entry. This category saw the team competing with entrants from **14 (Geo) Sqn, Chicksands**, the **PTI Corps** and **3 Para** for the Army minor unit Athletics trophy and, following an early drive down from Colchester, the team were keen to make their mark.



The day began well with **Sig Greasley** coming second in the hammer throw, no mean feat as this was the first time he had ever thrown a hammer. His efforts in the field were supplemented by great performances from **LCpl O'Brien** who came first in the discus, and second in the javelin, and **LCpl Deegan** who finished joint-second in the high jump.

Back on the track, **Sig McInnes** dominated the 110m hurdles, crossing the line seconds ahead of the opposition. He was also a worthy runner-up in the 400m hurdles coming second in a very hard-fought race. **Sig Hale-Mullin** put in an outstanding effort to win the 800m, as did **Sig Olukutukei** who took second place in the 5000m.

LCpl McCoy deserves a special mention for sheer tenacity. Having completed the 3000m steeplechase in third place, against formidable opposition, he had barely time to stop retching before almost immediately running again in the 100m relay. Never afraid to try something new, he also had a strong showing in the shot put. With numbers limited, almost everyone took part in several events and the whole team put in an excellent effort.

When all the events had finished, the result was still too close to call before all the scores had been processed and, as the awards were handed out, it became clear exactly how close the competition had been. The final standings saw the unit in second place with an overall score of 126.5, just half a point away from **14 (Geo) Sqn**, who took home first prize with a total of 127 points. Despite this narrow defeat, the team accepted second place with grace and returned to Colchester in high spirits after a great day of sport, resolving that next year the trophy would be ours.



CAYTHORPE MEMORIAL WEEKEND – by SSgt Porter

The small Lincolnshire village of Caythorpe was once home to the 1st Airborne Division Signals Regiment, one of the previous incarnations of the present day 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron. It was here they were billeted and trained prior to deploying on Operation MARKET GARDEN, Field Marshall Montgomery’s master plan to strike deep into the industrial heartland of Germany. Capturing the bridge over the Rhine and thus shortening the length of the war in Europe.



Prior to attending the veteran’s weekend however there was the small matter of a Squadron level MATTS training week at Beckingham camp, just outside Caythorpe. This was to be completed by all members of the squadron not on essential duties or career courses. The week consisted of the usual ranges, map reading, BCDT and respirator drills in the dreaded CBRN chamber. To the surprise of many, the Squadron’s marksmanship was on the ball, with many of the blokes scoring marksman on the ACMT. Although **SSgt ‘Dougie’ Porter** had his suspicions on how suddenly there was a Squadron of Carlos the Jackals. This was soon forgotten by the time he had put the Squadron Chefs through the Grenade range, after which he was considerably greyer than when he began.



The highlight of the week was undoubtedly the Squadron Jump onto Everleigh. This afforded the Squadron the opportunity to practice the skills and drills essential to our role in the Airborne Task Force (ABTF). For many this was their first jump after the Basic Parachute Course and was an eye opener to

what actually goes on in an operational environment. The flight was particularly pleasurable for **Sig 'Sick Bag' Baker**, who spent the majority of the flight time reacquainting himself with his breakfast. Once on the ground we went through the normal RV drills and practiced moving into our Tier One



MASTER OF SIGNALS – *by Lt Cotterill*

On the 7th November the **Master of Signals, Lt Gen Baxter** paid a visit to 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron. The Master received various briefings on the Squadrons return to contingency, its preparations for Army 2020 and its capability development. Commuting to lunch via quad bike, he ate with the Squadron in the echelon field kitchen, enjoying a curry cooked up by **Cpl 'G' Gurung**, while chatting with various members of the Squadron. Post lunch he viewed a capability demonstration of the various HQ constructs the Squadron provides for the Brigade and the Man/Quad-Pack rebro. After an Office call with Commander 16 Air Assault Brigade, **Brigadier Hill**, he addressed the Squadron thanking them for hosting him and outlining what lies ahead under Army 2020. In the evening he attended the annual Airborne Officers Dinner Night in the Officers' Mess.



EX EAGLES DAGGER – *by LCpl Graham*

The week started on a cold Monday morning at 06:00hrs meeting at the armoury to collect our weapons before setting off on a 6 hour coach journey to Warcop Training Camp. On arrival we went through the necessary safety briefs so we could go straight onto the ranges in the morning.

Tuesday started with individual firing from different firing positions and soon progressed to pairs firing and movement in the afternoon which was enjoyed by all until the rain fell.



Wednesday consisted of fire teams and section firing to the build up of the night shoot where **LCpl Jowers** and the RQ were busy all day preparing the pyro and the explosives for the night's event. The scenario kicked off with us as QRF and the defence position coming under attack which involved us leopard crawling through a tunnel that had a GPMG firing tracer rounds on the top of it and straight into our firing points. The targets were watch and shoot, but with minimal light from the loomies going up it was difficult to see until the pyro and explosives started going off, which on some you could of done with sunglasses. This was one of the great training days you don't forget.

Thursday started cold and wet and according to weather reports it was only going to get worse, especially hearing that the north was beginning to flood. We all knew this was going to be a long hard day doing section attacks. As the day progressed the water kept getting deeper and deeper which in some points got to chest height, **Sgt Thomson** (DS STAFF) can vouch for this. At the end of this we all knew it was our final day and endex was immanent.

Looking back on the exercise, even with the floods I can say it has been the best shooting camp I have ever been on.



EX CITADEL GUIBERT – *Sig Meaden*

On the 25th September 2012 a select group of individuals from the Squadron, departed for France to partake in Exercise CITADEL GUIBERT. This was an inter-operability exercise with the French 11th Parachute Brigade, our partners in the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force. Myself, **Cpl 'Blacky' Black**, **LCpl 'Stu' Keighley** and **LCpl 'Hills' Hillary** travelled in our Land rover detachments, where we would meet up with the main body who travelled in the minibus led by, **YoS 'Technically we're in a good position' Port**.

Eventually we all managed to reach Folkestone, and with a quick twenty minute break; we got back onto our designated vehicles and proceeded to be loaded onto the train taking us through the Euro Tunnel. Once we had arrived in France the second part of the journey began by negotiating the chaotic French traffic whilst trying not to get lost. Unfortunately Cpl 'the Whistler' Entwistle took numerous wrong turns, but soon enough we managed to select the right route and we arrived at Mourmelon Le Grand, the exercise area where would be staying for four weeks.



The following morning after coming to terms with our accommodation (squat toilets and nicotine stained walls) and questionable food (fish on a stick), myself and **LCpl 'Stu' Keighley** set off for Paris to collect Crypto from the British Embassy. **Sgt 'Ricky' Dowds** and **Sig Pollock** followed in the minibus. While we were en-route to Paris, the remainder were tasked with setting up the dismantled headquarters and the Tactical Network Gateway (TNG). The TNG enables Bowman to speak with its French counterpart SICF, this gives staff from both nations access to share point, chat and email whilst delivering shared situational awareness via ComBAT. Meanwhile myself and **LCpl Keighley** en-route to Paris, noticed the fuel gauge was getting a little too close to empty for comfort. The nearest services that accepted a fuel card was 12km away. To our dismay this was 1 km too far and the Landrover ground to a halt- the embarrassment! After a quick debrief by **Sgt 'Ricky' Dowds**, who had to make a round trip back to us in order to refuel we were on our way again.

The following day, with the crypto now in our possession and a mapping issue on ComBat resolved, the headquarters began to come to life and everything was going to plan. As we had a few days spare

before the actual exercise phase began, **YoS 'Technically we're in a good position'** **Port** suggested the idea of a recreational day in Paris, but four members of the group were required to stay at Mourmelon to look after the crypto. Myself, **LCpl 'Stu' Keighley**, **LCpl 'Hills' Hillary**, **Cpl 'the Whistler' Entwhistle** and **Sgt 'Ricky' Dowds** volunteered to stay and opted to go to Reims, a local town, the following day when everyone had returned from Paris. Whilst the first group took photos of themselves by the numerous tourist attractions in Paris and enjoyed the delights of the city's Latin Quarter, we more than made up for this by catching up with premier league football over a couple of beers the following day in Reims.

With the exercise phase eventually underway, and a shift rotation now in effective, the remainder of the exercise would consist of assisting Staff Officers with CIS interoperability issues. We built up a really good rapport with our French Signals counterparts as we endeavoured to overcome CIS issues together. Once the exercise was complete we had a night out with the French Signal Squadron in Reims and reflected over the exercise over one too many beers. We look forward to developing our relationship with them with several exercises and a joint expedition to Corsica planned for next year.



EX NOBEL LEDGER - *by Sig Cox*

In September Bravo Troop deployed down to Newquay on Ex NOBLE LEDGER to provide a main headquarters for 16 Air Assault Brigade as part of a wider Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) exercise. The exercise was formed around several challenging scenarios that had been set to test the ARRC, for which 16 Air Assault Brigade was a LOCON. Such scenarios included a CBRN attack, kidnappings and the retaking of an island held by local militia. Each were designed to test the headquarters staff and Squadron personnel in their planning ability and the provision of CIS.



Within the exercise we had a number of personnel including **Cpl 'Q' Qualthrough**, **Cpl Crabb**, **LCpl Baker**, and **Sig Greasley** providing rear link detachments to the Battle Groups. There were elements from the British, Turkish and French Army's and it was the detachments responsibility to ensure the delivery of effective communications throughout.

Thankfully it wasn't all work, whilst on the exercise there was time to do some physical exercise whether it is going to the gym, using the sauna or taking a stroll along the cliff tops with **SSgt "Jim" Wear**. One of the main highlights of our free time whilst on the exercise was going "Cloistering" along the cliff tops of Newquay where we jumped into the freezing cold sea.



EX KESWICK RUNNER – Sig Cox

Bright and early on a Sunday morning myself, Sig Pollock, Sig Barton, Sig Driver and **Lt Cotterill** left Colchester for the lake district town of Keswick to partake in the Royal Signals Corps Cross country training camp. The journey took an epic 7 hours, upon arrival we were given our rooms and briefed on what we would be doing throughout the week. On Monday we were divided into ability groups. I was shocked to see I was in the first group! The first run was therefore a matter of breathing uncontrollably for the seven miles clinging on to the back of the pack for myself and **Sig Barton**. The afternoon was a 'recovery' run followed by a stretching lesson.



Tuesday was an interval running circuit aimed at improving our short distance running speed. We did twelve sets of running flat out for between 2 and 6 minutes with a 1 min recovery in-between. This was a real lung burner and the final set could not come fast enough. In the evening we were instructed on how to use a foam roller to iron out muscle knots and flush out lactate acid. This was particularly useful after a couple of cheeky sessions.

Wednesday was the eleven mile endurance session around the lake for groups one and two. The weather was horrific with the rain lashing into us and winds gusting into us head on. The lead runner was going at some pace but **Sig Pollock** managed to stay close behind. The afternoon was orienteering event, for which I teamed up with **Sig Pollock**. The aim was to find as many clues as possible out of a possible 25. Despite all our hard work and effort **Sig Pollock** and I finished with a lowly score of six.

Thursday brought another interval session consisting of twelve 400m repeats with a one minute recovery interval. This was followed with a 5 mile optional 'recovery' run with what appeared to be minimal attendance. A prize giving was held in the evening where **Sig Pollock** scooped best male runner, after which we proceeded into town for a social drink.

We were introduced to fell running on the final morning, following an arduous route in the hills. **Sig Pollock** quickly discovered the benefits of sliding down on his backside. Showered, changed and few farewells later and we were off on another 7 hour epic back to Colchester. All in all, an enjoyable week

that I cannot recommend enough. It was both educational and physically demanding, my running has improved no end as a result.



Ex PONY EXPRESS – Sig Richards

On Monday, 14th January, 9 Members of 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron set off for France to go on Ex PONY EXPRESS; an interoperability exercise between us and the French Parachute Brigade. Those who went were **YofS ‘technically we’re in a good place’ Port, SSgt Atkinson, Cpl ‘Tommy’ Tucker, Cpl ‘Good egg Rankin, Cpl ‘John’ Mauger, LCpl ‘Archie’ Gemmel, Sig ‘my mate in 12 Mech’ Chick, Sig ‘Rocky’ Lee** and myself.

As I wasn’t initially tasked with being on the exercise until the last minute, I had not been involved with the testing of the kit back in the UK. Not knowing what to expect, I packed my bergen and prepared myself for a long drive down to Malley Camp in a small town not far from Reims.



The next few days were spent setting up and testing our equipment ready for the Staff Officers to come in and use it. We even got some time to check out the local town and were glad to find a supermarket, chip shop and several bars. We were also joined by two Ghurkha Signallers from 30 Signal Regiment who provided Dial-up JOCS and also gave us some training on the kit. By Wednesday everything was in place and working and the Staff officers came in and started their exercise with the French. They were pleased with the new services provided by the kit and the days went by with only minor problems to deal with. This was the most relaxed part of the exercise for us, mostly taking it in turns to man the helpdesk we set up and general troubleshooting for the Staff.

Unfortunately, due to French troops deploying to Mali, the exercise got cut short on the Saturday – 6 days early. After a meal out and looking forward to Sunday off, we got the call to come back and tear down; ready to come back to the UK the following day. Aside from loosing a day off, I was enjoying my time in France (and the pay that came with it) and, along with others, was disappointed to come back so early.



CT01 TRAINING – 2Lt Johnston

After returning from an enjoyable three week Christmas break Bravo Troop deployed straight into a five day Troop level training exercise, organised by **SSgt Weir**. We left Merville Barracks for STANTA, operating in two teams; the MPR (Manpack Rebro) and the HQ. The MPR team, which I was part of, navigated to the harbour area giving us the opportunity to refresh our navigation skills and on arrival we established communications with the HQ.

The concept of the exercise was simple. From our harbour position the HQ sent us tasks and the first couple were to conduct reconnaissance patrols on the enemy location with the aim of launching a dawn attack and setting an ambush. After a full day's patrolling we finally got our heads down, but it was a 2 am start in order to conduct our meticulously planned attack on the enemy FOB. We launched the attack on the 'known' enemy position that was situated in an abandoned barn by conducting a right flanking manoeuvre and those enemy who fled were caught in the ambush set by **Sig Hale-Mullen**.



Our attack a success, we now switched roles. The HQ become the MPR and the MPR the HQ, and the whole exercise started again. Before we started Phase 2 our reward for a job well done was a night sleep. However, the following morning we woke up to ice moustaches and frozen water bottles! Despite the cold we started setting up the Ops room while the other team prepared their move to their new location on the ground. The day got off to a slow start but progressed quickly with a cheeky CBRN phase. **Corporal Kev Lister** delivered a CBRN lesson after which we conducted a series of clearance patrols and rehearsed ambush drills.

Early evening we came under chemical attack and immediately donned our CBRN Kit, surprisingly this turn of events raised morale as we were grateful for the extra warmth. The MPR team attacked us at 0300 hours, we reacted by performing defensive drills and pushing out a clearance patrols in vehicles. On the final vehicle patrol we were attacked, we went straight into vehicle anti-ambush drills- firing and manoeuvring out of the situation. This was the final serial before the sweet words of "ENDEX" rang in our ears. All in all a good exercise that blew away the post Christmas leave cob webs and rehearsed us in our low level skills and drills. We look forward to heading to Catterick next month for Squadron level training.



BASKETBALL – LCpl Hartland

On Wednesday 30th Jan 2013 216 (Para) Sig Sqn went to Prince William of Gloucester Barracks, Grantham for the Support Command (Midlands) Basketball Championships. On arrival we were informed that we would be competing against JSSU Cheltenham.

From the offset our defence was outstanding, keeping a constant pressure on the opposition and making all of their offensive actions crumble. We kept stopping them in their tracks which led to JSSU getting frustrated and unable to get into the game. As the time progressed we kept scoring baskets and **LCpl Hartland**, feeling sorry for JSSU, even scored a basket for the opposition! **Sig Lonorgan** was truly on form, making 3 pointers look easy. **Sig Minett** was the play maker, instructing us on what play to make next which aided us in our success. **LCpl Keighley** grafted every second he was on the court, if 216 won the steal there would always be a race down the court in competition for the layup. With some great defensive and support play, **Sig Farmer** led from the front throughout the game he was a constant thorn in the side of the opposition, harassing the JSSU players on defence. After 24 minutes of a very one sided game the final score was 39-14.



A sterling performance by the whole team, everyone gave it their all from the start. The day almost went without incident until we had to collect our awards, as **Sig Minett** was presented the trophy he turned and tripped over a bench! Luckily his cat like reactions kicked in and the trophy remained intact. An outstanding performance saw **Sig Lonorgan** voted MVP (Most Valued Player). This was the first basketball trophy the Squadron has ever won.



CROSS COUNTRY - by *Sig Olukutukei*

This year's Army Cross Country Championships was different! Even though it was chilly it was a relatively bright day no snow and ice – a big change from the last time we were at RMAS. Despite having little time to prepare for the race (some of the participants had just come off duty that morning), the team was feeling confident and after **Capt Coomb** reminded **Sig Halle-Mullen** to properly 'admin' himself before the race starts we were ready for the start.

With about 400 men at the start line it felt like there was going to be a stampede. All the training that contenders had done would be summed up by a 45 minute first past the post test. The course was tough as bits of the terrain were undulating for miles on end and the narrow paths in the woods meant that we had to jostle for front; **Sig Tranter** (the driver) had only volunteered that morning to run thought it was a long and muddy affair! Most of us expressed similar sentiments at different times with some contesters found themselves literally running out of steam either as a result of being new to this game or inappropriate planning. It was not uncommon seeing competitors either walking back looking crest fallen or on occasion feigning an injury to get in the ambulance... Even **Sig Driver**, who is known for his great will power, said that on this particular occasion he felt his lungs were going to explode because the field was awash with talent and no matter how hard you thought you are running someone would just run past you like you were pace setting for them.



Unfortunately, we missed a slot in the podium as a unit thanks to the temporary downgrading of 16 Sig Reg – somehow they were a minor unit for the race – but despite this setback **216 (Para) Sig Sqn** will be back next year and looking to get back on the podium.



Ex Snowdon Signaller – by Cpl Proud

Ex SNOWDON SIGNALER was a weeklong multi-activity adventure training package held in Capel Curig, North Wales. Fourteen individuals from the Squadron took part in range of activities that included mountaineering, orienteering, mountain biking, kayaking and a high ropes course. The week offered an excellent opportunity for everyone to get away and let off some steam after what has been a busy start to the New Year.

We were split into three groups for the first day's activities were rock climbing, kayaking, and hill walking. After a bit of banter about the weather conditions everyone cracked on. **Cpl 'sheep's teeth' Nolan** led the hill walking group. **Cpl 'morale' Proud** kept everyone entertained rock climbing demonstrating his great finesse and strength on the wall by completing the more challenging climbs. He was partnered up with **Cpl 'corps champion' Pinnington**, who was on hand to give his experience to the group.

The second day was exciting! The excising troops were split into two groups, mountain bikers and rock climbers. The mountain bikers where headed up by exercise OC **Lt Cotterill** who is supposed to be a wizard on two wheels. The day started off with a skills lesson going over humps and mounds which proved easy for the group. **Sig 'I sleep a lot' Bingham** displayed his great down hilling skills, grabbing every opportunity to 'get air'. **Lt Cotterill** led from the front, taking all the falls for the group, bike wizard? Whilst **Cpl 'morale' Proud** spectacularly face planted himself on the board course. The day was rounded off by **Cpl 'national balancing champion' Pinnington**, showing off his skills by completing the challenging black route.



Day three, the whole group went to a high ropes course. We were slightly diminished in number as **Sig 'sick note' Robson** had been bedded down, still feeling the effects of the freezing water temperature from Monday's kayaking lesson. The high ropes sorted the men from the boys with more than a few wobbly legs on show around the course. **Pte 'chef' Bailey** stormed off from the start showing monkey like skill in navigating his way through the various obstacles, whilst **Sig 'I can sesh' Price** struggled

initially but was flying towards the end. **Lt Cotterill** was also struggling due to a bruised knee he gracefully injured on the bike the previous day. Yet again **Cpl 'corps high wire champion' Pinnington** was on hand to assist, shaking the rope for a slightly jittery **Cpl 'sheep's teeth' Nolan**. Another great day was had on day four, **Lt Cotterill** was keen to get the whole group to the top of Snowdon, the highest peak in Wales. In the mid February conditions this proved to be pretty challenging, with 40 mph winds lashing freezing rain on to us as we ascended via the pygs path. **Cpl 'morale' Proud** led from the rear on this one as he had carried the group all week. Our ascent was completed by having a few 'pretend to be happy' pictures on the summit, drenched wet through. We descended down Laandbiris for an equally epic lunch at Petes eats. **Cpl 'corps mountaineering' Pinnington** was on hand to advice again.



ABTF Stood Up

On the 1st January the Airborne Task Force (ABTF) was officially placed on high readiness for contingency operations. Held at five days notice to move, the ABTF can be called upon to carry out short term interventions, such as Non Combatant Evacuation and Disaster Relief Operations, any where in the world. The force is commanded by 16 Air Assault Brigade Head Quarters and Signal Squadron (216) and is currently formed around the 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment. In stepping up to a contingency footing 16 Air Assault Brigade is reverting back to the role it fulfilled in the late 1990s /early 2000s. During this period the Brigade deployed at short notice to several trouble spots across the globe such as, Sierra Leone, the Former Yugoslavia and Afghanistan.



Ex SECOND FLIGHT was a call out exercise designed to test the readiness of the ABTF. Initiated on the evening of Friday 27th January, every member of the Squadron received a phone call ordering them to report back to camp within 48 hours. A further two days preparation in camp enabled the completion of outstanding MATTs and last minute J1 documentation checks. Once complete the Squadron's seventy five strong ABTF contingent departed for the Joint Air Mobilisation Centre in South Cerney, Gloucestershire. On arrival all eighteen of the Squadron's vehicles were prepped for air travel by **SSgt 'Dougie' Porter** prior to inspection by 29 Regiment Royal Logistic Corps. Concurrently all personnel were put through a rigours J1 screening by the Brigade AGC and Medical Corps contingent to ensure everything was in order as if they were going 'out of the door'.

Following on from this the Squadron's Ops team, under the supervision of the Ops Officer **Captain Paul Johnson** and the Brigade Yeoman **WO2 (YoS) Steve Crutchley**, had the herculean task of pace exing the entire Brigade's combat net radios. The team performed admirably working throughout the night to ensure all coms were tested and ready to go within the allotted time frame.

Over the course of the next 24 hours the entire 1,500 strong ABTF went through the same process. It was impressive to witness just how quickly an all All Arms Battle Group could be assembled on the airfields of South Cerney. The exercise enabled the Squadron to demonstrate its readiness for deployment and also instilled a sense of perspective. The resurrection of the ABTF is a clear indication of considerations beyond the drawdown of **Op HERRICK** and in these uncertain times the Squadron is only to aware that the next time we arrive at South Cerney it could be for real.



Cross Country – by Sig Oluktukei

“And the winner is 216 (PARA) SIG SQN“sweet victory we were the Royal Signals Minor Unit Cross country champions. That didn’t come easy, there was some degree of physical training but the mental preparation was ultimate in this case.

With hardly four weeks of preparation (of which a whole week and a bit was spent on Christmas and New Year celebrations) after a major exercise we knew that we had to rely on our inner strength. As part of 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron this was paramount to us.

Upon arrival in Blandford the weather was relatively cool and neither the course nor terrain disappointed. Some of the teams had mint kit you could almost be mistaken for thinking that it was a fashion show of sorts. The ground was muddy and wet, perfect conditions for cross-country. To give ourselves a psychological head start we donned our maroon t-shirts during the initial warm up. The starting horn resounded and off we sprinted. We kept pushing each other along the way. The finishing stretch had a long gradual hill which was the hardest bearing in mind all the lactic acid that the muscles had accumulated while traversing the undulating ground on the “killer loop” that we had to do twice. All that starts well ends well. After all of our team were in we had a quick change of clothes and a warm brew as we awaited the awards. We travelled back to Colchester in high spirits as we took home the minor unit trophy to the delight of our team OC **Lt Cotterill**.

Two weeks later, on the back of winning the Royal Signals Minor Unit Championships we travelled down to Camberley to compete in the Army Cross-Country Championships at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS). Stakes were higher and there were great expectations from us. Checking on the weather conditions from the ubiquitous apps that have become our lifestyle we confirmed what we had expected earlier the conditions were adverse. The temperatures were freezing cold and the ice would cover most of the course meaning we had to change tact to a more sure footed easy run to compete as well as to avoid injury.

Upon arrival at RMAS we interacted with some of our long lost colleagues that we had met either on tour or doing the normal regimental postings. We were very anxious as we knew the course would be tough. Lt Cotterill advised us on when to put the minimum and maximum kicks while negotiating the course. The start was fine and though slippery ice on the ground was unrelenting we nevertheless did our best. Since some of the teams had a few men to spare like ten competing and only eight counted we had no choice but to make every man count as we were exact. Thank God by the end of it we all finished the course injury free.

After the tough race we went for a cup of tea at the café while discussing how we could have done it better. In a sense we didn’t expect much from this race so we took our time and only came into the awards hall five minutes ahead of the scheduled start time of the awards. No sooner had we stepped in than we heard “216” being called out. That’s how we took home the runners up title for the Army Minor Unit Cross-country Championships behind the Army School of Physical Training.



Football- by Sgt Swan

The season re-started after the Christmas period with a friendly against a local Non – League side Brightlingsea FC. Played on a heavy pitch, not ideal for both sides but we did get the ball down & for the first 20 minutes we were the better side. At half time with the score at 1-0 to the Brightlingsea, we changed the 8 of the starting 11, to give everyone a run out. As the game went on there football did the talking.

Despite slipping to a 4-0 defeat, we gave a great account of ourselves against a strong Non-league side, who sit 5th in their respective league. All the hard work was put back into the training pitch, in preparation for the game against 10 SR in the Signaller Cup 2nd round. The game against 10 SR, was a tight affair, after leading 2-0 with goals from **LCpl Daniel Chapman** & **Sig Jason Rose**, with 10 minutes to go we thought we were going through to the next round, however you have to give credit to 10 SR who never gave up & fought us all the way into extra time, with the final score 5-2 to 10 SR. With the Signaller Cup game over, it's back to the league & the plate, where we wait the losers of 2 SR VS 18 SR, whoever our opponents are they know that we will be up for a battle. Our season is still far from over & we still have some testing challenges ahead, I can look back from the beginning of the season to where we sit now and say that as a whole we have improved immensely.



CT02 AND CAST – by Sig Gladwin

Early February saw the Squadron deploy to Catterick for a week long, CT02 training package followed by the 16th Air Assault Brigade CAST. CT02 was a chance for the Squadron to operate in the field and develop their Field craft and Mill Skills which everyone thoroughly enjoyed. The exercise provided the squadron a valuable opportunity to deploy all of its assets including the Parachute Tac HQ, Tac HQ, Main HQ and Man Pack Rebroadcast (MPR). B Troop spent the first week setting up the Main HQ, which was achieved in record time, and delivering lessons on TacSat 117F and dismantled HQ kit. Meanwhile **SSgt Wear** led MPR out on the ground in particularly adverse weather conditions in order to hone MPR's ability to operate in the field. We also completed CBRN training, section attacks and tested the new Tactical Voice Bridges (TVB) over Bowman and TacSat 117F radios. A Tp deployed the Tac HQ into a FOB location, whilst Para Tac set up in a harbour and conducted contact drills across the area. A Merlin was brought in for part of the exercise to enable the guys to refine their air skills and qualify some more Landing Point Commanders.



The second week heralded the start of the Brigade CAST with the arrival of the Staff Officers, who were received by **SSgt Wear** and **Lt Mapplebeck**. Thankfully by and large CAST ran smoothly and without major incident enabling the guys to get into a good work routine. The Troop also managed the successful integration of the French 11 (Para) Brigade Staff Officers into Main HQ and a joint Anglo-French J6 cell which provided French CIS throughout the HQ. **LCpl Hack** and **LCpl Hardy** gave in-depth J2 briefs to the J6 cell in order to keep the situational awareness of the troop up to date. A few guys also completed a small Dial-up JOCS exercise.

The exercise was extremely worthwhile for all those involved from the squadron, with both field craft and trade skills being tested at a number of different levels throughout. We now hope to use the skills we have learned and refined on our next big challenge - Ex JOINT WARRIOR.



WORKING WITH THE ITALIAN AIRBORNE – *By Sig Driver*

March saw 216 (Para) Sig Sqn deploy a 12 man team on Ex EAGLES EYE in Tuscany, Italy. The exercise was designed to enhance the partnership and interoperability with the Italian ISTAR units and was a fantastic opportunity for those deploying to work with our Italian counterparts.

The initial phase consisted of a train the trainer and interoperability package. This was followed by an exercise, where some of our 12 man team saw themselves embedded into 3 Para Patrols Platoon, D Sqn Tac Group and the Sniper Platoon. Those imbedded were responsible for the all important TACSAT and HPW rear link to EXCON, where the remainder of the 12 man team were deployed.



Those employed within EXCON very much hit the ground running as they went straight into a 24hr shift pattern for real time point of contact. They also provided reach back safety comms from the live ranges and conducted radio lesson to the Italian Airborne Signals Platoon on the Harris 117F and HPW software. It was not all work and no play however, as **LCpl Hack**, **LCpl Howe** and **Sig Noble** were invited to take part in a 12000 ft tandem skydive with two members of the Italian Signals Platoon at their local sky diving club. All three thoroughly enjoyed it, whilst those who did not take part delighted in the look of fear on **LCpl Hack's** face as he plummeted to the ground!

I found myself deployed into Carpania with the Sniper Platoon as Platoon signaller within their Tac. The platoon took part in a range package with Italian Airborne Snipers, including a cold war shoot, angle shooting and day/night time stalks. A small confirmation exercise organised by the Italian OC saw the British and Italian forces work together to neutralize an enemy road block. As Platoon Signaller I was very much integral to the operation and after handing over of control of the net to the platoon IC the operation was a success.

As the confirmation exercise went on I began to thoroughly enjoy my role and was disappointed to see the exercise finish, until the QM department arrived with Peroni beer for the Italian and British Airborne forces to share. The perfect end to a fantastic exercise and I look forward to more opportunities to work with Allied forces in the future.



EXERCISE WITH THE AMERICAN 82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION – by Capt Johnson

In an effort to reinvigorate a close relationship with US armed forces, February saw myself and the OC **Maj Fayers** travel to the USA to spend some time with the 82nd Airborne Division. The purpose of the visit was to deploy on a Joint Operational Access Exercise (JOAX) with not only American, but also Canadian Airborne Forces.



The exercise commenced with a Para insertion at night in order to facilitate an airfield seizure. This consisted of a heavy drop, followed closely by two waves of 800 personnel each. This was an extremely impressive sight of which I, along with staff officers from the Bde HQ and representatives from some Bde units were fortunate enough not only to see but to be part of – earning ourselves our American wings. Following the jump our role switched to observing our counterparts for the remaining 48 hours, with a view to improving interoperability and enhancing our understanding of their capabilities.

Deploying on the JOAX with the American and Canadian Airborne was a rare yet profitable opportunity. Much was learned from counterparts from across the Atlantic, and as such it is hoped that British participation in future American JOAX's will increase. For the time being however, I am happy to be one of the few in the Bde currently donning the American wings on my smock!



EX LIGHTENING STRIKE - by Cpl Milson

As part of the 216 (Para) Sig Sqn recruiting team myself, **LCpl Fern**, **Sig Binks** along with **Capt Howley** and **Lt Cotterill** deployed to Blandford to take part in Ex LIGHTNING STRIKE. The exercise is designed to give Officer Cadets from Universities all over the UK the opportunity to take a look at the various roles within the Corps. Our stand combined briefings, with a competitive element in an emulation of the dreaded yet talismanic 'Log race'.



The briefing, given by **Lt Cotterill**, highlighted the various responsibilities the unit holds within 16 Air Assault Brigade as well as an insight in the long and proud Sqn history. Following this there was a brief on All Arms Pre Parachute Selection before we gave the Officer Cadets a small sample of the delights the course offers – a log race.

Having stressed the importance of this race to the ethos of 216 (Para) Sig Sqn, the Officer Cadets were ushered out of the comfort of the 12x12 tent and onto a log induction. Myself and **LCpl Fern** then completed a cheeky 10 minute warm up, which concluded with a 300m dash to the start line.

The race saw the teams run a hard route, much of which was uphill, however to the majority of the teams credit the pace of the race was impressively maintained – of course with plenty of extra encouragement by the DS to bring out the best in the Cadets. Overall, despite varied abilities throughout different teams, all gave 100% with a few individuals indicating they possess the attributes required to serve with Airborne Forces and 216 (Para) Sig Sqn. A highly enjoyable and worthwhile day for the Sqn, we hope to see some of the Cadets striving to join 216 (Para) Sig Sqn in the future.

UK MIDLANDS MINOR UNIT CROSS COUNTRY LEAGUE – By Sig Pike

The UK Midlands Minor League held its final race of the season on Wednesday 27th February. Hoping for a strong showing in the final race of the season, 216 (Para) Sig Sqn entered a team of 7 runners into the race. It was a perfect day for running as there was no rain, no wind, and a clear blue sky – a pleasant surprise considering the time of year.

A good performance on the day was imperative with a number of teams, including the Squadron, were in the 'running' to win the league. As such the Sqn sent out what can only be described as the dream team, with all 7 members of the team Para-trained and raring to go. From the off the Squadron showed its class, with myself and **Sig Pollock** coming in 4th and 5th respectively. We were closely followed (although not quite close enough!) by **Sig Meadon** 7th, my Tp OC **Lt Cotterill** 8th and **Cpl Milson** 9th.

The day concluded with 5 of 7 in the 216 (Para) Sig Sqn finishing within the top 10 and the Squadron winning the league!! It was a thoroughly enjoyable day and we look forward to next season, where we hope to achieve all we have this season and more!



216 (PARA) SIG SQN VS 21 SIG REGT (AS) RUGBY UNION - by Sig Binks

On the Wednesday 6th of March, 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron faced 21 Signal Regiment in the ongoing inter Royal Corps of Signals Rugby Union competition. The match was the first for the Squadron in the Hall Cup giving us the opportunity to develop some of the newer members of the squad.

After a competitive first half the score was close at 19-16 to the Squadron. The second half however saw our squad settle into the game more and the team began to run riot against a weakened 21 SR squad.

Impressive performances from **LCpl Hardy**, **Sig Wookey**, **Sig Harper** and top try scorer on the day **Sig Watkins**, brought a 73-16 victory to the Squadron come the final whistle. It was great for the squad to get off to a winning start with the newer members of the squad impressing in their first real run out of the season. Looking forward, this year's competition will be tough, and as last seasons champions the 216 (Para) Sig Sqn Rugby squad look forward to the challenge of retaining the Hall Cup.



Airborne Signals Association Membership by Captain Paul Jordan

Membership to the Association is open to all ex members (and their wives/husbands) who have ever served with Airborne or Air Assault Signals, irrespective of rank or age and is free of charge. The Association is keen to increase its membership and it is usually the ex members of the Squadron who spread the word on its behalf as to what is happening. If you meet anyone who qualifies to become a member of the Association please pass on my details and encourage them to get in touch.

Although the Association is not resourced as the Royal Signals Association there is a lot we can do with regard to members seeking advice and information. We can act as a signpost to point members in the direction of the relevant agencies who will be able help with any queries of problems they may have.

One of the Associations main aims remains the annual pilgrimage to Caythorpe village in Lincolnshire where a weekend of events with the former and current soldiers of the Squadron and the villagers culminates with a service of remembrance in the village church of St Vincent's.

Please ensure that you keep me informed of any changes in contact details so that you are not missed off our mailing lists. Also, if you no longer wish to receive our newsletters please let me know.

Caythorpe Weekend 2013 (Friday 6 September - Sunday 8 September 2013)

The Squadron is going through a very busy period, high readiness footing and ABTF commitments are to name but a few, we would hope to field a large contingent from the Squadron this year, with the Squadron Commander's intent being to hold the dinner on Sat 7 Sep 13 in the Village Hall and the church service on Sun 8 Sep 13. Full details of the weekend have been confirmed, a full outline on the weekends program will be available on arrival and promulgated in due course. Of note, we will be reading names from the Airborne Signals Book of Remembrance in the church on Sunday 8 Sept 13, this book commemorates the fallen from inception of Airborne Signals to present day.

PGL Adventure Activities have once again made a number of rooms available in Caythorpe Manor where the majority of you have stayed previously. After negotiation, this year the price has to cover PGL's costs and is set at £15 per person per night. The same price as last year! When compared with standard B & B in the area this is still a very competitive price.

Accommodation with the villagers is now well established as those of you who billet with them do most years. However should you wish to stay with one of the villagers please indicate on the attached return so the appropriate arrangements can be made. The camping site will still be available for those of you who wish to pitch your tents or use a campervan.

Transport will be provided over the weekend and is also available from the local railway stations (pre-book please) on the Friday and Sunday. Please have the enclosed returns along with cheques for accommodation and the dinner night returned to me by 21 Aug 2013. Unfortunately only 90 places are available at the dinner so please send your returns promptly to avoid disappointment and indicate clearly who you would wish to sit with. I will try and cater for your preferences. I and all the Squadron membership look forward to seeing you in September.

PRI Shop

The PRI shop will be available throughout the weekend and will be selling a large array of Shirts, Plaques, Tankards, and Berets etc at very competitive prices. Contact details for the shop are listed below. If you would like any specific items please do not hesitate to get in touch with Margaret. We offer a sales service over the phone and items will incur P&P should you wish to acquire goods from the shop in that way.

Mrs Margaret Watson on Civil 01206 815238 or Mil 94660 5238 (9.30 – 1.30 Mon – Thur)
Unit Welfare Office on Civil 01206 815505 or Mil 94660 5505

