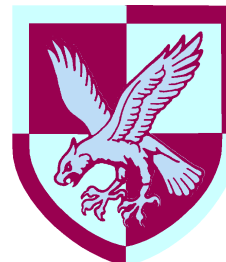


From: **Captain Dave Wilson ROYAL SIGNALS**

16 Air Assault Brigade Headquarters  
& Signal Squadron (216)  
Merville Barracks  
COLCHESTER  
CO2 7SW



Military Network: 94651 2990  
Civilian Access: 01206 78 2990  
Mobile: 07799477363  
Facsimile Extension: 01206 78 2780



May 2008

## **THE AIRBORNE SIGNALS ASSOCIATION** **NEWSLETTER 2008**

### Introduction

On behalf of the Officer Commanding 216 Major Robin Anderton Brown and all the ranks, welcome to the Airborne Signals Association Newsletter for 2008.

I hope this newsletter finds you all in the best possible health and that you enjoy reading its contents.

### The Squadron to Date

The Squadron has had an extremely busy period over the last few months conducting pre deployment training prior to deploying on OP HERRICK 8. Approximately 120 personnel from the Squadron have departed for Afghanistan over the last few weeks and are now settling in to their new locations for the next 6 months.

With the vast majority of the Squadron deployed on the OP, the rear party back here in Colchester have plenty of tasks to keep us busy. We are due to complete the move out of Goojerat Barracks to the new purpose built facilities within Merville Barracks with all 3 Radio Troops, the QM department, the Technical workshops and the MT/LAD all due to move in June this year.

### OP HERRICK 8

OP HERRICK 8 is the name given to the Brigades deployment to the southern Afghanistan province of Helmand where they will take on the role of Task Force Helmand. As you may already be aware the Squadron deployed to Afghanistan on OP HERRICK 4 in March 06 and this is the first time a Brigade has been redeployed back to Afghanistan to continue and adapt the role it played last time. The Squadron will have soldiers deployed throughout Helmand Province and Kandahar providing Communications and life support to the Headquarters and the Battlegroups.

Unfortunately, we have already received our first operational casualty of the deployment when Signaller James McKernan was involved in a Suicide IED attack during his first patrol. Commendably, Sig McKernan, although injured in the blast, suffering a broken femur, managed to send the initial contact report which ensured that the Quick Reaction Force and Incident Response Team were quickly on task. He has now been Casevac'd to

Selly Oaks Hospital in Birmingham where he is recovering after a series of operations. Hopefully, he will be back on his feet soon and is keen to rejoin the Squadron at the earliest opportunity.

### Combat Outpost.

In early Dec, Commander 16 Air Assault Brigade, Brigadier Carleton-Smith OBE, unveiled the specially commissioned OP HERRICK 4 painting. The painting, by well known military artist David Rowlands, is of two operators from the Squadron working as part of a Rear Link Detachment alongside soldiers from 3 PARA in Now Zad. The RLD teams operated in many of the combat outposts including Musa Qala, Kajaki, Sangin and Garmsir.

A copy of the print was also auctioned at a recent charity event in aid Of the Help for Heroes Charity which aims to provide practical support for members of the Armed Forces who are wounded whilst on Operations. The print eventually made £700 for the charity.

Copies of this print are available from the PRI at the much cheaper price of £25.

As a Sqn we are all very proud of what was achieved in Afghanistan, and it is only right that this image now takes centre stage in our historical room amongst items and pictures from the Airborne Signals glorious past, all the way back to its inception in 1941.



### The Lanyard Trophy 2008.

The 2007 Lanyard Trophy was held on the Dartmoor Training Area and 216 (Para) Sig Sqn were the host unit for the competition. The race took place on a wet and windy Monday in September, and the already arduous course took on a whole different appearance to that of the training phase.

The start of the race was, as is customary, 0530 hrs. From the gates of Okehampton Camp 216 were able to take an early lead, until they encountered the stream in flood. As the frothy torrent came into view in the darkness, the team knew the raging water would present a significant obstacle. Three of the team attempted the crossing and struck out for the other side. The rest of the team made other arrangements to avert the possibility of getting swept away and rejoined the bedraggled swimmers on the far side of the valley. The team were now in eighth position and had it all to do.

The 216 team gradually moved up the field, from eighth to third at the second checkpoint, and into first place by the time the course had traversed the moor to checkpoint three. The 11 Signal Regiment Team gainfully kept up the challenge to checkpoint six but then the 216 team were able to open up a sizable lead. Towards the end 216 were able to relax and enjoy the remaining few miles to the finish line without the fear of being overtaken. 216 (Para) Sig Sqn retained the Lanyard Trophy, completing the 40 mile course in 11 hours and 11minutes.



### The Drummond Historical Room

Maj Gen Deane-Drummond opened the historical room within the new Squadron HQ on Merville Barracks on the 31 July 2007. The room consists of photographs and memorabilia dating back through the history of Airborne Signals to its inception in 1941 right up to the current deployment to Afghanistan. Any ex Sqn member who wishes to have a look around the room is requested to contact myself to arrange a visit.

### National Memorial Arboretum

Weston on the Green (Airborne Signals) Branch is a national branch that was raised exclusively for former members of 216 Parachute Signal Squadron who served from its formation in 1941 until it's disbandment in 1976.

Following the reintroduction of the title "216 Parachute Signal Squadron" last year, membership has been extended to end those serving who are parachute trained. As a result, the former and present members decided to mark the occasion with the adoption of a tree at The National Memorial Arboretum.

The decision to dedicate the tree and the newly acquired branch Standard was arranged to coincide with the completion of training prior to deployment to Afghanistan, as it turned out the squadron left for Helmand Province the very next day.



Reverend Nick Cooke, Senior Chaplain to 16 Air Assault Brigade and former and present members of Airborne Signals attend the Dedication of their Branch standard and Tree at the NMA.

### Airborne Signals Association Membership

As you are aware the association is free of charge, open to all ex members (and their wives/husbands) who have ever served with Airborne or Air Assault Signals, irrespective of rank or age. We are always keen to increase the membership and it is mainly down to the ex members of the Squadron who are spreading the word on our behalf that this is happening. If you do come across anyone who has slipped through the net then please pass them on my details and encourage them to get in touch.

We are currently trying to update our historical database of Airborne Signals Members and to do this we are requesting all members to complete the form at the rear of the newsletter and return it to us with their Caythorpe returns. If you are not attending the reunion weekend we ask that you still complete the membership return so that we can update our records for future years.

Whilst we are not a fully resourced association such 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 that can help deal with any problems.

One of our main aims remains our 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.

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 2008 (Friday 05 September - Sunday 07 September 2008)

As is usual about this time planning for the Annual Caythorpe reunion is starting to gather pace. After the success of last year's event we will have to try hard to match the occasion.

Last years reunion seemed to be a successful event with no major problems occurring and everybody, I hope, enjoying the event. This year, with the majority of the Squadron deployed on Operations, we may have to drop certain aspects of the weekend that we did last year but we still intend to provide a full programme in conjunction with the villagers.





We will try and stick as closely to last years programme as it seemed to work well, however, it is unlikely we will be able to do a Para insertion. At the village fete there will be the normal collection of stands, not forgetting Margaret and the PRI shop and also the annual football match against the villagers. The dinner this year will be held up in Caythorpe Hall and will be preceded with a photograph in the gardens at the rear of the hall. Sunday morning will start with a march past through the village on the way to the church service, then followed by lunch in the village hall prior to us all dispersing. A more detailed programme will be published prior to the event.

As like last year I have spoken with the Arnhem committee and again there is accommodation available with the villagers should you wish, as usual it is free of charge and they are keen to accommodate anyone who needs it. Unfortunately accommodation is not available at Beckingham Camp, but we have managed to get a limited number of rooms at Caythorpe Court at the cost of £10 per person per night for Bed and Breakfast. If you require accommodation at Caythorpe Court please contact Major John Aspinall MBE at Beckingham Camp and he will be happy to sort it out for you, his details are attached. A leaflet is attached to this newsletter which should be returned to me as soon as possible regarding the weekend.

If arriving by train transport will be provided to and from Beckingham Camp over the weekend and also from local train stations on the Friday and Sunday, you just need to let us know the details.

So please don't delay, fill in your return today and send it to me and hopefully we shall see you in September.

### Unit PRI Shop

The PRI shop will be represented during the weekend and we will bring a large array of Shirts, Plaques, Tankards, and Berets etc at very competitive prices. Please be aware that we will endeavour to get hold of most items that you may have seen in other military outlets, just let us know what it is you want.

Please call the shop and speak to Mrs Margaret Watson      01206 782867 or 782748

### Further Information

If you should require any further information regarding any matter included in this newsletter please do not hesitate to contact me. See you in September.