



Gibraltar: Challenge, Change & Continuity

The Friends of Gibraltar Oral History Project (1930 to 1970)

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Object description

British NCO served with 4th Coastal Bty, 3rd Coastal Regt at Gibraltar, 1938-1942; served with 145 Bty, Coastal Artillery in GB, 1942-1944; served with 505 Bty, (Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry) RA officer in GB, 1944; served with 30th Field Regt, RA in Greece, ca 1945-1947; served with 124 Field Regt, RA in GB, 1947; served with K Bty, 5th Regt, Royal Horse Artillery in GB, 1947-1951; served with J and D Btys, 3rd Regt, RHA in West Germany, Egypt and Libya, 1951-1957; served as NCO and officer with 307 Field Regt (South Notts Hussars), RA in GB, 1955-1966

Content description

REEL 1 Recollections of background in Monmouth, 1922-1936: social circumstances; education; recruitment into Royal Artillery at Newport, 9/1936. Recollections of conditions of service, lifestyle and daily routine with 1st Boy Bty at Royal Artillery Depot, Woolwich, 10/1936-10/1937: reception and kitting out; barrack accommodation; origins of boy recruits; PT; ban on smoking; drill; bugle and trumpet training; musical band; education classes; history of RA; relationship with NCO instructors. REEL 2 relationship with recruits; sporting activities; use of director and dial site; food rations; canteen; pay; barrack room and kit inspections; restricted guard duties; recreational visits into Woolwich; passing out as trumpeter; choice of posting in Gibraltar. Voyage aboard Neuralia to Gibraltar, 1/1938: prior leave; hammocks; conditions. Recollections of period with 4th Coastal Bty, 3rd Coastal Regt, RA at Europa Point Barracks, Gibraltar, 1/1938-1/1942: reception; barrack accommodation; monitoring by NCOs as boy; smoking cigarettes; relationship with officers. REEL 3 Continues: relationship with officers and NCOs; characteristics of Mark V and VII 9.2" guns including automated equipment and gun drill; role of gun position officer; training as battery commander's assistant including use of position finder and meteorological corrections; use of fire director; practice shoots at towed targets from war stations; role as trumpeter and guard duties; sporting activities; church parades; daily routine; role as assistant battery clerk; visits into Gibraltar and Tangiers; status as boy soldier; state of army; question of approach of war and reaction to Churchill speech, 1938;

call up of reservists, 1938. REEL 4 Continues: reaction to radio reports during Munich Crisis, 9/1938; outbreak of war, 3/9/1939; observation post duty and personnel; move to war footing; acting as battery clerk; effects of attaining adult status, 7/1940; gradual promotion to lance sergeant including role as NCO and relationship with ORs; air bombing attacks from French and Italian aircraft; presence of 'H' Force; routine duties; Italian midget submarine attacks; anti-aircraft guns; question of morale; working parties to assist in digging underground defences and facilities; news of progress of war. Return to GB, 1/1942: treatment of German POWs during voyage; train journey to RA Depot, Woolwich; impressions of effects of war. Period with 145 Bty, Coastal Artillery at Lavernock, ca 2/1942-12/1943: situation; reversion to bombardier and instructional role; 6" guns, direction and range finder equipment; searchlights; opinion of state of unit training; promotion to lance sergeant and role as No 1 on 6" gun. REEL 5 Continues: 6" gun drill; improvements made to guns site; status as regular and background to attempts to get another posting; attending ammunition course. Period on field artillery conversion course at School of Artillery, Larkhill, 12/1943-2/1944. Period with 505 Bty, ??? Regt (Queens Own Dorset Yeomanry) RA at Dorset and Hornchurch, 2/1944-6/1944: impressions of unit; reactions to unit being left behind during D Day operations, 6/6/1944; move to administer 'S' Camps in Hornchurch area for troops en route to North West Europe; reactions to non-combatant role; movements. Recollections of period with 30th Field Regt, RA in Greece, ca 1945-1947: journey out via Italy to join unit in Athens area; situation; duties; effects of German occupation, political situation and relationship with Greek civilians; currency inflation; move to Salonika; billets; firing exercises in hills; role on promotion to Troop Sergeant Major (Warrant Officer II); state of roads; attack of diphtheria during voyage back to GB on leave; consequent retention in GB and intelligence test during period at RA Depot, Woolwich. Recollections of periods with 124 Field Regt RA and 5th Regt, Royal Horse Artillery based at School of Artillery, Larkhill, 1947-1951: role as training unit. REEL 6 Continues: nature of duties; reaction to posting to K Bty, 5th Regt, RHA; mixed armament of unit; problems with replacements for Sexton self propelled 25pdrs; duties acting as gun position officer during exercises due to shortage of officers; cases of shells falling in safety zones and problems faced by safety officer; firing with air observation from Auster; ability to act as gun position officer and question of commission; opinion of national servicemen and effect on unit training. Recollections of period with J and D Btys, 3rd Regt, RHA in Verden and Munster lager, West Germany, 1951-1954: state of unit and shortage of NCOs; question of improving quality of troop and role of Colonel George Baker; limited field firing exercises; opinion of Sexton. REEL 7 Continues: review of annual training programme from troop training to army manoeuvres; question damage caused to property of farmers; relationship with German civilians; attitude to question of threat from Soviet Union; alarm exercise in taking up designated war positions; role on promotion to Battery Sergeant Major of D Bty; relationship with battery commander; problems with National Servicemen going AWOL on leave; comparison of NS and regulars. Period at Waterloo Camp, Fyaid, Canal Zone Egypt, ca 3/1954-9/1955: initial impressions; tent accommodation; guard duties on

Sweetwater Canal water filtration plant; curfew; relationship with Egyptian civilians; question of exercises; problems with Sextons in desert conditions; role on promotion to Technical Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant including problems with radio batteries and problems of Egyptians stealing. REEL 8 Recollections of period at Hons, Libya, ca 9/1955-3/1957: background to move following policy change initiated by President Nasser of Egypt; situation; barrack accommodation; problem of Libyans stealing; role on promotion to Regimental Sergeant Major (Warrant Office I); initial problems in relationship with NCOs, nature of relationship with junior officers, battery commanders and Colonel; importance of discipline including role of drill, voice of command and swearing; composition and role of regimental office including story illustrating importance of secrecy and role of Part 1 and 2 Orders; importance of sergeants' mess including question of food rations, facilities and drinking habits. REEL 9 Continues: Continues: case of desertion of NS gunner; recall from practice camp and outbreak of Suez Crisis, 1956; introduction of curfew for British personnel; preparations for invasion of Egypt and review of changing nature of plans due to attitude of King Nidris; issue of new vehicles and radios; destruction of equipment prior to return to GB, 3/1957. Recollections of periods at Bulford and Tidworth Barracks, 3/1957-7/1959: re-equipment with 5.5" medium guns and vehicles; method of callibrating guns; nature of barrack accommodation and married quarters; exercises and firing camps; opinion of Colonel Philip Towers; problems with gunners going AWOL; reactions to end of term as RSM. Recollections of period as RSM with Headquarters Bty, 307 Regt (South Notts Hussars), RA at Bulwell Drill Hall, Nottingham, 7/1957-5/1961: composition of HQ Bty; reception; problem with low turnout for junior NCOs' course; opinion of various officers including Colonel Tom Foreman Hardy and Major James Gunn. REEL 10 Continues: opinion of various officers including Major Peter Featherby, Major D Black, Captain Norman Phillips and Quartermaster R G S Macpherson; question of prior briefing from RSM Pontin; difference between regular and territorial approach and role as RSM including menial tasks and responsibility for improving standards; state of unit training; weekend firing camp at Larkhill ranges and story of Colonel Foreman Hardy using personal caravan; annual camp at Millom Civil Defence Camp, 1960 including role running junior NCOs' course, attitude to civil defence role, question of drinking habits in sergeants' mess and nature of command exercise; married quarters and problem with neighbours. REEL 11 Continues: role and routine duties as RSM; question of career progress and objection to reports from officers; effects of poor rate of attendance on training programme; opinion of officers; opinion of various NCOs including RSM George White, BSM Jack Dennis, TSM Norman Tebbett, BSM Norman Brettle and TSM R Evans; opinion of Major Paul Pollitt and Major John Robinson; question of next posting, taking commission and decision to leave army; absence of competent careers advice. Civilian career: securing work as clerk in printing works; settling in Nottingham; qualification as accountant and promotion; acclimatisation to civilian lifestyle. Recollections of service as NCO and officer with 307 Regt (SNH), RA, 1961-1966: background to decision to rejoin as survey sergeant; formation of survey party. REEL 12

Continues: question of previous absence of survey party; training and methods employed by survey party in placing batteries on regimental grid; use of logarithms; annual camp at Sennybridge; opinion of Colonel James Gunn and his attempts to improve gunnery standards including problems caused by his insistence on qualifications and question of his use of business efficiency methods; opinion of Officers' Cadet Scheme; opinion of Major Roland Bream; question of competence of BSMs; recruitment activities; links with 1st Regt, RHA; question of training in effects of nuclear warfare; opinion of RSM Blake; case of NCO disciplined for leaving camp without permission during annual camp at Westdown, Larkhill, 1962; commission as survey lieutenant; officers' mess; role on promotion to battery captain of 520 Bty; opinion of Lieutenant Tony Haines; observation party role. REEL 13 Continues: including OP party role including composition of team, selection of target, defended zones and nature of fire orders related to artillery board; question of succession of Majors Featherby or Pollitt as colonel; opinion of Major Alan Bexon; opinion of role of Territorial Army and reactions to government cuts including re-designation of SNH into AVR III status; annual camp at Devizes, 1966; attitude towards Queen's Cup competition; decision to leave unit due to smoking related illness, 1966; leaving party. Aspects of period with Army Cadet Force, Nottingham area, ca 1972-1978: role as training major; organisation and role of ACF; role of Colonel James Gunn as Commandant, ACF; role of ACF; training of instructors. REEL 14 Continues: nature of ACF commitment; nature of training camps; role on promotion to Deputy Commandant; role as president of ACF mess committee; question of possible promotion to ACF Commandant; retirement, 1978. Membership of SNH Regimental Assoc and RHA Assoc.

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