

Tale No: HOUNslow 2371 Ext 32 or 215.

From: Major B. Langley, M.B.E.,  
Senior Information Officer,  
H.Q., Eastern Command,  
Hounslow, Middlesex.

EC/PR/20A

22 Nov 52.

The News Editor,

The Art Editor.

*Southampton  
during daylight*

*Mr GORDON (Kewman)  
Mr RUDKIN/Senior*

Return of The Middlesex Regiment (Duke of Cambridge's Own)

Southampton Arrangements.

Colonel Andrew Man, who commanded the 1st Battalion The Middlesex Regiment with distinction in Korea will be at Southampton on Monday, 1 Dec. 52, to welcome home the battalion. He is to be a member of the official reception party which will be headed by the Colonel of the Regiment (Lieut-General G.C. Bucknall) and will include Group Captain A.S.W. Dore, Vice-Lieutenant of Middlesex, Colonel M. Browne, ex-Colonel of the Regiment, Colonel M. Crawford, who was commanding the battalion when it left England in 1949, Lt.Col. A.E. Green and Major P.D.H. Marshall, who commands the Depot at Mill Hill.

The battalion, now commanded by Lt.Col. R.A. Gwyn, is coming home in the Empire Fowey. It is rather more than 500 strong and of this number there are about 200 who served in Korea.

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Unless for any reason the ship is held up she will berth at Southampton at either approximately 3 p.m. or 11 p.m. The battalion will remain on board overnight and will travel by train to its new quarters, Warley Barracks, Brentwood, Essex, on the following day.

Notes:

Facilities will be granted to photographers and reporters (interviews with a limited number of personnel only) at Southampton on 1 Dec. Boarding permits will be necessary and applications should be made for them as soon as possible and in any case not later than Thursday 27 Nov. 52.

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Major E. Merrill,  
Senior Information Officer,  
Public Relations Department,  
H.Q., Southern Command,  
SALISBURY.

Telephone No: Salisbury 6222 Ext 323 or 326.

*N  
27/11/52*

It is hoped that the enclosed copy of the recent history of the Regiment will be of interest to you.

*Para lighter*

*Monday -*

HISTORY OF THE 1st BATTALION, THE MIDDLESEX REGIMENT (DCO)  
(57th/77th) FROM 1948 - 1952.

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In 1948, in common with other Infantry Regiments of the Line, the Regiment was deprived of one of its regular battalions. The 2nd Battalion arrived in England in June from Palestine and was followed by the 1st Battalion from Germany in July. Both were concentrated at Inglis Barracks, Mill Hill, the home of the Regiment, and on 1 August they amalgamated to form the present 1st Battalion.

Initially the battalion was given the role of assisting the Territorial Army in the Home Counties. This task it never fulfilled, for in September it was moved to Chelsea Barracks to take over Public Duties in London, in conjunction with the 1st Battalion The Welsh Guards and the 1st Battalion The King's Shropshire Light Infantry.

On 1 October 1946, the battalion mounted its first King's Guard at Buckingham Palace and guards at the Tower of London and the Bank of England.

During the following nine months of Public Duties, the battalion had the privilege of providing the Guard of Honour at the Palace on the occasion of the State Opening of Parliament, when it was inspected and praised by His Majesty King George VI. A further and singular honour fell to the battalion in providing the King's Guard at Buckingham Palace on 14 November, on the night of which H.R.H. Prince Charles, Duke of Cornwall, was born.

The battalion, however, seemed destined for sudden changes, for in April 1949 it was ordered to mobilize. The Chinese Civil War had assumed a new aspect for, with the collapse of the Nationalist Forces, The Communist Army was steadily advancing towards the borders of Hong Kong.

On 3 May the battalion provided its last Guard and on the 5th took part in a seven mile flag march through London, while the Band and Drums in full dress had its distinction of taking part in the Lord Mayor's Show.

The battalion was now transferred to 27 Independent Infantry Brigade and returned to Mill Hill to complete mobilization. The move to Hong Kong was regarded with mixed feelings, since it meant returning to the scene of those dark and tragic days of December 1941 when, after a glorious action against overwhelming odds, the original 1st Battalion, with the remainder of the Hong Kong Garrison, was forced to surrender to the Japanese. Now, in 1949, the new 1st Battalion was to return, numbering amongst its ranks a few who had suffered four years of captivity in Japanese hands.

The battalion arrived in Hong Kong on 19 July and was quartered in Lyemun Barracks, the place at which the Japanese first gained a foothold on the island. Old friends and acquaintances arrived to offer welcome, and it was gratifying to the "new" 1st Battalion to find in what warm regard their predecessors were held.

The period of congenial surroundings which the island afforded did not last long, for after three weeks the battalion was moved to the New Territories, where the bulk of the Garrison was henceforth to be stationed. Initially the battalion lived in a tented camp in the plain of Sek Kong, where many had their first experience of a typhoon which ravaged the camp. Subsequently the battalion moved to the old Hong Kong Jockey Club stables near Fanling, where it was to remain for the next ten months.

Here the battalion laboured incessantly preparing defensive positions south of the Sham Shun River; most of the digging and wiring was carried out at night in an attempt to deceive the Communist Forces, who by now were in strength on the other side of the river. Despite many fears a direct threat to the Colony failed to materialize although the battalion had a grand stand view across the frontier of one of the final battles on the Chinese mainland, before the withdrawal of the Nationalist Army to Formosa.

Although the future appeared fairly settled, it was not to be, for June 1950 saw the outbreak of war in Korea, with the United States reinforcing the hard-pressed South Koreans. At one stage the Minister of Defence stated categorically that

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neither Hong Kong nor Malaya would be called upon to send troops to Korea and accordingly rumour in the Colony died. A week later however, the battalion, whilst taking part in a swimming gala, received orders to prepare for Korea, as part of 27 British Infantry Brigade (the Brigade originally consisted of only two battalions, 1st Battalion The Middlesex Regiment and 1st Battalion The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders). This force was to be the first British contribution to the United Nations fighting in Korea.

On 25 August, six days after it had been alerted, the battalion embarked in the aircraft carrier H.M.S. Unicorn and after a farewell address by Mr. Malcolm Macdonald, High Commissioner for South East Asia, sailed for Korea.

On 29 August 27 Brigade, comprising a token force of some fifteen hundred all ranks, arrived at Pusan. The Brigade was equipped for only a short period of active operations and was destined to be relieved by the 29 Infantry Brigade Group, a streamlined formation then being formed in England as Britain's promised contribution to the United Nations Forces.

When the Battalion arrived, the situation in Korea was critical. The North Korean Army had encircled Pusan, at places only forty miles from the port, and was poised for the last thrust which would push the United Nations Forces into the sea. Hurriedly the Brigade was moved direct from ship to train and thence to Taegu, the pivot of communications and the direct route to Pusan. Five days later it was in action on the Naktong River.

It was now that the value of the hard life in the New Territories became apparent. The Brigade was not only familiar with the climate and tactics in mountain country, but at this time were the only fully trained troops in the theatre. Despite its lack of supporting artillery, tanks, engineers and signals, the Brigade was very soon to win the acclaim and respect of its Allies. After only two months in Korea, the United States 8th Army Commander publicly stated that the British 27th Brigade was worth a Division to him in the field. A finer tribute would indeed be hard to find.

After a short period on the Naktong, the situation changed. The landing at Inchon was successful and the 8th Army took the offensive. 27 Brigade was allotted a vital assault role across the Naktong River and the capture of Sonju, a main supply base and road hub centre for the North Korean Armies on the central front.

On 21 September the battalion led the Brigade assault across the river, attacking and capturing Middlesex Hill, a steep and precipitous feature 900 feet high, which was stubbornly defended. This, the battalion's first big operation, was extremely well carried out and opened the way for the Argylls who continued the attack next day. After a few days of bitter fighting, Sonju fell and with it a vast quantity of enemy weapons and equipment. For this action, the Brigade was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation for valour by Syngman Rhee, President of South Korea.

At this stage the Brigade was re-inforced. Its two infantry battalions each received their fourth rifle company and the Brigade was joined by the 3rd Battalion Royal Australian Rifles. The designation was now changed to the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade, which became the proud forerunner of the now famous 1st Commonwealth Division, formed over a year later.

The front line began to advance rapidly as the North Korean forces crumbled. After a short period of mopping up operations, the battalion was flown to Kimpo and took up positions 1000 yards short of the 38th Parallel. On 16 October the battalion crossed the Parallel at Kaesong (now famous for the original peace talks) and took part in the drive on the North Korean capital. The battalion had the honour of being the first British troops to enter Pyongyang, which they did from the west, some few hours after the Republic of Korea Forces had entered the city from the east.

The next day the Brigade continued the advance as the leading element of the 8th Army. From then on the battalion was continually on the move, following hard on the heels of the retreating enemy. There seemed to be only one intention and that was to "roll on" without reconnaissance and with little support. Under these conditions the battalion fought several sharp encounter battles against determined rearguards frequently supported by SP artillery.

By 30 October the battalion had reached to within 40 miles of the Yalu River and the Manchurian border, where for the first time it was drawn into reserve, after sixty two continuous days in the line. Two days later, however, when it seemed that victory was in sight and the war over, strong Chinese Communist Armies intervened. On 5 November the Brigade clashed for the first time with the Chinese and after being cut off from the remainder of the U.S. Division in which it was serving fought its way back to the line of the ChongChon River. By 16 November it had counter-attacked and was once again in Pakchon, but by now the unbalanced dispositions of 8th Army forced a general withdrawal.

The Korean winter now arrived and struck savagely at troops who were still equipped with jungle green uniform. However, with their usual British fortitude and greatly assisted by "borrowed" American clothing, the battalion successfully overcame the semi-arctic conditions which by day and night produced icy winds and many degrees of frost.

During the next four weeks the Brigade served almost continually as rearguard for the U.S. IX Corps and was called on to fight several delaying actions - South of Kunuri after an 18 miles night march the Battalion found itself alone once again - this time with orders to cover the withdrawal of the U.S. 2 Div which had been outflanked by the rapidly advancing Communist forces.

In the two day action that followed, the battalion suffered many casualties, but succeeded in holding open the southern end of the main withdrawal route. A horrifying spectacle was witnessed as two U.S. regiments of lorry and tank borne infantry attempted to drive through the long Chinese roadblock to safety. As dusk fell on the second day the trickle of survivors had stopped and under fire from the surrounding hills the Battalion pulled back to begin its long 300 mile journey south through Pyongyang and Kunchon until it found itself tired and ragged once again south of the parallel.

Here with no immediate operation commitments the battalion settled down to enjoy Christmas. In this they were greatly assisted by the vast quantity of presents which arrived both from U.K. and Hong Kong, and by the very generous response to the Lord Lieutenant's appeal for a Middlesex Comforts Fund - so ably handled by the London W.V.S.

Parcels and letters poured in from friends, relatives and unknown well-wishers, while the turkeys, puddings and pies of the U.S. ration added a traditional flavour which made that Korean shantytown Christmas a truly memorable one.

New Year's Day 1951 brought the beginning of a renewed Chinese offensive and 27 Brigade was rapidly called upon to form a rearguard in the area north of Seoul. This they concluded most successfully in spite of the alarms and excursions which were then the order of the day, and were the last troops to cross the Han River before the bridges were blown.

January 1951 found the battalion reconnoitring and digging in on various defence lines but early in February the United Nations once again took the initiative and began to press the Chinese back in offensive mountaineering operations. Gone for ever was the "steam roller" drive along roads and the bye-passing of opposition, Instead the Army began a co-ordinated yard by yard advance along the front against a very determined, well entrenched and tenacious enemy.

Operation "Killer" started with the battalion leading the advance of the Brigade across the Han River towards Chipyeong-Ni, some six miles away, where a French battalion with U.S. troops were cut off and heroically withstanding overwhelming Chinese efforts to annihilate them.

All morning the advance on a wide front continued smoothly but in the late afternoon enemy were seen digging in on a long low feature lying astride the main axis. A quick encounter battle followed, with the Chinese retreating grudgingly spur by spur, but it was not until dusk that the last was finally ejected. Darkness found the Battalion frenziedly consolidating its isolated position for the night.

At 0510 hours the next morning the Chinese counter-attacked, supported by mortars and machine guns, blowing bugles and shouting. From then until 0645 hours, without a lull, the battle raged furiously with a considerable amount of hand to hand fighting.



At first light the Chinese called off their attack, leaving behind a large number of dead, wounded and prisoners (in one company area alone, 48 dead Chinese were counted). So ended the battalion's first action in Operation "Killer", an excellent omen and a great tribute to the skill and determination of all ranks.

During the next two months the advance continued with slow, heartbreaking progress amidst the rugged snow-capped mountains and icy winds of Central Korea. Once again the battalion crossed the 38th Parallel and on 17 April, after heavy fighting the Brigade was placed in Corps reserve for a well earned rest.

At this time, rumour of the relief of the two original British battalions became fact, but fate was to play one final trick before the long awaited event materialised. On 23 April the Chinese struck again, directing their central thrust against the 6th Republic of Korea Division, which had relieved the 27th Brigade in the line a few days previously. Once again the battalion was ordered north to stem the rot. Heavy fighting ensued and 27 Brigade, having successfully halted the Chinese main attack in the central sector, carried out a series of rearguard actions to positions south of the Pukhan River.

A few weeks later the situation along the whole front had stabilised and the battalion was relieved in the line by 1 KSLI, embarking at Inchon the next day in the U.S. Infantry combat ship - the Montrail - for Hong Kong.

Thus ended nine months of rigorous campaigning. During this period the battalion had suffered 5 Officers and 26 other ranks killed, 94 all ranks wounded and 2 other ranks missing. The battalion could feel justly proud of its fine record in Korea where it had proved that the well trained and properly led British soldier, whether he be regular or national serviceman, is unbeatable, full of resourcefulness and endurance, that he can withstand the rigours of any climate and terrain with equanimity and cheerfulness and that when called upon, he can outfight any foe. Once again the battalion had upheld the fine tradition of The Diehards and had added yet another chapter to its Regimental history.

After an Albufera Day at sea, the battalion disembarked at Kowloon and rejoined the Argylls and the remainder of 27 Infantry Brigade in the New Territories.

Life at San Wai camp during the next 18 months followed closely the pattern set earlier in Beas Stables. After a short period of leave the Battalion settled down to fulfil its functions as an operational unit, a training unit, and a peacetime establishment, with all the trappings of pomp and ceremony. Life was full and varied, with riot drills and border patrols side by side with ceremonial parades, operational wiring following closely upon education and weapon classification. While demonstrations, field firing, Brigade Exercises and individual training all clamoured incessantly to be included in an already over burdened programme both summer and winter alike.

After three and a half years in the Far East the Battalion has now returned home for a short spell before moving on to Austria. During its foreign tour some 80 Officers and 3,000 men have passed through its ranks, and of these some 1,100 have received the Korean medals. The Battalion arrived back at Southampton on 1 December with a total strength of 518 all ranks - some 200 of whom had served with it in Korea.

While abroad three events of regimental importance took place. Firstly, the granting of an alliance by H.M. King George VI between The Middlesex Regiment and the Hong Kong Regiment, in recognition of the part played by the two regiments in the Battle of Hong Kong in 1941.

A ceremonial cathedral service was held on the last Sunday before the Battalion left Hong Kong when a memorial plaque and Book of Remembrance were dedicated by the Bishop; and on sailing the Battalion was presented with a most original and handsome plinth surmounted by the silver crest of the Hong Kong Regiment.

Secondly, an agreement between the Colonels of the Middlesex Regiment and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders which extended Honorary Membership of each others Messes to mark the long association of the two regiments and the close friendship between the two 1st battalions in Korea and Hong Kong.

/And

And thirdly, the presentation to H.M.S Unicorn of the Regimental badge (which now hangs on her Quarterdeck) and the granting to her the permission to play The Regimental Marches on all ceremonial occasions in memory of the close alliance that followed the battalions voyage in her to Korea. In return H.M.S. Unicorn gave to the Battalion a large silver cup which is now the individual shooting trophy.

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1952  
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Tele No: HOUNslow 2371 Ext 32 or 215.

~~From:~~ Major B. Langley, M.B.E.,  
Senior Information Officer,  
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26 Nov 52

The News Editor,

The Art Editor.

Return of The Middlesex Regiment.

Since my memorandum dated 22 Nov. 52, news has been received that the "Empire Fowey" is making good time and, in fact, is so much ahead of schedule that she will now berth at Southampton at approximately 5 p.m. on Sunday, 30 Nov. 52 and not in the afternoon of Monday 1 Dec. 52. The battalion will remain on board overnight and will travel by train on Monday to Warley Barracks, Essex.

At this time of the year, however, it is always possible that shipping is held up by a sudden gale or fog. Should there be another change in the time of arrival efforts will be made to inform you but all who intend to be at Southampton and have applied for boarding permits are advised to keep in touch by telephone either with this office or with Major Merrill, whose telephone number is SALISBURY 6222 extension 323 or 326.

*Boarding permit at  
gangway.*

*Para keeping lights for  
Disembarkation at 7-30 am  
K. Gordon to stay to cover*

*Sd Unit to return after reunion subsistence Sun evening.*