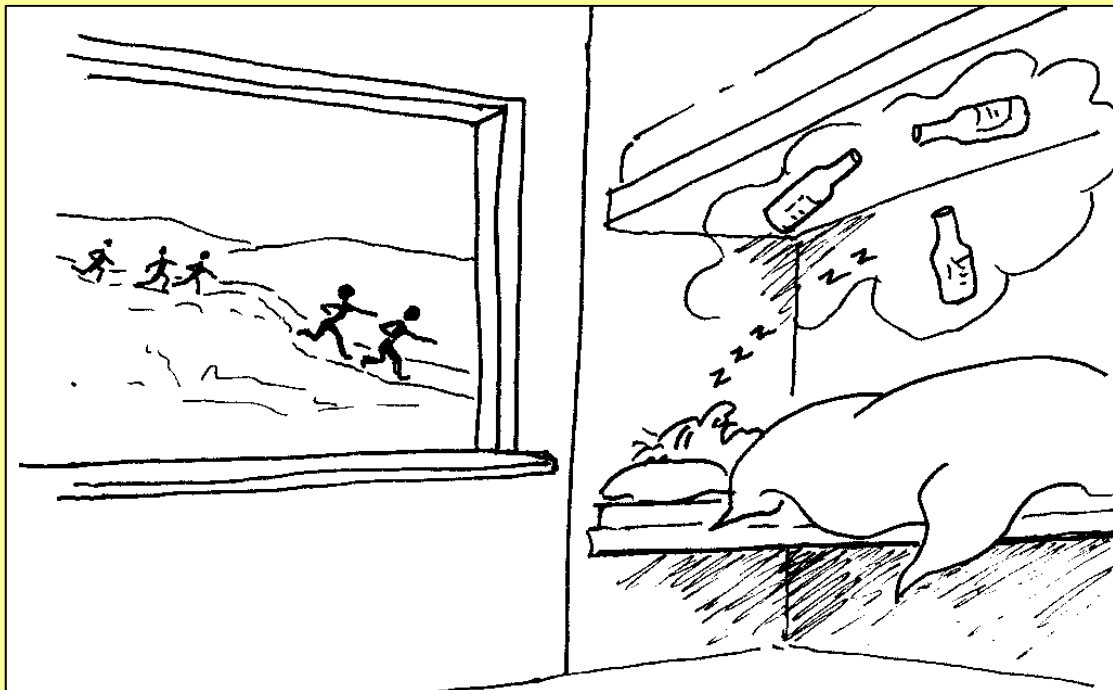


**HELE'S / ST. PETER'S C. OF E.**

**AIDED SCHOOL EXETER**

**COMBINED CADET FORCE**



**MEMORABLE INCIDENTS**

**1968 - 1999**

# **COMBINED CADET FORCE**

## **HELE'S / ST. PETER'S C. OF E. AIDED SCHOOL**

### **MEMORABLE INCIDENTS**

**1968 – 1999**

**OR**

### **THE CONFESSIONS OF A RETIRED CONTINGENT COMMANDER**

Some of the following anecdotes were taken from outlines in the Contingent's History Booklet; the remainder from the former Contingent Commander's memory.

Only the names have been disguised to protect the guilty.

Please bear in mind that many of the featured items occurred well before the advent of health and safety legislation, risk assessments, mobile phones and the like (thank goodness).

If you are a professional or amateur cartoonist please feel free to add to the text - simply e-mail your contribution to me.

The author served in the Cadet Force Movement for 50 years, a little under 30 as a Contingent Commander, and lived to tell the tale, or rather these 'tales'!

MF  
Spring 2015

Thanks to the following:

1. Brigit Holland who drew the cartoons, who not only had no military experience, but placed her own interpretation on the incidents.
2. Mrs J Carr who word processed the text.
3. Alan Brunton, Chair of the Chudleigh History Group, for his guidance and encouragement.
4. Tim Stephenson who set up the website.
5. Finally, to the thousands of young people and adults who passed through the Contingent and provided the inspiration for what follows.



In Loving Memory of  
Flt/Lt Angela Battershall  
St. Peter's C. of E. Aided School  
Combined Cadet Force  
1987 - 1999

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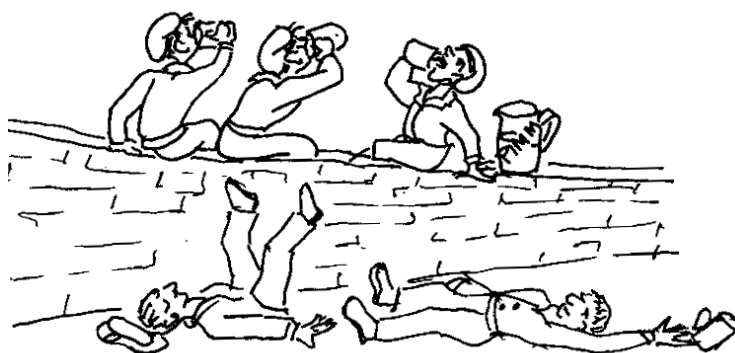
Do you remember me?

Rugby playing past.

## What Happened at Annual Camp - Stayed at Annual Camp

Back in the early 80's Annual Camp took place in West Germany hosted by a Royal Artillery Regiment at Hohne.

The attachment was a great success and culminated in a BBQ in the garden of the Officers' Mess.



Weak Pimms?

The Contingent Commander (C.C.), being an old hand in such matters, sought out the Officers' Mess Sergeant (O.M.S.), read Manager, to agree the necessary arrangements. The topic on what to drink was raised and, with the majority of the party being under 18, it was agreed to be "weak Pimms - with lots of fruit and lemonade in it, sir".

The event was held during the evening of the day before the party returned to England. The officers, not fancying "weak Pimms", had settled on several bottles of wine. Judging by the level of laughter and general noise, the event appeared to be going swimmingly, until the C.C. noticed several of the younger cadets fall off backwards from a low terrace wall. A Contingent officer was discreetly sent to check that they were uninjured but rapidly returned and informed the C.C. that they were .....

The penny suddenly dropped and the "weak Pimms" was sampled by the C.C. To his horror it turned out to be normal strength Pimms and was being consumed in half-pint mugs! The BBQ was swiftly ended and the cadets were rapidly, and in some cases merrily, returned to their accommodation.

The following day the C.C. first sought out the O.M.S., but was informed that he had gone on leave! He then had a very serious talk with his cadets (some of whom were suffering from sore heads). It was suggested that the best course of action was not to mention the Pimms on the basis that "what happened at camp stayed at camp", in the faint hope that letters of complaint from parents did not reach the headmaster.

To their eternal credit, and as a demonstration of their loyalty to the Contingent, the C.C. never heard mention of it again ... until now!

## **The Incident on Sennybridge Training Area**

In the late 1960's Annual Camp was based at Sennybridge Training Camp and its huge training area in Central Wales. The party was accompanied by an Officer Cadet (O.Cdt) from Sandhurst who, until recently, was a cadet in the Contingent.

The Contingent Commander (C.C.), being RAF Section, took advantage of the O.Cdt's expertise by asking him to devise and run a military exercise for the camping party. The sub-area to be used was some distance from the camp so the O.Cdt. was given use of the issue (read - borrowed) Land Rover, and instructed to be back by 'tea time' with his exercise outline.

'Tea time' came and went, 'dinner time' also came and went, but without any sign of the O.Cdt. Eventually, in the early evening, hot and bothered, the O.Cdt. arrived back at camp, but without the Land Rover!

When questioned what had happened to the vehicle, the O.Cdt. stated that he had run out of fuel in the centre of the training area and had to walk/hitch back to camp; to which the C.C. gently enquired if the O.Cdt. had been taught at Sandhurst that service Land Rovers had two fuel tanks and that the lever to switch from one tank to the other was under the driver's seat?

A red-faced O.Cdt. was ordered to 'go, fetch' without his dinner as the C.C. needed it at 0800hrs the following day.

Footnote: This incident did not appear to have an adverse effect on the O.Cdt.'s career as he won the Queen's Medal at Sandhurst and eventually retired as a Lieutenant General, with a knighthood!



## Initiative Training

Back in the late 60's and early 70's "initiative tests" were all the rage in cadet circles. "Teach them to stand on their own feet - make decisions", etc. You can probably add a few more of your own.

Not to be left out the O.C. Army Section (O.C.A.S.) decided to follow suit during Annual Camp, based at Fremington Camp, near Barnstaple.

While the senior cadets were away in groups of two or three arrangements were being made for a change of Command Dinner at a local hotel. All proceeded to plan until the Contingent Commander (C.C.) received a phone call from the Wing Commander/Admin. at RAF Chivenor ordering the C.C. and O.C.A.S. to report to his office immediately to receive his severe displeasure, and to retrieve two cadets who were currently residing in a cell in the guardroom.

The C.C., who had served in the Contingent since the late 40's, was particularly upset on this his last full day before relinquishing command. The two very worried officers, who thought they were about to replace the cadets in clink, changed into their No. 1 uniforms and proceeded to RAF Chivenor where they were ushered into the Wing Commander's office. He was seated with his uniform cap on (never a good sign), and rapidly gave them a severe rollocking for not clearing this initiative test with him in advance. The C.C. and O.C.A.S. were still none the wiser, but the Wing Commander, having completed his tirade, removed his cap, retrieved a bottle of whisky from a filing cabinet and, having invited them to sit, poured three large glasses - one each. The O.C.A.S. did not drink whisky, but on this occasion gulped it down!

The Wing Commander then told them the 'real' reason why the two cadets were in custody and why these two officers had been admonished.

His story went something like this:

"Your cadets, who were in uniform, hitched a lift to Winkleigh Airfield, which they had been required to survey as an alternative to Chivenor (nothing new so far!). They alighted from the vehicle, placed one foot on the airfield and were promptly jumped on by civilian police officers disguised as RAF personnel. They were then handed over to the RAF police at Chivenor and ended up in the guardroom nick (still no reason for their treatment!), but the Wing Commander had left the 'good bit' until last, namely that the civilian police had staked out Winkleigh Airfield following a tip off that Ronnie Biggs, of the Great Train Robbery fame (or is it infamy?), had buried his loot on the airfield.

Eventually we all parted on a fairly friendly basis and the two very chastened cadets were sprung from the guardroom.

The sequel to this incident was that another group had been required to take a distant look at Chivenor's security and had managed to obtain an A3 sized aerial photo of Chivenor which they had 'obtained' from the Station Master's office in Barnstaple. The O.C.A.S. decided that on balance it was probably sensible not to trouble the Wing Co./Admin. further about this breach of security, despite the era being at the height of

the Cold War!

What the parents of the two cadets thought of the treatment of their sons was never established, but they became instant Contingent heroes.

Years later the O.C.A.S. learned that the complete Contingent thought that the whole episode was a put-up job!!

## **You Don't Know Who I Am?**

In the late 80's Annual Camp was held in the Peak District, based at Leek Training Camp. The programme progressed without incident until the Contingent Senior Cadet NCO (S.N.C.O.) had a quiet word with the Contingent Commander (C.C.) about the small portions of food being served to the cadets. The C.C. attended the next cadets' evening meal and agreed that the portions looked decidedly small.

The following day, whilst pondering how to handle this situation, out on the training area the C.C. noticed one of the regular army directing staff give part of his packed lunch to one of his cadets. The C.C. politely asked the sergeant why he had been so generous, to which he replied "The kids are hungry, sir, they are not getting enough to eat"!

This was more than enough evidence that something had to be done and that the C.C. was the man to do it. He decided to raise the matter at the evening planning conference. This conference was held in a partitioned-off part of the Officers' Mess bar and a regular warrant officer who was responsible for ensuring that the civilian catering contractor met the contract was challenged. The C.C. was assured that the terms of the contract were being met and that he had nothing to complain about.

A very disgruntled C.C. left the conference, muttering to himself and wondering how much 50 x fish and chips would cost, to be stopped by a very distinguished-looking gentleman in civilian dress who said in a very cultured voice "You don't know who I am and I don't intend to tell you, but it suffices to say that questions will be asked in the House"!

Questions were in fact asked in the House of Commons about catering contracts, because Army Catering Corps officers arrived at camp and the quantity and range of choices improved enormously. The cadets were overjoyed by the improvement and when the S.N.C.O. discreetly let S.N.C.O.'s from other Contingents know who was responsible, the C.C. became the hero of the hour.

The C.C. learned sometime later that the distinguished-looking gentleman was a visiting old boy of another Contingent and a Whitehall Mandarin!

Proof that it's not what you know, but who you know that counts.

## Rolling Replenishment

Whilst on exercise with a Royal Artillery Regiment in Germany members of the Contingent were split between the crews of 109 self-propelled guns and charged from location to location, helping to set up fire and move - great fun.

The next phase of the exercise was to take part in a 'rolling replenishment at night', which took place about 0200 hrs. and involved the re-supply of ammunition, fuel, food, water, etc. whilst still moving, before settling into a defensive position.



The C.C Beats The Morning Rush Hour – Just!

The Contingent Commander (C.C.) was a passenger in the Battery Commander's (B.C.) Land Rover, being driven by a young soldier who looked younger than many of his cadets. The B.C. suggested that the C.C. might like to get his head down and so in the middle of nowhere in pitch darkness the Rover stopped and the driver retrieved a bivouac tent, a couple of poles and a few (not enough) pegs, and disappeared into the night, promising to pick up the C.C. at 0600 hrs, and assuring him that his cadets would be well looked after. The exhausted C.C. crawled into this sleeping bag and fell sound asleep.

Later that morning the C.C. awoke in daylight, poked his head out of the bivvy and, to his horror, found that he had slept right in the middle of a track which, in training area terms, was the equivalent of the M1! He felt very lucky that nothing very large and heavy had come his way during the night!

On returning to his cadets he found them breakfasting on wild strawberries which were common in this part of Germany.

## Chinese Annual Camp Dinner

Annual Camp usually ended with either a formal dinner with speeches, silver, candles, etc. or an informal BBQ, at which the cadets got their own back on the regular directing staff!

In this particular year it was a dinner and, for some reason that has disappeared with time, was held in a Chinese restaurant in Leek.

The complete party was moved from Leek Training Camp by road and the occasion proceeded without incident. Needless to say the party were all dressed in their best uniforms as would befit the occasion.



Left All On My Own In A Strange Town

The dinner ended and everyone made their way back to the vehicles with the exception of the Contingent Commander who remained behind to thank the staff and to pay the bill. On leaving the restaurant the C.C. could find no sign of the vehicles and returned to the restaurant to either phone the camp or to order a taxi, but to his dismay the establishment was closed and all the lights extinguished.

The C.C. eventually managed to attract the attention of a taxi driver, but not before receiving quite a few 'funny looks' from passers by, unused to seeing army officers in full regalia on their street.

On returning to camp the C.C. was greeted with "we wondered where you had got to". There's gratitude for you!

## **The Good Excuse**

Whilst attached to a regular unit at Dortmund, West Germany, the cadets were granted an afternoon's free time in the town as long as they were back in camp by a certain time. They were to show their record of service books signed by the Contingent Commander (C.C.) to gain re-entry to the barracks (cadets are not issued with military I.D. cards). The Guard Commander (G.C.) was made aware of this arrangement and was required to 'tick off' returnees on a nominal roll.

A few minutes after the deadline, the C.C. received a phone call from the G.C. that all had returned bar one. 'Thinking on his feet' the C.C. decided to make an example of the miscreant and instructed the G.C. to place him in one of the guardroom cells, to close but not lock the door, and in the fullness of time the C.C. would 'spring him'. About an hour later the C.C. did the decent thing but having an audience in the guardroom demanded an explanation why the cadet was late. The very worried looking young man replied that "he had been out with the Q.M.'s daughter and had forgotten time".

Those in the guardroom fell about laughing, so the C.C. decided that the point had been made and that no further punishment was needed! Obviously this fairly mature cadet had been a fast worker as the C.C. realised that he was the only person in the guardroom who did not know that the Q.M. had a daughter!

Footnote: This incident had no adverse effect on the miscreant's career as he was commissioned in the Royal Marines and served with distinction in the first Gulf War.

## **I'm Going to Report You - One**

In the late 70's the Contingent found itself on the Isle of Man based at a crummy training camp at Jurby. The weather was awful, which did nothing to improve the Contingent Commander's (C.C.) humour.

During the day before departure the C.C. was sent for by the Camp Commandant, a retired officer, re-employed for the job and known in the trade as a 're-tread'.

The C.C. reported as requested and was greeted with the order "you are the last Contingent - get a couple of your cadets to crawl into the incinerator and remove the dead tins". The C.C. wondered whether he should enquire if the incinerator was alight or extinguished, but at the last moment thought better of it. The C.C. then commented that surely the camp employed a couple of general duties labourers who could carry out such work but was informed that none existed.

By now the C.C. was becoming even more rebellious thinking of how he should respond to any letters written by parents to the headmaster complaining about the treatment of their sons (or late sons?).

The C.C. politely but firmly refused and was informed that disciplinary action would be taken against him. However, the C.C. was an old hand when it came to such matters and knew that C.C.F. officers were not subject to military law and thus were not liable for disciplinary action - hard luck!

It is always prudent to know ones limitations (is this an old Chinese proverb?).

## **I'm Going to Report You - Two**

On the final morning of an Annual Camp based at Fremington Training Camp, near Barnstaple in the mid-70's, the Contingent Commander (C.C.) discovered that the issue (read borrowed) 4 tonner's fuel tank had been milked (fuel stolen) during the night. After much discussion the Camp Commandant, a re-tread officer, reluctantly signed a statement to support the vehicle documents on hand-back to the vehicle depot.

The C.C. was, to put it mildly, not best pleased, and when conducting the hand-back of the cadets' accommodation to the camp Q.M., an old and cunning warrant officer, was incandescent to find that he was deficient one complete bed - yes, a complete bed - springs, headboard, tailboard, mattress, mattress cover, pillow, pillow case, two sheets and three blankets - a complete bed! How can you lose a complete bed?

The C.C. offered to line up his cadets for the Q.M. to search their kit, but this offer was politely refused. There had obviously been an accounting error, which could easily have been rectified by a full stock check at the end of the camping season, but no. The C.C. strongly suspected that the Q.M. was trying to make up his deficiencies by blaming it on an innocent C.C.F. Contingent Commander, but he had chosen the wrong C.C.!

The Q.M. made out a 'deficiency report' and invited the C.C. to sign. Now this was standard military procedure and the C.C. had willingly signed in the past for the odd lost pillow case, but not for a complete bed, so he refused, the result of which was - read the title!!

Early in September what was known as the green bill was received, followed a couple of weeks later by the red version, and eventually 'unless you pay this bill within 28 days a disciplinary action will be taken against you' letter arrived.

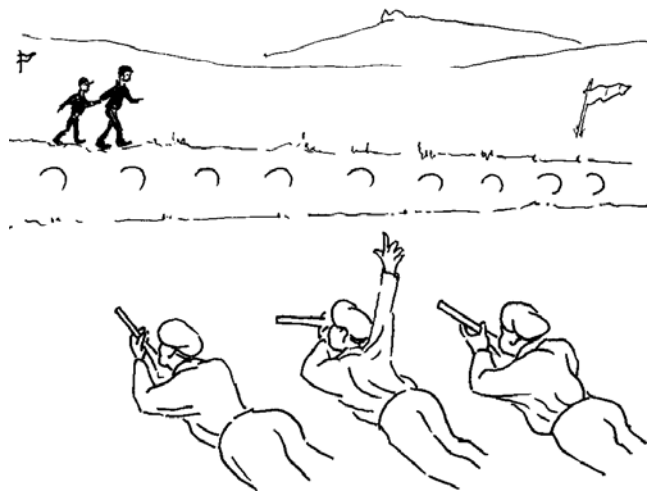
If you have read the Jurby Incident Report you will know what the C.C. did next - nothing, which was the last he ever heard about it.

The moral of this story is 'don't be intimidated'!



## I'm Going to Report You - Three

A range firing day was always a popular part of Annual Camp. In the late 70's the activity was held in the Brecon Beacons National Park at a range with the unpronounceable name of Cwmgwdi. This was a small 10 firing point, maximum 300 metre range set in a hollow with high ground on three sides. It was not enclosed by a fence but had numerous warning signs stating that entry was forbidden if the red flags were flying - they were - we hoisted them.



Target To Your Front - 5 Rounds - #?&\*!

Also several sentries were posted on high ground at the sides of the range with orders to wave red flags, shout and jump up and down if anyone came into view - all standard procedure of the time.

Firing was carried out in the static prone position. The Contingent Commander was acting as 'firing point officer' and several other range-qualified officers were standing behind the cadets to help, e.g. a jam or misfire, etc. A problem was indicated by a firer laying his weapon on the ground and raising an arm.

All went to plan until one detail (group of firers) was down and given the order to load, which they carried out. The C.C. shouted "target to your front - f", but simultaneously a firer raised an arm and a shout of "stop" rang out from an officer ordered to watch the sentries. Weapons were lowered and to his horror the C.C. saw two figures standing in clear view on top of the stop butts. The cadets were rapidly ordered to leave their rifles on the ground and to stand up.

The C.C. was not best pleased to see these interlopers and, having his range day interrupted, jumped into a Land Rover and drove along the range side track to confront these miscreants - a man and his 10-year-old son. His story was that "Yes, they had seen the warning signs, red flags and heard firing, but took no notice because they were in a National Park where they could walk where they pleased"!!

The C.C. gave the man a serious dressing down, stuck him and his son in his Land Rover and drove them to safety. On getting out of the vehicle the man stated that "he did not like the C.C.'s attitude" and, yes, you can guess the rest. This was becoming monotonous, but as usual nothing more was heard!

Footnote: The C.C. did take the precaution of sending a report of the incident, including names and address to the appropriate authority. (Always cover your back!)

## **Escape and Evasion - Welsh Style**

Annual Camp in the early 80's centred on Sennybridge training area in Central Wales, one of the coldest locations in Britain. Even in the middle of summer an Army Section Officer (A.S.O.) volunteered to organise and run the final 24 hour exercise and was determined to 'do something different'!

In much secrecy he and the O.C. RAF Section (O.C.R.) cooked up a 'thing' which would ensure that the exercise started with a bang. He assured the C.C. that the thing was perfectly safe to handle. The exercise was to be a variation on the standard escape and evasion with both evaders and chasers coming from our camping party.

The evaders were transported to the area, but were ambushed by detonating the thing in front of the 4 tonner. The thing produced more smoke than noise but was sufficient to convince the driver to jam on the brakes. All of the escapers ended up in a heap in the back in a mass of arms, legs, equipment and weapons, and were in no position to offer any resistance. All were captured and taken away for interrogation. Thus phase one ended successfully.

Phase two was to carry out a careful search of the 'prisoners', to find some incriminating intelligence, which would trigger phase three. However, after extensive and repeated searching no such evidence could be found! It suddenly dawned on the A.S.O. that in the heat of the moment, and considering everything else he had to contend with, he had forgotten to secrete the said document on one of the unsuspecting evaders (sneaky!), but showing great resolve managed to rectify the situation without anyone noticing!

Phase three began, the exercise progressed and was very successful, enjoyed by all. However, the A.S.O. learned a valuable lesson - 'kiss' (keep it simple sunshine). To be fair, after serving for five years the A.S.O. went on to gain his doctorate, specialising in the First World War. I wonder if his escape and evasion experience was of any help to him?

## A Compliment from a Gurkha

In 1993 the Contingent Annual Camp was of the 'central' type, with the programme organised and run by a number of regular officers and men. The men on this occasion were from the Brigade of Gurkhas who took great delight in brandishing their Kukris (large knives) on exercise.



Beware Of Watching Gurkhas

On the day in question the party had been issued with 'box meal' (packed lunch) and were transported somewhere by civilian coach. As is the way with teenagers, most had consumed the major part of their meal on the outward journey and, to their shame, and in this case, misfortune, had deposited some of the resulting rubbish on the floor - bad move!

Unfortunately this was not the first occasion that thoughtless behaviour of this nature had occurred and the Contingent Commander (C.C.) was determined to stamp it out once and for all! On the return to camp a bin bag was passed round and every scrap of rubbish collected from the coach.

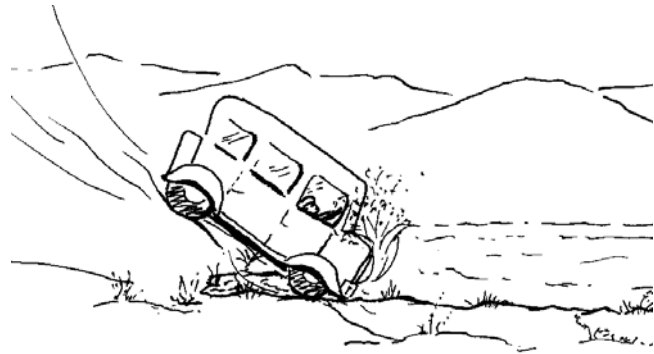
To emphasise the point the C.C. decided that drastic, unforgettable action was required. He thought of borrowing and using a Gurka's kukri, but felt on reflection that parents might be a bit upset if their offspring returned home minus the odd limb!! He therefore, in as dramatic manner as he could muster, strewed the contents of the bin bag onto the parade square where it was caught by the wind, and ordered the miscreants to pick up every last piece.

The demonstration of the C.C.'s displeasure had the desired effect! However, a Gurka who was standing outside the guardroom, and who had witnessed the incident, was heard to say to his mate "him mean soldier - I like him". Consequently the 'mean soldier' tag stayed with the C.C. for the remainder of the camp.

**Moral:** Never argue with a Gurka, particularly if he is brandishing his kukri, or worse, a disgruntled C.C. holding a bag of rubbish!

## Driving Instruction

One of the many advantages of an attachment to a regular unit in Germany was that restrictions on what cadets could experience in the U.K. did not apply in Germany.



When You Get To The Top - Put Your  
Foot Down

Consequently, modern weapons firing, i.e. from 109mm self-propelled artillery pieces to 9mm pistols was popular. However, arguably the most popular of all

was driving instruction. This invariably took place on the wide open space of a training area where there was little danger of an accident - or so the Contingent Commander (C.C.) thought. Three incidents come to mind:-

Incident one: Regular Sergeant to cadet: "Your turn next, lad"  
Cdt. to Sgt.: "I'd rather not, Sgt."  
Sgt. to Cdt.: "Why not?"  
Cdt. to Sgt.: "Because I tend to break things, Sgt."  
Sgt. to Cdt.: "Well you won't break that lad - get in".  
(The vehicle was a 32 ton armoured personnel carrier.)

Incident two: Picture the scene - very small cadet driving a very large armoured vehicle - only his head visible - drove up a steep hill very slowly - stopped at the top - told by instructor to put his foot down, which he did - puddle, no a pond at the bottom - hit pond - bow wave created - cadet hit in face by a cold blast of muddy water - great fun? Probably not for the cadet at that moment!

Incident three: The C.C. received a report that a cadet had a minor accident whilst driving a Land Rover. No injuries and only little damage to the Land Rover. The vehicle was returned to the camp and left overnight in the R.E.M.E. workshop hangar for repair. At breakfast the following morning the C.C. heard that during the night the vehicle had caught fire and was burnt to a crisp! (Apparently someone neglected to disconnect the battery!)

A very worried C.C. sought out the young lieutenant whose vehicle had been incinerated to apologise, but was greeted with "don't give it a second thought, sir, all the kit I lost on a recent exercise and was about to have to pay for, was in the Rover - aren't I a lucky boy"!

The C.C., who had his suspicions, thought that discretion was the better part of valour and let the matter drop.

## The C.C.'s Retirement Speech

In late July 1970 the Contingent Commander (C.C.), who had been a member of the Contingent since 1948, decided to retire. The occasion was marked by a formal dinner at the end of Annual Camp at a hotel in Barnstaple.

The C.C. had served in the R.A.F. during the war and was a former pupil of Exeter School.. He gave this very moving speech:-

“His boyhood school friend had been commissioned in the Royal Navy and was posted to serve on H.M.S. Exeter. Unfortunately he was killed when the Exeter was sunk by Japanese aircraft in 1942 in the South China Sea. However, the C.C. maintained contact with the mother of his friend who, after the war, gave him her son’s uniform dress sword and scabbard”. The C.C. produced the sword from under the table and held it aloft for all to see.



I Name This Sword "Excalibur"

Having told his story he asked the Contingent Senior Cadet N.C.O., who was leaving, to step forward. This young man had won a place at the Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth to train as a Royal Naval Officer. The C.C. presented his friend’s sword to him, knowing that it would then go back into service.

Not a dry eye in the room!!

## **How to get the Best Seats on a Cross-Channel Ferry**

During the 80's it was common to travel to West Germany in uniform via the Dover to Zeebrugge ferry. A naval section officer hit on a scheme to get the best seats in the lounge:-

As soon as, or just before, the ferry started loading he would confidently stride up the gang plank (or whatever else it was called!), hoping to be mistaken for a member of the crew. This ruse never failed!

## **Gwern-Gof-Uchaf**

Adventurous training was held annually during the Easter holiday and usually involved walking in the mountains of Wales or Northern England, followed by a canoeing marathon down a major river, e.g. Wye, Severn, Avon, Trent.

The weather at this time of year was often 'difficult' and this activity was largely reserved for a small number of hardy 16-18 year-old cadets who were expected to be independent from the officers in relation to camping and messing, etc.

The incident in question happened in the Ogwen Valley in Snowdonia at a camp site called "Gwern-Gof-Uchaf". The party arrived, set up their tents, including a 180 pounder ridge tent which was used for cooking in, etc. However, it then began to rain and rain to the point where the complete camp site became flooded.

Never slow to react, the Contingent Commander (C.C.) decided to evacuate. All tents, kit and personnel were rapidly slung into the back of a four tonner and the party swiftly withdrew a few miles down the road to a small military weekend training camp at Capel Curig where shelter was gained.

The following day the weather had improved and the morning was spent sorting out and drying wet kit. It was then realised that the cook tent was nowhere to be found and had been left at the camp site in the rush to retreat.

The party drove back to Gwern-Gof-Uchaf, but from the road it looked as if the cook tent had disappeared! On closer inspection it was found floating in a nearby swollen stream (small river), but with one guy rope tied to a handy telegraph pole, which had saved it from destruction, it was retrieved. Patched up, it gave loyal service for years after. Who tied it to the telephone pole? Only the C.C. knows and it has remained a closely guarded secret to this day!

## **Princess Anne's Room**

Whilst on route to North Wales for adventurous training the party suffered a recurring fuel problem with an issue four ton truck. The recovery system failed to fully rectify and so the small convoy limped into the Central Vehicle Depot (C.V.D.) at Ashchurch, near Tewkesbury.

It was by then late afternoon and the Contingent Commander (C.C.) had reached the end of his tether. In civilian dress, armed only with his military I.D. card he gained entry to the guardroom and asked to speak with the Duty Officer.

A sergeant arrived and readily agreed to the C.C.'s request to rectify the four tonner problem and to provide overnight accommodation for the officers and cadets. C.V.D. Ashchurch houses a huge stock of 'war mobilisation' vehicles of all types, mostly brand new. A civilian mechanic was kept on 'overtime' and duly fixed the problem by stealing a fuel tank from a new vehicle.

The cadets were settled in and the officers trooped into their mess. Fortunately few regular officers were in residence. The mess sergeant was somewhat taken aback by the sight of a female officer wearing jeans (there being little use for a dress on adventurous training!). After some head scratching the female officer was allocated Princess Anne's room and was told that the aforesaid Princess was the only other woman to have spent the night in the mess.

Nothing else of interest occurred, the party departed on time and adventurous training started - minus one day. It was then realised that one of the male officers had failed to return his room key before leaving the C.V.D.

Trying to return the key from the middle of nowhere in Wales back to C.V.D. tested the C.C.'s resourcefulness to the full.



## **Mountaineering with a Difference**

An experienced and well-qualified Mountain Leader Contingent Officer (M.L.) led a party of cadets on the final day of the walking phase of adventurous training.

The plan was to scale Cader Idris in Snowdonia from the north, and then descend south to be picked up by transport.

The weather was misty and Cader Idris resembles an extinct volcano rather than your traditional pointy top mountain. Well enough excuses! The group reached the top without incident and after a short stop proceeded down the other side. However, imagine the scene: having reached the road no transport could be found and then to the M.L.'s horror he realised that for some reason they had come down the same way that they had gone up and were back at the start point!

With no other option and no mobile phones (not invented yet) the party hightailed it round the base of the mountain to reach a very worried Contingent Commander who was considering calling out the mountain rescue team!

Everyone agreed that it was a very easy mistake to make, that visibility was poor and that no harm was done, other than to the M.L.'s reputation, as he had his leg pulled for years after about the up, down and round incident!

## **Adventurous Training ‘Land Party’**

It became a tradition to provide ‘sumptuous’ lunches using only ten man compo supplemented with fruit, etc. The occasion for these banquets was lunch during adventurous training canoeing expeditions and were provided by the vehicle drivers/land party.

On the day in question the land party set up shop, without permission, on the slipway of Monmouth Rowing Club on the River Wye. Shortly before the canoeists arrived a car pulled up and out got a distinguished looking elderly gentleman that the Contingent Commander (C.C.) mistook for an official from the rowing club.

The C.C. approached the ‘official’ and apologised for the intrusion. The official was very understanding and even kissed one of the female officers. It then dawned on the C.C. that the ‘official’ was the father of the female officer and not a rowing club official.

Clearly a case of mistaken identity, but reinforces the old maxim - proper preparation prevents .....

## **Lost Anything?**

Whilst taking part in adventurous training in Pembrokeshire in the 70's a Land Rover and trailer driven by the O.C. Army Section (O.C.A.S.) was leading a 4 tonner and trailer driven by the Contingent Commander (C.C.)

Just before entering the town of Haverfordwest the small convoy passed into a one way system caused by roadworks, with a very uneven road surface. To the C.C.'s surprise the two wheel trailer broke free from the Land Rover, but remained attached only by the electric cable which powered the indicators and rear lights, etc. The O.C.A.S. obviously had not noticed this 'parting of the ways' and carried on regardless. Eventually after about 100 yards the cable pulled out of its sockets, the trailer veered to the right, flipped into the air and landed upside down. By then the Land Rover had disappeared from sight.

The C.C. stopped his vehicle, dispatched a cadet N.C.O. to explain what had happened to the vehicles behind, dismounted everyone else and set to work sorting out the chaos, much to the amusement of the nearby workmen!

To right the trailer its cover had to be freed before it could be manhandled (or cadet-handled) back onto its wheels. In doing so all the kit in the trailer spewed out over the area adding to the chaos!

The situation was not improved by the honking of horns from the line of traffic behind the 4 tonner, and the line of traffic waiting to go the other way which the C.C. noticed contained the Land Rover - facing the wrong way to connect to its disobedient trailer.

How the situation was resolved has fortunately faded from the C.C.'s memory, but the only damage to the trailer was a fairly large dent in one side, which did not hamper its use.

The only problem that occurred was when the vehicles were returned to the loan depot and this was solved by parking both vehicles close together, thus concealing the 'dent'. Once the civvy had signed the receipt voucher the two C.C.F. officers hopped it quick, before he took a closer look.

It was never discovered why the incident happened, but the C.C. had his suspicions. Did the trailer complete a summersault or was it only a back flip - I will leave you to decide!

## The Black Mixen

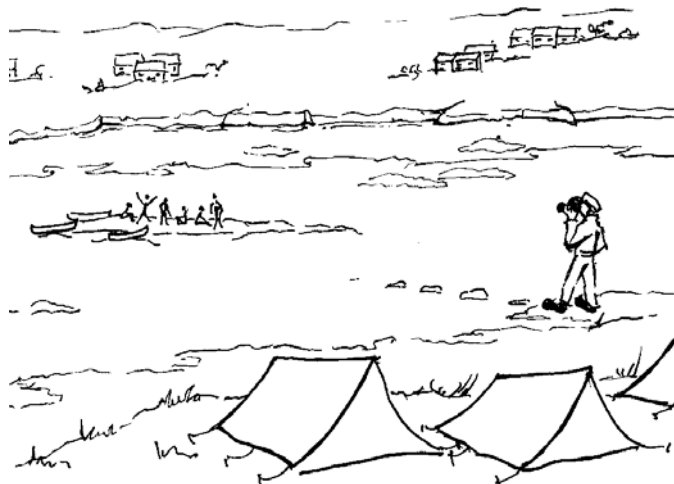
The three days canoeing phase of adventurous training was usually demanding, particularly as at this time of year the weather was often poor. Back in the early 70's, before the Contingent had acquired the necessary experience, expertise and cunning, it was sometimes somewhat hit or miss!

For some particular very good reason which currently eludes the author, adventurous training

was held in Pembrokeshire on the Western Cleadow River leading into Milford Haven, an extremely large estuary. The third and final day involved canoeing across the estuary, camping the night on the southern shore, before returning home the following day.

All went to plan; the land party provided lunch and the canoeists set off on the final part of their journey. The land party motored round to the camp site, set up shop and waited for the canoeists to arrive. Several hours went by - no canoeists. Eventually the Contingent Commander (C.C.) decided to find the poor souls before they froze to death (it was a particularly cold Easter). Using binoculars he spotted the group high and dry in the centre of the estuary on a mud bank called 'the Black Mixen'.

They had to stay there, shivering, until the tide came in and there was sufficient water to reach the camp site. For some reason, which always escaped the C.C., 'the tale of the Black Mixen' passed into Contingent folklore which was exaggerated a little more every time it was retold. This is the true version - or is it?!!



*Are You Lost Or Just Mucking About?*

## **The Unexpected Result of a Recce**

Back in the early 70's a recce for adventurous training was carried out in darkest Pembrokeshire during the February half-term by the Contingent Commander (C.C.), O.C. Army Section (O.C.A.S.) and the C.C.'s wife, who had come along for the ride.

During the early evening the group attempted to find somewhere to stay and pitched up at a small hotel come guest house which displayed a B & B sign in the window. The C.C. knocked on the door and was met by the owner to whom he requested beds for the night. The owner said "hang on a minute", turned and shouted "can we put up a couple and their grown-up son for the night"? to which all three potential guests fell about laughing!

The ultimate result was that for years after whenever the O.C.A.S. met the C.C.'s wife, he always greeted her with - "Hello, Mum".

## It's a Dog's Life

In the early 80's training for the annual Ten Tors expeditions on Dartmoor was a serious event, as selection depended on performance. The event was also used as a practice expedition for various levels of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and, as a result, was very well supported.



Who Ate Skiddy's Dinner?

The catering was the responsibility of a Volunteer Contingent Officer

(V.C.O.) who was assisted by a couple of junior cadets and, in this case, by his dog, Skiddy. As was often the case the weather was poor and a 180

pounder ridge tent used for this purpose leaked.

10 man compo rations were common at this time, which simply involved heating various labelless tins in hot water as the rations were pre-cooked.

All proceeded to plan until the V.C.O. came to feed Skiddy, but he could not find the tins of dog food that he had stored on the wet floor of the cook tent. In spite of a serious search no sign of Skiddy's dinner could be found.

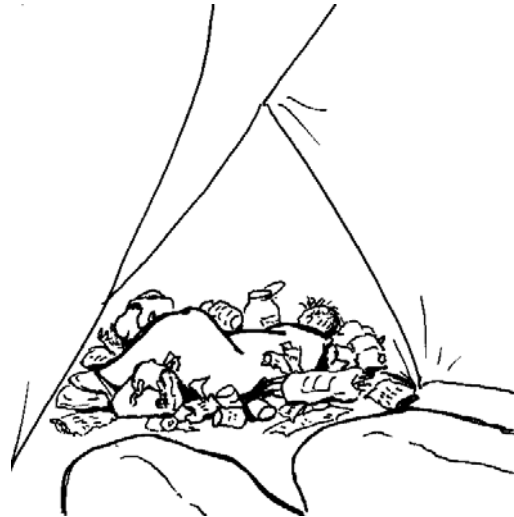
It then dawned on the V.C.O. that the labels on the tins of dog food had become wet, parted from the tins and blown away, which had then become mistaken for the compo, heated and eaten by a couple of cadets - "one between two - you can open yourselves"!

Skiddy was very disappointed, but the facts were discretely kept from the cadets who frankly were so hungry they would have eaten Skiddy if he had been squashed into a tin.

Who ate Skiddy's dinner ? We will never know!!

## Ten Tors Expedition Tentage Problem

Following the merger of Hele's and Bishop Blackall Schools, the Contingent admitted girls for the first time in 1985. A year or so later a 35 mile Ten Tors expedition team comprised four male and two female cadets (the Contingent has always been an equal opportunities organisation, in addition being totally voluntary). A small problem arose that this Contingent only had three-person tents, which meant that one of the boys would have to sleep in the same tent as the two girls.



With All The Boots & Cooking Kit

Not wishing to create an international incident, and following a conversation with the three concerned, the Contingent Commander (C.C.) sought the advice of the wise headmaster. All he got for his pains was "If the parents don't mind, I don't mind" (very helpful!). The C.C. consulted the three sets of parents and gained their permission (in writing, as the C.C. was an old campaigner!).

The event took place, the team completed the route within the time limit and received their certificate and medals. Before the group dispersed the O.C. Army Section (O.C.A.S.), a female officer, said to the lad who had shared the tent with the girls, "I expect you were nice and warm sharing the tent with the girls", expecting him to go red and to look at the ground as he usually did, but to everyone's surprise he said "No, do you know what they made me do"?, he replied "They made me sleep in the bell end (of the tent) among all the boots and cooking kit". The O.C.A.S. felt that it would hurt his feelings to laugh, a sentiment not shared by everyone else, including parents.

Never underestimate girls!

## **Nobody Loves a Smart Ar..**

The Contingent was training to select Ten Tors team members on Dartmoor. The camp site was at a place named Holming Beam, overlooking the aptly named Cowsick River. The site was not a particularly good one, but it was strategically placed in the centre of the moor, and thus convenient as a base for many different routes.

There was a much more suitable site on a grassy island in the middle of the river, reached by stepping stones. However, this site was within a water catchment area, was liable to flooding and was out of bounds to military units.

During the late evening vehicles rumbled past our site, headed down to the river, unloaded and set up camp on the island. The Contingent Commander (C.C.) considered wandering down and warning them about their choice, but on second thoughts - read the title.

There was heavy rain during the night and the C.C. awoke to the sound of what can only be described as a commotion. As he was warm and dry, and obviously the disturbance was not coming from his party, he went back to sleep.

The following morning both the other unit and the island they were camping on had disappeared, the latter under water and the former to who knew where. Had they all been washed away or forced to evacuate to a drier spot? What do you think?



## **48hr. Exercise, Salisbury Plain**

The continuous annual 48 hour exercise was arguably the highlight of the military aspect of Corps training, with many basic skills put into practice.

The exercise in question was held on Salisbury Plain, which had numerous sub-areas which could be booked in advance. All went well until the evening of the second day when the party was in a defensive position. As with all military exercises, there is a degree of collusion between attack and defence, if not contact could be missed, and everyone could 'get their heads down'!

However, in the darkness a report from a sentry reached the exercise HQ, commanded by the O.C. Army Section (O.C.A.S.) that "movement had been heard to the front of his position". As the O.C.A.S. knew that nothing was due to happen at around this time he ignored the report. Shortly after another report of movement was relayed, which was also about to be ignored when 'all hell let loose'. The position was under attack, but the O.C.A.S., being an experienced officer, could tell from the type and rate of fire that it did not come from the Contingent's 'own' enemy!

To the cadets' credit, a spirited defence was put up, until both sides realised that a 'mistake' had happened! A quick chat between attack and defence commanders established that the attackers were a company of German paratroopers who had attacked the wrong position. Order was restored, World War III was averted, and the exercise continued.

Back at school, on Monday, the Contingent Commander bumped into the Contingent Senior Cadet N.C.O. and enquired about the incident, to which the S.N.C.O. replied "It was touch and go for a while, sir, but we saw them off".

"Voops, wrong, vood"!

## **Sraesdon Emergency**

During a 48 hour exercise based at Sraesdon Fort and training area in S.E. Cornwall, in daylight, a small 'enemy' force was located and pursued by an equally small patrol who were in signals communication with their H.Q. in the fort.

Unfortunately one of the enemy tripped and fell fracturing his leg and was in some pain. What happened next was action of the highest order and a tribute to the training instilled in our young men and women.

The Patrol Commander, a sixteen-year-old male lance corporal:-

1. Made the casualty comfortable.
2. Cleared (unloaded) his rifle, thus making it safe to handle.
3. Radioed the exact location of the incident and the nature of the casualty's injury.
4. Guided the rescue party to the difficult to find location.

The casualty was air lifted to Derriford Hospital and later made a full recovery from his injury.

At the end of the exercise the Contingent Commander (C.C.) gathered all the officers and cadets together and commended the lance corporal for his exemplary action. He was promoted full corporal on the spot.

A very proud C.C. also wrote to the corporal's parents, sent a copy to the headmaster and a final copy to be placed in the young man's file.

Read the second paragraph again.

## Watch your step, sir!

Picture the scene - 48 hour exercise, Woodbury Common - final assault at dawn - Contingent Commander (C.C.) acting as Platoon Commander, accompanied by his signaller; followed his platoon downhill at the gallop - came across a stream - too wide to jump - spotted small island in the centre - jumped and placed one foot on it - promptly disappeared.

Re-appeared covered in weed and debris - much to the amusement of his signaller - wished that he had followed the old army maxim - "time spent on recce is never wasted".



&@#\*!!

## **Overheard on the Signals Net**

Overheard on the signals net:

“Hello Zero, this is one - send the Rover over - over”!

“Hello all stations, this is Hotel Sierra Zero - radio check over - Hello Zero, this is one - send grid ref. of Hotel Sierra - cannot find it on the map - over”.

(H.S. - Hotel Sierra - initials of the pre-amalgamation school, using the phoenetic alphabet, i.e. Hele’s School, not a hotel!)

Signals exercise on Woodbury Common using an obsolete radio with a maximum range of approximately five miles made contact with an American Army tank commander in Southern Germany and told by our signaller to “get off our frequency”.  
Atmospherics?

## **Confusion at St. James's Palace**

In recognition of his long involvement with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award for young people, the Contingent Commander (C.C.) was invited to attend a presentation ceremony at which a number of his cadets were to receive their Gold Awards at St. James's Palace, London and to meet Prince Philip.

The C.C. was lined up with other worthies in one of the staterooms where he waited for the Prince to arrive. There was quite a hubbub in the room and when Prince Philip spoke the C.C. thought he asked "How many Gold winners do you have here today"?, to which the C.C. replied "12, sir". Prince Philip laughed and said "You have 12 of your children here"? For a moment the C.C. thought that he had misheard the question, but then remembered the Prince's renowned sense of humour - what do you think?

## Keep Your Hair On

The Contingent Commander (C.C.) had been an active supporter of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award for donkey's years.



Keep Your Hair On - They Are Over There

On this particular occasion one of his Gold expedition groups, under independent assessment, was camping at Beardown Farm near Two Bridges on Dartmoor. The C.C. was acting as safety supervisor and during the evening drove to their camp site to check on the well-being of his charges.

On arrival he could not see the groups tents but could see that the majority of the camping field was covered in Indian tepees - yes, 'Red Indian-type tepees' - obviously some form of re-enactment group. There were camp fires, drum beats and individuals in full regalia dancing round the fires 'whooping and hollering'.

Eventually the C.C. found the group tucked up in a corner of the field as far away from the action as possible. They were all okay and still had their hair! Looking relieved to see another fairly normal person one said to the C.C. "We didn't like the look of them, or the way they looked at us, so we camped here"! Wise decision.

## **Key to the Impact Area**

In the middle of a military training area on Woodbury Common in Devon is an open area used by the Royal Marines for grenade throwing practice known as the 'impact area'.

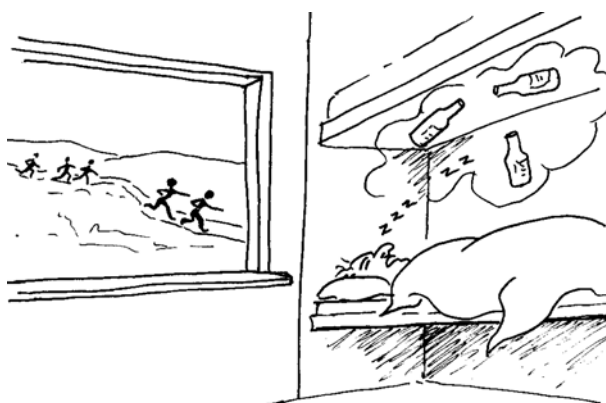
During the first field camp a new Year 9 recruit was detailed to ask another officer if he had the 'key' to the impact area (which obviously did not exist!).

This usually started the ball rolling as another innocent was sent on a quest for 'a long wait (weight) for a pull through', a fictitious part of a rifle barrel cleaning aid.

And so it went on via 'a set of sky hooks' - 'size' - 'colour', etc. until all concerned became bored and thought up some alternative means of entertainment. "If you can't take a joke, you shouldn't have joined"!

## The C.C. does the Decent Thing

The Contingent held its inter-section pentathlon championships at H.M.S. Raleigh, Torpoint, Cornwall. Raleigh is the initial training establishment for the Royal Navy and discipline is understandably strict.



Brings A Whole New Meaning To The Expression "Taking One For The Team"

Unexpectedly, and unfortunately, it reached the ear of the Contingent Commander (C.C.) that a couple of young cadets, who were independently making their way back to their accommodation, after completing an event, had failed to salute the Commander who was conducting his rounds (read inspection). This senior officer was evidently very annoyed by this lack of courtesy and let it be known that he expected the C.C. to apologise in person at his earliest opportunity!

Now Raleigh is a large establishment and it took until lunch-time for the C.C. to track down the Commander - in the bar of the wardroom (read officers' mess). By then the Commander had cooled down somewhat and was surprisingly reasonable about the incident and even proceeded to buy the C.C. a pint. Unfortunately the C.C. was unaware that the Commander had a reputation as a hardened drinker (the C.C. certainly did not!).

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Exactly what happened next is unclear, but the C.C. awoke lying on his bunk in his cabin at about 1600 hrs. with a severe headache, having no recollection of how he got there.

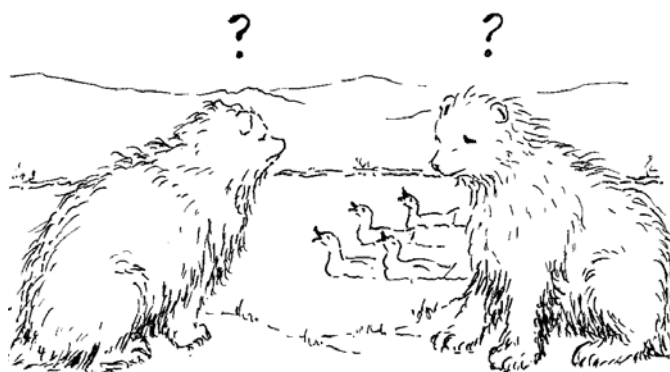
However, his fellow officers assured him that honour had been restored, that the pentathlon had proceeded smoothly and that the cadets were unaware of the C.C.'s indisposition.

The incident reinforced the meaning of the expression "taking one for the team".



## Who was Afraid of Bears?

In 1981 the Contingent Commander (C.C.) was fortunate to be selected to lead the U.K./Canada international cadet exchange group to the Rocky Mountains area of Western Canada.



The training programme covered rock and ice climbing, mountaineering, kayaking and white water rafting and hikes (expeditions) of various lengths and difficulty. The C.C. and his 21/c, an English A.C.F. officer, progressed to the final hike in British Columbia, known as the 'Rockwell High Line', 35 miles in length with a height gain of 8,000 feet, to a maximum of 7,700 feet, crossing four passes and taking three days to complete. Our leader (minder) was a very experienced Canadian officer called Al, who was the Deputy Chief Training Officer and "knew what he was up to"?

At the start we checked into a ranger station and obtained both a weather and bear warning (compulsory in National Parks) and off we went.

The weather was fantastic but the midges unbearable - bear - (get it? Canadian joke!). Every so often Al would stop and "quack like a duck". The C.C., having been 'caught' several times during the past month, refused to be taken in and ordered his 21/c to do likewise. This quacking went on and on and the C.C. began to wonder who would crack first - us or him?

During the last few minutes of the final day the C.C. ordered his 21/c to ask the fateful question and to put us out of our agony.

Al's face lit up and in his Canadian drawl said - "Bears don't eat ducks".

## **The Demise of the Practical Joker**

A certain female officer, whose identity cannot be revealed, acquired a fearsome reputation as a practical joker. The butt of her humour was centred on young officers, or Contingent adult under-officers who, though not commissioned, had officer status and, as such, were accommodated in the officers' mess (wardroom).

Her pranks included 'apple pie' beds, hiding the odd boot or - her speciality - stitching together the bottom of the leg of a pyjama trousers.

However, she was bound to reach her nemesis and imagine the look on her face when one evening, returning late to her room, she found that it had been stripped bare. Yes, bare. Everything had gone - bed, furniture, her personal clothing, etc. etc. - yes, everything.

The Contingent Commander never did discover if these items were returned, or was the joker forced to sleep on the floor, in a bath or in her car? Needless to say, the practical joker never struck again.

## **The Overseas Flight**

Back in the late 60's, before the advent of mass air travel and package holidays, the R.A.F. introduced a scheme to reward the loyalty of senior R.A.F. Section cadets, particularly those who were considering an R.A.F. career.

The scheme involved pitching up at R.A.F. Lyneham or Brize Norton and waiting on standby in the crew room for a flight to become available. There was no guarantee of a flight in a transport aircraft, but in those days aircraft regularly flew to Germany, Malta or Gibraltar, etc.

This particular cadet turned up at the beginning of the half-term holiday and hit the jackpot - Singapore. Off he went but on reaching his destination the aircraft became suspiciously unserviceable, and thus he could not return until it had been fixed. I seem to remember that it took about a week during which time he was lodged in the officers' mess and hit the high spots with the aircrew!

During the evening before school re-started the Contingent Commander (C.C.) received a phone call from one of the lad's parents explaining the situation and that the son would be late back to school. The following day the C.C. explained the reason for his absence to an even more suspicious form tutor. However, the cadet swore that he completed all his homework which he took with him for such an eventuality.

Yes! - Pull the other one!

## **“Do You Remember Me?”**

The Annual R.N. Section officers' meeting was held during an evening at a local public school (very nice buffet). Following our deliberations the group retired to a local hostelry for an informal chat and a drink. On this occasion the usual location was out of commission following a suspicious fire and someone suggested an alternative.

The Contingent Commander (C.C.) drove to this location, which was new to him, parked his car, entered and bought himself a pint. It was at this point he realised that he was in the public not the lounge bar. In the long distant past, the quickest way to get oneself thrown out was to buy a drink in the public bar and take it into the lounge bar which was more expensive! This was reinforced by the fact that none of his colleagues could be seen.

The C.C. decided to down his pint and to change bars. Moving away from the bar he noticed a large, tough looking young man staring at him. This chap had a Mohican hair cut, earrings, tattoos down both arms, and was wearing a top that could only be described as a 'vest'.

The C.C. moved even further from the bar but to his horror noticed that 'Mohican-man' was making a beeline for him. Having backed into a wall the C.C. could go no further and came face to face with him.

Mohican-man said "Allo, sir, do you remember me"? The C.C. mumbled something about remembering his face but was not able to dredge up a name when Mohican-man said "You gave me a slap whilst I was at school", quickly followed by "But I deserved it - can I buy you a pint"?

A clear case of one's past catching up - eventually.

## **Rugby Playing Past**

The following incident did not happen within the C.C.F., but had a significant influence on the Contingent Commander's (C.C.'s) decision to retire.

Following a lesson, a young girl in Year 8 hung back, approached her teacher, and said "Mr ....., you used to play rugby with my grandfather"!!

The teacher was somewhat taken aback, but when asked the Christian name of her grandfather, her reply confirmed the fact that he did play rugby with him, for his home town side.

He might add that her grandfather, who was over 40 at this time, was not only teak hard but represented the county on numerous occasions, was coming to the end of his illustrious career, when at 22 the teacher was just beginning his fairly ordinary career.

Apparently the girl's father had studied at Exeter University, had married a local girl and settled in the area.

The teacher never breathed a word and kept his little secret, but little did he know that every member of staff and members of the Contingent knew the tale.

Result: He retired (not out!).