

## Two Company News

### Foreword



Number Two Company deployed to Helmand Province, Afghanistan in mid September 2009 to take over from Number Two Company, 1 WG in an unknown base called Interim Operating Base Wahid. Wahid is situated at the junction between the Luy Mandah Wadi, the NeB Canal and the Shamalan Canal; in the more general context we were positioned between the area of Babaji (where Op Panther's Claw was conducted in the summer) and Nad-e Ali (where the Grenadier Battle Group is based). We were surrounded on three sides by Insurgent groups and to our north was the desert and in the distance Camp Bastion. Number Two Company was to occupy Wahid for two months before handing the area over to the Estonian Company and moving to Patrol Base Pimon. Pimon sits at the North-West corner of Nad-e Ali and occupies one of the few crossings into Nad-e Ali from the desert (again across the NeB Canal). At the time of writing the Company has been in Pimon for two weeks.



The Company is made up of the following elements and is seen as a Company Group: Coy Headquarters, 4 Platoon, 5 Platoon, 6 Platoon, a Multiple from the Irish Guards (known as "The Mick Multiple", Fire Support Group, Fire Support Team (1 RHA), a section of Grenadier Mortars,

Electronic Warfare Detachment, a section of Interpreters (almost exclusively from Kabul) and for the bulk of our time in Theatre we have had two sections of Engineers. We have been supported by the Brigade Recce Force (BRF) as well as countless sorties of Coalition jets and helicopters and expect to soon be working with the Afghan Tiger Team and Afghan Large Patrol (made up 10 to 70 Afghans trained by 1 PARA). We have supported the Grenadier Recce Platoon and look forward to working with them and other Battalions in the near future. All in all we have been incredibly well supported.



The highlights of the tour so far have been the incredible events at the beginning of November 09 at Wahid, where we faced mass attacks by the Taliban; over 120 enemy attacked us over 10 days and at the start they attacked in 60 man groupings. Needless to say we defeated them comprehensively and at least 80 of them died on the battlefield, with none of the Company Group being injured in that period. Another highlight was the Company finding 48 Improvised Explosive Devices in two months in Wahid; it shows how well the Guardsmen of Number Two Company have come to terms with this new threat and through training and common sense can minimise the risk to both us and the local nationals. Improvised Explosive Devices do still carry significant risk and the death of Guardsman Janes and the injury to three of his patrol highlights the difficulties faced of patrolling in what was in essence a nuisance minefield. We all were hit hard by Jamie's death and the injuries to the members of 6 Platoon, however after a short period of mourning the Company went out the gates the next day and got straight back into securing the population and defeating the enemy.



The bravery shown and the amazing ability of young men to conduct extraordinary actions is simply overwhelming at times **[NOTE TO EDITOR I have included an article I wrote on the activity during some of the mass attack, which was written for the Guards Magazine]**. The Company is now refocused on our new task at Pimon and we look forward to developing the area and bringing the success being shown by the Queen's Company and the Inkerman Company to a new area. This will be written about before we return to the UK.

### Company Headquarters

The Company is run out of either a couple of mud compound rooms (Wahid) or a couple of ISO containers (Pimon). The Headquarters has individuals dedicated to different areas, including an MT Rep (we have about 10 vehicles), a REME Sgt and mechanic, a bearded Influence Officer (Capt Mark Gresty from the PT Corps; a huge character and just outstanding at dealing with the Local Nationals). The Second in Command is Capt Andy Prior, from the Micks who manages all the daily and future company business, and is never too far from the Ops Room. To assist in the Ops Room are the three Company signallers, headed by LSgt Struczynski with LCpls Vine and Scott. The Intelligence SNCO is Sgt P Bailey, and with the Influence Officer they create the 'Fusion Cell'. With all patrolling being focused around the local population, the Fusion Cell works hard to ensure the Company is kept in tune with the Taliban's business and the local Afghan atmospherics. The G4 war is fought by Pay Sgt Howlin's team in Pimon, with the help from Gdsm Humphries in Bastion. With Pimon being just over an hour from Bastion, the resupply is relatively easy, and with it brings the luxuries of fresh scoff, post and morale. After taking over Pimon from the Estonians, the Pay Sgt's hard work has converted the camp to an impressive level, and a place the Company are proud to call home.



Company Sergeant Major Boak, keeps the Company in check from all angles of Pimon. A busy man, he ensures Pimon maintains the high standard expected from a Foot Guards Company, making sure the Company is always fit and ready for their next tasking. At the heart of everything sits the Company Commander, Major Richard Green, and his trusty side kick a huge South African from 1 RHA, Capt FJ Du Toit (known to the officers as FJ and the Guardsmen as Capt DT). Often seen in the middle of the night plotting the downfall of the Taliban over a cup of tea and a Marlboro light!

## 4 Platoon

4 Platoon have had varied tour so far. The Platoon were deployed straight into Checkpoint Luy Mandah from Bastion and had an area that covered an abandoned bazaar and deserted village. Due to the number of soldiers in the Platoon it was a challenge for the Platoon Commander, Lt Richard Hutton and the Platoon Sergeant, Sgt Scott Roughley, to plan patrols and maintain a guard force at the base. Things were not helped when Sgt Roughley became the first casualty in the Company after suffering bad burns in an accident. LSgt Danny Walton stepped up to fill the post and has been doing so admirably.



After 6 weeks, Checkpoint Luy Mandah was collapsed to allow the company to concentrate its force in the Wahid Area. The Engineer Section had a busy few days which ended in using 200lbs of bar mines to blow up the buildings, it was quite an explosion! The Platoon were then co-located with 6 Platoon and the Mick Multiple in Wahid giving the Company much more scope for manoeuvre on the ground.

Since the move to Pimon 4 Platoon have been enjoying being part of a complete Company Group for the first time. The Guardsmen have settled into Afghan life and are able to relax with their friends in the downtime between patrols.

## 5 Platoon

The last 3 months have been exciting to say the least for 5 Platoon. On arrival to Helmand we quickly took over from the Welsh Guards in Crossing Point 1. In the early days we got hit once or twice a day, with some notable occasions over October. We successfully searched and found what we thought to be a bomb factory, later determined to be a drugs den. During the search we were hit heavily from the south and fought a pitched battle with the Taliban over a one hundred metre field. 66mm rockets, rocket grenades and Javelin were used to good effect to destroy the enemy and aide our safe extraction back to Crossing Point 1.



After hearing the terrible news about the loss of Sgt Telford, Gdsm Major and The Sergeant Major, the FSG and 5 Platoon sat around and contemplated how we could next strike the enemy causing as much damage as possible which is where the plan was hatched for a 'fake' IED strike. With the Engineers helping us we moved onto a heavily IED road at real risk and set up an explosion to simulate the IED. It went off, and we threw red cylums to simulate the Casevac beginning. By now the FSG had began to enjoy success too and had engaged a known standing patrol and defeated 2 insurgents with their snipers. We got straight up onto the roof and with the Javelin team under Sgt Loder of the FSG, we identified enemy moving up to try and exploit our 'casualties'. The plan had worked. We engaged the enemy and took out between 12 and 14 insurgents in one evening.

Over the next month we then were involved with 2-3 large contacts a day, defeating a very large number of insurgents- as many as 120. Aircraft from all nations were carefully co-ordinated onto our location often having to drop munitions worryingly close to the Platoon house. The best part of the story however was the fact in our time there patrolling and fighting we inflicted no civilian casualties, the farmers there believed and felt we were securing there area, we suffered no casualties at Crossing Point 1 and achieved the Commanding Officers third aim of defeating the Enemy wherever he showed himself. Good arrests form Gdsm Munerzero of key Taliban figures, the securing of the area, the discovery of 18 IED's and the constant defeat of the enemy have left us all feeling justifiably proud of what we achieved and how we conducted ourselves at Crossing Point 1.

### **6 Platoon**

It has been an interesting tour so far for 6 Platoon. The Platoon was based in IOB Wahid for the first two months. In that time, under Lt Alex Rawlins and Sgt Chris Dougerty, they carried out regular patrolling of the AO to clear out the Taliban and simultaneously work on the Company's relationship with local nationals.



6 suffered the loss of Gdsm Jamie Janes who was tragically killed in an IED blast on 5<sup>th</sup> November. In the same incident, LCpl Harper, Gdsm Clark and Gdsm Pearson were also injured, leaving the Platoon depleted in numbers and heavy hearted. However, the men, never to be held down, were back on patrol the next day and have since gone from strength to strength. In Mid-November, five new members were admitted to the mighty 6 in form of Gdsm Leighton, Gdsm Markey, Gdsm Warde, Gdsm Golding and Gdsm Carter; all of whom were enthusiastic, if not a little nervous, from the get go. They have quickly settled in and are now an integral part of the Platoon. The time in Wahid was short-lived and the inevitable move saw the Platoon leaving their palatial surroundings and moving into Pimon's adequately comfortable tented accommodation, complete with insulation and poorly house-trained cats that roam at night. LSgt Adam Swift's section have had a new addition with Gdsm Jarret and Gdsm Scott has recently moved from 4 Platoon to LSgt Aaron Harris's section.

### **Mick Multiple**



The Mick Multiple was a late addition to the Grenadier Guards ORBAT for Op Herrick 11, joining Number Two Company little over a month before deployment.

Commanded by Lt Max Dooher, with the inimitable LSgt Miller in support, this small Platoon bolstered the manoeuvre capability of the Company on its arrival in IOB Wahid quickly seeing action in the first few days of the tour and embracing the idea of Influence lead patrols early on.

With a section attached from 6 Platoon for the patrol, it was a dreadful day for the Micks that saw the loss of Gdsm Janes near Luy Mandah Kalay. With a number of friends from Catterick injured in the explosion, Irish and Grenadier Guardsmen showed the real grit, determination and unifying bond of the Brigade of Guards by helping each other out of a wholly awful situation. The event galvanised the spirit and unity of Number Two Company; in which the Micks were proud to be numbered.

After the baptism of fire, the Micks adjusted well into IOB Wahid and life under para silk. Despite the best efforts of some, their shanty town accommodation (complete with chickens) did not quite manage to meet General Horrocks' s characterisation of the Micks resembling 'wretched peasants.'

The change of location to PB Pimon saw the Mick Multiple conduct a relief in place with the outgoing Estonian Company. With the Estonian Company out, and no Grenadiers in location, the Micks made themselves at home (flag and all), portraying a foot print much beyond their true numbers in a location that at times felt a little like Rorke's Drift. The early days in Pimon revealed a different population to Wahid with many locals perplexed by the sight of ISAF soldiers patrolling amongst them.

With the arrival of Number Two Company en masse, the Micks look forward to seeing out the remainder of their 3 month tour in PB Pimon. Next year the Multiple will split and the Guardsmen will return to their platoons to redeploy with the Irish Guards on Op Herrick 13. For all involved it has been an education made all the better by the attachment that has grown with Number Two Company.

### **Fire Support Group**



The Fire Support Group has mainly been manned from Support Company with a small element from Two Company. We as a Platoon were more fortunate than the other FSG within the Battle Group as we have been able to work as a Platoon or in individual teams when required. From the outset of taking over from the Welsh Guards we identified that a Sniper Team and a Javelin team should be permanently at Crossing Point 1 and the remainder located in WAHID as a mobile call sign or on foot if required. Throughout the time at WAHID we were allocated three Mastiff armoured

vehicles in which our GPMG section manned the Heavy weapons. Our first taskings were to dominate the ground as a foot callsign when ever a Rifle Platoon was on an Influence patrol. The first major event took place when Gdsm Janes was struck by an IED near check point Luy Mandah at the time we were located at crossing point 1 on an admin task so immediately moved to Luy Mandah as Casevac party; for many this was their first Live Contact. The Mastiff attracted several firing points including an RPG attack; my Heavy Weapon Gunners especially Gdsm Shelton suppressed at times four different Firing Points whilst we extracted Gdsm Janes to the HLS; this tactic of the Insurgents to follow up an IED strike with speed proved to be SOP and something which we could exploit at a time of our choosing. Another main Contact took place near Crossing Point 1; we were tasked as overwatch for 5 Platoon's advance into a known Insurgent stronghold; during this operation, LCpl Maynard was struck in the Helmet by a single round from a sniper and even though the round penetrated the helmet it was lodged within the head padding. LCpl Maynard had a severe headache and whiplash from the force of the strike, but was able to move back to Crossing Point 1 whilst the firefight ensued during which many insurgents were killed whilst they were following up into known firing points.



Due to the two main Contacts mentioned above we planned a Two Platoon Ambush using a Blast to attract the Insurgence into the Killing Areas This was successful within ten Minutes of the Controlled explosion the insurgents were within range and our killing areas. 10 Insurgents were killed, 3 of which were a Sniper Team Kill by LSgt Pointon from the same spot where LCpl Maynard was hit. This for my Platoon was retribution for the past 2 weeks.

The following 10 days saw a high kinetic level of attacks on Crossing Point 1 and a few isolated attacks on IOB WAHID; throughout all the attacks the FSG deployed with in the Mastiff vehicles to every Contact to draw the Enemy Fire. This we did with great effect and at times engaged enemy at distances of less than 100 metres with .50 cal and GMG. During one Contact we arrived on the scene within 5 mins of the Contact starting; Guardsmen like Attu and Snyam came into their own with excellent fire control even with rounds hitting the Mastiffs and RPG attack they maintained the rate of fire when required, forcing the insurgents to withdraw or face pending death. The Javelin team and sniper teams at Crossing Point 1 under control of LSgt Loder, who also operated the GMG and Javelin system, accounted for many of the enemy KIA.

Throughout the time at Wahid there are countless times that could be mentioned where the FSG were tasked, for instance Gdsm Snyam accounting for an enemy KIA with the sniper rifle at 980 meters at night through a thermal sight and with the extra tasks of IRG moves and admin runs for the crossing Points this was a very busy and successful period for the FSG; even though we were

known as Wahid Taxi service, we proved we were capable of drive by and organised hits when required and are looking forward to the challenges at PIMON.

### **Fire Support Team**

The affiliation of E Battery, 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment Royal Horse Artillery to the Battalion has seen an eight man team attached to Number Two Company since September 2008 and has provided the Joint Fires and ISTAR needs of the Company Group. The early integration of "Witchcraft 44" has been the envy of 1 RHA FST's and has gone a long way in generating mutual understanding and a relationship based on trust and unified purpose. We have been fortunate to have had 3 Grenadiers in the team which saw Sgt Robinson (JTAC), LSgt Pendelbury (MFC A) and LCpl Hurst (MFC B) working side by side with their Gunner counterparts providing the desired effect with the Joint Fires platform of choice. As an FST Commander this has been one of the best experiences of my career and although testing at times, ultimately hugely rewarding. The way we were welcomed is a testament to the Number Two Company ethos which sees professionalism and enthusiasm combined with a very strong team spirit to create a unique working environment that forces you to give 110% all of the time. The friendships forged will undoubtedly last a lifetime and we look forward to watching the Company Troop the Colour on return from Op HERRICK.

### **Conclusion**

A very happy Company Group, that revels in getting on with the job and enjoying the down time to the maximum. So far so good and the challenge now is to keep it going until we return to UK. At that point we will need to refocus quickly as we will need to get on with Public Duties and all that London soldiering involves.

