

leabhar J. B. Egan.

21/c 19<sup>th</sup> Inf Gp.



# STAIR AONÁID

**19ú Grúpa Coisithe  
Náisiúin Aontuithe  
An Chipir**



**MEÁN - FÓMHAIR 1970 — AIBREÁN 1971**

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Reamrad

Tá deire tagta len ár misiún sa Cipir anois agus beid saigdiúirí an I9 Grúpa Coisite scaipite tar na h-Éireann ga gairid.

Smaoiním ar teact le céile an Grúpa, agus annsan teact cuig an Cipir go Zyyi, Kophinou agus Larnaca.

Smaoiním ar na deacractaí i dtosac agus an obair a dein gac éine cun na deactraí sin a sárú agus an dílseact a tug gac duine domsa ó tosac. De bárr san bí an spiorad agus meanma sa Grúpa seo.

Ag feácaint siar ar an dturas is feidir liom a rád go bfuaras cómoibriu agus dílseact agus diograsact tar bárr ó gac uile duine sa Grúpa.

Táim buióc do gac Oifigeac ONC agus Saigdiúir as uct seirbís dílis a tugadar damsa agus cé háit a beid mé beid grád speisiolta agam do meiteal an I9 Grúpa Coisite.

  
( T. O. TREASAIGH. )

Lt. Cor

Oifigeac i gCéannas I9 Grúpa Coisite

The 19th Infantry Group, activated on the 2nd October, 1970 and which took over operational responsibility for Larnaca District, UNFICYP, on the 6th October, 1970, represented, uniquely, the passing of an era and the commencement of another.

Ten years had passed since the first unit of the Irish Army-32nd Battalion - had served abroad. Gradually over the years, units were filled with veterans of previous units until it became unusual to meet somebody on his first trip overseas. However in our Group the majority were 'first-timers', and they came with a refreshing new look. To them tales of Manono, Kipushi, or even Kabo, Pyrgos had as much relevance as Blackwater stories, these were strictly 'old, unhappy, far-off things, and battles long ago'. Even 'Khyuios' had lost its relevance and became an old mans song, just another aspect of a "temps perdu".

A new generation of soldiers had arrived, prepared, of course, to listen and learn, but intent on doing their job in their own way, singing their own songs, making their own traditions. The measure of their success is now history. We keep the past for pride, this unit gave an encouraging glimpse of the future.

#### DEPARTURE

Nothing unusual marked the formation and pre-departure training of the 19th Infantry Group and the relevant list of dates is as follows:

- (a) Date of Assembly Advance Gp HQ - II September 1970 at Collins Barracks.
- (b) Date of Assembly Gp HQ & HQ Coy - I4 September 1970
- (c) Date of Assembly 'A' & 'B' Coys - I8 September 1970
- (d) Date of Activation of Unit - 2nd October 1970
- (e) Date of Departure for Cyprus
  - (I) Recce Party 25 September 1970
  - (2) Adm Party 2nd October 1970
  - (3) OP Party 6th October 1970
  - (4) Main Body IIth October 1970.

It was a workmanlike proceeding in every sense. No formal parades or inspections. We came together, got to know one another, and then, with the minimum of fuss departed for Cyprus.

Cyprus ! Even though, as already stated, it was the first time abroad for many, this lovely island in the sun seemed to be known to all, and when we arrived the weather was at its most beautiful.

Carribean blue skies, and balmy nights, an island paradise marred only by an unexpected menace - mosquitoes. (Tales of the Congo were not quite so irrelevant at this point!)

It is our pleasure to record that, during the takeover period, we found our predecessors most helpful, and so, here, we give thanks to the 18th Infantry Group.

We became operationally responsible for Larnaca District UNFICYP on the 6th October 1970 and the last element of the Unit arrived on the 11th of the same month.

The preliminaries being over now it was our job to ensure that the battle did NOT commence! The Companies and the various sections of Group Headquarters now tell their own story.

Group Headquarters 'A' Branch

As is now normal procedure, the Adjutant Captain Noel Carey, arrived in Cyprus on the last chalk, the 11th October and found his section working smoothly - which we have continued to do since then, with the usual minor troubles.

Apart from routine the undermentioned dates were the busiest for us :

1. Visit of An t-Aire Cosanta, Árd Aid and Sec of Dept  
From 13 Oct to 22 Oct '70.
2. Rotation 'A' and 'B' Coys
  - (a) 'A' Coy to Larnaca on 6 Jan '71
  - (b) 'B' Coy to Kophinou on 6 Jan '71
3. Medal Parade - 25th Feb '71
4. St Patricks Day Ceremonies - Irish Night 17th March
5. Easter Sunday - 11th April.

Sport and Recreation

'A' Branch has of course responsibility for sports, and we had a very full programme due to a most energetic sports committee listed hereunder;

Chairman	Cft J. Egan
Unit Sports Officer	Capt N. Carey
Soccer Rep	Capt N. Carey
B/Ball	Sgt Scully
Volleyball	C/S Gaynor
Swimming	Lt Marshall
Athletics & Cross Country	Lt Woulfe
Tennis	Fr. McCabe
Rugby	Lt Pender
Squash	Capt Costelloe
Gaelic	Capt Coughlan
Hurling	C/S Fahy

The most popular outdoor sport was soccer, which was the only game that could be played with any success, on the rock-hard pitches available.

An inter-unit competition was won by 'B' Coy. (Four teams took part and each team had its good days, but 'B' Coy emerged in the end as deserving winners.) The same team won a knock-out competition.

In an Inter-Contingent Competition, we defeated the Canadian Contingent in the first round by the comprehensive score of 7 -0, and the Danish Contingent 3 - 1 and qualified for the Final against the Swedish Contingent, and that remains the situation at the moment of going to press.

Our rugby team achieved marvels when one considers that there were so few in number of established players, (the total number available for any match seldom exceeded ten). It must be recorded that all stop-gaps performed manfully, although on occasion basic instruction was given seconds before the starting whistle, due to our old friends, the "exigencies" ! Despite this, and a shaky start in the first match, we became a team to reckon with. Our opponents were established teams from the British Sovereign Bases, with magnificent grounds and training facilities - something which we lacked completely. Against such formidable opposition we emerged with a fifty percent record, a most honourable performance.

In basketball, we celebrated a great week for the Irish by winning the Inter Contingent Competition, the details of this fine feat being as follows:

Ist Rd	IRCON	34	V	CANCON	13
2nd Rd	IRCON	52	V	BRITCON	15
Final	IRCON	31	V	FINCON	18

Team

C/S Gaynor, Sgt Scully, Cpl Dowler, Cpl Stanley

Cpl Corrigan, Sgt Mullins, Cpl Barclay, Cpl McDonald

Sgt Prior, Pte Regan.

This win followed closely on the Irish win in the Felling Plates Shooting Competition, and there was no doubt but at this stage we were cock-o-the-walk in UNFICYP.

Our other sporting activities could be said to be more recreational than competitive, nevertheless in such competitions as were organised we performed creditably in Squash (our 'A' team qualified for Final being beaten 2 matches to 1 by UNFICYP HQ 'B' Team), Tennis and Volleyball.

In "Orienteering" a sport much more popular on the Continent and Britain than it is in Ireland, our 'A' team finished 9th, and our 'B' team 18th out of total entry of 30. Once again, and considering our lack of acquaintance with this sport, this was quite creditable.

In conclusion, then, we can justifiably claim that on the sporting field, we kept the flag flying merrily.

GROUP HEADQUARTERS - LOGISTICS BRANCH.

No major problems were encountered during mobilization. The accommodation provided at Collins' Barracks and at Clancy Barracks was adequate for transit locations and tropical uniform, less scarves, was issued to all personnel. When we arrived in Cyprus combat clothing, UN greens, field caps and scarves were issued.

A pleasant surprise awaited us in Zyyi Camp where we found that there was a UN tailor in residence. He also commuted to Kophinou and Larnaca when required. This service was very much appreciated and his work was very satisfactory. The services of the Group's own tailor were not normally required and he became available for general duties; thereby easing the situation in that respect. In addition to tailoring, laundry and shoe repairs were carried out by civilian contractors, arranged by UN, and it must be recorded that these services were highly satisfactory.

The catering standards in the Group were very satisfactory. Irish UN ration scale was adequate and allowed for good variety. Use and availability of MCA (Messing Cash Allowance) gave good variation. Compo rations were issued to Armd Car Group, "A" Coy and "B" Coy for emergency use. The rest were held in reserve at Group HQ. As a result of a catering review with DADACC and OC. Supplies Sub Depot minor adjustments were made to the ration scale. Representations were made to UNFICYP HQ to have hotplates installed at Larnaca and Kophinou. The request was approved but unfortunately those items were not available from normal source of supply. Consequently "A" and "B" Coys used improvised hotplates. DOE were very co-operative in the matter of repairs to general catering equipment.

Apart from Standing Patrols and OP duty the Group did not have very many operational requirements. We did have a great number of receptions and social commitments however, and these taxed our branch to the full. We pride ourselves that we were not found wanting.





Officers of the 19th Infantry Group

Group Headquarters Operations (A and B)

The 19th Infantry Group assumed operational control of the UN military district of Larnaca at 061000B October 1970. The district, which is almost identical with the civil district of Larnaca is a coastal strip on the South-eastern side of the island, being roughly 35 miles long and with an average depth of about 14 miles. The terrain varied from low mountains -which are in fact the foothills of the great Troodos Range - in the West, to wide plains separated by arid hills, in the East. There is only one large town, Larnaca (Pop.20,000) and many villages.

The 19th Infantry Group had two Company Areas, with headquarters at Kophinou in the West and at Larnaca in the East, with the Group Headquarters sited at Zyvi in the Western Company Area.

At the date of our takeover the general operational situation on the island had shown little change for a long time. The inter-communal talks had not ceased, but they seemed to be achieving little. At a local level the areas of tension in our district were the same as previous UN units had met. Kophinou - a Turkish village astride the junction of two main roads, and Scala, a large Turkish suburb in Larnaca. There were minor village trouble spots too, and at one of these, the mixed village of Arsos, the denial of freedom of movement to one of our patrols on the 22nd December 1970 caused quite an amount of tension. The affair, which for a while threatened to get out of hand, was eventually settled by "Coffee-shop diplomacy", and freedom of movement was established on the following day.

Apart from this affair, and the usual number of minor incidents, this was a trouble-free run from our point of view. Those Heavenly Twins of the Operations Branch, the SITREP and INFSUM will be of little interest to the historians of the future. No trouble - Mission accomplished!

### Headquarters Company

Our personnel arrived in Cyprus on all three "Chalks" between the 2nd and 11th October, the Company Commander having preceded us on the 25th September. Zyyi Camp, where we were stationed for the whole period was new to everybody even to those with previous service in Cyprus. The Camp is quite extensive with installed roads and all personnel were housed in permanent buildings. It is situated within a few hundred yards of the Mediterranean, about 18 miles from Limassol, and just south of the Nicosia - Limassol road. There is a completely rural ambience, if one excepts the few houses which form the fishing village of Zyyi. Carob, olive and fig trees are everywhere, and inland one can see the giant peaks of the Troodos massif. Close by the Camp are the enormous masts of the BBC relay station for the middle East, and it was probably to afford protection to that installation, that a military camp was originally put in this somewhat unusual location. Here then the various components of Headquarters Company of the 19th Infantry Group served out their tour in Cyprus.

Our predecessors had served here during a Summer period, and our first task was to prepare all buildings for the coming Winter, this work was combined, however, with a much more pleasant task the preparation for the visit of An tAire Cosanta. He arrived with his party which included An tArd Aidiúnaigh, on the 13th October and remained for nine days. He and his party were frequent visitors to Zyyi Camp. On the day after their arrival they were entertained to lunch in the Officers Mess, and two days later the Minister inspected the Camp. At a later date he inspected the Officers quarters including that portion derisively named the "Zyyi Hilton". During his visit An tAire showed an informal and friendly attitude to all ranks which was very much appreciated, and his understanding of our problems gave a boost to morale which lasted throughout the tour.

The Company took an honourable part in all sporting activities organised by the Group and provided members for inter-Contingent Soccer, Rugby and Cross Country teams. Seven - a - side Soccer and Volleyball were played on an inter-platoon basis and a high degree of keenness and rivalry were evident. However the enthusiasm of the unit for sport had one undesirable, but, unavoidable side effect, in that there was an inordinate number of injuries, some resulting in absence from duty. This, however, could be regarded as a small price to pay for the general degree of physical fitness attained, and for the degree of comradeship generated within the Company.

Recreation, other than sport and athletics was adequate in Zyyi. Swimming took place at Governors Beach, an unspoiled stretch of sand about 6 miles west of Zyyi, and it is worthy of mention that the Christmas Day swim took place in a temperature of 70 degrees. We had three film shows a week, defraying the full cost ourselves by means of a collection, where all ranks subscribed equally. Thus all members of the unit subscribed to the recreation plan, and films were an extremely important part of that plan.

The films themselves were of varying quality, they were shown in a special building set aside for projection, and wide -screen projection was possible. Other recreational activities included the inevitable Bingo, twice and sometimes three times a week, and concerts which as always on these tours, proved a resounding success.

An unusual departure from normal military recreation occurred on the 2nd of December, when the Akrotiri Drama Group performed a modern play to a large and appreciative audience. Recreation was rounded out by bus tours, a rest camp in Famagusta, and by mess functions.

The facilities available for social life in the Officers Mess, NCOs mess and Mens Club could be described as fair, but all these held very enjoyable functions. The principal function in the early part of the tour was the "Meet the Irish" reception held in the officers Mess. This was attended by VIPs, both military and civilian, including the Force Commander. It was notable that the attendance from the Turkish side was excellent even though the event occurred in Ramadan! There were few demands on Headquarters Company from an operational point of view. Our commitments in this respect were to provide a reserve platoon to the rifle companies when required, in fact we had to do so twice only. The Heavy Mortar troop formed part of the District Reserve. Of course it was a quiet tour of duty, from the operational point of view.

Finally, a word about our Pipe band, since this hard-working and efficient sub-unit will not have mention other than here. The establishment of 13 members was made up from units all over the Army, and under the able leadership and exacting tutelage of CQMS J. Duggan it achieved soon a high standard of musicianship. If it did not appear at "every wake and wedding, and at every cuntry ball" on the island, there were times when this seemed to be so. Our stirring martial airs, our love songs and laments were heard in many unlikely places. But there were also a multitude of formal engagements in our own camps and in UNFICYP headquarters. When one adds to this the burden of routine duties cheerfully and efficiently performed by the band, it can be seen how well these few words of appreciation are deserved.

( HQ Company) Heavy Mortar Troop

For the first time since Artillery Units first went overseas our Unit was supplied mainly from the Depot And School Artillery Corps, and I Anti Aircraft Regiment. We assembled in Kildare at the end of August and commenced training. Firing practices were held in Glon Imaal in the second week in September and we then moved to Dublin and joined the remainder of Headquarter Company.

We arrived in Cyprus to find the situation "quiet" as it has been for some time now. Thus we spent our entire period at Zyyi Camp, and both Officers, NCOs and men found themselves immediately employed on administrative duties. The NCOs Mess and the Mens Club were run completely by the Troop, and it would be false modesty on our part if we do not claim that these two installations afforded the maximum amount of service, available under the conditions here. We also supplied some of the staff to the Officers Mess, and here too, the bearing and efficiency of our members was exemplary.

Despite this fragmentation during duty hours, we managed to maintain a sense of unit entity. Training was done mostly after duty hours, or on selected days and several demonstrations were put on for visiting dignitaries. It caused some disappointment however that we were not allowed to fire in Cyprus during the tour. Nevertheless unit morale was excellent. The troop had its own Soccer and Volleyball team which gave a good account of themselves in Unit competitions. The biggest social event during our stay was the celebration of St. Barbara's Day - here she is known as Ayia Varvara and many monasteries are named after her.

The Troop Commander and GPO visited the National Guard Artillery at their training depot at Athalassa, and there met the Director and assistant Director. These gentlemen, a Colonel and a Lieutenant - Colonel of the regular Greek Army, were later our guests at Zyyi on several occasions.

(HEADQUARTERS COMPANY) ENGINEER SECTION.

"There can never be enough engineers". The accuracy of the old military adage was shown again in our experience on this tour. It was decided to locate an engineer NCO and carpenter at Kophinou and Larnaca ( the two Company HQ's) - and to retain the balance of engineer personnel at Zyyi Camp. These latter would be available to move out to other posts as required. The plan was all right, and the system worked reasonably well, but it quickly became apparent that there were not enough carpenters to maintain the posts at an acceptable level. The transition from summer to winter conditions involved a considerable amount of work which, unfortunately, could not be satisfactorily completed.

One of the biggest tasks completed by us was the erection of a new elephant shelter and the building of a new ablution at Kophinou. The whole section was involved in this work and a drop in maintenance standards in other parts was soon apparent.

Apart from the larger tasks we gave priority to work in op's, but the decision to re-deploy in the Artemis Road ( a flash - point area in Larnaca town ) held up work in this sector. As to works in the Artemis Road itself, all plans were completed, and op 313 will have new cookhouse and dining-hall facilities for a sixteen-man post. The accommodation for officers at Zyyi Camp was considered to be totally unsuitable and plans for new accommodation were prepared. These are now being considered at Ministerial level by the Cyprus Government. Prefabricated structure were specified, the estimated cost being £8,000. It would seem however, that this will concern our successors, not us, and we wish them good luck, and hope that they will have as pleasant and rewarding a tour as we have had.

(HEADQUARTERS COMPANY) ORDNANCE SECTION

We were one of the smaller sub-units of Headquarters Company (one Officer, four Sergeants and two Corporals), and of course we had to contend, almost throughout our tour, with the question "what exactly do you people do here anyway"? Since three of our personnel had already served with UNFICYP we all knew what to expect. The previous experience of these men was a great help in meeting our problems and the volume of work was higher than we expected.

This was particularly so in the case of inspection and maintenance of arms and equipment because this had to be carried out in four centres viz Zyyi, Kophinou, Larnaca and Mhekelia, and as a result our inspection and maintenance team kept on on the go during our entire period of the tour. This team also did Fire Control and optical inspections.

General maintenance was carried out at our workshops in Zyyi Camp. Repairs to Tilly lamps, oil heaters, cookers and refrigerators were all carried out as the occasion arose. It was hoped that the winter period coincided with a greatly increased demand for servicing and maintenance in all these. The Winter period, too, brought out the necessity for repair to much of our tentage, which is not in good shape. We also had to erect marquees for some of the functions held by the Group.

In addition to all these, we also did 500 earmarked odd jobs in maintenance and construction, varying from the construction of a Sauna ( a labour of love ) to the repair by welding of the piping supplying water to the Camp. What exactly do we do, indeed? It would take too long answering the question, so we just went ahead and did it instead.

HEADQUARTERS COMPANY ( SIGNAL PLATOON)

We took over the responsibility for communications on the 6th. October 1970 and immediately encountered the problem that the main medium of communications was the C. 42 set, and a number of our operators had no previous experience with this equipment. The problem was quickly overcome, and for this our thanks are due to those personnel who had used this type of set on previous tours. We are glad to be able to state that all operators quickly attained and kept a very high standard in message and set handling.

In our present location, Zyyi Camp, there is, however, another great communications problem, and one to which the answer has not been found. Just a few fields away, so to speak, are the enormous masts and equipment of a huge BBC radio station, one of the most powerful transmitters in Europe. Interference from here is experienced on all our sets, VHF and HF. Efforts by our own Signal platoon, with co-operation from BBC technicians have failed to eliminate this interference, and, it is felt that only a change of location for Headquarters Company will finally solve that problem.

One of the bigger and more dangerous tasks undertaken by the Signal Platoon was the dismantling of a 120 foot mast at Kophinou. This normally would be the task of 644 Signal Troop, but, to the cheers and admiration of the Kophinou garrison, our men did the job, showing competency and enthusiasm for the very rigorous task.

In our unit we have two able and enthusiastic radio mechanics, unfortunately the workshops facilities available to them give them little opportunities to display their talents. It is to be hoped that this is a situation which will soon be changed for the better. In any case the powers that be have been notified and recommendations made.

A famous politician once said that it is impossible to fool all of the people all of the time. We, in, the Signal Platoon, can vary that by saying that it is impossible to satisfy all of the people all of the time - and especially to satisfy them in the choice of film. Well, we didn't produce the film, but we did project them and competently too. In fact the word competent seems an apt one to describe our tour in the 19th. Infantry Group.



-13-  
HEADQUARTERS COMPANY ( TRANSPORT PLATOON )

If it can be said that the morale of the Transport Platoon was high right throughout our period in Cyprus, that does not mean we consider that it was an easy run for us - on the contrary. The fact that the driver and fitter establishment are completely inadequate meant that drivers and fitters were always over-expanded to maintain the fleet.

The fleet itself, of course, could be described as generally dilapidated, firstly because the roads in the island are generally not good, and some of the roads to the op's have to be seen to be beleived. There was a general improvement in the shape of the fleet during our tour however, both in mechanical efficiency and appearance. The astute application of paint helped greatly in the latter regard.

Some statistics from the platoon record may prove of interest: The MT section completed an average of 600 details a month while drivers averaged over 2,000 miles a month, and it is to be noted that two of our drivers were hospitalized for the first three months of the tour. Taking these statistics into account we come to the most important statistic of all - the accident rate. Our drivers were involved in eight accidents in all, and five of these were of a very minor nature, and when the mileage driven, and the hazards to be met are taken into consideration, it must be admitted that it is a fine performance. It was certainly better than any other Contingent could achieve.

As regards stores and equipment there were two grave drawbacks when we took over. Firstly the stores back-up was very poor, but after a number of early difficulties, this position has improved and could finally be considered satisfactory. Secondly, the workshops equipment is completely inadequate for the carrying out of first-line repairs. We failed to improve that position for ourselves, but there are hopes that our requisitions will be met for the 20th Infantry Group. If such is the case we say good luck to them, and "Bon Voyage".

Officers of the 19th Infantry Group who presented the 'Irish Presentation' from left to right, Capt C. Dodd, Capt H. Johnston, Lt K. Heery, Sgt Scully, Comdt J. Egan, Capt H. Smith, Fr F. Moriarty, Lt D. Murphy



Headquarters Company ( Medical Platoon)

The Medical Platoon of the 19th Infantry Group assembled in Collins Barracks, Dublin on 14th September 1970. As with previous platoons serving with UNFICYP it consisted of 2 MOs, 1 C/S, 1 Sgt, 3 Cpls and 5 Ptes. This number was reduced in January due to the repatriation on compassionate grounds of 1 Pte.

One MO was located in Zyyi and covered Zyyi and Kophinou areas. The other MO was located in Larnaca and was responsible for that area. The rest of the platoon was deployed as follows:-

2 NCOs and 2 men in Zyyi  
1 NCO and 1 man in Kophinou  
1 NCO and 2 men in Larnaca  
and  
1 NCO in Louroujina

While the rest centre functioned in Famagusta an NCO was located there on duty. The NCOs and men rotated at intervals and so gained the maximum experience from their service overseas.

The high standard of performance of the medical personnel contributed to the excellent health of the Group. The morbidity rate in the Group was consistently among the lowest of the contingents on the island. A high proportion of people seeking medical attention did so as a result of injuries, usually of a minor nature, received at sports or in the course of duty.

Treatment was afforded to members of Auscivpol serving in the District. Emergency treatment was given to members of the civilian population when requested, usually as a result of traffic or other accidents and in some medical emergencies.

An adequate supply of Medicines and dressings was brought out from Ireland by the Group.

ARMoured CAR GROUP

We concentrated in Collins Barracks, Dublin, all personnel having reported by the 21st. September, and while documentation for overseas service was carried out, the training needs were assessed. It was decided that extra training in driving, gunnery and the use of the radio were required. Our thanks are due to the 2nd. Motor Squadron for making two Panhards available to us, so that this training could be completed. In addition technical training was carried out in the Cavalry workshops under the supervision of Lt. E. Horgan.

Our departure from Ireland and arrival in Cyprus were uneventful, and we must compliment our predecessors who served with the 18th. Group for the smooth and efficient handover. In particular we must compliment the excellent condition of the Armoured Cars and equipment. The main body of our troops arrived on the 6th. October 1970, and we took over operational responsibility on the same date.

The three main tasks of the Armoured Car Group were :-

- (a) To patrol as required
- (b) Maintain, at 30 minutes notice, a troop of Armoured Cars on District and Force Reserve.
- (c) Prepare a going map of Larnaca District.

We can now justifiably claim that all these tasks were carried out efficiently and cheerfully by us, in addition to any extra duties that came our way.

Training was unceasing throughout our stay, beginning with a refresher course for drivers under Lieutenant Horgan, and it is to be noted that no accidents however minor were recorded during the tour. Lieutenant O'Brien carried out wireless training throughout the whole period while Lieutenant Heery gave gunnery training. All this training paid off when combined exercises were held with other members of the Force Reserve, including the crack British units, the Scots Greys and the Royal Hussars. It must be admitted also that one of our proudest moments occurred when we won the Falling Plates competition of the Group; since the Group later won the inter-Contingent competition it showed how high our standard had to be. The members of the team who achieved this feat were:- Comdt. E. Sheehy, Sgt. McEvoy, Cpl. Carey, Cpl. McGlynn, and Troopers Magee and Fahy.

The Armoured Car Group took it's full share in all Group activities, including sport. In fact one-half of the rugby team were Cavalrymen. When social activities were the order of the day, we were not found wanting either. We supplied Sergeant White as "resident landlord" of the Group rest centre in Famagusta, and the resounding success of that venture was, in no small part, attributable to him. All in all, it has been a very successful, and rewarding tour for us.

'A' Company

On the 11th September 1970 'A' Company personnel met for the first time as a unit in Collins Bks Dublin. The Company was made up of two platoons from Ceann 'D', one from Ceann 'O' and a Company HQ section drawn from both Commands. Our Company Commander was A/Comdt Michael O'Shea, 15 Bn with Captain Jim Harold 8 Bn as 2I/C. The Platoon Commanders were Lt W. Hanlon 2 Garr Coy S&T, Lt D. Murphy 12 Bn and Lt W. Freyne 4 Bn. The Company Sergeant and Coy CQMS were respectively C/S Woods 4 Bn and CQMS Costello 3 Fd Coy S&T. From the 11th September until the date of the first Chalk on the 2nd October the Company trained and rehearsed in preparation for the Task that lay ahead in Cyprus. By the 12th October all 'A' Coy personnel had started working in the Coy area of Kophinou. Everyone looked forward to commencing their UN service as the time in Dublin dragged particularly from the 6th to the 11th Oct.

The operational sub-district allotted to 'A' Coy was that of Kophinou. Company HQ was located in the Camp which was the former Tk/Pol compound situated at the junction of the main Nicosia-Limassol-Larnaca roads, and beside the Turkish Village of Kophinou. The area is still highly sensitive because of the tragic confrontation and resultant battle which took place in 1967 between units of the Nat Gd and local Turkish Fighter elements. It was with genuine enthusiasm that the Coy commenced the carrying out of the operational tasks allotted. The five O.Ps in our area were manned and straight away became a popular detail. The main reason for O.P. duty being preferred to camp regimental duties was because of excellent weather, very good food, and also the fact that people were now acting on their own initiative in an important role. The O.Ps themselves were in quite good shape, which was also a contributory factor. Both Rifle Platoons rotated fortnightly on the four local O.Ps ; Bunker, Skarinou, Tango and Blackbridge.

O.P. Mari was manned at all times by personnel of Support Pln. with rotation of staff after 14 days duty. This O.P. was almost Ten miles from Coy HQ. There was an extra sentry required to man a precariously perched box on nearby Crown Hill. It presented quite an unusual situation as there was a Turkish sentry box only fifty yards away. This was one area of sensitivity where Turkish - Irish-UN relationships were to say the least cordial.

The main operational task in our area was the Alaminous Patrol. The little mixed village of Alaminous is situated about six miles N.W. of Kophinou. The patrol was carried out daily by personnel of the Support Pln and was quite popular for a number of reasons. It afforded routine mobile patrols of local area combined with periods of quiet observation from a post in the Village itself. In conjunction with the commencement of operational duties, the most important task undertaken by the Coy was improvement of Kophinou Camp. The amount of tentage was reduced to the minimum by making all possible use of permanent buildings to accommodate personnel. The clearing of obstacles such as the one hundred foot radio mast and the relocation and reduction of tentage made it possible to set up a parade ground and volleyball court within the compound, bamboo matting was purchased and erected along the perimeter fence thus affording a much needed degree of privacy to Coy personnel.

The re-location of the Comcen and O.Ps room in the officers mess afforded a modicum of privacy to the Officers of the Coy.

In general our time in Kophinou was enjoyable. A wealth of entertainers were discovered within the Coy. A number of successful concerts were held in the canteen and also in the local Turkish Villages by 'A' Coy entertainers. Across the road from the camp stood our much loved Half-way house where multitudinous pints of Keo wound their way up, down and out. The occasional impromptu sing-song here not to mention the crack, made it a very popular venue for Coy personnel. Of the indoor entertainments darts proved to be the most popular and as well as our own Coy competitions we played host to both Britcon and Cancon teams. On the sporting front our time in Kophinou was high lighted by our soccer team which reached the final of the inter-company league competition. Another notable achievement was that a large number of 'A' Coy personnel were picked as members of the Group obstacle course team. In an orienteering competition organised by Britcon our Coy team finished eight of about fifty entries. In the group falling plates competition the 'A' Coy team was placed second after a controversial decision which demanded a reshoot of the final. Other outdoor recreational activities popular with all ranks were (a) swimming parades to Governors Beach, which were organised daily up to the beginning of December but thereafter not quite so often. A Coy swimming parade was held to Governors Beach on Christmas Day as an appetiser. (b) Organised walks in the hills in Kophinou district. This form of recreational activity became very popular as the weather got cooler in December. Arms and foot drill (directed towards ceremonial perfection in preparation for UNFICYP HQ Guards and visits of V.I.Ps). Severe morning physical training and continuous training in R.T. procedure and operation of radio equipment, were organised and practiced during the entire period even when demands on personnel for operational duties resulted in only small groups being available for instruction. A Coy Dinner on both Christmas Day and New Years Day was so organised as to permit the participation of the full Coy strength with the exception of six NCOs and a driver who volunteered for a four hour period to man the Coy OPs. Both functions were a tremendous success and served as a great booster to the morale of all ranks. Planned training on Military subjects, insistence on constant physical and outdoor activity, well organised entertainment in camp, improved living conditions, participation by other ranks in the form of committees to organise and operate the Coy credit union, canteen, and Coy entertainments, all combined to build up the morale in the Coy to a very high standard and a sound sense of commitment and devotion to duty. The Coy credit union was started to provide 'A' Coy personnel with facilities whereby they could save regularly, lodge credits, sent out from Ireland, and borrow money for immediate use on the strength of forthcoming credits from home. As such it has proved a great success.

With the festivities of Christmas and New Year over, we moved to a new Company location at Larnaca, on the 6th January, 1971. We looked forward to the change as this in a more pleasantly situated camp with better living conditions all round. However there was a heavier commitment for OP duty, and the conditions in the OPs themselves was not so good. But the men went about their various tasks with a will, and our time in this Company district - a description of which appears elsewhere - was pleasant and rewarding too.

'B' Company

The Western Command supplied the company headquarters, one rifle platoon and the support platoon, the remaining rifle platoon being drawn from the Curragh Training Camp. This was the composition of our Company.

On the 14th August, 1970 No. 3 platoon with Lt David Doyle, and the support platoon with Lt Fergus Gleeson assembled in Custume Barracks, Athlone, to commence training in preparation for the move to Cyprus. In the following week the Company HQ formed up, also in Athlone. No. 4 platoon, with Lt Austin Woulfe, formed up in the Curragh in the third week in August. While the unit was in these two centres documentation and medical processing were completed. Training was limited to internal security exercises, live firing practices, mortar and 84mm training, and field exercises at section and platoon level. A live firing practice took place in the Glen of Imaal on the 8th September. The Company assembled at Clancy Barracks on the 18th September, and here documentation was completed. All training was geared for the probable tasks ahead of us in Cyprus to which we were airlifted in the following weeks, our last platoon, No. 4 arriving on the 11th October. We took over the Larnaca Company Area of the Larnaca District.

The company area for which we were now responsible is the Eastern half of Larnaca civil district, 'A' Company being responsible for the Western half. In addition we were responsible for that portion of Nicosia civil district around the Turkish/Cypriot town of Louroujina, a total area of some 300 square miles. Larnaca, the district capital, is beside the Company HQ, and two of the main roads in Cyprus meet here i.e. the Limassol - Famagusta road and the Larnaca - Nicosia road. Larnaca has a population of some 22,000 and there are 33 villages in the Company area. Physically the area varies from the flat coastal plain around Larnaca in the South to low arid hills in the North. These hills seen from afar give the impression that this is a desert area, but the appearance is deceptive, because many of the valleys are quite fertile. We discovered that the main sensitive areas in our area were (a) Larnaca town itself, (b) Louroujina (c) several mixed villages where there was no permanent UN presence. We will now attempt to give some idea of what our problems were in these places.

Larnaca ! There was a name to evoke memories, because -

" Of old, a brave and haughty race,  
Honoured and sentinelled the place"

The first UN unit in Larnaca was the 3rd Infantry Group commanded by Lieut Colonel (now Colonel) McDonald, in the days before the Irish "diaspora" to the West of the island of Cyprus. It may be said that the operational situation has changed little since those days either. In that part where the Turkish suburb of Scala and the Greek section of the town converge, the confrontation is still "eye-ball to eye-ball" as a commentator from the 3rd Group once put it. There is a "Green Line" in Larnaca down Okoulla Street, one side Turkish, the other side Greek - and it is a very narrow street! The Artemis road goes West from Larnaca to the Tekke Mosque. South of it lies Scala and there are various posts along it, manned 24 hours a day by Turkish Fighters. On the North side of it are National Guard posts similarly manned, and we had five OPs in the area between

them. This area where shooting had occurred several times since 1967 was an extremely sensitive spot. The Tekke Mosque itself is also a constant centre of friction. This shrine is the third most important Muslim place of worship in the world, but although it is only about one mile from the Turkish Scala, it is under the control of the National Guard who have a post nearby. The Turkish pilgrims thus have, so to speak, to pass by Greek guns in order to go there. Even the caretaker is a Greek Cypriot. In common with our predecessors, we tried to have him replaced by a Turkish Cypriot, but without success, jobs are scarce in Larnaca. Another place which is a great source of friction is the Scala School. The buildings are on the Greek side of the Green Line, and thus have been denied to the Turks, although it is a Turkish school. Negotiations have been proceeding for years to have this school made available to them again, but without success. In the troubled situation here, apportioning blame to either community is dangerous, but it may be noted that at one stage, when agreement to have the school handed over was almost reached, the Turkish side demanded the right to fly their flag on it when they got it - with the result that negotiations broke down. No Turkish flags would be allowed on the Greek side of the Green Line. Flag flying was to provide a constant source of annoyance throughout our tour.

In the North of our Area in the Turkish-Cypriot town of Louroujina - a large town of about 4,000. Just beside it - a few fields away to the South, as one might put it, - is the Greek-Cypriot town of Lymbia, which is almost as large, and other Greek towns surround it on all sides, including Dhali to the North. There was a long history of inter communal conflict here, and possession of high ground overlooking both Louroujina and Lymbia was sought by both communities. In the end they both allowed the UN to take over the positions on the high ground, including a most picturesque OP at Stavros Church, situated on a steep, conical hill of about 600 ft, and reached by a fairly vertiginous road.

Our problems always arose in mixed villages or when a Turkish village lay along a road joining two Greek villages and freedom of movement for the Greeks was interfered with. A problem of the former kind arose at Arsos, and has been dealt with in an earlier part of this history. The manner in which the trouble in this obscure village escalated until the whole UN force was placed on "alert", was an example for us of how easily the troubled peace in Cyprus could be disturbed.

Apart from maintaining the status quo our main task was to check on villages, which either had refugees from other villages, or from which refugees had departed to other villages. This work was designed to assist in the return of refugees, part of the "normalization" procedure agreed upon at the high level inter-communal talks. By constant patrolling, and diplomatic questioning we succeeded largely in gaining the information, but when we left Larnaca Company area there had been no noticeable improvement in the refugee problem. Matters move very slowly on this island.



The Louroujina Patrol climbing Stavros hill from left to right, Cpl J. Bracken, Ptes S. Foy, G. Crichton, P. Barnwell, F. Frawley, E. Fallon, J. O'Connell.



Our station for the second half of our tour was Kophinou in the Eastern half of the Group Operational area, which has been described for you elsewhere. The problems here were, of the same general nature as in our previous station, but in Cyprus every area of tension has its own particular local aspects, and it is absolutely essential for a peacekeeping force to know these. We received a full and satisfactory briefing from 'A' Company, and it only remains now, to say with some pride, that our work here was done to the satisfaction of everybody, including ourselves, for we set ourselves high standards.

With regard to recreation, it soon became obvious that our company had a high proportion of highly qualified and skilled sportsmen. Swimming and volleyball were the main pursuits during our first month here, but as time progressed our teams began to knit together and in Group competitions we won the following:

Volleyball	Championship
Soccer	Championship
Basketball	Championship

Our Company basketball team then represented the Group and won the Contingent Championship, a feat which gave us immense satisfaction. In the same week some of our "shots" were represented on the team which performed the absolutely unique feat of winning the "Falling Plates" Competition three times in a row. Altogether, a most satisfactory performance.

And so our time in Cyprus has drawn to a close. We found our work interesting and rewarding, and we can only hope that our short presence here has done something to bring peace to this lovely but troubled island.

UNFICYP FALLING PLATES COMPETITION 1971

Tuesday, 26th January 1971 was a beautiful summerlike day in Cyprus. On the flag-bedecked range at DHEKELIA there was an air of nervous excitement as nineteen teams waited for the start of the 1971 UNFICYP Falling Plates Shooting Competition. Eight nations were represented - Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, Ireland and Sweden. As starting time approached a large gallery of enthusiastic supporters had assembled to cheer on their teams.

In the Irish tent last minute checks were carried out under the watchful eye of Sqn/Sgt Gleeson, whose long and intensive course of training was now going to be put to the test. A few last-minute words of advice from Comdt Egan and all was set to make our bid to win for the third year in succession.

Changes in the rules from former competitions allowed each Contingent to enter two teams of four each and increased the run-up distance by starting at the 300m point and firing from 200m point. The draw did little to improve our chances as we were the only contingent to have our 'A' and 'B' teams in the same half of the draw.

At precisely 14.00 hrs loud cheers heralded the start of the first match between Force Reserve 'A' and Austrian 'A'. Tension increased as the first shots rang out and excitement mounted as the targets started to disappear. A final loud burst of cheering accompanied the disappearance of the first set of targets and the first match was decided. Irish interest was centered on the time taken and this was encouraging in view of our pre-competition tryouts which were much faster. A feeling of confidence grew amongst the Irish teams and mentors, and this was justified with good wins by the 'A' team over BRITCON and CANCON teams and by the 'B' team over UNFICYP HQ and SWEDCON teams. An extremely fast shoot by the 3rd Bn RGJ 'A' team in 22.5 secs served a very useful purpose in making sure that over-confidence was not going to be our downfall. Both Irish teams had now reached the semi-final stage of the competition together with 'A' teams from 3rd Bn RGJ and UNFICYP HQ. With the luck of the draw our 'A' and 'B' teams had to fight it out for a place in the final. As they took up position on the firing-point the Irish supporters relaxed in the knowledge that either team would be a worthy representative in the final. Not so with the firers. They had faced each other many times before to-day and they each had a healthy respect for the other. As the word "GO" was shouted they both leaped forward and with professional expertise they proceeded to knock their targets in rapid succession. Victory was to go to the 'B' team in the end who set up an all-time best performance of 23.7 secs. The disappointment of the 'A' team was soon forgotten as they rallied round their victors for their final match against UNFICYP HQ 'A' team.

Following a short interval the stage was now set for the final encounter. Both teams took up position to the shouts of advice and encouragement of their respective supporters. Tension reached fever-pitch as last minute checks were carried out and as the word "GO" rang out for the last time both teams sprang forward to the accompanying roars from the spectators. The final battle was on. Quickly the targets disappeared and in a brief few seconds a prolonged cheer from the Irish supporters heralded once again an Irish victory.

The 19th Inf. Group had done it again. For the third successive year the Irish Contingent had won what Sqn/Sgt Gleeson called "The Competition of the Soldier".

The winning team was:-

Sqn/Sgt. Gleeson (Team Capt)	-	1st Tk Sqn.
Sgt. J. McEvoy	-	1st Armd Car Sqn.
Sgt. P. Hughes	-	5th Bn.
Cpl. H. Barclay	-	4th Fd Sigs.
Cpl. M. O'Halloran	-	1st Bn.
Sgmn. Wrenne (Sub)	-	1st Fd Sigs.