

urge those of you who have not yet sent your cheque to Eric to do so quickly, accompanied by the form sent out in November, as this will be the last Bulletin sent to those who have not paid. Rates for overseas members are given on the inside front cover. It is certain that we will not be able to sustain Air Mail subscriptions after this year as the postal costs alone take all of the subscriptions in some cases!

This year, the Society's award for the outstanding contributions to the Bulletin went to Howard Ripley for his sustained support over many years in keeping members informed about military buttons.

Mr DG Glover has received a number of corrections and additions to the CFS Cap Special Number including some information on the cap worn by the Guards in the Crimea. Detail of an alternative pattern has been received on the R Anglian Regiment and the proposal is to issue an amendment section as we did for Howard Ripley's Rifle Volunteer Button Special. Could any members please let me have details (with photographs – colour if possible – or sketches) of any caps known to them or references to them in print so that I can pass them on to the compiler. Please give details of authority, source, location or other evidence.

Meetings 2003 (See separate sheet for current details)

Committee meetings start at 1030hrs, talks at 1200hrs and the Annual Trustees meeting at 1000hrs. A sandwich lunch and bar facilities will be provided when meetings are held at Regent's Park Barracks.

Sat 8 Feb		1400hrs	Visit to Royal Hospital Museum, Chelsea
Sat 8 Mar	Regent's Park	1030hrs	General Committee
		1200hrs	Talk. Jerry Parsons "A Country Family's Experience of the Great War"
Sat 10 May		1330hrs	Visit RASC/RCT private Medal Collection
Sat 12 July	Regent's Park	1030hrs	General Committee
		1200hrs	Talk. Mike Padmore "NW Frontier: Maxim Gun at Chakdara"
Sun 28 Sept	Farnham Maltings	1030hrs	Annual Exhibition
Sat 11 Oct	Regent's Park	1000hrs	Trustees Meeting
		1030hrs	General Committee
		1200hrs	Annual General Meeting
		1330hrs	Talk. Capt P Starling
Sat 13 Dec	NAM	1300hrs	General Committee
		1400hrs	Talk. Capt R Tatham: "Some highlights in forming a Foot Guards Collection over 50 years"

THE ANGLO-BOER WAR AND THE MALTA MOUNTED INFANTRY

by Denis A Darmanin

While Malta was celebrating the relief of Mafeking and Valletta was *en fete* with bunting and decorations adorning Queen's Way (now Republic Street), and the tunes of both civil and military bands could be heard playing in every square from Queen's Gate to the Main Guard, the conflict in South Africa had escalated to proportions that the British authorities had not expected and casualties were high. To cope with the need for fresh troops, units that previously were not eligible for overseas service were now authorised and other new ones were raised just for service in this theatre of war. The vast and wild terrain required to be covered, demanded that troops must be able to respond quickly in order to engage the enemy and to be able to peruse in conditions that the cavalry could not manage. In other words, fast and efficient deployment.

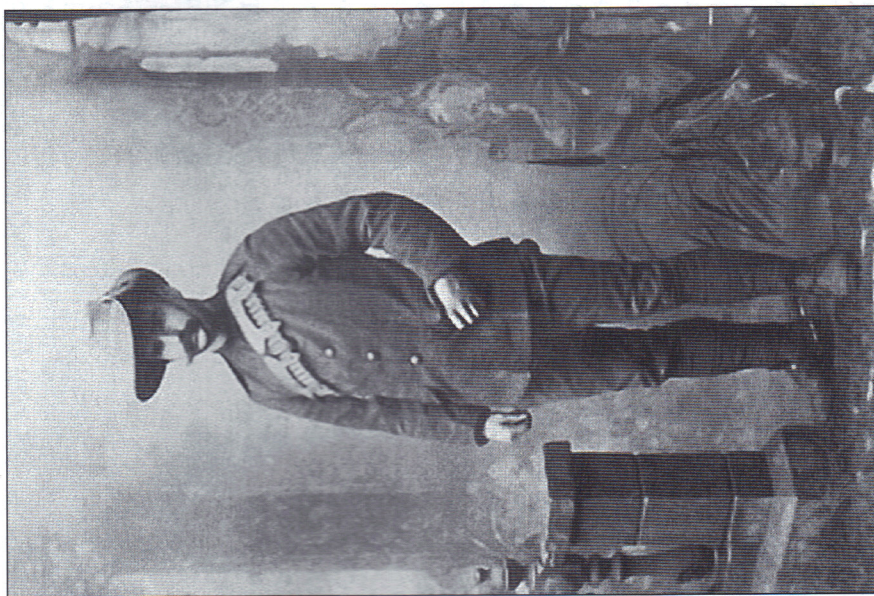
This concept was not new to the British Army, as the infantry was mounted, not just on horses but even on mules, ponies and camels, especially in the attempt to relief the ill-fated Gen Gordon and Khartoum. There had been the Imperial Mounted Infantry in South Africa (1877-79) and the Mounted Infantry in Egypt (1882) and Sudan (1884-5). However, this new Mounted Infantry is not to be confused with the battalions of Imperial Yeomanry of the Anglo-Boer War.

An article that appeared in *The Sunday Times* (of Malta) in mid 2000 had referred to a unit serving in South Africa, which was designated the 10th Malta Mounted Infantry. It went further to say that issues of the Queen's South Africa medal 1899-1902 are known to have been named to this unit. Such obscure units, especially those related to Malta, kindle something within me and urge me to investigate the subject further. However, records indicate that this was the 9th Mounted Infantry Battalion and not the 10th MMI as mentioned in the said article. In all, there were 28 Mounted Infantry Battalions and I could only trace Malta's involvement with the 9th Bn Having seen much service in South Africa, Sir Francis Grenfell, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Malta, had great conviction that war in South Africa was imminent. He knew from experience that mounted infantrymen or those soldiers who could ride would be needed there, so he suggested to the War Office for permission to establish a training school for mounted infantry in Malta. Although a Mounted Infantry school had already existed in Britain, the War Office gave the necessary sanctions and some time towards the end of December 1899, Capt WR Marshall of the 2nd Bn The Sherwood Foresters was given orders to buy ponies and to take the necessary steps for the formation of a Mounted Infantry School. Although



A Mounted Infantryman c1899-1902

unconfirmed, its location is very likely to have been at the Pembroke Camp, which later became known as St Andrew's Barracks. Stables that were constructed around 1902 still exist there today. The Royal Malta Regiment of Militia had provided cavalry instructors in the training of the Mounted Infantry Depots in Malta. Two such officers were Lts Charles Pace and Alfred Briffa.



Studio photo of Mounted Infantryman taken in Malta c 1901

On the outbreak of the Boer War, both the 1st and 2nd Sherwood Foresters were stationed in Malta and various records exist to the regiments' stay and connection with the Malta Mounted Infantry. The 1st Bn had sailed to South Africa in November 1899 to remain there until the end of hostilities. The 2nd Bn remained in Malta and along with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, the Lancashire Fusiliers and the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, provided volunteers for the 1st Malta Company of the newly raised companies of Mounted Infantry Battalions. The 2nd Bn The Sherwood Foresters was the nucleus of the 2nd Malta Coy.

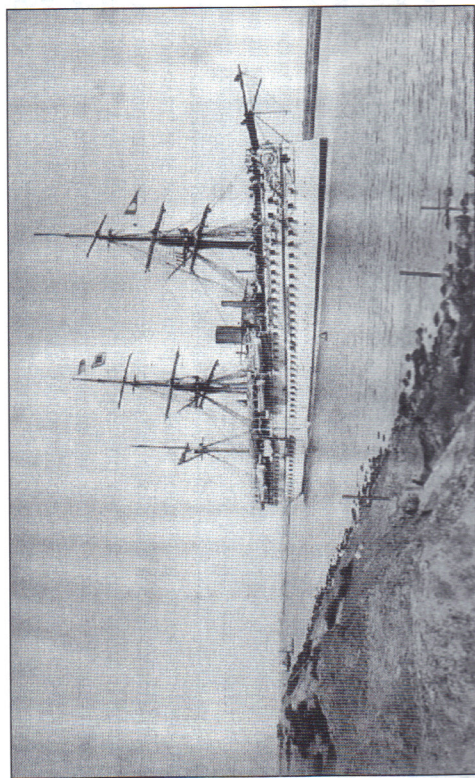
All ranks of the 2nd Battalion were greatly disappointed to find that they were not going to proceed home to England after a prolonged tour of Foreign Service, and still more because the battalion was to take part in the South African Campaign then just commencing. It was well understood that the 2nd Bn was the more mature battalion from the two, and the one with having the larger and more recent experience of active service. However, if it was to be denied the good fortune of proceeding to the seat of the war as a complete unit, many of its officers and men were to proceed to South Africa with the different sections and companies of Mounted Infantry which were organised in Malta. Records compiled by some of those officers who had commanded, raised or served with these units in the field have served to learn more about the story of the stay of the Battalion in Malta.

As stated, the Sherwood Foresters were not the only to train in Malta at the new school. Two months after its formation, about the middle of February 1900, orders were received for No. 1 Malta Coy, Mounted Infantry Battalion to sail in the Pavonia, which left Malta on the 20th. The Company was under the command of Capt JE Pine-Coffin of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, and composed of compliments from the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, The Lancashire Fusiliers and Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, plus a mixed section from the 2nd Bn The Sherwood Foresters under Lt HK Atfield. The remainder belonged to Capt Pine-Coffin's own battalion. Sgt Dames of the 2nd Bn was the Section Sergeant, and was alone in having some previous experience in the country, having served as a bugler with the late Maj FS Evans' Mounted Infantry Company of the 1st Battalion during the Matabeleland trouble.

Capt Pine-Coffin was a man who kept records of events and of how the title of Malta Mounted Infantry had originated. The following is a particular entry in his diary:

"Cape Town. March 20th. Pavonia arrived and the M.I. was ordered to proceed to East London. The Pay Office at Cape Town decided to christen us "the Malta M.I." – hence our name', and the result of this appears to have been that the authorities laboured for some time under the impression that the Company was composed of Maltese; and when later on the Company was ordered to join the Colonial Division, then forming under Gen Brabant for the relief of Wepener, that commander expressed his regret to Capt Pine-Coffin that the only languages he knew were English and Dutch!"

Just like others from all over the Empire, the Maltese also responded to the call to serve the "Queen and Country" and the Malta General Orders of 21st March, 1900 had provided this opportunity. A number of Royal Malta Regiment of Militia and Royal Malta Artillery officers were granted commissions as 2nd Lieutenants for service in South Africa. These were 2/Lts Charles Albert Gatt and George Mompalao de Piro from Royal Malta Artillery to Royal Garrison Artillery (4th May, 1900), Capt George Dunbar Vella from RMRM to South Staffordshire Regiment (21st April, 1900), 2/Lt Joseph Ardoino from RMRM to the Manchester Regiment, 2/Lt William John Parnis England from RMRM to the King's (Liverpool Regiment) and Lt Eugene von Brockdorff to the King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment), who departed from Malta on 7th May, 1900. Capt L Monreal RMA left Malta on 11th January, 1902 en route to South Africa to join the Army Pay Department with whom he was attached, but found that the war had already been won although the Boers did not sing the general surrender terms until 31st May, 1902.



The Crocodile, a Troop Ship similar to those that transported soldiers to South Africa.

Lt F Stivala of 2nd Bn RMRM is recorded as having taken part in four battles while attached to the British Mounted Infantry, while Privates G Pace, P Caruana and P Farrugia saw action with the Driscoll Scouts, whose task was to ride ahead of the main British columns to report on the Boer positions. Lt Stivala and the three Privates were awarded the South Africa Medal in 1904.

Another Maltese Officer who left Malta for service in South Africa was Lt Col Samut, the Commanding Officer of the 2nd Bn RMRM. He had volunteered as a Medical Officer, and who on 3rd April, 1900 had embarked from Malta for England on the SS *Carola* and from there to South Africa where he served with distinction in a number of military hospitals. Following his retirement from commanding the 2nd Bn RMRM, he was appointed Chief Medical Officer and Superintendent of Public Health in Malta.

As certain victualling and consumables were not catered for by the military, a number of private firms were contracted to supply such needs on regular basis. One particular was 'Messrs J. E. Mortimer & Co., Army and Navy Agents and Contractors'. Mortimer was also one of Malta's leading producers of 'aerated water' and other beverage, whose Eagle Works were quite famous at the time. His production plant is believed to have been located in the vicinity of Il-Menqa or Lighters Wharf in

A Mortimer ceramic ginger beer bottle manufactured by Bourne G. Denby



Memorandum of Agreement between the PRESIDENT. Mess. *Mortimer & Co. & Sons* and J. E. MORTIMER & CO., Army Contractors of Malta.

Messrs J. E. Mortimer & Co., Agents for the
J. A. REES, Major, P.M.C.,
and Liverpool Regiment.

MALTA, 3rd February 1901.

DEAR MR. MORTIMER,

I have great pleasure in stating that your firm has always supplied a Mess for the Officers of the Mounted Infantry when in camp during the past year, furnishing us with all stores, including Wines, Cigars, &c.

Every effort has readily been made to meet our requirements, and all has been arranged to our entire satisfaction.

Yours faithfully,
W. L. LORING, Capt.,
Commanding Mounted Infantry Depot.

MALTA, 6th February 1901.

This is to state that Messrs MORTIMER & Co. have supplied the Mess with Mineral Waters
during the stay of the Regiment in Malta, which have been, besides, fruit, and coffee.

Testimonials and documents relating to the MI, Messrs Mortimer and Malta

Marsa. One particular source had even suggested that Eagle Alley in Marsa, which is also in this particular area, could have been named after Mortimer's Trademark, an eagle perched on a bar. An entry in the company's 'Recent Testimonials' records that Capt P Rigby of the 1st Battalion, The Sherwood Foresters had written from his office at the Auberge de Baviere on 20th November, 1899, to complement the firm for catering to the needs of the Officers Mess on their arrival in Malta and their departure.

The Training Camp in Malta must have remained to supply fresh troops in duration of the war in South Africa. Another letter addressed to Mr Mortimer, dated 6th February, 1901, and written by Capt WL Loring, thanking and praising his firm for having always supplied a Mess for the Officers of the Mounted Infantry with stores, including wines, cigars, and other luxuries when in camp in Malta during the last year. At this time, Capt Loring was the Commanding Officer of the Depot.

Sources and Reference:

- 1 *History of the King's Own Malta Regiment and the Armed Forces of the Order of St. John*, Capt JM Wismayer, pp133, 134 and 136
- 2 *History of the Royal Malta Artillery, Volume 1*, Brig A Samut-Tagliaferro, pp321-322 and 333
- 3 Chapter XXXVIII, *The History of The Sherwood Foresters*, Col HC Wyllly, as featured by Cliff Housley, Regimental Historian, The Sherwood Foresters Museum in The Bulletin (of the Military Historical Society), Vol 51, No 202, Nov 2000, p87
- 4 *British and Imperial Regiments at the Anglo-Boer War*, Dup Martins (Internet Web site)
- 5 *Land Forces of Britain, The Empire and Commonwealth*, TF Mills (Internet Web site)
- 6 *The Sherwood Foresters, A History*, Stephen Mee (Internet Web site)
- 7 Miscellaneous documents, Capt SP Portelli ACIB, RMA (T)
- 8 Author's collection