

Extract from 'The History of the 3rd Medium Regiment Royal Artillery 1939-1945'

Donated by Jack Edwards

Winter Training 1940

On 20th October, 1940, the Regiment moved to Leicestershire for Winter Training. R.H.Q moved to Beaumanor, a large and bleak old house near Quorn. 2/11 were in Quorn and 6/10 in Barrow-on-Soar. In this area billets were excellent, and there were towns nearby; the inhabitants were friendly and, in fact, it was "just the job" after Lincolnshire. 2/11 especially, after the summer in Bishopbridge, wandered about looking very pleased with themselves.

R.H.Q soon got dug in at Beaumanor and established a close liaison with the local inhabitants. The house was a fine one and well in keeping with R.H.Q traditions. It has been said by some cynical and unkind people, that if ever the Regiment is stationed in London or Washington, R.H.Q will be found in Buckingham Place or the White House. In the grounds were many pheasants and partridges, and advantage was taken of this, it being assumed that the poaching laws could not possibly apply to anybody in uniform .. The Regiment was now, at last, completely in battle dress. Up till the evacuation from France many of the older men had worn their S.D jackets, while some of the officers always wore field boots and breeches.

The regiment's serial number had now become "5" and signs were changed to include this number. In time the serial number of a Regiment means a great deal, and great pride is taken in it. The Regiment took great pride in "13" which was considered lucky. It is doubtful if anybody ever took the slightest interest in "5". Enormous pride was later taken in "383" by which number the Regiment was known in the M.E.F, C.M.F, and B.L.A. On June 5th 1945, the Regiment's number was again changed to "1176". This was a shock and was disliked intensely, the Army Commander himself trying in vain to get authority for the regiment to keep the well known and famous "386". At the time of writing the history the new "1176" has just been painted on all signs and vehicles. The number is viewed with gloom and regret, which is not helped by our Canadian friends saying that it looks like the number of a zombie anti-malarial squad formed to go to Borneo. However, there is no doubt that in time, especially if the Regiment goes to fight the Japs, the number will come to mean a great deal and the famous "Reserved 1176" will confront all those who fondly imagine they can ever beat the 3rd Medium Regiment in securing gun areas and palatial billets.

While in Leicestershire, the Regiment was pleased to find that Lieut. W Rignall, Lieut. E W Eveleigh and L/Sgt Art. W G Davies had been mentioned in despatches, and that Driver Hill, A.W, had received the Military Medal.

Relieved for the time being of an operational defence role, the Regiment now embarked on six weeks' intensive mobile training,. It started with Troop Drill Orders, then Battery Drill Orders, and finally Regimental Drill Orders. The training was

really mobile, and for the first time a serious attempt was made to use wireless, though this did not become good till the middle of 1941.

Barrow is a name that will be coupled with Raimbeaucourt and Tickhill by 6/10 Battery. The billets were excellent, and the inhabitants more pleasant and friendly than in most parts of England. Nearby were the kennels of the Quorn Hunt, then rather hard hit by the war. Some of the officers were lucky enough to have a few days out with the Quorn that season, and what could be more pleasant than a hunt over Quorn country with only a small wartime field instead of the usual three or four hundred field of peace time.

Quorn was as popular as Barrow, and had some excellent pubs. The "Old Bull", the "New Bull", and the "White Horse" were very much patronised and saw many pleasant parties. This was varied with trips to Nottingham, Leicester and Loughborough, and the names of the "Black Boy", and "Flying Horse", the "George" and the "King's Head" come readily to mind. Occasionally, hotly-contested and thrilling darts matches were played off against the Home Guard at the Manor Hotel. All will remember Billy Norman, the village policeman. He was greatly liked and though he gave many "last warnings" to delinquents, never had the heart to run anybody in. During January, Major and Mrs Johnson organised a very good children's party which was a great success, the parents having almost as much fun as the children.

During January, Quorn, like many other places, was bombed. The stick of bombs landed in the village causing no casualties and providing a topic of conversation for days to come. One landed in the garden where Lieut. Day, the signal officer was billeted; another landed about 50 yards from Lieut. Rignall's billet; and a third hit a gas main which burnt pleasantly and brightly for some hours.

It was at Quorn that a certain lieutenant added lustre to his reputation. Sent off on an urgent detail, he dashed out of the Battery Office and jumped on to a motor-cycle. Starting up with a clever and nonchalant kick, he engaged bottom gear with smooth brilliance and set off, soon going flat out in top gear. After about four minutes spent crouched over the handle-bars, he looked round and found that the motor-cycle had never moved, being still on its stand. It is alleged that he then moved the cycle off the stand. As the motor-cycle was in top gear at maximum revs., it went one way and its rider went another. Such fun !