



Lieutenant Colonel Brennan Dwyer, former Commander 3PWRR reports:

3PWRR has a new Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Tim Petransky. Tim is an Army Reservist. Since December 2017 he has been the Army's lead for national civil engagement with Ethnic Minority communities. He is responsible for building and maintaining links into these communities; developing mutual understanding to ensure that the community feels connected to its Army and that British Army is representative of the Nation it serves. This role has fired a determination to broaden Britain's understanding of the important contribution made by the Commonwealth to Allied victory in the World Wars.

Tim attended the Army's leadership course at Sandhurst in 1999 and commissioned into the Black Watch in 2000. He transferred to the Princess of Wales' Royal Regiment (PWRR) in Nov 19 post selection to command 3 PWRR. He has served in Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan, in a mix of staff and command (leadership) roles. He has instructed on Army courses that develop leadership and planning capacity its junior managers.

Tim left the Regular Army in 2015. In his civilian career since leaving he has instructed on a staff development course for AMISOM in Mogadishu and been a General Manager for a waste management company.

For 3PWRR, the New Year saw the Battalion preparing for Exercise WESSEX STORM. Along with 4PWRR and 3 Royal Anglian, both Army Reserve units, our Annual Training Exercise this year was not to be a summer visit to somewhere exotic but a fortnight in February on Salisbury Plain operating against 2 Royal Anglian and The Queen's Dragoon Guards.

As a new concept it makes sense – within a brigade units could be tested using the brigade's own troops plus the Reservists get to operate at tempo and with equipment we wouldn't usually work with. Therefore, after a preparatory exercise one weekend in January we arrived on the Plain in February ready to go.

We formed a company that worked in a Reserve Battlegroup and it worked well. In our first action the company, commanded by Major David Richmond, very successfully defended Imber Village causing heavy casualties. A highlight was Cpl Jones, one of our storeman, spotting and 'killing' two of the QDG's sniper platoon.

All the troops and equipment had TES simulators on them, so if they were hit they beeped loudly and became inactive. Many of our newer soldiers had not used it before and thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity.

After defending Imber the company formed a screen of observation posts (and enjoyed wind, rain, snow and brief sunshine) before forming a defensive position. Sadly the intended attack on the position failed to materialise due to our 'catastrophic success' against the recce elements moving forward. A series of night attacks followed, with various sections enjoying fighting patrols over

several nights, and then the company attacked Copehill Down village before again setting up defences.

With storms Ciara, Dennis and George all passing over Salisbury Plain the event was definitely not like our usual summer exercises but it was successful. Our soldiers performed well, very much achieved the task and, surprisingly, actually enjoyed it – enjoyment that will increase the more it becomes a memory.

March saw some of our soldiers deploy to Sierra Leone for anti-poaching work while others went to Brunei for an anti-poaching course. They left the rest of us completing our annual training tests before the new training year and our planned Annual Training Exercise in Italy.



3PWRR troops in Brunei

As you may have guessed, Covid-19 then put a stop to this and, after initially stopping our own training, in April we had 110 members of the Battalion mobilised. We mobilised a full company, comprising of a command and deployable element, in response to the UK Government's request to HM Armed Forces for assistance. It was a first for the Army Reserve as the threat was very real, on our own shores and had an element of the unknown. The mobilisation itself was unique in that we mobilised remotely from our four company locations instead of the national mobilisation centre in Chilwell. Once mobilised our team came together under the banner of Z Coy.

For the command element a whole new system of remote working had to be set up, very different from our more usual face to face dynamic, and this soon came together with what is now the new normal of e-mail, telephone and conference calling. At this point the command group was at its busiest planning and conducting force protection. This included getting all deployable personnel vaccinations for a variety of communicable illnesses such as Hep B.

In May, four 12 person Mobile Testing Unit (MTU) teams were trained at Leros Bks, Canterbury, by 1 Scots Guards, who we would be taking over from. Our teams learnt how to site, set up and administrate the public through MTUs. Roles included welcoming members of the public, explaining the test process, scanning tests in and out, being on call for any emergencies during the testing process and then informing the public when they would get their results. All of this was to be done whilst maintaining a safe distance from the public and socially distancing from each other!

The teams then deployed onto the ground and started testing members of the public who were showing signs and symptoms of Covid-19. We initially relieved 2 MTU's based out of Gatwick and Oxford, with our soldiers based in Gatwick and Bicester Garrison respectively. The MTUs were a testing working environment for our soldiers, who were dealing with sick members of the public and working in full PPE. This was taken in their stride and they still showed true empathy and professionalism at all times. These tasks ran for periods of 5 – 9 days and locations varied from being static for a few days or moving every day.

In early June another 4 teams were trained in Brighton and then deployed to Ebbsfleet in Kent and to Brighton itself. This gave us a good area to work across and was keeping everyone busy, with up to 280 tests in a location each day.

Our soldiers were just getting into a routine of MTU testing, and lots of moving around, when we were given notice that the OC Maj Jonny Laws was being re deployed into London to take over NHS liaison. He was seamlessly replaced by Maj Douglas for the last burst of our deployment.

We then started to wind down our operations, handing over Gatwick to 7 Rifles and our remaining MTU's at Ebbsfleet and Brighton to 4 PWRR on 21st of June.

In total the soldiers of 3 PWRR ran MTUs in three counties, we had 72 soldiers testing and conducting reliefs in place, with the remaining teams on rest or conducting equipment care or other essential admirative tasks. Combined with this 2Lt Austin's team met the Minister for Defence Procurement at their site and the soldiers of 2Lt Woodruff's team met the General Officer Commanding and demonstrated a MTU. In each and every case, whether with ministers or members of the public, our soldiers performed to the highest standards and expectations, further enhancing our Regiment's reputation.

It should also be noted that in addition to the MTUs we had 15 other personnel attached to various NHS trusts, local government and military planning teams. This included working on the refitting of Headley Court as a 300 bed intensive care unit and being in the planning team for NHS England.

We can be justifiably proud of the part we played in the military's response to Covid -19, and whilst our deployment was short it was intense. Thankfully none of our deployed soldiers contracted this awful disease.

Now, as all our soldiers have demobilised and are heading back towards their civilian roles, we are looking again to our training and making plans to attract our soldiers back. Italy remains cancelled but we do have 2 weeks in Norfolk to look forward to! This will be live firing, with lots of great infantry skills getting practiced – including live firing platoon attacks and grenade throwing.

Sadly I will not be there to see this as I have now passed command of the Battalion to Lt Col Tim Petransky. Tim has dived straight in and, along with other items, will bring the Battalion back to full capability after Covid-19 and OP RESRCIPT. The best part of this, though, will be meeting the Worshipful Company of Needlemakers!

As a Battalion we highly value our links with the Needlemakers and, on a personal side, I have always been so very impressed by you friendship, interest and support. You are very much a force multiplier for the work we do, and particularly with your help for the welfare of our soldiers. Thank you very much, from myself and the Battalion, for all you have done for us for the last two and a half years, it is both very memorable and very much appreciated.