

The Blue Beret

October 2003



Music to
celebrate
UN Day



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Dear friends all over the world,

These are difficult times, for the world and for the United Nations.

In Iraq and in many other regions, violence and terror continue to bring death and suffering to innocent people. In August, the United Nations itself suffered a brutal assault on its Baghdad headquarters. We lost some of our dearest friends and colleagues. You, the peoples of the world, lost some of your best and most dedicated servants.

But on this United Nations Day, let us not mourn or be downcast. Let us rather remember what our colleagues were in Iraq to do: to help the Iraqi people rebuild their country, after years of war, oppression and isolation – just as other United Nations workers are in other war-torn countries, helping to relieve suffering, restore peace and build new institutions.

We must continue that work of serving humanity wherever its needs are greatest. We must continue helping you, the peoples of the world, to find common solutions to common problems. And we will.

We will continue our efforts to tackle poverty, disease, climate change, and the spread of small arms. And we will also work together to fight terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. We do not have to choose. The United Nations must confront all these threats at once.

To do so successfully, it may be necessary to make changes in our international system, including the United Nations itself. By and large, I believe our Organisation has served humanity well for 58 years. But it has never been perfect, and the time may well have come to improve it. I have urged all governments to think about that, and I am appointing a panel of wise men and women, to make suggestions.

In the end, governments will decide. But they will make the effort to reach agreement only if you, the peoples, tell them clearly what you expect – what kind of world you want to live in. I rely on you to do that. And I believe that if you do make your voices heard, loudly and firmly enough, we can indeed win through this crisis and build a better world, based on the rule of law. Let us all persevere, in the knowledge that we are all contributing to a better future, for ourselves and for our children.

Kofi Annan

Editorial: SG's Message on UN Day, 24 October

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Front Cover: Music to celebrate UN Day

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Dutch Prime Minister Visits

The Dutch Prime Minister, Mr. Jan Peter Balkenende, visited UNFICYP headquarters at the UNPA in Nicosia on 7 October. UNFICYP Chief of Mission, Mr. Zbigniew Wlosowicz, Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus, and UNFICYP Chief of Staff, Col. Ian Sinclair, received the Prime Minister and his delegation, including the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, and the Netherlands Ambassador to Cyprus, Jhr. Mr. Maximiliaan Gevers.

After the meeting, the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs travelled by UN helicopter before joining the rest of the delegation for a Green Line tour through old Nicosia.



Dutch Prime Minister inspecting a Guard of Honour on his arrival at UNFICYP's headquarters



The Dutch Prime Minister, escorted by Sector 2 CO, Lt. Col. Bob Caldwell, enters the Ledra crossing point from UNFICYP's Sector 2 Ledra Palace headquarters through Exchange Gate.

Preserving the Cyprus Moufflon

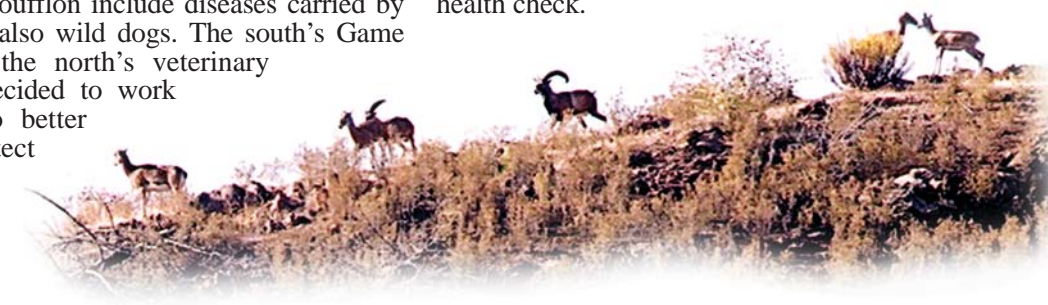
A bi-communal project aimed at preserving the Cyprus Moufflon has been launched under the auspices of the Bi-communal Development Programme, which is funded by UNDP and USAID through UNOPS.

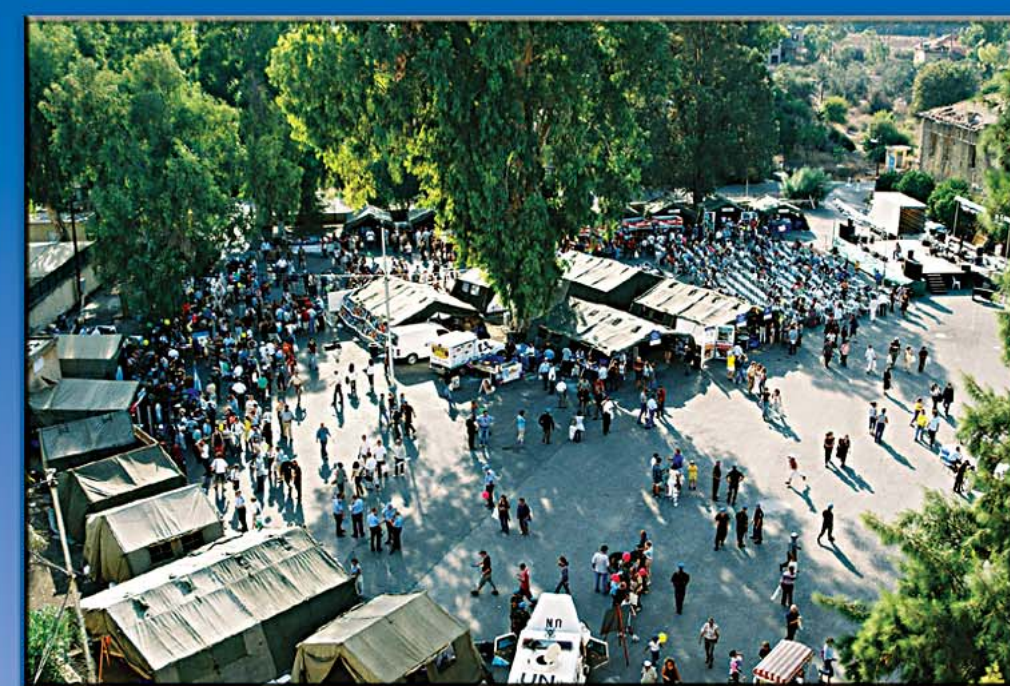
The Cyprus Moufflon (Ovis gmelini ophion) is an endemic species, unique to Cyprus and, until recently, an endangered species. Introduced to Cyprus by Pre-historic Man in the Neolithic age, the Moufflon soon colonised the island. However, hunting and the destruction of its habitat almost drove the Moufflon to extinction, and at the beginning of the 20th Century, the Cyprus Moufflon population had been reduced to a few dozen. Conservation efforts in recent years have saved the Moufflon from this fate, and there are now over 3,000, mainly in the Paphos Forest area.

Unfortunately, over the last few years, more and more animals have been found dead for unknown reasons. The dangers facing the Moufflon include diseases carried by domestic sheep, and also wild dogs. The south's Game Fund Services and the north's veterinary experts have thus decided to work together in order to better understand and protect this animal, which forms an important part of the natural heritage of Cyprus.

The main objectives of this project are to study the movements and activities of the Moufflon populations on either side of the buffer zone, to provide them with a water supply in times of drought, and to check the health of the animals.

The first meeting took place on 14 October 2003 at the new Veterinary and Environmental Facility at the UNDP-UNOPS premises in the UNPA. There, the Game Fund Services gave advice to their Turkish Cypriot associates on the equipment and techniques required for observing the Moufflon. On 22 October, the Turkish Cypriots were invited for training to a Game Fund Service mission in the buffer zone. Armed with four-wheel drive vehicles, binoculars and a lot of patience, the team spotted 75 of the elusive creatures. The plan is to catch some Moufflons and fit them with tracking devices, as well as taking blood samples and giving them a thorough health check.





Celebrating the UN's 58th Anniversary in Cyprus

Cyprus celebrated UN Day with UNFICYP and the UN family of agencies at Ledra Palace in Nicosia on 19 October with a five-hour concert featuring musicians from all over the island and a special guest appearance by the Ross Daly trio.

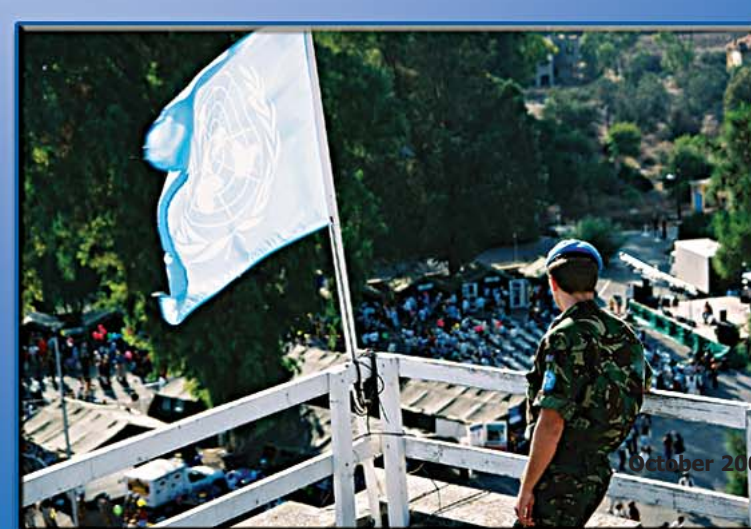
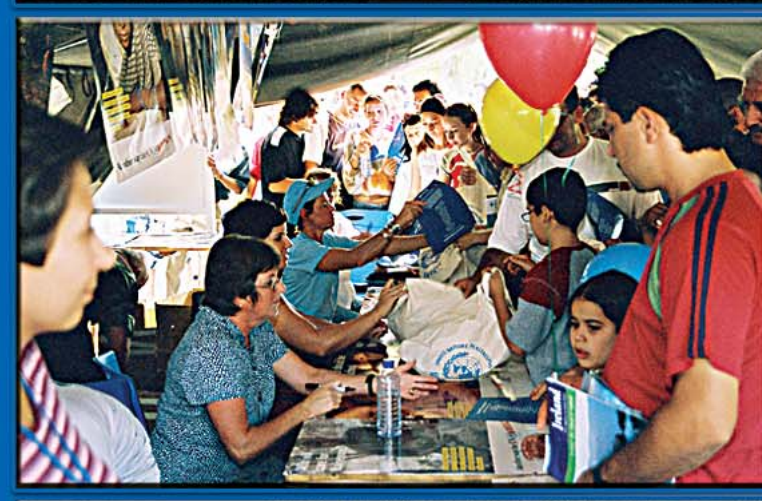
The island's celebration of the UN's 58th anniversary was opened by UNFICYP Force Commander Lt. Gen. Jin Ha Hwang, who welcomed the turnout of some 3,000 guests at this year's leading bicomunal get-together.

The UNFICYP Force Commander noted that this year Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots have been meeting throughout Cyprus, a welcome development worthy of celebration in itself.

"We believe that this contact contributes to understanding and friendship among the people of this island", he said. "The political problems have not been solved yet – but through your interaction, you can help progress on the way to peace."

This year's UN Day tribute highlighted performances by such artists as the singer Pavlina Costantopoulos, Umut Albayrak (vocals) with the Abraham Gersek group, a trans-island jazz quartet, the Bicomunal Choir, Hajimike and Zeki Ali with Poetz 4 Peace, and a special appearance by the lyre virtuoso Ross Daly and his ensemble.

UN Day is celebrated in Cyprus on the nearest Sunday to 24 October, the actual date on which the UN marks its official anniversary.





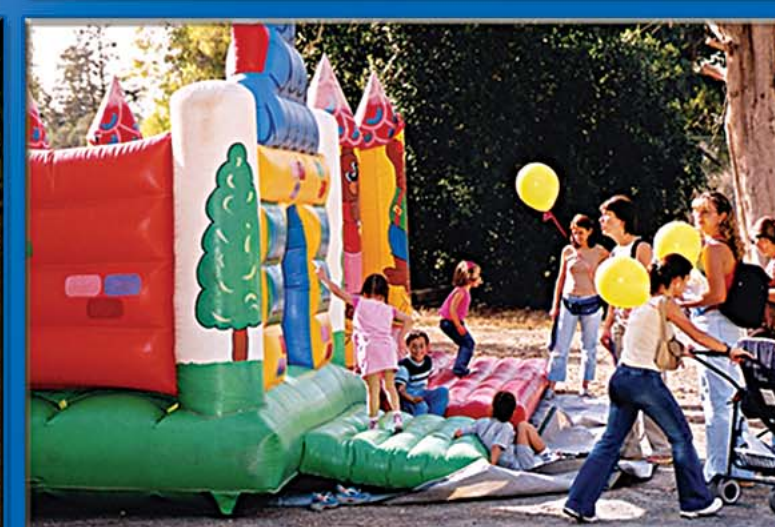
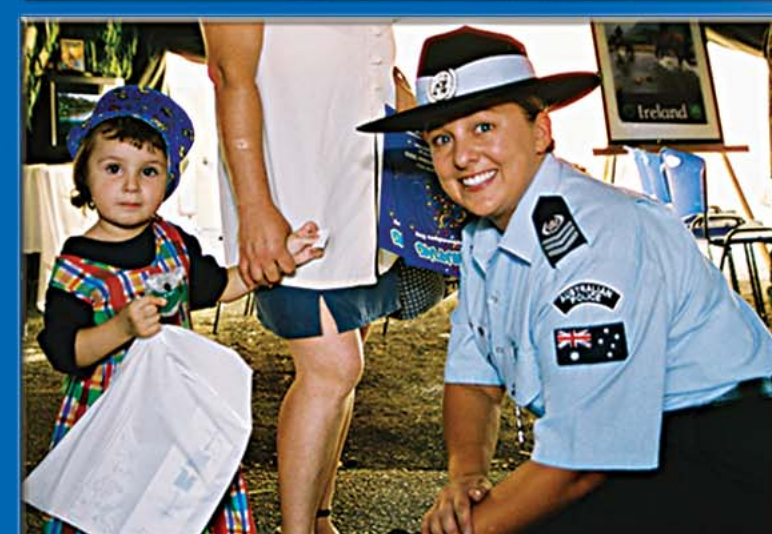
Celebrating the UN's 58th Anniversary in Cyprus



The overall theme focused on the island's traditions, in addition to the usual displays from home by UNFICYP's peacekeeping contingents and the UNHCR and UNV exhibits.



The UNDP/USAID-funded Bi-communal Development Programme (BDP) through UNOPS mounted a special display of local arts and crafts. BDP also helped underwrite the concert.



The Cultural Heritage of Cyprus: Part XVII

Our Lady of Ayia Napa

Our Lady of
Ayia Napa ■

Ayia Napa, situated on the right arm of the bay between Cape Pyla and Cape Greco in southeastern Cyprus, is one of the most well-known places on the island. Once a small fishing village, it's now a resort town that offers tourists sand, sun and watersports.

Next to the central square in the old part of the village, however, among tavernas, cafeterias and shops, sits the town's namesake: the Church of Our Lady of Ayia Napa. In our continuing series on the cultural heritage of Cyprus, the Blue Beret examines the legends and history of the church and of the monastery that developed around it.

Archaeology tells us that the Church of Our Lady of Ayia Napa was built in the 14th century, during the Lusignan period of Cyprus (1192 to 1489). The earliest documentation for the church reinforces this, with two references by a Cypriot chronicler, Leontios Machaeras, dated 1366 and 1373.

The Italian Renaissance-style monastery, meanwhile, with its cloistered walls forming an irregular quadrangle "fortress" around the church, dates to the 15th century. Evidence shows that it was refurbished in the 1500s, during the Venetian period (1489 to 1570/1), and it does in fact appear on Venetian maps and other post-Lusignan documents.

As is so often the case in Cyprus, legends add colour to the archaeological record. It is widely believed that the church was built to honour an icon that was discovered here in the 11th century. A hunter, looking for his errant dog in the then-wooded valley where the monastery now stands, discovered his animal in a grotto. When he entered the clearing, he saw a floodlight that surrounded an icon of the Virgin Mary.

It's from this legend that the church and the town gain their names: Ayia means "Saint", while Napa means "wooded glen" (although a different source says that the name comes from the handkerchief that St. Veronica used to wipe Jesus' face as he carried the cross).

During the 8th and 9th centuries, the Byzantine Empire was shaken by an iconoclastic controversy in which a "war" was declared on the icons in order to destroy the belief held by the peasantry that icons were miracle-workers. Many important icons were destroyed during this period, especially in the major cities of Byzantium, thus depriving Byzantine art of some of its most exquisite examples. As Cyprus was at some distance from Constantinople, however, Cypriot icons were more or less spared. The icon of the Virgin Mary found in the grotto could perhaps have been hidden there by those who wanted to protect it from the hands of the Iconoclasts.

A second legend relates how the monastery was refurbished in the 16th century by a noble Venetian lady from Famagusta, who took refuge here from her family's pressure on her to marry a nobleman. She likely built the two-storey house by the northern entrance and the domed fountain in the centre of the courtyard.

Pietro della Valle, who stayed at the monastery for four days in September 1625, provides some interesting reading on Ayia Napa. He wrote about his experiences at this "place noted for its sacred character and natural beauty", which was run by nuns. He says that "the rooms were full of people, men and women, Greek Christians with a few Turks among them, all playing, dancing, drinking, amusing themselves, and we amused ourselves likewise".

During its long history, Ayia Napa served the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, both as a monastery and a nunnery. It was abandoned early in the 19th century for unknown reasons, and its vast land properties were hired out to farmers, who came to settle in the area and enlarged the fishing village of the same name, now turned into a thriving summer resort.

The monastery was reconstructed in the 1960s, and is now used by the delegates to conferences of the World Council of Churches. Its gardens and fountains remain a peaceful haven.

What You'll Find Today

The Monastery Entrances: At the southern (main) entrance to the monastery walls, which are thought to have been built to protect the church from pirates, a large cistern outside the gate is overshadowed by one of the most ancient trees in Cyprus. It is a massive "figus sycomorus", or mulberry fig tree, commonly known as a sycamore tree. A native of Ethiopia, it was planted here 700 years ago, during the Lusignan period.

The entrance to the monastery here consists of three rooms that form arcaded patios looking towards the courtyard. The roof of these rooms is semi-circular, oriented in an east-west direction. The western room of the entrance connects through a door to a neighbouring oblong room. The masonry is solid, but undecorated.

Unlike the southern entrance, the northern entrance, and particularly its adjacent two-storey house, is more elaborately decorated. The windows have purely Renaissance elements that have partly disappeared during the course of the last century. The upper front room facing outwards is fronted by a covered arcaded veranda. The gateway itself is decorated with effaced escutcheons on either side of the rectangular frame above it.

The Courtyard: In the centre of the courtyard, inside the cloistered monastery walls and surrounded by gardens, an octagonal fountain basin decorated with large garlands takes pride of place. Reliefs above each garland depict different items, which (in clockwise order) include a vase with flowers, a female head with side-extended hairstyle, flowers, a crowned and bearded head, animals (probably a lion devouring a deer), flowers, and another female head. Some spaces beneath the joints of the garlands are decorated with angels or cupids.

The fountain, probably erected by the same Venetian lady who refurbished the monastery (if we accept that the heads on the fountain are those of her parents and herself) is housed in an open, arcaded, domed building with interior parapets providing seats.

A white marble boar's head on the northern side of the courtyard also provides water, sourced from a Roman aqueduct.

The Church of Our Lady of Ayia Napa: The church is situated inside the monastery courtyard, on the northwestern side, built into the rocky hill that rises there.

Over the southern entrance door is a rather beautiful fanlight rose window - reminiscent of Byzantium - that lights up the split-level nave. The barrel-shaped roof, the western wall and the part of the northern wall above the two open arched doorways (which lead to the subterranean end of the church), are not plastered, thereby allowing regularly-shaped blocks to be seen.

A set of steps behind these open doorways leads down to the underground portion of the church - perhaps the original grotto where the wonder-working icon of the Virgin Mary was found.

This icon, or its representative, now covered by a relief-decorated bronze cover, is a 1962 donation by a family from Famagusta. It hangs on the wall on the right of the screen that is in front of the apse. The irregular roof of the grotto is plastered throughout, with natural light provided through a beehive type of roof window.

In the northernmost end of the grotto is a tap from which holy source water is provided to the faithful. A staircase leads up to a third door.

Parallel to the upper part of the church is the Catholic chapel that is entered through arched openings on the eastern wall of the nave. The chapel walls bear signs of fresco paintings in which some crowned heads can be seen. The roof is barrel-shaped, and reinforced by columns attached to the walls. An oblong window is found on the southern wall.

In addition to the screen in the grotto, icons are also found in other parts of the church, especially along the nave's western wall.

Fountain in the centre
of the courtyard

Inner courtyard
to the cloisters

A Day in the Life of the MFR

By Gnr. A. Myles



Crowd control exercise

Once completed, all hot and sweaty, we moved to the urban area ready for our next exercise. Upon the arrival of Col. Bayless, we began. It was hard going, especially with our clerk, L/Cpl. Borensenko, and the Sector Two lads pushing us to our limits. Cheers guys, we will get our revenge. Afterwards, Col. Bayless gathered us all together for a few words of wisdom, which lifted spirits within the battery, due to our forthcoming disbandment upon return to the UK.

Then it was time to clean up and hand in stores, while Col. Bayless attended a top table lunch with the officers and seniors of the battery.

All in all, we carried out the day in the true Louisburg fashion. Well done, lads! Now it's onwards, taking each day as it comes till the end of tour.



Col. Bayless inspecting the guard of honour

Well, once again 53 (Louisburg) Bty had a busy week ahead of them, as the MFR in the UNPA. Along with our security details, we had to carry out patrols in City Troop. Then it was decided the time was right to replace the barbed wire around Blue Beret Camp. No easy task, believe me, especially as we were down on manpower due to the ARGCON changeover. But we pressed on.

On Tuesday, we were informed that Col. Bayless (Brigade Commander of 7 AD Brigade) was visiting our location and an honour guard had to be established. No problem with that, as we had done plenty in the previous months. It soon came to light there were another two the same day, plus a rural/urban crowd control demonstration to be managed.

Friday came and members of 1 Platoon MFR carried out the honour guards. The first was at 09:30 hrs, followed by the arrival of Col. Bayless at 10:30 hrs, who met all nine members of the honour guard. Escorted by Maj. Morgan, he proceeded into HQ UNFICYP for a JOC brief.

Meanwhile, the honour guard had one more visitor at 11:00 hrs. That completed and the honours done, we had to ditch our weapons and get up to UN Flt and join 3 Platoon and the rest of 1 Platoon for the rural demo. We got the call over the radio that Col. Bayless was in position ready.

So, off we went in our TACTICAs and carried out rural crowd control. A big thanks to Paul, our fire chief, for the fires, and to MSgt. "Boris" (Slovak) for letting me burn.... (Cheers mate!)

Nicosia: Monuments and Memories



Around 500 people attended a bicomunal event at the Ledra palace Hotel on 10 October which focused on Nicosia: Monuments and Memories.

The event was sponsored by the US Embassy, the United Nations, the Hellenic Bank and the two municipalities of Nicosia.

The history of Nicosia from the Middle Ages to recent times was related by a group of young Greek and Turkish Cypriots through a tri-screen slide show with narration in English, accompanied by slides in Greek and Turkish. The journey through the city's history was based on personal experiences that have been recorded by historians.

The memories, descriptions and portrayals of Nicosia's journey in time provided a good insight to the audience of the city's distinctive beauty, past and present.

From Civvy Street to UNFICYP

By Bdr. Ian Inglis

After 10 years in the Territorial Army (TA) serving with 218 Battery, 105 Regt RA (v), I thought it was time to broaden my military experience. But how and in what way? Just at that time, a memo and poster was circulating round the Battery, that 22 Regt RA were looking for TA volunteers to join them on their UN tour to Cyprus. They needed people to start training in April.

I never gave it a second thought. Running my own cleaning contracts business is very demanding and time-consuming, along with my TA commitment. There was no way. Weeks passed, April came and went the poster was out-of-date but still on the notice board. I read it more closely, and thought: "Could I manage to go?". Sixteen years being self-employed – time for a change I thought! What about Donna and the kids? Every time I passed the poster, I thought I like the sound of this. But I'm too late. It's now May and they leave in June. Will I? Won't I?

So I called 22 Regt direct, missing out the proper chain of command, and asked if they were still looking for TA personnel. They said "yes" – great! Would they accept a bombardier who is getting on a bit? They said "yes" again! Great!

So I set the wheels in motion. Then I thought I better mention it to my wife! After many discussions, like "can we afford it?", "what about the business?", "what will you do when you come back?", Donna agreed to me going away for six months. But deep down, she was thinking: "He probably won't pass the medical, but at least he tried".

However, after having passed the medical with no problem, I was offered a contract there and then and needed my signature there and then,

so I signed. I was given a week to sort out my affairs – I'm off to Cyprus in eight days.

That's when the emotions came out. How would we both cope? We have never been apart longer than two weeks in 18 years. What about the business? Am I too old to be doing this? A lot of questions came up. The result was? Well, I'm here now and writing this.

On 3rd June, I arrived in Cyprus with my new Battery and new Regiment. I was to be a member of 53 (Louisburg) Battery, serving at the UNPA as part of the Mobile Force Reserve. Having had no pre-training, prior to joining the Battery, I was a bit wary to say the least. But after meeting the guys and the girls who I would be serving with for the next six months, I thought, "this will be OK, I think". This was despite the fact that the majority of my new comrades are between 18 and 25, and here's me, 39 in a few months. I was old enough to be a dad to some of them. But I'm here now, it's too late, I just have to get on with it.

My first port of call on my first time off was.....? Well, being a 38-year-old Scotsman, it had to be the international bar for some light liquid refreshments. It didn't take me long to become a regular; shame about the two-can rule though. I soon got to know all the guys and find out who the characters are. They also got to know me, the old TA guy who just hates a drink.

After the first few weeks of 12-hour shifts on security, PT in the mornings, crowd control training and fire fighting, I couldn't help but think: "What the hell am I doing here? I could be at home in front of the TV with a beer in my hand and my feet up. I'm too old for this".

But I was starting to enjoy myself. It was good meeting new people and doing something important and worthwhile, as well as learning new things. Good experience to take back to my own unit. I decided to make the best of it and to get as much out of it as possible. I was getting fitter "a bit", thanks to the beatings from L/Bdr. McGettigan, the platoon PTI, even though I hated every minute of the PT. I was losing weight (no

bad thing), learning new skills, and attending the JNCO fire fighting course. This was all new to me, but the other battery members, having been part of OP Fresco, were old hands. It didn't take long for that to show, when we were called out to tackle the first fire in the UNPA. The professionalism of the regiment soon had the fire under control.

As well as the military skills I was learning, I was able to go to UNRRATT and do some adventure training, something we don't get to do much in the TA. I have recently completed my level 2 powerboat handlers course and my BCU *2 kayak course. I have now been bitten by the kayak bug. I can't get enough, thanks to Foxy and the UNRRATT team.

But doing all the adventure training has also helped me decide what I want to do when I return back to Civvy Street and the TA. I've started to look at training to become an outdoor education instructor. There are a number of courses I am going to try and complete and get the relevant qualifications, including kayak instructor and mountain leader, to name a few. I have also thought about starting an adventure-training cell back at my Regiment, when I'm back, but I'll have to run it past my CO first. Who knows, I may go off to Bosnia, or the Congo on another FTRS instead?

On the whole, I've had a great tour and have enjoyed my tour with 22 Regiment. And it's been an honour to serve in 53 (Louisburg) Battery in particular, with them being the oldest battery in the Royal Artillery, particularly because it is their final operational tour with 22 Regiment as they are being disbanded early next year. It's also been a great experience serving with the United Nations – something I will never forget.

So guys and girls, it's been great to meet you all, and I would have no hesitation in serving with you all again, anywhere, if you'll have me (ha ha!). I'd also like to wish you all good luck in your new Regiments.

And remember, there's a beer for you any time you are in Edinburgh. Just look me up at 218 Bty, 105 Regt, next to Redford Barracks

Cheers and all the best!



Ian with Donna, daughter Claire and son Scott

Last UN Medal Parade for the 22nd

By Gnr. C. Steel



The band of 2 Light Infantry Battalion

Everyone loves and hates the medal parade. The rehearsals always pay off on the day, but that's not always on your mind when you are doing the drills. September's Sector 2 medal parade, however, was like no other parade before, since this was the last tour for the 22nd Regiment as we are disbanding in March next year.

We started the build up to the parade with every RSM's favourite past time – rifle drill and parade format training. Although these were long and somewhat boring, there were a few funny moments to look back on. Case in point – when the RSM caught LBdr. Hancock napping after he missed the order to right turn, and gave him some press-ups to wake him up.

The parade was conducted at LPH on 26 September. We were led on by the band from 2 Light Infantry Battalion. Once we were all into open order, the officers marched on to join us and the parade was passed to the CO, Lt. Col. Caldwell. Then the long wait for the staff cars.

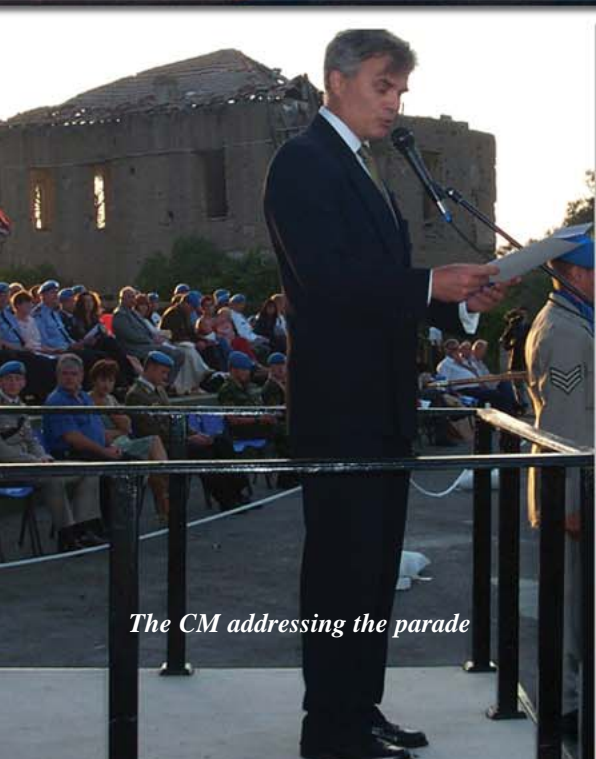
On arrival of the staff car containing the Chief of Mission, Zbigniew Wlosowicz, and the Force Commander, Lt. Gen. Jin Ha Hwang, we all were brought up to attention, and the CM gave a speech of welcome to all the guests. Having been given the order to advance in review order and then having given a general salute, we were ready to receive our medals.

All medals pinned, the FC stepped up to say a few words and to congratulate us all on a job well done. We then marched past in quick time and gave an eyes right as we passed the guests.

After the parade, everyone gathered in front of LPH for a reception, enabling us all to talk with our guests over a few drinks and to thank them for attending our historic final UN medal parade.



The Force Commander presenting the UN medals



The CM addressing the parade



Following the ceremony, the lowering of the British, UN and regimental flags

Beware Ideas And The Scent of the Day

By Sgt. Cameron Scott

When the advance party arrived at Sector 2 West (Ypenburg) I, in particular kept hearing people referring to it as the “smelly”. I wondered why for a day or two, until it became blatantly obvious. The sewage truck arrives every day and “empties” everything just as it is getting hot, therefore setting the scene for the day! It is now clear why everyone was scarce for that period of the day. Something that we here at the “smelly” have adopted too!

Comfort is close to everyone's heart and six months is a long time. However, not wanting to upset the applecart, we waited until all the troops (17) had arrived at the troop house before “renovations” begun. We had an abundance of feasible ideas as the makeshift builders, electricians and budding Do-It-Yourself enthusiasts got together regularly to discuss what was going to happen in what we now call “the big brother house”. It seemed to be that if you could wire a plug you were the electrician, and if you had made a sandcastle at Cleethorpes beach, you possessed a building qualification. As for the hobby chefs, I'm not even going there. Beef Wellington is nice if you can get it, but ask them to make a curry!

SSgt. Darren (Cronnie) Cronshaw and LBdr. (Chuck) Berry were the builders with help from Bdr. Dave Window. Bdr. Martin Hawkesby was the electrician, whilst LBdr. Sam Wilding became the accountant looking after the troop funds. LBdr. Donna Welch was an instant vet, and continues to this day looking after the two dogs we inherited (Nose and Zin Zan). The “labourers” (the actual workers) were made up of the remainder of the troop with LCpl. Mark Wright and LBdr. Glen Deakin leading from the front. As for me, I was the BT engineer, come Information Technology guru, come author, come entertainments manager, come cemetery guide! The Battery Commander would soon be shocked on a regular basis as the projects begun.

So in between carrying out our operational role, working shifts and trying to grab what little time there was left for our own “down time”, what have we done? One thing is for sure – the place looks different, of that there is no doubt. A subject close to everyone's heart, as we were “gated” for the first six weeks was the troop bar. The Imjin Bar, as our predecessors had named it, was an achievement. The bar has a beach theme with sand as the floor and a wooden beech hut as the bar itself. It did look good and we thought we would have difficulty identifying ways to improve it. It was only when we had suffered its high maintenance that we decided that it had to be “sorted”. We decided that the four or five tonnes of sand had to be removed and replaced by something of a better quality. Perhaps some slabs around the bar and maybe some lights? Sounds good on paper, but in the absence of a do-it-yourself store and any money, we had hit our first obstacle.

Not deterred, the scavenging began. The labourers emptied the bar in record time (four hours) and the slabs began to be laid by the chief builder, Chuck. Dave, Cronny and I seemed to get the wrong end of the stick as the new sand would have to be shovelled by hand through the bar window. Not a pleasant task!

So with the bar now finished, what have we done since? We now have a large 42 Bty eagle sculptured from concrete on the entrance wall to the troop house. All the fine work of our own Cronny. So impressive that it is seen



here being unveiled by the new Chief of Staff, Col. I.B. Sinclair, CBE RA. It will take a very brave man to demolish his efforts because of the brass plaque, which now takes pride of place next to it.

Bored with the inside bar, we now have an “outside” bar, again constructed with materials from forgiving sources and made by the changing rooms team minus Carol Smillie. It is somewhere where we can drink our “two cans” and reflect on what we have achieved to date and what could be done next.

Last, but by no means least, we now have a pool. We were quite jealous when we discovered that “the enemy”, Sector 2 East, had chipped in and bought pools at two troop locations where the soldiers could relax in and cool down as the temperatures rose above 100°F. The Battery Commander foolishly betted three crates of beer that we would never pull it off. Not only did we not have the room, but also the chances of this coming to fruition in the time frame he had bet on were pretty slim. Cronny was on leave to the smiling satisfaction of the BC so things were going to be tight. However, three crates are three crates, and it's not often the BC parts with his cash!

The gauntlet had been dropped. Chuck being the chief engineer and JCB driver, Hawkey converting from electrician to carpenter and myself being the draughtsman and planner whilst Sam “cooked the books” with the troop funds, we were set to task. Chuck quickly made friends with the builders who were working temporarily at our location and after clearing a large area with the digger and Haywkey having built the frame we were ready for a whole lot of concrete.

The area now sorted, we needed a pool!! We had 24 hours to go, and the BC seemed to increase in gloats as the day of reckoning grew closer. He thought he had got away with it. Little did he know that Chuck was in Dhekelia looking for a supplier and that we had a back up plan of a babies paddling pool inflated and on standby. A pool is a pool is it not? He never specified what size it had to be!

The sand had reached the bottom of the timer and we summoned the BC. Smiling all the way from his office he thought his cash was safe. When he turned the corner his face was a picture, 300 square feet of concrete and a pool measuring two foot wide! We had achieved our aim and the crates were ours. On a more serious note though, Chuck was on his way back with a pool that has made everyone on the line green with envy. Twice the cost but twice as big. Being 15 feet wide it can now hold the majority of the troop. All we need now is the time off to try it!!!

What's next? There is a saying at the “smelly”. WO2 (BSM) Gus Brandon has promulgated that saying. When we hear it we scarper! It starts with, “I've got an idea”, “What if we.....”

Ambrosino's Mandolin

Once upon a time, an Italian prisoner of war named Carlo Ambrosino whiled away his time in a prison camp in Egypt by making a mandolin. He used everything and anything that came to hand – wood, brass, copper pennies, bits of plastic combs, metal hinges, whatever he could find.

About the same time, a farmer named Pelopidas Polycarpou turned up in the land of the Pyramids. He was one of a group of Cypriots who had answered the call to serve with the British forces in the Second World War.

Polycarpou admired Ambrosino's craftsmanship and bought the mandolin. After he was demobbed at the end of the war, he brought the mandolin back with him to Cyprus.

Once safely home, he was one of the pioneers who helped set up the renowned collective farm at Onisha. There the years quickly passed. Many a mellow evening, Polycarpou, the veritable virtuoso, entertained friends and family with melodious murmurings on his magical mandolin. Then came the disruptions and disturbances of 1963-64 when, caught in the midst of inter-communal dischord, Polycarpou and the Onisha cooperative were forced to flee the farm under gunfire from the neighbouring foothills of the Pentadaktylos mountain range.

No sooner had they made their forced and hurried departure than enter a 25-year-old UN peacekeeper, Master Corporal Tom Johnson, newly arrived from New Brunswick, Canada. In April 1964, Johnson and seven other Canadian peacekeepers deployed to the farm where Tom, a musical man, having stumbled across the abandoned instrument, plucked harmony from its idled strings in the quiet of the evenings.

Life rotates onward and soon Tom returns to home and hearth in the chillier climes of New Brunswick



Tom and Ambrosino's mandolin

where, unpacking his kit, he finds, surprise, surprise, the ownerless, refugee mandolin snugly nestling.

Years pass and Tom muses quietly about the magical history of the nomadic mandolin. He can see that Ambrosino, the Italian POW who had so lovingly crafted the instrument, had inscribed his name inside the sound box. But it was by turning to another and more contemporary tracing mechanism that Tom eventually verified the mandolin's true ownership. Thanks to the Internet, e-mail and a Canadian-raised Greek Cypriot reporter from the Cyprus Weekly, Tom discovered that Polycarpou was the man he sought.

So it was that at the town hall in Nicosia's Agios Dhometios suburb, in the presence of the President of the Cyprus House of Representatives, the Akel leader Demetris Christofias, that the 40-year-old saga played out its latest tune.

Tom Johnson, his wife, and two other Canadian couples met 85-year-old Pelopidas Polycarpou, and in front of an audience of hundreds of Onisha farm cooperative association members, the Ambrosino mandolin was restored finally to its rightful owner.

Lars Skold bids farewell



Mr. Lars Skold from Sweden, the outgoing Chief Support Services, decided to take early retirement on 30 September 2003 after almost three decades of service with the United Nations.

Lars was recruited as a civilian staff member of the United Nations on 2 February 1976, after spending two years in the Swedish military in UNEF II and UNFICYP.

Here in Cyprus, his military, international and local staff colleagues in UNFICYP hosted a number of farewell functions prior to his departure.

Lars says: "I hold many fond memories of my service with the Organisation, far too many to commit to paper. But I consider myself fortunate and privileged to have served with the United Nations".

Lars plans to share his retirement between Sweden and Cyprus.

New CO Sector 1

Lt. Col. Gustavo Jorge Luis Motta graduated from the Military Academy as a 2nd Lieutenant of the Engineer's Corps in December 1979.

As a junior officer, he served in the 101st Combat Engineers Regt, 2nd Armoured Engineer's Coy and the 7th Engineer's Coy. In December 1987, he graduated as a Military Intelligence Officer.

After graduating as a Staff Officer in 1992, he was assigned to the Operations Branch at the Army General Staff HQ. Between January and March 1995, he was appointed Instructor in the "O3 (Staff) Course" for Latin American Officers at Fort Benning in Georgia, USA.

In April, 1995 he was reassigned as the Engineering Officer in the Field Administration and Logistics

Division (FALD) in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), UNHQ, New York. In 1998, he was assigned to the Planning Department of the Operations Branch, Army General Staff HQ.

From September 1998 to March 1999, he was Commanding Officer of 12th Engineer's Coy in UNIKOM working mainly in explosives ordnance disposal and road maintenance tasks. At the end of 1999, he took up the post of Assistant of the General Staff Director in the Army HQ and, since December 1999, ADC to the Army's Chief of Staff. After this posting, he was appointed CO 12th Jungle Engineer's Regt in Goya (Corrientes). In August 2003, he was assigned the post of CO Sector 1.



During his career, Lt. Col. Motta has been awarded the UN medal for services at UN HQ and in UNIKOM.

Lt. Col. Motta is married to Maria Elisa Buzaglo and they have three children, Nicolas (17), Maria Guillermina (12) and Luis Ignacio (9).

Slán Caleb

WO1 Caleb Cooper wrapped up his year-long tour with the UNFICYP Spokesperson's office a few days before all hands were called on deck for the latest UN Day at Ledra.

For Caleb and his wife Elaine, Ledra was where it had all started when they first made landfall on the island the previous year. It was a confusing but appropriate place to begin, since Caleb was to serve as Visits Coordinator, and where and when better to start than the day and place where thousands of islanders come together to mingle in the biggest bicomunal event of the year?

In his capacity as Visits Coordinator, Caleb continued an IRCON tradition of meeting, greeting and, most importantly, organising and coordinating visits to UNFICYP HQ, to the UNPA and, in close consultation with the hardworking crew at Sector 2, tours of the Green Line, whether a group visit for school children or the most VIP of VIPs, as was the case this month when the visitor was the Dutch Prime Minister. Caleb's visitors all met with the same courtesy, and the same unflappable care and attention to detail went into planning their programmes.



Elaine and Caleb

This spilled over into his personal life while here as well. It is unlikely that there is anyone left in Caleb's native city of Cork who has not benefited from the Caleb and Elaine guided tour of Aphrodite's isle. Many came and none were turned away. It has also been said – tongue in cheek, of course – that Caleb, IRCON's only naval representative, saw more sea service in his year with UNFICYP than he had for many years prior – those inter-island cruises certainly did wonders for his sea legs!

Caleb clearly made the very best use of his time with us, and he and Elaine will be sorely missed for their warmth, sociability and unfailing generosity and good company.

Caleb's replacement and settling in rapidly is RSM Brian Doherty. We wish him well just as we wish Caleb and Elaine every good fortune on their return home to their own green island.



RSM Brian Doherty, the new Visits Coordinator

Dutch Prime Minister Visits UNFICYP

