



THE TWELVE MILE SNIPERS

John Potter
Murray Barnes



The story of the
8th (Belfast) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment
Royal Artillery (Supplementary Reserve)
1939 – 1945

NORTHERN IRELAND
WAR MEMORIAL
HOME FRONT EXHIBITION

Published by
Northern Ireland War Memorial
21 Talbot Street Belfast BT1 2LD
2011



The formation of the regiment

In 1938, as the likelihood of war increased, the War Office ordered an expansion of the anti-aircraft defences of the United Kingdom. This included the raising of an anti-aircraft brigade – 3 (Ulster) Anti-Aircraft Brigade (SR) – in Northern Ireland. The brigade consisted of two Heavy Anti-Aircraft regiments plus 3 (Ulster) Searchlight Regiment RA (SR) and Royal Signals, RASC and RAOC subunits. At 1 January 1939 both Royal Artillery units were formed. Officer recruitment was already underway and permanent cadre staff had arrived. The titles were 8th and 9th Anti-Aircraft Regiments RA. Each deployed three Heavy Anti-Aircraft batteries and one Light Anti-Aircraft battery. On 8 May 1940 the two regiments were re-titled 8th (Belfast) and 9th (Londonderry) Regiments Royal Artillery (Supplementary Reserve). On 1 June 1940 Anti-Aircraft regiments were re-designated Heavy Anti-Aircraft (8HAA and 9HAA). The brigade and its units were designated Supplementary Reserve, which meant that they could be called out, principally for overseas service before the Territorial Army was mobilised. The recruits signed on for four years' service, although this proved to be a technicality as their service ran out while the war was still going on.



Each regiment was made up of three batteries equipped with the new 3.7 inch mobile anti-aircraft guns. Each battery was composed of two troops each of four guns, a total of 24 guns per regiment. Each gun was capable of firing 28 pound shells at 15 rounds per minute against enemy aircraft to a height of 25,000 feet. They were also extremely effective and accurate when used in the ground role, so much so that the 8HAA in Burma earned the nickname *The Twelve Mile Snipers*. Each gun was towed by a Matador lorry which could carry the 10-man detachment and first line ammunition. 8HAA was destined to serve first in Northern France and then Burma. 9th Londonderry served in North Africa and Italy.

Recruiting for the new brigade was opened in April 1939. The response was enthusiastic. By the time war was declared five months later, the regiments were pretty well fully recruited. Amongst the officers who enlisted in 8HAA were men who in the post-war years became leading members of the community. Jimmy Cunningham, who commanded the regiment in Burma, took over the directorship of the family firm of stockbrokers. Robert Stephens was appointed Secretary to the Governor of Northern

Ireland. Norman Brann became Her Majesty's Lieutenant for County Down. Robin Kinahan, the regiment's adjutant, served as Lord Mayor of Belfast and was awarded a knighthood. Harry McKibben played rugby for Ireland and was a member of a British Lions team. Harry Porter became a prominent businessman and a senior Territorial.

For the first three months 8HAA was deployed to defend the dockyards, with their heavy guns at Greencastle, the Antrim Road, Orangefield and Kinnegar. The light guns were in the docks. The guns were out of date and there were far too few of them for an effective barrage but they were the only available defence against an attack. It was the only time the regiment deployed in defence of its own City.

By November 1939 8HAA had moved to England and thence to Northern France. Regimental headquarters and two of the batteries, 22 and 23, were deployed in the area of Le Havre to protect the port and airfields, while 21 battery deployed well forward in the neighbourhood of Arras, an area which would have already been familiar to the small number of gunners who had served in the 36th (Ulster) Division in 1915-1918.

The conditions in France that winter were miserable. An officer in a field battery described the digging of gun pits. 'It was hard work and it had to be done quickly. The gunners worked magnificently. Nothing could dampen their spirits. Not even the soaking rain which now began to pour steadily. It was to rain without ceasing for weeks. Our regimental area became a quagmire. Gun pits were flooded. At every step you sank into mud a foot thick. Rain washed out our billets. Dry clothes became a luxury. Useless for the 1914-18 veterans comforting us with the assurance that it couldn't be compared with the Flanders mud.

Then it began to snow, roads blocked by drifts and it was bitterly cold.' In a sense the coming of spring was a relief.



On 10 May 1940 the Germans launched their 'blitzkrieg', a lightning war, sweeping through Holland and Belgium and into Northern France. 21 Battery was the first component of the Ulster Brigade to open fire against the Luftwaffe formations. For days they were continuously on duty in defence of Arras. They fought hard, moving northwards to Hazebrouck to

defend Lord Gort's headquarters. At one stage they were almost surrounded by German tanks and came under direct machine fire. As the Germans closed in, the battery, travelling in small groups, joined the shambolic move to Dunkirk, hampered by attacks from the air and mixed up with the French units moving south and the columns of refugees westwards. Once they were inside the perimeter around Dunkirk, they destroyed their guns, blowing them up by loading two shells at once in opposite direction, and smashing their ancillary equipment. For a while they joined the infantrymen in defence of the perimeter until called forward to embark on one of the large fleet of small boats providing a shuttle service back to England.

Meanwhile the rest of the regiment still at Le Havre was ordered to cross the Somme and join up with 21 Battery in defence of General headquarters at Hazebrouck. When it failed to get through against the tide of traffic moving westward, it was directed to make for the coast of Brittany, protecting the airfields on route. On 18 June 22 Battery was evacuated from Cherbourg, 23 Battery via St Malo. One of the batteries managed to persuade a ship's captain to load three of its guns and take them back to England. The remainder were deliberately destroyed to prevent them falling into enemy hands. In all 74 of the BEF's 3.7 inch heavy anti-aircraft guns and 101 of the Bofors were lost.

Back in England the regiment gathered at Blackpool to reform and recoup to prepare for the inevitable air offensive, prelude to a German invasion.

The Battle of Britain and the Blitz

There was little respite for the gunners of 8HAA on their return from France. They were deployed to protect Coventry, Plymouth and Wolverhampton. The blitz began in September 1940 with nightly attacks on large cities. There had been a painful foretaste in July and August, but it was the new intensity and continuity of the offensive which gave it its place in history. The night 'blitz' of 1940-1941 lasted just over eight months. When London was heavily bombed on 7 September, the regiment was concentrated there.

On 27 September an enemy plane was claimed as shot down during a raid on London. On 2 October the regiment helped to extinguish some 2,000 incendiary bombs which fell in or near Harrow School, setting part of it alight. Between 8 and 16 October, bombs fell on the regiment's positions on several

occasions, causing three fatal and 12 non fatal casualties. On 24 and 25 November, the destruction of a further plane was claimed.

In January 1941 the regiment was moved to Middlesborough, over which enemy raiders had passed on their way to attack other targets, including Belfast. These raiders were engaged with uncertain results, but just before the Belfast raid of 5 May 1941, pieces of enemy aircraft were found scattered over the Tees valley.

Burma

In the spring of 1942 8HAA embarked on the Belfast built RMS *Britannic*, bound for India. After a long voyage in a convoy escorted by the battleships HMS *Rodney* and HMS *Nelson*, the liner docked at Durban to receive an enthusiastic welcome from the South African people who treated them with warm hospitality. Happily, from the gunners' point of view, an engine fault on the *Britannic* delayed the onward voyage by ten days.

Eventually the men arrived in India, disembarking at Bombay. The guns and equipment were landed at Karachi, some 500 miles to the north. The gunners and their guns came together at Lahore and from there drove a thousand miles on the Grand Trunk Road to Calcutta and beyond into East Bengal.

In late July and August the regiment defended Calcutta against air attacks. It then moved further east to defend Chittagong and East Bengal. By this stage each of the guns in the regiment has been named after the wife or girlfriend of the Number 1 in charge – the name being painted on the barrels.

From October a long series of Japanese air attacks were directed against the Digboi oil plant and the forward airfields of Eastern Bengal as far south as Chittagong. Calcutta was raided regularly. The commonest form of attack was carried out by Army type 97 bombers (Mitsubishi Ki 21 or 'Sally') flying in formation and escorted by Zero fighters. The newly arrived British and newly formed Indian Regiments alike took time to bring drills and procedures up to the right standard. Some casualties were suffered by the defending gunners but soon they began to bring down their targets.

Chittagong had not only a large airfield but was also the supply base for 15 Corps. By March 1943 there were 24 x 3.7 inch and 32 x 40 mm guns in position there. *The History of the Royal Artillery* records that, in Chittagong 'the Ulster AA Regiment, 8th HAA was noted for its good shooting, bringing down three out of five for 24 rounds on one occasion.'



Sergeant Cunningham Fowler of 23 Battery described one of these raids. 'They came over, about twenty thousand, twenty-two thousand, feet. I think there were probably about seven or eight bombers escorted by maybe ten Zeroes. I can still picture those Zeroes weaving back and forward over the bombers. The Zeroes were spotted before the bombers and the guns took on the

Zeroes, which was a bad thing – I mean our job was to try to divert the bombers away from targets, but the guns were firing on Zeroes when they should have been on the bombers. When we realized what was happening, of course, we had to switch from the Zeroes to the bombers but I can still picture the bright sunlight glinting on their wings as they drifted across the top of us.'

The Arakan

The Arakan lies on the western coast-line of Burma. A range of steep, razor sharp mountains, the Mayu Range runs parallel to the coast, rising to about 2,000 feet. A good road runs north to south along the coastal plain. Another crosses the mountains, running from the port at Maungdaw to Buthidaung, passing through the Mayu by way of two tunnels, built by previous British railway engineers to bring consignments of rice from the interior to the port. It was the only good road over the mountains. In addition there were two winding rough tracks, the Goppe Pass in the north and the Ngakyedauk at the centre. The eastern side of the range was largely dense jungle. Leeches were rife and malaria took a heavy toll among the troops, with 7,500 cases. In one year alone 94% of the total manpower went down with malaria

The first Arakan campaign

In September 1942, while 8HAA continued to play its part in the defence of the airfield at Chittagong, 14 Indian Division was tasked to advance down the Arakan and occupy the port and airfield at Akyab. At first the operation went well. Then the Division began to encounter stiffening resistance, including a new weapon, bunkers. These were small strong-points, usually made of heavy logs with four or five feet of earth on top and so well camouflaged that they could not be identified at 50 yards in

the jungle. Each contained five to 20 defenders, plentifully armed with machine guns.

By May 1943 it was apparent that the offensive had failed and the Division was back in the area of Cox's Bazaar, more or less where it had set out six months earlier.

The Second Arakan Campaign

Of all the fighting which 8HAA became involved in throughout the war, undoubtedly the hardest was in the Second Battle of the Arakan in January-February 1944. When General Slim, by now commander of 14th Army, launched XV Corps back into the Arakan, it was not so much to capture territory as to inflict a crushing defeat on the Japanese. The Corps consisted of 5 Indian and 7 Indian Divisions under Lieutenant General Christison. 8HAA was in support of the Corps in both a ground and air defence role. The operation began on 26 January. The outline plan was for 5 Division to advance down the coastal plain to the west of the Mayu Ridge, while 7 Division was to cross the Goppe Pass and attack the Japanese in the area of Letwedet and Buthidaung.

Tanks and the larger part of the artillery, including 22 Battery, were allocated to 5 Division, while 23 Battery provided defence for the roads from the assembly area. All went well until the Division came up against the almost indestructible fortress of Razabil with its network of interlocking bunkers which had stymied the advance of 14 Division. Neither repeated artillery concentrations nor attacks by tanks could shift the defenders.

By 26 January it was apparent that the attack by 5 Division in the west was getting nowhere. XV Corps directed that some of the divisional units should be sent to reinforce 7 Division in the east, crossing the Mayu mountains through the Ngakyedauk ('Okeydoke') Pass. At the beginning of the year the track, which rose and fell, had been developed as a fair weather road, just wide enough to take a Matador towing a 3.7 inch gun. 21 Battery was to be one of the reinforcements. On 2 February a recce party from B Troop of 21 Battery set out to select gun positions. Two days later the Japanese opened a counter offensive in the east, sweeping round behind 7 Division, then turning west and south to cut the pass. A troop of 21 Battery, held up at the foot of the pass by the Japanese, became involved in close quarter fighting, supported by elements of 5 Division. The troop suffered casualties and lost two of its guns. B Troop, having engaged an enemy position at 1,000 yards and been shelled, mortared and dive bombed,



suffering seven killed, one wounded and one gun lost, eventually reached the Admin Box and took up positions on the southern perimeter.

(On 15 August 1996 a monument was erected at Arakan by the British Columbia Branch Burma Star Association in memory of the soldiers who died there in the battles.)

The Admin Box

In danger of being cut off by the Japanese advance through dense jungle on its eastern flank, the units of 7 Division set up separate 'boxes' with patrols keeping contact between them. The largest of these, the Admin Box at Sinzweya at the eastern side of the Ngaukeydauk Pass, became the focal point of the battle. It measured about a mile long and half a mile wide and consisted of dried paddy fields, wooded hillocks and streams surrounded by jungle clad hills.

Almost every part of it was visible to the enemy on the hills.

Inside the box were some 8,000 troops. They included the headquarters of 7 Division, the artillery and signals headquarter, 9 Brigade with three companies of the West Yorks dispatched from 5 Division in the west just before the enemy cut the pass, two squadrons of tanks, two batteries of Bofors, one mountain and one medium battery, B Troop of 8HAA and a number of administrative personnel, drivers, clerks and cooks.

On previous occasions when they were in danger of being encircled, XV Corps had withdrawn. However General Slim reckoned that this time the Japanese had overreached themselves. He gave orders that the boxes must stand firm at all costs, arranging for them to be resupplied by air using the Dakotas of the USAF, escorted by Spitfires newly arrived in theatre and more than a match for the Zeroes.

The battle of the boxes went on for sixteen days. By day the Japanese infantry launched fresh assaults from different directions, supported by mortars and light guns. By night they attempted to infiltrate the defences. Gunners, drivers, cooks and clerks of headquarters staffs joined the infantry in the slit tents.

Twice B Troop was shelled and mortared, suffering yet more casualties and losing another gun, but the detachments silenced the enemy guns with retaliatory fire at close range over open sights and buried their dead on the gun positions.

Eventually the Japanese – outfought, running short of supplies and in danger of being overtaken by the breaking of the monsoon – withdrew to their original positions on the Razabil-Buthidaung line.

In this second Arakan campaign XV Corps had lost 3,506 men, half of them in 7 Division, the Japanese about 5,600. The campaign marked a turning point in the war in South East Asia Command (SEAC). For the first time the Japanese had been resoundingly defeated. 8HAA had played a significant part, particularly B Troop, three of whom were awarded gallantry medals. Captain Robin Reade received a Military Cross, while Sergeant William Adrain and Lance Bombardier Miles were awarded Military Medals. In all, the troop had suffered 37 casualties, 14 of them fatal. In an Order of the Day, General Slim wrote ‘Anyone who was there has something for which he can be very proud.’

In the aftermath of the Japanese withdrawal, 5 Indian Division, supported by a massive bombardment from 200 guns including 8HAA, at last captured the fortress of Razabil. The division was then transferred to Imphal, to be replaced by 25 Indian Division tasked to secure the high points covering the road to the Tunnels and then capture the two Tunnels themselves. With the monsoon season about to break, the other Arakan divisions and the Corps artillery were withdrawn to more congenial quarters around Chittagong, leaving 25 Division supported by 22 Battery of 8HAA to hold the line and harass the defence.

‘Once the monsoon started’, Captain Harry Porter (one of the troop commanders in 22 Battery) recalled ‘the roads just disappeared and the country became a complete sea of mud. We must have filled millions of sandbags. In the heat and humidity, it wasn’t easy work.’

Sergeant Fowler described how the batteries ‘employed coolies, who dug a vast hole in the ground and what they took out of that they threw into a mound, flattened it out and then the guns were set on top of that, so that when the monsoon did come they were completely surrounded by water except for four or five small islands with guns sitting on top of them.’

Gunner Tom Reynolds, a dispatch rider, recalled how the Japanese were dug in at the Tunnels. They had been there for quite some time and were very difficult to get out ‘because they used to run their guns out to the very mouth of the tunnel, fire and then retreat back in. Well they tried all sorts, heavy artillery, twenty-five pounders, three-point-sevens, everything and couldn’t move

them. And then, of course, there were the Vultee Vengeance, the Indian Air Force, Sikh pilots, who used to come over every day at four pm on the dot. They would peel off and dive-bomb the entrance to the tunnel, and then the artillery would follow. But eventually they had to use flamethrowers.'

Captain Robin Kinahan, adjutant of 8HAA, walked through the Tunnels after they had been reopened. 'It was very messy. I can remember the smell of the dead, both Japanese and our own people, as we got out the other side. It really was a very bloody battle.'

By now 656 Air OP Squadron had flown in from India and the artillery observers piloting the Austers were to play an invaluable part in this and subsequent battles. 'The pilots were averaging some 40 flying hours a month. They engaged the enemy with every type of gun from 3 inch mortars to the 3.7 inch guns of 8HAA. The latter were very long range and extremely accurate. The very first shoot with them destroyed an enemy field gun. These Northern Irish gunners were keen as mustard and loved firing for the Air OP. They were very hospitable and the Air OP pilots visited them frequently.'

Tom Reynolds remembers one of them. 'This spotter plane was on a landing strip that was surrounded entirely with four guns and also the command post, the predictors and everything else. The pilot was a big Scottish bloke with a black moustache. In his Auster spotter plane – a very slow plane – he had a radio, a revolver and a bottle of Scotch. His job was to take off from this strip, fly over the Mayu ridge, identify targets and then radio back to our command post whatever height or distance was required. And he told us that on one occasion about eighty odd Japs were killed, lining up at their cookhouse for their bowls of rice. We didn't see this, of course. On another occasion he actually pinpointed a barge coming up a river and we got direct hits on it.'

In December 1944 XV Corps renewed its offensive to clear the remainder of the Mayu peninsula. By 1 January 1945 25 and 26 Indian Divisions had reached Foul Point across the strait from Akyab. An amphibious operation was planned, with 5 Commando Brigade coming in from the Bay of Bengal and XV Corps crossing the strait. The operation was to be supported by a naval task force consisting of a battleship, three cruisers, three destroyers, four sloops, plus a total of some 270 aircraft and an artillery bombardment from the Mayo peninsula, including two batteries of 8HAA. Zero hour was to be 10.00 am on 3 January.

The day before one of the pilots from 656 Air OP Squadron flew over Akyab to check on a target. White flags were flying from the houses and a good crowd of people had gathered on the airfield. The pilot landed and was nearly mobbed by excited locals, assuring him that the Japanese had gone. He reported back to Corps headquarters. Just in time the barrage was called off. On 4 January 1945 the landing in Akyab proceeded unopposed.

For three weeks 8HAA carried out an air and sea assault on neighbouring Ramree Island. Batteries from 8HAA defended the airfields, which were of particular importance because they were in range of the assault on Rangoon. A decision was then taken that the new Indian HAA regiments should replace the British and that 8HAA should return to India.

While they waited, members of 23 Battery undertook the restoration of Akyab's St Mark's Anglican Church built in 1845. At Easter a memorial was unveiled to the men who died in the Arakan. A teak board records 'the first restoration of this church was by men of the 23rd Battery, 8 (Belfast) HAA Regiment and the 36th LAA Regiment, January – February 1945.'

After VJ Day on 15 August 1945, 8HAA set sail from Madras for home. By coincidence a Belfast built ship, RMS *Stirling Castle*, transported the regiment back to England.

Shortly after arriving in Belfast the men of 8HAA, all wearing the distinctive 14 Army bush hat with brim tacked up on one side, took part in a farewell parade and march past through the streets of Belfast, led by their commanding officer, Lieutenant



Colonel Jimmy Cunningham. Such was their respect for their Commanding Officer, the men would often refer to themselves as having served in 'Jimmy Cunningham's private army.'

In 1945 Lieutenant Colonel Cunningham was awarded an OBE on the recommendation of Lieutenant General A F P

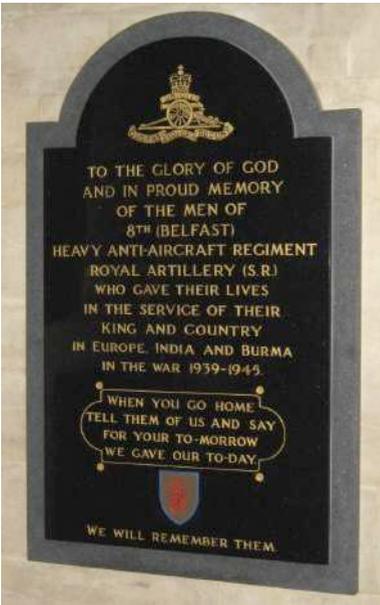
Christison, commander 15 Indian Corps, and Lieutenant General William Slim, GOC-in-Chief 14 Army. The citation reads: *This officer has commanded his regiment with marked success and ability. His quiet, cheerful personality and forceful leadership have combined to produce a regiment which has proved itself equal to any occasion. The success attained by his guns in the forward AA and*

ground role is due to his careful planning, drive and enthusiasm. His devotion to his Regiment and the interests of his men is outstanding.

Many of the officers and men came together again in 1947 when the Territorial Army was re-formed and so helped to perpetuate the regimental spirit in a new organisation, the 245th (Belfast) (Mixed) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery, which was considered the successor to 8HAA.

Later a memorial to the regiment was unveiled in St Anne's Cathedral in Belfast.

To the glory of God and in proud memory of the men of 8th (Belfast) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (SR) who gave their lives in the service of their King and Country in Europe, India and Burma in the war 1939-1945



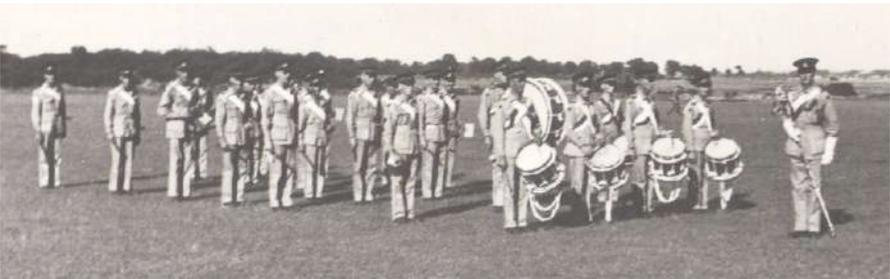
When you go home,
tell them of us, and say,
for your tomorrow
we gave our to-day.

Postscript

The men of 8HAA were not continually in action and did have some time for rest and recuperation during their time in India and Burma. When they had the opportunity to relax, they grabbed it with both hands.



The regiment found time to form a corps of pipes and drums. Three sets of pipes were purchased in India, and within a year, there were twelve pipers. In 1944, the officers of the regiment presented Kashmir silk pipe banners. The pipers and drummers wore a white cross belt on which was emblazoned the red hand of Ulster. The band played when the regiment was not in action. Parades were held on St Patrick's Day and on the 12th July, led by the band. At one stage the regiment had two pipe bands and a flute band.



The lack of entertainment produced a self help attitude from the men. They formed their own 'concert party' to entertain their mates and even persuaded some pals to become

female impersonators in the true style of *It Ain't Half hot Mum*. These shows were greatly enjoyed by all ranks.

The fighting spirit and cheerfulness shown by the men in the Arakan was shown again in the regimental sports. Football, wrestling, tug-of-war and rugby were arranged. The rugby was easy to fix, especially with Captain Harry McKibbin of Ulster and Irish rugby fame in charge.



Bibliography

The Royal Artillery Commemoration Book 1939–1945.

Anti-Aircraft Artillery 1914–1955 by Brigadier N W Routledge OBE TD.

The Far East Theatre 1941–1946 by General Sir Martin Farndale KCB.

The Readers' Digest Illustrated History of World War II.

The unique film of 8HAA on operations in Burma recorded by Harry Porter. It would have been all the more valuable if large parts of it had not been cut out by the censors.

The authors are grateful to the military historian, Richard Doherty, for use of the interviews with former members of 8HAA recorded by him in January 1989.

Officers of 8HAA 1945

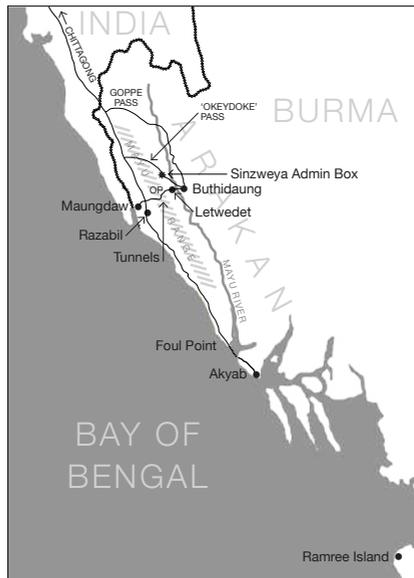


Lt West, Lt Prosser, Lt Young, Lt Bates, Lt Wynn, Lt McGillivray,
Lt Sayce, Lt Francis, Lt Brouse, Lt Patterson, Lt Stevens, Lt Landon

RSM Simmonds, Lt Dinwoode, Lt Haseldon, Lt Hales, Padre Caley,
Captain Beldam, Captain Porter, Captain Burrows,
Capt White RAMC, Captain Gantley, Captain Lidgate, Lt Hardy,
Lt Brock, Lt Austin, 2nd Lt Busy

Capt Brann, Capt Garrett, Capt Cook, Maj Gabbey, Maj Bates,
Lt Col Cunningham OBE, Maj Mitchell, Maj Holden, Capt Kinahan,
Capt McKibbin, Capt Reade MC

Map of Arakan



Roll of Honour

The Roll of Honour in Belfast Cathedral contains the names of 50 members who died while serving with the regiment. They are:

LBdr W Aiken	Sgt H V Hawkins
Bdr J Allden	Gnr T E Hill
Bdr D W Anderson	Gnr J Hughes
Gnr G O Ashbrook	Gnr J Jamison
Gnr W R Bailie	Bdr J O Kerr
Gnr W H Baird	Gnr A Kinnon
Gnr D Barnhill	Gnr T T Knox
Gnr E Bassett	Gnr J Logue
LSgt J Bingham	Gnr W McKay
Gnr T Bryce	Gnr A Millar
Gnr E Buller	Gnr W Rea
Sgt A Clarke	Gnr D A Rhead
Gnr E M Coppinger	Gnr T K Roberts
LSgt R Drew	Gnr R Robinson
Gnr W Eaton	Gnr E Rowlands
Gnr D H Ebery	Pte R Rowley
Gnr L Edgar	Gnr H Sharpe
Gnr D Foster	Bdr N Sherratt
Gnr T Fuller	Gnr J Shields
Gnr J Fulton	Gnr H A Spray
Gnr J Galway	Gnr W T Talbot
Sgt L C A Gregory	Gnr E Tindsley
Gnr J Grinsell	Sgt J D Vance
Gnr R G Haughty	Gnr F W Ward

We will remember them



John Potter

Major John Potter MBE was born in 1925 into a military family. His father, Lieutenant Colonel Claud Potter, had commanded one of the artillery brigades supporting 36 (Ulster) Division in the last year of WWI. John was educated at Marlborough College, Wiltshire. He served in Queen's University Officers' Training Corps and in 1944 followed his father into the Royal Artillery. He served in India, the Suez Canal Zone and Germany. On his retirement in 1970, he joined the Ulster Defence

Regiment and was Regimental Secretary at the time of the merger of the Regiment with the Royal Irish Rangers in 1992. He is the author of *A Testimony to Courage*, the Regimental History of the Ulster Defence Regiment. John is a trustee of the Northern Ireland War Memorial.



Murray Barnes

Murray Barnes was educated at RBAI, where he was Vice Head of School and a Cadet CSM in the CCF. A former member of the Territorial Army Reserve, he served (part time) for 26 years in the successor units to 8HAA in the Royal Regiment of Artillery, achieving the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He is Chairman of the Royal Artillery Council of Northern Ireland. He was Clerk Assistant of the Northern Ireland Assembly. He was awarded the TD in 1977 and made an OBE in 2000.