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Junior Leaders Regiment Choir

The Choir of the Junior Leaders Regiment, Royal Signals at the Victoria Palace



Frankie Vaughan - SSgt K Foster - Patricia Lambert - Cliff Michelmore - Vera Lynn - Jean Metcalfe
JSgt Fred Wilson - JSgt R Murray - JLCpl R Spree - Mr J Griffiths

If someone had told me the previous month that I was shortly to appear on the stage with Gracie Fields, Harry Secombe, Vera Lynn, Frankie Vaughan and a host of other stars I would have suggested an immediate visit to the Medical Officer. And yet there I was with fifty-five other Junior Leaders entrained for London, and the Victoria Palace Theatre, to do just that. Even the journey down had an unreal flavour about it. Singing in the train, first to the alarm, and then, apparently, to the pleasure of our fellow passengers.

On arrival at Paddington the Army, in the form of the R.A.S.C., took over and in a matter of minutes we were careering through the streets of London – destination Regents Park Barracks. Within an hour most of us were out exploring the city – finding to our surprise that the cost of living was more expensive than in Newton Abbot. To some, however, it was native territory and infinitely preferable to the fleshpots of South Devon.

The following morning we left the Barracks at nine o'clock for the Victoria Palace. There, during the rehearsals that took place, we became acquainted with an R.S.M. 'of the old school.' He, a member of the Irish Guards to boot, insisted that our knees be raised to somewhere within the region of our throats, and as a result caused such shaking in the 'mark time' that we feared for the safety of the stage structure...We rehearsed throughout the day; Harry Secombe making the whole affair one big 'belly laugh.'

With the laughs replaced by butterflies we returned to the theatre after our evening meal. It seemed we were waiting for an age, but at last we were 'on.' To a packed house and in the presence of the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester we sang two songs with Gracie Fields ("There'll always be an England" and "Wish me luck as you wave me goodbye"). Much to our amazement and pride we received three curtain calls, the only act to be so honoured during the evening. (Could this have been Gracie? I wonder!)

For the finale we marched on singing "Soldiers of the Queen" while the band of the Welsh Guards marched through the theatre and onto the stage. We followed this with "There's something about a soldier" and then we ended by accompanying Constance Shacklock in "Land of Hope and Glory."

It was a very happy fifty-six Junior Leaders, not forgetting Staff Foster – the boy with the moustache! – who left the theatre somewhere around midnight.

Altogether it was a memorable occasion which, coupled with our appearance on Westward Television earlier that week, made this the high spot of the term for the Choir.



JSgt R Murray - SSgt K Foster - ? - JLCpl R Spree
with one of the Tiller Girls



JSig P Coleman - JLCpl W Watson - JSgt R Murray
with Gracie Fields

March 1962

JUNIOR LEADERS REGIMENT Follow My Lead

Don't be surprised if you see a film (possibly with a recruiting bias) at your local cinema which tells the story of a Junior Leader and his life before, during and after training.

A film was made recently for Army Recruiting purposes by Anvil Films Ltd., of Beaconsfield, and has been given the working title of "Follow My Lead." The casting for the film was made by the Director using our Junior Leaders in most of the parts which included our own "Alan Ladd" – Junior R.S.M. Wraith. Rank was not the main consideration, "rugged looks" and one who had completed his "Senior" were two of the qualifications that were required. Others in important parts were Junior Sergeants Sharman, Lock, Junior Corporals Greenwood, Kynaston and Junior Corporal Mate from the All Arms Junior Leaders' Regiment in North Wales.

The Military Advisor was Captain Guy Rogers who, using the precedence started by Alfred Hitchcock, made a short appearance as a "Rebel" in one of the scenes. Though most of the shots were taken at Tonfanau (All Arms Junior Leaders Regiment), most of the action shots were taken very close to Denbury and as usual the typical Devonshire weather, "gales and rain," held up filming on several days.

Helicopters were used very successfully and the "artists" chalked up many flying hours. It was no wonder that one of the cast commented, "Adventure Training won't be the same after all this."



We will not tell you the story or the plot; in fact we don't know what the final production will be after the "cutter" has finished. It will be a pity if they cut out "Rebel Rogers."

May 1962

JUNIOR LEADERS REGIMENT

Graduation Parade, Easter, 1962.

We had to break with tradition when we decided to have our Graduation Parade on Saturday, 7th April. This was done in order that it would be easier for parents to come down and see the parade than it would have been had it been held, as in the past, on a week-day.

As always, some distinguished person was asked to take the parade, and this time we were honoured by a visit of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir Richard Hull, G.B.C., D.S.O., A.D.C. It was for him his first impression of a Junior Leaders Regiment dressed in the new No. 2 Dress – by all accounts he was very impressed by both turnout and drill.

Several other distinguished people attended, who included the Master of Signals, Signal Officer-in-Chief, Divisional Commander, Inspector of Boys' Training with many local dignitaries from local towns and boroughs.

Again, as on so many occasions in the past, we were lucky with our weather – the rain held off just long enough for us to complete the parade.

After the parade, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, accompanied by the Commanding Officer and R.S.M., visited the Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess, where he met members of the staff, and on leaving was interviewed by Junior Signelman Smith, our top *Junior Mercury* reporter.

After a quick lunch in the Officers' Mess, the C.I.G.S. had to leave, but we carried on with our customary prize-giving in the cinema, attended by all parents and staff. The prizes were kindly presented by Mrs. Whistler, who also received a bouquet of flowers, presented by the smallest man in the Regiment (by quarter-of-an-inch) Junior Signelman Dawson of White Swan Troop. With the prize-giving over, there followed a display of Highland Dancing, *Swords and Fling*, by Scottish Country Dancing Team, and the afternoon was closed by the choir, which gave a very fine performance, under the direction of the Choir Master – the programme ranged from our traditional songs to a selection from "Stephen Foster Melodies."

Parents and Staff were able to discuss the progress of the Junior Leaders over afternoon tea, which was held in the gymnasium. This was a particular success and very much appreciated by the parents, many of whom had a pleasant chat with the Signal Officer-in-Chief. Most of the parents, after spending a night in barrack rooms, departed early on Sunday morning, though a few stayed behind to attend the end-of-term church services.

Once more Denbury is quiet, and to the output we send our sincere best wishes for the future and we look forward to a full Summer Term – always the busiest. Next term we return to find the greatest number of Junior Leaders under training we have ever had in the Regiment – we have over 40 per cent more under training now than we had three years ago – all this in spite of a much higher entry and retention standard.



The C.I.G.S. interviewed by JSig T.P. Smith, Junior Mercury Reporter. An apprehensive R.S.M. "looks on"



The C.I.G.S. presents the CO's award to JRSM J.A. Wraith



JSig B.J. Dawson presents a bouquet to Mrs Whistler

Please go to the Ten Tors 1962 file DENBURY page for the WIRE article

September 1962

JUNIOR LEADERS REGIMENT

Royal Guard of Honour and Summer Graduation



NB The above photo is thanks to Willy Watchorn – much better than the scan from the Wire

As expected the summer term was very busy and it was with satisfaction and a sense of achievement that Junior Leaders and staff went home for the usual long summer leave.

The streamlined new training programme worked well and was not unduly handicapped by two great events – Ten Tors (already reported in our last notes) and the provision of what is believed to be the first Royal Guard of Honour to be provided by a Junior Leaders' Regiment.

The close links between the Regiment and the towns of South Devon have been reported before when these towns, and in some cases Rural Councils, presented Pipe Banners. The town of Totnes through their previous Mayor (Councillor Evans), was the first to present a banner – this banner is now carried by the Mayor's Piper on any occasion that the Mayor may require his presence. Such an occasion arose recently (Friday, 27th July) when Her Majesty The Queen visited Totnes whilst on her Royal Tour of South Devon.

Totnes not only requested the presence of the "Mayor's Piper" but asked if the Regiment could provide the Royal Guard of Honour. The selection, training and grooming of the Guard was under the direction of the Second-in-Command Major Scott (seen in the photograph accompanying H.M. The Queen). Each Squadron, Slim and Alexander, provided sixty junior leaders each and from these the final selection was made. The standard and bearing was of a very high order and the crowd of several hundred applauded their marching both to and from the Steamer Quay where the inspection took place.

Graduation. General Whistler, probably visiting the Regiment for the last time as S.O.-in-C, took the parade, which was watched by over four hundred parents who had stayed in the Regiment overnight and were to see the prize giving in the afternoon and the Denbury Theatre Show in the evening.

General Whistler, in addressing the Junior Leaders, stressed the tremendous opportunities that are available to those graduating to colour service, and in particular to the promotion prospects that are there to those Junior Leaders who are prepared to develop the skills and standards that started in Denbury. The General's words were very much appreciated and all ranks wish him every success in his new appointment and sincerely hope that he will visit the Regiment again.

Parades vary very little at Denbury though each graduation parade has that little "something" that is different from the rest – this time we had our Pipers in full dress for the first time. (The photograph shows the Pipe Major, Junior Corporal Bowie, carrying the Royal Banner, talking to the S.O.-in-C.). After some apprehension about the weather, we were thankful for a fine day and the Adjutant, with a sign of relief, put his Wet Weather Programme away for another term.

At the prize giving in the afternoon, Mrs. Holifield presented the individual prizes immediately after the Colonel had given his report (Headmaster style) to the parents. Tea followed for all parents and staff in the gymnasium where the careers and progress of the boys were discussed in a more relaxed and informal manner.

The evening's highlight, after the Beating of Retreat (under the direction of Drum Major Yates), was a full two and a half hour show in the theatre by Junior Leaders and staff. With every seat taken the parents, who formed the majority of the audience, were treated to a show of a high standard of both variety and performance – by far the best seen at Denbury. Production was by Mr. Whapham, one of our civilian teachers.

Summer term came to a close on a high note and as it fades away one wonders what Christmas term will bring – Firelight Fantasy?

