

# **SERVICE OF DEDICATION OF A REGIMENTAL MEMORIAL TABLET**

Field Marshal Lord Bramall of Bushfield KG, GCB, OBE, MC, JP gave the following address during a Dedication Service of a Regimental Memorial Tablet at Winchester Cathedral on Friday 17th October 1997:

## **Address at Winchester Cathedral**

Have no fear, I am not presuming to preach a sermon, but I did want to give you a little background as to why we are gathered here today in this lovely Cathedral. And the primary reason is to remember the sixty officers and men of the three regiments which have now formed the Royal Green Jackets, the 43rd/52nd, the 60th and the 95th, who died on active duty between the years 1945 and 1965, and for whom no other memorial has, up to now, existed.

All the Green Jacket regiments have memorials and Roll of Honour books - the 60th and the Rifle Brigade in this Cathedral and the 43rd/52nd at Christ Church College, Oxford, and these remember, with periodical turning over the pages and simple ceremonies, all those who died throughout the Regiment's history up to 1945 and the end of the Second World War. While the Royal Green Jackets, formed on 1st January 1966, have a Roll of Honour book in the Light Division Chapel at Flowerdown, which commemorates those who died on active duty since that date. So there was this gap of twenty years - a period very much in the military span and experience of many in this congregation in which we also want to honour and remember those who lost their lives in service of their country. And the wide range of places where these men died, from Central America in the west, through Europe, Cyprus, the Middle East, Kenya, to Malaya, Sarawak and Korea in the Far East, reflects not only the amazing scope of British Army service, even after World War Two, but also the uneasy peace in which they have operated, and which has ensured that in only one year since 1945 have British forces not been shot at and suffered casualties somewhere in the world in the course of their duty; and of course that figure of sixty has grown considerably since 1966, not least as a result of the troubles and the repeated operational tours in Northern Ireland.

The opportunity to remember these sixty in an appropriate fashion came in 1995 when, in answer to the last Dean's Appeal for the Cathedral, the Royal Green Jackets gave a dedicated gift of £10,000 to the Cathedral to restore the west gable window of the nave; and the Regiment had in mind stained glass in that window, depicting perhaps a Rifleman and Regimental badges as a fitting memorial to these men. Unfortunately it soon became clear that, important as the window was, it was largely obscured by the ceiling of the nave and could therefore not be properly seen from inside the Cathedral. Hence the Dean's agreement to our placing a suitable tablet down in the

southern aisle of the nave which would permanently and visibly link their memory to the restored window.

And there could, of course, be no better place to do this. Winchester is, after all, our home, and I hope will always be our home. The 43rd, raised in 1741, had their original home headquarters here as far back as 1742; and for 127 years, from 1858 (apart from the war years and the interlude of the fire) Peninsula Barracks, high on the hill above the City, on the site of that great royal castle, was the continuous home of the Rifles, the King's Royal Rifle Corps and the Rifle Brigade, and for the last 27 of those years, now joined by the 43rd/52nd, that of the Green Jacket Brigade, soon to become the Royal Green Jackets. It was not therefore surprising that nearly sixty years ago that great Liberal Secretary of State for War, Lord Haldane, was quoted as saying that the Rifles were and always have been part and parcel of the City of Winchester. And more recently, since 1985, while our museum and Regimental Headquarters stayed in Peninsula Barracks, our recruits are now being trained only one and a half miles down the road at Flowerdown, so that 'at the going down of the sun and in the morning', and if the wind is in the right direction, the sound of the bugles can still be heard in Winchester as they have been over so many years.

And of course a walk along the south and north aisles of this great building quickly confirms the strong ties which have existed between the Green Jackets and the Cathedral itself. There are four King's Royal Rifle Corps and four Rifle Brigade regimental memorials outside the Cathedral and some 57 individual memorials within it, spanning two centuries and including those of three Victoria Crosses, a member of the Royal Family, the Duke of Connaught, two Battenberg princes who both served in the 60th and were uncles of Lord Mountbatten, another Field Marshal, two Commanders-in-Chief, one in Canada and one in South Africa, Colonel Commandants and many more who have just been deemed to have given distinguished service to their country and their regiments; and many other regimental services have been held in this Cathedral, perhaps the most moving being when the guards from the 22 60th battalions and 12 Rifle Brigade battalions took part in a memorial service in 1916, after the Battle of the Somme. Many of us, too, have known numerous individual services of memorial, thanksgiving and dedication to and for people we have known and admired. Some of us have even been married here - one young 60th officer, I remember only too well, getting a monumental rocket for allowing his wedding here to interfere with an important cricket match at St. Cross. But that is another story.

So, then, despite all the changes in the British Army since withdrawal from Empire and the end of Cold War and many other alarms and excursions, to say nothing of cash squeezes and reorganisations, our links with this City and this Cathedral of Winchester are secure, as is the memory of those 60 brother Riflemen and comrades in arms whom we remember today. May they rest in peace, and in the words of that lovely prayer 'may light perpetual shine upon them'.