

## 173 PROVOST COMPANY 3<sup>rd</sup> REGIMENT RMP



### **About The Unit**

Prior to 'The Troubles' starting in 1969, the RMP had personnel in the Province since the early 1950s. Northern Ireland had been the ideal place to spend time enjoying many pursuits that the 'Emerald Isle' had to offer such as fishing, rugby and playing golf. The only RMP presence in the province was 173 (Northern Ireland) Pro Coy which was located in Thiepval Bks, Lisburn and supported 39 Infantry Brigade. The strength of the company at the time was two Officers, one Warrant Officer and 29 NCOs.

On 14 August 1969, rioting, which had started in Londonderry, spread to Belfast. The Army was ordered into action and the end of August saw 173 Pro Coy reinforced by one section from 3 Div Pro Unit and with vehicles borrowed from the local TA, severely stretched with escorts to VIPs and ammunition, traffic control for the arrival of troop reinforcements from the mainland and points men in city locations where hostile crowds had forced the RUC to leave.

A swift reorganisation enlarged 173 Pro Coy to a new HQ and 6 platoons, an increase from its original strength of 32 to 110. Further reinforcements on 4 and 6 month tours came from the UK and the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) and additional platoons from 3 Div Pro Unit, until, on 5 November 1971, 173 Pro Coy ceased to exist and the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment RMP was created.

1 RMP consisted of 5 companies, one of which was 174 Pro Coy (nowadays also part of 3 RMP), starting its new life on Guy Fawkes Day in 1971. It consisted of only three platoons and had no established Company HQ except for an Officer Commanding. The Coy was mounted in Land Rovers and operated in Belfast from Ardmillan House.

The role of the RMP in the early 1970's included the following tasks; Escorts to Military Convoys, Patrolling in place of the RUC in 'no go' Republican areas, Response to 999 Emergency calls, Military and Civilian investigations, arrests and searches. In Belfast it was to provide Arrest and Find teams and

assist the Bde on the same tasks as required. In the new 3 Inf Bde RMP were to continue to provide arrest and Find teams; to support the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Newry, Lurgan and Castlederg in securing town barriers and to provide NCOs to a new Bde organization called Bomb Intelligence, the forerunner of what was later to be known as Weapons Intelligence.

On 1 July 1973, 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment Royal Military Police formed and consisted of 175, 179 and 180 Provost Companies.

In April 1977, 174 RMP personnel moved out of Mahon Road Bks in Portadown, relocating to Drumadd Barracks in Armagh. The task of mobile reserve was abandoned, as it no longer fitted operational requirements, and was replaced by foot patrols of town centres. As a result of 2 year tours and the trickle posting system, allied to RMP skill at talking to people, powers of alertness and observation, the flow of low-level intelligence greatly increased. It is here that the Continuity Non-commissioned Officer (CONCO) system began to evolve.

In October 1977, 180 Provost Company disbanded.

In 1977/1978, 179 Provost Company disbanded.

On 1 April 1978, 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment Royal Military Police disbanded.

In March 1985, 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment Royal Military Police disbanded and Companies became independent.

In August 1987, 173 Provost Company reformed and consisted of 177 Pl, CWS, LPO and SIB.

In 1992, 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment Royal Military Police and 172 Provost Company reformed.

In July 1997, 172 Provost Company disbanded.

In 2000, 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment Royal Military Police disbanded for the final time.

On 1 June 2000, 6<sup>th</sup> Regiment Royal Military Police formed: 172, 173, 174 and 177 Platoons became Operations Company; 175, 176 Platoons, Courts and Witness Section and Claims Investigation Team became Police Company.

In 2005, the Historical Information Team formed under 6<sup>th</sup> Regiment Royal Military Police (now Legal Process Office).

In February 2006, Operations Company and Police Company amalgamated. 6<sup>th</sup> Regiment Royal Military Police continued to support the General Officer Commanding's mission to assist the Police Service of Northern Ireland in the defeat of terrorism, with the eventual goal of returning the Province to normality.

Operation Banner ended on 31 July 2007 and with it 38 years of RMP support in the Province. 6<sup>th</sup> Regiment Royal Military Police based in Lisburn, Northern Ireland disbanded on this date leading to fresh challenges, presented as a consequence of Normalisation. Primary amongst them has been the need to convert from an Operational posture to that of support to a regional garrison. Key is the rebirth of 173 Provost Company, which formed on 1 August 2007, part of 3 RMP, delivering operational support to 19 Light Brigade.

The RMP have been deployed in Northern Ireland since the outbreak of 'The Troubles' in 1969. Over this period we have supported the Civilian Police and the Army on a wide variety of sensitive, enduring and frequently hazardous duties. At the height of operations over 750 RMP personnel were deployed. Throughout the campaign the RMP have delivered a professional, committed and dedicated service to the people of Northern Ireland in order to support freedom of movement and personal liberty. Over the 38 or so years of support, they arrested gunmen, processed terrorists and criminals, and made countless appearances in court, providing evidence to secure convictions for murder, possession of illegal weapons and ammunition, hi-jacking and kidnappings. They had attempts made on their lives by gunmen, as well as suffering from regular stoning and petrol bombings. RMP gave first aid to victims of sectarian violence from both sides of the community and saved life. RMP conducted searches, including derelict buildings, the Crumlin Road Jail and the Maze Prison and made finds of weapons and ammunition, including explosives.

During this time the RMP lost 15 members with 4 directly attributable to terrorism. Collectively, RMP were awarded the Wilkinson Sword of Peace, a Distinguished Service Order, 36 British Empire Medals, a Distinguished Conduct Medal, 3 Queen's Gallantry Medals, 4 Military Medals, received 47 Mentioned in Dispatches and 10 Queen's Commendations for Valuable Service.

## ROLL OF HONOUR

The under mentioned Royal Military Police personnel have lost their lives whilst serving in Northern Ireland:

<b>Lance Corporal W Jolliffe</b>	-	<b>1 January 1971</b>
<b>Corporal A J Holman</b>	-	<b>11 February 1973</b>
<b>Sergeant S Young</b>	-	<b>18 May 1973</b>
<b>Corporal A R Lane</b>	-	<b>30 May 1973</b>
<b>Corporal R J Roberts</b>	-	<b>30 May 1973</b>
<b>Corporal S K Milne</b>	-	<b>20 February 1974</b>
<b>Corporal P C Mundy</b>	-	<b>20 February 1974</b>
<b>Corporal F Lea</b>	-	<b>21 January 1975</b>
<b>Corporal A S Stryker</b>	-	<b>4 June 1976</b>
<b>Corporal G H Middlemass</b>	-	<b>8 November 1977</b>
<b>Sergeant D Ross</b>	-	<b>27 March 1984</b>
<b>Corporal D Chappell</b>	-	<b>19 September 1991</b>



<b>Corporal P A Bacon</b>	-	<b>12 February 1992</b>
<b>Lance Corporal P Melling</b>	-	<b>4 September 1997</b>
<b>Sergeant A Stevenson</b>	-	<b>3 April 2004</b>

Currently 173 Pro Coy, 3 RMP are under going pre-deployment training in preparation for deploying with 19 Lt Bde on Op HERRICK 10 (Afghanistan) in Apr 2009.

