



A Short History of the 174th Provost Company Corps of Royal Military Police

Initially 174 Provost Company originated during the Second World War, having been formed in 1942 to control several ports in the North East of England, where it was responsible for military traffic control and troop movement. At the end of the Second World War, as a result of the drawdown from war establishment, the unit was disbanded in January 1947 and was not heard from again for another twenty two years.

In August 1969, sectarian rioting in Northern Ireland prompted a swift military response, with a large influx of troops to the Province. Up to this point, the RMP presence in the region consisted of a mere 32 military policemen of all ranks. As the troubles mounted and the number of deployed troops increased this figure proved to be woefully inadequate. Duties such as VIP and ammunition escorts, traffic control and providing pointsmen in exposed urban areas, became the norm and the RMP was forced to expand its presence in Northern Ireland accordingly. Thus, 173 Provost Company was heavily reinforced with elements from the UK and the then British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) until, on 5th January 1971, 1st Regiment Royal Military Police came into being. The regiment consisted of 5 companies of which only 174 Provost Company still survives.

Initially comprising only 3 platoons, with no established company HQ, the company was mounted in Land Rovers and operated from Ardmillan House in Belfast. As required, NCOs from the company deployed to Gough Bks, Armagh, where they were responsible for the supervision and processing of terrorist suspects. In addition to this, the company provided Arrest and Find teams, working closely with the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

On 18th February 1974 the company was placed under the operational control of the newly formed 3 Infantry Brigade, and moved to Mahon Barracks, Portadown. Here it was further augmented by a WRAC platoon, and began operations in Newry, Lurgan and Castledearg. NCOs were also provided for the just-formed Bomb Intelligence unit, the pre-cursor of today's Weapons Intelligence Sections. A mobile task force, using Austin 1800s, also came into being, and for the first time RMP operated in vehicles in a variety of hues.

In April 1977, 174 Provost Company moved out of Mahon, 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.

On 31st December 1981, almost 10 years to the day after its formation, 174 Provost Company was disbanded, only to be reformed in Tidworth in the early months of 1982. Bringing the new formation up to establishment was a slow process, with anticipation of the arrival of G1098 equipment and Land Rovers still being felt a year after its creation. With the Cold War at its height, the company began to busy itself training for its wartime role in support of 1st British Corps in Germany. On the policing front Long Range Area Patrols were conducted, as well as purges on Absentees and Deserters (a theme pursued to good effect on the company's move to Donnington in later years).

In 1992, 174 Provost Company moved to Parsons Barracks, Donnington. Over the intervening years, personnel have deployed to several international hotspots including Kosovo and Bosnia, and were heavily involved in the containment of the Foot and Mouth crisis of 1999. Close liaison with the West Mercia police resulted in strong mutual respect and co-operation, with the Absentees and Deserters Section being highly regarded.

June 2003 saw elements of 174 Provost Company, 4th Regiment Royal Military Police, supported by personnel from 116 and 253 Provost Company, 4th Regiment Royal Military Police (Volunteers), deploy to Iraq for a 5 month tour, where they assisted in establishing the smooth lines of communication through theatre and helped develop the training protocol for the Iraqi Civilian Police.

As a result of the recent LAND Police Study, the infrastructure of the company was dispersed to Gutersloh and Bulford, with remaining elements concentrating on providing support to 101 Logistics Brigade. In November 2004 the Coy moved to 3 Regiment, Royal Military Police, operating in a close support role to 12 Mechanised Brigade.

In April 2005 the Coy deployed on a 6 month operational tour of Iraq in support of 12 Mechanized Brigade. Their role covered the spectrum of policing, encompassing the training and mentoring of the Iraqi Civilian Police.

February 2006 saw the Coy recommence its Policing role to cover the 143(WM) & 160 (W) Bdes and the incorporation of Brecon Police Post to the Coy Orbat.

In April 2007 the Coy deployed on a 6 month operational tour of Afghanistan in support of 12 Mechanized Brigade (Op HERRICK 6). The Coy provided close support to the infantry battle groups during kinetic operations and was instrumental in the handling of detainees and the Security Sector Reform of the Afghan National Police.

The Coy is scheduled to deploy to Iraq in April 2009.