

"Seconds Out" for 'Albert Hardy'

by Colin Booth

I'm a civilian trainer working in Driver Training Wing at the Defence School of Transport (DST), Leconfield, having joined the Civil Service in 1975. Prior to that, and during my Army career, I did a lot of boxing at a high level. I represented England on a number of occasions and won the prestigious 'Hemming Belt' four times, helping my unit 10 Regiment RCT win the King's Shield in 1974. It doesn't seem that long ago, but in reality it is over 35 years. This article, however, is not about me, it's about an interesting person who visited DST on Friday 3 April 2009 - the winner of the 'Hemming Belt' and the winner of the Army Team Boxing Championship 'King's Shield.'

Albert Hardy (pictured below) whose Army boxing career started over Fifty years ago served with 15 Training Battalion RASC in Blandford Dorset during the 1950's. He was a class boxer, representing the Army on a number of occasions and won individual boxing titles and trophies. He was so good that he was due to become a professional boxer after his release from National Service.

During his National Service, Albert won individual and team trophies. A very notable trophy is the 'Hemming Belt' which was a gift to the Corps from Major J W Hemming RASC (pictured below) who was later promoted to Colonel.

'The Hemming Belt'

Albert Hardy had the 'Hemming Belt' trophy presented to him in 1957. He was the second winner and the most outstanding boxer in the RASC. This trophy continued to be presented to individual boxers every year even though the Corps changed from RASC to RCT and then RLC, the presentation is conducted during Corps Day.

Albert, a Light Middleweight, also helped his unit win the converted title 'The Army Inter Units Team Championship' the biggest and most demanding boxing event in the Army. All the major units aspired to win the prestigious Kings Shield, however, 15 Training Battalion RASC with their outstanding boxers won this title and the Kings Shield three years in a row 1957, 1958, 1959.

The competition for the Team Championship was that great it took over twenty years before a Corps team managed to win the trophy again. During the Nineteen

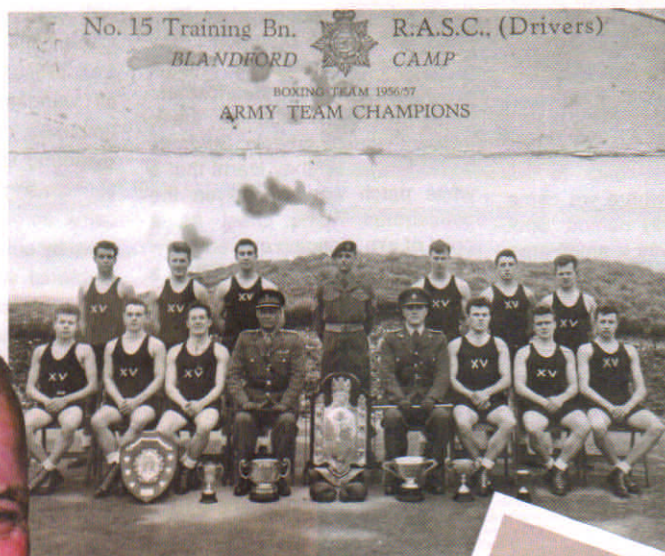
Sixties, Training Regiment RCT managed to get close but, however, were beaten by the Kings Regiment and the Parachute Regiment in consecutive years. In the Seventies 10 Regiment RCT (The Fighting Tenth) won the Kings Shield four times 1973, 74, 75 and 77. An achievement no other Regiment had been able to match. Unfortunately, 10 Regiment RCT was barred from the competition after 1977. In reality they were too good! The official line was that 10 Regiment's Northern Ireland tours took priority. The King Shield is no longer competed for, the Army has now downgraded the Army Inter Units Team Championships to novice boxers only and they wanted to have all units boxing on a level playing field. I suppose that in the past, some Regiments trained their boxers to a very high level and they became top class open standard boxers; these were matched against other Regiments team boxers who were not at the same standard.

Albert, now a 73 year old veteran

living in Doncaster, was given permission by the Commandant DST to visit here and see what kind of changes have been made since he left the Army in 1958. He met QMSI Dutton and was shown the excellent facilities at the Gymnasium. In Albert's day a medicine ball and vaulting box was about as much as one could expect. He was also treated to a drive around the cross country area with the compliments Head of Department, Service Driver Conversion, Keith Graham and given an introduction to the Minimum Test Vehicle with the compliments of Gavin Dalton, Head of Licence Division.

If you are interested in seeing a list of winners and photographs of the Kings Shield and the Hemming Belt go to my web blog shown below then follow the links.

http://www.ajbooth.karoo.net/Boxing/hemming_belt.htm



Standing L/R:
LCpl Alf Mc
Ginnes, Dvr
Tall, A, Dvr
Lutt, M, CQMS
Coppstone
(Asst.Trainer),
LCpl Harper
Jack,
Pte Foot R, Dvr
Hughes A.

Front Row:
Pte Da Costa
D, Cpl Pearce
R, Dvr Morrison
J, Col T E
Stoneman MBE
(Commanding
Officer),
Capt G Murray
(Officer I/C
Boxing &
Trainer), Dvr
Hardy A, Dvr
Jago B and Dvr
Foster A.

