



Ministry  
of Defence

Army Secretariat  
Army Headquarters  
IDL 24 Blenheim Building  
Marlborough Lines  
Andover  
Hampshire, SP11 8HJ  
United Kingdom

Ref: FOI2017/06060/79007

E-mail: [ArmySec-Group@mod.uk](mailto:ArmySec-Group@mod.uk)

Website: [www.army.mod.uk](http://www.army.mod.uk)

28 June 2017

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your letter of 22 June in which you requested the following information:

*"Were the Royal West Kent Regiment involved in any operations whereby members of the aforementioned Regiment would have been exposed to asbestos or any other dangerous related bodies between 1946 and 1953 inclusive."*

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Having undertaken initial searches, I have established that there were six Battalions of the Regiment during the timeframe provided and that they would have been based at numerous locations. I should advise that under section 12(2) of the FOIA, I am unable to confirm if the Ministry of Defence holds the information requested. Section 12(2) relates to historical documents that would be held in general files in MOD archive and would be impossible to find, or we would expect to have been destroyed under policies in place at the time. It would, therefore, be an unfair burden and a disproportionate effort on the Department to find them.

Under section 16 of the FOIA – advice and assistance – I have attached brief summary of the movements of the various Battalions of the Royal West Kent Regiment during the period requested.

To assist you further, you may wish to contact the Regimental Museum, which may be able to provide details on where the battalions were based and what they were doing during the timeframe in question. The National Archive may also hold Regimental Journals from the time that may provide more information. I have provided contact details and web links for both the museum and The National Archive, which I hope you find useful:

Maidstone Museums  
St. Faith's Street  
Maidstone  
Kent  
ME14 1LH

Tel: 01622 602838

Email: [museuminfo@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:museuminfo@maidstone.gov.uk)

<http://museum.maidstone.gov.uk/our-museums/queens-own/>

The National Archives  
Kew  
Richmond  
TW9 4DU

Tel: 020 8876 3444

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>


You may also wish to know that you can apply to receive a copy of your father's Service Record from the Ministry of Defence. This may help you identify which Battalion he served in and his locations. There is a £30 admin fee for this service. I have attached the appropriate forms for you to complete should you wish to seek a copy of the file.

On the issue of asbestos, I am sure you are aware that its use in the construction of buildings as well as lagging and vehicle brake blocks. However, it would be difficult to quantify the exposure of any individual directly involved in work which was likely to expose asbestos and create asbestos dust, rather than an individual who might have been in a building where asbestos was present.

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail [CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk](mailto:CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk)). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <https://ico.org.uk>.

Yours faithfully,

  
Disclosure and Litigation Leader

**The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment (1920-195) by Lt Col H.D. Chaplin**

- a. 1<sup>st</sup> Bn: In Aug 1945, the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn was based at the Artillery Barracks, Larissa in Greece. On 28 Jan 1946, it transferred to Salonika and was accommodated in the Technical Barracks there. After the Greek elections of that year, the need for British troops reduced and 1<sup>st</sup> Bn RWK left the country on 18 Aug 1946, re-locating to Egypt. Most of the Bn were initially based in the Suez area, before undertaking internal security duties in Cairo in early March 1947. Meanwhile one company prepared a new camp for Bn at Connaught Lines, Moascar near Ismailia in the Suez Canal Zone. The rest of the battalion quickly joined them there on leaving Cairo. The bn embarked at Port Said on 3 Sept 1947 and arrived at Liverpool on the 13th. The moved to Shudy Camp, Cambs prior to taking disembarkation leave.

On return from leave the bn moved to Gosfield, near Great Dunmow in Essex. Two coys were employed on maintenance of vehicles, as the rest of the bn began to reduce and personnel be released from service. On 24 April 1948, a cadre of 3 officers and ten OR proceeded to the Depot at Maidstone to prepare to place the Bn in suspended animation.

- b. 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn: The Bn had embarked at Dover in December 1945, to join the Army of Occupation in Germany. By Feb 1946, companies had arrived at Uslar, Northeim and Adelebsen. In June, the bn moved to Brunswick and was accommodated in Pontefract and Wiltshire Barracks, providing garrison troops for the area. In December, the bn moved to Berlin and Wavell Barracks, Spandau and undertook guard and internal security duties. The battalion returned to Brunswick in March 1947 and remained there, with the exception of training camps, until it returned to the UK in November 1947. It was stationed at West Camp, Crowborough and detachments undertook vehicle maintenance similar to the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn, but at Sevenoaks. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn also began to be rundown, but moved again in Feb 1948, occupying Ross Barracks at Shorncliffe. Here it was to become a training unit for National Servicemen of the Home Counties area – becoming 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment (Home Counties Training Battalion).
- c. The 4<sup>th</sup> Bn went into suspended animation overseas by Feb 1946.
- d. The 5<sup>th</sup> Bn went to Gibraltar in December 1945 and had detachments in three locations – Morrish Castle, Casemates Barracks and Four Corners. In let-1946 most of the battalion was drafted direct to the Middle East to supply troops for other units and a small cadre returned to the UK prior to disbandment.
- e. The 6<sup>th</sup> Bn was based at Hermagor in Austria at the beginning of 1946, prior to moving to Vienna to carry out garrison duties in the city centre for two months. Having returned to Hermagor, the bn was prepared for disbandment.

On 1 June 1948, the cadres of 1<sup>st</sup> Bn was amalgamated with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn and a new battalion was formed – 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment (Home Counties Training Battalion). This remained based at Shorncliffe as the Basic Training Unit for the Home Counties Group. The unit occupied four barracks at Shorncliffe – Moore, Ross, Somerset and Napier.

### The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment (1951-1961) by Lt Col H.D. Chaplin

1951: Regimental Depot remained at Maidstone. The 1<sup>st</sup> Bn at Shorncliffe had remained in its role as the Basic Training Unit for the Home Counties Group of Regiments up to Autumn 1950, when it was warned that the battalion would be expected to return to its traditional role as a Battalion of the Line and duty in Malaya. On 20 November, the battalion finally gave up its training role and assembled in St Martin's Plain Camp, Shorncliffe. During the year, a small number of the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn were attached to 1<sup>st</sup> Bn, The Middelsex Regt in Korea

1<sup>st</sup> Bn sailed from Liverpool on 2 Feb 1951 and disembarked at Singapore on 3 March. They then transferred to a tented camp at Nee Soon. After a period of training and acclimatisation they moved to their operational area in Selnagor, Malaya. They returned to Singapore Island on 25 Feb 1954 and to Nee Soon. They embarked for the UK on 3 March 1954. They remained in the UK (Maidstone?) for three months prior to moving to Luneburg in Germany in June 1954.