

84th TANK BATTALION

It is quite natural, that the question arises for the origin and the habitus of our battalion, the question why just we were selected to be the first german unit to be your guests in Wales.

The difference from other battalions of the German Bundeswehr is only due to the fact that the number of our battalion is a different one. The soldiers of our battalion are white-blond, as well as brown or dark-haired boys, you will find in every garrison of the German Bundeswehr. Most of our soldiers are draftees, some of them are regulars. They have all kinds of jobs, and for this reason the average of our soldiers is not more intelligent than those of other armies in the world. They are at the same time as little enthusiastic as the draftees of other armies of the idea to give up their job, or to be interrupted in their professional training in order to fulfil their obligation. To stir the enthusiasm of these young people, to further their understanding of political connections and to educate them for a combined work within the NATO is the task of their superiors.

At the top of these superiors there is our Commanding Officer, Lt-Col Karl-Wilhelm von Kleist. Having been Military-Attache in Canada, he got various impressions and experiences, the results of which are a benefit for our Battalion since January 1961.

We owe our good reputation at Luneberg to our former Commanding Officer, Lt-Col Freiherr von Maltzan. He has the opposite career. After a two years stay in Luneburg he was called to be the Military-Attache to Greece.

The history of our battalion actually is quite young. Nevertheless we are proud to have our origins in one of the oldest tank-battalions of the Bundeswehr, the former 3rd Tank-Battalion.

The birthday of our battalion is the 7th July 1959.

Within these two years - so it seems to others - we have done the same as all other battalions of the Bundeswehr. Several times during the year we went to the training camp of Bergen-Hohne for shooting practice and manoeuvres. We trained with tanks and did minor training, frankly speaking, we endeavour to drill and educate our boys to become good soldiers within the NATO. Our soldiers however were not occupied with military duties only. From the birthday of the battalion many hours were spent for sports. We did not want to train champions but to gain good average results. In the course of time we organized six different teams in football, handball, volleyball, skittling, table-tennis and fist-ball; by the efficiency of these teams we won several cups for the battalion. However, there is one kind of sport missing - Rugby. Perhaps we may have the opportunity to train our soldiers in this game during our stay with your people in Wales.

Whilst we are staying in Castlemartin, we should be very pleased if some matches with Welsh teams could be arranged in order to further the human relations between our two peoples.

The Commanding Officer as well as the officers and the men of our battalion would very much appreciate, if our stay in Wales - besides our training aims - would further the mutual understanding for a combined aim within the NATO. In addition, we all hope that the contact between the Welsh people and the Luneburg tank-soldiers may not only be of a temporary duration but may last forever.

THE COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE 84th TANK BATTALION

CURRICULUM VITAE

I, Karl-Wilhelm von Kleist, was born on 3rd February 1914 in ROME/Italy. (At that time my father was the Military-Attache at the German Embassy in Rome).

My childhood I spent in the country-side south of Berlin. I got my school-education on a college in Berlin, in which 1933 I graduated.

In April 1933 I joined a Cavalry-regiment in Silesia as a cadet.

After my promotion to Lieutenant in 1935 the regiment had changed over from horseback to tank. As a CO of a squadron of this regiment, I took part in the Poland Campaign (1939), France Campaign (1940) and later as the Regiment-Adjutant of the same regiment in southern Russia. 1942 General-Staff training; 1943 General-Staff course Berlin and Bad Salzbrunn. After this employment as the 1st General-Staff-Officer of a Reserve Division and later of an Infantry Division in the Western-Campaign. Here I was taken Prisoner-of-War (Major) by the British Forces in November 1944. Until I was released in 1947 I stayed in six different prisoner-of-war camps in England.

1947 I rejoined with my wife and her relatives, who had fled from Silesia, in HESSIA. Here in the country-side my father-in-law opened a carrying-trade in Lumber business, in which I assisted him. After a 3-years employment with the "American Labourservice", I commenced my employment with the "Dienststelle Blank".

After rejoining the Bundeswehr as a Lieutenant-Colonel, I was called as Military-Attache to the German Embassy in Ottawa/Canada from March 1957 until October 1960.

In January 1961 I had the great luck to get in charge of the 84th Tank-Battalion as Commanding Officer.

Decorations (Medals): EK I (Iron Cross I), EK II (Iron Cross II)
Verwundetenabzeichen Silver (3 x in Russia)
Panzerkampfabzeichen

Married since 1947 - 3 children. Hobby: Hunting and swimming.

SCHLIEFFEN-BARRACKS AT L Ü N E B U R G

Schlieffen-Barracks were built in 1936 as an accommodation for a cavalry-regiment. The "Reiterregiment 13" moved from Hannover into it.

By this name-giving one of the most well known Generals of the "Grossen Generalstab" was kept in memory for the tradition of the horse-men. The squadrons of this regiment took over the tradition of the former cavalry regiments (i.e. "Ulanen", hussars, dragoons). Most of these regiments came from Hannover, which for a long period was connected by personal union to the British Crown. Therefore in the King's Ulanen of Hannover the tradition of the Cambridge Dragoons lived on, and the tradition of the King's Ulanen was part of the 1st squadron of the 13th cavalry regiment.

A big painting in the Officers Club of the Schlieffen-Barracks still shows the close connections between the British and the Hannover regiments. It represents a fighting scene during the Spanish War in the year 1809, when British and Hannover Troops were fighting against Napoleon.

After 1945, when the German Army existed no longer, traditional British regiments moved into the Schlieffen-Barracks. Since this German name was difficult to pronounce, they were re-named into Wyvern-Barracks.

Many old British regiments were stationed here; among them:

"The South Staffordshires"

"The Royal Scots Greys"

"The Welch Regiment"

"The 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars"

"Royal Medium Artillery"

"The Royal Dragoons"

"The Highland Light Infantry"

For a long period the "7th Armoured Brigade" was stationed here with different battalions.

In October 1958 the barracks were ceremoniously returned to 2 German Bundeswehr-Battalions. In the colloquial language of the soldiers - stationed now in Lüneburg - still the following nick-names for pubs as "Honky-Tonk", "Bucket of Blood" or "Smoky Joe" appear, showing that the German soldiers also during their free time have followed the footsteps of their British comrades.

The present Schlieffen-Barracks have been renovated entirely during the past year, and still a lot of renovations are carried out, e.g. the old horse-stables are going to be re-built into tank and car-sheds, the barrack-gates will be enlarged and adapted to modern requirements. In spite of all these internal changes the barracks have remained the old ones; and surely many of those British soldiers, formerly stationed at Lüneburg (when Brigadier Tilly was still Garrison Commander) would recognise the barracks.

84th Tank Battalion

The 84th Tank Battalion is composed of 3 Tank-, one staff- and supply-companies.

About 380 to 400 soldiers will take part in the exercises on the training camp of Castlemartin from 9th to 30th September.

Each second member of the Battalion is a draftee aged 20 to 21 years.

The average age of the Corporals is 23 to 24 years, that of the Sergeants about 35 years.

Almost each fifth member of the Battalion is married.

The Battalion will be transported by air and by sea.

The advance-party, about 50 men, will be flown in by transport-carriers of the German Air Force from Celle to the operational airfield BRAVDY near Castlemartin on the 25th of August. The main party will follow also by air during the first week of September.

The steamer "Trautenfels" of the Bremen Hansa-Corp. has been chartered for shipping the material from Bremerhaven and disembarked at Pembroke-Docks(Wales).

They will be transported by sea :

40	Tanks of type M 48 A 2
1	Tank recovery vehicle
1	flatcar to transport Tanks
46	motor-vehicles.

The exercises will be combat-training with and without live ammunition; classification firing in position, field firing with individual tanks and formations. The advance-party has to prepare the carrying-out of these exercises with British Officers, to take over the accommodations and to organize the supply.

The training-programme of the battalion will be furthered extremely by the chance to use the British training-camp. For a battalion in the Federal Republic there is no other chance for such a programme of 3 weeks.

Especially the gunnery training and the tactical training in a small formation are very difficult to be carried out in the Federal Republic, as there are no suitable target ranges available.

19. September 1961

- The actual training of the Battalion started on September 11, 1961 and meanwhile 1540 round of 90 mm guns have been fired on the range.

- We scored a 70 % direct hits.

This is a good average if we take into consideration that about one third of our soldiers have had special Tank Training for only about two months.

- Besides that we practised sharp-shooting with all other weapons of the M 48 A 2 Tank, e.g. cal. 50 and 30 machine guns.

- Firing stops on the range because of traffic on the sea:

About 27 % of the total firing time for 90 mm guns
10 % of the firing time for machine guns.

Sorry that we can't demonstrate a battle-run (that is firing with guns immediately after several stops and firing machine guns while moving.)

The security regulations prohibit this exercise with spectators.

- Since the start of our training our tanks completed a total mileage of 284 in the training area. (Up to and including Monday, Sept. 18) Our wheel driven vehicles completed 7500 km during the same period. Tanks, detailed for driving practice and training of new drivers, completed 512 miles within the training area.

- No accidents

- Preventive maintenance and repairs in the Battalion Workshop:

One tank engine taken out, ignition troubles repaired.

One tank engine replaced.

- All wheel driven vehicles had to be cleaned from a salt crust. During the unloading operations at Pembroke Dock these vehicles had to be driven through salt water. This salt crust formed a conductor and caused short circuits in the electrical system.

- 8 720 rations have been issued to the battalion.

The British QM stated that the amount of potatoes consumed by 500 German soldiers would be sufficient to feed 2000 British soldiers.

Our soldiers meanwhile discovered that tea is an excellent beverage and the consumption has increased considerably. We wonder what will happen to this habit back home in Lueneburg Barracks.

- Discipline can be said to be good. No soldier had to be punished yet.

- So far no damages caused through our training have been reported.

- The M.O. had to take care of one of our football players with a slightly injured ankle, which was put in plaster, and one soldier with slight concussion as a result of falling from a tank. He has to stay in bed for a fortnight in our hospital.

- We have our own Church services, conducted by a Protestant Pastor and a Roman Catholic Father. Both of them came with the battalion from Lueneburg. The services are held at the Camp Chapel.

- We have been quite active on the football grounds of South Wales.

We have already played four matches and eight more are to be played. Of the four we played, we lost two and won two. The goal score for these four games is 12 : 10. 15 different players participated in these four matches. The match of the teachers of South Wales against our team resulted in a collection of £ 22 - 17 - 8 1/2 from the soldiers of our battalion for the Old Age Person's Home in Pembroke.

- We have received 823 different letters with invitations from British families for weekend visits for more than 400 soldiers. Besides that many many more verbal invitations have been made for Officers, NCO's and men. During the next weekend 64 soldiers will travel to London with two buses and see British families who invited them for a weekend. The WO's and Sergeants of the battalion have invitations for this weekend from four different British Army and RAF units. at the same time and are asked to come with about 20. The total number of WO's and Sergeants in the battalion is only 20. Many private invitations cannot be accepted, because we do not have enough men.

- During the last weekend three different sightseeing tours through South Wales were organized with local buses.

- The soldiers' favourite game acquired at Castlemartin is pitch - and - toss, which they play when told to fall out for a smoke.