THE RECEPTION AND TRAINING OF Z RESERVISTS
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BY
Lieut.-Colonel G. B. HEUGH
Royal Army Medical Corps

Lieut.-Colonel T. H. WILSON, O.B.E., T.D.
Royal Army Medical Corps (T.A.)

AND

Major W. F. de C. VEALE, T.D.
Royal Army Medical Corps (T.A.)

WITH A FOOTNOTE BY

Colonel R. H. ROBINSON, T.D.
A.D.M.S. Home Counties District

The following notes have been compiled at the suggestion of Col. R. H. Robinson, T.D., A.D.M.S. Home Counties District. They represent the ideas and views of the units concerned only.

The notes are divided into two parts, the first part dealing with details of reception and dispersal, as seen by the Reception Unit, 15 Field Ambulance. The second part provides the viewpoint of the Training Units, in this case 4 (Eastern) Casualty Clearing Station and 24 (Eastern) Field Dressing Station, and is, of course, of a more general nature, dealing with training, morale, etc.

PART I

A RECEPTION UNIT (FIELD AMBULANCE, REGULAR)

Reception Arrangements

The arrangements made for the reception of Z Reservists were briefly as follows:

"Railway Reception Committee."—This consisted of a corporal, a private and the legend "4 C.C.S. 24 F.D.S. Z. Report here." This proved quite adequate, and with a “committee” at both Shorncliffe and Folkestone stations, all reservists were collected in neat bundles and deposited at the door of the Reception Centre in Risborough Barracks with no loss of time.

Arrival Check.—On arrival at the Reception Centre each reservist’s name was checked against the nominal roll of his unit, the time of his arrival was noted and he was presented with a “Reception Form.” Two men were employed on this duty.
Buffet.—As the majority had long distances to come, a meal of some sort, even if only the traditional “char and wad,” was obviously a necessary preliminary to any reception procedure. A hot meal was served between 1230 hours and 1430 hours to all who had arrived by that time, and a cold meal was served between 1700 and 2000 hours. For the rest of the time between 0900 hours and 2200 hours, tea, cakes and buns were served to all arrivals. The buffet kept a Serjeant and 6 men fully occupied during the peak period.

Payment of Travelling Claims.—This duty was carried out by the Paying Officer of 4 C.C.S. for men of his unit, 24 F.D.S. having arranged to pay their reservists later.

Signature of Q & R Card.—This also was a T.A. unit commitment. Each reservist’s particulars were checked, changes of addresses and next of kin noted, and his signature on the card obtained.

Medical Examination.—All reservists had been medically examined before arrival, so all that was necessary was an F.F.I. inspection although a watch was also kept for any obvious defects or infirmities.

Left Luggage.—Before going on to the Quartermaster’s Store reservists were advised to deposit their suitcases in a “Left Luggage Office” in order to free their hands for coming showers of clothing and equipment.

Q.M. Stores.—The Q.M., R.Q.M.S., a Serjeant and 8 men were kept busy from 1030 hours to 2100 hours in issuing clothing and equipment. A “continuous belt” system was used, personal clothing and equipment, e.g. caps, shirts, gaiters, etc., being issued from a long table down one side of the room, blouses and trousers, B.D., boots and greatcoat being fitted in a “fitting room” at the end, and finally down the other side of the room were issued items of webbing, water bottles, etc. A form in lieu of H. 1157 was signed by the reservist as he left the store (App. B).

Bus waiting room.—The men returned from the Q.M. Stores to the left luggage office, drew out their luggage and waited in the next room for transport to take them out of the Camp. They were despatched when the N.C.O. i/c left luggage considered that there was a reasonable lorry load.

Notes on Reception

Morale.—All reservists were in extraordinary good spirits on arrival, and the whole procedure of reception was a cheerful and friendly affair. Not a grumble was heard all day.

Health.—There were no unfit men amongst them, the only notes made by the Medical officer being one hallux valgus, one bunion, and two “athlete’s foot.” All were clean.

Times of Arrival.—The most important point to record is that every man arrived on his call-up day between the hours of 9.30 a.m. and 9.30 p.m. The first arrivals were one from Manchester and one from Stoke-on-Trent both of whom arrived at 9.30 a.m. The last arrival, at 9.30 p.m. was, as anticipated,
the one living closest, from Hythe. The peak period was between 2 and 6 p.m., 62 per cent arriving during that time, leaving only 14 per cent to arrive after 6 p.m.

Rate of Flow.—The original intention had been to deal with the reservists in parties of ten, i.e. ten at a time to be passed on from Pay and Records to Medical Centre to Q.M. Dept. It was, however, soon found that it was more convenient and just as easy to keep them moving in twos and threes. The buffet also helped to keep an even flow going, by acting as a buffer between arrival and the start of reception procedure.

Forms.—Only three forms were introduced. One was the Reception Form (Appendix A) which proved most valuable as a check that every man had completed each step of the procedure. The absence of a signature showed at once that the reservist had not been dealt with by the officer or N.C.O. in charge of that particular step. One had doubts when instituting the form whether many of them would get lost or destroyed, but in fact only one was lost during the day.

The second form (Appendix B) was for the use of the medical officer and was intended to cover men unfit to march, wear boots, etc., and if necessary men unfit to undergo training at all. It was only used twice; one unfit to wear boots and one unfit to march.

The other was a pro forma in lieu of A.F. H. 1157 (Appendix C). This allowed for the reservist’s signature to items received and his signature to deficiencies on completion of training. In this way it acted as a clearance certificate from the Quartermaster to the Paying Officer.

Q.M. Department.—This was obviously the vital part of the reception procedure and therefore the one which required most careful thought and organization. The time spent in preparation was well rewarded by the smoothness with which clothing and kitting proceeded.

The following points were noted:

Battledress.—There had been considerable speculation as to the value of the Size Rolls submitted, and the general opinion was that they would not be much help. Arrangements were therefore made for the individual fitting of very man, the size roll to be used as a guide to first “try-on.” Each man’s size roll was accordingly marked with the size of blouse and trousers required for the measurements given, and the size roll was attached to his “H. 1157.” On entering the fitting room, if his build conformed reasonably closely to the size given, he was given that size to try on. If it did not fit or if the measurements were obviously wrong, he was given a more suitable size until well fitted. The following figures show that the use of size rolls was justified, but that individual fitting was nevertheless essential: 60 per cent were fitted according to their size rolls, 30 per cent were one or two sizes out in either direction, and in 10 per cent only the size roll was valueless. The special size roll demanded on A.F. H. 1119 gave an exact fit, as could be expected.
Tailoring.—Arrangements had been made for a tailor to be available during reception, but his services were required only once. This was to sew chevrons and crowns on the blouse of a Staff-Sergeant who had apparently swollen considerably since he last measured himself. He had to wait twenty minutes only before his blouse was returned, complete in all its glory. A factor which helped greatly in saving time over the sewing on of chevrons was that, between the time of indenting and the actual reception day, quite a number of reservists had been deleted from the nominal roll. This allowed about 10 per cent reserve for sizing, and, in the case of N.C.O.s, chevrons were affixed to a few of the extra battledresses to allow for faulty size rolls, a procedure which was obviously justified by the fact that only one suit required tailoring.

Boots.—All boots were fitted individually, and it was considered worth while to ensure that each man first put on the socks he had been issued with, as these were, of course, much thicker than the average civilian socks. Even so a matter of 6 per cent returned next day to change their boots for a larger size, having mistaken an overtight fit for a snug one.

Berets.—At least 30 per cent of reservists underestimated their cap size. This was due in some cases to civilian hair-cuts or lack of them, and in others to the fact that the modern beret with its leather band does not give to the same extent as the cloth beret in use at the time of the reservists’ discharge.

General.—On the whole the Q.M. Stores was a very happy little place. The mere sight of stacks of clothing and webbing was sufficient to rouse memories of previous visits to the quartermaster, and the old time-worn jokes, some rude and some ruder, were all revived.

The general opinion of the reservists was that the standard of clothing was higher than they had had when in the Service, and that it was much better than they had expected.

More than one commented on the speed (an average of fifteen minutes, including fitting) with which he had been issued with a complete set of clothing and equipment.

Dispersal Arrangements

It was not considered practical to disperse the reservists on Saturday, the fifteenth day of their call-up, for two reasons. Firstly the Territorial Unit itself was dispersing on that day, and secondly the Reception Unit was receiving the next party of reservists on the same day. Dispersal therefore took place on Friday, the fourteenth day.

Compared with reception, the dispersal of reservists was a comparatively simple matter, but again showed that careful preparation was half the battle. The system used was as follows:

At Camp.—After breakfast in camp, the reservists were issued with a haversack ration, and their individual barrack deficiencies were checked and noted by the T.A. unit’s Q.M., who then notified the paying officer of individual charges.
Arrival.—The men were ferried in from camp by lorries, and on arrival deposited their suitcases in the “Left luggage office” before going to the Q.M. Dept. to hand in their kit.

Q.M. Department.—A long table was set down each side of the room, with a row of empty crates behind each to receive the kit. One side was used for checking and for storing clothing, the other side for sorting out and stacking equipment. The R.Q.M.S. and two senior serjeants acted as checkers, three men were employed in assisting the reservists to lay out their kit for checking, and another three were engaged in sorting out equipment ready for issue to the reservists due the next day. A clerk issued each reservist as he arrived with his “1157,” on which the checkers noted deficiencies. These were then taken to the Quartermaster who entered on them the cost of the missing articles, signed them and handed them back to the reservists for presentation to their paying officer. At the same time the Quartermaster entered the necessary details on A.F. P. 1954 in duplicate, one copy being retained, and the other passed to the paying officer to support his imprest account.

Pay.—The paying officers had previously prepared each man’s account, having added his pay, allowances, and bounty, and having subtracted earlier that morning the barrack deficiencies. As each man arrived at the pay table he presented his “1157,” the paying officers subtracted the cost of deficiencies if any, and paid him the remainder. There were very few deficiencies, 21 per cent of the men being deficient of articles of an average cost of 2s 2d., the total deficiencies from both units together amounting to only £3 5s. 5d.

Departure.—Having received their pay, the reservists withdrew their luggage, boarded the waiting lorries, and were driven to the railway station.

The first of the 144 reservists were brought to the reception unit at 0815 hours, and the last to depart for the station left at 1130 hours, giving an average of 1½ minutes per man.

General.—All the men looked remarkably fit, and they were all very happy. The amount of deficiencies, as noted above, was remarkably low, and no man objected to paying for the missing articles.

PART II

A Training Unit (Casualty Clearing Station, T.A.)

The 4 (Eastern) Casualty Clearing Station, R.A.M.C. (T.A.), went for their Annual Training in Camp at Dibgate Plain, Shorncliffe, from 30th June to 14th July 1951.

It was known that “Z” Reservists were to be attached to the unit for fifteen days’ training.

The unit has a Volunteer strength of 6 Officers of whom 4 are M.O.s; 1 Q.M. and 1 Non-Medical Company Officer; 3 Nursing Officers and 24 Other Ranks. In addition there are 12 N.S. men.
Previous to camp, over a period of several months, the permanent staff have had a quantity of paperwork associated with the posting of 109 "Z" men. This unit had then to forward all their particulars to the D.D.M.S. Eastern Command and A.D.M.S. Home Counties District. There were many cancellations, in fact 23 out of a total of 109, or twenty-one per cent.

The method adopted for receiving Z men was that the 15 Field Ambulance at Shorncliffe should receive the Z men, feed them on arrival, fit them out completely from size rolls supplied by this unit, house them if necessary for a night and then send them to this unit for training. This part was admirably carried out and I have nothing but praise for the work done by 15 Field Ambulance.

The men were coming from as far afield as Aberdeen and very few from local counties. They all arrived on time and there were no absentees.

All Z men were in excellent spirits and each decided that as training had to be done they would make the most of it.

All except 3 had had their Pulheems before arrival. A Foot and Face Inspection was carried out. There was no sickness or disability—one man had permission to wear shoes on account of foot deformity. Some hair was a little long, but this was not usual.

First parade on first day of training was inspected by myself. The turn out was remarkable for the correctness of the fitting of battledress. The only point worth noting was the poor quality of the webbing and the buckles. The webbing was blancoed, but buckles were impossible to deal with to make them smart. After this all started their training in seriousness.

This unit not only had to train the Z men in general duties of the R.A.M.C. in the field and in stationary units, but had to man a 50-bedded hospital and to receive real casualties.

Z men were divided into 3 companies each with 2 Z Officers over them and Volunteer T.A. Officers and N.C.O.s as advisers. The Volunteer M.O.s and Coy. Officer were there to supervise, lecture and act as specialists, as well as carrying on the general duties of the unit.

Each Coy. in their turn had four days in the 50-bedded hospital, training and nursing. After this each Coy. carried on certain R.A.M.C. training, including squad drill, stretcher drill and field exercise.

The most popular items were those associated with field work. More of this could be done another year, if sick did not have to be treated as well.

The "specialists" amongst the Other Ranks were given the facilities to work in their own line. The Dental Officer (Z Officer) and his men (all Z) put up a Dental Centre in a tent and worked well with the training equipment available. The laboratory technician was sent to the Shorncliffe Military Hospital for a short time only. There was no work for him to do in the field—anyway he is already trained at his job in civil life. The X-ray staff had no field equipment although this was asked for. They, too, visited the Military Hospital.

The cooks were a good set and worked voluntarily overtime. Their work was good and our own Volunteer Sjt. cook was impressed with them.
R.A.S.C staff were up to a good level of experience. They were used for the transport section mainly—though they helped with the general work of the unit.

The presence of Z men definitely stimulated the unit and its keenness from myself downwards. The several years we had spent in training the cadre of Volunteers to act as instructors did not seem to be wasted. All Volunteer ranks worked splendidly and trained the Z men by example and encouragement, not by driving them. Only one Z man could have been regarded as a “misfit.”

A few of the N.S. men have volunteered: these are the cream and are all good men; more should follow. However my impression is that most N.S. men are content to remain Privates and do the bare minimum. I do not think Z men had any obvious effect on them.

I doubt if many Z men will enlist in the T.A. If they had been near the unit I believe a large number would have volunteered. As most live miles away they would prefer to be recalled to this unit which they know rather than enlist locally with a strange unit.

On departure the 15 Field Ambulance again worked wonders for us. Z men handed in their unit articles in the camp—any losses were noted. They then passed to 15 Field Ambulance, were de-kitted and any losses again noted. When all deficiencies had been added up they were paid out less the cost of deficiencies. There were no complaints and grumbles. The cadre of the unit then packed itself up and handed over in the usual way.

The unit was visited by:

The impression gained by the unit was that these visiting Officers were pleased with the set up and training. The visiting Officers (V.I.P.s) came to get their impression of the Z men. The D.G.A.M.S. was particularly pleased to find 3 Nursing Officers helping with the training, a thing he had never known before.

Church Parade.—During the middle Sunday, Church Parade was held, after which the A.D.M.S. presented a Sussex T.A. Certificate of Merit to the Sjt. cook.

A march past followed, A.D.M.S. taking the salute.
When the idea was explained to all, the Z men very quickly worked on their uniforms and belts so that the turn out was good. Their marching was good and it was quite obvious they had not forgotten to behave as soldiers. This variety of training in the ceremonial drill was as well carried out as the other main part of the training.

PART III
A Training Unit (Field Dressing Station, T.A.)

Of the Z Reservists called up for service with the F.D.S. it was noted that the majority had had service with Base Hospitals, but very few had been with a Field Ambulance or Field Dressing Station.

The men arrived cheerful and there was no moaning at having been recalled. They were well kitted out by the 15 Field Ambulance—only one man had a jacket which did not fit him. Each man was given a slip of paper which showed his rank, star rating and rate of pay. He was asked to comment if this was incorrect. One A.C.C. cook contested this and the matter was taken up successfully with O. i/c Records. The only other case was one Sjt. R.A.M.C. He had been shown on the original nominal roll, supplied by Records, as S/Sjt. and the unit had therefore written to him to tell him that he would be employed and paid as S/Sjt. On the nominal roll from the paymaster he was shown as Sjt. and on inquiry it was found that he had, in fact, never reached higher than the rank of Sjt. An error on the original nominal Roll was admitted, but it was not possible to alter it, and he had to be paid as a Serjeant. This incident led to considerable ill-feeling and probably lost a recruit for the T.A.

The men fell into the routine easily. From the first day they drilled as trained soldiers and the senior N.C.O.s were able to give lectures with only a minimum of revision. As previously explained most of the field work was new to the men.

The first few days were hectic until everyone was sorted out. This was particularly noticeable in the kitchen, which was manned entirely by Z Reservist A.C.C. cooks under the unit Sjt. cook. However, once the Sjt. had learnt the capabilities of each man everything settled down. To the town dwellers unused to life in the open, rations appeared to be very short at first. but special entitlement to additional Rations for Hard Training was discovered, and their issue eased matters considerably.

There was not much interest in organized sport. The men liked to kick a football around in the field near their tents but an official cricket match was poorly supported.

Discipline was excellent and there was not a single minor charge during the two weeks. As the camp was near a large town most of the men seemed to disappear into the town in the evening. There was no case of V.D.

There were many friendships formed between Z Reservists and T.A. men. The men mixed together and were soon indistinguishable. Many reservists
said that if they had lived in the same town as that in which the unit was normally stationed they would have joined the T.A. with the unit. Unfortunately there was not a single man living within reasonable distance. This seemed to have the opposite effect in that the reservist argued that if there was going to be a war he would like to be called up with the unit that he already knew, rather than join a unit near home about which he knew nothing.

A few Officers and Senior N.C.O.s have been invited to apply for Territorial Commissions and appointments for service with the unit but with special permission to do their weekly drills with the nearest Medical Unit and to join this unit in camp each year. It is not yet known if this will be permitted.

The training programme consisted of lectures, demonstrations and exercises. There was no P.T. or route march. R.S.M. parade was at 0830 hours and the rest of the morning was divided into three periods and there were two periods in the afternoon. As usual the most popular days were when the men had something active to do. A river crossing with improvised equipment and evacuation of casualties across the river was very popular. A map-reading exercise produced disappointing results but the men enjoyed it. It showed that constant repetition in map reading is essential.

A lecture, on the evacuation of casualties by air, with lantern slides, was given to officers and Senior N.C.O.s by Colonel A. M. Meneses, C.B.E., D.S.O.; another lecture for Medical officers, dealing with psychotic casualties in the field, was delivered by Brigadier R. J. Rosie.

The T.A. had to shoot its Annual Course on the ranges and so all Z men shot alongside them. Very few had done more than a recruits' shooting course and time for instruction before shooting was limited. Results were therefore poor. In fact, without individual rifles properly "zero-ed" for each man it is difficult to see how the R.A.M.C. can ever become efficient in this art.

A recreational visit to Canterbury was much appreciated by all.

One Ceremonial Parade was held after Church Parade. The men, especially the R.A.S.C., said they had enjoyed it and wished that there had been more squad drill, which was purposely kept to a minimum in the programme.

The R.A.S.C. element was a special problem. There was no Transport Officer to appreciate their difficulties. There were approximately three drivers to each vehicle. The T.A. complained that the Z reservists had ruined the trucks they had so carefully looked after all the year. Many had not driven since their discharge.

The R.A.S.C. Sjt. (T.A.) was one of the busiest men in the unit. He had to lecture on the vehicles and their maintenance, to superintend the driving, to lecture on the rifle and Sten gun and do many other things. It was found impossible to arrange to borrow another instructor and the best that could be done for them was a visit to a Command Workshops. Next year much more care will have to be given to this side of the F.D.S. to see that the men get some additional instruction.

Another overworked individual was the P.S.I. This was eased by calling on a S/Sjt. to help him.
One frequent criticism was that the Army expected 8 men to sleep in a tent with civilian clothes and suitcases also in the tent. This led to considerable overcrowding.

Lastly the Officers. Five Z Reservists were called up to fill the vacancies. All were young and had served eighteen months as R.M.O.s in various parts of the world. None had any experience of Field Units.

Each was placed in nominal command or second in command of a “training company” and competitive spirit was introduced. All were keen to do their best but this led to some trouble with the Senior N.C.O.s of the T.A. who perhaps felt that they ought to be training the Officers, as they had so much more experience.

The general impression was that it had been a most successful Camp and the presence of Z Reservists had stimulated the T.A. to do its best.

A FOOTNOTE

The foregoing notes are by the Commanding Officers of the one reception unit and two training units dealing with the first batch of Z reservists to undergo training in Home Counties District; they have been submitted for publication in the JOURNAL OF THE R.A.M.C. so that they may be a permanent record and may be of use or interest to Commanding Officers on future occasions.

I would like to add a few comments of my own.

(1) First and foremost: However good the arrangements within the training unit, they will be cancelled out by the smallest hitch in the unit responsible for reception and dispersion—the Z men must start off by feeling that they are welcome and that their reception has really been planned and not left to chance—on dispersal they must leave with a pleasant taste in their mouths, in the literal and actual sense. The great success of this venture at Shorncliffe has been due to the most efficient management of the smooth working machinery of the Field Ambulance concerned with reception and dispersal.

(2) Recruitment of volunteers for the T.A. from Z Reservists is not likely to take place in appreciable numbers unless the men are called up for training with units near their homes; propaganda by the T.A. unit is not likely to be successful in this respect, but they should be able to do some useful propaganda work in connexion with the JOURNAL OF THE R.A.M.C., the Army Medical Services Magazine and the Corps Association.

(3) The two training units shared camp facilities and the training facilities of the 50 bedded hospital. Many of the Reservists (R.A.M.C.) had had plenty of hospital experience; what they lacked was experience in more active field units—probably in the future training programmes will have to be more elaborate so that more or less time can be directed to Ward Department work or field work, according to the previous experience of the majority of men called up.

(4) When the men are Laboratory Technicians, Radiographers and so on in civilian life they do not need much technical training in Camp (except possibly to get used to handling special Military equipment again)—but where a man is called up as, say, a Radiographer, and his civilian employment is, say, bank clerk, then it is important that adequate technical equipment should be readily available for his training—when units training miles away from a suitable hospital, then mobile X-ray equipment should be brought to the Camp.

(5) Experience in the handling of the rifle is a desirable part of the R.A.M.C. man’s training for the following reasons:

(i) He might have to unload a casualty’s rifle and should know how to do it.
(ii) He might have to use a rifle as a splint and should know how to handle it with safety.

(iii) He might have to have charge of an arms dump, or an armoury, in a C.C.S. or hospital (patients' weapons).

(iv) He might have to defend casualties in "uncivilized" warfare.

(v) He might have to defend himself against foes who are not covered by the Geneva Convention (e.g. marauders not officially recognized as belligerents).

Training should be obligatory, but there should be no need to "pass a course" to the extent of being able to scare a bull or even hit the target every time.

(6) The Z Reservists, like the T.A. men, suddenly thrown into camp life and exercise to which they are not used become desperately hungry and the normal Home Service Ration Scale was not enough—the arduous duty supplement which was authorized was most important.

(7) Much of the success of the Z Reservists training this year has been due to the keen-ness and splendid spirit of the Reservists themselves—those who had a grievance about being called-up entered into the thing in the right spirit and did not allow their grievance to play any appreciable part. I believe many would welcome a compulsory call-up again for similar training, for, after all, the boss and the missus cannot stop that bit of escape.

(8) Last—the training of Z Reservists has thrown a great burden on the officers and other ranks of the T.A. They have shouldered this burden willingly and, in the old T.A. tradition, are already asking for more.
ERRATA

The following corrections should be made to the article “The Infected Hand,” Vol. XCVII, No. 5, 359–362, and on front cover.

For Lieutenant D. L. Gardener read Lieutenant D. L. Gardner.

For systematically, page 360, line 6, read systemically.

For course, page 360, line 15, read cause.

After with, page 360, line 29, insert it.

After Miles, page 360, line 33, insert A. A. and amend 267 to 266.

For is, page 361, line 17, read are.

For Pentothal, page 362, line 2, read Thiopentone.