

23rd Pioneers farewell

A sad farewell to 23 Royal Pioneer Regiment

It was with a sense of pride, admiration and also of sadness that large crowds gathered in Bicester town centre on 27 July, to bid farewell to 23 Pioneer Regiment as they paraded through the town for the last time before being officially disbanded in September

'Pioneers' are historically defined as a group of far-sighted, tough, skilled and determined adventurers who prepare the way for others. The Pioneer Corps arrived in Bicester in 1941, where they were engaged in the initial construction of the Central Ordnance Depot and the military railway. In recognition of their work during the Second World War, King George VI decreed that the Corps should have the distinction 'Royal' added to their title, and thus the Royal Pioneer Corps was formed in 1946. In April 1993, the Royal Pioneer Corps united with the Royal Corps of Transport, the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, the Army Catering Corps and the Postal and Courier Service of the Royal Engineers, to form the Royal Logistic Corps. Over the last three years, the Royal Pioneer Corps has been deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia and Cyprus. In the last 30 years, their key roles have included operational hygiene,

defence skills (similar to infantry tasks), bricklaying, concreting and carpentry, logistic enabling, assault pioneering and mortuary affairs.

The Pioneer Corps has a long history dating back to 1854 as it evolved from the Army Works Corps, which was established during the Crimean War. With the start of the Second World War in 1939, a number of infantry and cavalry reservists were formed into works labour companies that soon became the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps (AMPC). Their name was then changed to the Pioneer Corps in November 1940.

At the end of the parade, a Silver Dhow was presented to the Mayor of Bicester Cllr Lynn Pratt, who took the final salute, as a lasting reminder of the Pioneers and their association with Bicester.



'It is extremely sad to lose such a vital part of our community', said Cllr Pratt. 'The Regiment has had such a positive impact on the town for many years. We do hope that those who do decide to stay continue to feel an important part of our community. 23 Pioneer will forever remain in our hearts, the dedication of Pioneer Square in our town centre will ensure they remain an important part of the history of Bicester.'