

Colonel M G Ramsey *By Brigadier CA Findlay CBE (assisted by the Regimental Secretary)*



Colonel Michael (“Mike”) Gordon Ramsey, who died after a characteristically hard-fought battle with a range of debilitating illnesses on 20th April aged 81, was a truly memorable character with great personal presence and an abundance of well justified self-confidence. Holding all of the great ‘Offices of State’ within the Royal Military Police (save that of Provost Marshal (Army)): the truly influential appointments of Commander Provost 1st (British) Corps (Comd Pro 1 (Br) Corps); then successively Provost Marshal (PM) British Army of the Rhine (BAOR); and PM United Kingdom Land Forces (UKLF) before his retirement in 1993, Mike Ramsey left an indelible mark on the Royal Military Police.

Having attended the 15-week Training Course for National Service Officers at Eaton Hall, the country seat of the Duke of Westminster, which between 1946 and 1958, had housed 164 Officer Cadet Training Unit, Mike was gazetted to the Corps of Royal Military Police alongside future Provost Marshal (Army) Brigadier Norman Allen CBE, with whom he had shared a billet at “*The Hall*” and reported to the Depot and Training



Establishment at Inkerman Barracks in August 1957. After Provost Officer training with Course 101, he was posted to 227 Provost Company in Cyprus, in October. Gaining a Short-Service Commission in 1959, and promoted Lieutenant, postings with the Permanent Staff at Woking, with 101 and 70 Provost Companies and 251 (General Headquarters) Provost Company RMP TA followed. In 1968, he transferred to the Corps of Royal New Zealand Military Police (RNZMP) as an officer and saw Active Service during the Vietnam War, thus became one of a handful of British Army Officers to be seen wearing the campaign medals from this conflict. Returning to the British Army in 1972, he commanded 179 Provost Company, 1 Regiment, in Northern Ireland; 111 Provost Company in Hohn, Germany; the Allied Central Europe Mobile Force (Land) Element of 158 Provost Company; and London District Provost Company, before his promotion to Lieutenant-Colonel in 1980, and appointment as Assistant-Provost Marshal (APM), Hong Kong.

As Comd Pro 1 (Br) Corps supporting three Armoured Divisions and an Infantry Division in West Germany as the point of the sword, he commanded no fewer than three divisional Provost companies (111, 113 & 114), two Corps Provost Companies (110 & 115) and on exercise and on mobilisation for war, 174 Provost Company from Northern Ireland and the General Support 116 Provost Company (Volunteers) with its 19 platoons. In this appointment, his influence shaped the development of a generation of young officers and those in their initial command appointments and nothing escaped his notice. Dress was often a key marker, and conformity was essential, enhanced by his presentation at his personal expense of matching pairs of khaki socks to his Company Commanders to ensure uniformity. On his ‘Lunching Out’ at the magnificent Headquarters 1 (Br) Corps Officers’ Mess in Bielefeld, Mike declared loudly that he doubted that any of the officers were wearing the correct socks at which point all those present raised a trouser leg and showed that they were all indeed wearing socks that he had given each of them at Christmas. With this revelation Mike then showed his socks: light blue in colour with hand embroidered RMP cap badges emblazoned in gold thereto and shouted, “*No you’re not!*”



As Comd Pro, and later as a theatre PM, his impending appearance at a Unit would be met with a punctilious formality, which reflected the deep personal commitment he gave to his role as a senior Provost Officer intent on projecting his personality as a “Red Tab” into the deepest recesses of the RMP organisation. His view was that Senior Officers had to be seen to be effective. His staff visits were legendary, not least for the after actions, which flowed from his penetrating analysis of what

needed to be improved or enhanced to ensure the very best was achieved for both the Army and the NCOs of his Corps. His approach to soldiering was driven by a strong belief in the pride he took in the Royal Military Police, projected so successfully when engaging the support of the Army's most senior commanders who trusted his judgement and relied upon his firm touch to maintain the highest of standards. Mike Ramsey had an uncanny degree of influence at the highest levels, not unusually drawing one stars and above to his table in the Officers' Mess at lunch at Headquarters UKLF, where he would shape the structural outcome he sought and then leave the detail to his well-focussed and hard-pressed staff to deliver! While PM UKLF, he also led the last great expansion of RMP Territorial Army (TA) structures in the formation of an additional 5 new Provost Companies earmarked for Home Defence. Sadly, these lasted until only 1999, with further TA reductions. The effectiveness of his argument in the Army Establishments Committee was impressive as each challenge was batted away to the well-hidden delight of his attendant Grade-2 Staff Officer. Mike Ramsey was intensely loyal to those on his personal staff, making great effort to develop their professional competence for further promotion. His leadership was palpable and his willingness to defend the reputation of the Corps against all comers, regularly ensured that the lives of NCOs were improved, and the status of the 'Provost family' greatly enhanced. Highly attuned to propriety, he will be remembered as a stylish and sociable dinner party guest whose flowers always arrived well ahead of the event, to the clear delight of the hostess and whose note of thanks arrived the next morning. Doing things properly with as much grace and panache as possible, was a clear tenet of his approach. Mike left an indelible mark on the Royal Military Police, leading Provost structures while the RMP was still represented at significant 'Scale' within a much larger Army, where the deployment and manoeuvre of large formations relied heavily on the effective planning and execution of road movement and traffic control. He was a master of these older, traditional tasks from the Cold War era, where the Garrisons of both Germany and the UK benefitted from his astute and highly professional leadership of military policing. On hearing of Mike's passing, former PM(A) Brigadier Ray Bell MBE, said:

"Mike was a "one off" in so many ways who was 100%+ RMP and always did what he believed to be the "right thing to do" for the Corps in every circumstance. There was never a need to guess where he was coming from on any issue!"

In sum, Mike Ramsey was a professional officer and a gentleman of the old school: punctilious, tenacious, determined, and loyal and one who influenced a generation of Military Policemen and women at a time when the United Kingdom still had substantial military forces.