



THE ROYAL SCOTS DRAGOON GUARDS
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EXERCISE MONGOL EAGLE – POST EXERCISE REPORT (PXR)



Crossing the Altai Mountains; Mongolia.

INTRODUCTION

1. Between 14 July and 10 August 2012 the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards entered a team into the Mongol Rally under the team name 'the Screaming Eagles'. The team completed the epic 10,000 mile race in 27 days, crossing the finish line in Ulaan Bataar in 30th place, out of field of 309 teams. Their participation is the first official Service team to enter the Mongol Rally in its eight year history. This PXR is an account of what happened and more importantly, a guide to those intending to repeat it in future years.

THE MONGOL RALLY

2. The Mongol Rally has been running for eight years and is organised by 'The League of Adventurists International' <http://www.theadventurists.com/the-adventures/mongol-rally>, an events company based in the UK. The rally starts in Goodwood, Sussex and finishes in Ulaan Bataar, Mongolia. The only rules are that vehicles are either a car under 1200cc, a Service vehicle (e.g.

fire engine), or a motorcycle under 125cc. The route is up to the team and the timeframe is 4 -7 weeks. The aim of the rally is to provide a very demanding motorised endurance race at minimal cost, with teams using the opportunity to raise money for charity if they wish.

THE AIM

3. The aim of EX MONGOL EAGLE was to deliver an extremely challenging and rewarding experience for soldiers in the Regiment. In this case the challenge was delivered through the medium of endurance motorsport. Motorised rallying and endurance racing is an increasingly popular sport in the Army and has recently been given 'Approved' status.



Camping in the Altai Mountains; Siberia.

THE RALLY

4. **The challenge.** The Mongol Rally delivered its aim. Below are the focus areas of individual development promoted during the race.



Testing the water temperature; bath time in Mongolia.

a. **Team work.** In order to get these cars through the terrain we travelled through, required constant team work, whether it be sharing driving, maintenance, or obstacle crossing and everyone had their area of expertise.

b. **Discipline.** Success was only possible with each member 'pulling their weight' and doing what needed to be done without being asked.

c. **Physical endurance.** The team was averaging 14 hours driving a day in terrible conditions and with only three drivers per car. Over four weeks this was physically very demanding.

d. **Cultural education and diplomacy.** The team transited a huge spectrum of Eurasia's population and with this came the need to adapt quickly to the present situation and cultural sensitivities. These experiences were not only educational and enjoyable, but to make a mistake could quickly have the most severe of consequences.



Bactrian camel traders; Gobi Desert.

5. **The topography.** The route crossed a huge variety of terrain, from the wheat fields of the Ukraine, the deserts of Kazakhstan, the mountains of Russia and the Mongolian Steppe. Not only was this incredible to view, but also a considerable challenge to cross.



Sunset over the home of Genghis Khan's Empire; Karakoram, Mongolia.

6. **The People.** As a seasoned traveller, I never cease to be amazed by the hospitality of those that have so little. This journey was no exception and throughout the journey we were helped and befriended by all those we met.

7. **The Route.** Due to the time limit imposed upon our participation the team chose a reasonably direct route. Annex C has a basic map of the route.

8. **The Team.** The team consisted of two regimental officers and four soldiers. In a small car a three man team allows a driver, a commander and one man resting. Four would be a squeeze and two increases the chance of driver fatigue.



The team in the Czech Republic.
 Left – Right: Tprs Gemmell, Kendrick, Cpl Munro, Capt Irwin, Maj Foulerton, LCpl Stewart

9. **The dates.** Below is a brief itinerary of the Rally:

| Date | Event |
|-----------|--|
| 12 July | Team leaves Fallingbostel, Germany. |
| 13 | Team arrives at Goodwood and tours the Rolls – Royce factory. |
| 14 | All teams cross the start line at the Goodwood racetrack at 1600. |
| 16 | Team enter Czech Republic. |
| 18 | Team enter Ukraine. |
| 21 | Team enter Russia. |
| 23 | Team enter Kazakhstan. |
| 27 | Team enter Russia (Siberia). |
| 30 | Team enter Mongolia. |
| 10 August | Team cross finish line at 12.30. |
| 13 | Five of the team return to UK in order to travel on to Canada (BATUS). |
| 17 | Last team member returns to UK after leave in Mongolia. |



Obstacle crossing; Mongolia – Mongol Rally style (Note the use of improvised snorkell!).

10. **Driving conditions.** Until the team reached the Ukraine the road conditions were excellent and the cars could average 60 mph. Ukraine, Russia and especially Kazakhstan had some terrible road conditions, with enormous potholes and an abundance of atrocious drivers. Colliding with large potholes can do more damage to cars that some of the most testing off road conditions. A combination of well rested drivers and no night driving reduced the chances of an accident. The

dangers of driving in such countries at night should not be underestimated and should be avoided in all but an emergency. In Mongolia 80% of the 1700km was off road, on very rough tracks at best and the average speed was 14 mph!

11. **Accommodation.** Throughout the entire route the team camped (not in campsites), which significantly reduced the cost.

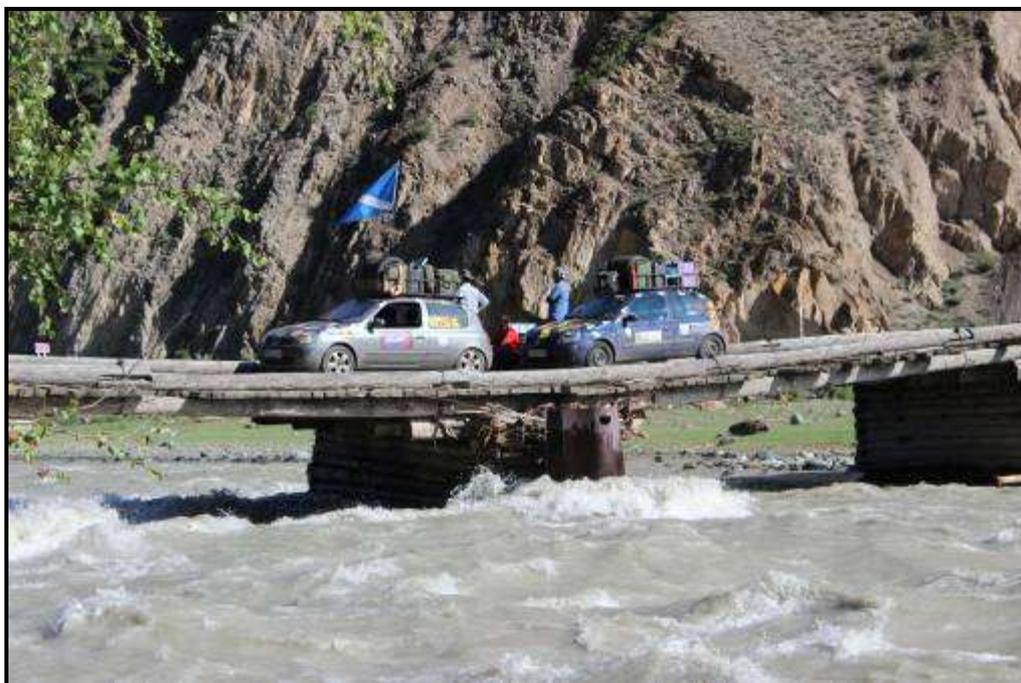


Another night under the stars; Mongolia.

12. **Food and water.** Throughout, the team bought and cooked their own food and again this significantly reduced the cost. Water was sourced from taps, wells or groundwater and purification was used when required. The team also ate with locals and this was an educational, although not necessarily enjoyable experience for some.

THE VEHICLES

13. **Choice of vehicle.** The team chose two Renault Clios, which were eight and ten years old. The maximum engine size negates the use of most four wheel drives, meaning that the competing cars are completely inappropriate for the terrain they are crossing, thus adding to the challenge. These particular cars were chosen simply because both were the same model, which was an advantage when understanding them. What these cars did was beyond what a rugged 4WD might be asked to cross; a testament to the cars and their crews.



River crossing - Altai Mountains; Siberia.

14. **Insurance and registration.** Both cars were registered and insured in British Forces (Germany) (BFG) because the Regiment is based in BFG. All members of the team were insured to drive both cars. Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan and Mongolia were not covered under the

insurance policy and local insurance was purchased in these countries. Worldwide motorcar insurance is not available.

15. **Vehicle preparation.** Very little was altered on the vehicles, principally because to do so in Germany can negate insurance and few mechanics will conduct such work. The following were completed and proved critical:

a. **Under carriage armour.** This is the most critical element of vehicle preparation. Vehicles intended for road use are not designed for major impacts to their underside and when used off road they risk substantial damage when they come in contact with the ground. The key areas of concern are the engine sump, fuel/ brake lines and the fuel tank. If these areas are not sufficiently armoured, normally with steel plate, they risk being punctured. Damage to these areas is the principle reason for cars failing to make the finish line. Our cars had sump guards bolted on by 2 Battalion REME and fuel/brake line covers were welded on in Mongolia. Our vehicles only suffered damage to non critical areas.

b. **Raised suspension.** We were unable to complete this very useful modification in Germany. Without raising suspension, especially at the rear, the combination of increased weight and off road conditions hugely increase the chance of the underside of the car coming in contact with ground. Many suspension units can be replaced by the owner without professional mechanical help.

c. **Steel wheels and winter tyres.** Steel unlike alloy wheels can be eaten back in shape when bent to an extraordinary degree, which reduces the need for carrying or replacing large numbers of wheels. Deformed wheels, which can lead to deflated tyres is likely to be the most common mechanical problem facing teams. Winter, or snow and mud tyres provide significant extra traction in a two wheel drive car. Front wheel drive is also a distinct advantage over rear wheel drive when traction is likely to be lost.

d. **Roof rack.** Our cars had custom made roof racks, which were bolted straight on to the roof of the car. These were very strong and at no cost, as opposed to the huge cost of fitted roof racks. These were built by 2 Battalion REME.

e. **Wading snorkel.** We had to cross some major rivers, which were way beyond what many would expect a 4WD to ford. To increase the wading depth of the cars we constructed snorkels, which allowed the engine to run safely when submerged. This practice can be used on both petrol and diesel engines; however the former is not as desirable unless the electrics are waterproofed.

f. **Spares.** The only spares we carried are listed in Annex A. Most mechanical problems can be repaired on route and with two cars one can tow the other if required.

ADMINISTRATION

16. **Authorisation.** The event was authorised by the Army sports Control Board (ASCB) because motorsport is not classed as Adventurous Training (AT). The chain of command was aware and strongly supported the event.

17. **Civilianisation.** The event was a sporting activity and it must be emphasised that all members of the team were in civilian clothing, driving civilian cars and competing in a civilian run competition.

18. **Diplomatic clearance.** This was a relatively complicated and unclear area and it was principally down to the British Embassies and their Defence Attaches that the problem was solved. The major hurdle to overcome was attaining official permission for British military personnel to transit through the relevant countries. Their governments either said yes or were baffled as to why

we were doing what we were. The result was that all British Embassies were aware and content with what we were doing and the respective countries, at the very least had been informed of our plans. Throughout the route we informed the relevant embassies of our progress as a matter of courtesy and in the event of a problem. We visited the British staff in Kazakhstan and Mongolia. While planning we liaised directly with the relevant embassies because there was no requirement to process clearance through Adventurous Training Group (United Kingdom) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

19. **Visas and Political clearance.** This was achieved by applying for the relevant tourist or transit visas and was processed by a visa application company because we will be unable to visit embassies in person. Contrary to perceived problems associated with registering that we soldiers on applications, the process was quick and without issue, although it was expensive because we used an intermediary.

20. **Security.** All participants received briefs from the intelligence cell at HQ 1 UK Div. The absence of any disciplinary or security incident during the event was a result of a well disciplined team and not the lack of threats. The countries that were transited can be dangerous to travellers for many reasons and stupid behaviour can quickly result in very serious consequences.

21. **Risk Assessment.** A risk assessment and 'actions on' plan was produced in advance by the event leader. Although the risks were highlighted in advance; any event, from a serious injury to arrest would have had to have been dealt with by the team at the time. Medical and diplomatic help were along way away for much of the journey.

22. **Medical Cover.** The team were all trained to 'team medic' standard and a comprehensive first aid pack was carried. Medical evacuation would have been conducted under the control of the team leader or second in command. All team members had comprehensive medical insurance, covering all medical costs and repatriation. During the event no one had any significant injury or ailment.

23. **Funding.** The Mongol Rally is a relatively expensive venture and with no access to public funding, we relied heavily on applying for non-public funding, personal contributions and reducing costs to an absolute minimum. In hindsight there are no areas where additional savings could have been made and sources of non-public funding were maximised. A breakdown of income is shown in Annex B.



Crossing the Gobi Desert; Mongolia.

SUMMARY

24. EXERCISE MONGOL EAGLE was a highly successful and beneficial sporting event and achieved the aim it set out to deliver – a very demanding motorsport endurance race. The scale, complexity and the challenges involved in the Mongol Rally should be rated along side the very highest level of sporting activity conducted by the Army this year.

25. A rally of this nature offers soldiers something completely different from the sports field, or even a motorsport event held nearer to home. The very challenge of getting a car designed to go to the supermarket across the wilds of Mongolia is just the start. This race across Asia traversed a third of the way around the planet in less than a month, across some of the most isolated regions on earth and required the team to be completely self-sufficient. It is for these reasons that the 2012 Mongol Rally gave these soldiers a challenge that army sport should deliver.

NG Foulerton
Officer Commanding
D Squadron

Annexes:

Annex A: Equipment list
Annex B: Balance Sheet
Annex C: Route Map

Distr:

Regt File
Regimental Trust
Army Sports Control Board (ASCB)
DA Austria
DA Russia
DA Kazakhstan
DA China
Berlin Infantry Memorial Trust
Fallingbostel Station Welfare Fund
Hohne Garrison Welfare Fund
ASCB Charitable Fund
BFG Welfare Fund
BFG Officers' Enterprise Fund
Nuffield Trust
HQ Royal Armoured Corp
British Army Motorsports Association (BAMA)
HQ 1 UK Division
HQ 7 Armoured Brigade

EX MONGOL EAGLE EQUIPMENT LIST

| Ser. | Item | Number | Remarks (All figures are for both cars) |
|-------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| 1 | Car Parts | | |
| 2 | Spare wheels | 6 | Essential. |
| 3 | Air filters | 2 | Essential. |
| 4 | Belts | 4 | Fan and alternator belts. Essential. |
| 5 | Fuses | 10 | Essential. |
| 6 | Tools | | |
| 7 | Car jacks | 2 | Issue. Essential. |
| 8 | Shovels | 2 | Issue. Essential. |
| 9 | Pick axes | 2 | Issue. Useful. |
| 10 | Crow bars | 2 | Issue. Useful. |
| 11 | Racket straps | 6 | Useful. |
| 12 | Tow ropes | 2 | Issue. Essential. |
| 13 | Bungee cords | 12 | Issue. Useful. |
| 14 | Petrol cans | 2 | 20 Ltr. Issue. Essential. |
| 15 | Complete tool kit | 1 | REME issue. Essential. |
| 16 | Air pump | 2 | Essential. |
| 17 | Insulating tape | 4 | Issue. Useful. |
| 18 | Liquid metal | 1 | Issue. Useful |
| 19 | Wire/ String | 2 | Issue. Useful. |
| 20 | Camping | | |
| 21 | Tent | 3 | Issue. 2 issue bivouacs and one nylon 4 man tent. |
| 22 | Stove | 2 | Issue petrol/ diesel stoves. Excellent. Essential. |
| 23 | Water Jerry cans | 4 | Issue. Essential. |
| 24 | Mosquito nets | 6 | Issue. Useful. |
| 25 | Crockery/ cutlery | 6 | Essential. |
| 26 | Washing bowls | 2 | Issue. Useful. |
| 27 | Sleeping bags | 6 | Issue. Use winter bags (Bouncing bomb). Essential. |
| 28 | Roll mats | 6 | Issue. Essential. |
| 29 | Folding chairs | 6 | Issue. Useful. |
| 30 | Cylumes | 30 | Issue. Useful. |
| 31 | Personal | Per/ pax | |
| 32 | Bergens | 1 | Issue. Useful. |
| 33 | Warm clothing | 1 | Issue. Softies. Essential. |
| 34 | Boots | 1 | Issue. Strong. |
| 35 | Lightweight shoes | 1 | When shoes get wet at river crossings. |
| 36 | Waterproofs | 1 | Essential. |
| 37 | Sun hats | 1 | Useful. |
| 38 | Sunglasses | 1 | Essential for driving. |
| 39 | Gloves | 1 | Useful for maintenance/ obstacle crossing. |
| 40 | Smart cloths | 1 | Useful for Embassies etc. |
| 41 | Torches | 1 | Issue. Essential – ideally a headtorch. |
| 42 | Knives | 1 | Essential. |
| 43 | Camera/ camcorders | 6 | Ensure someone is a reasonable photographer. |
| 44 | Miscellaneous | | |
| 45 | Medical Kit | 1 | Issue. Very comprehensive, essential and excellent. |
| 46 | Gifts | 30 | Whisky tots. Essential and whisky is popular. |
| 47 | Chargers/ 12 – 24v converters | 10 | Essential for all electrical equipment. All equipment should be chargeable from the 12v car supply. |

EX MONGOL EAGLE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

| Income Source | Amount bid for (£) | Amount pledged (£) | Status | Expenditure (£) | Amount (£) | Status |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Regimental Sport Fund | 1200 | 2000 | Received | Car 1 | 826.44 | Paid |
| Regimental Officers' Enterprise Fund* | 600 | 800 | Received | Car 2 | 929.75 | Paid |
| Army Sports Lottery | 3000 | 1500 | Received | Return flights | 3680.6 | Paid |
| Army in Scotland Trust | 1200 | 600 | Received | Visas | 2149.26 | Paid |
| Berlin Infantry Memorial Fund | 600 | 275 | Received | Entry fees | 1428 | Paid |
| Personal contributions | 3600 | 3600 | Received | Mapping / Guides | 88.37 | Paid |
| Garrison Welfare Fund | 600 | 415 | Received | Travel costs** | 2661.78 | Paid |
| Station Welfare Fund | 600 | 415 | Received | Spares/ parts*** | 949.85 | Paid |
| British Army Motorsports Association | 600 | 100 | Confirmed | Ferry | 123 | Paid |
| ASCB Charitable Fund | 2000 | 1500 | Confirmed | Travel Insurance | 504 | Paid |
| 1 UK Div. GOC's Fund | 600 | 600 | Confirmed | Mobile telephone | 300 | Paid |
| BFG Welfare Fund | 600 | tbc | Not confirmed | Vehicle insurance | 237.39 | Paid |
| BFG Officers' Enterprise Fund | 600 | tbc | Not confirmed | | | |
| Nuffield Trust | 1200 | tbc | Not confirmed | | | |
| Army Central Fund | 1200 | tbc | Not confirmed | | | |
| Team Army | 2000 | 0 | Non given | | | |
| HCR & RAC Fund | 600 | 0 | Non given | | | |
| Total | 17200 | 11805 | | Total**** | 13878.44 | |

Received = The funds are in the Exercise account.

Non given = The bid was unsuccessful.

Confirmed = The grant is confirmed but the funds have not yet been transferred.

Not confirmed = Awaiting the outcome of the authorising board.

* All participants have paid equal personal contributions.

** Travel costs covered all costs incurred on the journey, principally; fuel, food, repairs, taxes.

*** Costs of spares and replacing broken items

**** £600 personal contribution per person has been paid. Pending the outcome of the remaining four sources of funding, the total personal contribution stands at £945.57 per person, or 41% of the total cost.

8. GOODWOOD

9. – 14 JULY

5. ULAANBAATAR

6. – 10 AUGUST 2012 –

