



“Desert Raiders”

**Keeping the Legend Alive
British Special Forces from North Africa, 1940-1943**

Newsletter Number 10 May 2005



The Newsletter of the *Desert Raiders Association*

Editors – Peter Sanders & Paul Lincoln

We have decided to change the publishing dates of our Newsletters, so that we can get it to you well before the show season in May and before Christmas in November. Hopefully, this will encourage you to come and see us at our shows and enable you to keep better track of what we are doing. Also, in this issue, we start a new feature called “Vehicle Spotlight”, where we go into great detail on the history, mechanics and use of one original vehicle, as well as our (sometimes stumbling) efforts to re-create it. We hope that you like this idea and we would welcome your suggestions as to which vehicle to cover next.



As you will see from this Newsletter, we have not been idle over the winter months. We have planned the summer season and we hope to see you at one of our shows, or during the photo shoots for the 2006 MVT calendar. Contact us by email on the usual address: desertraidersassociation@yahoo.co.uk for the latest news, or to submit anything you would like us to highlight in the next Newsletter. We cannot close without wishing everyone a great summer; look after yourselves and keep in touch.

Social and Committee Meetings.

Our Christmas get together was held on Sunday December 19th in Watton. Fourteen members of the Association, with their wives, enjoyed a super Chinese dinner in the centre of town. We booked tables at the “China Cottage”, High Street, Watton and the food was really excellent. The décor was to a very high standard, with exposed beams and plush carpeting. Originally, this building was derelict but it has recently been rebuilt by Paul, the well-known local builder and vehicle restorer. No wonder his trucks look so good! Everyone had a great time and more visits to this restaurant have already been planned.

We had another Chinese meal at our January Committee Meeting. This time it was a take-away, delivered to the meeting at Paul’s house. The meal was great and the company excellent – it bodes well for an enjoyable time in 2005. The meeting lasted all evening, coupled to a visit to see the 3 tonner rebuild project. We discussed various important matters, concentrating on planning the 2006 calendar and the 2005 show season, the perennial transport problem and the museum. For more details of these issues, please see the separate articles in this Newsletter.

Our next committee meeting will be held at Twinwoods “Campaign” show on 12th June: if you have any items that you would like to bring to our attention, please let us know.



Members of the Committee with our Patron, Jimmy Patch, at Beltring in 2004.

Show Plans for 2005.

We have made the conscious decision to limit our show attendance to three main events, to allow us to spend more time on the photographic sessions for the calendar. We will be at "Campaign" in Bedford and Beltring in Kent, with our final show of the year being more local - at the East England Tank Museum in Norfolk. Here are the details of these shows: Peter is organising Twinwoods, Paul is taking care of Beltring and the E. E. Tank Museum.

1. Twinwoods Events, "Campaign 2005". June 11th and 12th. Held at Twinwood Airfield in Clapham, Bedfordshire. Twinwood Arena and the Glenn Miller museum is located in Clapham, which is the first village north of Bedford on the Old A6, signposted as The Glenn Miller Museum. Go up Twinwood Rd for half a mile until the woodland, and turn right onto Twinwood Airfield. It is billed as a World War Two historical show with all sorts of attractions. It should be a big event and we have been promised a prime site. For more details, phone Twinwoods on 01234 350413 or visit www.twinwoodevents.com.

2. Beltring, War and Peace Show. July 20th to 24th. Held at The Hop Farm, Paddock Wood, Kent. On the A228, well signposted. This is the world's largest military vehicles and collectors fair, with always something to see and do. We have a slightly different pitch this year - we are on the opposite side of the track, in a good spot for photographs. We also have much more space than before and plan to display with the Afrika Korps, 8th Army and Italians. We aim to be there from 18th July, with tea and fizzy apple juice available for visitors. Jack and Donna Valenti and Rick Butler from the LRDG Preservation Society plan to be with us, so this promises to be a memorable week. For details phone 01304 813945 or visit www.thewarandpeaceshow.com.

3. East England Tank Museum. August 13th and 14th. We do not have the details yet, but this will be an end of season bash for us, to chill out at this amazing local museum. It is signposted from the A11 near Elveden (close to Thetford, Norfolk); take the road to Barnham. Phone 01842 890010 or visit www.tankmuseum.com.

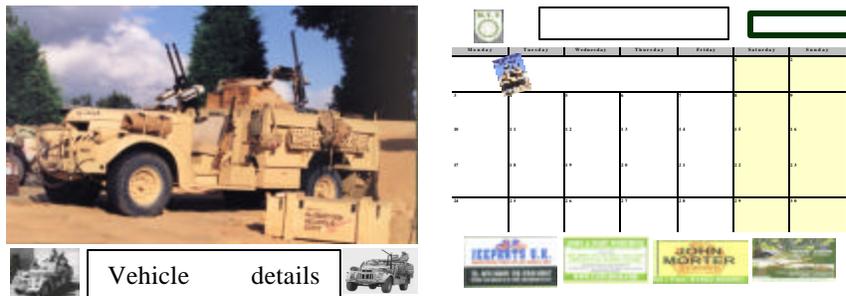
MVT Calendar, 2006.

Planning is well under way for this high profile publication. David and Peter have worked extremely well together to organise the many details that go into such an activity. Our phone bills must be astronomical, since our international calls often last 30 minutes! We have put together a detailed layout for a 32 page, full colour, calendar. Each month will have two of our vehicles as a full page photograph, along with some descriptive text. There will also be a small black and white one in the same pose as a wartime photograph. On the opposite page, we will have the monthly grid and our advertising slots. This has been accepted by the MVT and they have also agreed to our financial plan which allows us to recover the costs of getting our vehicles to the various locations.

Peter and David, with help from the rest of the committee, have found enough advertising revenue from our trusty suppliers and specialists to ensure that the whole project breaks even. The Desert Raiders Association will have enough extra copies for our members and our mailing list, plus some to spare.

Paul and David have scoured the East of England for suitable locations: sand pits, quarries, beaches, grassland, woodland, airfields and wartime buildings are all needed. All that's required now is good weather and realistic setting up of the vehicles.

John Blackman will do much of the photography and Paul's cadets will play the part of vehicle crews. We have a printer lined up and everything looks good for a "monster" publication. It all has to be ready to go out with the Autumn Windscreen, so the pressure is mounting! Here's what the two pages will look like for one month.



An Impressive Vehicle Collection.....

We now have so many vehicles between us that it is becoming increasingly difficult to keep track of them all. This is not helped by the fact that some of us appear to buy old vehicles with the weekly groceries and restore them by the weekend (just joking, David). So, we've done a round-up of our vehicles, projects and plans, mainly to help us when it comes to doing film and museum work: we can tell them exactly which vehicles we have available.

As you can see, it is a very impressive collection that covers the most common vehicles used by the LRDG, SAS and PPA. We believe that this is the most complete collection of such vehicles in the world. However, there are still some gaps to be filled - RA and MO trucks and a wider variety of heavy section trucks, for example. And how about the Fiat SPA, Opels and Bedford MW seen in some photos? Or the light tank and bren gun carrier used briefly by the LRDG? We've even spotted a water tank trailer in use by the LRDG - a nice starter project for someone. Then, of course, there is the wide range of vehicles used by PPA in Italy.



LRDG projects for the future: convoy of Jeep, 3 tonner with water tank trailer and MO truck.

PPA vehicles in Italy: Dodges, No 13 cab Ford/Chev and Jeeps.
Photo courtesy of PPA Preservation Society.



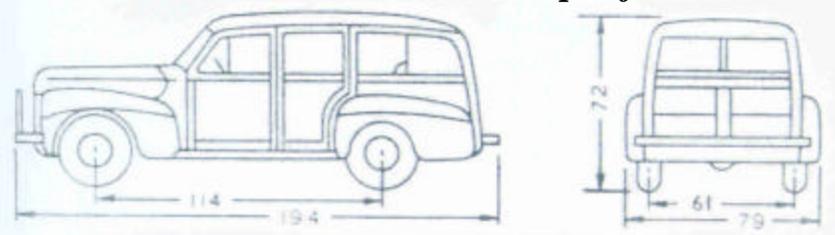
Vehicle	Status	Unit
Ford F30, <i>Aramis</i> , 1940	Running	LRDG, Y2, Y Patrol
Willys Overland Jeep, 1940	Running	LRDG, G1, G Patrol
Willys Jeep, <i>Blitz Buggy II</i> , 1942	Running	SAS
Bedford OXD, <i>De Doppelte Tauschung</i>	Running	SAS/SIG
Willys Jeep, 1942	Running	SAS
Chevrolet 1533, <i>Te Anau II</i> , 1940	Running	LRDG, T6, T Patrol
Chevrolet WA, <i>Te Hai</i> , 1940	Running	LRDG
Ford F60, 1940	Running	LRDG Heavy Section
Willys Jeep, 1942	Running	SAS
Willys Jeep, 1942	Running	SAS
Willys Jeep, 1942	Running	PPA, desert
Ford Jeep, 1943	Running	PPA, Italy
Ford Jeep, 1944	Running	SAS Europe Armoured
Ford Jeep, 1944	Running	SAS Europe Armoured
Ford Jeep, 1944	Running	SAS Europe Unarmoured
Willys Jeep, 1942	Running	SAS Europe Unarmoured
Kubelwagon, 1942	Running	DAK/SAS
Ford C11 ADF, <i>Blitz Buggy</i> , 1941	Running	SAS
Ford V8 Pickup RHD, <i>Docs Car</i> , 1940	Running	LRDG
BMW R71 M/C & Sidecar, 1940s	Running	LRDG/DAK
Ford F30, 1940	U/restoration	LRDG S Patrol
Ford F60 HS14, <i>Harriet</i> , 1940	U/restoration	LRDG Heavy Section
Chevrolet C60, 1940	U/restoration	SAS/SIG
Ford F8, 1940	U/restoration	To be announced
Ford V8 Pickup RHD, <i>Te Rangii II</i> , 1940	U/restoration	LRDG, T Patrol
Willys Jeep <i>Wasp</i> , 1942	U/restoration	PPA Italy
Chevrolet 1311	U/restoration	LRDG
Ford V8 01 Pickup LHD, <i>Te Rangii</i>	Planned	LRDG
Motorcycle (BSA/Matchless?)	Planned	LRDG HQ - Info required

Vehicle Spotlight

The “Blitz Buggy”: SAS Modified C11ADF, 1942

Before they obtained their own transport (mainly Willys Overland Jeeps and Chevrolet/Ford 3 ton lorries) in July 1942, the SAS got hold of one C11ADF “Woodie” station wagon (a 1941 Canadian Ford V8) and used it in many daring raids. An SAS veteran tells us that it was damaged during unloading in Cairo and, whilst being stored in the back of a compound, it was “liberated” by David Stirling. It quickly became the commanding officer’s pride and joy.

Canadian Ford - C11ADF - Specifications



Engine V8, petrol, 95 bhp	Turning circle 39 feet	Electrics 6 volt
Fuel Consumption 13 mpg	Fuel capacity 12 gallons	Bridge Class 2
Max. Speed 70 mph	Right hand drive	Seating 5
Laden weight, front axle, 2030 lbs	Tyre size 9.00x13	
Laden weight, rear axle, 3080 lbs	Gears 3 fwd, 1 rev	

The C11ADF was extensively modified for use by the SAS: the roof and windscreen were cut off, all the glass was removed, a spotlight, sun compass and sand mat brackets were fitted, as well as racks for fuel and water cans. A radiator coolant expansion tank was rigged to conserve engine coolant. The suspension was uprated to cope with desert travel and an extra fuel tank was fitted in the rear compartment to increase the range. It was designed to look like an enemy vehicle but there is some debate about what colour it was. Johnny Cooper, in *“One of the Originals”*, states that it was painted a drab olive green, but Virginia Cowles in *“Phantom Major”* states that it was a dark grey. It carried the monthly German recognition mark painted on the bonnet and a large SAS emblem on the side. Originally, it mounted two concealed machine guns; in June 1942, these were replaced with three or four Vickers K machine guns. Affectionately known as the “Blitz Buggy” or “Battle Wagon”, it was an important component of the early SAS raids.

The first operation was on 15th March 1942, when David Stirling drove the Blitz Buggy from Siwa to Benghazi harbour, the last part being done at 70 mph with headlights full on. The canoe he carried (to attack shipping with limpet mines) was damaged in transit, so Stirling abandoned the raid on Benghazi and attacked Benina airfield with Lewes bombs instead.



This is believed to be the Blitz Buggy, but there is no condenser or SAS emblem. Photo courtesy of Jonathan Pittaway & Craig Fourie, LRDG Rhodesia.



The Blitz Buggy with Major Stirling and Corporals Seekings, Rose and Cooper. Note the SAS emblem, German recognition stripe and the machine gun mount on the passenger's side.

On 22nd May 1942, Stirling and his team again approached Benghazi harbour in the Blitz Buggy, this time with an inflatable boat. The SAS party was an illustrious one, consisting of Major Stirling, Captain Randolph Churchill (son of Prime Minister Winston Churchill), Lieutenant Fitzroy Maclean (a linguist and Member of Parliament) and Corporals Seekings, Rose and Cooper (all SAS originals). The track rods on the Blitz Buggy became bent during the desert travel, causing a loud screeching noise on the road. Nonetheless, the SAS party managed to pass Italian checkpoints by claiming to be German staff officers. Once inside Benghazi, they parked the Blitz Buggy in an abandoned garage. Then an alarm was raised, so they decided to blow up the car and abort the mission. When it became clear that it was the RAF, and not the SAS, that had caused the alarm, they removed the time pencil just in time.

That night, they carried their boat into the guarded harbour area, but it would not inflate. Whilst at the waters edge, frantically pumping away, they were challenged by an Ascar sentry. By shouting loudly in Italian, they managed to make him go away! On the way back from this encounter, two Italian sentries followed them to the harbour gate. Fitzroy Maclean (in scruffy "mufti") berated the guard commander by asking how it was possible for strangers to be able to walk around a guarded area with large equipment: "*for all you know, we might be British saboteurs with loads of high explosive*". Amazingly, they got away with this and returned to the hidden Blitz Buggy, resting up in the garage for the rest of the night and all the next day. After a further night reconnaissance of the harbour, they drove out of Benghazi (still with the screaming tyres), shouting the magic words "*Staff Officers*" to the sentries and returned to Siwa.

In June 1942, the SAS and LRDG conducted a co-ordinated series of raids on German airfields, intended to help merchant ship convoys get through the Mediterranean to re-supply Malta. Unfortunately, the Blitz Buggy ran over a Thermos mine close to the target on the outward trip and had to be abandoned. After the raid, Stirling recovered the vehicle, towing it 400 miles to Siwa for repair.

Early in July 1942, the SAS set out from Kabrit with the Blitz Buggy and other vehicles, passing the El Alamein line to a point 40 miles inland from Mersa Matruh. They infiltrated Bagush airfield on foot and destroyed 22 aircraft. A few hours later they drove the Blitz Buggy and a Jeep onto the same airfield and destroyed 15 more aircraft with their machine guns. The success of this “drive-in” raid resulted in the later use of 18 Jeeps in the famous Sidi Haneish raid. On the way back across the desert from Bagush, the SAS party was spotted and attacked by Italian C42 aircraft. After a long chase, the Blitz Buggy had to be abandoned and it exploded after coming under sustained machine gun fire.

For many years, Peter has been dreaming of recreating the Blitz Buggy to go with his SAS Jeep, but it seemed like such a daunting task that the project never got started. Few C11ADFs are still around and the civilian 1941 “Woodies” on which they were based are very rare (and left hand drive). Nonetheless, this was a vehicle that the Desert Raiders just had to have, so there was nothing for it but to get stuck in and do it. Peter spent six months searching for a suitable vehicle and researching the Blitz Buggy history. He found a few fully restored 1941 Woodies but these were too good to cut up. In the end, Peter bought a 1941 Ford V8 Sedan and some spare parts in the USA, then had it all shipped to the UK.



The vehicle Peter would have liked

and the one he got.



The vehicle had a very nice, reconditioned, V8 engine. It also had a good chassis but with civilian axles, suspension and drive train. The bodywork was somewhat rusty and it was, of course, left hand drive. The poor bodywork did not matter as Peter was planning to make the wooden panels whilst at work in Saudi Arabia. Just at the right time, and out of the blue, a complete set of wooden panels (plus the correct rear wings) materialised in the UK and Peter snapped them up, saving a lot of work. The most difficult items were the 900x13 sand tyres, which are no longer being made. David, as usual, came to the rescue and found a full set.

Having earlier said that C11ADFs are rare, you can imagine Peter’s feelings when he heard that one in Portugal had just been sold to his pal Ed. It was in terrible condition, having been used as a chicken shed for many years. Its engine was seized and the metalwork was rusted through, but it was essentially complete. Very fortunately, Ed was a long time pal and it turned out that he wanted to “civilianise” it. This meant that Peter got the military running gear in exchange for the civilian counterparts and some panels. Having an actual C11ADF to study for patterns of specific military details was also invaluable. Ed was a great help with information and photographs to get the minor details such as switches, interior details, data plates and trim correct.

So, Peter now had everything except the time needed to do the work. As you will have seen from earlier newsletters, the work was done by a local military vehicle restoration company. In reality, Peter admits that conversion from left to right hand drive and modification from sedan to woodie would have been well beyond his capabilities, so this was the only viable option. The chassis was bead blasted and powder coated, the transverse rear spring was changed for parallel springs and the new running gear was overhauled and fitted. The chassis was modified to accept the different rear wings and woodie panels, with the bodywork being fitted using specially fabricated brackets and strengtheners. Changing from left to right hand drive was (apparently) very straightforward; the main problem was matching the truck rear axle to the gearbox as the propshafts were different in the two vehicles. In the end, a new floor shift gearbox had to be fitted in order to overcome this. Military style bumpers were made and a dummy long range fuel tank was fitted in the rear. With the addition of condenser, spotlight, gun mounts, re-upholstered seats, fuel can racks and sand channels, the Blitz Buggy was finished.



Much thought went into the colour, especially with the two different published colour schemes. Finally, we went with grey, justifying this because it was supposed to look like a German staff car and because green would look out of place amongst our other desert vehicles. The German Wehrmacht grey came out too dark, so a special lighter grey was ordered, giving it a “weathered” look. Peter painted the SAS emblems and a yellow recognition colour stripe on it: he plans to fit the sand mat and sun compass brackets before the 2005 show season.

We think this is as close as we can get to recreating the Blitz Buggy: if anyone has any more details or recollections of it, please let us know. In line with the Desert Raiders ethos, Peter will make any changes needed to ensure complete accuracy.



Ten photos of the conversion from dowdy sedan to a faithful replica Blitz Buggy.



Vehicle Progress Highlights.

David has been charging ahead with all his projects. His green *SAS Jeeps* are now finished, his *Chevrolet WA* has had the final touches done to it and his *Ford V8 01* pickup (Doc Edmundson's medical truck) has had the rear body, aeroscreens, brackets, seats and so forth fitted. It has been painted and all it needs is the engine to be put in. It looks terrific with the correct wheels and widened front wings. We'll put in a photo next time.

Chevrolet 1311. This is another of David's projects. He had the base vehicle shipped over from the USA, is having a new engine fitted and will fit a wooden body this summer. The only problem is that it is left hand drive, but, judging from Peter's experience with his Ford, changing to right hand drive is not that difficult.

This SAS 13 cab *Chevrolet 3 tonner (C60)* is yet another thing that David is doing. He has had the vehicle in his yard for a long time and it needs a lot of work doing to it. However, this photograph (of a French SAS detachment?) has given him the incentive to start on it. Does anyone know more about this photograph? David is trying to find out as much as he can about the vehicle, the equipment and where and when the photo was taken.



David requests any information on the vehicles, personnel or location in this photograph.

Bedford OX. Clinton has done a great job sorting out a few minor problems on Peter's Bedford. Apart from the usual winter service, he has replaced a worn out handbrake linkage and stripped down the rear hubs to reveal leaking rear hub seals. With some new seals and linings, the Bedford should be good for 2005.

Peter's *SAS Jeep*. This Jeep has never started well from cold, so Clinton investigated the problem. The starter motor bushes were worn and the fuel pump had a slight leak in the diaphragm. Once these were renovated and refitted, the Jeep starts much better. Peter now has a pair of reproduction Vickers Ks, so the Jeep can be fitted with 5 Vickers Ks or 3 Vickers Ks and a .50 Browning.

Ford V8 01 pickup, Te Rangii II. Progress is at last being made. The front panelwork is back together, the brakes are done, dashboard made and the seats are ready to fit. The engine is still not functioning, however, and Peter is looking for a running engine. Peter plans to collect the rolling chassis in June and complete the rebuild. A very big "thank you" is due to David, who has come to the rescue. David made a second body for *Te Rangii II* when he made the one for Doc Edmundson's vehicle, plus all the steel brackets, the aeroscreens and assorted fittings. This means that the two vehicles will be built to the same general style and will look very good together. Peter and David plan to fit the body in June and then go off to photograph the two Fords together for the calendar. Great team spirit – thanks again, David.



Peter's Ford V8, still in pieces.



Ted's BMW will look like this one in Australia.

BMW R71 Motorcycle/sidecar combination. Ted's 1940's BMW R71 combination is on its way from the USA and he is fitting it out as a DAK vehicle, complete with an MG42. After a small amount of detail work, Ted hopes to have it at Beltring this year. It will certainly add to the group display and we all look forward to seeing it. Although we need more details to confirm it, we understand that the LRDG captured one of these motorcycle combinations for headquarters use, so it can nicely represent either a DAK or a LRDG vehicle.

PPA Jeep WASP. It seems like Peter was working 24 hours a day during his January vacation, to ensure that the WASP will be on the road this year. The special two-part bonnet has been made, with the front part being completely removable and held in place by four bonnet clamps. The holes have been cut to take the inlet and outlet pipes of the evaporator, mounted on the passenger cowl. Peter has also cut the large notch in the glove compartment, to take the two big rubber fuel feed pipes. He has scrounged a gas cylinder and one of the two fuel tanks; all that is missing is the larger tank - a hot water cylinder is the correct size, but a compressor tank would look better. Peter spent the winter down at the workshop in Saudi Arabia and he has fabricated the evaporator, the gas master valve, the gas filter, the rear part for the projector controller (including the fuel pump, carburettor, ignition coils and fuel line fittings), the spill box and various can brackets and fittings. He has also made wooden/epoxy masters for the projector nozzle, the two handles, controller handwheel, ignition cut out switch and boost valve. The patterns are now with the foundry to be cast in bronze, before fitting them to the pivot and support plate in Devon. It is fair to say that the Saudi airport security were “interested” in the contents of Peter’s suitcases when they went through the x-ray machine at check-in: he had some careful explaining to do when they opened them up! Peter is called the “mad scientist” by the guys in the Saudi Aramco do-it-yourself club as it seems no-one else is building anything like this. One chap is rebuilding a Series 1 Landrover, but everyone else is working on their “posh” modern cars. One last push, some fitting, plumbing, welding and painting and this unique Jeep should be out and about this summer.



Peter's WASP Jeep.

Ford F8. Clinton and Tim are now working flat out on this project three nights a week. The front body panels are now on and the engine has been reconditioned at great expense. It has just been fitted to the chassis, so it is starting to look like a truck again. The body is coming along fine, with new steel panels being bent to shape and the new cab back is virtually finished. Both front wings are bolted on: unfortunately one will need a fair amount of filler! There are a couple of missing suspension parts delaying things. Clinton says that it will be touch and go to make Beltring, but he is doing a fantastic quality job, so there is no point in cutting corners to rush it.



Clinton's F8 (left) and Paul's F60 (right), some months ago.



Ford F60. Paul and Adrian continue to work hard on this big project. The exhaust is now fitted after several hours of frustration getting everything to marry up. It took a good deal of cutting and welding and required the removal of some cab panels round the engine. They needed to make sure that the engine ran prior to fitting the radiator and, after a bit of confusion with the plug leads, run it did. It now starts on the button every time. There is a bit of a problem with the charging mechanism at the moment, but it should not be too serious. Then it's test drive time! There can be few experiences to match the first drive out of the workshop in the latest vehicle - especially when they represent three years of your spare time (and more than a few quid of your money)! The rear body is also nearing completion, with a beautiful copy of the first pattern 3 ton steel body. There is only the tailboard to go, then it's time to spray it in desert sand and add the markings.

Stop Press - Buy Yourself an Association Polo Shirt.

We have just received a trial batch of very some stylish Desert Raiders Association Polo shirts, in black and with a discrete logo. They sell at £12 each, plus postage, and are available to Association members. Please contact Paul to place an order.



Hard at work on the vehicles over the winter.



With summer now well on its way, we are just starting to dust the cobwebs off our vehicles, preparing them for the show season. We're looking forward to getting out and about and meeting as many of our readers as possible. If you are able to get to one of our shows or to the photo shoots for the calendar, or just want to drop in for a chat, we'd love to see you.

If you have any ideas for future issues (or, better still, some copy that you would like us to include), please let us know: this is your newsletter, so your contributions are always welcome. Please don't hesitate to contact Paul or Peter by phone, through the post or by using our email address:

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The Desert Raiders Newsletter Team, May 2005.