

Lieutenant-Colonel Mike Argue

Officer in the Parachute Regiment who won an MC taking control of the vital ridge behind Port Stanley

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL MIKE ARGUE, who has died aged 59, won an MC in the battle for Mount Longdon during the Falklands campaign.

On May 1 1982, a month after Argentine forces had invaded the islands, the first British troops arrived; and, three weeks later, some 4,000 reinforcements landed at San Carlos on the north-west coast of East Falkland. The western end of the ridge that forms the north side of the valley in which Port Stanley lies is dominated by Mount Longdon; and, from this position, the Argentine defenders were able to provide supporting fire on to important strategic features nearby.

On the night of June 11, 3 Commando Brigade launched two other major operations, for which it was essential that they gain possession of the mountain. Argue, a major in command of B Company, 3rd Battalion, Parachute Regiment, was given the task of seizing the rocky, fortress-like summit, and destroying key command and support weapon positions as well as silencing the 120mm mortars.

The night was moonlit and

bitterly cold, with freezing rain and sleet. Argue's company had to negotiate awkward water obstacles and cross open ground and moorland that was known to have been mined.

The Argentines were dug into the rocks in battalion strength along the top of the mountain and had considerable artillery support.

Shortly after 9pm a soldier stepped on an anti-personnel mine, severely injuring his leg and alerting the enemy. The company then came under harassing fire from machine guns operating on fixed lines and, as they gained a foothold on the mountain, the British were forced into narrow, rocky gullies down which the defenders were able to hurl grenades.

The Argentine forces proved formidable opponents, and the company's advance was slow, hazardous and costly. Positions believed to have been cleared of enemy burst into life with fire as heavy as ever.

Snipers equipped with passive night sights impeded attempts at flanking movements and machine-gun and mortar fire was



Argue: hazardous and costly advance to take Mount Longdon

heavy and sustained. At a critical point in the battle, when 4 Platoon was pinned down, Sergeant Ian McKay led a charge across open ground to clear a number of bunkers and silence an elevated medium machine gun. He was awarded a posthumous VC.

The company took considerable losses as it moved eastwards along the objective. Attempts to use naval gunfire to eliminate individual targets proved

difficult because the terrain sometimes made it impossible to observe the fall of shot. An outflanking movement by two platoons ran into intense machine-gun fire, and brought further casualties. By 3am B Company was reduced to less than half its strength and was pulled back to the western end of Mount Longdon, allowing A Company to move through them.

In a series of fierce, close-

quarter actions against heavily-defended positions, A Company cleared the feature of the enemy. After an action lasting more than 10 hours, Mount Longdon was back in British hands. Argue was awarded an MC.

Michael Hugh Argue was born at Acomb, York, on March 1 1947 and educated at Penwortham County Secondary School, Preston, Lancashire. After working as a farm labourer and a steel erector, he joined 17 Training Regiment in 1965 and was awarded his green beret the following year.

He served with 29 Commando Regiment, RA, and then on permanent attachment to 22 Special Air Service Regiment in Cyprus, the Middle East, Malaysia and Brunei. After attending an officers' training course at Sandhurst, in 1973 he was commissioned and posted to 2nd Parachute Battalion and served in Northern Ireland and BAOR.

Argue completed another tour in Northern Ireland with 3 Para and was mentioned in dispatches in 1981. A good Arabist, after the Falklands campaign he moved to Beirut as assistant defence attaché and was then posted to Oman as second-in-

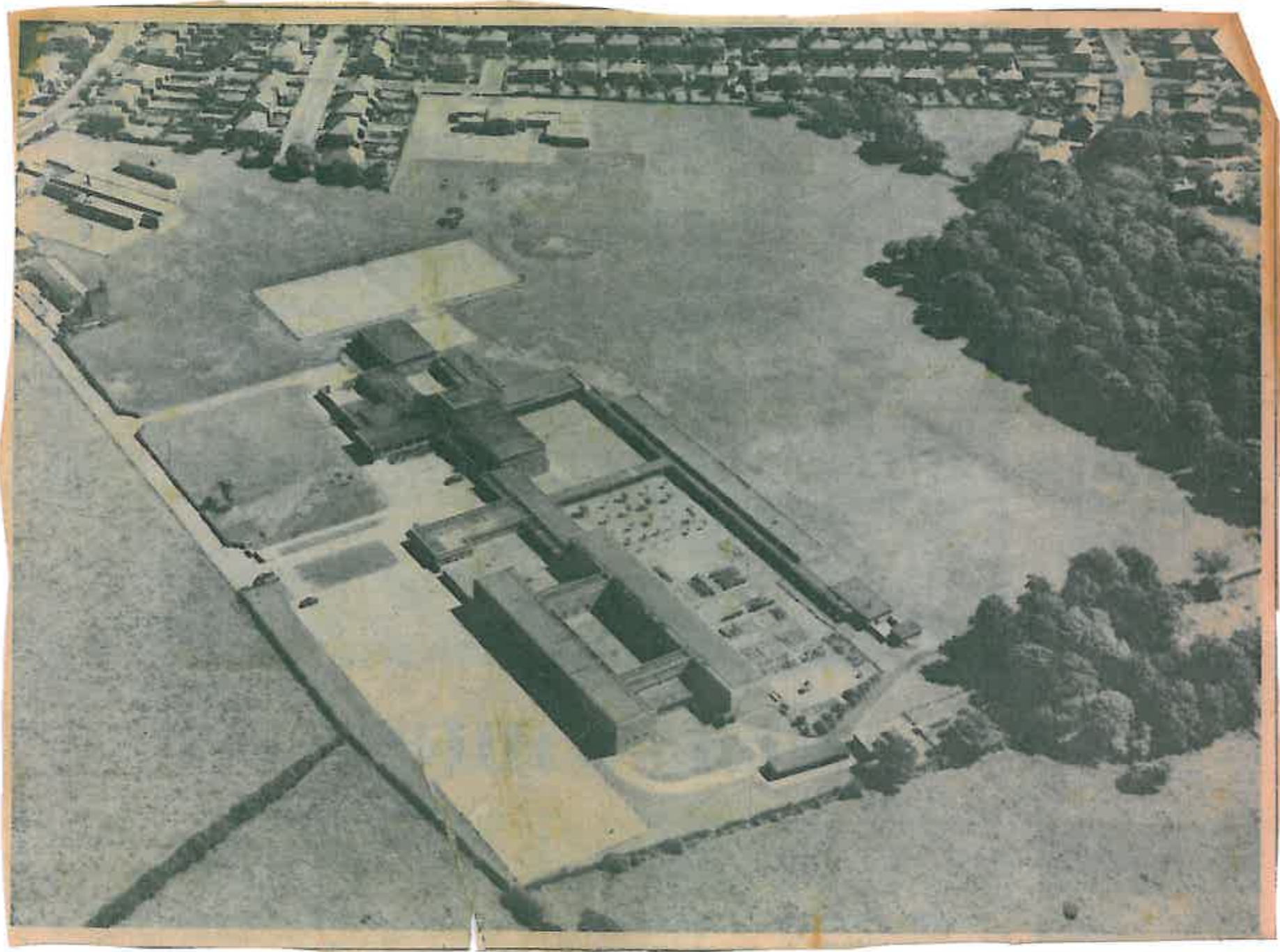
command of the Sultan of Oman's Parachute Regiment. He was appointed MBE in 1986.

Argue was promoted lieutenant-colonel in 1989 upon taking command of 15 (Scottish Volunteers) Parachute Battalion. A posting to Saudi Arabia with the British Military Mission was followed by two years in Abu Dhabi as SO1 Training.

In 1997 Argue moved to Rabat, Morocco, as defence attaché. After retiring from the Army in 2002, he lived in a Wiltshire village and became commercial director of the Stirling Group, the security and risk management group, until his death on July 20.

Those who served with him remember him as quiet, professional, single-minded and very likeable. A member of many countryside and wildlife organisations, he enjoyed cross-country skiing and cooking.

Mike Argue married first, in 1968, Glynis Butt. He married secondly, in 1989, Marie Louise Steir, who predeceased him. He married thirdly, in 1991, Jane Wise, who survives him with a son and a daughter from his first marriage and two step-daughters.



Flower show just keeps on growing

SOUTHPORT Flower Show bosses are sowing the seeds for another blooming success.

Next year's event - which is a major part of the town's tourist trade - will be increased to four days to cope with its popularity.

Over the last three years visitor numbers have topped the 100,000 mark and advance inquiries for the 1997 show are

already at record levels.

Organisers have decided the time is right to build on the show's success and are making plans to protect the event from being spoiled by overcrowding.

Show Chief Executive Tom Bradshaw said today: "Every year we attract thousands of new visitors and one of the questions we are often asked

is whether or not we are open on the Sunday.

"With so many people working full-time, Sunday has become increasingly popular for families to spend the day together.

"The extra day will give us the opportunity to extend the family entertainment aspects of the Southport Flower Show and hopefully open it up to

wider audience."

Mr Bradshaw added: "The opening day of the show is always special with the emphasis on the horticulturist and keen gardener.

"Many people come to see the exhibits and displays at their very best and want to be on the showground when trophy winners are announced.

"These traditions will be up-

held and special effort will be made to preserve the horticultural interests throughout the four days."

Adult gate price for 1997 will be £9, or £8 for senior citizens. Both prices have a £1 deduction if the ticket is bought in advance.

Prices for young people are £3 or £3.50 and wheelchair occupiers have a £4 concession.

Pupils' sporting chance

PUPILS with special needs will demonstrate how learning difficulties are no barrier to sport next week.

They are taking part in a basketball contest on Wednesday in Blackpool's showpiece sports centre.

The resort's council has teamed up with special schools and Lancashire Sports Development Officer Mark Botterill to organise the event at Stanley Park.

Around 90 youngsters with moderate learning difficulties from across Lancashire will

take part in the competition. It is being co-ordinated by Great Arley School in Thornton, near Blackpool.

The event is the second in a series of five events sponsored by the Lancashire Playing Fields Association.

It follows a highly successful cross-country contest in October that provided many special needs pupils with their first experience of competition.

The basketball competition start at 10.30 am and will run until 1.15pm.

Hospital takes action on samples

Holy water can spread infections

HOSPITAL chiefs in Preston are sterilising Holy Water - on health grounds.

They have taken the action amid fears that water from holy shrines can make patients sicker.

A group of around 80 infection control nurses from the North West met last month and heard of a patient who had become infected after being sprinkled with the water.

Shrines

Investigations found that many of the waters brought back from shrines including Lourdes, Knock and Walsingham, contain bacteria which are known to cause infections of the skin and can seriously affect burns patients.

Preston's infection control

By SARAH GOLDTHORPE

nurses recommended to consultant microbiologists that the water should be steamed under high pressure to eliminate the rogue bacteria.

And after discussing their intentions with hospital chaplains and other religious leaders, they agreed that all Holy Water brought to Royal Preston Hospital would undergo the same treatment.

Maureen Wilson, a clinical nurse specialist for infection control in Preston, said no-one had objected because the spiritual potency of the waters remained unaffected.

She said: "I wasn't the instigator of this but all I did was to try and make the water safe for the patients of Preston and respect their religious beliefs.

"But it certainly makes life a lot easier. In particular with

burns patients when the skin is broken, some bacteria stops the burn healing and in some cases can cause a lot of life-threatening infections.

"We decided it was a good idea to sterilise and now we just advise people that the water may cause an infection.

Problems

"So far the chaplains tell me there's been no problems at all."

Father Benedict Ruscillo, who oversees the Holy Shrine at Ladywell, near Preston, today agreed that sterilisation of water from shrines would not in any way harm its spiritual properties.

He said: "It would not affect it. The trouble is that when you bring water back from abroad all kinds of things can get into it."



DIGGING IN: Former Priory High School pupil John Counce is assisted by Kevin Harrison and Priory pupils.

Old boy helps school dig its way to a greener future

A PENWORTHAM high school has branched out with a new landscaping scheme funded by an old boy.

Priory High has had benches installed around the school grounds, new stone flags and 40 trees planted in eight-foot stakes.

The whitebeam trees were planted by the International Tree Foundation, formerly chaired by John Counce, who was a pupil at Priory from 1959 to 1964.

When he retired from the ITF he was given a gift of money and was able to pass £750 on to the

school to get the landscaping scheme off the ground around 12 months ago.

Mr Counce planted the first of the 40 trees which have been arranged by 12 students over a two-day period.