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# Home, home on the range

Story by Mike Starke/Pictures by Leslie Wiggs

**F**ORT Monagh and Silver City—it could almost be the Wild West. And the tough areas of Northern Ireland in which these stockades have sprung up are even nick-named "Indian Country."

These "forts" with their high corrugated iron perimeter fences house one, two and sometimes three companies of soldiers on peacekeeping duties in the province's hot spots.

Belfast's Andersonstown area—staunchly Catholic and the scene of much bloody strife—has four of these new camps which were built after Operation Motorman last summer when troop concentrations reached an all-time high and every nook and cranny became "home."

When the Army set about establishing a strong presence in residential areas of the city there was a dearth of the factories and derelict buildings which they had occupied elsewhere. In some cases they moved into schools for a short time before the new camps began to rise out of waste ground.

The technique became a pattern. Sappers threw up a high corrugated-iron fence to thwart snipers, then local contractors worked inside this protected area to put up portable huts and prefabs to make some of the comfiest quarters soldiers have known since the present troubles began in 1969.

Glasmullen Camp was the first to go up, on a patch of fairly level waste ground. This meant disturbing a local children's play group using a hut on the site, but the Army provided two brand new huts a

few yards outside the gleaming tin fence which has earned this camp the name Silver City.

Safe inside the tin screen and a thick brick blast wall, SOLDIER found two companies of troops settled in to the relative comfort of the camp. Relaxing in the canteen, a soldier of 1st Battalion, The King's Own Scottish Borderers, said: "This is the best accommodation we've been in on tours here. There's space in this camp—you're not confined like before." A comrade quipped: "There's one toilet for every day of the week—we're living in luxury compared with the rest." A third added the reservation: "They're a bit noisy, these huts. The walls are only cardboard really, but it's better than a factory floor."

Sharing Silver City with The King's Own Scottish Borderers was a company of 1st Battalion, The Green Howards. A sergeant praised the shower facilities which have done away with the queuing he suffered in the past. He added: "Last year some of the lads were sharing mattresses; this year we've all got one each."

Recreation is a problem for the troops confined within their stockades. But there are plenty of television sets to watch and there are ambitious plans for squash courts, sauna baths and even bowling alleys to relieve the boredom.

Nearby MacRory Park camp dominates another corner of the area. The waste ground here was acquired last November

The bombed out Woodburn Hotel (above) once more opens to guests in the form of troops. Below: High corrugated-iron fences prevent sniper fire finding its mark and make the new camps (right) look like Western forts. Left: Showers are a boon in the new camps.



