

# The Military Survey (Geographic) Association



## New Year 2012 Newsletter



### Issue 43

#### PRESIDENTIAL JOTTINGS

This will be my second opportunity to contribute through the medium of The Association Newsletter and, as with the first time around, I will start by wishing you all a very happy and prosperous 2012.

During the past year, your committee has started to implement subtle but important changes to the (perceived) image of our Association. Angus has dwelt on the action that has been taken so far and the reasons for it in our last Newsletter and I won't attempt to repeat this. At all events, any changes to our Terms of Reference will need to be approved at this year's AGM.

Angus concluded by asking for feedback from you with regard to how these changes were received and I am pleased to announce that since then, one letter has poured in! I would like to thank Tim Holt for taking the trouble to put his thoughts on paper and would welcome further comment from our membership on how we are doing. The part of Tim's letter that concerned the Association was generally in favour of the changes to our modus operandi but there was some criticism of the disproportionate influence of officers in the development and continuing running of the Association together with the consistent use of the same venue for our reunions.

In response to his second point, I feel I should comment that holding our reunion/AGM at 135 Squadron resulted in what was probably the lowest attendance in our history. As regards the matter of officers controlling the committee, it is true that the proportion of retired officers on it is greater than that in a military unit, for instance, but at the risk of stating the obvious, we have an AGM partly for the purpose of electing a committee chosen by the membership. Closer scrutiny of the present committee will also reveal that with one exception (the Chairman) all of the retired officers on it were commissioned from the ranks. Broadly speaking, club and association committees are comprised of those who are willing to serve and it invariably takes a certain amount of arm-twisting to persuade individuals to 'volunteer'. Nobody wants a bunch of entrenched timeservers guiding the Association and new blood would be welcomed with open arms.

As Military Survey tradesmen, we were a fairly disparate bunch with very different skills sets and it is natural and encouraging to see that the various specialist groups have been holding their own reunions – personally, I would make every effort to attend the next 'Fieldie' event where we could talk the talk, as it were. There has been some progress in seeking to give our Newsletter a wider circulation to include a broader readership, including the TA and the groups who prefer a pure reunion type gathering of specialists to the obligation of spending an hour out of the day at an AGM. Improved communication of this sort may well serve to avoid clashes similar to that which occurred last year, when the Military Survey Association and Repro held their reunions on the same day - to nobody's benefit.

All contributions and suggestions concerning the way forward to make our Association more relevant to its members – not to mention attracting new recruits – will be very welcome. I look forward to hearing from as many of you as possible and to seeing you at our forthcoming Reunion/AGM in September.

**Bob Avenell**

**MILITARY SURVEY ASSOCIATION REUNION DINNER**

**FRIDAY THE 7th OF SEPTEMBER 2012**

**FOLLOWED BY:**

**MILITARY SURVEY ASSOCIATION LUNCHEON & AGM**

**SATURDAY THE 8<sup>TH</sup> OF SEPTEMBER 2012**

**Location: DENNISON BARRACKS - HERMITAGE**

Your Committee with the kind permission of Commander JAGO, Col Mark Burrows, extends an invitation to members to attend a semi formal (jacket and tie) restaurant style and service (i.e. **separate single tables, no seating plan, meal served**) three/four course dinner at the Officers Mess Hermitage on Friday night the 7th September 2012. On the following day, Saturday, at lunchtime (**see below**) we shall reconvene in the Sgts Mess for drinks, snacks and lots of chat (photo history available). In mid afternoon, we will hold a **VERY SHORT** AGM with prize presentation and further acclimatisation at the bar with closure at about 1730hrs or later.

To allow the dinner to proceed we have to start planning for this very soon and will be unable to justify the costs involved unless we can get substantial support from members. If support for a dinner is not there then we will revert to a simple gathering together on the Saturday afternoon.

Even with a generous subsidy of £1000 from Association funds by the committee it is expected that a dinner, wine included, for fifty to one hundred persons would cost £30 to £40. Put simply this compares favourably with an evening out in good hostelry and we hope members will be keen to support this venture.

However, we need to know, much earlier than normal, what the attendance might be and thus we ask that members make an early commitment by responding **with a cheque** before the **19 March**. **This will not be cashed until we are sure sufficient members have signed up to attend**. If enough support is not forthcoming then these cheques will be destroyed (shredded) rather than being cashed and members notified accordingly in the next newsletter.

**Lunch in the Sgts Mess will comprise bar snacks which members will order and pay for individually on the day, worry not – lunch will be over an extended period!**

We do hope to provide transport on the Friday evening to local hotels and hope to persuade the unit to allow the use of accommodation in the various messes on a repayment basis. We shall keep you informed of this, if successful, through the next newsletter.

**It is vital**, given the difficulties and cost of catering, **to establish firm attendance figures early** and we request that you return the attached form **ASAP – but no later than 19 March 2012**.

**Mick Perry - Event Organiser - Problems, enquiries** Tel 01635 37510; Email [mandpdperry@sky.com](mailto:mandpdperry@sky.com)

**URGENT ----- RETURN THE FORM ON THE LAST PAGE ----- URGENT  
BEFORE 19<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2012**

## **News from the Military Front**

### **RSM's Column**

Firstly, I would like start by wishing you all a happy New Year and good luck for 2012. Time is marching on and I shall soon be heading off to pastures new, has it really been almost 2 years? Well the fact that I have survived my second Christmas period confirms it. The build up to Christmas was busier than ever despite the best efforts of the continued budget constraints. The soldiers had their traditional hearty meal served by the tentative looking upper echelon, this year accompanied by the Regiment's version of Gareth Malone and the Officers' Mess Choir. As has become customary the QM and his charity raffle rounded off the Christmas meal which, it must be said, was a treasure trove of goodies.

The Officers and Seniors verses the Corporals' Mess football match saw the CO adopt his slot at the heart of the defence and the RSM play in a twin frontline with the SMI (Italy would have been proud). After a hard fought first half the teams went in at half time on a level par at 0-0. The second half was a very different story, as could have been predicted the fitness of the younger Cpls took effect in a flurry of goals, in all 7. If not for the rather dubious penalty the Officers and Seniors would have lost 7-0, but 7-1 was the final result.

The Christmas festivities continued with the WOs' & Sgts' Mess hosting the Officers Mess for Christmas drinks; these carried on into the small hours, leading to the usual group of LE fraternity paying homage to the WOs' & Sgts' Mess, their ancestral home.

### **Redundancy**

The worries surrounding Tranche 2 of the redundancies did little to distract the Regiment from remaining firmly fixed on ensuring that the forces in Afghanistan continue to receive the level of Geospatial support that has gone a long way to protecting us from Tranche 1. If you are followers of the news you will undoubtedly be aware that we have recently faced Tranche 2 of the redundancy, and unfortunately we will be losing one LE Captain, name to be announced on the 12 Jun 12.

### **RE Games 2011 by LCpl T J Lofts**

42 Engr Regt attended the RE Games on 6 – 8 Sept 2011 with the number of the teams having to apply their skills across a number of different events. These events consisted of football, rugby, swimming and water polo, squash, mountain bike racing, triathlon, cross country racing, clay pigeon shooting and fishing.

On arriving at Waterbeach station the teams settled into the 4-star accommodation with the other players from across the Corps. Sqn bars started opening around 1800hrs to allow the finest athletes of the Corps to hydrate themselves before the next two challenging days ahead.

After an early rise for breakfast and a queue half a mile long it was time for the welcome speech from the CO of 39 Engr Regt, who were hosting the event. With sore heads and extremely (de)hydrated players the games were about to begin. With a great turn out for the rugby, under the management of WO2 Dave Hamilton, we managed to get through to the knockout stages of the games, however due to work commitments we couldn't carry this through therefore having to withdraw.

With an inexperienced football team, under the guidance of SSgt Rob Coleman, we managed to play some good football, however didn't manage to make it through the group stages.

Under the direction of Captain L Chestnutt the swimming and water polo team made their way to the aquatic centre, to no surprise at all it wasn't the usual heated indoor pool, but a non-heated outdoor pool. With the pink swimming hats and a quick warm up the swimming got underway. Much to our

surprise both teams put up a good fight with both men and women's team hitting 1<sup>st</sup> place. After a short rest and bite to eat it was back to the pool to compete in the water polo. With only 2 players having played water polo before, we were sure to be going home the same day. Putting up a great fight we managed to go through to the semi-finals on the next day. After losing players to work commitments or other events the following day, players from other teams were asked upon to make up the team. After a valiant effort from all the team members we unfortunately didn't make it through to the final. After a short rest we then played for 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> place and again with a great effort we finished 4<sup>th</sup>.

Whilst the swimming was commencing the mountain bike race took place that morning with a great effort from SSgt Gaz Watkins, Captain G Jarvis and Captain 'Tiny' Simmonds we managed to take 1<sup>st</sup> place team with 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> individual winners also.

In the afternoon SSgt Gaz Watkins took to the countryside for the cross-country race taking 1<sup>st</sup> place individual male. With a great turn out for the fishing and clay pigeon shooting, we however didn't manage to make it through to the finals or take 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> place. With only a team of 2, Lt Col T Wilby and Captain Le Clerc, we put up a good fight against a very strong opposing team and didn't manage to make it through to the final. A special mention must go to Spr Jamie Eames who officiated in the football across the 2 days.

After 2 days of fierce competition the men and women of 42 Engr Regt (Geo) managed an overall place of 7<sup>th</sup> out of about 20 units that took part in the RE Games. A huge well done and great effort for all those that took part in this year's events, hopefully next year we can build on this and take a slot higher on the leader board.

**Promotions**

The promotions have at last begun to be given at the WO1 level. After a rather dry year last year there were three WO2s selected for WO1: WO2 (SSM) Dom Andrew; WO2 (SSM) Chris Sharpe; WO2 (SSM) Will Robinson also being selected as the RSM (Designate) of the Regiment. Congratulations also go to WO2 Andy Sergeant who selected as Sergeant Major and will take over as the SSM 16. At the time of writing we await with anticipation for the results of the SSgts to WO2 board.

I will sign off now.

*'Once a Sapper, always a Sapper'!*



**WO1 (RSM) Conetta RE,  
Hermitage Station**

Congratulations to WO1 (RSM) Alfie Conetta on his recent selection for a commission. RSM Conetta has over the last two years proved to be a very strong supporter of the Association and his many efforts have been much appreciated. We wish him well in his new career in the Mess on the opposite side of the sports field.

**Treasurer's Summary: January 2012**

Reserve Account	£7,716.37
Geo Fund	£2,016.98
Current Account	£820.58

**Alf Isherwood**

**News from the Civilian Front – Jan 2012**

**Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR)**

In response to the SDSR announcement for a reduction of 25% in MOD's civilian staffing, 25,000 over the next five years, 52 DGC staff (majority being administrative grades) were offered Voluntary Early Release in this current financial year, although not all have accepted the offer. Staff departures have been ongoing since Oct 11 with the majority departing at the end of Mar 12. In addition we have received notice of further reductions to civilian manpower in the MOD between 2015 and 2020. The original baseline reductions were 25%, 25,000 civilian posts by 2015, now this has been extended to a total 33%, an additional 7,000 civilian posts from 2015-2020 bringing the total reductions to 32,000 civilians leaving 53,000 civilians by 2020.

In Nov 11 the Department announced a new Voluntary Early Release Scheme (VERS 2) which would run for two years from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2014. Under the scheme, there would be 8 dates of departure over the two years. Applicants would be asked to state their preferred leaving date and also whether they would be prepared to consider an earlier or later date of departure. Within the DGC 150 applications were submitted, decisions to release or not will be made over the coming months.

**ICG Estate Rationalisation - DGC/JAGO Merger**

The DGC/JAGO Merger Study was completed with the main recommendation being that a merger is not recommended without co-location. Therefore any merger will depend on future location decisions.

**Programme to Rationalise and Integrate the DIS Estate (Pride)**

The study into the possible relocation of DGC to RAF Wyton has highlighted wider business benefits. The likely timeframe for the relocation, if approved, would be 2016 at the earliest.

**Production – Support to Ops**

DGC support to Ops continues with the production of a range of geospatial products, standard series topographic line maps and numerous digital datasets to meet specific customer requirements. Web mapping services have been developed for operational areas and geospatial viewers published across Defence. Work is continuing at a pace in the production of a 5K fully attributed digital dataset over the Helmand operational area.

**Production Systems Upgrade**

Work is continuing on implementing Foundation Divisions (formerly Production Division) Production Generation Upgrade. The new equipment and applications are being extensively used in supporting the production of operational products. This capability will allow greater production flexibility and will lead to reduced production timelines and improved re-use of geospatial data.

**Collaboration with Ordnance Survey (OS)/Continuous Improvement (CI) Initiatives**

Last year OS staff were invited to DGC to share knowledge and expertise of their lean journey and working practices to enable DGC to embed a continuous improvement culture within the organisation. Since then work has continued with nominated DGC staff receiving CI training and subsequently carrying out process flow analysis on some of DGC's production flowlines in order to identify inefficiencies, bottlenecks, and document best practices. Initial results have proved very promising with improvements being identified and implemented all of which has led to a reduction in timelines in selected areas. The intention is to roll the CI initiative out to other areas within DGC.

**Notable Retirees**

August 2011 – Richard Kim  
September 2011 – Nigel Kenny  
October 2011 – John Swain  
December 2011 – Dave Weightman, Ron Shepcar

**Pete Dowell**

**Old Boys Reunion (Picnic in the Park)**

**If you ever served at Feltham then this event offers an opportunity to meet up with many of those people that you used to work with.**

This years event will take place provisionally on Friday 8 June 2012 (to be confirmed), those previous members of the Garrison, military as well as civilian, who wish to attend should send their name, contact details directly to:

Tony Ruff – FGSSA Reunion Coordinator Foundation Division,  
Room 019, Hotine Building,  
Defence Geographic Centre,  
Elmwood Avenue,  
Feltham TW13 7AH  
Tel: 0208 818 2702 or e-mail: [Tony.Ruff943@mod.uk](mailto:Tony.Ruff943@mod.uk)

**Committee Christmas Meeting and Dinner**

Arriving, happily without the forecast of snow, at the Carnarvon Arms, Highclere, near Newbury, on Thursday the 13th December 2011, I soon had cause to consider my attire as I was greeted by what I thought to be a Welsh lady enquiring as to whether I was there for the “will reading”. This was before I had even ordered a drink and duly found out that she had purported to be a Russian lady who had previously engaged other members arriving for our rather longer committee meeting than normal which preceded our Committee Christmas Dinner. She had shown a great deal of interest in their former lives – Security officer please take note.

Nine committee members and two guests, John Elder and Peter Wood, (a new idea to invite ex committee members as paying guests) sat down in candle light to sample the delights. The candle light was not a planned event, it had occurred during the meeting which it slightly hampered to begin with, but was the result of a power failure which fortunately had not affected the kitchen. As experienced last year, the fare was well presented and in the added warm and jovial atmosphere it proved a good beginning to the Christmas Festivities and a fitting farewell from the Committee to the outgoing stalwart Treasurer Mike Gowlett.

**Rod Siggs**

**Visit [www.militarysurvey.org.uk](http://www.militarysurvey.org.uk)**

## The Square

Everyone who served in the Regiment between 1963 and 1985 will undoubtedly remember the vast, windswept parade square at Barton Stacey. This bleak expanse of tarmac was the venue for the regular Wednesday parades and latterly the PTI Pete Hunt realised that it was the ideal course for the second part of the BFT as he could watch and suitably encourage those struggling with the mile and a half run.

Phillip Robinson recalls when he was OC 19 Squadron a parade in a fog with about 50 feet visibility as one of his enduring memories of Barton Stacey. Watching 13 Squadron disappear into the gloom and wondering whether we would collide when 19 Squadron moved off was interesting, but there was the reassurance that nobody at the saluting base (Peter Andrews I think) could actually see what was happening. By the time we came to advance in review order I think that some of 19 had got mixed up in 13 and vice versa, but at that point Peter called a halt to proceedings.

Phillip was to return to the Regiment later as 2i/c and again he remembers the square. The Regiment was rehearsing for a parade some time in 1985 when John Read was CO. As 2 I/C he took the parade states for RHQ, 13 and 19 Squadrons from the RSM. Then when John arrived on parade marched forward to convey the figures. As he halted and saluted his mind went a complete blank (a not unusual occurrence!) Accordingly he blurted out what seemed to be a reasonable figure, something like "12 Officers and 234 men on parade, SIR!". John leaned forward slightly and sotto voce asked, "Is that correct Phillip?" Equally quietly he felt obliged to reply, "I haven't a clue John". With a faint smile he said loudly " Thank you Major Robinson" at which he saluted, about turned and marched back to his due place.

Few amusing events occurred on A Camp square but one springs to mind. The Regiment was practising for the Queen's Birthday Parade sometime in the mid Sixties and it was progressing very badly. Each advance in review order ended with a machine gun like staccato of crashing feet and over 200 soldiers scattered seemingly at random across the square. After a number of repeats the RSM, the inimitable and imposing figure of Nick 'Lofty' Carter addressed the Regiment in absolute exasperation. In no uncertain terms he described the lack basic military skill and his amazement that such well educated soldiers seemed unable to count accurately into the teens. He finished his tirade with the threat that we would have one last chance to get it right and if that failed we would return to practise over the next weekend until we did get it right.

We were duly 'right dressed' and following the command to advance in review order we set off with a palpable feeling of tension in the air as over 200 men duly counted their paces. With one uniform sharp crack the squadrons halted in perfect unison.....almost! There followed two further footsteps from the direction of 22 Squadron before there was total silence. There, one pace in front of the immaculately ruler straight front rank stood the loneliest soldier in Hampshire. The silence was broken by the rapid crunch, crunch, crunch of the RSM's shoes as they raced across the square towards the unfortunate soldier who couldn't count. He crashed to a halt and in his best parade ground bellow RSM Carter demanded to know "*Why are you there?*" A slight pregnant pause and then a small voice replied "*'cos they all stopped Sir!*" The Regiment as one attempted to stifle their mirth, shoulders quivering, mouths spluttering. Another pregnant pause and then the RSM's footsteps receded to the edge of the square and finally we carried on and we did have the weekend off.

*The square 25 years on.*



## “Can You Help The Secretary?”

I send out approximately 250 emails for each edition of our newsletter, plus anything else the committee think members of our Association should be notified of, and the following email addresses continually fail which indicate that they have been changed and I have not been notified. This means that a large number of our membership are not receiving their newsletters OR they are accessing them directly from the website, albeit a month later than they should receive them. **Do you** recognise them as one of yours or a previous one of your friends? If so please contact me (your Secretary) or get the owner to email me [rod.siggs@ntlworld.com](mailto:rod.siggs@ntlworld.com) so I can change it. Thank you.

[aj.barnes@ntlworld.com](mailto:aj.barnes@ntlworld.com) [andybarton.newbury@virgin.net](mailto:andybarton.newbury@virgin.net) [bill@wellshot.wanadoo.co.uk](mailto:bill@wellshot.wanadoo.co.uk)  
[billvo@burgate.freeseve.co.uk](mailto:billvo@burgate.freeseve.co.uk) [bnsaunders@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:bnsaunders@ukonline.co.uk) [colbald@cytanet.com.cy](mailto:colbald@cytanet.com.cy)  
[david.bernasoni@ukgateway.net](mailto:david.bernasoni@ukgateway.net) [DickWhittington1@aol.com](mailto:DickWhittington1@aol.com) [doncawthra@breathemail.net](mailto:doncawthra@breathemail.net)  
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[machawkins@hawkeditions.freeseve.co.uk](mailto:machawkins@hawkeditions.freeseve.co.uk) [marcusmaunder@hotmail.com](mailto:marcusmaunder@hotmail.com)  
[michelle@awalnet.ner.sa](mailto:michelle@awalnet.ner.sa) [neil@woodend1.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:neil@woodend1.fsnet.co.uk) [painter.frgreen@cableol.co.uk](mailto:painter.frgreen@cableol.co.uk)  
[robert@eastaficanarts.fsbusiness.co.uk](mailto:robert@eastaficanarts.fsbusiness.co.uk) [roysabine@esatclear.ie](mailto:roysabine@esatclear.ie)  
[sapper@cawthra8609.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:sapper@cawthra8609.fsnet.co.uk) [stephen@familybooks.freeseve.co.uk](mailto:stephen@familybooks.freeseve.co.uk)  
[twesley@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:twesley@ukonline.co.uk) [veronicatsmith@aol.com](mailto:veronicatsmith@aol.com) [ye1942@msn.com](mailto:ye1942@msn.com)

**Rod Siggs**

## Streak Remembers

Mick Gowlett and I were in the same intake and reading in the Summer newsletter the story of his disastrous journey home for Christmas in 1954 prompted me to look in my diary for that period.

- 8 Dec. Schick tests. (for diphtheria I believe)
- 13 Dec Went sick, admitted to MRS. 102.2 F. Gargles and pills.
- 16 Dec Better, so back to barracks. Painted beds. (Happy days!)
- 18 Dec Flu epidemic, HQ Company in quarantine.
- 20 Dec Carol service with the Princess Royal.
- 22 Dec Reveille 0330, left camp 0600, left Harrogate 0745, arrived Kings Cross 1230.
- 4 Jan Left home (Godalming) 1.35pm, London 3.30, left Kings Cross 5.10, Harrogate 11, camp 1130. All trains delayed due to heavy snow at home but none up north.

## Military Survey at the 1947 Olympics

Captain RA 'Bill' Morris, AI Trig at the Survey Training Centre, Longleat, was selected for the 1 mile event in the 1947 Olympics and two other military surveyors, Captain DCL Wilde and LCpl John Bickers were members of the relay team that which carried the torch from London to Torquay for the yachting events. Bill Morris retired with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and died five years ago.

Thanks to John Mason for prompting a little research.



**“MAPS & SURVEYS 2012”**

**THE DEFENCE SURVEYORS' ASSOCIATION ANNUAL SEMINAR**

**SATURDAY 16 JUNE 2012**

This year's "Maps & Surveys" Seminar on historical military surveying, mapping and charting will take place at the Royal School of Military Survey on Saturday 16th June 2012. The cost of attendance is £20, to include tea and coffee breaks and a finger-buffet lunch with drinks.

1000-1045 - Registration and Tea/Coffee

1045-1050 – Chairman DSA's welcome in the first-floor lecture theatre.

**1050-1130 – The Gough Map: the first modern map of Britain?**

By Nick Millea, the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

**1130-1210 – Wellington's Surveyors in the Peninsula War.**

By Dr. John Peaty, Defence Geographic Centre.

1210-1320 – Lunch, and display of historical military maps.

1320-1330 - Presentation of Annual DSA Prizes by Major General P.F. Fagan CB, MBE, FRICS, FCMI.

**1330-1410 - Photographic Intelligence Gathering in the Berlin Corridors.**

**1410 - 1450 – Moving Map Displays – Forty Years of support to RAF Navigation by DGC.**

By Richard Chesney, Defence Geographic Centre.

1450-1530 - Tea/Coffee and display of historical military maps.

**1530-1610 – Surveying the “Ulu” – A Troop Commander's tour in Sarawak 1964-1966.**

By Major General (Retd) Roy Wood, DSA.

**1610-1650 – Current “Geo” Operations.**

By Colonel M.R.H. Burrows and others from the Joint Aeronautical and Geospatial Organization (JAGO).

**1650-1700 - Final Questions/Discussion and Closing Comments by President, DSA.**

Bids to attend this seminar may be made as follows : -

By Email [maptnolan@googlemail.com](mailto:maptnolan@googlemail.com) By Telephone (01635) 253167

By Letter M.A. Nolan, Tall Trees, Broad Layings, Woolton Hill, Newbury, RG20 9TS.

For those arriving by car please include details of car make, model and registration number.

Cheques, which would be appreciated in advance of the day, should be made out simply to DSA and sent to the above address. Refunds will be made for any cancellations notified more than a week before the seminar. Receipt of cheques will be acknowledged and the RSMS will send out a car pass about a week before the event. Anyone wishing to display any historical military mapping or charting or “Survey” memorabilia in the Conference Room Annexe during the day should contact Mike Nolan in advance.

The seminar not only provides a series of fascinating presentations but is also another chance to meet up with old friends.

## **Putting South Georgia on the Map**

**A review by Ron Birch**

### **Introduction**

The recent publication of a 216 page book by the Australian geologist Alec Trendall covering the main surveys of the remote island of South Georgia should be of great interest to those who served on the island with 512 Specialist Team. However it is the wider community of military and past military surveyors to whom the book should be of real value.

The book describes in detail the hardships experienced by the survey team throughout the three expeditions—man-hauling sledges, back packing, mountaineering and camping in primitive conditions for weeks on end with virtually no radio communication. In fact their travelling techniques to reach peaks necessary as survey stations had barely changed from the heroic age of Antarctic exploration.

### **The Island**

The sub-Antarctic island of South Georgia lays some 2000miles due east of Cape Horn. It forms a gentle arc of 170 kilometres in length and some 40 kilometres wide with an icy mountain spine rising out of the Southern Ocean to 3000metres like a misplaced section of the Alps. It is a place of wild beauty and capricious inhospitable weather with all year round snow covering the mountainous interior.

The first journey across the interior was made, famously and involuntarily, by Sir Ernest Shackleton to bring help to other members of his ill-fated Trans-Antarctic Expedition in May 1916. His only mapping aid being that made by Filchner in 1911, barely sufficient for him to identify the direction and distance needed to cover his epic march towards an occupied whaling station.

A brief article appearing in 'The Times' captured the relationship between that explorer and the island, which witnessed both his salvation and his demise. "South Georgia will always be remembered as journey's end for a great British polar explorer, Sir Earnest Shackleton, and that alone is enough to assure it a place in history. His grave lies adjacent to Grytviken whaling station whilst a Cairn and Cross, a memorial tribute set up by his former comrades, stands proudly on the tip of Hope point at the mouth of the cove. "

### **Objective**

The primary objective of the exercise was to map the entire island of South Georgia, which to all intents and purposes had to be treated as unsurveyed. Prior to this only maps of a small part of the island and coastal waters existed, the interior was largely unknown. As no systematic records of earlier mapping attempts existed the new mapping had to commence from fundamental survey principles.

### **Personnel**

In preparation for the expedition the leader, Duncan Carse, decided that two surveyors would be needed for the task. To this aim Carse visited the School (now Royal) of Military Survey in the hope of securing the services of Tony Bomford, a senior survey instructor, to join his party. However although this proved fruitless a national service student, John Heany, volunteered and having undergone 18 months instruction under Tony was accepted alongside another national service surveyor Gordon Smilie. (Tony Bomford was later to figure as Survey leader of the 1955-56 survey.)

Military Survey thus provided the expertise required to carry out the daunting task of mapping a complete country from 'scratch'.

### Survey Expeditions

The first survey took place during 1951-1952 and certainly achieved a great deal but in hindsight the idea of mapping what was basically an unknown island in its entirety was over ambitious. For instance to establish the initial accurately measured base line on which to construct a triangulation system took over one week. It must be appreciated that unlike modern techniques using distance measuring and global technology the only method available was by steel tape, even finding a suitable level straight amongst snow covered ridges for a base line was a major task itself. However an accuracy within two millimetres was obtained from a number of measures.

Further surveys would now be required to complete the task and these took place during 1953-54 and 1955-56. It would be impractical to delve into great detail of the survey expeditions; even perhaps a breach of copyright, but without any doubt, through the endeavours and skill of the survey parties, the primary objective to map the island of South Georgia was accomplished.

### Achievement

The first accurate map of the whole island was undoubtedly the prime achievement of the three South Georgia surveys. The coloured map (DOS 610) at a scale of 1:200,000 was published in 1958 and remained the definitive map of the island for forty-six years. Indeed it was the map used by the British and Argentinean forces during the Falklands war in 1982. The accuracy of the map was controlled by 88 trig stations, 8 base lines, 18 sun azimuths and 7 position line astro fixes.

### Acknowledgements

Included in the acknowledgements printed on the face of the map were the names of A.G. Bomford, G. Smilie and J.B.Heaney, all of which had served with Military Survey. Reference is also made of P. F. Fagan who retraced Shackleton's crossing during 1964-65. Readers will know that he later achieved the rank and position of Major General, Director General Military Survey. Surely accolade of the achievements of these gentlemen within our circles is long overdue.

### The Book and Price

The large format (A4) 216-page book describes the survey expeditions to South Georgia led by Duncan Carse in the 1950s resulting in the first accurately surveyed map of the island being published in 1958. It contains no less than 98 photographs and eight maps depicting the various stages of the surveys.

Unfortunately the book is only available from the author in Australia so postage is an added premium to the publication's price. Potential purchasers should be advised that sea mail can take over 4 months from order to receipt so airmail is the only sensible (but expensive) option.

The price:- Australian \$Aus 40 plus \$Aus20 (if airmail requested) equivalent to approximately £26 plus £13 postage.

When one considers this epic story of the trials and tribulations of a small party of men surviving in Antarctic conditions, combined with its use as a reference system it is certainly value for money. Highly recommended as essential reading for anyone interested in surveying and/or Antarctica.

For payment details go to <http://www.alectrendall.com.au> or better to contact the author direct at [info@alectrendall.com.au](mailto:info@alectrendall.com.au) who will always reply promptly.

**Ron Birch**

**Follow Up to 'Which Unit, Where, Etc'**

This article of a few issues ago reminded me of the first modern print train that was delivered to the SMS in either late 1955 or early 1956.

A tractor unit was delivered on its own and the first trailer and generator was brought to Hermitage from Tolworth by a civilian contractor, I think it might have been Pickfords but I am not sure about that. The drivers who delivered them refused to bring any more as they stated that they were too dangerous to tow such distances! Consequently the MT officer despatched some of our drivers to Tolworth to ferry the remaining equipment to SMS. One of the drivers was 'Derby' Loach, a chappy who came from Worksworth. When asked how he found the driving, he stated "a piece of p---! I don't know what they were beefing about," or words to that effect.

When all the train was assembled at SMS it had to be assessed and certain junior NCO's from the printing school were charged to work in them. 'Scouse' Keith Thompson was the chap who worked the actual print trailer and one of the things he found out was that a Perspex guard on the delivery got in his way when unloading printed paper. He was given the go ahead to have the guard removed. Consequently the side casting of the machine started to move apart and the guard was quickly replaced. Crabtree then had to send engineers out to look at the problem and work out a solution to it. Which, eventually they did.



*One of 14 Squadron's mobiles leaving camp.*

Another incident that comes to mind was on a GOC's annual inspection; a REME team came to check all vehicles in the unit and of course there was one of the old print trains at the SMS. One of the units was taken on road test up towards Chieveley. The lane in those days was very narrow and had many trees growing in the hedgerows, their root systems bulged out into the road somewhat and, lo and behold, the REME expert team managed to collide with one of the tree roots and tore the back off the unit. Oh, dear! Much merriment in the MT department as there had never been an accident when the SMS drivers took them out.

Another incident was in the Storeman Survey block when we were having trouble with one of the starter boxes on one of the guillotines. It was duly reported to the REME mechanics, who sent an electrician to investigate. After poking about in the box for several minutes with his rather large screwdriver there was an almighty flash and bang with the L/Cpl going one way and the large screwdriver going the other and embedding itself into the wall up to the handle. Luckily no one was injured. The screwdriver was about 12 inches length and the blade a half-inch across.

Happy days!!

*Tony Webb*

**From the Website: My 10 months with 6 RASLS RE**

I and three other National Service sappers joined 6 Radar Air Survey Liaison Section at Takoradi in what was then the Gold Coast in West Africa on 26 January 1951. This was almost exactly a year after I had been at 3 TRRE at Guillemont Barracks to do basic field engineer training, then trained as a trigonometrical surveyor at SMS Hermitage, spent 2 cold January weeks at the RE Depot at Barton Stacey, been flown in a chartered civilian Vickers Viking to Accra, with an overnight stop at Gibraltar, and picked up from Accra the following day by 82 Squadron RAF Dakota.

We four new boys soon got used to the routine of starting work early and normally having the afternoons off. This enabled us to go to the beach where I found the sea temperature to my liking and soon learnt to swim. We got used to having a 'boy' to do our chores and banana fritters with our evening meal, but took a little longer, despite the ceiling loofahs, to get used to sleeping under a mosquito net in the sweltering night temperatures at sea level only 5 deg north of the Equator.

We were allowed to buy RAF shoes and long socks from the squadron stores and had our shorts shortened to the length worn by our RAF colleagues. This meant that the only difference in our appearance from the airmen was then the colour of our berets and the fact we had no eagle shoulder badges. The Section even paraded on the weekly squadron parades as number 4 Flight and if the CO, a wing-commander, wasn't present our OC took the parade because as an army major he outranked the 2 or 3 squadron-leaders on the squadron.

We were immediately introduced to the work of the section and I was soon drawing up flight plans for areas to be surveyed in Sierra Leone. Also laying out survey photographs to check that the quality was suitable for map making, as well as co-ordinating the radar scans with the photographs. We worked on Saturday mornings but on Sundays there were occasional excursions along the coast.

During April we were all moved to RAF Eastleigh in Nairobi by RAF Valettas of Transport Command. This was not without incident as the aircraft I was in was forced to stay at Kano for 36 hours with an undercarriage problem, landed at Maiduguri with engine trouble, spent a day at El Fasher with propeller trouble and finally had to wait at Juba in order to follow another aircraft because of a compass problem. At Eastleigh we were in a purpose-built barrack block and had to get used to again doing our own chores. However the night temperatures were better for sleeping because although only 1 deg south of the Equator we were now well inland at over 5,000 ft. We now worked all day and I prepared a number of flight plans. Sundays had occasional excursions, including one to Lake Naivasha which meant going down into the Rift Valley, giving some wonderful views. From our quarters we could see Mount Kenya to the north and Mount Kilimanjaro to the south.

At the end of May I was sent on detachment to Livingstone in the then Northern Rhodesia as briefing sapper with the squadron detachment. I had an office in the airport control tower and my job was basically to keep the navigators' charts up-dated and report on progress by signals back to Eastleigh. I used to meet the Lancasters when they returned from a sortie, collect the charts, prepare my signal, update the charts from signals received from base and then put the updated charts into the aircraft for the next day's sortie. Each Thursday I sent a written report to base via the squadron's weekly Dakota flight from Eastleigh which also brought me any new charts. Although we worked a 7-day week, there were days when for various reasons no flying took place and visits were possible to the nearby Victoria Falls. I also made contact with the local Survey Department and arranged some special visual survey flights for them. Livingstone was a stop on the London- Johannesburg air route and a highlight of aircraft arrivals was that of Comet G-ALZK on a proving flight before it went into service with BOAC.

Late in September, shortly after my 20th birthday, the work at Livingstone was finished and I returned to Eastleigh non-stop in one of the Lancasters. After four months of again having someone to do my chores, I once again I had to get used to barrack life and looking after myself. I was now mainly given the job of correlating the radar readings with the photographs but we also did some outdoor survey work during which we had to carry a theodolite up the Ngong Hills and take observations from the survey

point at just over 8,000 ft. One day several of us acted as passengers in an early Vickers Viscount while it carried out trial manoeuvres from a high altitude airfield before they went into service.

I left 6 RASLS on 30 November to travel overnight by train to Mombassa where I boarded the troopship *Empire Medway* for the journey home. My experience when I was a Sea Cadet helped when it came to slinging the hammocks in which we slept. After a trip of 38 days via Dar-es Salaam, Mauritius and Aden, with Christmas in the Great Bitter Lake (with a fire in the boiler room) and New Year's Eve in the Mediterranean, we eventually docked in Southampton opposite the Queen Elizabeth. Then, after another two cold January weeks at Barton Stacey, I again became a civilian, but with great memories.

**Bruce Peeke**

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### **Life After Military Survey – Russ Garner**

I left Military Survey and emigrated to Australia back in 1993 and worked at a few carto-related council jobs for the next five years. In 1998 I started work for the Australian Military Survey organisation which had been civilianised two years previously and was based in the fine old house called Fortuna. Here I worked the likes of Doug Arman (and his two sons). After a few name changes (ATSE, DTA) it is now known as DIGO: <http://www.defence.gov.au/digo/> and was relocated to the outskirts of Bendigo back in 2008. Chances are that I'll still be there for the next ten years before retirement beckons (or sooner if the house extension mortgage can be paid off).

As for sporting excursions, these ended in 1998 when reoccurring injuries side-lined me, compounded in 2004 when dislocation enforced sporting retirement, and only a couple of weeks before I was to have a knock of tennis with Alan (Oggie) Ogden (now living in South Australia). Nevertheless, (model) railway research (Somerset & Dorset) continues to be an outlet and during a short UK visit last year I bumped into Graham Simpson at the Somerset & Dorset Railway Historical Trust at Midsomer Norton - small world. Also, John South baptised our daughter back in 1997!

**Russ Garner (Chepstow 75A)**

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One of your memories, anecdotes or photographs could have filled this blank space – go on – write down or get is out of the album and share it with our readers.

## Notice Board

### History Matters

#### A Digital Archive of RSMS Course Photographs

The Association is actively supporting a project to preserve in digital form as many of the photographs of Military Survey courses as is possible.

Copies of this digital archive on DVD would be lodged with all relevant libraries and museums so that the photographic record of Military Survey courses and those who attended them would be preserved and be available to future generations irrespective of what happens to RSMS in the future.

It is intended that copies of the archive will be made available to anyone, military or civilian, who has served in or with Military Survey.

Phase one of the project, currently in progress, is to collate together from whatever source possible as many of the photographs as can be found of courses held at the Survey Training Centre, Longleat and at Hermitage up to the point when the traditional trade structure was replaced by the three trade system in the early Nineties. Army Survey Course photographs of all courses up to number 94, the last one, will be included. The Hermitage courses will include those carried for civilian staff from SPC/MCE and the Ordnance Survey. Consideration is also being given to including photographs of Intakes at Harrogate and Chepstow.

The archive will allow users to search for individuals, a course, a trade group or for all the courses held in a given year. The latter will let you see who was there when you were.

The next issue of the newsletter will update you on the project and list courses for which we have not found photographs and therefore need your help.

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### Anecdotes

The Editor really appreciates receiving anecdotes or short pieces that may be of interest to readers and so many thanks to those who have sent contributions in over the last few months.

If your piece hasn't yet made it into the newsletter please don't take offence as I assure you all input will eventually make it into print. Getting each issue to fit the right number of pages (the hardcopy version is printed four up which drives the number of pages) whilst ensuring time sensitive material is included is quite a juggling act hence – some articles get put aside for a future edition.

The bottom line is – please keep the articles flowing in.

**SEND ALL RETURNS BEFORE 19 MARCH 2012 TO:**

M. Perry, 101 Craven Road, Newbury, Berks, RG14 5NL  
Problems? [Then contact me on] [mandpdperry@sky.com](mailto:mandpdperry@sky.com) or Tel; 01635 37510

From: Forename:..... Surname:.....  
Address: - Tel No: - .....  
E-mail: - .....  
Type & Make of transport:.....Registration No .....

**MILITARY SURVEY ASSOCIATION REUNION DINNER 2012**

**I \*shall/\*shall not be attending the Reunion dinner on Friday 7 September 2012; I will be bringing the following guests:**

1 ..... 2..... 3.....

Wine Preference please tick; RED..... WHITE..... ROSE.....  
I enclose a cheque for the proposed DINNER @ £35 per person of £.....

(MADE PAYABLE TO: MILITARY SURVEY BRANCH, REA)

**MILITARY SURVEY ASSOCIATION REUNION LUNCH & AGM 2012**

**I \*will/\*will not be attending the lunch/AGM on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> September. With the following guests NB these can be different from above!**

1..... 2..... 3.....

A small fee will be charged (on the day - for tea & coffee etc) to those persons not attending the dinner.

**PLEASE - PLEASE REMEMBER THE GEO SUPPORT FUND**

.....This year; please send a separate cheque which will certainly be cashed soon.....

**I enclose a separate cheque to support this for £.....**

Please note that any excess funds or overpayments etc will go to the Geo Support fund unless you specify otherwise.

If you have any special dietary needs or require **disabled access** please detail these below and every attempt will be made to accommodate them.

.....

NB military units do not cater for severely disabled conditions (for obvious reasons) and we apologise in advance for any shortcomings that might cause individual inconvenience.

\*\*Delete as appropriate.