
The Military Survey (Geographic) Association



Summer 2014 Newsletter



Issue Number

53

The Regimental Farewell Weekend

The much anticipated Regimental farewell to Hermitage and Newbury came and went in a glorious blaze of sunshine, military precision and meetings with old friends and was very much enjoyed by all the former military surveyors, or 'veterans', as today's soldiers refer to us.



Ron Birch, Gramps Parr and Frank Johnstone at the curry supper



Crowds enjoying the Beat Retreat



The 'Maps and Surveys' Seminar



Colin Price, Mick Ward, Ricky Braybrooke, George Johnson and Dave Taylor at the Open Day



The 'veterans' on the Freedom Parade

An Overview of the Farewell to 42 Engineer Regiment (Geo) A Weekend to Remember – Sadly!

On a very cold January in 1965 me and a bunch of “well promoted” lance corporals from 61C Chepstow duly arrived at Barton Stacey to join with the Regiment for our first posting. We were issued bedding and had to break into our “luxurious hut” (no key available) and freeze the night away minus heating and hot water whilst watching the grass grow through the holes in the wall! Instant thought was demolish the hut and the sooner we leave this place, or even leave “the army”, the better!

Fast forward to the 25th of September 1985 and here I am “a young” captain newly promoted from lieutenant on the farewell parade of 42 Survey Engineer Regiment as it bids farewell to Barton Stacey to join with the School of Military Survey (as was) at Hermitage. Considered a tragic event by me and many others in stark contrast to my arrival way back in 1965!

Fast forward again, this time another thirty years, and once again I find myself, now a decrepit retired major, again heavily involved (albeit on the periphery) in another farewell of 42 but this time from Hermitage as it moves on “up north” to probably its last ever home at far flung Wyton. Another farewell and a gathering of old comrades, many of whom can remember farewells from the fifties and sixties as the Regiment moved around the Middle East and eventually back to the UK.

A sad occasion and in many ways an honour to be involved in the organisation of this auspicious event even if it did involve turning back the clock and attending, once more, pre-move meetings with that feeling that one had never gone into retirement sixteen years ago.



The Corps Band Beat Retreat

But what of the weekend; Friday night cocktails in the Officers’ Mess and curry in the Sergeants’ Mess followed by Beating Retreat by the Corps Band. What an evening! The cocktails were superb as were the petit fours along with an opportunity to meet again those serving and to mingle with local dignitaries, along with the many who have supported the unit over the years including of course the main service charities. The Curry; mess members were joined by us “The Military Survey Branch and Reading & West Berks Branch of the REA” and by all accounts enjoyed a stupendous curry along with the beer missing from the cocktail party in the other place! Beating Retreat followed and a mass of spectators enjoyed a feast of music from a premium military band; what a night.

Returning afterwards to both Messes allowed old comrades to mix with those currently serving and enjoy a drink or two late into the evening.

Saturday saw frantic preparations during the morning in advance of the afternoon’s open day event and what an afternoon - a large crowd of serving and retired Survey members gathered on the sports field to be entertained by stalls and games. Demonstrations of current capabilities were impressive as were the displays of ancient survey equipment laid out to remind all us ‘oldies’ that we were ancient too. We knew it because we could operate it and took delight in assisting the serving “young “soldiers” to set some of it up. It was a good way to interact and to swing the odd lamp or two and one must say the young lads showed great interest and might even have been impressed – for a short while anyway!

We set up our Branch stall in the gymnasium and displayed a running programme of the history of Military Survey in pictures as a precursor to our combined project with the Defence Surveyors’ Association to record the history of Military Survey in photographic form. Visitors were many as were the donations and a fair few new members joined with us on the day. A brilliant afternoon but one that, sadly, many missed.

The evening saw many of us in the Corn Exchange in Newbury for a concert in support of the Royal Engineers Association played by “our” band and if you have never attended such an event – you should. Military bands have a superb range from classical to rock and of course, marching music. Add a little bit of vocal support from within the band’s ranks and it is entertainment that is well worth going to – BRILLIANT - Thanks must go to Mike Payne for the amount of time and effort he put into setting this up and for hosting the attendant dignitaries; well done Mike.



The RSM leads the Regiment into the Market Place for the Freedom Parade.



Branch members on the Freedom Parade

The whole weekend was capped off on Sunday morning when the Regiment exercised the Freedom of Newbury by parading through with town bayonets fixed and swords drawn. Superbly done and, as ever, supported by the Corps Band and not forgetting the addition of a contingent of REA members primarily from the Reading & West Berks Branch but with a very small mattering of our members. A special mention here must go to John South who escaped Australia especially to attend this event and stood proudly on parade to the shame of most of our members who opted out – surveyors of old were never too keen on parades but it would have been nice to see more of us there.

Well done those who were and to our standard bearers who once again took pride of place.

Thank you all.

Mick Perry – Event Organiser

The Cocktail Party

The final cocktail party in the Officers’ Mess held by the Regiment was attended by the great and the good from the local area and was blessed, as was the rest of the weekend, with fine weather. This enabled the guests to spill out into the garden overlooked, as always, by the Buddha which, of course, will remain in place as long as the School is there. On the other hand, for those who know the mess, it had changed somewhat as many of the familiar paintings and items of mess property had already moved on to be replaced by less well known items.

The party itself was a lively affair with many familiar faces amongst the guests; we were all extremely well looked after by our hosts and before we knew it, it was time to move out to the sports field for the Beating Retreat. However, before leaving the mess the Mayor of Newbury made a farewell speech and presentation to the officers of the Regiment followed by a speech from the Commanding Officer.

Although the annual Hermitage cocktail party will be continued by the School and the new residents it will be very different and we will all miss the Regiment in this neck of the woods.

Angus Cross

The Regimental Farewell to Hermitage – Sgts Mess Buffet Supper

So here we were at the Sgts Mess on a very warm and sultry evening and at the start of what promised to be an exciting and possibly sad weekend. Walking into the bar and out onto the patio you could feel the buzz from the mix of the young and old. It was a pleasure to see the younger generation and their families mixing freely and generously with the old boys and girls?

After the usual pre-ambls of laughing at each other's disabilities the serious business of 'catching up' took place. With the flow of ale and an excellent curry buffet everyone relaxed and really started to enjoy themselves. The RSM warmly welcomed all to the mess followed by a studious lecture on the historical basis of 'Beating Retreat'. We were then formed up in three's and marched out to watch the Corps Band which was, I would add, at their very best.

Noel Grimmitt

The Open Day

Finally the Farewell Open Day came and it dawned and stayed bright and sunny which matched the mood of the many 'old boys' and at least one 'girl' (Suzy please note the omission of 'old'). After parking we were met by today's serving '42' soldiers and how pleasant and courteous they were to us vets - as they refer to us. The intention was for everyone to start by passing through the gym – registering with the branch and for non-members to be encouraged to sign up which happily some more than a dozen did. Unfortunately many missed out the gym and with it the chance to browse the Course Photos CD, watch the slide show of days gone by, marvel at the Mess silver and view photographs of more recent times – 15 people thought the course photos so interesting that they promptly bought a copy on CD.

Immediately outside the gym the Regiment had set up displays of old field and air survey equipment all of which meant something to the former surveyors. Whilst taking the collection of old field survey kit from the display cases and setting it up was a relatively easy task, it must have been no mean feat to move the Multiplex and the Cambridge Stereocomparator out into a tent but the effort was much appreciated by the old dot pushers.

There was a variety of stalls set up around the sports field with the beer tent and burger bar proving to be the most popular and acting as a focus for the many 'get togethers' of old friends. Occasionally people could be heard diffidently asking who someone was but in the main we all seemed to still be recognisable despite the long march of time. Throughout the afternoon there were inter-squadron sporting events carrying on interspersed with two sessions from the always immaculate Corps Band.

13 Squadron were set up in their field situation with the new Field Deployable GEOINT kit in box bodies and an ops room in tents. Those who ventured under the cam nets were met by very pleasant and knowledgeable young soldiers who were extremely polite when answering what to them were probably quite dumb questions from men of the mobile train era. The look of incomprehension on one soldier's face was wonderful when Gramps Parr suggested that his bright new truck full of high tech wizardry was the new TACIPRINT – after a meaningful pause the young man politely inquired what a TACIPRINT was! Nothing remains of our times – even the tents and camp beds look amazingly modern and comfortable – no more 180 pounders and pits safari!



TACIPRINT???

All too soon it was time to drift off at the end of a very pleasant afternoon meeting old friends and chatting of times gone by.

Charity Gala Concert

When 42 were finally given a move date during the summer of 2013 I asked the 2ic and CO if there was going to be a final parade before they left and, if there was, might I be allowed to organise a concert in the Corn Exchange in Newbury with the Corps Band in aid of Royal Engineers benevolence.

So June 2013 saw the start of what was to become the Farewell to Newbury weekend. A date was chosen by the CO and I submitted a request for band support. "No chance", was the response from Aldershot, as the date chosen was Armed Forces Weekend and band support that weekend was NOT the gift of Aldershot. However, if we were to slide to the left by a week, there was a possibility; but it would be put in the melting pot to see what came out! So the CO agreed to change the date and I submitted a firm bid, as did the RSM. Even then, there was no guarantee that it would be the Corps Band as they were scheduled to be on tour in Germany for a month and wouldn't be back until the Wednesday before our weekend; and there was already a request for the Corps Guest Night the day after they returned. I could, possibly, have the Rifles Band or the Gurkhas! "No," I said, "I don't think they would be too happy performing for Royal Engineers benevolence."

I even took the liberty of writing to the Chief Royal Engineer and speaking to the Corps Colonel to enlist their support for our combined bid.

In October I chased Aldershot for an answer as the Corn Exchange contract had to be signed and their publicity started. Bingo! A positive response! Yes, we could have band support for three days and YES, it will be the band of the Corps of Royal Engineers. Three days with one unit! Unheard of!

So, the Regiment had a band for their Cocktail Party and Beating Retreat and the Freedom Parade and I had my Band for my Charity Concert!

Emails and telephone calls with the Band ensued, photographs received and posters and fliers designed and printed. Contracts with the Corn Exchange were signed and 2,500 fliers delivered. Invitations were sent out in March to people who I felt should be included and would enjoy the Band in concert. In particular the Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire, the Chief Royal Engineer and Corps Colonel, the Mayor of Newbury, the local Member of Parliament, as well as the CRE GEO and CO, all with their partners.

As many of you will know, the weekend turned out to be an amazing success; the weather was good to us. Friday evening the Band performed the Ceremony of Beating Retreat. Played at the Open Day during the Saturday afternoon and lead the Regiment on parade on Sunday morning and, in between, on Saturday evening, gave a stupendous performance at the Charity Gala Concert in the prestigious and historic surroundings of the Corn Exchange in Newbury.

The musicians excelled themselves, the soloists astounded everyone - and you should have seen the hands of the Xylophonist during the encore! Well, actually, he was so fast it was a job to see where his hands were!

A good eclectic mix of music, from what the Army now calls a multi-capability band, culminating in not once, but twice, JS Bach's Toccata in D Minor. Originally written for organ but transformed into what must be one of the best transitions ever, into a piece for concert band. If only we could have a recording!



Of course the Concert would not have been complete without Hurrah for the CRE and our Regimental march, Wings. Just about every Sapper present stood up to sing the Corps Song and I am sure the rest of the audience wondered what the heck was going on. The Director of Music said to me afterwards

that not only had the band thoroughly enjoyed performing but it was probably one of the few times when the band has had the Corps Song sung back to them. For them, too, it was a fantastic evening!

But what of the real reason for the Concert? (Apart from satisfying an ambition of mine) I still have no final total for how much the Concert raised as I am still waiting to see what VAT I can get back. But I am hopeful that it will be in the region of £3,000.

If you missed the concert and would like to contribute (or even want to donate a bit more) please send you cheques to me (made payable to Reading & West Berks, REA) and your contribution will be added to the total. Remember, the benevolence fund administered by the Royal Engineers Association is there for all of us and our dependants in time of need. Thank you.

Mike Payne

	COMMANDING OFFICER 42 ENGINEER REGIMENT (GEOGRAPHIC) 42 Engineer Regiment, Wyton, Cambs, PE28 2EA	
	Telephone Military: Wyton 95371 Ext 7217 Telephone Civilian: 01480 52451 7217 Facsimile: 01480 44 6667 Email: 42ENGR- HQCO@MOD.UK	
Mr R B Siggs Mil Svy Branch of the REA 11 Merlin Way Southwood Farnborough Hants GU14 0PF		Reference: CO/DO Date: 08 Jul 14

Rod,

I would like to formally offer my sincere thanks to the Military Survey Branch of the Royal Engineers Association for both the financial support they committed to the Farewell Weekend and also the organisational support provided by some key members, most notably Mick Perry.

I believe the whole weekend will be seen as a great success despite it marking a somewhat sad occasion for the geospatial community; we totalled just under 700 people through the gates on the open day. What it did highlight is the strong link between past and present both in terms of our heritage and also people. This link should only grow into the future and I look forward to hosting you and your members in our new home of Wyton Station.

Once again, without your help and support the weekend would only have been a shadow of its actual success.



RM Blunt
Lt Col
CO

Photography Credits

Photographs of the various Regimental Farewell Weekend events used to illustrate articles were kindly provided by Alan Armstrong, Noel Grimmett, Gramps Parr, Mick Perry and Mike Nolan.

Presidential Jottings

Greetings to you all once again – my second missive of the year, whilst like Mafeking, Ladysmith and Kimberly I wait to be relieved! Seriously though, it is always a pleasure to put fingers to keyboard and to impart some (not very) pearls of wisdom to our membership and others. I have no doubt that much of the content of your newsletter will be devoted to the celebration (if that is the word) of the departure of 42 for the Cambridgeshire fens and my piece is not going to be an exception.

It was a real privilege both to attend the event and to be a participant, albeit in a minor way. The list of real contributors is long and distinguished but I must make special mention of the many hours of work Mick Perry put in, liaising with the Regiment on many levels to ensure that your REA Branch was well represented at the main event on Saturday. Many thanks also to Dave Johnson, ably assisted by Alan Gordon, who were responsible for producing the photographic slideshows and other information at our 'stall' in the gym. Among the military personnel, thanks are due in particular to Sergeant Tony Mulcock for his assistance in setting up the said stall, not to mention gratitude to him and his team for clearing up after the event. Your Branch also made a significant financial contribution to the funding of the farewell weekend in keeping with our policy of supporting our serving soldiers wherever and whenever we can.

I am delighted that a replacement for Alan Gordon as editor of this newsletter has been identified in the person of Noel Grimmatt who has whispered to me that he expects to retire from gainful employment in the near future. Being an apparent glutton for punishment he has agreed to take on the herculean task of newsletter editor. I, and I am sure all of our readers, will be relieved to know that your newsletter is in such safe and competent hands.

Noel's new role does, however, leave a vacancy on the committee for a welfare member – a very important position when one of our principal tasks is to ensure that we, as a Branch, contribute meaningfully to the comfort of our serving soldiers. As I have said previously, your committee is not an exclusive club within a club and whilst the confidence of our members in re-electing the officers (Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer) each year is very encouraging, stasis is no substitute for dynamism. I am no longer naive enough to anticipate a sudden rush of volunteers but if you feel that your arm is being gently twisted, please give serious consideration to joining the committee.

It only remains for me to wish you and yours all the very best of health, wealth and happiness

Bob Avenell

Editor's Farewell Piece

"So it's goodbye from me and hello from him" - so read the headline in the autumn of 2007 on Newsletter number 27, Miles Henry's last issue as editor. And now the time has come to repeat the phrase as this is my last edition before I hand over the reins to Noel Grimmatt who, frighteningly, I first met 50 years ago in the Air Survey office in 84 Squadron.

When, by sleight of hand, I managed to get Peter Wood to take over as secretary from me I should have been more aware when years later, following a casual conversation with him, I suddenly became editor! Having said that, I have enjoyed the job with the only downside being the task of putting together a few words about the passing away of old friends.

I would like to thank the very many of you who over the years have sent in anecdotes and photographs of your time in uniform - it is these rather than any efforts by the editor that have kept the newsletter going. I am sure that you will all give the same support to Noel as he takes the newsletter forward.

Best wishes to all our readers

Alan Gordon

Hermitage – The Next Chapter

With the Regiment now gone Hermitage moves on to another chapter in its history whilst the School remains there for a while it will soon be joined by some newly formed units. Tony Keeley explains what is going to happen to the School and Denison Barracks.

Whither the Royal School of Military Survey

On the 10th of July AVM Rigby briefed the School on the plans for relocation. No longer is the term 'aspiration' used for a move to Wyton, now there is a plan in place complete with allocated funding; the RSMS move happening in conjunction with the relocation of the Defence Geographic Centre (SPC/MCE in old speak) to Wyton.

The most likely timeframe for RSMS is July/August 2017 in order to minimise the disruption of training, particularly to the MSc programme. A move of the DGC is likely to be not before 2018, with the subsequent alienation of the Feltham site. With buildings, pavilions, already available at Wyton an RSMS move is not considered problematical and IMINT Wing, currently at DISC, will also re-locate to Wyton at the same time. The move represents the opportunity to have teaching resources designed and built not only for current requirements but also for the future.

The DGC move is more complex particularly with business continuity in mind however, Wyton DGC will be a slimmed down version with the contractorisation of the reproduction facility. Concurrently the detailed planning of the moves including discussion with appropriate Trades Unions is well advanced.

Security Assistance Group (SAG)

The creation of the SAG will bring coherence to the management of Information Activities and Stabilisation Support capabilities under a unified 1* Command. The SAG will be located at Denison Barracks, Hermitage and will be commanded by Brigadier Alastair Aitken. The SAG will officially stand up as a unit on 1 Sep 2014 however, Brigadier Aitken is already in post and resident at Hermitage Station. The SAG HQ element will consist of 41 military personnel (16 Officers, 16 SNCO, and 9 ORs).

The following Units will form the SAG:

- Media Operations Group (MOG)
- Security and Capability Building Team (SCBT)
- 15 Psychological Operations Group (15 POG)
- Military Stabilisation Support Group (MSSG)

A number of units will collocate at Hermitage to form the SAG. The first regular unit will be the Military Stabilisation Support Group (MSSG) which consists of 60 military personnel (20 Officers, 40 ORs). The majority of the MSSG will move to Hermitage during the week of 18 - 22 August.

15 Psychological Operations Group (15 POG) will move to Denison Barracks in 2016 when the proposed package of infrastructure works to support them is complete. The finer detail on the proposed infrastructure package has not yet been confirmed.

Some of the SAG's units moving to Hermitage consist of high numbers of Reserve Forces therefore there will be a surge in weekend training activities at Denison Barracks. These units will be commanded by a relatively small number of full time staff based at Hermitage.

Other units that will move to Hermitage over the coming months and years include:

- The Defence Cultural Specialisation Unit (DCSU)
- Security Group Military Intelligence (SGMI)
- 73 Military Intelligence Company
- The Land Intelligence Fusion Centre (LIFC)

D-Day 70th Anniversary – A Military Survey Story

Newsletter number 51 included an account of 13 Field Survey Company's evacuation from Dunkirk which was based on the personal reminiscences detailed in a letter written by the late Tom Harris to Mike Nolan in 1982 but not previously published. Tom was a 'returner', that is, a soldier who left France in the 1940 Dunkirk evacuation and returned to that country with Operation Overlord. To mark the 70th anniversary of D-Day below are Tom's reminiscences of his time with 4 General Field Survey Section, the unit he joined after 13 Company.

A D-Day Postscript

Training in Wales

After many months stationed in north-west Surrey drawing the France 1:25,000 sheets in eight-hour shifts (the Benson Project that produced the mapping for the Allied invasion), 4th General Field Survey Section RE drove to North Wales in April 1944 to conduct an arduous triangulation survey exercise across Snowdonia, starting from Corwen. The purpose of the scheme was to produce co-ordinates for the Royal Artillery in Snowdonia whose targets were to be on the Isle of Anglesey across the Menai Strait.

The job involved most of us being transformed into either mountain goats or pack-mules, or both, shinning up craggy peaks and tip-toeing through soggy bogs well-laden with plane tables, theodolites, batteries, lamps and helios. Attached to us was an elderly Major Schreiber from Norwegian Survey, Oslo, an expert climber, who inspired us with his selfless dedication and determined endurance. His demonstrations of log-splitting helped us to make quick camp fires and his sure axe-wielding no doubt saved us from self-inflicted injury.

Finally, under canvas in a lush meadow, we produced Sheets Nos. 1 and 2 of the Menai Strait area from a series of 1942 air photographs and based on the new 1944 control, working at night with the aid of hissing Tilly lamps. The exercise provided a sharp contrast to the long period of shift-work in Surrey and was a peaceful preliminary to the inevitable lively activity awaiting us across the Channel.

Normandy 1944 - D-Day + 10

4th General Field Survey Section landed on D+10 from an American-crewed LST, embarking at Gosport pm on D+8. On walking on deck in mid-Channel the next morning, I peered over the sides and was amazed to see that similar vessels alongside both to port and starboard were packed with US troops! I roused Lieutenant Fullard who, using his binoculars, agreed with me that something was wrong. It appeared that the American skipper of the vessel had been "bomb-happy" since his participation in the Salerno landings. He was very much off course and eventually we pulled out of the Omaha Beach bound convoy into which we had strayed. We spent the night of D+9 anchored off Arromanches, attacked by only one German plane.

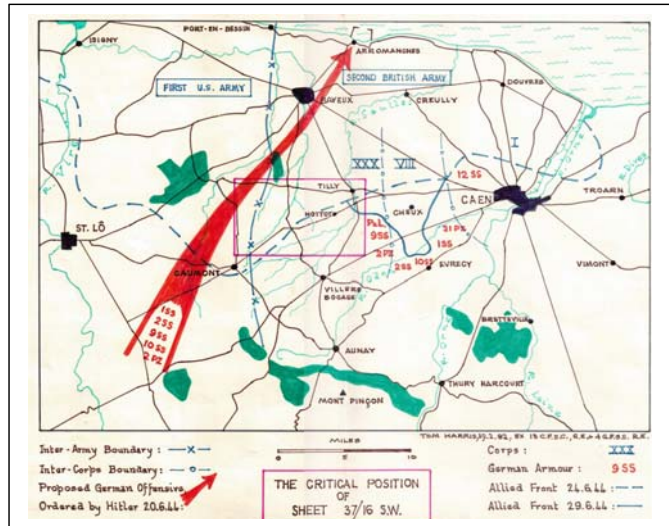
The General Situation around Tilly-sur-Seulles

The capture of Tilly-sur-Seulles was vital to General Montgomery's plan to draw the maximum number of German armoured units eastwards opposite the British and Canadian forces around Caen so that the Americans would have the chance to make an easy breakthrough in the west.

Because of the very strong gales of 19th to 22nd June which held up the delivery of supplies of both material and men (VIII Corps), the anticipated vital EPSOM offensive could not start until 26th June when VIII Corps began its attack towards the River Odon with its right flank protected by XXX Corps which had started southwards, pivoting on Tilly-sur-Seules, on the 25th June.

The result of the EPSOM operation was that by 27th June, Rommel had to move his strategic reserve panzer divisions eastwards from their intended offensive positions (planned by Hitler on the 20th of June for an advance on Caumont to Bayeux and the coast at Arromanches). The River Odon was crossed and a considerable British salient threatened the area south-west of Caen in spite of there being eight Panzer Divisions along the twenty-mile stretch of Second Army front.

Map Sheet No.37/16 SW



This particular sheet, originally made by 520 Corps Field Survey Company, was re-captured from the enemy when 50th Northumbrian Division finally took the key village of Tilly-sur-Seulles on the 19th of June after a week of fierce fighting. The addition of German grid, legend, and details of east and west adjoining sheets clearly demonstrated the speed and efficiency of the enemy's survey units in the field. The following items, however, were omitted from the German printing, "GSGS 4347, 4000/2/44, 520 RE, 1183/122."

In action with Sheet No. 37/16 SW

Just after the capture of Tilly, the 4th General Field Survey Section, based at Creully, was given the task of providing basic co-ordinates and levels for the Gunners. Thus, in a 15 cwt truck, Lieutenant Fullard the OC, with a driver and myself tried to find out the enemy's current positions to the south of Tilly. The information given by a local HQ we later discovered to be entirely incorrect. After a quick "recce" from the damaged tower of Tilly church, we drove via Longraye Bridge (788663) and arrived at the crossroads, Le Lion Vert (796648). We turned east and approached the village of Hottot intending to reconnoitre from its church tower (823657).

From the rear of the truck I saw no troops, no movement of any kind, no life, only dead cattle and the outskirts of a shattered village. I banged on the cab for the driver to stop. Lieutenant Fullard was puzzled but I explained that we appeared to be already well forward of our own lines and that if we went further we would be shot off the road by the enemy. Then, the OC noticed that Hottot church tower had been destroyed already. The driver was told to turn round pronto and to creep back slowly to Le Lion Vert, making no dust and there to turn right (north) and to "go like the clappers". As we made that turn a Tiger tank appeared slowly coming towards us from the west.

The following day I was on the track which ran outside the south wall of the Chateau Cordillon (810659). I held up a levelling staff. A burst of machine-gun bullets from the trees to the south peppered the wall just above my head! Down I went and put on my helmet. After a few minutes wait I waved the staff around. No response. We moved on westward towards La Taille (794663).

Just past the chateau wall I heard noises coming from a radio set which seemed to be in a ditch just behind the north hedge of the track. Something moved. Up came a well-camouflaged helmet beneath which was a short, stocky private. I asked him what he was doing in a ditch and he replied that he was a member of a forward patrol! Remembering the Hottot road episode of the day before, I asked the infantryman where his Company had then been positioned. He pointed to some woods a good half-mile to the north. He was very keen to know what I was doing "walking about in the open". Briefly I tried to explain and received 'an unsolicited tribute' to RE Survey, "Blimey! I wouldn't have your job for anything!"

Sheet 37/16 SW might once have been "fixed" on a metal printing plate, but it also for ever etched on my mind.

Legion d'Honneur Award for Veterans

In conjunction with events to mark the 70th Anniversary of the Normandy landings, the Government of France has advised the Ministry of Defence that it wishes to award the Legion d'Honneur to all surviving veterans not only of the landings but also the wider Battle for Normandy, the Invasion of Provence (Operation Dragoon), the Liberation of Paris and the Liberation of France. MOD approval has been given for recipients to wear the decoration.

The invitation and application form can be accessed here at [N70 Ld'H veterans application invitation](#).

Anyone eligible for this award should apply to:

Mr Simon Lane, Pers Trg DS Sec Commemorations Augmentee; 6-C-01 Main Building,
Ministry of Defence, Whitehall, LONDON SW1A 2HB

His telephone contact number is 02072183029 and e-mail: PersTrg-DSSec-CommemAug1@mod.uk
A cut-off date has not been indicated but we are advised the offer will not be open-ended.

Chepstow Reunion

Yours truly suffered a terribly deprived childhood and went through the gates of Chepstow Army Apprentice School (later College) 50 years ago this year. Accordingly, a few "old boys" are getting together to celebrate the occasion at the Beachley Old Boys Association (BOBA) Annual Reunion at Chepstow in September. If you are reading this and did not know of this celebratory get together and were in Group 64C, Chepstow and wish to join us then contact me ASAP. (Contact details at rear of this newsletter.)

Rod Siggs

Plane Tabling

The article by Mick Clowes in the recent Newsletter regarding the last possible use of plane tabling in Military Survey reminded me of an amusing incident which took place in 84 Field Survey Squadron during 1957.

A small detachment from the Squadron was deployed on the Northern Territories in Hong Kong under the command of a young National Service officer. The survey was to be undertaken using plane table methods.

The task soon became well behind schedule mainly due to the night fog and mist which swirled around into late morning being compounded by the heat of the day increasing reflection on the surface. Worried by pointed reminders received from his OC back at HQ in Malaya the officer called a 'Napoleonic' assembly of his team to spell out the need for more speed and improved performance. However one National Service sapper, Ernie Pickering I believe, raised the question "What about the haze sir?" The Officer paused for thought then answered "Yes, OK, you can use that method if you wish" Naturally a deadly hush overcame the team awaiting the exit of their officer before busting into fits of laughter.

I do not think that anyone ever enlightened the officer in question.

Ron Birch

From Our Website
Peter Bell-Young's Memories

My first memories are attending the recruiting office in Brighton then, after what seemed ages, suddenly finding myself on a train to Taunton in Somerset to report to the Army Apprentice School at Cothelstone Manor Camp at the foot of the Quantock Hills. Some months later the camp closed down and whereas most A/Ts transferred to the AAS at Chepstow, my transfer was to AAS Harrogate in Uniacke Barracks.

The first year was taken up with drill under CSM Kelly of the Irish Guards, selective trade training and education to prepare for the ACE First Class exam. I was selected for surveying (Topo, Trig and Cadastral). Fantastic training and days out on the neighbouring moors in both topo and trig. Trig saw us using the Watts 5inch theodolite, later to be replaced by the 3.5 inch CTS model, and in topo the usual clinometer and plain table boards. I remember having to learn how to soak the linen backed cartridge paper in water before pasting and stretching it over the board and leaving it to shrink before embarking on the task of chasing contours!

In those days Uniacke Barracks had a number of timber 'spider' accommodation blocks each comprising six barrack rooms, three on either side of a central ablution area. Each block had its own water tower and I remember an occasion when I was placed in a kit bag and hoisted to the top of a water tower and left hanging there. I can't remember what I had done to deserve this pleasure! Eventually I was lowered to the ground by the Orderly Sergeant and received a severe ticking off! Each barrack room was supervised by an A/T corporal or sergeant who enjoyed the privacy of a single room at the end of the barrack room. This inspired me to work hard for promotion and come the end of my second year I had achieved this and the luxury of my own room and didn't even have to 'make my bed up' every morning.

We derived a great feeling of achievement when, thanks to CSM Kelly's raging and ranting, we all finally mastered the art of drilling and enjoyed the regular Sunday Church parades. On one hilarious occasion we had 'fallen out' and proceeding in single file into church, with officers and their families already inside, when the A/T in front of me forgot to remove his cap on entering the church which provoked the CSM to shout, as only CSMs can, "*...left, right, left...and take your bxxxxxy cap off in the 'ouse of Gord!*"

My memories of Harrogate are a mixture of pride and happiness. I became involved with the Dragon Parade Methodist Church Youth Club, (under the railway bridge to the left of the bus station) and made a number of good civilian friends, including my first girlfriend. I passed out from the AAS into the Royal Engineers in February 1951 as an A3 Trig and Topo Surveyor, with my ACE First Class. I remember how proud I was of my smart fitting battle dress and beret and, of course, the 'dodger' I had on my left sleeve! The passing out parade went well... 1TRRE Malvern here I come!

My arrival at 1 Training Regiment was a mixture of confidence and amazement. Confident that my three and a half years of military training would stand me in good stead when it came to drill and firing on the rifle range. Amazement at how bitterly 'anti ex boys' our troop corporal and sergeant were. I'm sure it stemmed from their resentment of the way our uniforms fitted us and our skill on the parade ground compared with other 'rookies' who had joined straight from civvy street.

The pleasure and excitement of watermanship, handling explosives and Bailey Bridge building were dampened by the rigorous regime imposed on us by the training NCOs in all these activities purely because we were 'ex boys'. On the bright side it made us even more determined to succeed and pull together as a team, to withstand them. One very tragic outcome of all this was when one of our troop who had been with me at AAS Harrogate completely lost his nerve and, following a visit to the rifle range, shot our troop corporal at close range during a rifle inspection in the barrack room. A week later another corporal, the armourer, was accidentally shot by a member of our troop who was assigned to the armoury to help in cleaning weapons. On the completion of basic training I was well versed in most of the 'sapper skills' and a great deal wiser when it came to dealing with people..... School of Military Survey here I come!

My hopes of resuming my Trig Survey training were dashed on arrival. It was explained that every tradesman had to do some time performing 'military duties'. It had been decided that it would be best if I embarked on this now rather than later in my career and so I was made acting Provost Lance Corporal.

The only one marching around the SMS Camp in a smartly ironed battle dress and *white* blanco'd webbing and, of course, carrying a black cane! I became so over officious in this role that after a few months it was decided that I should give up the provost appointment and become the SMS Fire NCO!

I was seconded to the London Fire Brigade Training school and after an exhilarating two weeks carrying people 'fireman's lift' down 60ft extension ladders and using a Davy line to scale down the jumping tower from a fourth storey window opening I returned to SMS on the 16th February 1952 with a Grade A Fire Training certificate to start my role as Unit Fire NCO. Good bye smart battledress with *white* blanco'd webbing. Hello denims! I had great fun training the unit fire crew and even greater fun instigating fire drills. I think I must have overdone this a little because in June 1952 I was selected for posting to 42 Survey Engineer Regiment..... Goodge Street Transit Camp, London, here I come!

Until I arrived I had no idea that Goodge Street Transit Camp was in fact a disused underground station apparently used as an air raid shelter during World War 2. It was eerie going down below ground to the sleeping quarters and to hear the rumble of trains in the distance. Still, it wouldn't be for long and then I'd be on my way to resume my trade taking part in primary triangulation work. I even had my CTS theodolite with me to verify this! Right?...Wrong! The next morning I was summoned to the RTO's office to be told that my posting had been changed. Instead of going to 42 Regiment I was being posted to 32 Fortress Squadron RE in Gibraltar, to set out the tunnels! "Sir" I replied, "*I'm a trig surveyor not a tunneller, I have no idea what to do when it comes to tunnelling*". "You can use a theodolite and you even have one with you, correct?" "Yes, sir" I replied. "*That's why you're going to Gibraltar.*"

As I sat looking at the clouds from the Dakota flying out to the Rock of Gibraltar I couldn't help feeling proud, at least I was going to a place that features prominently in Corps History. When I arrived it was like stepping into another world, everything around me was dwarfed by this enormous rock. I later found out that it was about three miles long; three quarters of mile wide and that the highest point was just over 1400ft. The local CRE gave me my brief. Work had started tunnelling an 8ftx8ft adit simultaneously from the western and eastern side of the Rock with the hope of meeting in the middle. Sadly this had not happened and tunnelling operations had ceased until a surveyor, me, had plotted where the two adit faces were in relation to each other in order for him to plot a 'dog leg' adit to connect them. This had to be accomplished without delay in order to keep to the programmed completion date. I spent a fretful day wondering how I could possibly do this.

I finally decided to carry out an open traverse from the eastern face round to the western, including taking levels from a TBM I would establish at the eastern face. The field work seemed to take ages. When this was finished the plotted results enabled me to calculate the angles and levels for the new adit to ensure it joined up the two faces. This was relayed to the tunnellers in the form of profiles erected in the tunnel to keep them on line and at the correct gradient. It worked! Everything I had learnt at AAS Harrogate had enabled me to achieve success!

I became involved with the setting out of other tunnelling projects in Gibraltar and was seconded to CRE Cyprus for a short while to set out the first major tunnel to be driven in the country, well known for its land tremors! August 1954 saw the end of my tour in Gibraltar and I was posted back to the SMS, where I sat and passed my A2 Trig' Survey trade test.

My next posting was to the Directorate of Military Survey at HQ BAOR Moenchen Gladbach, Germany where I was responsible to the AD Survey for a team using aerial photographs to update maps of Germany and transforming them from the German Gauss Kruger Grid system to the Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) grid system. My tour in Germany finished in December 1956 and I was told I was being posted back to AAS Harrogate as a Survey Instructor - I couldn't wait to get back!

Send In YOUR Story – You've All Got One To Tell

We are always interested in your anecdotes and memories or indeed what you did after leaving Military Survey. Please send either Word documents and high res jpegs or handwritten pieces with original photographs which we will scan and return to the editor – contact details on the last page.

Deaths of Old Comrades

It is with sadness that we record the deaths of the following old comrades.

James Birrell

James had been a National Serviceman litho worker and was a long standing member of our Branch. His wife advised us that he had died a couple of weeks ago.

Roger Clowes

Roger attended 29 Army Survey Course in 1962/63 and then spent two years with the DOS surveying in Malawi and Zambia. His field survey expertise was then put to good use as AI Field Survey. In 1968 he went to Feltham as DAD Survey 2a before a five year secondment to the OS firstly as Regional Controller in Nottingham and then with Geodetic Services at Southampton. In January 1975 Roger took up the AD Survey appointment in Hong Kong but in the summer of 1978 it was back to Survey 2, this time as the AD. He was promoted to Colonel in February 1978 and spent the next three years as Chief Geo in HQ NORTHAG. Roger's last posting was once again in Feltham this time as Commander PPCU but was appointed as acting Deputy Director Military Survey for his final months in uniform. Roger died on the 26th of July at Buxton where his funeral took place on the 6th of August.

Malcolm Dodd (Mac)

Since attending the Photo and Print Reunion held in 2011 Mac had been diagnosed with cancer and although having undergone extensive treatment he was then admitted into hospital for surgery in May 2014. During surgery it was discovered that he had developed secondary cancer symptoms which were beyond treatment and he was advised that he had but a few months to live. He was admitted into the care of a local hospice on the 23rd June and passed away three days later on the 26th June. A family funeral was held on Saturday 5th July in his home town of Hexham in Northumberland. He has been survived by his wife, Susan and his two daughters.

Warrant Officer Class 2 Spencer Faulkner

Warrant Officer 2 Spencer Faulkner was born on 15 December 1975. He joined the Army as a Royal Engineer, Geographic Technician in September 1992. Selected for employment as aircrew in 2005, he completed his initial flying training prior to streaming on to the Lynx helicopter. He completed his conversion training at Middle Wallop in February 2007 and was subsequently officially re-mustered to the Army Air Corps as a pilot. An experienced aviator, Warrant Officer 2 Faulkner deployed to Afghanistan on numerous occasions, often at short notice, in support of UK Armed Forces.

Spencer died along with four others in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan on the 26th of April and his funeral was held at St Johns church in Newbury where our Branch Standard was present alongside that of the AAC. The Regiment provided a Firing Party and a reading was given commemorating his time as a Royal Engineer.

A true Army Warrant Officer in bearing and professionalism, he was liked and highly respected by all who worked with him.

Brian Macknish

Brian was called up for his National service in 1950 and spent the next two years at the School and then with 3 Army Field Survey Depot in Brixton Barracks, Bielefeld. After release from national service Brian spent seven years with 135 Field Survey Regiment leaving in 1959 as a Staff Sergeant with 339 Squadron. Brian lived in Sevenoaks where he died in May aged 83.

Deaths of Old Comrades

Harvey Yellowlees

Harvey was an air surveyor who joined 19 Squadron in the late 1970s. He was employed on the TARLOCs project where he first met a computer – it turned out to be a marriage made in heaven. He was definitely one of the big, literally, characters of the Regiment at that time, he always had an irreverent, but never undisciplined, quip to suit every occasion.

Harvey later served at JARIC and as instructor at the School during which time he wrote the first computer program to process triathlon data which until then was done manually after the event.

After leaving the service he worked for Masons Air Surveys and then for GE Energy's Smallworld GIS based in Melbourne in Florida. It here on Saturday the 10th of May that he died, aged 60, of a brain tumour caused by falling off a ladder. He was a very memorable and likeable man.

Court Case Following the Death of Jim Ironside

Readers may recall that Jim, along with a paramedic, died when the ambulance that was rushing him to Southampton Hospital was involved in a collision in the New Forest. The driver of the car that hit the ambulance was a 26 year old man who was subsequently charged with two counts of causing death by careless driving.

The trial at Bournemouth Crown Court commenced on the 23rd of June and lasted for five days and after over six hours of deliberations the driver of the car was found not guilty.

The Origins and Start of the Great War

A talk and dinner in Hermitage Station lecture theatre and Officers' Mess

Thursday 11 September 2014

Gordon Corrigan, a former Gurkha Officer and acclaimed military historian, will speak on the Great War to include the origins and early days of mobilisation. This will be followed by a reception and dinner in the Officers' Mess. Dress for dinner is jacket and tie or equivalent. Cost for those attending dinner will be £20 per head, no cost for the talk on its own. Accommodation can be made available on a first come first served basis at £5 B&B.

The programme for the day is:

1800 hrs	Talk by Gordon Corrigan on 'The Great War', Lecture Theatre
1900 hrs	Drinks Reception Officers' Mess Anteroom
1930 hrs	Dinner Officers' Mess Dining Room

The total cost per person for dinner is £20 or £25 to include accommodation but to attend the talk only is free. If you wish to attend please contact Tony Keeley before the 1st of September on 01635 204244 or email DISCRSMS-TrgCoord@mod.uk

Current Financial Status

Bank accounts from statements as at 11 July 2014

Current Account	£3,839.25	
Reserve Account	£4,623.76	
Total		£8,463.01
Cheques to clear	£742.59	
Combined bank accounts		£7,720.42
Geo Soldiers' Fund	£2,572.45 (Ring fenced)	
Grand Total		£10,292.87
Commitments		
Geo Soldiers' Fund	£2,572.45	
Other*	£1,620.00	
Total		£4,192.45
Working Capital		£6,100.42

* contingencies ,standard bearers, awards, John Stevens Award, AGM and functions.

Alf Isherwood: Hon Treasurer

Army Apprentice School - Harrogate 1959

A grand reunion will take place in Harrogate on the 4th of October 2014 for all those who joined the Army Apprentice School in Harrogate in 1959. It is time to meet to celebrate their 55th anniversary of joining the Army. Wives and partners welcome.

Contact Ian Buckley on 07760 445212 or at ianbuckley800@fgmail.com

Visit www.militarysurvey.org

Contact Details

Secretary

Rod Siggs
11, Merlin Way,
Southwood
Farnborough, GU14 0PF
email: rod.siggs@ntlworld.com
Telephone: 01252 660144

Treasurer

Alf Isherwood
8 Riley Road
Tilehurst
Reading
RG30 4UX
email: alfish@ukfsn.org
Telephone: 0118 941 4355

Webmaster

Dave Johnson
Auchen
Hermitage Road
Cold Ash
Thatcham RG18 9JH
email:
webmaster@militarysurvey.org.uk

Newsletter

Noel Grimmatt
5 Canford Close
Shedfield
SO32 2HZ
email:
noel@burwells1.demon.co.uk
Telephone: 01329 830153 or
07817 683299

Photograph Archive

Following agreement at the last AGM regarding capturing photographs relating to Military Survey activities from the past and making them available to view on the internet, the project has been progressed quite significantly. A project leader has been put in place, Colonel (Retd) John Fitzgerald with both Alan Gordon and Dave Johnson providing the bulk of the initial fire power.

The project is being jointly financed by ourselves and the DSA and the plan is a phased approach with an initial pilot system to be in place by early next year so that the members of the REA and DSA can see what we are getting. We have each placed £2k in the project pot to achieve the pilot system which will require the upfront purchase of the software package required; that is the major cost of the project.

As the project progresses we will keep you informed.