

# The Military Survey (Geo) Branch

Autumn Newsletter 2016 – issue 61



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## The Early Days of Satellite Geodesy

### 512 STRE BC-4 Section in South Georgia, South Atlantic

#### Introduction

Many of us own a Satellite Navigation (SatNav) device, which we use to navigate in our cars. It uses advanced technology from the Global Positioning System (GPS) to show our position and directions to reach our destination shown on a digitized map projected onto a small screen. GPS is now commonly used by the military for navigation and targeting and by surveyors for controlling map production and engineering works.

#### Geodetic Surveying

Geodesy is the branch of mathematics dealing with figures and areas of the Earth or large portions of it. It involves measurement of the size and shape of the Earth and the locations of points on its surface. Before 1960 geodetic surveys were carried out using precise theodolites and distance measurement tools for determining horizontal and vertical positions. Geodetic positions were calculated from measurements on the ground using a selected spheroid of computation adjusted to fit a selection of stations whose geographical coordinates had been calculated from precise astronomical measurements. This best mean fit defined the datum of the geodetic system and covered only part of the Earth's surface. Consequently the land masses were covered by a patchwork of geodetic systems, the sea surface was not included and the centre of the Earth was not defined.

#### The Space Age

The Soviet Union launched Sputnik on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1957, and scientists in the USA were able to determine its orbit by analysing the Doppler shift of its radio signals. It was realized that if a satellite's position were known and predictable, the Doppler shift could be used to locate a receiver on Earth. The US Navy developed this principle into TRANSIT, a system of satellites and supporting ground stations that was intended primarily for navigation of ships at sea. The same concept could also be exploited for accurate geodetic positioning of stationary control points. Subsequently in May 1960 the first US balloon satellite Echo I was launched. This satellite could be photographed against a background of stars using ballistic cameras. Photographs taken simultaneously at separate ground survey stations could be used to determine the relative positions of those stations even when separated by hundreds of miles.

#### C&GS BC-4 Programme

In August 1963 the US Coast and Geodetic Survey (C&GS) began a programme to fix the positions of geodetic survey stations covering the whole of North America; the geometric satellite triangulation. In this programme the Echo I satellite was photographed against a background of stars taken with a Ballistic Camera-4 (BC-4). The Echo II satellite was launched in 1964. This balloon satellite was a 30 metres diameter sphere coated with vapour-deposited aluminium inflated in orbit at 1,600 kilometres which acted as a giant reflector of sunlight and could be seen from the Earth with the naked eye. C&GS soon realized that with a higher balloon satellite it would be possible to conduct a Worldwide Geometric Triangulation Programme with stations separated thousands of miles apart on different continents. Consequently in June 1966 NASA launched the Passive Geodetic Satellite (PAGEOS) into an orbit of approximately 4,000 kilometres altitude. Like terrestrial triangulation, satellite triangulation determines only the shape of the network of points and scale must be provided by a baseline. Fortunately C&GS had already embarked on a programme of high-precision traverses using laser-based distance measuring equipment. This Transcontinental Traverse provided the length of the base-line connecting Moses Lake, Washington and Beltsville, Maryland, the two BC-4 station in the USA. Additional projects were undertaken in different parts of the world to establish high-precision traverses to adjust the scale of the network. The BC-4 Programme had become a worldwide programme with consequent increases in personnel, equipment and expenditure. The military potential was recognized and the US Department of Defense (DOD) authorized the Army Map Service (AMS) to participate.

#### British Involvement

When the United States entered the Second World War in 1941 DOD held little Geographic Intelligence of the rest of the world. British Military Survey's extensive Map Library was made available to DOD and liaison was established to ensure that there was no duplication in wartime map and aeronautical chart production. After the war ended a joint programme was begun to provide worldwide cover of maps and aeronautical charts at 1:250,000 scale in the Joint Operation Graphics (JOG) Series.

In 1958 a British Liaison Officer's post was established in Washington DC and AMS established a Liaison Officer's post in MOD Directorate of Military Survey (DMilSvy) in Feltham Middlesex to facilitate the sharing of Geographic Intelligence. In March 1963 DMilSvy established a team led by Maj Prescott to take part in the AMS Sequential Collation of Range (SECOR) programme. A Specialist Geodetic Survey Team (SGST) was approved on 5 July 1966 to include the SECOR section and a BC-4 Section led by Maj Batterham which was formed in October 1966. The SGST was commanded by Lt Col Ayers, who also had the title Assistant Director Survey (ADSvy) Washington DC. The unit changed its name to 512 Specialist Team Royal Engineers (512 STRE) in 1967 and the 2 sections operated independently of each other in separate programmes. According to Maj Batterham the 2 sections met unexpectedly in June 1967 in Maui, Hawaii. In 1967 the BC-4 Section personnel changed as the tours were for 12 months unaccompanied. Maj Nott-Bower was OC in early 1968 when the Section was deployed to South Georgia a remote mountainous island in the South Atlantic.

### **The BC-4 Section on South Georgia**

I was posted to 512 STRE in July 1968 and flew with WO2 Ron Birch RE to Washington DC. We were greeted by Lt Col Tiny Ayers at HQ AMS, which was adjacent to the British Embassy on Massachusetts Avenue. The rest of the Section had arrived several weeks earlier. They were SSgt Weston Robertson REME, Instruments Artificer, and Cpls Bob Flynn and Alex Chalmers, who were RE Field Survey Technicians II. After some necessary administration including US Army driving tests, we moved to Beltsville, Maryland for training on the BC-4 equipment. Two weeks later we were joined by LCpl Eddie Friis-Smith of the Army Catering Corps (ACC) who would be our cook on South Georgia. We were also joined by Mr Jack Fried a C&GS electronics engineer, who was accompanied by his wife, 3 years-old daughter JJ and 4 months old baby Lara. Jack was a burly, bearded civilian who had been working on the BC-4 programme, for 4 years. He was responsible for maintenance of the electronic equipment, for tracking time and communications with C&GS in Beltsville.



L to R – Maj Bill Codd RE, L/Cpl Eddie Friis-Smith ACC, Cpl Bob Flynn RE, Mr Jack Fried (US Coast & Geodetic Survey), WO2 Ron Birch RE, Cpl Alex Chalmers RE

The Section then flew to Montevideo, Uruguay where we became passengers on a US Army supply ship FS216 commanded by Skipper John King. He was 65 years old and looked like Burl Ives. He had a wife and family in USA, another in Okinawa, another in Manila, and mistresses around the Pacific Ocean. He lived in Montevideo with an 18 years-old bar girl.

He took me to the lowest and ritziest bars in town and the only way that I could distinguish between them was by the size of the bills. The crew were all Philippine nationals and they had been in Montevideo for so long that Skipper King worried that the ship was stuck on the harbour mud.

When we left harbour dozens of whores waved the crew off with tears in their eyes. As the FS216 a ship of only 850 tons had no watertight bulkheads and we were heading out into the South Atlantic Ocean they probably thought that they were unlikely to see their regular clients again.

After five days at sea we steamed into Port Stanley, Falkland Islands where I reported to the Governor Sir Cosmo Haskard to deliver the Diplomatic Bag which the British Embassy in Montevideo had entrusted to me. We bought supplies in the Falkland Island Company store and two days later we sailed for South Georgia many hundreds of miles away to the East and well South of the Antarctic Convergence. We steamed along the length of the spectacular North coast of this island which is mountainous and has large glaciers tumbling into deep fjords. On 22 August 1968 we entered Cumberland Bay East after dark in bright moonlight. It is an incredibly beautiful place.

The BC-4 section was operating on King Edward Point, where the Falkland Islands administration of the whaling industry was based. Across the cove was the deserted Norwegian whaling station of Grytviken, which had closed two years earlier when whaling had become no longer commercially viable. There were two Norwegian caretakers at Grytviken but the Falklands administration had been slower to withdraw. The Administrative Officer's house and the large hostel Shackleton House were built 4 years earlier for the administration of up to 2,000 whaling station employees only just before whaling ceased. It was planned that the entire administration would be withdrawn in November 1969 when the settlement would become the HQ of British Antarctic Survey (BAS).



King Edward Point

The entire population of South Georgia, all 16 souls including the outgoing personnel of the BC-4 section, met us on the jetty. The mail, the first for 3 months, was quickly taken ashore, the post office opened and the letters sorted and distributed within half an hour.

The next day was glorious, with bright sunshine, glittering snow and the most magnificent mountains and glaciers that I had seen outside the Alps. Mt Paget (altitude 9,625 ft) is across the Bay and the beautiful fluted ice cone of Mt Sugartop (7,623 ft) is temptingly close.

We changed accommodation with the outgoing section personnel led by Maj Nott-Bower and established our operations in the Customs House, a cosy wooden bungalow, with the adjacent BC-4 camera in its dome and the instruments shelter, containing timing, communications and other electronic equipment. After two days handover and a farewell party the old section left and we settled into a routine. The next ship was expected in November. Until then our sole means of communication with the outside world was our radio links with Beltsville, Maryland and the Falkland Islands.

Two members of the section observed each night which meant that each person observed every other night. It took about two hours to set up the equipment and take a satellite pass and we normally had two predictions each night. The week's prediction of look angles, times, exposures and other information was passed to us by radio every Friday and we were concerned with photographing both PAGEOS and Echo II satellites. Echo II was the same size as PAGEOS but its orbit was smaller at about 1,600 kilometres above the earth. It was brighter, faster and moved in a different direction across the heavens. The camera had rotating shutters which were synchronized with time from the Time Code Generator (TCG), a precise crystal clock, with a precision of 1 millionth of a second. The satellite's photographic trail crossed the glass plate and was produced as a series of coded dots against a backdrop of stars, hence the time of each exposure or dot could be determined to the nearest ten thousandth of a second, and its direction measured from its position relative to the stars. The satellites were photographed simultaneously from Punta Arenas in Chile, Villa Dolores in Argentina, Natal in Brazil, Johannesburg and Tristan da Cunha. Cloud cover and bad weather in the South Atlantic hampered operations. In December 1968 two more stations were established on the Antarctic continent at Palmer and Mawson Stations.

During a pass one observer operated the console inside the shelter, while the other took meteorological readings outside, opened the dome and set up the camera for direction, f-stop, etcetera, and loaded the plate. The plate was exposed to the stars for 20 minutes before the satellite "on-plate" time. Then for 5 minutes "on-plate" and for 5 more minutes after the satellite pass to check the coded images in case there had been any slight movement of the camera. The shutters opened and closed as directed by punch-tape fed into the computer in the shelter and those orders were synchronized with the TCG.

Everything that happened was monitored on an oscilloscope and recorded on brush tape that spilled out of the equipment by the yard. Brush tape had a carbon base and was about 4 inches wide. Twenty electric brushes burnt images on it as it passed out of the console and from these coded images we were able to calculate the time of each star and satellite image. As it burnt it smelled like scorched rubber. Lights of different colours flashed on and off during the satellite pass and hooters sounded if the camera shutters gears fell out of synchronization. Inside the shelter only red lights were lit so that the operator could see the green spaghetti on the cathode ray screen of the oscilloscope. Cigarette smoke and the smell of scorching brush tape created an atmosphere of science fiction hell. During the pass the camera operator had to remain outside the shelter with binoculars to check that the satellite was following its predicted orbit. Sometimes the predictions could be up to 10 minutes early or late and the operators needed to react quickly to speed up or slow down the programme on the camera. We were unable to shine a light outside, because it would fog the images on the plate, so the outside man had to be very careful not to fall over a sleeping elephant seal in the dark.

One night SSgt Robertson was gazing at PAGEOS through binoculars when my cat jumped onto the back of his neck. He nearly had a heart attack. After each pass the plate was removed from the camera and placed in an insulated bag. It was then removed to the darkroom in Shackleton House where it would warm slowly during the night to 67 degrees Fahrenheit at which temperature it could be developed by one of the section who had been off duty during the night. The gears of the camera shutters had to be changed between PAGEOS and Echo II passes as different coded images were used for the two satellites. It was very interesting work and required operators to be very alert in the wee small hours.

The Administrative Officer of South Georgia was responsible to the Falkland Islands Government. He was Captain Coleman a retired merchant navy officer, about 55 years old and very short and bald. He had lived on the island for 8 years and was accompanied by his wife, a slim, energetic woman who spent the afternoons skiing or walking to keep fit. Captain Coleman was very cooperative and allowed me to make modifications to the accommodation provided I asked his permission first.

The doctor was a 30 years old bachelor, who had spent 2 years on contract in the Falklands, followed by one year on South Georgia. He had only 16 people to look after and no infectious diseases, so he spent his time drinking coffee in the Customs House in the mornings and in the evenings playing Mah Jong and drinking whisky. He lived in one end of Shackleton House where there was a hospital. The Assistant Administrative Officer, Customs Officer and Postmaster was about 25 years old, very scruffy, and kept whisky hidden in various secret places so that he could keep permanently topped up. He had almost no work to do but every Tuesday he issued rations from the food store to the steward of Shackleton House. By Thursday he had recovered from the strain of Tuesday's efforts and could be seen typing telegrams for Captain Coleman for transmission to the Falklands by the radio operator.

The radio shack was the domain of a small, young Glaswegian who communicated with Port Stanley twice a day by Morse code telegrams. Much of his time was spent tearing round the mountains on skis or on foot and sitting in the Customs House eating our biscuits and making derogatory remarks about anyone in authority. The entire settlement had an electricity supply from a power station with three diesel generators. An Irish mechanic kept the generators working assisted by a young Chilean. The Irishman was accompanied by his English wife and two dogs, which occasionally rolled in a seal, wallow and became untouchable until washed. We rarely suffered a power failure in the year that we were on the island.

The steward of Shackleton House and his wife are typical Falkland Islanders. He got drunk every Sunday with the older Norwegian caretaker of the whaling station and his wife baked leaden bread loaves and served mutton stew for almost every meal. They were nearly 60 years old, lived in a bungalow furthest from Shackleton House and in winter had difficulty skiing up the road. His speech was very slurred and completely incomprehensible to anyone except his wife. This disability was rumoured to have been caused by a fall on his face from a Landrover travelling at 30 mph in Port Stanley one Saturday night. However they did look after Shackleton House well and were both very friendly and well liked.

There were two Chilean stewards who were so incompetent that one had been reassigned as meteorological man and the other as assistant diesel mechanic. He spoke English and so helped communication between the Irish engineer and his Chilean deputy who had no common language. The policeman/handyman and his wife were Falkland Islanders. They had a baby daughter who was born on HMS Lynx, which was called into South Georgia to take her mother to Port Stanley. He was rumoured to have a policeman's uniform hidden away somewhere but even on South Georgia he had a reputation for being lazy, so he was lucky to have an assistant. Norman came from Solihull. He was 35 years old and tall with an impressive patriarchal beard. He always smoked a foul-smelling pipe and spent much of his spare time striding up the smaller mountains. He had a squeaky voice and was rather simple, but very hardworking, obliging and helpful. He often went mountaineering with me, when he would squeak continually: *"If my mother could see me now"*.

One day several members of the section skied over to Cumberland West Bay and Norman met us at Echo Pass on our way back. This was a great achievement for him because he had very little control of his planks. We started down and he fell at the top and lost one of his skis that shot away into the other valley. No-one noticed so he had to flounder through deep snow for a half mile to recover it.

Things like that happened to Norman. He would spend hours unblocking Jack Fried's drains which choked up every two weeks. He regarded South Georgia as paradise and his 3 years on the island were the happiest of his life. Sir Ernest Shackleton was his hero and he tended his grave in the Grytviken cemetery with great care.

The younger caretaker at Grytviken Finn Samos was 31 years-old and had been on the island for 10 years. He and I were good friends and we went skiing and mountaineering together frequently. He took me across the East Bay in the whaling station launch to Sandebugte on the Barff Peninsula and we walked across to Godhul on the far coast.



*Norman before he lost his ski*

The FS216 returned with supplies on 26 November and Finn decided that he should return to Norway to enjoy a more rewarding life. Skipper King was anxious to get back to Montevideo because he had a new speedboat on deck; no doubt he would be tearing about off the beach with bikini clad girls water skiing behind. He said that he was having trouble with pregnant women. His crew had been in port for far too long. The developed photographic plates and timing records were entrusted to the skipper for onward posting to Beltsville via US Diplomatic Service. I had the end of month accounts and reports to complete and the Falkland Islands Company bills to sort out. This company was the most confusing and muddled organization that it had ever been my misfortune to deal with. When I complained that their tonic water had no fizz, they replied that I had not ordered fizzy drinks. The ship left after two days taking Finn with it, which ruined my chances of climbing Mt Paget and Mt Sugartop.

HMS Endurance was due to visit South Georgia on 12 December but just 2 hours from us she was diverted to the Antarctic Peninsula to rescue the crew of BAS Otter aircraft that had force landed on Grahamland. HMS Endurance was the British Ice Protection ship commissioned in 1967 and the only British ship in the South Atlantic to carry a helicopter. In 1967 the Perla Dan a commercial ship designed to operate in frozen seas, was under contract to BAS and was taking a crated aircraft to the base on Deception Island. That year this active volcano erupted and the base was evacuated. The aircraft was left at South Georgia instead.

In 1968 HMS Endurance was due to collect the aircraft from King Edward point and deliver it to the reoccupied base on Deception Island. She arrived on 5 January 1969 and stayed for just 16 hours owing to a tight schedule. Capt Robertson invited me for supper and a film show on board.

In mid-January the Perla Dan visited for two days on her way south to the BAS base at Halley Bay. They slaughtered 50 elephant seals on the point to feed the huskies on the base for the next 12 months. Blood and guts covered the shore and the skuas and petrels gorged themselves until they could hardly fly. After Finn left the island Thorsen took his launch out of the water and was not at all keen to take us across the Bay. After SSgt Robertson and I worked on the boat engine and repairs we persuaded him to take us to the Sorling Valley where we camped and made long expeditions to Tijuka Point and to the king penguin rookery in St Andrews Bay.

We had no satellite work for most of December and January when many of the Atlantic stations moved and the stations on the Antarctic mainland were set up. During this hiatus we filled in the time on field surveys to tie the RN Hydrographic stations to the BC-4 satellite station on King Edward Point. The summer weather was pretty awful; rather like winter in Western Scotland, it snowed often but usually melted soon after settling. In mid-February the Perla Dan called in on the way back from Halley Bay.

I was still having problems with the Falkland Islands Company bills, so with Lt Col Ayers permission I hitched a lift in the ship back to Port Stanley. I stayed with the Colonial Treasurer there and made contact with the RN Hovercraft Team and with the Royal Marines platoon. I had made friends with some of the BAS personnel returning from Halley Bay and with one of them I rehung the bells in the parish church. The RN team took us to Kidney Island for a few days stay to watch the colonies of sea lions and rock hopper penguins. The FS216 was due to arrive in Port Stanley for her last journey South on 1 March but her departure from Montevideo was delayed for two weeks because the Uruguay customs would not release the Doppler Time Transfer equipment any earlier. This was an atomic clock of great accuracy, which was carried by a C&GS electronics technician between the BC-4 stations to calibrate their TCGs. The ship arrived in Port Stanley on 9 March and sailed for South Georgia the following day. Despite the barnacles on her hull the FS216 arrived at King Edward Point at 2030 hours on 12 March. I had enjoyed a wonderful holiday but I was glad to get back.

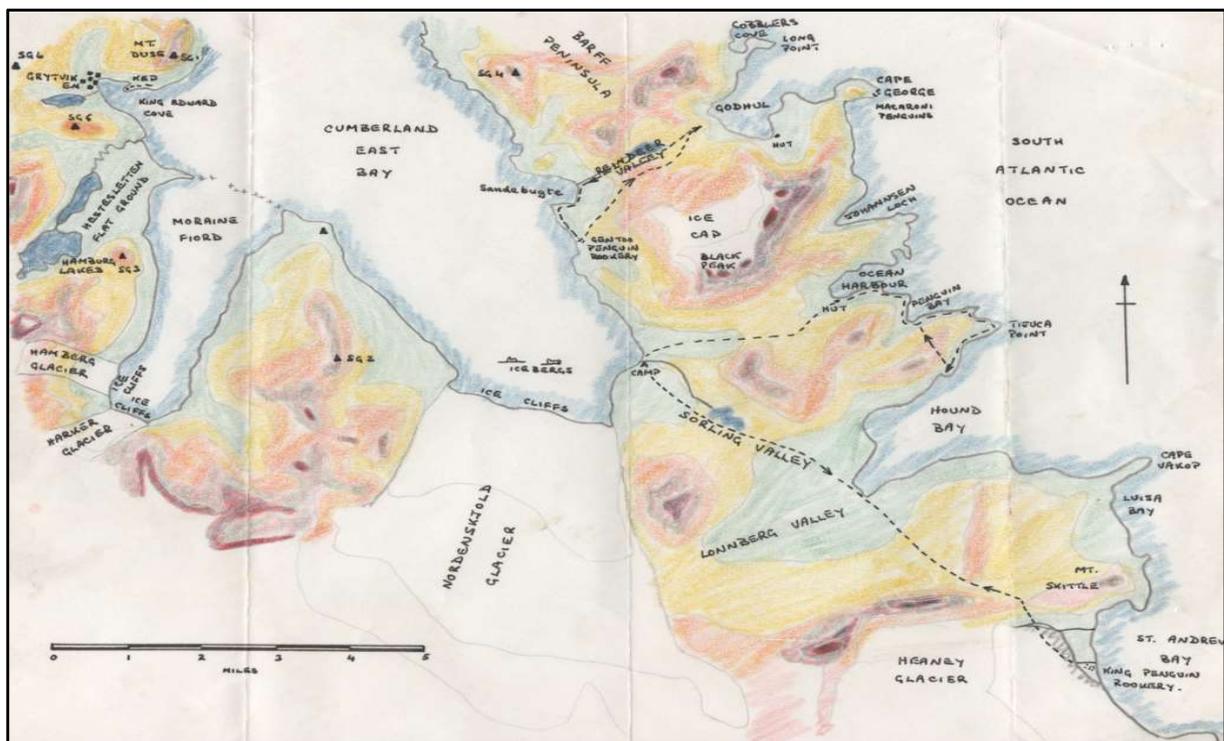
The BAS ship RRS John Biscoe called into South Georgia on 9 April and she was the last scheduled visitor to the island until we were due to leave in mid-July. We resumed our satellite observations but SSgt Robertson reported sick on 24 March with stomach pains, which were diagnosed by the doctor as a partial strangulation of the small intestine. This was quite serious as there was a danger of a complete blockage which would require emergency surgery.

Two days later he was much worse, when a Russian trawler "Ostrovski" appeared unexpectedly, which carried a doctor, who examined Robertson and made an emergency call to the Russian fisheries research ship "Academic Knipovitch" which had a surgeon on board. She was Dr Pavlova, who was sent ashore by boat and stayed for 4 days. She decided that she could not operate until there was a complete obstruction of the bowel, because surgery under such primitive conditions would carry a high risk of infection.

The “Knipovitch” returned on 30 March, recovered its surgeon and sailed away. On 1 April Robertson’s condition worsened, with violent distensions of the intestine and swelling of the belly. He thought that he was dying and I began to think so too. What really worried me was the fact that the doctor gave up drinking.

On 2 April I sent a signal to the Governor of the Falklands requesting his immediate evacuation. The BAS ship RRS Shackleton, was carrying out a magnetometer survey in the Drake Passage, and was sent to South Georgia arriving on 6 April. Captain Frosty Turnbull brought her in through the most pitch black night that I had ever seen on the island. Robertson was taken aboard the next morning and she sailed for Port Stanley. The ship encountered calm sea and reached the port 24 hours ahead of schedule enabling a connection with RMS Darwin sailing for the Chilean port of Punta Arenas in the Magellan Straits. Robertson was accompanied by Dr Holmes of BAS and then was flown to Santiago, where he spent 4 days in hospital before catching a flight to London on 18 April. He was met at LHR Airport by paramedics with an ambulance from Millbank Hospital who were surprised when he walked through the arrivals lounge without assistance. He made a miraculous recovery without surgery.

The next 3 months passed without further incident. South Georgia is a beautiful island when the sun shines but the weather is generally wet, cold and windy. The soldiers required resilience and ingenuity to avoid boredom. We took every opportunity to take exercise outdoors by walking, exploring the mountains, fishing, skiing in winter, bird and seal watching and photography. We read books, wrote letters, developed and printed photographs, socialized in the evenings, playing Mah Jong and entertaining the locals. We gave LCpl Friis-Smith one day off each week and took turns cooking.



*Sketch Map of East Cumberland Bay area of South Georgia*

The FS216 was withdrawn in May; therefore AMS had to charter a ship to bring replacement personnel in July. Maj Underwood and his team flew to Punta Arenas and sailed to South Georgia in the chartered Falkland Islands Company ship AES; I thought that all ships had proper names until then. After a short handover we departed leaving Jack Fried and LCpl Friis-Smith behind. The latter had volunteered to stay with the new team, until it left the island.

We arrived in Port Stanley 5 days later and the spent 3 weeks there waiting for passage in the Darwin to Montevideo. During this wait we stayed with the RN Hovercraft detachment and we enjoyed an exhilarating hovercraft journey round the North coast of the islands. The Governor and his wife also travelled back on the Darwin so we had interesting meals at the Captain’s table. From Montevideo we flew to Washington DC and after debriefing by the CO we flew to New York, where we stayed for 2 days before catching an RAF VC10 to Brize Norton in late August 1969.

The Apollo 11 moon mission was launched from Cape Canaveral a few days after we left South Georgia and it landed on the moon on 20 July 1969. The crew of Armstrong, Collins and Aldrin travelled back to Earth, and then spent 3 weeks in isolation/decontamination. They still got home before we did!

### Later Developments

The BC-4 programme was wound up in 1972 and the data produced was included in the US DOD World Geodetic System of 1972 (WGS 72). Doppler satellite tracking techniques provided faster results because they could be used in cloudy conditions. They could also use navigation satellites thus eliminating major costs. As equipment was developed using solid-state electronics it became more portable and less fragile. In 1984 the first GPS satellites were launched and surveyors rapidly moved into this new technology which produced horizontal and vertical position in WGS 84. During the first six years of the 1990's I was the Deputy Director of Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland in Belfast and in 1995 we entered into a joint programme with Ordnance Survey of Ireland in Dublin to carry out a new geodetic survey of all of the island of Ireland using GPS dual frequency receivers at 11 stations. This campaign took 3 weeks of field observations and the data was passed to the University of Nottingham for computation. In early 1996 the IRENET Zero-Order network was accepted into the European Geodetic Network.

### Bill Codd

### References

NOAA 200<sup>th</sup> Celebration Website – *Surveying using satellites*

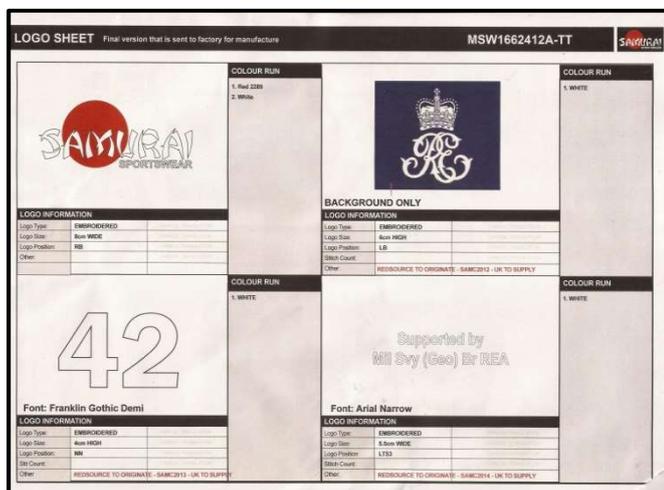
The Ranger Winter 2014 “*The History of 512 STRE*” by Lt Col M. Stanbridge (Retd)

REA the Military Survey (Geo) Branch, Summer Newsletter 2015 “*A Posting Best Forgotten*” by Ron Birch

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## 42 Engineer Regiment (Geo) – Track Suit

In order to encourage pride in the Regiment and gain advantage on entering the sporting arena and engender esprit de Corps, the purchase of Regimental tracksuits has been proposed. To offset some of the cost of the Regimental tracksuits a request has been made to the Branch for a possible contribution. The Branch Committee discussed the matter fully and agreed to the request and that the sum of £3,000 (£2,000 from the Geo Support Fund and £1,000 from Military Survey (Geo) Branch REA) be made available to the Regiment for this purpose. The bulk of the cost (£15,420.48) will be met by 7 Inf Bde (non-public gainshare), plus contributions from Wyton and 135 PRI funds. Each member of the Regiment will make a personnel contribution, for regulars - £10, and reserves - £20. The attached diagrams indicate the chosen colour and style. On the LOGO SHEET in the bottom right box you will note the wording ‘Supported by Mil Svy (Geo) Br REA’. This will be attached to the upper left sleeve as indicated in the picture below.



## Formation of "B" Air (Survey) Liaison Section Royal Engineers

War Diaries – History – Major A J D Halliday RE – February 1944

"B" Air (Survey) Liaison Section RE – activities from January 1944 – AFHQ Algiers

Authority was given for the formation of 'B' Air (Survey) Liaison Section RE w.e.f. 18 January under AFHQ G 1 (B) 1003/163/A1. Letter received by O C 518 Corps Field Survey Company RE informing him that 'B' Air (Survey) Liaison Section would be formed under his supervision and attached to him for all purposes.

No 73057 WS Capt (T/Major) A J D Halliday appointed to be OC this unit as GSO II w.e.f. 18 January, Letter 2222 MS of Dep Mil Sec., (Major Halliday was at this time holding the position of Survey Liaison Officer with Mediterranean Allied Photographic Reconnaissance Wing (MAPRW) at San Severo near Foggia, and as this unit was being formed to be attached to MAPRW it was decided that Maj Halliday would remain in San Severo and the unit sent to him when its formation was completed).

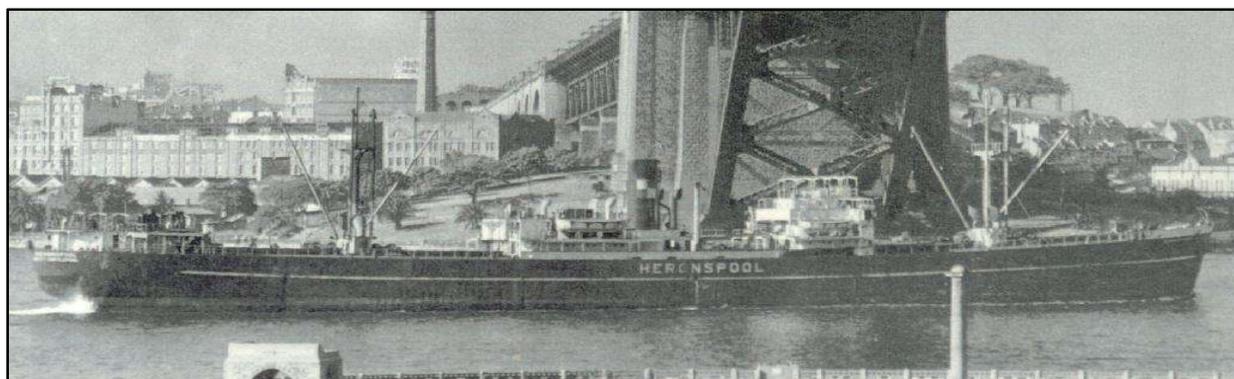
No 1952160 Dvr Budd collected by OC 518 Survey Company and taken on strength of his unit w.e.f. 22 January. Authority 02E RE RD No 2/4127. On 31<sup>st</sup> January letter sent by DD Survey AGMP to G (SD) CMF requesting that the unit is called forward for attachment to MAPRW.

In February 1944 the u/m sappers arrived at 518 Field Survey Company and were taken on strength of the unit w.e.f. 18<sup>th</sup> January authority 02E RD 2/4231. 14612315 Spr Burr ridge J P, 2125410 Spr Crockett W K, 14613925 Spr Dear KW, 1941675 Spr Maugham D W, 14613932 Spr Nicholls W, 14605075 Spr Robinson P W. 14613927 Spr Dowden J was also included on the same Reinforcement demand but could not be collected as he was in hospital.

On 8<sup>th</sup> February authority given for 1869098 W/Cpl Watson A N to be posted to this unit from 13 Corps Field Survey Company w.e.f. 18<sup>th</sup> January, and for his promotion to A/W/Sgt w.e.f. from the same date. (As Sgt Watson was in Italy he was posted direct to Maj Halliday at San Severo). Authority given to post 1949858 Spr Chambers G from 518 Field Survey Company to this unit w.e.f. 18<sup>th</sup> January and for him to be promoted A/U/Cpl w.e.f. the same date. Sgt Watson arrived at San Severo on the 9<sup>th</sup> February and reported for duty to Maj Halliday.

No 155896 W/Lt Carmody joined unit at 518 Field Survey Company. No 14613927 Spr Dowden J arrived at Bir Touta and was taken on strength of unit w.e.f. 10<sup>th</sup> February. Authority 02E RD 2/4231. On 10<sup>th</sup> February the formation of unit was reported complete to Algiers Sub-Area.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> February instructions were received from D Survey AFHQ concerning embarkation of transport. On 24<sup>th</sup> Transport 15 cwt No Z5319510, loaded with unit G1098 stores and m/c No C/4992460 taken to Algiers for embarkation. ESO unable to embark transport as ship had not arrived. Transport returned to Bir Touta. On 25<sup>th</sup> transport again taken to docks in Algiers and successfully loaded aboard *SS Ocean Vesper*. No personnel allowed on board with transport. Telephone message received from Movements Algiers Sub-Area authorising one driver to proceed on *SS Ocean Vesper* with transport. Dvr Budd embarked.



*The Ocean Ships were a class of 57 cargo ships built in the Second World War for the British Ministry of War Transport at Richmond California USA in Jan 1942. Sixteen were lost to enemy action. The survivors were sold into merchant service post war.*

Authority given for Lt Carmody to be posted to this unit and appointed GSO III w.e.f. 9<sup>th</sup> February with acting rank of Captain (Dep Mil Sec letter 2207/MS). Telephone message received on 29<sup>th</sup> February at 1215 hrs from Movements Sub-Area enquiring why unit had not embarked on *HMT Winchester Castle* at 1100 hrs today. A movement order had been dispatched and had not arrived. Capt Carmody and remainder of unit (8 ORs) set out for the docks immediately and were on board by 1500 hrs and *HMT Winchester Castle* left Algiers.



*HMT Winchester Castle* - Took part in the North African Landings at Sidi Ferruch, Algiers code-named Operation Torch on the 6<sup>th</sup> November. September of the following year she saw action at the Salerno Landings code-named Avalanche in which Lt. General McCreery's 56<sup>th</sup> Division, British X Corps were landed between Paestum and Maiori either side of Salerno. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1944 she took part in Operation Dragoon landing troops near Cannes for the Allied invasion of Southern France.

*HMT Winchester Castle* arrived at Naples on 3<sup>rd</sup> March after an uneventful crossing. Capt Carmody and men disembarked and were accepted at 159 Transit Camp under direction of ESO. No arrangements made for onward transmission so Capt Carmody saw Movements Peninsular Base section and arranged to leave by train for San Severo on 6<sup>th</sup> March.

On 5<sup>th</sup> March Brigadier Brown arrived at San Severo to visit MAPRC. Message received by Major Halliday from Movements Taranto that transport was due to arrive at Taranto. Sgt Watson despatched to collect transport. Orders produced by Maj Halliday for employments of this unit. On 7<sup>th</sup> Major Halliday left San Severo with Brigadier Brown for Alghero (Sardinia) to visit 23 PR Squadron. Capt Carmody and men arrive at San Severo - accommodation and messing arranged by RAF element MAPRC. Sgt Watson returned to San Severo with transport and Dvr Budd. On 10<sup>th</sup> Unit G1098 unloaded and work started on orders left behind by Major Halliday.

On 11<sup>th</sup> Capt Carmody went to Alghero by MAPRC courier plane to visit Major Halliday and returned the following day. Col Papworth DD Survey AAI visited the unit. On 21<sup>st</sup> March Major Halliday returned from Alghero with Capt Carmody and went by road to AAI for discussions with Col Papworth where arrangements were made to replace four of the sappers by more experienced men from other companies.

On 4<sup>th</sup> May No 1885544 Spr Weeks EC arrived from 19 Field Survey Company to bring unit up to strength. Col's Sanceau and Wirak visited MAPRW leaving on 5<sup>th</sup> May. Major Halliday left for Algiers by MAPRW courier aircraft to visit D Survey AFHQ and returned from Algiers accompanied by Capt Reitz of Survey Directorate AFHQ. On 12<sup>th</sup> Major Halliday and Capt Reitz left for AAI to visit DD Survey returning the following day bringing particulars of a new "collation map" programme to be undertaken by this unit.

On 15<sup>th</sup> Spr Maughan appointed P/L/Cpl w.e.f. 1 April; Spr Smith L/L/Cpl w.e.f. 1 May. Stationery was collected from Bari. On 20<sup>th</sup> - 4 Sappers: 871335 Spr Melmoth RE; 14603743 Spr Bradley G; 14635131 Spr Wick NC; 14626543 Spr Trickett RE arrived from reinforcements pool, 19 Field Survey Company for attachment to this unit to deal with the "collation map" programme. Spr Stevens appointed local L/Cpl.



Major Arthurs (NZA) of Survey Directorate, AAI visits section for discussions on cover diagrams and collation maps, and returned to AAI on 3<sup>rd</sup> June. Also on 3<sup>rd</sup> June Captain Carmody left for Algiers, on routine liaison visit, taking cover diagrams of France and making a verbal report on the sections activities returning on the 12<sup>th</sup> June.

On 5<sup>th</sup> Spr Healy appointed local L/Cpl. Additional cover traces of France sent to AFHG on the 7<sup>th</sup> June and cover diagrams of Istrian Peninsular and Yugoslavia sent to AFHG, MEP and AAI on 17<sup>th</sup> June.



Major Halliday left for visits to Survey Directorate, AAI, Engineer HQ, 5<sup>th</sup> Army and Survey Directorate, Eighth Army, and returned on 26<sup>th</sup> June. On 22<sup>nd</sup> June Spr Melmoth was submitted to No 4 General Hospital RAF and on 23<sup>rd</sup> Sgt Watson was appointed War Substantive Sergeant and Sprs Dowden and Wick were re-mustered Draughtsman Topo AII's

On 2<sup>nd</sup> July cover diagrams of NW Italy sent out and diagrams of cover of Garonne Valley France available in UK – received and order placed for file or prints to be sent. By the 10<sup>th</sup> cover diagrams of S France area and of NW Italy sent out.

Major Halliday visited Survey Directorate AFHQ, returning on 20<sup>th</sup> July. Cover diagrams of S France area sent out. Weekly Field returns, Officers and OR's. Cover diagrams dispatched in month and summary of orders placed in month



Cover diagrams for North Italy and Yugoslavia sent out plus orders received from AFHQ to supply cover diagram of River Danube to MEF. Telephone message received on 7<sup>th</sup> August for Major Halliday to report to Survey Directorate AFHQ prior to posting as OC 518 Corps Field Survey Company RE. Major Halliday left for AFHQ. Command of unit handed to Capt Carmody.

1 OR left for 19 Field Survey Company for exchange for 1 OR from 19 Field Survey Company, and on the 9<sup>th</sup> Diagram of Southern France despatched. Further diagram of Yugoslavia despatched and on 19<sup>th</sup> August Capt Carmody left for AFHQ on routine liaison visit and returned from AFHQ on 20<sup>th</sup> Aug.

On 24<sup>th</sup> August further diagrams of Italy dispatched. Four OR's on attachment with the unit from x (4) list returned to 13 Field Survey Company for posting instructions from survey directorate AFHQ. On 30<sup>th</sup> August flying job in North Greece completed and job cancelled with Squadron.

On 16<sup>th</sup> September visit of Brigadier Brown and Lt/Col Williams to MAPRW. Capt Carmody visited Survey Directorate AFHQ at Caserta (right) on routine duty and returned to San Severo on 19<sup>th</sup> September. On 28<sup>th</sup> cover diagrams for Italy and Yugoslavia despatched.



Further cover diagrams for North Yugoslavia, Italy and Europe (Air) dispatched and on 8<sup>th</sup> October Capt. Carmody left to visit AFHQ on routine duty and returned to San Severo on 11<sup>th</sup> October.

On 1<sup>st</sup> November 1944 - 1 Sgt and 2 OR's posted from unit and 2 OR's posted to unit. On 20<sup>th</sup> November a Conference between W/Cdr Fuller and Capt Carmody was held. W/Cdr Fuller stated that owing to the imminent move of 941<sup>st</sup> Engr Bn C E, Director of Survey AFHQ must be asked to implement promises made at a conference on 16<sup>th</sup> Sept viz – to attach a Survey Company to 336 Wing to do Litho work. On 22<sup>nd</sup> Capt Carmody proceeded to AFHQ to explain the need for a Survey Company at 336 Wing and returned to unit with Maj Guy of 516 Field Svy Company, which it is proposed to attach to 336 Wing. Capt Carmody and Maj Guy began searching for accommodation for 516 Coy. Maj Guy returned to AFHQ. Lt Hunt and 10 OR's from 516 Field Svy Company arrived for attachment to unit to carry out necessary urgent work for 336 Wing. Remainder of 516 Company to follow at a later date

Lt/Col Huntley from Survey Directorate AFHQ visited San Severo to make final arrangements for 516 Survey Company RE and returned on 3<sup>rd</sup> December. On December 5<sup>th</sup> Maj Guy and advance party of 516 Field Svy Company arrived at Serra Capriola to be accommodated in the Scuola Elementari Femina. Major Guy visited 336 Wing. A conference was held between W/Cdr Fuller, Maj Guy and Capt Carmody concerning the function of 516 Field Svy Company. An agreement was reached that w.e.f. Monday 11<sup>th</sup> December all work being done for 336 Wing by 941<sup>st</sup> Engineer (Avn) Bn would be taken over by 516 Company. On 11<sup>th</sup> December the first jobs were delivered to 516 Company. On 17<sup>th</sup> Capt Carmody visited AFHQ to confer with Major Arthurs of HQ 15<sup>th</sup> Army, Army Group and Capt Reitz of Survey Directorate AFHQ. He returned the same day.

Brigadier Brown and Brigadier Hotine arrived at San Severo on 23<sup>rd</sup> to visit 336 Wing and to see if 516 Coy was functioning satisfactorily. A conference held between Brig Brown and Brig Hotine of Survey Directorate AFHQ, W/Cdr Fuller and S/Ldr Dacombe of 336 Wing, W/Cdr Watson of MPIC and Capt Carmody of 'B' Air Survey Liaison Section RE. Brig's Brown and Hotine left at 12.00 hrs for Bari on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1944.

Capt Carmody left for Florence to visit 15 Army Group and 3 Photo Group AAF and returned on the 5<sup>th</sup>. On 10<sup>th</sup> January 1945 one Sgt attached to unit to bring up to W. E. On 20<sup>th</sup> notification was received of a conference concerning function of this unit to be held at San Severo on 25<sup>th</sup> Jan. The following officers arrived for conference: - Brig Brown – Director of Survey, Maj Arthurs NZE & Capt Reitz SAEC – representing Survey Directorate AFHQ, Maj Purchas RE – representing Survey Directorate 8th Army, Lt Smith SAEC – representing Survey Directorate 15 Army Group. Conference held on 25<sup>th</sup> and Brig Brown, Maj Arthurs, Capt Reitz and Lt Smith left for their respective HQ's on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Maj Purchas left for his HQ on 27<sup>th</sup>.

On 21<sup>st</sup> No 134600 W S Capt (T/Maj) The Hon J A Adderley appointed to be OC of this unit with the appointment of GSO II w.e.f. 21 Feb letter 12045/MS 1 of Dep Mil Sec.

Maj Adderley left to attend Conference at Survey Directorate AFHQ. At Survey Conference Maj Adderley was instructed to press MPIC for the earliest possible completion of flying of complete 6" cover of Austria. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> Maj Adderley returned from AFHQ. Conference held between Maj Adderley and Maj Crawford Heron on completion of flying of 6" cover of Austria. Spr Smith A E returned to UK on compassionate posting. Maj Adderley left for Bari to visit 54 area and AD Survey HQ 3 District (Eastern Det.). On 11<sup>th</sup> March Maj Adderley returned to unit. Increase in flying for Survey began. On 15<sup>th</sup> March Maj Adderley left to attend conference at Survey Directorate AFHQ. Informed Director of Survey that since 11<sup>th</sup> Mar approx. 12,000 square miles in Austria had been covered by 6" photography useful to Survey and that all this was now plotted and on order for Survey Directorate.

On 10<sup>th</sup> April the last 6" sortie flown for Survey – 6" cover of Austria virtually complete. Maj Adderley left to attend conference at Survey Directorate AFHQ and returned to unit 14<sup>th</sup>. On 17<sup>th</sup> three long strips flown in Austria for ETO USA. Second diagram for 6" cover of Austria closed.

Lt Col Williams DD Survey AFHQ visited unit. Conference with; W/Comdr's Fuller, Watson and Buchanan; and S/Ldr's Dacombe and Barber on post hostilities flying for Survey. Decided that before embarking on programme test sorties should be flown and processed to decide, whether the equipment available was suitable.

Lt Col Williams left San Severo and one OR sent on detachment to 'H' Survey Computing Unit RE. Test Survey sortie flown by 60 Squadron SAAF. Maj Adderley left for Casserta and returned to the unit on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

On 6<sup>th</sup> May a second test-sortie for survey flying flown by 60 Squadron SAAF, which was satisfactory. 60 SAAF Squadron started programme of survey flying on the 14<sup>th</sup> May. A detachment of 680 Sqn RAF detailed to assist 60 SAAF Squadron with survey flying. On 22<sup>nd</sup> Maj Dickerson AFHQ visited the section returning to AFHQ. Maj Purchas of No 1 Survey Computing Unit RE and Maj Moon of AAF visited the section. Maj Adderley returned to unit from AFHQ. On 31<sup>st</sup> May 1945 Maj Adderley posted from this section to 15 Army Group.



*The 60 Sqn SAAF Mosquitos in Italy included a red and white striped tail unit as an identification aid to distinguish the Mosquito from the German Me410*

On 7<sup>th</sup> June Major Carmody left for Caserta on routine liaison visit returning on the 9<sup>th</sup>. 60 Squadron SAAF recommenced survey flying and on the 12<sup>th</sup> Authority was received to fly cover of Albania. Two OR's admitted to 4 General Hospital with suspected malaria. The flying services of 60 Squadron SAAF were retained.

Flying Specifications issued: CV 9/27 - Photography to Post War specifications - CV/12 - Post Hostilities Flying in the Med Theatre.

On 6<sup>th</sup> July Lt Creese reported for duty from 514 Field Survey Company RE. Conference called at 336 Wing to discuss flying for Survey, Major Carmody attended. Major Carmody visits survey Directorate on routine liaison visit. 60 SAAF Squadron ceases to undertake flying for this unit, pending its return to the Union of South Africa. Brigadier Brown CBE Director of Survey visited the section and accompanied by Major Carmody visited 60 Squadron SAAF. Lt Creese taken on strength WREF 6<sup>th</sup> July, promoted A/Capt WEF that date and granted appointment of GSO III. Major Carmody to survey Directorate on routine liaison visit

Some other ranks proceeded to UK on PYTHON (The Army had operated a scheme whereby any man who had served overseas for four years was repatriated). On 9<sup>th</sup> August Major Carmody proceeds to Caserta on routine liaison visit to Svy Directorate and returned the following day. On 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1945 Major Carmody went to Survey Directorate on routine liaison visit and returned on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Captain Creese 2 i/c travels to Survey Directorate on duty and returns to unit on completion.



*Two Recce Spitfires of No 682 Photo Reconnaissance Squadron RAF at San Severo Airfield, Foggia Airfield Complex, Southern Italy, September 1944 in their PRU Blue finish. The aircraft "F" is a PR. XIX with a Griffon engine. Formed on 1 February 1943 at Maison Blanche, Algeria from No. 4 Photographic Reconnaissance Unit (PRU) RAF, the No 682 Squadron supported the invasion of Italy and carried out sorties over Yugoslavia including special reconnaissance for army and commando operations. In 1944 the squadron began to target southern France and it moved detachments to France in September 1944, receiving the Spitfire PR.XIX. It returned to cover the Italian campaign and also operated over Greece. With the war over the Squadron carried out **survey flights** until it was disbanded on 14 September 1945 at Peretola, Florence.*

On 17<sup>th</sup> September Major Carmody was repatriated to the UK on grounds of Long Service Overseas and Captain A E Creese GSO III assumes duties of Officer Commanding. Lt Col Newman A D Survey visits Section and returns on the 19<sup>th</sup>. On 24<sup>th</sup> September the unit is in process of moving to its new location with OC Troops Foggia.



Royal Air Force - Italy, the Balkans and South-east Europe, 1944-1945. Squadron Leader J T Morgan, Commanding Officer of No. 682 Squadron RAF, talking to the unit's Photographic Officer, Flying Officer R S Fortune, from the cockpit of his Supermarine Spitfire PR Mark XI at San Severo, Italy. James Morgan (1916-1975), a civilian pilot and member of the Scottish Flying Club, was called into the RAFVR in 1939 and underwent service flying training at Sywell, Montrose and Silloth. He was posted to No. 1 Photographic Reconnaissance Unit at Benson in February 1941 and undertook a number of photo-reconnaissance sorties over north-west Europe, for which he was mentioned in despatches in June 1942. In May 1943, Morgan was posted to No. 682 Squadron in North Africa, and commanded the Squadron in North Africa and Italy from July 1943 until 31 July 1944. During this time, he was awarded the DSO for his photo-reconnaissance sorties over the Anzio and Cassino fronts. (IWM photo)

On 12<sup>th</sup> November Instructions were received to complete technical work in order that unit should move to Maddaloni and disband. Unit departed Foggia and arrived in Maddaloni, being attached to 650 Field Survey Production Coy RE.

On 20<sup>th</sup> November 1945 Capt Creese visited Survey Directorate GHQ CMF to submit completed work and technical files. Capt Creese attended Survey Conference at GHQ.

**On 1<sup>st</sup> December 1945 Disbandment instructions received from 3 District and 56 Area. Disbandment instructions completed and Final Report submitted to 56 Area. All personnel struck off strength and casualties rendered to GHQ 2<sup>nd</sup> Echelon.**



Maddaloni – No 2 ASLS joined 650 Field Survey Production Coy RE prior to disbandment

Noel Grimmett

Sources: - War Diaries – TNA Ref WO 170/5094.

**ABERFAN-----50 YEARS ON**  
**By Ron Birch**

The 50th Anniversary of a major episode in the careers of many Chepstow Apprentices will be remembered in October this year. For it was on the 21st October 1966 that an almost entire generation of children came to a terrible end in what will always be known as “The tragedy of Aberfan”. 144 inhabitants of that tiny Welsh village lost their lives that day, but perhaps more poignant was that figure included 116 young children.

A number of Survey Apprentices became actively involved in that tragedy in the post disaster and rescue operations. *(Ron has been interviewed, and details published of the part played by the Apprentices in The South Wales Argus, Leicester Mercury and Hinckley Times).*

Aberfan was a dreary, perhaps rather a dirty, small village built on an incline with the Merthyr Vale deep mine situated at the lower end and Pantglas Junior School perched at the top. Lurking some 2000metres behind the school were the slag heaps with their daily feed of colliery waste climbing ever higher. Those tips were to prove significant on that damp foggy day.

However the weather could not dampen the joy of the children as they entered the school at nine o'clock on that Friday morning of the 21st October. For in just a few hours' time they would be breaking up for a week's half term holiday

But that holiday, or any other holiday, would never come as in less than sixteen minutes one hundred and sixteen of those tiny children were dead!

Days of rain and underground streams had turned the waste slag tips into molten slurry until without warning a complete tip became unstable, turning into a gigantic unstoppable wave estimated at over 80 miles per hour heading directly for the village. Three houses stood in its path, all three being swept away together with their occupants. But another building was also situated in its path---Pantglas Junior School---where 141 young pupils, all aged under ten, had just answered the register.

The slurry hit the school, smashing walls and windows, bringing down the roof and heavy beams smothering the children with tons of that ‘black death’, burying them alive. Only 25 children of the entire school survived.

On the day of the disaster I was a SSgt instructing potential Field Surveyors at the Army Apprentices College Chepstow. Being the nearest military unit to Aberfan it was natural that our unit was put on stand-by in case we were needed. However during those desperate first hours no thought of external help was considered as the distraught local mining community dug with their bare hands to clutch at anything which might help rescue those poor children. However in less than two hours after the slurry hit the school the last child to be brought out alive was registered at 11am, all the others being presumed dead although very few of those miners could accept that. It was now time to seek help!

Some 24 hours later a detachment consisting of 150 senior apprentices and a few permanent staff together with medical personnel moved into the village. Nothing will ever dim my memory of the sight which greeted us. A great mass of thick deep black slurry covering an area a mile in length from the now contorted tips to the village streets and clambering in that mess the villagers still working with hands, spade and shovel seeking their missing children. All round them stood those young mothers, their faces etched and aged with grief looking tearfully towards the school ruins still praying that somewhere under that slurry their son or daughter may have survived. Sadly they were praying for a miracle.

Our first task was to assist the local police to throw a cordon around the village allowing only essential personnel to enter. Yes, the ghouls and sight seers were already arriving! Dividing our troops, we established an eight hour on, four off, shift pattern alternating a triangular system between the three major tasks which confronted us namely:

- (1) Establish Sand Bag Barriers.
- (2) Slurry search for bodies.
- (3) Mortuary Deployment.

- (1) The slurry was still moving albeit at a much slower pace. This required establishing a barrier wall using sandbags which ironically had to be filled using the surrounding slurry. This barrier was essential to avoid the tip engulfing more of the village.
- (2) The slurry being excavated by mechanical methods was to be loaded into Lorries for disposal. Our gruesome task was to sift through each load mostly, by hand, to look for bodies or parts of bodies dislocated by the terrible force inflicted upon them.
- (3) As bodies were recovered they were carefully taken to a temporary mortuary where they were washed, cleaned and laid out so that in sudden death dignity could be afforded them. No mother could ever be allowed to see the state of their children prior to our harrowing task.

After five days, tired and dirty, we were now ready to return to the safety and calm of Chepstow. However before we left most of those grieving parents came to shake our hands and thank the young Apprentice Soldiers for their efforts. But, sadly, the 'bottom line' was that no matter how hard we toiled we had not been able to save even one life. But no one had survived after those first few minutes when the tip spewed out its deadly contents.

The part we played, although perhaps faultless, was nothing compared to the grief of those parents who could only wonder "why them?" The official death toll was later finalised as twenty eight adults and one hundred and sixteen children aged ten or below.

I have often revisited that little village. Gone are the tips, gone is the colliery, gone is the School, but more to the point gone is a complete generation of children.

A memorial garden now stands on the site of Pantglas School, small stone walls showing where the classrooms once stood whilst every gravestone has a photograph of each child lying beneath in that mass grave.

Perhaps time heals but for those parents and to a lesser degree for me and those young Apprentices the tragedy of Aberfan will never be erased from our memories.

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This photograph was found in a Short Report of the Workings of Middle East Survey Service for the month of March 1946  
 The passengers are not identified but the report was signed by Brigadier R E Fryer Director of Survey Middle East  
 (A bottle of wine will be awarded for the first Branch Member to positively identify the make of car?)

## **512 Army Field Survey Company RE - The Mobile Echelon in Greece – March 1941**

The main body of the Mobile Echelon (2 Topo Sections and an HQ Section) landed at Piraeus late on 29<sup>th</sup> March, a small advance party and the M.T. having arrived a week previously. A three storey house was acquired and used for offices and officers' quarters, O.Rs, being accommodated in a camp in pleasant surroundings a ¼ mile away – this was on the extreme edge of a fashionable suburb of Athens, called Philothei.

The house was fitted out with improved lighting, sufficient blackout and a telephone. Space for drawing was limited and a school was taken over and shared with 517 Coy RE. At the time of the evacuation drawing tables, plan presses, etc., were being made by RE workshops.

The only field work carried out was in connection with gun positions near Athens and Piraeus. Observations were carried out for resecting the position of eight guns and Greek officers assisted us to identify trig. stations.

At the school a very elementary stereo course was started and no productive work was carried out. The first job was to sort out, number and index air photographs of the Struma Valley area. These were used in one or two cases for revising existing maps and eventually were made up into mosaics. Several compilation jobs were undertaken particularly in connection with the latest information about roads.

Owing to the rapid German advance changes in programme were frequent and jobs were invariably required in a hurry. An example of the type of makeshift undertaken may be cited. The rectangular co-ordinates of the corners of four sheets of a Greek map having been computed all "hands" were summoned and ten copies of each sheet gridded in blue pencil and delivered to the Directorate 1½ hours after receiving the co-ordinates by telephone. The personnel did not take kindly to drawing nor to working at speed and required considerable supervision.

The delivery of maps was regarded as of supreme importance and the Survey Directorate insisted that an officer should deliver them personally to the various headquarters. Lieut's Boycott and Quiggin undertook most of this map conducting covering a total of over 2,100 miles in twelve days. Earlier deliveries were to Capt. Kurrel at Anzac Corps H.Q. which was then near Elasson, latterly Capt Wylie ran a Mobile Map Depot attached to Advance Force H.Q. near Thebes.

British troops were under an hour's notice to move from 21<sup>st</sup> March; the Mobile Echelon, having destroyed its M.T. and abandoned much kit, was taken to a station outside Athens on the afternoon of 23<sup>rd</sup>. We moved by train during the night arriving at Argos at noon. The following night was spent on the beach in hopes of being evacuated. Ships arrived but they were not for us. Next day, 25<sup>th</sup>, we lay hidden to avoid air attack and assembled late at night in Navplion eventually being directed to the station at 0300 hours. A train due at 0500 hours appeared at 1000 hours by which time everyone had had to disperse. Here 4 O.Rs, were left behind, the train reaching Kalamai the same evening.

Camped outside Kalamai the attentions of enemy planes were almost continuous during daylight. We spent two such days marching to the beach each evening. The Mobile Echelon was in the middle of the front "force" for embarkation at Kalamai – there were seven such forces of approximately 1000 men each. On the second evening, 28<sup>th</sup>, advanced German forces were in possession of Kalamai; subordinate commanders took it into their own hands, organised their men and fought their way into the town. By 2300 all was quiet and we had 100 prisoners on the beach. Liaison with the Navy apparently failed and some wounded and a few men were evacuated at the extreme end of the beach. At 0300 hours on 29<sup>th</sup> we were told that we had capitulated and that OC's. would stand by their units. The Mobile Echelon marched back to camp well-disciplined to the last and too tired for anything but sleep. A hasty conference was held with Capt Birch who insisted on staying; Lieut's Boycott and Quiggin, with 3 officers and 1 sapper of 517 Coy, left Kalamai at 0600 and were lucky to be picked up by the Navy from a rowing boat 21 hours later, having covered 20 miles by road, 15 on foot and 5 by boat.

The whole embarkation was characterised by lack of information and organisation; it appears that no junior officer was ever informed either how grave the situation was or at what moment it became a case of "chacun pour soi" (every man for himself). Rotten luck on Capt Birch who sweated blood night and day to look after the Mobile Echelon, obtain all available information, and conduct it to safety.

8/5/41

A H H Quiggin Lieut R.E.

(Transcribed from the War Dairies of 512 Army Field Survey Company RE (TNA WO 169/1903 by Noel Grimmett)

The records show that Captain W W Birch RE having stayed behind in Greece with some members of 512 Army Field Survey Company – Mobile Echelon, was captured and sent to Oflag IX-A/Z at Rotenburg an der Fulda, Hesse, Germany. After repatriation Capt Birch worked in the War Office as a staff officer on the Chief Imperial General Staff and then moved to SMS Hermitage as a Senior Instructor at the Engineering Survey School and Trade Test Board from 1950 – 54, finally retiring as a Major in 1955.

### **Oflag IX-A/Z at Rotenburg an der Fulda, Hesse, Germany**

Camp Oflag IX-A/Z was opened in October 1939 as Oflag IX-A to house POWs from the British Royal Air Force and the French *Armée de l'Air*. The camp was renamed Oflag IX-A/H (*Hauptlager*, "Main camp") in June 1940, after Oflag IX-C at Rotenburg an der Fulda (picture of old town below) came a sub-camp (*Zweiglager*) designated Oflag IX-A/Z. The first person to escape from the camp was Flight Lieutenant Howard Wardle in August 1940, but he was recaptured and sent to Oflag IV-C at Colditz Castle.



The camp was closed in February 1941, but reopened in July when it was used for housing RAF and British Army officers. On 3 September 1941 three RAF officers, Dominic Bruce, Peter Tunstall and Eustace Newborn, escaped disguised as members of a "Swiss Commission". They were escorted to the main gate by another prisoner, John Milner, dressed in a German officer's uniform that had been found in an apparently forgotten set of attic rooms. They passed through the gate, and then, wearing faked *Luftwaffe* uniforms, headed to an airfield near Kassel intending to steal a Ju 52, which Newborn had flown before the war, and fly home. Unfortunately, there were no suitable aircraft, so they decided to head to France and contact an escape line. After ten days they arrived at Frankenberg, but were challenged by soldiers suspicious of their uniforms. Speaking little German they were soon identified as escapees and arrested. Returned to Spangenberg, the three were each sentenced to fifty-three days in solitary.

As a result of this, and other escape attempts, the camp was evacuated in October 1941 with all prisoners being sent to Oflag VI-B. The camp was reopened in January 1942, and housed British and Commonwealth army officers. The Germans marched the prisoners east on March 29 1945. The Americans liberated the camps inmates at Lengefeld unterm Stein on 4 April. Spangenberg Castle was destroyed by American bombs after Oflag IX A/H had left.

Notable prisoners - The following prisoners are known to have been held at the camp:-

- Pilot Officer Anthony Barber, No. 1 Photographic Reconnaissance Unit RAF. Future Chancellor of the Exchequer.
- Flight Lieutenant Aidan Crawley, RAF. Future author, journalist and MP.
- Major General Victor Fortune G.O.C 51st (Highland) Division. Captured at St Valery in June 1940. Senior British officer P.O.W in Germany. Despite declining health, refused to be repatriated. Knighted after his release for his work to promote welfare of British P.O.Ws. Building of cricket pitch at Spangenberg organised under his direction.
- Lieutenant Colonel John Frost, 2nd Battalion, Parachute Regiment. Captured in the Battle of Arnhem.
- Lieutenant Airey Neave, Royal Artillery. Colditz escaper and MP.
- Flying Officer Oliver Philpot, No. 42 Squadron RAF. "Wooden Horse" escaper.
- Major Bruce Shand, 7th Armoured Division. Captured in the Western Desert Campaign. Father of Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, second wife of Charles Windsor, Prince of Wales.
- Wing Commander Robert Stanford Tuck, No 257 Squadron RAF. Battle of Britain ace.

References:

British Prisoners of War 1939-1945 - Ancestry.co.uk  
History of Oflag IX-A/Z – wikipedia.org

## Obituaries

### Lieutenant Colonel Thomas William George Farmer RE FRICS 11<sup>th</sup> February 1930 – 21<sup>st</sup> July 2016



No 26 Army Survey Course - Tom Farmer - sitting third from left

Tom Farmer was commissioned into the Royal Engineers on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1955 and joined No 26 Army Survey Course at Hermitage, which ran from 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1960 – 20<sup>th</sup> October 1961. Tom commanded 84 Svy Sqn from 1968-70 and was appointed Chief Instructor at SMS from 1973-76 followed by a spell at Feltham working in Svy4. Later he was the first Civilian "Senior Instructor" replacing Archie Hamilton who had just retired. Tom was in the Middle East in about 1987-89 as an unattached Contract Officer with NSA Oman. When young he was a keen footballer and boxer

Philip Robinson has kindly added his recollections of his time serving with Tom: *Although I knew Tom and Joan very well in both Cyprus and Singapore, and retain great affection for them, it is difficult to pluck forth particular reminiscences for an obituary.*

*Tom was the Adjutant for 42 Survey Engineer Regiment at Zygi in Cyprus in 1962 – 63. He made his mark as being both fair and firm and along with the Commanding Officer Jim Williams did much to re-generate pride and morale in the regiment. He was remarkably tolerant of the foibles of a number of inexperienced young subalterns (of which I was one). Though stern when needed, he was always ready to encourage and offer good advice. Tom and Joan also did much to maintain a lively social ambience and were generous with their hospitality. We enjoyed a number of excursions together including some rooting for antiques, something that today would rightly be illegal.*

*I next served with him when he commanded 84 Survey Squadron in Singapore, initially as his administrative officer, later as a troop commander. He had a complex role with production of mapping for Far East Command and directing far flung field survey troops, one in Thailand and another in North Borneo. He exercised firm but friendly command and ran an efficient and happy Squadron. As always he and Joan generated a friendly and hospitable atmosphere amongst the officers and senior ranks.*

*There are tales one could tell not least the tribulations with a pet monkey of mine. He had the Nelsonian touch with a blind eye when needed. To provide the Squadron club with duty free beer a stepbrother of mine based in Malacca would periodically land his helicopter in the Squadron lines to offload contraband cases, but although Tom's office was nearby, somehow he never heard the helicopter arrive or depart. He didn't even blink when I submitted a travel claim for the use of my private yacht to convey surveyors across the Singapore Straits to occupy survey points, although there was a bit of an argument with HQ Singapore District about the appropriate rates for using private vessels on duty. Did motor mileage apply to nautical miles?*

*One particular recollection I do have was an occasion one of my sappers was brought before him on Squadron orders for some modest crime. Tom was sitting sternly behind his desk, I standing to one side to plead or otherwise for clemency. "Call in the accused" announces Tom. The Squadron Sergeant Major Mark Maunder bawls out "Accused, quick march – lef – roight – lef - roight". The accused arrives in this manner at speed before Tom's desk. "Alt" bawls the Sergeant Major. Unfortunately the office floor was well polished and on the command "alt" the sapper skidded, then fell with his boot clad legs shooting under Tom's desk to strike both his knees with some force. Tom leapt up with a howl, the Sapper lay flat on his back with a paralysed look on his face, the Sergeant Major was lost for words and I had great difficulty avoiding hysterical laughter. Tom hobbled around behind his desk then spluttered "Case dismissed and get him out of here S'arnt Major". A few minutes later, reinforced by swiftly produced coffee, we both sat there laughing – such was his style.*

*Regrettably after Singapore we went quite separate ways and had little contact outside occasional Survey social events. Aside of the obituary I have much to thank Tom and Joan for in their support in Singapore and rightly critical advice over some personal matters. It is a sadness that I had so little contact with them after Singapore. He was a good friend in Cyprus and Singapore for whom I retain great respect.*

Tom was very affected by the loss of his wife, Joan and was beset by medical problems in later life. Tom's funeral service was held at Highclere Church, Newbury, on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> August. He will be sadly missed by his family, Susan, Sally, Nigel, Paul and Madeleine and was a devoted grandfather to Victoria, Alexandra and Josephine, whom he adored.

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### **Bill (Jock) Brown**

**1944 – 2016**

Bill Brown joined up in April 1960 at the Army Apprentice College, Chepstow - Group 60B.

This was the first Survey Group to start in Chepstow, as all earlier groups started in AAC Harrogate then moved down to Chepstow. I first met Bill the day I travelled down by train to Chepstow. Having changed trains at Birmingham I met up with this other young man in one of the compartments and when we started chatting we realised that we were both joining the army and both going to Chepstow. Little did we realise that we would both be in the same room and both be Photo Tech's

Having left Farnborough, after basic RE Combat Training, Bill was posted in September 1963 to 84 Svy Sqn in Singapore and whilst there he took up parachute jumping as a hobby. A bad landing in August 1965 caused severe damage to his right ankle and sadly this finally led to a medical discharge in 1966.

The cremation service was held at Portchester Crematorium on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> July and was attended by eleven ex-Survey personnel, six of whom joined up with Bill and we have all kept in touch since our first meeting in 1960.

**Frank Johnson**



## Patrick (Pat or Paddy) David Thomas Ryan

19<sup>th</sup> July 1943 – 9<sup>th</sup> August 2016



No 2 Litho Camera Operators Course SMS - Pat Ryan standing first from left.

Patrick David Thomas Ryan, known to most people as 'Pat' or 'Paddy' was born on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July 1943, in Portsmouth the eldest child to Tom and Win, having a brother Keith and a sister Kate. Paddy started his educational years at the Bosmere School before going on to Cowplain Comprehensive.

Having limited career opportunities he decided to join the Army, and enlisted in Boy's Service completing three years at AAC Harrogate & Chepstow before moving to join the Royal Engineers; with the following seven years working in Military Survey, and given the opportunity to see the world – including a posting to run a map store on a Borneo Beach, with not much else to do other than swimming and catching the sun!

During the mid-sixties Pat married Jennifer, then left the Army in 1968 to further his career in the printing industry. Pat took a job in Exeter, which he enjoyed although with the family based in Portsmouth he decided to return and continued his printing career with the Grosvenor Press. Pat and Jennifer had three children Mark (1975), Hollie (1977) and Matt (1981)

Having spent quite a few years working for Grosvenor, eventually and with some friends, Pat set up his own printing venture, Harbour Reprographics, then moving on from there and working at The News, although by that time the printing industry was starting to change, technology was taking the traditional skills away and so Pat moved on once again, he did some caring for a while before heading off to the Post office where he worked as a sorter, even did some delivering, before finally retiring at the age of sixty five.

In retirement Pat Paddy was just pleased to be able to do his own thing spending time doing what he enjoyed ... a crossword, reading, and Pat was quite the studious sort, he enjoyed a Will Smith but also books on different periods of war.

Music was a joy and Pat never did limit himself to any particular sound, and the likes of Frank Sinatra, the Rat pack, he'd give, most artists a go, enjoyed the Pogues although when it came to James Blunt, I think Paddy found him quite depressing! Now entitled to a free bus pass Pat took a bus ride all the way to Brighton and swore blind he'd never do that again! For the last five years Pat found friendship and companionship with Jan, and would do a lot of things together, including holidays, it was a friendship that Pat valued very much.

Over the years Pat kept himself active, he loved his garden but also enjoyed sports. From his earlier days in the army, playing football for the Royal Engineers, to local teams, and even making the press for his efforts. Paddy followed Pompey for many years until Matt became an Arsenal fan and Pat then changed his colour preference, always wanting to please!

Pat enjoyed the status of Granddad, he was soft hearted and generous having money boxes for all of the grandchildren, and will always be associated with the Biscuit Barrel? Pat lived, not just a happy and content life, but at times an exciting one as well, and always wanting to please other people, at the age of fifty four, did a bungee jump, imagine that?

Pat passed away at Portsmouth Hospital following a long illness. The funeral took place at the Portchester Crematorium on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> August and was attended by many family, friends and ex-army colleagues. The Branch Standard was in attendance for the service.

(Abridged - An Eulogy prepared and given by Andy Searson (Funeral Director) on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2016 at Portchester Crematorium)

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**WO1 Victor Charles Cook RE**

**23<sup>rd</sup> December 1935 – 14<sup>th</sup> July 2016**



No 2 Air Svy Conversion Course May – June 1974 - Vic Cook – seated on the left

Victor (Vic) Charles Cook was born on December 23<sup>rd</sup> 1935 to parents Ellie and Victor Earnest Cook at home in Clacton-on-Sea, Essex. He attended St Osyth's primary and Clacton High School. Vic was very athletic and excelled in track and field earning the title Victor Ludorum year at the annual field day plus swimming champion. He was also an active member of the Boys Brigade.

It was at Clacton High in 1949 where Vic met the love of his life and partner to be for the rest of his days, Angela Sumner; they would have been married 60 years this year. Vic joined the army at Harrogate Apprentice College in 1951, after he had just turned 16 where he specialized as a cartographer and topographic surveyor. His first overseas tour in 1955 was Egypt and Cyprus, where surprisingly he was allowed 3 weeks leave in the winter of 1956 to come home, to get married and celebrate his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, during the Suez crisis. Vic was joined by Angela in 1957 after the Regiment was transferred to Cyprus. In 1960 he was in Hermitage and from 61 to 62 in Bahrain and 62 to 63 back in Cyprus. Then followed another stint at SMS from 1963 to 1966 and then to Aden for just over a year.

In 1968 Vic and Angela decided to settle in one place and bought their first house in Lakenheath, which has remained their family home ever since. Vic continued to travel until he retired in 1977 with postings to AAC Chepstow, RAF Wyton (ASLS - detachments to Far East etc.) and Donnington.

It is reported that Vic only ever fired his weapon in anger once – *'That was because he was annoyed his dinner might get cold. When he served in the desert in Egypt he would spend days under canvas mapping the terrain and would be supplied by lorry with food and water. On this occasion the lorry driver had dad's unit position wrong and drove past his team while they worked. In order to get the driver's attention and not spoil their supper he fired a shot as a signal to the driver. This was actually a serious matter as the soldiers were only issued 4 bullets each for their weapons and had to sign them in and out at the armoury when they were at camp. Dad caught an earful for his actions, but at least his comrades got a hot meal. He was a maverick and hero to his comrades that day'*.

On a more serious note while stationed in Aden with his family in a section of the city called Maala, they were involved in a dangerous incident. It took place a few weeks before leaving Aden and with most of the furniture and possessions packed they found themselves in the middle of an ambush. Sitting in their living room watching *Mr Ed, the talking horse* on TV there was a serious bangs and flashes outside. An army patrol was being attacked right outside their apartment window at which point Vic herded the family into the back room and grabbed his rifle and took up position. This went on for a while until finally it died down. Vic then came into the back room, flicked on the light and kicked one of the empty packing cases, which caused his young boys to jump with fright.

Following his retirement from the army in 1977 he took management positions in the bursary at the County Upper School in Bury St Edmunds and for the St Edmundsbury Council in Environmental Health. From 1986 until 1991 he was Administrator at the Lakenheath Home on Back Street where Angela was Matron. His last job was for the NHS in supply and procurement and that took him through to retirement in 2000.

Vic threw himself into village life as a doer, a leader and a model of someone who by his efforts, not just words, made our community a better place for all. He was a clerk of the trustees for Lakenheath Village Home for 5 years. He was a founder member of the Lakenheath branch of the Good Neighbours program and secretary of the Village Hall committee and the West Suffolk Lapidary Club. Vic and Angela ran the Medi-Aid charity for the local doctor's surgery and was a hand bell ringer and member of the bowls club. In his spare time he was an active member of the LADS and appeared onstage and off in panto's musicals and plays, coordinating the lighting, music and multimedia.

Vic embraced technology and he and Angela had two computers in the house, apparently not because their thirst for knowledge required multiple machines, but because they argued over whose go it was next!!

Vic's funeral took place at St Mary's Church Lakenheath Suffolk on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2016. He leaves behind Angela and his loving family: Steve, Rhonda and Karen, their 6 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren

(Abridged - From the eulogy given on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2016 at Vic's funeral held at St Mary's Church Lakenheath Suffolk)

## **EXERCISE CARTO NORGE**

Two of our civilian colleagues at Feltham are preparing records for storage at THE NATIONAL ARCHIVE and apparently have found that there is a serious lack of information about 'Exercise Carto Norge'.

If **you** were involved in any way with this exercise then Alan Gordon will be pleased to hear from you on either: - 07765 577 754 or [alan.gordon67@btinternet.com](mailto:alan.gordon67@btinternet.com)

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**Will members please inform the Secretary of any changes to their contact details and in particular their e-mail address! Thank you**

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

**Members Please Note - The 'SMS Course Photographs' have now been uploaded to the website and are available to view - click the link 'Historic Archive'.**

**It is recommended that members take time to familiarize themselves with the new layout of the website, and if you wish please sign the guest book before leaving. Thank you. Webmaster.**

**MILITARY SURVEY BRANCH REA**

**IT'S A REUNION**

**FREE ENTRY AND FREE CURRY SUPPER**

**SUPER BAR @ MESS PRICES**

**FREE TRANSPORT AFTERWARDS TO LOCAL HOTELS ie M4 JUNCTION 13**

**1830hrs for 1900hrs FRIDAY THE 31<sup>st</sup> OF MARCH 2017**

**Location: SGTS MESS - DENISON BARRACKS - HERMITAGE**

Plus; do please note we generally only meet once a year and we must vote in officers of the Branch and approve the accounts therefore we are compelled to hold an annual general meeting (AGM). Those interested in attending the AGM should note that this will take place on the same day at the same venue but at an earlier time. It will not interfere with the opportunity for members attending the reunion to chew the cud, enjoy the food and of course the good cheer.

**THUS OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING WILL BE AT 1700 for 1730 ON THE SAME DAY**

**FRIDAY THE 31<sup>st</sup> OF MARCH 2017**

**Please do try to attend both of the above and support your Branch.**

The Committee with the kind permission of Commanding Officer and of course the RSM, the President of the WO & Sgts Mess, extend an invitation to members to attend this reunion and if so desired the earlier AGM in the Sgts Mess Hermitage on Friday night the 31st March 2017.

**FURTHER DETAILS AND THE ENTRY FORM ARE AT THE LAST PAGE**

**PLEASE SEND IN YOUR RETURNS NOW**

**BUT NO LATER THAN THE 13<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2017**

**THE MILITARY SURVEY BRANCH OF THE REA**

**REUNION**

**1830hrs FOR 1900hrs FRIDAY THE 31<sup>ST</sup> OF MARCH 2017**

**PRECEDED BY AN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**1700hrs FRIDAY THE 31<sup>ST</sup> OF MARCH 2017**

Please note that the bar will be open from 1830hrs. Food will be served at about 2000hrs.

**Accommodation:** A small number of rooms might possibly be available but members have to note that as the barracks are no longer under the command of RSMS that this may prove to be too difficult. Hotel facilities are available at junction 13 of the M4 motorway and locally at Chievely too and remember we will provide transport to these locations at the close of the evening.

**Dress:** Smart casual or better if you wish!

**WARNING: - Hermitage has become a high security Barracks and entry will only be permitted to those who have returned this entry form with their details; identity checks may well be required to gain access to the camp.**

It is vital to establish firm attendance figures early and so once again we would request that you return this form **ASAP:**

**SO PLEASE SEND RETURNS BEFORE THE 13<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2017 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 .....

**I \*shall/\*shall not be attending the Reunion on Friday 31 March 2017.**

**I \*wish to/\*will be unable to: - attend the AGM beforehand.**

**Guests: Wives/partners are welcome 1 ..... 2.....**

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

**I enclose a cheque to support this for £..... payable to “Military Survey Branch REA”**

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.