



The Military Survey (Geo) Branch

Spring Newsletter 2021 – issue 79

Obituary - Major (Retired) Alan A Gordon RE FRGS FRSPSoc MCMI



April 1943 to January 2021

Alan Gordon was born in Salisbury Wiltshire and educated at Shaftesbury Grammar School. He joined the Royal Engineers in 1962 and trained as a topographical surveyor.



*2 Primary Svyr Topo Course – 1963
Eveleigh Codrington Reeves Mead Stockley
Attfield Gordon Cpl Callow Walton Lyno*



Celebrating Harry Hawkins 21st in October 1964 at the Intercontinental Hotel Orchard Road Singapore with Baz Humphreys, Taff Everleigh, Harry Hawkins, Alan Gordon, and Noel Grimmett



*No 18 Advanced Air Survey Technician's Course
(5 October 1970 – 2 April 1971)
Cpl Aldous Cpl Moss Cpl Gilhespy Cpl Longley Cpl Oxley Cpl Price
Cpl Gordon Sgt Stacey QMSI Bryant Cpl Horton*



*No 2 Survey Staff Specialist Course
 (25 March to 3 November 1974)
 SSgt Roberts Sgt Key Sgt Hughes SSgt Gordon
 SSgt Gray SSgt Hill SSgt Procter*

Over the following thirty years, he enjoyed postings to Singapore, Cyprus, Berlin, to a NATO Headquarters in The Netherlands and also to several Military Survey establishments at Feltham, RAF Wyton, Hermitage and Barton Stacey. During his career Alan worked on maps of Borneo, the Aden Protectorate, Cyprus, Norway, East Germany and digital data of Poland and the Soviet Union. Highlights of his service were being the first military surveyor posted to the British Commanders'-in-Chief Mission to the Soviet Forces in Germany, BRIXMIS, where he developed and implemented a programme that revised 208 map sheets covering East Germany in three years.

During his career he rose through the ranks to be commissioned, and as a major, was the operations officer for 42 Survey Engineer Group during the first Gulf War. Alan took early retirement in 1994. He pursued a second career as a consultant whose clients included Military Survey, the Ordnance Survey, Railtrack, several leading defence contractors, and an Irish geospatial database company.

He continued his association with the Royal Engineers and Military Survey. Alan was instrumental in the forming of the Military Survey Branch of the Royal Engineers Association: -

[Survey Branch Royal Engineer Association](#)

Newsletter No 1 – Branch Commissioning Committee – April 2000

President	Major General Roy Wood (Representative Colonel Commandant)
Chairman	Chris Nash
Secretary	Alan Gordon
Treasurer	Les Morgan
Vice Chairman/Benevolence	Ron Birch
Military Representative	RSM 42 Survey Engineer Group: WO1 Mick Jenkins
Reunion Organiser	Mick Perry
Civilian Representative/Military Svy Liaison	Tony Painter (Director Geographic Production)

Alan Gordon – Hon Sec – 2000 to 2002 and Editor of Newsletter – 2000 to 2001 & 2008 to 2014.

Defence Surveyors Association

Alan became Editor of the Defence Surveyors' Association Journal, *The Ranger*, a position he held from 2000 to 2010.

Shortly before leaving the service Alan developed an interest in the history of Military Survey, particularly researching and recording former surveyors' memories and collecting materials, notably photographs, that might otherwise have been lost. The collection of over 7,000 photographs now forms an online archive, scanned, and assembled by Dave Johnson (Branch Webmaster).

Alan's knowledge and enthusiasm for the history were acknowledged when he was invited with his two business partners to design and project manage the year-long celebrations to mark the 250th anniversary of Military Survey. As part of that project, he produced jointly with Dr Yolande Hodson a significant exhibition illustrating the history of Military Survey.

Alan's published work includes 'An illustrated History of 250 Years of Military Survey' written jointly with Dr Yolande Hodson, the appendix 'The Map Makers' for *Beyond the Frontline* by Tony Geraghty. His articles on a variety of Military Survey history-related subjects have appeared in the *Cartographic Journal*, *Surveying World*, *Geomatics World*, *The American Surveyor* and *The Ranger*. He was the Military Survey advisor for the Military Survey content of *Follow The Sapper* and produced the first draft of the Military Survey element of Volume XII of the official *History of the Royal Engineers*. Digital publications include choosing the subject matter and writing the text for an interactive computer-based 'History of Military Survey' for the Royal Engineers Museum and for a DVD entitled 'Snapshots from 250 Years of Military Survey'. He has given highly regarded presentations at relevant seminars at the Universities of Greenwich, Oxford and Portsmouth and to the Defence Surveyors' Association's 'Maps and Surveys' seminars on four occasions. Alan also produced numerous articles for both publications over the years culminating in the publishing of *The Regiment That Mapped The World* in 2021.

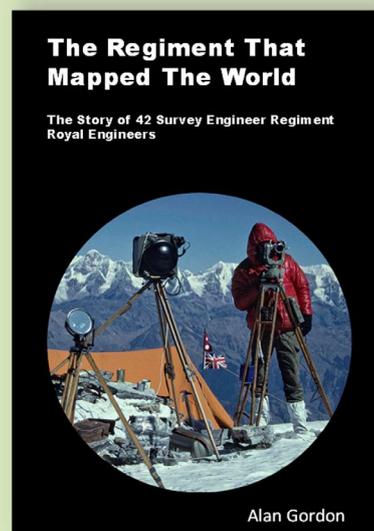
A NEW BOOK

A must for those interested in Military History, Survey and Mapping

The Story of a Unique British Regiment 42 Survey Engineer Regiment Royal Engineers

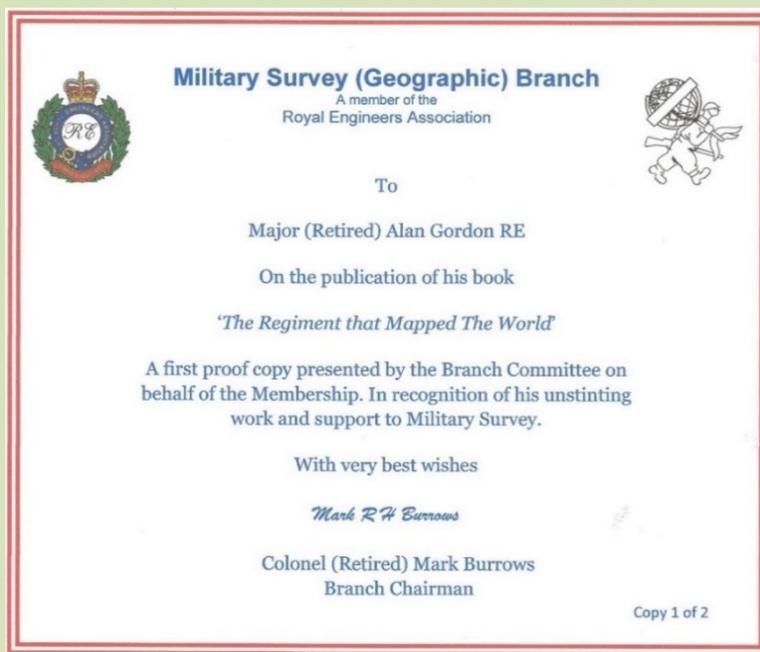
For those interested in military history, survey and mapping and the everyday life of a soldier, this book offers all of this and more. The book spans from post-war chaos through withdrawal from empire, Middle East turmoil, Northern Ireland's troubles and cruise missile deployment. From 1948 to 1985, the Regiment surveyed and mapped across the world, the Middle East's deserts, islands in the Caribbean, Pacific, the Mediterranean, the Himalayas, the Americas, Australia, and Europe. It takes mapmaking from hand drawing to GPS and automated cartography. It is as much about the people who served as about the surveying and mapping. The book is A4 size with 240 pages lavishly illustrated with many photographs mainly donated by former Royal Engineer Surveyors.

The author **Alan Gordon** joined the Royal Engineers in 1962 and trained as a topographical surveyor. Over the following thirty years, he enjoyed postings around the world. Shortly before leaving the service, he developed an interest in Military History.



Alan has many publications, including, *An illustrated History of 250 Years of Military Survey*. With *Follow the Sapper* (edition 1) he was the military survey adviser and produced the first draft of the Military Survey element of Volume XII of *The Official History of the Royal Engineers*. His research, knowledge and writing style have created an exciting detailed and very readable book.

The Survey Branch of the REA arranged for a number of proof copies to be printed through the good offices of Chris Nash, two of which I delivered personally to Alan on the 16th of December 2020. The surprise was complete, and he called to say how delighted he and his family were to receive the books.



Book review: For *Sheetlines* magazine of the Charles Close Society by Professor Thomas O'Loughlin FRHistS, FSA, FSA Scot. Professor Emeritus of Historical Theology The University of Nottingham

Alan Gordon, *The Regiment That Mapped The World: The Story of 42 Survey Engineer Regiment, Royal Engineers*

Let me begin on a melancholy note: this book was a labour of love by its author to tell the story of the unit to which he belonged, and, sadly, he died as the book was going to press. But we can congratulate him, posthumously, for a work that will delight many, if not most, of the people who find Sheetlines of interest. As I read its pages – I was sent a proof-copy for the purposes of this review – I realised that one could not view this as a book dedicated to a single theme or readership, but rather one has to approach it as something more complex and enjoyable that weaves together five themes. The most obvious strand is that this is a regimental history – a well-established genre among military historians. This unit was formed after the Second World War and changed personnel, structure, locations, tasks, and kit until it was disbanded in 1985 – and yet it continues in another form beyond the end of this narrative (see a 'map' of its history on pp. 2-3). So, we follow the human beings that were its life blood at work (surveying and producing maps – its main task, being deployed as infantry in Northern Ireland and as replacement fire-fighters in the 1970s), at play, and in all the formalities (and informalities such as a visit from Miss GG Barton Stacey of The Sun on p. 158) of army life.

Having met the people, the book is a quick guide to how military survey has evolved over the period since the Second World War. The book's story is set in context in that it presents the work of this regiment in a longer time frame that begins with Roy's survey in 1747 – and points out, something I had never noticed before, that General Roy began his work in Scotland as a civilian and it was while the mapping was in progress that he received his commission. Across Europe most, if not all, the national mapping agencies began life as military endeavours which, as with the Ordnance Survey, gradually migrated into the civilian sphere to a greater or lesser degree. Then, when their histories came to be written it was usually done by civilian historians who had a greater familiarity with the civilian rather than the military dimension of their subject.

This book is the exact opposite, and it provides, therefore, a very welcome balance. Time and again as I read its pages, little bits of information fell into place simply because Gordon thinks of the history of survey from the viewpoint of the military unit that did the work. While we expect that viewpoint in the history of survey during wartime (one finds it so well done in Peter Chasseaud's work), when we see it applied to the mapping of Ceredigion (pp. 159-60) one gets a fresh insight the dynamics of survey and the competing demands that underlie every map.

The third level of interest is linked to the notion of 'the regiment that mapped the world.' This unit was based in many places in the UK and abroad – it spent nearly a decade in Cyprus – but while one might expect to learn of the maps it produced for places where there were deployments (Cyprus and Aden in the 50s and 60s and then the Falklands – there is a fascinating section of a 'Minefield Map' on p. 180) or manoeuvres (Norway), one also sees maps produced in more exotic places such as Nepal.

*The author presents this activity within the long traditions of the RE working on maps of British interests abroad such as the surveying the border between the USA and Canada along the 49th parallel. It might be more accurate to say that Gordon has given the military survey dimension that parallels the work of the Directorate of Overseas Surveys. That organisation had almost the exact same lifespan (1946-1985) as 42 Regiment, it produced maps that were very similar in style and appearance, covered some of the same regions, probably its Director, Brig. Martin Hotine, knew many people in the regiment, and lastly, the histories of the two organisations have almost identical titles – see Alastair Macdonald, *Mapping the World* (London 1996). Each book throws light on the other.*

The fourth stream is that by looking at this very specific kind of survey, done by one small and very focussed group, one senses that mapping is always to be located in terms of a larger society and in league with other players – in this case, in a particular way, with the Ordnance Survey. It is perhaps this element of the book that is more interesting for members of the CCS – and, yes, our inspiration, as 'Captain Charles Close, commanding Number 1 Survey Section,' get a mention on p. 13. The book allows us to see how the historic link between the OS and the RE, both in pursuit of the government of the day's agenda, continued to touch, depart from, and overlap each other until the 1980s.

*The last stream within this book is that it is micro-study, in its photographs as in its text, of the greatest revolution in cartography since the Renaissance. In the sections on the late 1940s we see methods of survey and instruments that would have been familiar to Close, Kitchener, Colby, or even Cassini. There is a picture of a plane table set up with clinometer, a signal lamp descended from that designed by Colby, and an officer looking through a theodolite (p. 45). No doubt there was a slide-rule and log-tables nearby and they could do the trig with pencil and paper. Likewise, on p. 108 is a marker for a trig station (labelled 'A Norwegian Trig Point') that is identical in shape with the 'Trigonometrical Pole' pictured in Close's *Topographical and Geographical Surveying* (London 1905), p. 10. By the book's end we have laser measuring instruments and satellite location – and in the pages between we can track the evolution in survey and map production – which, while ever more accurate, seem far less fun to use! I suspect that this is a book that members of the society will really enjoy having.*

Thomas O'Loughlin.

Tributes

Peter Wood close friend, and colleague: -

Alan was a very great friend both in the service and later as a business associate in civilian life.

Whilst in Military Survey we served together in 1965 in 84 Survey Squadron in Singapore, I as a Cartographer, and he as an Air Surveyor. Later we met again at the School of Military Survey whilst I attended the first Survey Staff Specialist course and Alan was my instructor during the Air Survey element. In early 1979 he took over my duties as SSM of 19 Topographic Squadron at Barton Stacey.

After commissioning we served out our separate appointments at home and abroad until we both left the colours in 1994. After a short period of resettlement, we were offered the management of a project, creating a plan for the modernisation of the disparate national railway signalling systems for, the then, Railtrack company. This task jump-started a business partnership in project management that became Gordonwood Associates (GWA), which existed for a successful 10 years. One project, amongst the many we ran, was the management of the celebration of the 250th anniversary of Military Survey. Another intense two-year project involved working with Ordnance Survey to produce a computer-based course on Map Reading. For this project we welcomed a third partner, Dave Johnston, for his prowess in digital illustration.

During the time that GWA was operating, we never had a serious cross word mainly because of Alan's amiable nature and, I have to say, it was his pleasant character that had a wonderful calming effect on me. I recall on many occasions, that when we shared a platform on business presentations, people often remarked on the entertaining vocal contrast between my efforts and Alan's lilting Wiltshire accent! (he came from Bemerton just NW of Salisbury). We wound up the partnership in 2004 but remained very much in touch living only about 6 miles apart.

A lovely man: it was privilege to have known him.

Yolande Hodson close friend and colleague: -

I first met Alan in about 1996. I had no idea who he was. He rang me out of the blue one day, full of an idea he had had, and he wanted to know what I thought about it. He had realised that 1997 was the 250th anniversary of what could be said to be the beginning of the Military Survey of Scotland, and, extrapolating from that, it could surely be said that it was, therefore, also the 250th anniversary of Military Survey itself. My purist academic mind cautioned that one could equally say that 1749 was a better date or even 1784, when the first Engineer survey company was formed (they were not 'Royal' until 1787). In the end, I succumbed to Alan's infectious enthusiasm and agreed that one might as well go along with 1747.

From that time on, Alan was the driving force behind the Military Survey 250 project. He had an amazing capacity for work and an astonishing 'can do' attitude which meant that everything was completed on time – exhibitions, the writing of the history booklet which we did together, the open day, lectures, and so much more. It was his idea to apply for a 'Royal' title for the School of Military Survey to celebrate the anniversary – another achievement of his. When he took over the editorship of the DSA Newsletter, *Ranger*, in 2000 he transformed it during his ten years at the helm into the highly successful journal that it is today. He must have been delighted to see the proof of his newly completed history of 42 Regiment shortly before he died.

Mike Stanbridge close friend and colleague: -

Alans posting to Brixmis, Berlin in 1973, followed a request from Brixmis to Lt Col John Henshaw, AD Svy HQ BAOR, which filtered down to Svy 1a at Feltham where I was SO3 and responsible for RE Svy soldiers' careers and postings. I recall interviewing Alan at Feltham, from the short list that I had compiled, from paper records in those days, which met the job description, and selecting him for the post. There was no doubt he was the right man for the job not only from his rank, trade, and experience perspective but also his personal qualities, communication skills and particularly the enthusiasm he showed to get on with the new job that had been outlined to him. This was well proven because, whilst in Brixmis, Alan developed and implemented a programme that revised 208 map sheets covering East Germany in three years.

During the remainder of his career, he rose through the ranks to eventually be commissioned and, as a Major, was the operations officer for 42 Survey Engineer Group during the first Gulf War in 1991. Before that, however, I met up with Alan again in 19 Sqn, as OC and SSM respectively, during 1979-81 and that longer term connection led to us using each other's knowledge, and particularly individual networks, for consultancy purposes after I had retired into the defence related geo-int industry such as BAe Military Aircraft, Logica, Aerosystems International & EDS Defence. Alan's aid and assistance, together with Peter Wood's, with the reformatting of the DSA Ranger during the late 90's was also most welcome.

Alan will be sadly missed by us all for his endless help and support to many of us. Nothing was ever too much trouble.

P.S. The Story of 42 Survey Engineer Regiment by Alan Gordon

The good news is that with the lifting of the lockdown, a lot of work left in the office while working from home is now moving. The closing date for expressions of interest for a copy/copies of the book was 4 April 2021, and an excellent response was forthcoming. In a few days, a decision will be taken on the final cost. The book will be published as a private publication and will be offered at cost. All should shortly receive an email or letter outlining the cost and inviting payment. The plan is to have the book with you by the end of June 2021.

**Obituary - Lt Col (Retired) John S Himbury BSc RE
July 1932 to January 2021**



**No 27 Army Survey Course – Feb 1961 to Apr 1962
Olobokin Hinges Faramola Obiako Shalwani Ireibi
Fagan Shaubel Gathercole Himbury Mongeau**

John Himbury was born in Southsea Portsmouth on 10 July 1932 and educated at Farnborough Grammar School. His father also a Sapper retired as a Major (QM) in 1958 - who was awarded an MBE in February 1943 for services as RSM of 4th Searchlight Regiment RA in Malta from 1941 to 1944.



Malta 1939 age 7

Early Military Career 1953-1957

John was educated at Farnborough Grammar School and commissioned into the Royal Engineers, from Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Rhine Coy (Intake 10), in February 1953. That same year he attended 10 Young Officer Course at Royal School of Military Engineering, Chatham. On completion of the course, in July 1953, he was posted, as a Field Troop Commander, to 38 Field Engineer Squadron, in 23 Engineer Regiment, British Army of the Rhine. After that, he attended 9 Young Officer Degree Course at the Royal Military College of Science, Shrivenham. He was awarded a BSc in May 1956 and returned to the RSME to attend 16 Young Officer Advanced



Married Margaret Nelson in July 1956

Course. During that same busy military training year, he found the time to marry Margaret Nelson at Aldershot.

Upon completing the RSME YO course in March 1957, John returned to 38 Squadron as a Troop Officer, which had just amalgamated with Royal Engineer Troops, Berlin to become 38 (Berlin) Field Squadron. During that tour, John, and Mary's first son, Michael, was born in January 1959. A month later, John was promoted to Captain and posted to 22 Field Engineer Regiment at Chiseldon, near Swindon, as the Adjutant. During the tour, he decided to join Military Survey and was selected to attend No. 27 Army Survey Course (ASC) at the Royal School of Military Survey (RSMS), Hermitage commencing February 1961.

Survey Career 1961-1985

Following his ASC completion in April 1962, he was attached to the Department of Overseas Surveys (DOS) in Uganda for a year. John and Mary's second son, Mark, was born during that time in September 1963. After this one-year attachment to DOS, he returned to military life as Adjutant at RSMS until promoted to Major in February 1966. It was then back to civvies again, but this time as Ordnance Survey Regional Officer for West Midlands in Kidderminster, Worcestershire.



In the Autumn of 1970, John moved South to Barton Stacey to be Officer Commanding 13 Field Survey Squadron in B Camp. The Squadron had been kept extremely busy since its return from Aden in 1967. It continued to be so during John's time as OC with Ex Spring Tulip, the aerial identification and survey of high-rise obstructions for the new RAF Low Flying Charts, and numerous overseas troop or section deployments to such places as the Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Anguilla, and Ex Calypso Hop in Jamaica. Those that knew John during that time and were under his command comment on his excellent planning and control, risk management and communication skills. No one ever saw him lose his temper or show any anger. 13 Sqn became an integral part of the 42 Survey Engineer Regiment in November 1971. John then took over the Regimental 2i/c posting in A Camp for the latter part of his Barton Stacey tour until December 1973.

In 1974 he was posted to the Directorate of Military Survey, Feltham as Deputy Assistant Director, Survey 2, a branch responsible for all map planning, production, and distribution. On promotion to Lieutenant Colonel in September 1977, he attended the NATO Defence College staff course in Rome, a pre-requisite before taking up the Chief Geographic Officer post in HQ AFNORTH, Oslo. The office was deep inside the Kolsas mountain, which, with the northern latitudes sunrise and sunset times, meant that one generally went to work in the dark, worked in the dark and came home in the night!

On returning to the UK in December 1980, it was back to Svy 2 again in Feltham as the Assistant Director, a critical position for Operation *Corporate*, the Falklands Conflict. He was the cornerstone of the Director General's (Major General Eric Barton) small decision-making team with the overall responsibility for the critical, timely production and distribution of all the geospatial products required for that military operation.



John Himbury studying a Falkland Map display at Hermitage (photo – Mike Nolan)

John's article 'Immediately after the Event' published in the December 1982 Edition of the Royal Engineer Journal and, again, in the DSA's 2017 Summer Edition of 'The Ranger', provides insight into his duties and responsibilities were at that time.

A friend and comrade of John who was under his command in both 13 Squadron and during Operation *Corporate* recalls his cool, calm, and collective response at all times with, sometimes, a wicked sense of humour.

In November 1982, John moved back to RSMS and took charge of the Training and Development Team before finally retiring from the Army in July 1985 and a sad loss to Military Service.

Mick Perry friend and colleague recalls: *a genuine and really nice person - an officer and gentleman of the old school who placed genuine trust in and empowered his SNCO's. In the early seventies it was a revelation for a young Sergeant to be summoned by his OC and to be invited to sit and have coffee and chew the cud.*

He would seek your assistance in guiding subordinates and occasionally your seniors for their best benefit and indeed for the benefit of the unit as a whole. He entrusted His SNCO's to take charge and manage survey tasks both at home and overseas. He fully appreciated and respected the technical expertise and experience of his SNCO's and indeed all of his troops. Highly respected by all under his command.

Post Military Retirement Activities

As a retired officer (RO), he accepted an RO2 Civil Service appointment in the Army's Communication & Information (CIS Army) branch at the Ministry of Defence in Old War Office Building which suited him well with his Op Corporate experience. He eventually retired from the Civil Service in September 1995 at the age of 63.

In retirement, John and Margaret lived in Fleet. Margaret, regrettably, pre-deceased him, also at Hill Brow Residential Home, in May 2018. Michael and Mark, their two sons and their grandchildren Holly and Max, survive John and Margaret.

Contributions from Mike Himbury, Mike Stanbridge and Chris Nash

Prince Philip Endorses HMS Magpie's New Rallying Cry

The survey ship's new motto is 'lux in tenebris lucet', which translates as 'shine light into darkness'.

14th January 2021 at 4:58pm



The Duke of Edinburgh has given his seal of approval to the motto adopted by one of the Royal Navy's smallest ships. HMS Magpie's new motto is 'lux in tenebris lucet', which translates as 'shine light into darkness'. "The motto is aimed at complementing the ship's crest with the black annulet symbolising the darkness and the light within," Lieutenant Commander Mark White, Magpie's Commanding Officer, said. "I hope that adopting a motto will further embellish the already splendid ship's crest and act to inspire those who serve in her."



The Duke of Edinburgh being saluted on board HMS Magpie in Malta in the 1950s (Picture: Royal Navy)

Prince Philip has endorsed the new motto, which is unique across the fleet and has been selected to be non-specific to the survey vessel, so future Magpies can rise to it, whatever their mission or role. Prince Philip receives regular updates on the small craft, which is the ninth vessel to be named Magpie. Other ships to carry the name include a frigate commanded by Prince Philip from 1950.

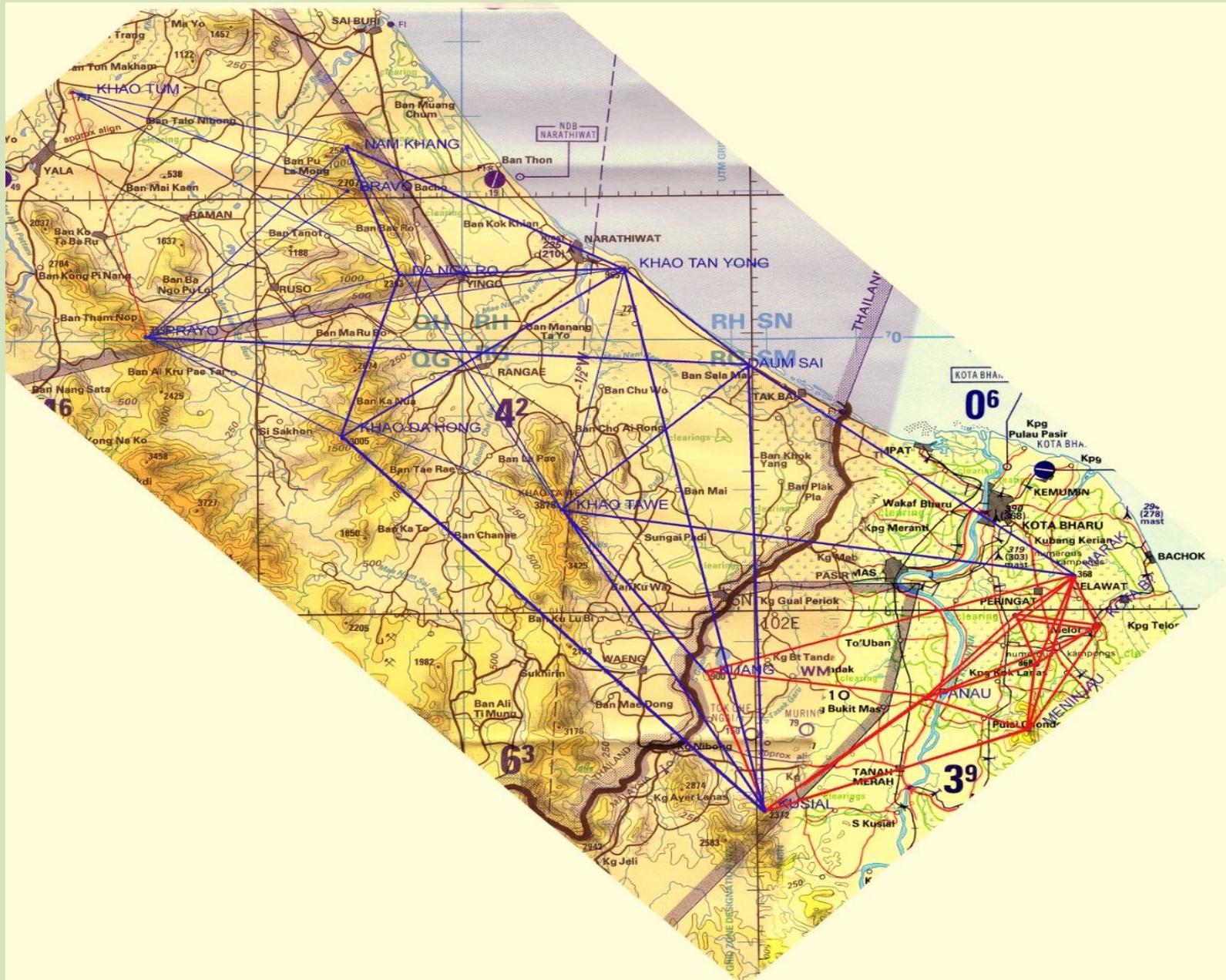
Magpie is 18m long and traces her history back more than two centuries, but has never had a rallying cry, unlike many ships and submarines in the fleet. HMS Magpie is currently undergoing her annual maintenance period across the water from her home base of Devonport. The survey ship will return to action this month and collect data and information about the waters and coastline of the nation's key harbours.

Cover image: Royal Navy. https://www.forces.net/themes/custom/forcesnet_2020/logo.svg



The Thai/Malay Geodetic Connection 1967 to 1968

Albie Field



This map shows all the proved rays which formed the axis of the proposed scheme submitted to HQ FARELF and after slight modification was approved

1 Topographical Troop 84 Survey Squadron RE moved in its own transport from Singapore to Kota Baharu, North Malaysia arriving on 22 Sep 67. A base camp was established at Pengkalan Chepa, adjacent to 7 Royal Malay Regiment Barracks, five miles from Kota Baharu town. To the best of my recollection, we used one Bedford RL three-ton lorry, three or four 109-inch Land Rovers with half ton trailers and a water browser. On this occasion we journeyed up Malaysia on the east coast unlike on the reconnaissance. My memory is that the journey was about six hundred miles although asking the internet now gives it as four hundred and sixty miles.

We had at least one overnight stop, but I cannot recall where. I do recall an incident at that stop when a side window of the Land Rover shattered causing a facial injury to John Redford. My memory of who was with us is rather vague over fifty years after the event, but I can recall the following: -

Capt. Alex Matthews RE
 Sgt "Albie" Field RE
 Sgt "Bill" Sinclair RCE
 Corporal's "John" Redford,
 "Norm" Brindle,
 "Pat" Keough (driver),
 "Pete" Simmonds
 Sappers – "Bob" Wells, "Mick" Lelliot, "Geordie"
 Carr, "Shady" Lane, "Chris" Moorhouse and
 "Frank" Smith.
 Cfn "Chris" Cobon (vehicle mechanic).
 plus, an ACC private as a chef.

Many more changes of personnel occurred during the operation which continued until June 1968 mainly due to the monsoon conditions experienced for a considerable part of our stay. We had regular visits from squadron commander Major Tom Farmer. We were joined for some time by Staff Sgt Alf Isherwood and also by the SSM Chris Robbins.

Although we travelled up in uniform the Troop was required to wear civilian clothing during the operation for security reasons, as CT were active in the area, especially in the area of Khao Tawe where we had a permanent Thai Police escort. Those of us who had spent time in Borneo found the situation somewhat different, in Borneo we were in uniform and carrying weapons. There was far less wildlife to be found in Thailand at least in those locations where I found myself, I cannot speak the areas I did not visit. In Borneo we had been able to supplement our food from the wildlife, wild boar, monkey, and the delicious barking deer; alas that was not the case in Thailand.



Preparing for the journey to Thailand for the recce



Crossing into Thailand at Sadao

When we first arrived at Pengkalan Chepa we were accommodated in tents but soon moved into a house close to the Sergeants mess where we were to remain. We set up a radio net for communication and were lucky enough to have an airport close at hand used by many of our visitors from Singapore.

It was anticipated that two base camps would be needed during the operation, one at Kota Baharu, Malaysia and one at Tan Yong Mat, Thailand. Temporary accommodation in wooden buildings had been arranged at those places during the reconnaissance, with the assistance of the Malaysian Army and the Royal Thai Survey Department. The Troop was equipped with normal stores for a Survey field troop including MRA3 Tellurometers and Wild T3 geodetic theodolite.

The Thais and Malays were also providing a Wild T3 theodolite each. The troop also had a set of A 13 radio transceivers for communications.

All three nations would have a surveyor on each hill occupied and each would complete a full set of observations. This to include 16 rounds of horizontal angles to primary standards on the following zero settings – 00° 01' 05", 90° 08' 55", 45° 02' 10", 135° 07' 50", 22° 33' 20", 112° 36' 40", 67° 34' 30", 157° 33' 30", 11° 15' 05", 101° 23' 55", 56° 17' 10", 145° 23' 50", 33° 48' 20", 123° 51' 40", 78° 49' 30", 168° 50' 20".

As used by Ordnance Survey for the retriangulation of Great Britain.

Tellurometer measures

Four measures in each direction and vertical angles to obtain distance corrections for slope and mean sea level. Temperature and humidity must be taken to determine the saturation water vapour. Electrically aspirated psychrometers and Baromec barometers made by Negretti and Zambra were used for this purpose.

Although there was no road connection between Malaysia and Thailand in the East at that time there was a rail connection at Sungai Golok (now known as Sungai Kolock,) or as it is called in Malaysia Rantau Panjang. The bridge could also be crossed on foot stepping on the sleepers. The required vehicles were taken across by train to Tan Yong Mat where the second base was set up. I do believe that the journey can now be done by road.

Our base in Thailand at Tan Yong Mat was in a Thai school and we were joined by two Royal Signals radio operators from 15 Signals Regiment who operated a C11 transmitter and R210 receiver to act as the base station for communication as we were not having much success with their own equipment.

Later this was extended to a daily call to Singapore where our parent unit 84 Survey Squadron RE was based. 15 Signals Regiment was in fact the next unit to ours at Dover Road.

On 4th October 1967, the field work started and combined British and Malaysian observing parties occupied Mark Kuang, Meninjau and Kusial on the Malaysian side of the border; and further trigs were occupied in Thailand at Khao Tawe, Khao Tan Yong, Khao Dahong, Khao Tum, Nam Khang Prayo and Da Ngaro.

What could be called the lynch pin of the scheme KHAO TAWE (also one of the highest trigs) was not too far over the border into Thailand and had a railway station at the foot of the hill, with a Buddhist temple at the base of the hill. The hill was shown on existing maps as being 2000 feet high but was in fact found to be around 4000 feet high. This may well have accounted for the fact that an aeroplane had crashed into the twin peak! I believe that Tawe was occupied for most of the duration of the task. The area around Tawe was known to have active terrorists and we were accompanied by a Thai Police section for all the time. Tawe tended to be in cloud or mist, most of the time and occasions when theodolite observations were possible were few and far between. I spent quite some time on this hill initially with James Hoyland and later with Chris Moorhouse.

When we first received the MRA3 tellurometers when on the task in fifth division in Borneo they perform brilliantly but they were brand-new time, however the performance on this task was nowhere near as good the atmospheric conditions seem to affect them badly a great deal of time was spent under repair. I personally was attached to REME workshops in Singapore in an attempt to improve the service we got from.

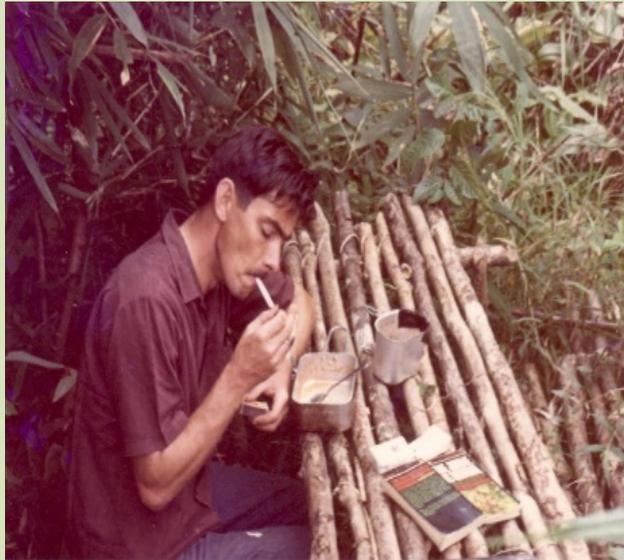
Although the technicians were extremely competent as it does not seem to grasp the idea of cannibalization of using components from a known good machine to check which parts of the machine was wrong and others. One of the replacement instruments we obtained even had a NiCad battery in it, but we had no means of charging these. One of the major benefits of the tellurometer was the voice communication, which on many occasions assisted the radio network.

Unlike the Troop's experiences in Borneo helicopter support was few and far between.

At a later stage is decided that gravity observations will be taken at all trig stations, as it is essential that observational loops must be completed within a certain time it was necessary to obtain helicopter support.

I have included two appendices containing the recollections of this task by two team members at that time, L/Cpl James Hoyland and Sapper Bob Wells.

Captain Alex Matthews recorded a lot of the task on cine film and an edited version can be found at this link - <https://1drv.ms/u/s!AutHKiGxGPONGaAgg-SFDfRf-iDWPg?e=FtW8Xc>



The author on a smoke break

Appendix 1

Memories and Recollections of the Thai/Malay Border Connection - Sep 67-Jan 68

By LCpl James (Sid) Hoyland (later Captain RE)



Sid Hoyland at Kusial

We were under no illusions that the border survey was a particularly important and political job. Perhaps most of this awareness came later as we progressed but I do remember Sgt Alf Isherwood and Capt. Alex Matthews impressing on us the importance of the work and our part in it. It was a British led operation but with the active part of the Malay Lands and Surveys Department and the Royal Thai Survey Department staffed almost entirely by Royal Thai Army Officers. Everything had to be done three times; every angle measured, and every distance measured, every station description completed three times, every panorama drawn and every photo ID similarly. International borders are very sensitive, and even though this was a combined operation we nevertheless had to be very careful, particularly when meeting and dealing with local peoples. In addition, in the interior away from the rural areas, the border area was very porous and roving bands of Chinese Communists insurgents caused frequent problems for both the Malay and Thai authorities.

The British surveyors came from No 1 Topo Troop, 84 Field Survey Squadron based in Singapore. 1 Troop had recently returned from Sarawak after many years based in Kuching and Sibiu. We had a mixture of experience.

Those of us who were previously in Sarawak were partnered with relatively recent arrivals to 84 Squadron. All of whom were very capable and that is how I was teamed up with Bob Wells. If memory serves me correctly, we got along very well and made a very good team. The work was very challenging, not only was there the multi-national nature of the job, but also the weather was against us within a very few weeks.

I am not sure who decided that the beginning of the monsoon season was the right time, but it was not! With hindsight, it was probably a political decision to get the work started as soon as possible.

We, of course, had all the advantages, we were well trained, using our own equipment, and commanded by our own seniors and officers. The Malay surveyors, who were almost all ethnic Chinese, were professionally qualified albeit with less experience of major control surveys. The Thai officers on the other hand were inexperienced and not necessarily trained land surveyors.

As a consequence, we had to spend a lot of time simply instructing both the Malay surveyors and the Thai officers on how to use our equipment. All in all, it was very rewarding, even if a little frustrating at times waiting for the other two parties to finish their obs.

There were other challenges as well. As I said earlier, within a few weeks the weather was against us and almost all stations spent inordinate amounts of time either waiting for the local weather to clear or waiting for it to clear on the distant stations which they needed to see.

Our first station was Bukit Kusial, which was about 2500ft AMSL if I remember correctly? We had to walk in with all equipment. The nearest road-head was some distance away and the trek took about 8 hours.

There were the six surveyors plus about 15-20 labourers. Some of whom would stay with us, but most would leave the following day after a night's rest from carrying all the equipment.

It was hard and hot work! On our way we passed through Kampong Kusial, and I seem to remember we had a short break, and the local villagers hospitably provided a small meal and refreshments which was very welcome.

Further into the hills we passed over a small river, about 3-4m wide but not deep at all. On either side of the ford there were small pools, upstream and downstream with beautifully crystal-clear water. This river was very important as we were to find out later.

On our first night, the bashas had been built and we had all eaten. The Malay surveyors had built their own two-man tent as had the Thai officers. I seem to remember Bob and me sharing a longer basha with four of the labourers. Suddenly one of the labourers started screaming and thrashing about as if in terrible pain. My Malay, by then was quite good, but I could not understand anything he was saying but I do remember it took four of us to hold him down until he finally calmed and fell into a deep sleep. The following day the labourer's foreman sent him away. I asked what had happened.

Apparently when we crossed the river, the spirits had told him that he was not allowed to go further, he ignored them, and they followed him. That night they attacked him. I asked what would have happened if we had not held him down, they said "Amok", which meant that he would have run crazy and attacked anyone who stood in his way.

He would literally have run amok. A reminder that local beliefs and superstitions can never be ignored. There are many horrific stories of men running amok, and almost always with serious loss of life and injuries.

We were very lucky that the other labourers recognised what was happening and managed to restrain him, with a little help from two young and fit British Surveyors!

On the second and subsequent days it was all work. We had to unpack and check the equipment, setup the British Army A13 radio and its aerial, make contact with the base station and send our daily sitrep, check and re-centre the beacon, get our labourers organised and generally settle in for what would be a fairly long stay.

One day Bob was observing distances using the MRA3 and I was booking, sitting comfortably with a mug of tea, on the empty Tellurometer carry case. Then from between my legs from under the case crawled the biggest and blackest scorpion I had ever seen! "Goodness me, Bob", I said, "Come and have a look at this". "By Jove", he said, "That's a big one!" I called the labourers to ask if it was dangerous and they just picked it up and cut off its sting. We all gathered around and took photographs. I took a photo against a "can spanner" for scale. Interestingly, later than night we had another visit from a scorpion. A much smaller one coloured sandy orange. This time the labourers moved well away and would not go anywhere near it; from which we gathered it was extremely dangerous. Fortunately, it went away untroubled by humans.

Generally, the work continued very well. We had quite good weather to begin with, with one or two exceptions, and we managed to complete all the observations before the other stations were due to move. However, there was one station about 20 Km away on the coast East of Kota Bahru.

I think it was a station called Tumpat. The difficulty was that we were quite high, and they were quite low. The intervening ground was initially jungle, then paddy fields, then rural farmland and finally scrubland approaching Tumpat.

This sort of terrain was problematic for measuring EDM. Too much reflection of the radio waves confused the receiving instrument. This phenomenon was known as “ground swing”. We must have measured the line a dozen or so times without reaching our required accuracy. It was quite obvious what the problem was and so after a short conversation Bob and I decided that the only way to satisfy the requirement was to measure the line many more times. This would not necessarily increase the spread of the measures nor achieve the required accuracy, but it would improve the probability of getting a good mean measure.

Our decision was ratified some years later when on a visit to the then Mapping and Charting Establishment in Feltham, I had the opportunity to discuss this with one of the senior computers who had worked on the computations of the connection. He told me that we had done exactly the right thing.

A few weeks later I had to leave Bukit Kusial and return to Singapore, leaving Bob in charge until another young surveyor could join him. I travelled down on my own on the overnight train. My wife was arriving in a few days and we were moving into quarters. Unfortunately, when I arrived at 84 Squadron lines, a letter was waiting for me saying that a few days previously my wife had had a bad accident in the hotel kitchen at work and scalded the whole of the inside of her forearm. She still has the scar to this day. Anyway, this had turned septic, and the doctor had banned her from travelling.

So, it was back on the overnight train and back up to Kota Bahru. As things turned out I would be back in the UK only a couple of months later. My next station was on Bukit Tawi which was one of the main pivot stations about which the scheme turned.

I think it was John Redmond, who was in charge of the crew, but he left shortly after and I was joined by Chris Moorhouse. This station was one of the highest, if not the highest, at about 4000ft in the scheme. Chris and I had never gotten along very well whilst we were in Singapore, but on the hills where we had to work together, we got along fine. It was on this hill that we had to spend the whole of Christmas due to the instructions of a senior officer! This senior officer was the Assistant Director Survey (AD Survey) Far East Land Forces. I remember his name; it was cursed along the whole border!

But perhaps it is not important now, suffice to say that I do not think he rose above the rank of Lt Col, whereas Alex Matthews, who fought unsuccessfully to allow us some time off rose much higher! Poetic justice perhaps The talk amongst us junior ranks was that Alex had argued to the point where he was threatened with disciplinary action and had no choice but to accept what he knew to be a thoroughly bad decision. During this enforced occupation of all the stations, by the British only, since the Thais and Malays were taking a break, our weather was extremely bad. Chris and I got drunk on lots of Thai whiskey and beer!

I went on to man one other station after Bukit Tawi, with Frank Smith as I recall, where I suffered a very painful and embarrassing bout of amoebic dysentery which had me in agony for about 4 days. This station was much lower and therefore had much better weather.

As a consequence, it was also extremely hot and humid. These conditions cause as many problems as bad weather. Constant care must be taken to ensure that the equipment is kept as dry as possible. The humidity will affect theodolite lenses as well as EDM electronics.

On a rest break back at the base I successfully petitioned Alex Matthews to recommend that I be sent on the next Field Survey Class 2 Technician course at The School of Military Survey in Hermitage, which I knew was starting in February. A few days later I was back in Singapore on my way home.

Appendix 2 Recollections of Thai/Malay Survey by Robert Wells



Bob Wells - Kusial

The advance party took the vehicles, and I was among those who went by train. I recollect that we had a problem with customs at Johore Bharu, in particular with the large black Tellurometer boxes but eventually we arrived in Kota Bharu, which ironically, being in the North East of the country, translates as New Castle (perhaps a colonial throwback). We transferred to the barracks, now 8 Brigade Army Camp, next to the airport. I do recollect the senior surveyor from the Malay Survey Organisation being somewhat incredulous that we were attempting to carry out this task seeing as the monsoons were imminent.

But being true brits, we thought we knew better and carried on regardless. Later some of the instruments showed damage from the damp and I heard a senior officer was making accusations that this was deliberate!

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My first hill was Kusial with L/Cpl Sid Hoyland, which we climbed along with a large group of porters. We had a couple of Malay Surveyors and Thai army officers, but I do not remember if they joined us at the same time.

Sid and I had an interesting time with the Thai officers seeing as neither of us could speak each other's language and we were trying to assess their knowledge of surveying. One of the Thai officers started to move his hand back and forth horizontally making clicking noises which for a time baffled us but eventually we worked out that they were air surveyors/photogrammetrists. This led to some hilarious incidents when they had to carry out the angle observations. This was a long-drawn-out procedure.

- Sid showed them how to use the clamps and slow-motion screws in order to intersect the lights (of course this was all at night!). Once intersected they shouted, "Sid, Sid" then Sid had to confirm that they had put the crosshairs on target.
- The next procedure was to gain co- incidence with the micrometer. The same "Sid, Sid" call came for him to check.
- I was doing the booking so I recorded the readings, albeit read out in Thai and I can still recite 1 – 10 in Thai! (Nung, song, sam, see, hah, hock, jed, pad, kow, sib – please forgive the phonetic spelling).

This procedure was carried out for every single observation to every target and took almost from dusk to dawn. However, when I analysed the observations, the spread and the first eight and second were always well within the tolerances.

After a short time, Sid's wife arrived in Singapore, so I was left to my own devices, which was OK for a while until the weather broke and the Malay and Thai surveyors decided to have a break.

I was left with Malay labourers, which improved my Malay language skills no end. Regular contact was made between the individual hills using the two-way function of the tellurometers and also by radio.

I was called one day by base camp to meet at the bottom of the hill to sign a visa form for Thailand. This was a particularly bad day, so I instructed the Malay lad how to light the tilly-lamp and hang it under the beacon, whereupon I

“slid” down the hill to meet, I think, Alf Isherwood. I told Alf that I thought it ridiculous that I should try to go back and explained that the light would still be operating OK. Not having spoken face to face with anyone I recall talking “ten to the dozen” on my way back to the barracks.

Eventually I returned to the hill and was later joined by Mick Lelliott. When it got close to Christmas the Thai and Malay surveyors said they would go down so that we could also have a break.

I understand that there was going to be a gathering of everyone on the Thai side of the border, but this was kayboshed by the powers that be, and we were then ORDERED” to stay in situ. In order to ensure this happened, a senior officer flew up to Kota Bharu airport in order to ensure we stayed put. I believe that Alex Matthews (how did he get one of his other names as “Humby”) pressed our case but was overruled and I believe disciplined. Once the senior officer arrived, he went to the nearest occupied hill in order to” broadcast to the troops”.

All personnel were aware of this beforehand which led to a hilarious radio communication fiasco. The officer started with the typical “You are all doing a wonderful job, blah di blah....” then “Roger so far over”.

Each hill was well prepared, and the responses varied from “You are un-readable; please say all again” to “Please say all after - You are”. I am sure the officer must have twigged what was going on but could not really say anything and eventually gave up and returned to his loved ones in Singapore for a nice Christmas lunch. Mick and I had a tinned steak and kidney pie! Sitting on top of the hill in the rain eventually gets to you and the slightest thing that your colleague does gets on your nerves, such as pulling at your ear, and at one-point Mick and I stomped off in opposite directions.

To while away the hours, it was fun to detach a full leech from your anatomy and then put it on top of the lit tilly- lamp ‘til it burst and also to catch cicadas and put them all in a plastic bag and throw the bag into the trees. Such Fun!!

Eventually I was transferred to the Thai side of the border and occupied another hill (I do not recall the name) to take over from Geordie Carr. We had a couple of Thai officers, one of which was a keen Thai boxer who promptly set up parallel bars. He also had a bit of a drink problem and had his own porter to carry his Mekhong whisky, the local brew.

If you found a bottle that was more than 3 months old, you had a real vintage brew! I had one disturbed night when I heard a terrible crashing in the jungle around me and in the morning, it was evident that an elephant had been grazing in the bamboo around the campsite. The only other wildlife was a rat that Geordie warned me about.

He had thrown his knife at it and, according to Geordie he took a chunk out of it. It visited the basha on a regular basis to try and get at the rice and one time it sat on my shoulder while I was in my sleeping bag.

Eventually we completed all the observations, and I was transferred back to Kota Bharu by helicopter this time, I believe that this was supplied in order to carry out the gravity survey. I returned to Singapore by train and was sent on a Malay language course but had malaria symptoms and was transferred to hospital, but they could not confirm the diagnosis. We were given R&R in a rota, but it was decided to carry out a similar operation to link Singapore to the Malay Peninsula so Frank Smith and I missed out on the break until after this job. This job was completed in good weather and far more efficiently.

As a postscript Frank and I returned to Narathiwat for a short break after the second job and, because I had helicoptered back across the border, my passport still showed me as being in Thailand and this caused some consternation at the border crossing.

Air Travel Army style.

Dave Swindlehurst

I completed the 12-week Surveyor Topo A3 course at SMS Hermitage beginning in April 1956 and, following 2 weeks embarkation leave, was posted to Barton Stacey to await my posting to Malaya – 84 Field Survey Squadron RE. I sailed from Southampton on M V *Dunera* on 24th or 25th July, with a planned itinerary of Malta, Cyprus, Aden, Columbo and Singapore. While the ship was crossing the Bay of Biscay the news broke that Col Nasser had nationalised the Suez Canal (the start of the Suez Crisis) and the Army hurriedly changed its plans. The ship continued to Malta (where we enjoyed a free day ashore) to offload all personnel bound for Malta and Cyprus, and then set off back to Gibraltar bound for Cape Town. All on board were very impressed by this plan, but in fact at Gib we turned north and returned to Southampton - the ship being needed for the assault on Suez. I had enjoyed a free holiday at HM's expense - a conducted tour of the Mediterranean.



MV Dunera

We travelled back to Barton Stacey by train, to await revised plans for our posting. Barton Stacey was an example of the British Army at its best, with personnel arriving from all points of the compass for the “war” effort against the Egyptians. I spent a lot of time working nights in the bar in the NAAFI - the canteen was open 24 hours a day, with not enough NAAFI personnel. I also served as RP for a while. Eventually the excitement subsided and in December (!) I was allocated a seat on a trooping flight from Stansted. For diplomatic reasons we had to travel as civilians and so we needed passports. For these we were photographed in battledress. Brilliant.

We took off on the 6th December, the flight plan being Brindisi (refuel), Baghdad (refuel and meal), Karachi (overnight stay), Calcutta (refuel), Bangkok (refuel and meal) and Singapore. BUT it all went pear-shaped after we passed the point of no return on our first leg. Air Traffic Control in Brindisi refused us permission to land, ostensibly because of an outbreak of cholera, but I think that our chosen occupation was more significant. As a result, we were diverted to Malta, and stayed overnight, with an evening on the town thrown in. The aircraft (a Hermes) could not make Baghdad in one hop from Malta, and another re-fueling stop was hastily arranged, being Ankara, in Turkey.

We were not allowed to use the main airport (again for diplomatic reasons) and put down in an unsuitable rough military airfield, the aircraft suffering significant damage to its undercarriage and becoming unserviceable. We passengers were transported into Ankara and dumped at a downtown caravanserai, which had beds but nothing else. We had no money, no food, no luggage, no legal status, and no idea what to do next. After 2 nights, staff from the American Embassy turned up and took us to the Embassy itself and gave us an American breakfast.

They also arranged transport for us to meet a replacement aircraft which had been flown from the UK for the purpose. We saw no UK embassy staff or other UK personnel at all during this whole episode. This was disgraceful.

We eventually took off and completed the flight to Singapore fairly normally, via Karachi, Delhi, and Bangkok - it had only taken 6 days – another holiday at HM’s expense! I had one night in Nee Soon and then entrained for KL. We should have been in post in August – in the event it was December – 4 months late!

I enjoyed Batu and KL itself. I formed a love/hate relationship with Lt Taylor, a seconded Australian member of the Commonwealth Brigade, who was a decent bloke but insisted on smoking everybody else’s cigarettes, particularly mine. There were so many cigarettes around that there was no logistical problem, but the Australians didn’t get the free issue which we had, and they weren’t too well paid either, so I had a lot of fun at his expense (I sometimes wondered why he put up with such insubordination!). He got his own back when, having acquired by some mysterious means a large box of Senior Service, he emptied the whole lot over my head in the DO. Ben Burrows took over from Major Hansen as OC whilst I was there. Fergus Simpson was the SSM, and Mont Iliffe a S/S. My fellow Surveyor Topo A3 Geoff Barson, from the same course as me at Hermitage, looms large in my memory. During that period, I came close to benefitting from a military funeral, when Jock Alexander (our MT corporal) driving me to GHQ lost control of the Landrover at high speed, left the road and passed through a densely packed coconut grove without impacting a single trunk! The gods were smiling on me that day, as they have done every day of my life.

Our accommodation bashes were alongside those of KL’s RMP contingent. This proved useful, as none of the squadron personnel ever seemed to attract their attention when out on the town.

Sometime in 1957 I was transferred to 570 Map Reproduction Troop in Singapore, where I also had a lot of fun. The OC was Capt Henshaw, a nice chap but who regarded me as being deranged. When he discovered I was from Lancashire, he told me that whilst in the area he had gone to visit the Rossendale Forest, but hadn’t been able to find it and where were the trees? When I explained that a forest does not have to have trees (“forest” being a hunting area) he decided to treat me with caution.

Other characters at 570 were RSM Eade, who went bananas when his beloved map store was damaged by some night shift clowns driving a forklift truck, Snoddy McCulloch (unit DR) who was put in the stockade for stealing the stamp money, Joe Dalziel who lugged his golf clubs around with him but never played and the printers, who never managed to get the Heidelberg 4-colour printer to work properly in the months I was there. I was also entertained to some free sailing by Smudge Smith at the Sapper Sailing Club

I met some good folk. John Mitchell was a draughtsman from Surrey (ex OS), Wilf Marron (machine minder) from Manchester, Bill Mundy, whose “trade” I don’t remember but who had the most amazing artistic skill I have ever seen, Jack Batty, Jock Speedie, Cpl Dennis Martin who was a decent bloke but considered himself God’s gift to women, Cpl Bowra, Jim Lake and Rod Brockbank who were printers and gifted musicians, and Len Nicholson from Liverpool. And lots of others. I also met Stuart Hislop, with whom I became good friends. I lost touch with him after he emigrated to New Zealand in about 1961 but have recently made contact again. I have lots of other memories - of Singapore, KL and Penang, where I met a most delightful nurse and would have stayed with her had it been possible. But all good things change and eventually I returned to Batu and was RHE’d from there in July 1958, sailing from Singapore on S S *Nevasa*, on a much more organised journey.



The Branch Annual Award for 2020



The Branch Annual Award was presented to - CORPORAL A. WATTS ROYAL ENGINEERS by Brig Paul Lynch, Comd NCGI - Nat Centre for Geospatial Intelligence. For obvious reasons, the award was unable to be presented at the Branch AGM.

Citation of the 2020 Annual Award of the
Military Survey (Geographic) Branch
A member of the
Royal Engineers Association
To
CORPORAL A. WATTS ROYAL ENGINEERS
“Spirit of Good Fellowship Beyond Normal Expectations”



Cpl Adam Watts RE has had a range of roles during his time in 13 Sqn. As well as being employed as a Section Commander, he has also performed the roles of Data Manager and IT Manager. His mature and intelligent approach, along with his exceptionally strong work ethic, ensures that these important Sqn jobs are consistently performed to the highest standards. Cpl Watts can often be found working late into the evening and over the weekends in order to provide IT and data support to those personnel deployed within the Sqn.

Whilst employed within the Troop, Cpl Watts provided Geo support for several large-scale exercises including Op CABRIT, out in Estonia, supporting 3rd United Kingdom Division on Ex WARFIGHTER in the United States and flying out to Australia for Ex PAPA TERRA. Cpl Watts then took on the role of Data Manager within the Sqn, a role that had traditionally been filled by a SNCO. His knowledge, enthusiasm and motivation for this role was an immediate asset to the Sqn. He played a key role in developing Geo-Viewer and Geo-Portal systems within the Sqn and in developing bespoke training packages around these applications.

Socially, Cpl Watts is the life and soul of the Cpl's Club and Sqn Welfare facility, selflessly giving of his own free time to run the bar and put on events for everyone's enjoyment.

For his hard work, diligence, and commitment to the Sqn he is most strongly nominated for the 'Spirit of Good Fellowship' award.

The Branch Award is presented annually, to the individual who has given outstanding and loyal support to the Regiment; whilst participating and contributing in a variety of activities throughout the training year. The fact that Cpl Watts has been selected for this honour, demonstrates the significance of his outstanding contribution to unit life, during this period.

The Changing of the Guard

Dear Members

I have to inform you that two of our stalwart committee members have decided to retire. Between them Rod Siggs and Mick Perry have served on your Committee for a combined total of - **36 years**. Rod joined the Committee as REA Civilian Liaison, at Feltham Garrison serving from 2002 to 2008, and then re-joined the Committee as Hon Sec in 2010. Mick joined the Branch Commissioning Committee as Reunion Organising member in April 2000 and except for a one-year sabbatical has served continuously.

Through the good offices of the Chairman Mark Burrows a volunteer has been found namely Mark Keiras. Needless to say, the other Committee members welcome the new recruit as I am sure all members will and join me in wishing him well in supporting the activities of the Branch. We hope a further recruit will be joining shortly. Finally, on your behalf I thank Rod and Mick for the exemplary way they have performed their duties, which is borne out by the health and strength of the Survey Branch of the REA.

The Editor

[A few parting words from Mick Perry:](#)

Mark, committee, members

The time has come for me to remove myself from the committee of the 'Military Survey (Geographic) Branch of the REA. It has been a long journey with Military Survey; it started in 1961 followed by a first retirement in early 2000 when I immediately joined the Branch commissioning committee as event's organiser.

Twenty-one years later and the time has come to move on and hand over to someone younger and more in touch with the modern Geo world. It has been my pleasure to be on the committee since the inception of the Branch those many years ago. Committee work is often difficult and thankless, but I have had the pleasure of working with some really dedicated committee members, some sadly, no longer with us.

As event's organiser I have come into direct contact with many serving personnel who have all been a pleasure to work with - thank you to them all. But most of all it has been fun having a close association with all our members. So, thank you all for your support and I look forward to joining your ranks. A parting shot for all out there, our work on the committee is not arduous; it really isn't time consuming, and it is very, very rewarding. Thank you all for your support. Best wishes for the future to you all

Committee Contact Details

President

Lt Col A J Harris RE
CO 42 Engr Regt (Geo)

Chairman

Col (Retd) Mark Burrows
email: mark.burrows@stfc.ac.uk

Secretary

TBA

Treasurer

Ted Davies
email: teddavies48@gmail.com
Telephone: 01635 582892
Mob: 07934512097

Event's Organiser

Mark Kieras
email: markkieras@me.com

Webmaster

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

Newsletter Editor

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

Social Media

Colin Gardiner
email: cgardiner@the-gardiners.co.uk