



Military Survey (Geographic) Branch

Royal Engineers Association

Winter 2025/26 Newsletter – issue 98

2026 ANNUAL REUNION

We are pleased to announce that the 2026 Branch Reunion will be held on Saturday, 25th April at the Royal British Legion Club, Newbury.

The Reunion commences at 12:30 hrs and includes a buffet lunch with dessert, bar at 'club' prices, and convivial company.

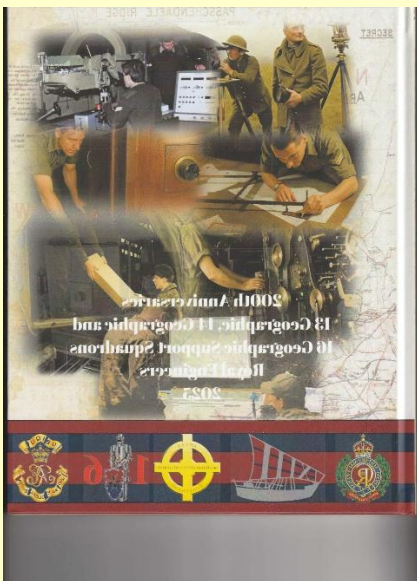
Free to members and their wife/husband/partner or guest.

The reunion will be preceded by the Annual General Meeting (starting at 1100hrs), which all Members are encouraged to attend.

More details and a return are on the back page of this newsletter.

NOTE: Returns must be received by Monday, 11th April at the latest – don't delay.

STOP PRESS!! 200th ANNIVERSARIES PHOTOBOOK



We have just received the great news that the 200th Anniversaries Photobook is back from the book binders and will be sent out shortly to those who ordered copies.

After tests, trials and tribulations, this pictorial record of the celebrations which took place in Newbury is finally available. We hope you enjoy it!

A very small number of copies will be available at the AGM/Reunion on a strictly first-come, first-served basis to those who attended the event.



42 ENGINEER REGIMENT (GEOGRAPHIC) **NEWS**



THE REGIMENT ON PARADE ON **REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY**

On Remembrance Sunday, the Squadrons represented the 42 Engineer Regiment at different locations near to RAF Brampton. 13 Geo Sqn represented the Regiment and conducted their parade in St Ives, 14 Geo Sqn represented in March, 16 Geo Sp Sqn represented in Ramsey and Bury, and RHQ and a mix of other military personnel represented the Regiment in Brampton. The Squadrons do change round every year, and so will parade at a different location each year.



14 Squadron on parade in March



13 Squadron on parade at St Ives

The Fougasse Cup Competition

The Fougasse Cup was established to develop cohesion within the Regiment and to have some healthy competition between the squadrons. There are several events which are run throughout the year; these are usually arduous physical activities where the squadrons submit teams to compete against each other. At each event, the winning squadron is presented with a shield for that event.

The last event of 2025 was an all-ability event. There was a team of two for sports, a team of three for CV, a team of 3 for Strength (deadlift and squat) and a team of five for the final circuit.

The final circuit is called the 'Acid Bath'. It is a mini Hyrox, consisting of 10 Burpees, 500m rower, 500m Ski machine, 1000m bike and then a weighted sledge push individual effort. This year, the winning Squadron was 14 Squadron.



The Fougasse Cup; the 'Acid Bath' final event – weighted sledge push individual effort

Christmas at the Regiment

The Turkey Trot

The Turkey Trot is the annual Christmas tradition where the Commanding Officer dresses up as a Turkey, and the rest of the Regiment are encouraged to be in fancy dress. They have to chase the 'Turkey' over a set course around camp. It is always a fun way to finish off before Christmas leave starts.





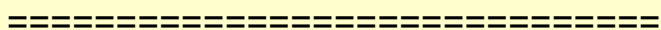
Soldiers' Christmas Lunch

As always, it is tradition for the Officers and SNCOs/WOs to serve the Christmas lunch to the soldiers of the unit to thank them for their service for the year. This year was a fun and joyful event!

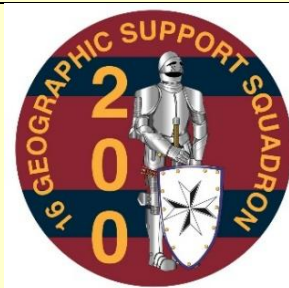


Sports Day

During Christmas week, the Regiment run a sports day during which a number of different events are run. The Officer and Seniors vs the Juniors football match, which is always a firm favourite, Touch Rugby and Basketball. The Officers and Seniors won the football (4-3) and basketball, with the juniors winning the touch rugby.



16 Geographic Support Squadron Quiz



At the time of the anniversaries of Squadrons' anniversaries, we set quizzes to test people's knowledge of the squadrons. The Autumn Newsletter – No 97 – contained a short quiz to test people's knowledge of 16 Sqn. The questions and answers are given below – how many did you get right ?

Q1 The formation date of any unit is considered as the date the Royal Warrant for its creation is signed. What was that date for 16 Squadron?

20th October 1825

Q2 13 and 14 Sqn were formed to undertake the Survey of Ireland. For what purpose was 16 Squadron (then a Company) formed?

- a. The Survey of Ireland
- b. The Survey of Scotland
- c. The Survey of Bermuda
- d. The Survey of Gibraltar

The Survey of Ireland – The work done by 13 and 14 Companies had been so successful that it was decided that another company should be formed to help with the work!

Q3 16 Squadron has had a number of changes to its title. The first change occurred in 1855. What was the new title afforded to 16 at that time?

16th Survey Company Royal Engineers. It, along with all Royal Sappers and Miners Companies, became a Royal Engineers Company when the two Corps amalgamated.

Q4 During the First World War the Squadron did not deploy overseas but was primarily employed on draft finding duties. In which part of the country did it operate?

The North-East of England – principally around the rivers Tees and Tyne. It was then titled 16 Tyne Works Fort Company.

Q5 In 1932 it moved to Gosport, Hampshire, and was absorbed into another unit. Which unit was it absorbed into?

4th Fort Company, then stationed at Fort Monkton.

Q6 In 1934, 16 Company was reformed with a new role. What was that role?

As an Anti-Aircraft Searchlight Company.

Q7 From the late 1930s until late in 1943 the Company was deployed overseas. In which country?

Malta.

Q8 In 1944 the Squadron was given yet another title and role which would employ it from shortly after D-Day through to the end of the war in Europe. What was its title?

16th Electrical and Mechanical Squadron.

Q9 In 1947 the Squadron was placed again into suspended animation only to be reformed in the mid-50s. It deployed to Egypt for the Suez Crisis and served in Cyprus before returning to UK in 1957. After a short period at Ripon, it was deployed overseas again, to which country?

West Germany as part of BAOR – the British Army of the Rhine.

Q10 In 1992, after many years mainly based abroad, the Squadron was disbanded yet again only to be resurrected some three years later as a Survey Support Squadron. Who was the first OC of the newly formed Squadron?

Captain N J (Nick) Collins.

REA Military Survey (Geographic) Branch Annual Award

The annual REA Mil Svy (Geo) Branch Award in 2025 was awarded to LCpl William Butler. This Annual Award is usually made at the AGM/Annual Reunion, but that could not happen because LCpl Butler was on Operational deployment. He was still overseas at the time of the 200th Anniversaries events and on Post Op-tour Leave at the time of the 200th Anniversaries celebrations at Wyton. The award was therefore made in January 2026.

The citation for LCpl Butler's award reads as follows:

LCpl Butler has had an exceptional 12 months and has busied himself amongst a variety of commitments with the benefits felt at the sub-unit and unit level.

He has utilised his CBRN-A qualification as the sole qualified NCO in 13 Sqn and ensured training compliance across the board. Normally a task reserved for a SNCO, he led CBRN serials on the Regimental Section Competition Exercise and performed extremely well. In late 2024, LCpl Butler was also aligned to Op VENTUS (hurricane relief in the Caribbean) for six months, during which time he briefed geospatial capabilities at 1 level whilst simultaneously employed as the test case for integration of RE Geo into NCGI's open-source intelligence capability. This was immediately followed by 2 months as surge to the NCGI Crisis & Response Team. In 2025, LCpl Butler conducted PDT and deployed as acting Cpl on operations in the Middle East. A driven, passionate and enthusiastic JNCO, LCpl Butler has shown great stretch and capacity for work, setting a commendable example to his subordinates and peers. His performance has highlighted his adaptability across joint intelligence environments from Pathfinder Building in RAF Wyton to overseas operational theatres.*

Finally, his loyalty to the sub-unit is beyond reproach, and he will add value at any opportunity he is given. He has routinely utilised his Cat D license to facilitate activity away from Roy Lines and composed the sub-unit 200th anniversary vignettes. Two small examples of his selfless commitment.

In recognition of his acts of good fellowship, LCpl Butler is awarded the Military Survey (Geographic) Branch Annual Award for 2025.

LCpl Butler received a copy of Alan Gordon's book about 42 Regiment "The Regiment that Mapped the World" and a cash prize of £175



LCpl Butler being awarded the Mil Svy (Geo) Branch REA Annual Award by the CO, Lt Col Andy Mangan

Soldiers' Soldier Award - No 63 ME Geo Tech 0-2 Course

The Branch recently presented the prestigious Soldiers' Soldier Award to a trainee upon completion of their ME Geo Tech Class 0-2 Course. The award holds special significance as it is not based on academic achievement, but upon nominations made by fellow soldiers in recognition of their contribution made to their peers, embodying the spirit of the REA's motto, "Service not Self."

At the End of Course Ceremony, the Branch Secretary, Ian Thurgate, presented the award to Spr Samuel Perkins. This was unusual as Spr Perkins was also the course Top Student. He was presented with a certificate, cash prize and, now in line with other RE trade courses, a copy of "Follow the Sapper" – an illustrated history of the Corps.

Our congratulations to Spr Perkins and other members of No 63 Course for successfully completing their 0-2 training.



Spr Perkins receiving his prizes from the Branch Secretary

The War Diary of Allan Marles – Part 3

We continue Allan's story as he returned to UK from Sudan. Whilst searching out where General Gordon was killed, he met the daughter of the Governor of Sudan and then the Governor himself. This extract covers not only his exploits, but how life used to be as a British officer working overseas. He returned to UK in November 1948.

Allan takes up his story.....

Here I attended an engineering course, sailed a lot and at one time managed the Sapper 4-man team competing for the Wyfold Cup at Henley. My task had nothing to do directly with rowing but

was purely the management of their everyday life. No drinking, no girls, early to bed and out training whenever possible. They won the cup and I found the water.

Later I attended the Long Survey course at Hermitage, married and got ready to go overseas again.....



No 11 Long Survey Course - Allan Marles Front Row – 3rd from the Left

Straight after the Long Survey Course, Allan and his new wife were posted out to DOS back in Africa. Allan takes up the story again....

May 1954 – North Rhodesia. Captain

Here we were seconded to the Overseas Survey, Colonial Office, on two tours only one of which could you be accompanied by your wife. Off we both went by BOAC, leaving from Heathrow which at the time had Terminal Buildings built of corrugated iron which looked like giant Nissen huts. We finally arrived at Fort Jameson, Northern Rhodesia, where I joined a survey party tasked with primary triangulation from Nyasaland to the 30th Meridian, triangulation in the Copper Belt and primary triangulation to determine whether the proposed dam should be built at Karriba on the Zambezi River or at Kafue on the Kafue River. The survey party consisted of 3 Europeans and a party of 40 Africans, the latter number was increased depending on how far we had to walk to the trig points, which of course were always on a hill, a mountain or a concrete tower built for us.

When travelling in vehicles was no longer possible, the Africans carried the stores, water, tents, instruments and batteries, sometimes for many hours and through difficult terrain. We walked in single file with the European 4th so that the first African would disturb any snakes, the second annoy them and the third sadly bitten. I could then, with the minimum of delay, inject him with the anti-snake serum. Travelling 5th in line was always my batman carrying a gun, frequently used not to defend us but to help feed everyone.

After completing the recce, trig stations to be observed were manned by one African who could be totally relied on to show the heliograph at midday and a light at night.

Frequently, on the tree-covered plains of Northern Rhodesia we found a lack of hills and the need therefore to build a tower. To confirm its location, metal ladders were bolted together with rope guys tied to trees. With them firmly in the air, I would climb to the top to check that we could see all the other hill stations. However, before I risked ascending, an African would always do so to check that the ladder was safe for me to climb. On one occasion, however, an African refused to do so. When questioned by the Forman, he replied that when we returned to base he was going to marry and his bride to be would be very disappointed if he was injured. The Foreman in reply said how would my wife feel if I was injured because he wouldn't climb the ladder. Without a second's hesitation, the African climbed the ladder and proved that it was safe.

Fortunately for my wife and I, we always rented a house at our base location and returned to it for 2 or 3 days each month. We were given a house by the Provisional Commissioners' office in Livingstone, but sadly I could not afford the rent so had to reject it and told the Commissioner so. I further said I would therefore move my wife out to a tent at our base. The reply came back very speedily, 'don't move! We have reconsidered - you can live in the house rent-free.'

In addition, when I took mid-tour leave for 6 weeks by motoring to and around South Africa, the Colonial Office paid all our expenses up to the cost of one return BOAC flight to the UK and back.

July 57 – U.K. Captain

When my tour in Northern Rhodesia finished, the Colonial Office paid for us to come home on a British India Liner - 'The Kenya' taking four weeks, which, at the time, was well within the cost of two flights to the UK. Needless to say, we were very impressed with the Colonial Office.

August 57 – M.E.L.F. Captain

After a year in London on a course, I was posted to Cyprus to join 42 Regiment at Zyggi. My first appointment was Technical Adjutant, then OC 32 Litho Sqn and finally Regimental 2I/C. We were involved in mapping the Aden Protectorate, Oman and Iraq together with many other countries in the area. It is interesting to note that up until the coup, which put Saddam Hussein in power, the Squadron in Iraq had authority to travel anywhere and to map the whole country.



Major Marles, OC 32 Litho Sqn with Sir Hugh Foote the Governor of Cyprus
Lt Col Irwin, the CO in the background

The one thing I achieved in Cyprus was to be the only serviceman who lost his loaded revolver to EOKA and not to be found guilty for it. At the time, we were travelling from Limassol to Zyggi in a military vehicle driven by a National Service soldier with only 6 weeks of driving experience. Sadly, we crashed with another vehicle; I was knocked out for over 24hrs, had my revolver stolen and later court-martialled for doing so. When the court asked what I was doing at the time I readily told them and further stated that I was very pleased that whoever stole it didn't shoot me as well.

At the end of my tour, I was given authority to motor home, in our own car and our expense. The MOD were of course in charge.



Zyggi – Crabtree Ensign 4

August 60 -U.K. Major

On our return to the UK, I was posted to Edinburgh, to the Ordnance Survey, as Regional Officer for Scotland and 3 counties in England. This I thoroughly enjoyed for four years with visits to survey parties in the Highlands, the Outer Hebrides and Orkney and Shetlands, besides others.

Indeed, on my first visit to the Orkneys, I was surprised when drinking at the bar of the hotel, that a local spoke to me and enquired if I was over from Scotland. I said yes I flew in from Edinburgh this morning, but I thought I was still in Scotland, he replied 'no you are now in the Orkneys.'

Needless to say, the Ordnance Survey, being part of the then Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, was a good employer, but never offered to pay for any extra costs and failed to supply a batman!

October 65 – FARELF. Temp Lieutenant Colonel

We next went to Malaysia for 4 years where I was attached to their Lands and Survey Department, the only Military and British person in the Department of over a thousand staff.

Confrontation with Indonesia was active for most of the time in East Malaysia, but other than that, my military activity was nil. The Malays were excellent to work with, were very friendly and for most

of the time very professional. Apart from frequent visits to Sarawak and Sibiu, my work took me to Thailand, where at the time the military was in control of the government; they were very hospitable and friendly, and warmly welcomed my wife and I whenever we visited them. One project which I dealt with on behalf of the Malays was the delineation of the border between the two countries. We readily agreed on the number and location of border trig points and set about having them observed.

The Thais then suggested we should visit the border area, where at the time communist insurgents operated making it off limits for my wife. I met the four Thais in Southern Thailand, from where we motored down to the border, inspected the trig points and then they kindly took me to a hotel before later collecting me for dinner. We were enjoying the first four of a twelve-course dinner when I noticed one of them drive away and return with five young Thai ladies. None of ladies spoke English, my Thai was totally inadequate, but they served the Thai whiskey, and after dinner when we went to a nightclub, I danced with them all. At around one thirty, the senior Thai asked me, as their guest which one I would like to take to my room. We were all in army uniform, I was their guest, in their country what could I say that would not offend them? I replied, 'Burin- I have danced with them all, they are delightful I want all 5'. He consulted with his chums and soon replied saying sorry but we want one each so you can't have the lot. That said they kindly took me to my hotel, said goodnight and left with all the girls.

My time in Malaysia sadly came to an end. My wife and I returned to the UK, and I retired from the Army in April 1969, at the age of 43 years.

It is interesting to note that I surveyed for 26 years, 14 of which were overseas and not under direct control of MOD.

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"My Life in the Army – The Early Days" by Jack Crompton

Jack was a Field Surveyor who joined as an Adult Entry soldier in the late 1960s. This is the first part of his observations whilst serving.

The School of Military Survey (SMS) – Part 1

My Father died when I was about thirteen. His name was John, but he was called Jack. When I went to join up at the recruiting office, the chap there went through the forms with me. At one point he asked me what my religion was. I said, "Congregationalist". He looked up and said, "how do you spell that?" I said, "I don't know". He said, "Do you mind if I put you down as C of E?" I said "No, not at all". So that was me with a changed denomination.

I went for my initial training in the Army at the Royal Engineer recruit training establishment at Farnborough in Hampshire. We were in the old wooden spiders. There were twenty-six of us in one room, all sitting on our beds, wondering what comes next. One bright spark, a chap called Jeff Bullivant who had been in the TA, said, "we may not remember everyone but if we introduce ourselves, we will know at least who we are sitting next to. We started to do this and I was towards the end of the first line. The names were something like: John, Fred, John, Joe, John, Harry, John, John, John. When it came to my turn I thought, 'I am not having this'. When my father died, I wanted to be called Jack, my mother was against that for obvious reasons. So, at the right time, I said my name was Jack. The chap in the next bed said, "Oh I'm Jack too". For the rest of our time together, he was known to everyone as "Jack Two".

I was posted to the School of Military Survey (SMS), Not yet the Royal School, where I was to start my training as a Land Surveyor or as the Army termed it, a Field Surveyor. Whilst waiting for that course, I was on General Duties.

NO 12 ADVANCED FIELD SURVEY TECHNICAL COURSE

10 February 1975 – 19 July 1975



Cpl Oliver Cpl Shay Cpl Crompton Cpl Axten Cpl Ridler

Cpl Mears Cpl Woods SSgt Brindle Sgt Pointon Cpl Brown

I was very fit, having spent my spare time at college training with the British Gymnastics Team once a week and as a trainer of a girls' trampoline class during my second year (that was good fun, we referred to the trampoline as the bed). I was the Buckinghamshire junior trampoline champion before I joined the army. At school, I did not like football or cricket as they were rammed down my throat, and therefore, I acquired an aversion to them. I played Basketball or did athletics if I had a choice. I lumped Rugby in with football and cricket because I knew nothing about the game, and it seemed the same as football, to me, in my ignorance.

At SMS, one of the lads asked me, one evening, if I wanted to go to Rugby training. I said, "No" and told him why. He said that they did not actually play the game just 'bunny hopped' up and down the pitch and were pushing and practising throwing the ball about. I went with him to see if it was a good fitness workout. It was, and I quite enjoyed it. I think in truth, at that time, I just enjoyed being with my mates.

The next day I was in the cookhouse at lunch time when the Major, who managed the Rugby team, walked in. I was sitting next to Mick Eaman, the Rugby Captain, who was also soon to be on my Survey course as a Field Surveyor. The Major said, "We are short of a winger for tomorrow's match".

He then saw me and as he had seen me at the previous day's training session, said "What are you doing for Wednesday Afternoons sports?" I said, "I am going for a run, Sir". I was a bit overawed as having just finished basic training, an officer was a god and to be spoken to by a Major was unheard of. I was soon to learn that, outside of training, they are human as well. He said to me "You are in the team tomorrow". I said, "But Sir, I have never played before". He just said, "Eaman, teach him the rules!" He walked out thinking 'job done - full team for the next day'. Mick and the Rugby team then tried to teach me, in half an hour, the rules, which to me, seemed quite complicated. They did not stand a chance! They ended up by saying, "You know our voices, Jack, just do as we say during the match tomorrow."

The next day I was kitted out and got on the coach (typical Military utilitarian vehicle; square wheels, wooden seats and no suspension), with the rest of the team to go and play against 'Heavy Drop Paras' at Aldershot. The very name 'Paras' was scary, to a new boy in both the army and to rugby; I thought that I was in for a really hard time. We arrived, got changed and were on the pitch warming up. The opposition, home team, were out as well. They did not look any different to us in sports kit. There were a couple of big chaps - one was a huge Fijian guy but then Mick was quite big, and I was 6' 1". I was on the right wing.

The first time I got the ball and started to run; at least I knew which direction to go! It was obvious to my teammates that I was not going to get very far with the opposition that was in line against me, and they did not want me to lose possession of the ball. I heard a voice shout "get it over the line Jack". So, in my ignorance and doing what I was told, I threw the ball over the sideline. The Ref., not unexpectedly blew his whistle and came over and said to me, "Have you ever played before?" and on seeing my negative answer said, not unkindly, "well, when he said, 'to get it over the line', he meant to kick it over, as you are not allowed to throw it over the sideline". The opposition and a few of my own side thought this quite amusing and the tone was set for me for the rest of that match. I was blown up for a couple of other mistakes and the same kindly tone of the Ref. in my ear, explaining the rules. Again, to the amusement of all within earshot.

During the second half, I had the ball and was running full tilt down the pitch towards the try-line. I was going so fast that to swerve was not an option - and I really could run; I was a runner in athletics and cross country. There was one of the opposition in front of me and he realised that I was not going to be able to swerve very much, if at all. He was crouching very low ready to tackle me round the legs. I was also a high jumper and a hurdler in athletics, so I simply avoided him by jumping completely over him. The Ref. blew his whistle yet again. I stopped turned round and in frustration said, "What have I done wrong now?" This started the grins, and the Ref. said, "dangerous play, studs on your boots over his head." I realised what he meant immediately, and my reaction was just as immediate; I turned to the chap I had jumped over and said in a genuine apology, "Sorry mate, I didn't mean to be dangerous." He was grinning like a Cheshire cat, and we shook hands and there were thirty-odd others who were laughing fit to bust. This was the best entertainment they had had on a rugby field in a long time. Even the Ref. was laughing.

I was not the only one who caused hilarity that match. The big Fijian chap had the ball on the ground in a ruck and hid the ball with his big body, instead of giving it up as he should have done. He tried to hide it and rolled out of the pack and along the ground, hoping the Ref. would not see. When he finally came up for air and looked around, the Ref. and nearly everyone else was standing around watching him. He looked for the Ref. then shook his head questioningly! The Ref. shook his head, in answer and the big chap just stood up, gave the ball to the Ref., and shrugged his shoulders, as if to say, 'I tried.' This caused another round of laughter from all the players.

I, again, had the ball and was making for those two big poles at the end of the field. The chap that I had jumped over was after me to stop me; he tackled me round the legs and I went down with the

ball in front. I landed on it with my stomach on top; I was winded and could not get my breath back. All my mates were pounding me on the back saying "Well done, Jack." I eventually was able to breathe properly again and had recovered a bit when I said, "What did I do?" My friends said, "You scored a try." I said, "How did I do that?" They said, "By touching the ball over the line," pointing to the try line. I looked up, pointed to the next line out and said, "What's that line?" They said, "That is the dead-ball line." That was the one I was making for, I just said, "Oh", accompanied by more laughter.

I ended up as top scorer by the end of the season and the best game I ever had was that first game. It was the most fun and the cleanest game we ever had. Mick Eaman, our Captain, knew all the tricks in the book and a few others besides. If ever the opposition started it, he played dirty, but he would never start first. That game he also enjoyed and said that it was a good game. I can't even remember who won, and frankly, I don't care.

Before I started my first course at the School of Military Survey, I was on what was termed, 'General Duties', which meant that we could be tasked with anything that the Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) decided needed to be done around the camp. One of the top jobs, keenly sought after, was to assist in the library. I was never lucky enough to get that Job. Something to do with the fact that I am severely Dyslexic, not that that term was known about then. A gentle way to put it was 'Word Blindness.' There was a small Pig Farm on the Camp looked after by an 'Officers' Mess Steward', who had probably never been in the Officers' Mess and was commonly known simply as 'The Pig Man'.

A task was required by the Pig Man, requested through the RSM, that a pit be dug for the pig waste to drain off and soak away. I quite often cleaned the pigs out; in the Officers and Sergeants' Messes there was cleaning, sweeping, polishing and being really bored. So, when this job of digging the pit outside at the Pig farm came up, I volunteered. It was hard work but much more enjoyable than mucking out the Messes!

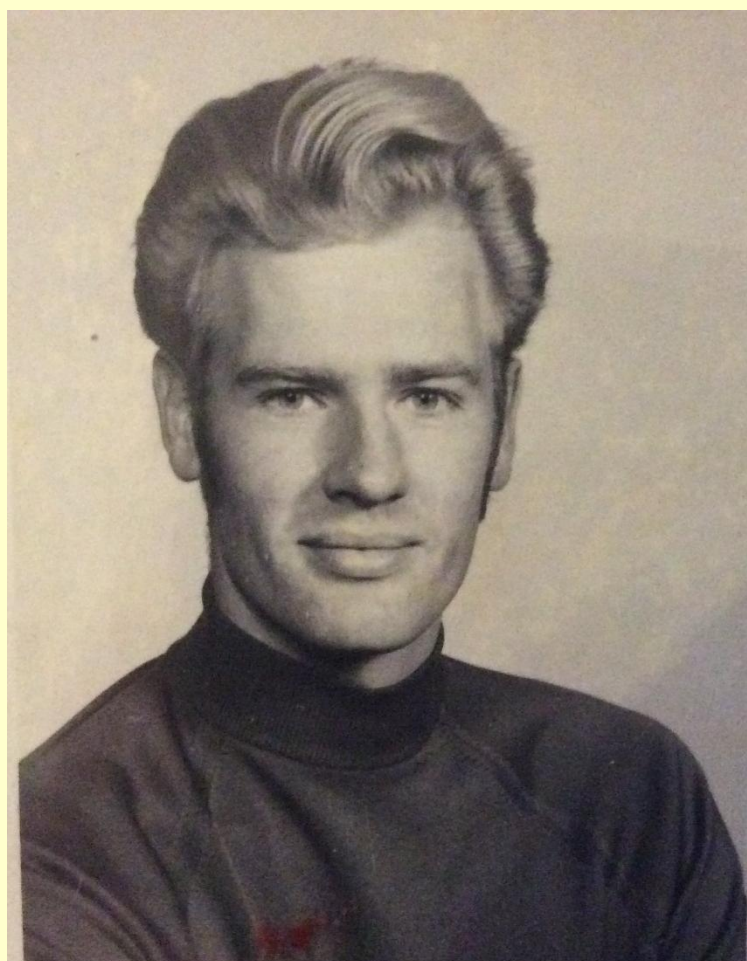
The pit was about eight foot by four foot by about eight foot deep. I got talking to 'The Pig Man', whose real name I cannot remember, so let us call him 'Arnold'- it's friendlier than 'The Pig Man'. I learnt something of Pig Husbandry from Arnold and, as I was born and bred in the country, I was interested and got on well with him.

The pit took me three days to dig. I then had to dig the pipeline from the sties to the pit. The RSM wanted this in a straight line from the pigsty out, then at right angles and into the pit. Straight lines and right angle; typical military thinking. But we were Engineers as well and should also be thinking in practical terms. Arnold wanted the pipeline line to be straight from the sty to the pit, with no kinks, because if it got blocked, which at some point in time it was bound to, a straight pipe was easier to unblock. One with a bend would be difficult to clear. When the RSM came round, as he sometimes did, to see his men and to have a walk round on a pleasant day, I tackled him about the pipe, before I started to dig it. I used the Engineer argument as to being practical as opposed to the soldiers. He considered it and said, "Yes, good point. Make it a straight line." Arnold was over the moon. I dug the pipe trench and we laid the pipe, placing railway sleepers over the top of the pipe and the pit to protect it. Job done.

Now what was I to do? Back to the Messes? That would have driven me mad, after being outside all the time. Arnold had asked for some help on the farm, and I tentatively volunteered for that job. This made me the friend of everyone on General Duties as that was the one job that no one wanted, except me. I thought it was even better than the library job. I was allowed to get a second pair of overalls and gum boots from stores, as well as disinfectant and a scrubbing brush. I then cleaned the overalls every night and scrubbed the boots with the brush as soon as I finished work and had

a shower myself. There was never any Pigsty aroma in the block and no complaints. I was therefore, everyone's best friend.

I liked the Job. I got to learn all about pigs and how to handle them. I did well on the farm and was there late one evening after dinner and well after work had finished, when the RSM came along. He asked me what I was doing. I said, "I am looking after the sow, who is about to farrow, while Arnold gets his tea." He was impressed and as we were leaning on the gate watching the sow, he said to me, "You are going to be a 'Field', aren't you?" (a "Field" is a Field Surveyor or a Topographical Surveyor - or as a civilian would call the profession, 'Land Survey'). I said, "Yes, Sir", knowing that he was a Cartographic Draftsman. He then said, "Don't change your attitude to that of the slovenly 'Field', you stay smart, and you will get on well." Everyone was afraid of RSM Macintyre, nick - named 'Black Mac'. After that conversation, I stopped being afraid of him but respected him. I realised that an RSM had a job to do the same as everyone else, and believe it or not, they were also human. I still did not intend to get on the wrong side of them.



Jack whilst serving in Singapore circa 1965

A while later when the old boar was to be taken to the slaughterhouse because a new boar was to be brought in, I asked the RSM if I could go along with Arnold to learn what happened. He considered it and said, "Yes, you have done a good job here, and deserve the trip out." I was wearing coveralls and gumboots and of course, a beret. I left the beret in the cab of the vehicle, and I did not look any different to the rest of those around the abattoir. The only difference was that my coveralls were olive green instead of blue or white or bloody. I was allowed to watch, which would never happen today. Health and Safety has a lot to answer for.

I saw them as they slaughtered a bull and bled it. I am not squeamish; this was part of life and the animals did not suffer. I was allowed to help pull on the rope round a cow's neck, to keep it steady, when they slaughtered it. But when it came to our boar, I was told to keep to the side out of the way as, an angry boar was a very dangerous animal and would kill you faster than a bull would. This time on the rope, they needed only those who knew what they were doing so that they would be one co-ordinated group. Having me in the line this time could be dangerous for all of them. So, I stayed out of the way and just watched as our poor, old, placid, faithful, boar was put down. Sad, but that's farming.

I have always been able to kill for the pot or to put an animal out of its misery, without any qualms, but I never considered it a pleasure. To go on the shoot or hunt was not what I thought of as fun. Although I have done it in the Jungles of Borneo and other places, that was for the pot, and I was hungry.

"Say You Served" Campaign

When individuals leave the UK Armed Forces, it's important for them to register with an NHS GP practice and tell them they've served. This means their GP can better understand their health, particularly any health problems relating to their time in Service.

This does not always happen, which means that some veterans may not be getting the support that is right for them, particularly in terms of benefitting from care and treatment from dedicated services, such as:

[Op COURAGE](#): The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service

[Op RESTORE](#): The Veterans Physical Health and Wellbeing Service.



NHS England, together with the Office for Veterans' Affairs, is running a campaign - "Say You Served" to encourage veterans to let their GP practice know they have served in the UK Armed Forces; it's important to 'say you served'. It does not matter how long someone served for or when they left the Armed Forces, it's important that veterans let their GP surgery know this information, as it may be relevant to their health and care, now or in the future.

No matter when you left the Armed Forces it isn't too late to inform your GP and "Say You Served."

To find out more, visit www.nhs.uk/veterans

Keep in Touch/Renew Old Acquaintances

The importance of keeping in touch with old friends and colleagues is well recognised as a useful thing, not least amongst Veterans. We have passed out information of Veterans' Breakfasts, which are appearing all over the country and, indeed, Geordie Hambling's charity Veterans for Veterans in Care.

Members will hopefully remember that our piece on Geordie's charity prompted Graeme Abernethy's daughter, Sharon, to get in touch and our subsequent appeal for anyone that knew her Dad to get in contact and hopefully be able to talk of old times and raise a few smiles with some reminiscences. We are very pleased to say that Sharon has contacted us since to say that several members have been in touch with her Dad and a visit from one is being planned.

If any member would like to hear from old colleagues in general, or to get in contact with a particular individual, please get in touch with the Secretary REA-MilSvy-Sec@outlook.com and we will try our best to help.

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DEATHS OF OLD COMRADES

Tom Jackson (14 May 1929 to 1 January 2026)

Tom Jackson had a long and successful career in Military Survey. He enlisted as a boy soldier apprentice in July 1945 and served through until April 1977, having been commissioned and retiring as a Captain. Although we aren't sure which trade he was first trained in: Photographer Cartographic; Photo Writer; or Helio Worker, he is recorded as a Photo Tech in Branch records. No matter which, Tom was always a very competent tradesman.

Unfortunately, we don't know too much about his early career, but Peter Timbrell met Tom when Peter was posted to Cyprus in 1958. Peter recalls

"The time was when Archbishop Makarios was calling for union with Greece, and there was unrest in the country. The barracks where we were stationed was in Zyggi, which was some distance from Limassol. The barracks were surrounded by barbed wire and were guarded at the entrance. Inside, we had offices, a Sergeants' Mess, a NAAFI, a parade ground and we slept in tents. Outside the camp, there was a football and a hockey pitch.

The hockey pitch was the most important because here Tom and I spent most of our time there! We had a very strong team and, despite the troubles, played Home and Away fixtures. Until December, playing away meant taking some sort of weapon in case it was needed.

Ten days before Christmas, the ban on wives was lifted and Diana joined me in Limassol, where I had rented a bungalow in the Greek area. Maureen, Tom's wife, must have already been living in Limassol because she and Diana became very close friends. After 6 months, Diana and I were allocated a bungalow in Berengaria, the married families' village, in Limassol.

Tom and I now saw much more of each other when not at work. The Regiment had a very strong Hockey Team, and I cannot remember us being beaten! Our biggest victory was against RAF Nicosia who later announced on the radio that they had won !!!

Tom, Maureen, Diana and I had now decided to spend Saturday evenings at 'Niazi', a local Kebab. He always greeted us with 'something to start?' The meals were excellent and so was the wine!..... Years later we met Niazi in Kyrenia. He now owns a shop and 2 hotels!"

Later in Tom's career, he was commissioned and posted to 14 Sqn. Ted May recalls

“ He was a very competent SNCO and made a very good officer. He was officer in charge of 14 Sqn Reproduction Troop at Dusseldorf, and I was the Warrant Officer under him. We deployed on many exercises together, mainly Summer Sales”.

The performance of the Troop under Tom is also remembered by, then Capt and later Maj Gen, Mike Wilson *“I was the 14 Fd Svy Sqn Squadron Technical Control Officer (STCO) in 1974 or thereabouts. My memory is a little hazy, but I remember Tom Jackson being in the Sqn, and I assume he took over from John Rylatt as Repro Tp Comd.*

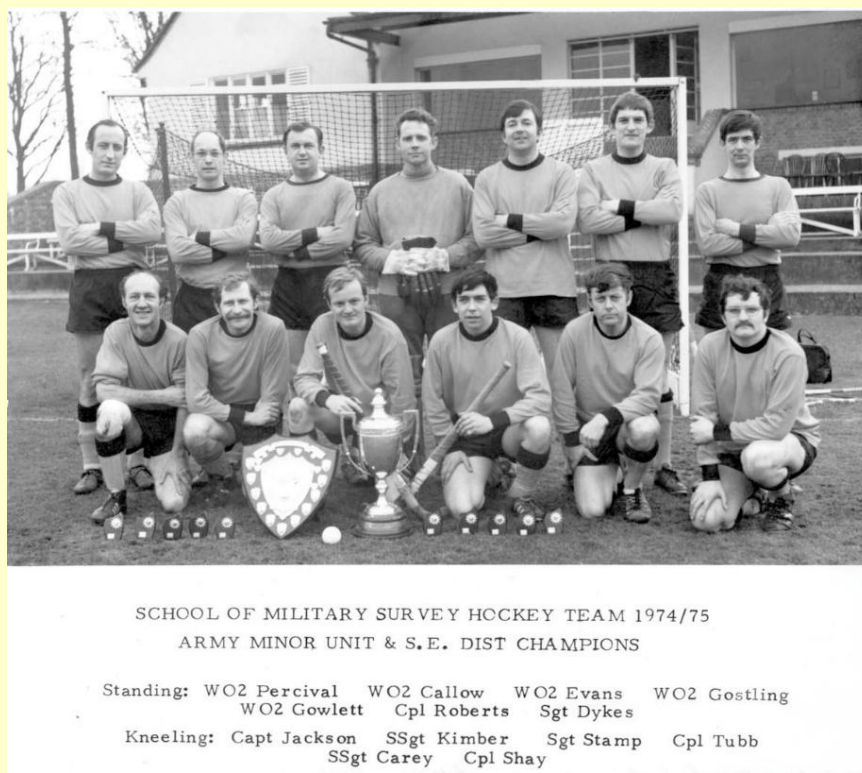
I can't remember any specific memories of Tom, but as STCO, I was always impressed by the “can do” approach shown by Repro when presented with impossible specifications and deadlines! They were incredibly resourceful and got the Sqn out of a hole on many occasions, contributing to the excellent reputation Survey enjoyed with the staff in HQ BAOR and HQ 1(Br) Corps.”

From a more junior position, Alan ‘Oggie’ Ogden remembers Tom:

“Tom was my troop commander for my first posting in 1969 at 14 Sqn at Ratingen. We got on well, and he was definitely an “old school” officer who accepted no excuses for poor technical work. I played hockey, he umpired, so we had an out-of-work interest as well. Years later, when I later played for Andover Hockey Club against Newbury, he was still umpiring.”

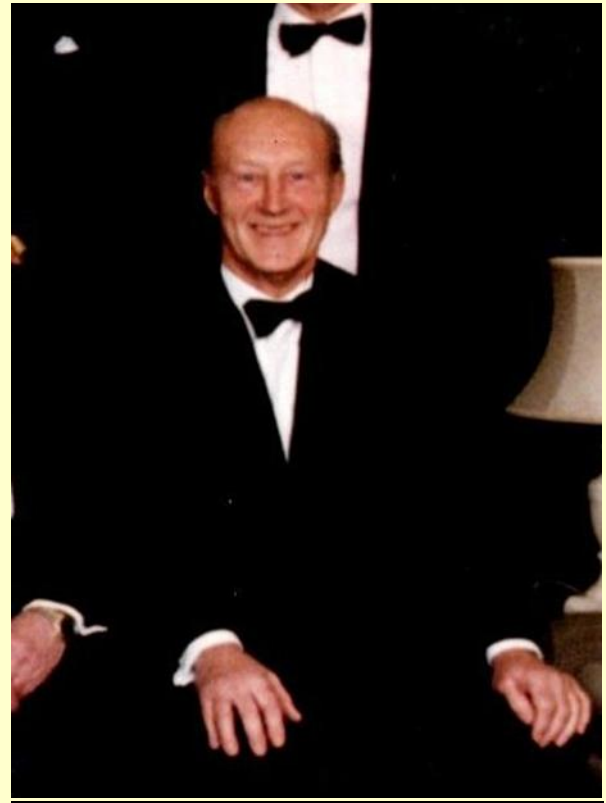
From 14 Sqn, Tom returned to UK and 13 Sqn where he is remembered by Nick Collins as Litho Troop Commander and later still by John Croft as Sqn 2IC. In all cases, a knowledgeable and very capable officer.

Throughout his career, and from other accounts one word is very apparent – Hockey. Tom was a very good player. Survey had a great Hockey record and Tom made significant contributions. He played throughout his career and was a member of the SMS team that were South-East District Champions and Army Minor Units Champions in the 1974/75 season. His love of the game led him to become a very competent umpire.





Tom whilst serving



Tom at an LEO Dinner

Colin Wright

Colin Wright, our DGC representative, died on Saturday 27th December 2025 after a recurrence of long-term health issues. He was 54. He was surrounded by his family and his mother held his hand at the end.

Collin was a 'Redbourn', and David and Caroline Watt added the following about Colin:

'Colin had only been to a few of our meetings, but I hope you will agree that his bright and happy personality, interest in civil and military historical mapping and willingness to share his profound knowledge of military maps and map making in the digital era contributed hugely to our exchange of knowledge and conviviality. He was deeply moved to be welcomed so warmly into our circle, and marvelled at the depth and extent of 'the Redbourn Brains Trust' as he called it.

Though Colin worked 'behind the wire' his cartographic contacts ranged over our national map librarianship community and internationally with contacts maintained in Australia and the United States. His work delving into the history of the Defence Geographic Centre, though possibly influenced by his somewhat idiosyncratic interests, brought together into one place knowledge which the organisation greatly values and takes forward into its new incarnation at RAF Wyton, a move which Colin was actively embracing; he was due to view a potential new home for his Willis Jeep and Morgan car in that area in three weeks' time.

He is missed greatly by his friends and colleagues of which us 'Redbourners' form a small but significant part.

A Tribute to Colin from Colleagues

Colin joined the Defence Geographic Centre in 1989 and, through a succession of roles, stayed in the same career for 36 years. He spent a whole year training to become a cartographer and then spent his early years in a cartographic production office. From there, he moved on to developing software routines and applications for automated cartography, leading towards DGC's transition to a fully digital organisation.

Colin's unrivalled enthusiasm and his willingness to do the best for everyone he worked with and for, brought him both personal fulfilment and success as he developed his career through a range of appointments. One of the highlights was his 5-year posting to Washington DC. Here, he threw himself wholeheartedly into the culture of the nation, developing a passion for baseball and a wide range of Americana. He became popular for his good company and was widely respected for his professional knowledge and rapport.

In recent years, back in the UK, Colin had custodianship and oversight of the UK government's geospatial map library. He was leading this through times of unprecedented change in preparation for DGC's relocation from Feltham to Wyton. All the while, he ensured the collection remained relevant and accessible to support today's Defence activities. In parallel, he developed protocols and procedures to enable archive material to be deposited in the National Archive and the British and Bodleian Libraries to name just two. In short, his contribution to preserving the national public record of DGC and its predecessors has been extraordinary.

Colin appointed himself as the "unofficial historian of the DGC", and his work in documenting the rich heritage of DGC and Military Survey will remain part of his legacy for future staff. He became so knowledgeable that he wrote and edited pages on Wikipedia.

One of his most notable achievements, and a major part of his legacy, is the meticulously researched organisational timeline for British military mapping organisations. This spans well over two centuries, from the end of the 18th century to the early years of the new millennium.

This is matched by his complementary *Opus Magnum*, which details the history of Military Survey and its production units, principally SPC RE/MCE RE, over a similar period.



Colin was also renowned for his eclectic collections of items relating to any one of his many passions, including Star Wars, Ghostbusters, Steampunk or militaria. His office contained a wonderful collection of LEGO and not a single desk in the offices he worked in was safe from epic

builds, little people, or random creations! His LEGO Concorde remains in DGC as a memorial to the man and the fun he brought to his colleagues.

During Colin's time in the US, his apartment, just like his flat in UK, looked more like a film prop workshop than a living room, with all sorts of purchases and amazing home-made and customised costumery. He also took great pleasure in travelling across the States to attend various Comicon conventions dressed as Darth Vader, a Storm Trooper, Indiana Jones and various other film characters.

Colin also supported the social side of DGC, providing many displays and demonstrations of his film props, cosplay equipment, decommissioned weapons, items from his personal map collection, uniforms, badges, his Willys Jeep and, of course, his Morgan.

Colin's impact on UK Defence and his service to our nation cannot be overestimated and will not be forgotten. His utmost professionalism and personality leave a huge gap within the ranks of DGC, retired staff and the wider geospatial community. He will be remembered by his colleagues in the UK and abroad with the deepest respect and gratitude.

Wendy Williamson

Mary Hiscock

Readers may recall that in our Winter 2024/5 Newsletter, we recorded the passing, in October 2024, and at the age of 94, of Mary Hiscock. She was one of the two lady telephonists who operated the switchboard at Hermitage from 1963 to 1990.

At the time, we did not have a photograph of Mary at work. Recently, when looking through old SMS photos for a different matter, we spotted one showing just that, and so we are pleased to be able to include it here.



Photo: Mary Hiscock at the switchboard SMSHermitage

Lost Members

Hardcopies of the Summer Newsletter have been returned by Royal Mail as 'Not known at the address' of the following members. If any member has any contact details or information on the following people, please contact the Secretary on REA-MilSvy-Sec@outlook.com. Thank you.

E G (Eric) Stride, last known address in Bassett, Southampton

V (Vic) Moncrieff, last known address in Lanark

Contributors

Our thanks go to Brian Garvan, David and Caroline Watt, Ian Thurgate, Jack Crompton, Dan Mumford, Peter Timbrell, Ted May, Mike Wilson, Nick Collins, Alan Ogden, Wendy Williamson, and Allan Marles' family for their contributions to this edition of the newsletter.

The Secretary and Newsletter Compiler are always very grateful for contributions and, especially so at this time, any associated with 13, 14 and 16 Sqn. We hope, equally, to recognise 19 Sqn upon its 200th anniversary in due course.

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MILITARY SURVEY (GEO) BRANCH REA REUNION – RETURN

To be held at Newbury Royal British Legion Club, Haig House, Pelican Lane, Newbury, RG14 1NP

Saturday 25th April 2026 (12:00hrs till late)

PRECEDED BY AN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING to be held at 11:00hrs

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Timings: | 10:30hrs | Tea/Coffee served. Bar opens. |
| | 11:00hrs | AGM starts. Bar closes. |
| | 12:00hrs (approx) | CO, 42 Engr Regt, Brief |
| | 12:30hrs | Reunion starts. Bar re-opens. |
| | 13:00hrs | FREE Buffet lunch and dessert |

Dress. Smart casual or better if you wish! (Members are encouraged to wear the Branch Lapel Badge).

It is vital to establish firm attendance figures early and so once again we would request that you return this form as soon as you can to Mark Kieras or email the details requested in the form to: functions-rea-milsvy@outlook.com.

If you have any special dietary requirements, (the Buffet will hopefully cater for most dietary needs), please detail these below and every attempt will be made to accommodate them.

Cost: Members and first guest: Free. Additional guests and Non-members: £8 each

RETURNS MUST BE RECEIVED BY **Monday 11th April 2026 LATEST**

I am a member YES / NO. If NO, I confirm payment of £..... to the account as given below:

From: Forename: Surname:.....

Tel No: E-mail:

Guest 1: Guest 2:

Guest 3: Guest 4:

Dietary / Special requirements:

Payment (for non-members and additional guests):

Name: RE Association Branch Funds

Bank: Lloyds

Sort Code: 30-11-75

Account Number: 34412560

Reference: MSG26–*Your Initial and Surname* (example: **MSG26 JSmith**)