

## Anguilla plane-table map revision 1971

Anguilla island was invaded by a force of 331 paratroopers and 30 Metropolitan police officers on March 19, 1969. In the rear guard a couple of years later were three surveyors from 42 Regt tasked with revising and updating the map of the island. This is their story. Anguilla is a small Caribbean Island total area of 91 km<sup>2</sup> situated relatively close to South America. The population of approximately 6,000 wanted their independence from the larger colony of St Christopher-Nevis-Anguilla. Not a shot was fired and the laid-back islanders didn't organise any sort of major resistance – not least because there was no telephone system on the island and communication was poor.



Anguillian Cavalry

Al Gordon listed Anguilla as one of the countries where surveyors from 42 Regt had operated but his book contained no other information on the deployment and this has stimulated me to write this account. I was a sergeant at the time and led the team from 13 Field Survey Sqn who used plane-tableing survey techniques to revise the map of the island. My assistant surveyors were Sappers Drew White and Jim Steger. Fifty years on, my memory is hazy but my red "Certificate of Service" booklet shows that I served in Anguilla between 14 June and 13 July 1971 and photographs in my scrap book have helped to jog my memory.

We flew to Anguilla in an RAF Hercules aircraft. The first leg of the journey took us to Gander in Newfoundland where we spent the night in a transit hotel. I was wakened at 2 am by the fire alarm set off by my two lads who had fallen asleep while smoking in bed and had set fire to their room. Not the best start to the job. We re-fueled at Patrick Air Force base in Florida before landing in St Maarten a neighboring island and catching the ferry to Anguilla.

The first and last time I used plane-tableing was on Anguilla. Plane-tableing is one of the survey techniques I learnt during my survey apprenticeship at the Army Apprentice College, Chepstow 1962-65. The apprentices, Fred Clarke, Dutch Holland, Stan Evans, Colin Evans and I in 62B group practices the technique along the Wye valley under the watchful eyes of Frank Wilkinson. The valley was not the best location to learn the technique as plane tableing is more suited to open country such as on Anguilla. Plane-tableing is long established graphical method of survey in which the map is rough drawn in the field as the survey proceeds. The equipment we used were a plane-table board with tripod, trough compass, spirit level, alidade and Indian clinometer which were all easily carried by one man. We only needed one set of equipment but took two just in case.

The map we revised was the Directorate of Overseas Surveys series 343, Lesser Antilles 1:25,000 Anguilla with Dog Island and Scrub Island sheet. The map was enlarged and mounted on the plane table board, additions and deletions were added as we traversed the island. I decided that there was no need to visit Dog and Scrub Island because they were uninhabited and had no infrastructure.

Despite the political problems we found the locals friendly. There was no public transport on the island and very few vehicles and the young children were forever begging for a lift in our short wheelbase Land Rover.



First vehicle ride for these children

We fed on local cuisine that included lobsters, red snapper fish and iced prickly pears.



Lobsters for lunch

I remember my time on Anguilla fondly but regret my decision not to visit Dog Island while I had the chance. I have been obsessed by tropical seabirds for the last 30 years and Dog Island has recently been recognized as one of the most important bird islands in the Caribbean.