



## Military Survey (Geographic) Branch Royal Engineers Association



### Newsletter No 37 Summer 2010

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#### President's Piece

The Beating Retreat at Hermitage on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May this year was held on a balmy evening at Hermitage. It was a memorable and enjoyable occasion. It allowed the surveyors at Hermitage to welcome and thank all those from the local area and elsewhere for their support and encouragement. The commander, Colonel John Kedar, spoke warmly of the support from the local community, including our Branch.

It is clear that Sappers in general and RE Geo in particular are very well regarded for what they do in support of operations today, as they have always done. Soldiers from Hermitage have been supporting operations continuously, around the world, for the last twenty years. All we can do in the Branch is cheer them, and the soldiers and civilian staff at Feltham, from the touchline. But this we do, willingly and loudly.

One of the strengths of the Branch lies in the collective wisdom and experience of us all. Together, we have many years of service in Military Survey. Of course, we swap stories every year when we meet but it is good to turn some of them into more tangible form, by contributing to the website or the newsletter. The advantage of the website in particular is that we can capture images and stories and broadcast them to a wide audience. I do encourage you to do this; not just the official unit information but the anecdotes that bring our collective experience to life. The formal unit photograph is good to look at, but a story about the person, second from the left in the back rear row, makes it interesting.

Our AGM this year is on Saturday the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 2010 at Hermitage. I do hope you can come. I look forward to meeting some of you there and to sharing some of those stories.

Have a great summer

*John Elder*

**WE NEED YOU – PLEASE JOIN US AT THE**

**Military Survey Branch (REA) REUNION & AGM**

**ON**

**SATURDAY THE 4<sup>TH</sup> of SEPTEMBER 2010**

**Location - Denison Barracks, Hermitage**

**To plan this occasion we need to urgently establish firm attendance figures and ask that you return the proforma in this newsletter **before the 20<sup>th</sup> of August.****

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The AGM and reunion is once again held with the full support and invaluable assistance of The Commander, Colonel John Kedar, and his staff especially the RSM.

This year will be a low-key affair but we will be having a **BARBECUE** during the evening and we also hope to be able to enjoy the company of some Mess members. There will be a short AGM and a series of briefings, **to which wives and guests are also invited**. The Commander has kindly agreed to brief members on current and future activities, in addition there will be a brief on current operations as well as the presentation of our annual prize to the deserving soldier.

**SO COME AND HEAR IT DIRECTLY FROM THOSE WHO SERVE THE SHARP END!**

### OUTLINE PROGRAMME

**1230 - 1400 if you wish to arrive early you are free to use the Sgts Mess - bar open lunch/snacks will available on repayment.**

**1400 - 1600 Registration in conference room - tea/coffee/biscuits will be served.**

**1600 - 1800 AGM, presentation and briefings to including a break.**

**1800 retire to the Sgts Mess for drinks and BBQ.**

Depending on numbers attending, the conference room or unit theatre will be the focus for the AGM and briefings. The conference room will be the venue for registration and light refreshments; it will also be used to display some of the historic photo albums and rogue's gallery. Access to other areas of the unit is to be made available but is subject to ongoing discussions, further details will be disseminated on arrival.

### Cost

We have kept the outlay to a minimum but we do have to reflect the true costs none of which can be offset against unit budgets. The unit and contract staff willingly looks us after and it is only through their kind generosity that costs can be kept as low as they are. The cost for each member and guest for tea/coffee at the AGM and a handsome meal during the evening has been kept to an all-inclusive **£12 each**. Beat that downtown! Those attending the AGM only will be required to contribute **£2** towards the cost of refreshments.

### Dress

Once again, for clarity and to avoid the many phone calls or e-mails on the subject, smart casual is to be the dress for the day. Do feel free to dress up but please do not dress down.

### Security - Access

**To reiterate previous advice: owing to the ever-present security situation you will have to identify yourself on arrival at the gate, so please have some form of identity with you.** Help us by forewarning anyone whom you might be aware of who intends "just turning up" - please, please - get them to contact us first!

### Transport

As last year we will attempt to provide late transport at the end of the evening but only to local hotels (M4/A34 junction). NB - this still remains to be confirmed.

**Return**

The return for the AGM and Reunion is the last page of this newsletter – please complete it and send to Mick Perry before the 20<sup>th</sup> of August.

**Finally**, if you feel that you have something you can contribute to this event that would be of interest to all, please do contact us. I look forward to seeing you on the day.

**Mick Perry**

**Event Organiser** - Telephone 01635 37510 - e-mail: [mandpdperry@sky.com](mailto:mandpdperry@sky.com)

**“MAPS & SURVEYS 2011”**  
**The Defence Surveyors’ Association Seminar**  
**Royal School of Military Survey**  
**Saturday 11 June 2011**

The Defence Surveyors’ Association will run the fourth in its series of annual seminars at Denison Barracks, Hermitage, on Saturday the 11<sup>th</sup> of June 2011.

As for previous seminars, the 6 or 7 presentations will cover a variety of subjects presented in generally chronological order, hopefully ending with something on geospatial support to current operations.

New speakers and fresh subjects are always welcome. Informal shorter presentations based on experiences in the defence surveying sphere or on equipments or techniques employed would be welcomed. Anyone feeling that they might offer a subject, or having any enquiries, should contact Mike Nolan at [maptnolan@googlemail.com](mailto:maptnolan@googlemail.com) or call 01635 253167.

It is too early to give details of likely presentations but once these have been decided in the autumn full details of the programme will be advertised on the DSA website, in appropriate journals and by email to previous attendees whose email addresses are known.

**REA Diary**

4 September	Military Survey Branch AGM and Reunion, Hermitage
17 – 19 September	Corps Memorial Weekend, Chatham
9 October	REA AGM and Annual Dinner
10 October	Sapper Sunday at Royal Hospital Chelsea
11 November	Field of Remembrance, Westminster
14 November	Remembrance Sunday

**News From the Military Front**

Publication of this edition of the newsletter fell at the same time as the handover of RSM at the Regiment and so due to the very heavy commitment load on RSM Alfie Conetta there is no RSM’s Column. It will appear as usual in the next issue along with a ‘bio’ of the RSM.

## News from the Civilian Front

**Staffing:** As with the rest of the Civil Service pressure exists to reduce costs through savings measures etc. Following various savings cuts and recruitment bans the Defence Geographic Centre (DGC) has an allowed establishment of 506 (including 13 military staff) for FY 10/11 this compares to an establishment of 576 at the start of FY 09/10.

**Pride Update:** Programme to Rationalise and Integrate the DIS Estate (Pride) is progressing well with work on the new building at RAF Wyton underway with handover of the building scheduled for December 2011. Those elements of the Intelligence Collection Group (ICG) that are planned for relocation to Wyton include HQ ICG, HQ JAGO, 42 Engineer Regt, JARIC, and elements of DGC. A number of DGC geospatial analysts will be embedded into Wyton as detachments to support what will become the Defence Geospatial Intelligence Fusion Centre (DGIFC). All moves planned to be complete by the end of 2014. Also, site assessments of the five potential future locations for the Royal School of Military Survey (RSMS) are nearing completion.

Work is now complete within both Richmond and Hotine Buildings in order to accommodate displaced Defence Intelligence and ICG staff from London as part of the programme to close the Old War Office Building, these staff will start arriving from July 10 onwards.

Also, Defence Estates are investigating the feasibility of alienating and selling the North West corner of the Feltham site which includes the Officers' Mess and surrounding area.

**DGC Modernisation:** As reported previously DGC's Production Division has been undergoing a major modernisation programme in terms of new equipment, hardware and software. This programme is nearing completion and will provide common systems and commercial GIS software applications across the majority of Production thereby allowing greater flexibility in tasking and production of the range of geospatial products.

Continuing the production theme, DGC has continued to be heavily involved in supporting Operation Herrick, this includes close co-operation with geo staff in theatre. In addition to standard topographic line maps, new products have been developed and supplied, such as Cross Country Movement and Ditch Analysis all of which are fully attributed digital datasets.

There is a growing interest in understanding Ethnicity and Tribalism in relation to the geography. This has resulted in the creation of a Human Geography Section which produces a range of items to satisfy requirements, including reports, digital data and hardcopy maps.

Also, a new development is Enhanced Foundation (E-Foundation) Data. DGC will lead on the development and delivery of E-Foundation data which is additional layers of contextual or thematic data to topographic foundation data. These additional data layers may include elements of geospatially referenced data about the physical and human environment, reference data from multiple domains.

**British Forces Germany (BFG) Map Depot Closure:** The end of 2009 saw the closure of the BFG Map Depot with all mapping being transferred to the Feltham site.

**Planned date for Old Boys Reunion (Picnic in the Park):** Friday the 11<sup>th</sup> of June 2010, full report to come in the next issue of REA Newsletter

**Notable Retirees :** November 2009 – Charlie Silverlight (resigned)

*Pete Dowell*

**EXCERPTS FROM OPERATIONAL LIFE**

**Operation HERRICK 11, Afghanistan**

*The following are excerpts from articles written by soldiers from 42 Engineer Regiment (Geo) for their regimental magazine. Each gives a flavour of what life is like for Geo soldiers deployed to Afghanistan where young junior soldiers are operating, often on their own, in remote Battlegroup locations.*

I dismounted the Chinook Helicopter it was dark but it appeared that Main Operating Base (MOB) Lashkar Gah did not change much, even the flight path from Bastion seemed familiar. I arrived at the waiting area but there was no one there to meet me, that was not problem I left here two years ago and I remembered my way around. I took the route around via Grenade Alley the memories came rushing pack as I go past tent ten, which used to be home during Herrick 6. I arrive at the HQ and now I realised that a few things had in-fact changed, there was now a perimeter fence around the HQ, luckily I bumped into Frankie (LCpl Green).

The Counter-IED tasks vary from very interesting to slightly boring at times however, it is predominantly very interesting. The CIED Task Force brings together personnel from all three services, this is all part of a bigger plan to combat the IED incidents that are currently the number one killer in Helmand. Most of us were on the Brigade MRX so that made it a lot easier when I arrived because I knew most of the people I would be working with.

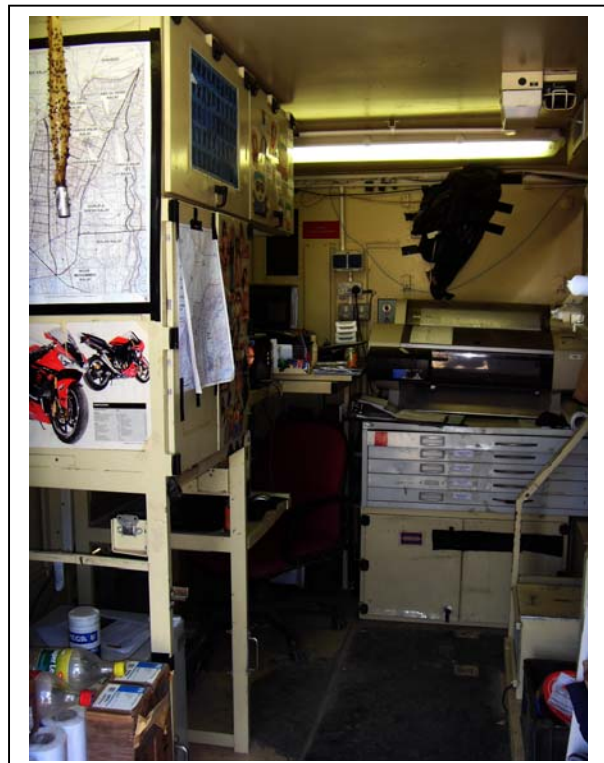
After a few weeks here we found out that we would be staging on in the Sangar, I must admit I was sort of looking forward to it as I was getting tired of the seeing the four corners of the camp walls. It seems not much has changed outside either, it looked almost the same as it did when I was here during the war on Herrick 7. The normal working day starts at 0800 and finishes at 2200 hrs, they are long days but there's work to be done. On Fridays we have a lie in and start work at 0900, but Saturday is the best day here luckily we get the football games on Sky, however when the Sky is not working we get stuck into the Newbury Weekly News.

***Cpl 'Keva' Hackshaw, HQ Task Force Helmand (TFH), Counter-IED TF***

So far I've been moved about through central Helmand, initially at Bastion, then up to the highest region we in TFH (Musa Qulah) which was freezing! Especially during a midnight sangar duty, even with four thick layers on making me look like the Michelin man. For anybody who thinks they have done team medic training for nothing it's far from the truth. There was a suicide bomber in the local village and it was hands on when local civilians came through the front gate. Anyway from Musa Qulah I eventually arrived in Lashkar Gah.

***LCpl 'Meerkat' Rogers, HQ TFH***

During my time in Sangin I worked along side 2 RIFLES for the majority of my tour. The majority of work carried out in Sangin was the production of patrol mapping to help the lads on the ground. It was good to see that the work you were doing was being to put to good use and not going up on some officer's wall!



Inside TACISYS at FOB Shawqat

The facilities at Sangin are fairly basic with all washing carried out in the canal that runs through the centre of the Forward Operating Base (FOB). With an ICAT Helicopter being shot down 600m short of the FOB while flying over the green zone, in my time there fresh food was hard to come by. However, if you liked noodles and spam you were in for a treat as this was the only dinner we had for around 3 months, so forget the Atkins diet and try the Sangin Weight loss plan!

Guard Shifts were another highlight of my time at Sangin completing around 3 a week. It was on one of these fateful sangar duties during the Afghan national elections after around 7 hours of on/off Indirect Fire, I put down around a 100 GPMG rounds onto a Taliban mortar position that was targeting the sangar position I was currently occupying. (At one point a mortar round landed 50m away, but even at that distance I was suffering from squeaky bum time!) That was the most exciting day during my tour.

### *LCpl 'Corky' Corcoran, Battlegroup (North), Sangin*

After spending the first half of my tour in affluent and salubrious Lashkar Gah, I was 'lucky' enough to be transported back in time to Patrol Base Two. PB2 is in the heart of Helmand province and is the headquarters of the Babaji Battle Group. On my arrival in the patrol base I was not only informed that I was to provide geographic support but I would also have to actually build the patrol base! Needless to say Geo work took a back seat and the erection of tents took centre stage. It's not that often that we Geo get to work closely with the mainstream Sappers,



*Battlegroup Babaji Patrol Base 2.*

luckily for me I was taken in by the lads of 23 Squadron RE and their courageous leader Lieutenant Dan "Turkish" "The Jazz" Hands (Ex Geo). The Sappers in PB2 were responsible for putting the infrastructure into the patrol base, much to the distaste of the Coldstream Guards who have to rely heavily on us for the small comforts in life such as plumbing!

With the patrol base built, it was time to get on with some of my primary trade, which unbeknown to me had been changed to Guardsman! The next 3 weeks or so were spent getting intimate with a

GPMG and a sangar. This is not to say that I didn't get some Geo work done.

Geographic support has been provided to operations and rebuilding projects in the Babaji community, such as route Trident road build and establishing schools in the area. The work remains varied and interesting as one moment I am providing terrain analysis products to the Battlegroup Engineer and then the next moment I am printing out the Alphabet for a local school's wall! I have used the majority of the skills learnt on the ME Geo Class 1 course to cover the patrol base in signs!

### *LCPL 'Franky' Green, Battlegroup Babaji, Patrol Base 2*

**Carto Reunion - 26 June 2010**

**Held at The Trout Inn, Lechlade, Gloucestershire**

Some came from the North including the Lake District and Newcastle , others from Cornwall and the South West. Steve Antonic travelled from Kabul and Scouse, all the way from Swindon. Taff cycled 50 miles from home and Arthur came straight from a night shift.

From 12:00 hrs we took up a strategic position next to the bar and stood and chatted for nearly eight hours before we gathered at HQ for a sit down and fish and chips. At 23:00 hrs the music finished and the sick, lame and lazy retired to their hotels and B&B whilst the hard men continued drinking into the night. I think most of us hit the sack at midnight which certainly says something!!

In the morning we had bacon butties, broke camp and headed home. The general consensus is that we're all up for it next year, same time, same place and hopefully a few more from the dark and distant. I think we should give Alan the opportunity to organise the next one, I have every confidence in his ability and am happy to take the credit (again) if it's a success. Tippo and I have volunteered to run a bar-b-que which will be significantly better and cheaper than the one on-site. Please note that we will absolutely and definitely not be catering for vegans or vegetarians, there is plenty of grass. Andy Christopher's has been commissioned to come up with a suitable, all inclusive song with which we can entertain the gathered masses. I'm already counting the sleeps until next year. Executive Committee meetings will start again in the Autumn.

Cheers - Nick Adnitt

**Attendees:** Andy Tipping, Al Drysdale, Alan Easingwood, Nick Adnitt, Sid Holderness, Steve Antonic, Doug Earls, Andy Natrass, Paul Faithful, Trev Foster, Gary Smith, Steve Mumford, Steve Turville, Pete Markley, Howard Hudson, Jim Danks, Andy Bell, Dave Johnson, Andy Christophers, Arthur Mann, Taff Watts, Norman Samuels, Rog Scoon, Scouse Bradshaw, Al York, John levers, Sean Kennedy, Nick Nettleingham, Dave Winship,

Apologies received from: Steve Smith, Taff Everson, Steve Endean, Ken Bithrey, Mark Sherrin, Mick Porter, Russ Garner.



**Colonel Michael Cobb PhD 1916 – 2010**

Michael Cobb gained national recognition when in 2008 at the age of 91 he became the oldest person ever to be awarded a PhD by Cambridge University.

Michael went to France with the BEF and was evacuated through Dunkirk and then served in the North Africa and then with the airborne forces. After the war he joined Military Survey and was in charge of the troop train which moved the Survey Training Centre from Ruabon to Longleat and spent the entire journey on the footplate. He rose to command 42 Survey Engineer Regiment from 1953 until 1956, during which time it moved from Fayid in the Suez Canal Zone to Zyyi in Cyprus, and was then Commandant of the School of Military Survey until 1959. His final tour with Military Survey was as Deputy Director Large Scale Surveys at the Ordnance Survey.

He retired from the Army in 1965 and worked for the cartographic company Geographia until retirement in 1971. In 1978 he began working on his magnum opus - *The Railways of Great Britain: A Historical Atlas* - which was to show all the railway lines of Great Britain opened to traffic between 1807 and 1994 annotated with historical detail. The atlas was completed and published 25 years later in 2003 and it was for this immense project that he was awarded his doctorate on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July 2008, making him possibly the world's third oldest person to be awarded a PhD.

Michael died on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June and Branch President John Elder attended his funeral in Honiton on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July.

**Dave Herriott**

Dave was an ex Harrogate boy joining with Intake 50B. He was an air surveyor by trade and after leaving the service set up his own survey company. He died in his sleep on Easter Sunday morning after 12 months of poor health. Dave leaves a widow Sylvia and daughters Linda and Trilby.

**Alf 'Tommy' Thompson**

Alf Thompson, known universally as Tommy, passed away on Thursday the 8<sup>th</sup> of July. He was a former SSM of both 47 Cartographic Squadron and the School of Military Survey.

**20 YEARS OF NON-STOP OPS**

In the summer of 1990 Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and British Forces joined the international coalition that was put together to liberate that country. So started twenty years of continuous operational deployments – the First Gulf War, the various operations in the Balkans, Iraq again and Afghanistan which looks likely to continue for some time yet. With a soldier's full career being 22 years and the first two of those taken up with training, there is now a generation of whose entire career has comprised training for and deploying on operations – witness to this situation are the arrays of medals on SNCOs chests.

To commemorate this twenty years of operations the Defence Surveyors' Association are publishing a special issue of their magazine, *The Ranger*, which will tell the stories of the Geo involvement in all these operations. Please let the newsletter editor know if you would like to receive a free copy of this 130+ page bumper issue – contact details elsewhere in this newsletter.



## Which Unit, Where, When...the Answer (Maybe)



Many thanks for the suggestions from several readers as to the answer to the question posed in the last newsletter as to the story behind the photos of a mix of wartime Hippo and 1960's print train vehicles disembarking from an LCT.

The answer seems to be Exercise Stowaway over the weekend of 18 – 21 March 1965 when the Hippo equipped 135 Regiment (as it then was) and a detachment from 22 Litho Squadron with its new Helio print train wagon practised loading and off loading from an LCT. The vehicles embarked at Poole and sailed to Portland where they disembarked and drove to Chickerell Camp.

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## CAST IN STONE

Thought is now being given to what should happen to the myriad historical and commemorative items scattered around Denison Barracks, particularly the two Messes, when the units move to what will be shared accommodation – there almost certainly won't be room for all of the Military Survey/Geo memorabilia. However, there is one item that almost certainly will have to stay at Hermitage and will forever be testament to 'The School' – the Sergeants' Mess foundation stone – although probably now un-noticed by all who pass by it.

For decades Military Survey was awash with two rumours; that the School was to be rebuilt and that the Regiment was to move from Barton Stacey. First firm indications that the old American hospital at Hermitage was to be replaced occurred in the early Sixties and were supported by a scale model that was proudly shown to all new entrants to Military Survey and details even appeared in the Newbury Weekly News complete with dates. Alas, this initiative was to come to nought only to be replaced again by rumours.



When, in 1974, 2 Survey Staff Specialist Course\* came to ponder what to present to the Sergeants Mess at the end of their course it seemed like a good idea to highlight the 'rebuild' rumour that was once more going the rounds. A handsome foundation stone was produced by the local monumental mason and housed in a smart glass fronted case to which a small brass hammer was attached by a chain and a brass plaque was fixed to the front which proclaimed "*In case of rebuild: break glass*".

And so it eventually came to pass in the late Seventies that the small brass hammer was used to break the glass and the stone was passed to the builders of the smart new Mess who embedded it into the entrance foyer for all to see today and probably all who pass by in years to come – whoever they may be!

\* The course starred: Geoff Roberts, Alan Gordon, Bev Hill, Laurie Gray, Tom Key, Barry Hughes and 'H' Procter.

## Treasurer's Input

### Current Worth of the Branch

On 16 July 2010 the bank account holdings were as follows:

Current account	£707.52
Reserve account	£8,011.12
RE (Geo) Support Fund	£1,925.84

I am pleased to say that a request has been received from the Unit Welfare Officer for a donation towards leisure equipment for soldiers on Operations. The sum of £628 has been made available from the RE (Geo) Fund and a cheque will be sent in the next few days. Also, the sum of £500 will be donated from the Reserve Account to support the annual Sports Dinner when awards are made for sporting achievements by Hermitage personnel.

### Subscriptions and Debtors

By 16 July 2010 265 members have paid subscriptions (the vast majority by standing order) realising income of £2,120. 10 members have not paid their 2010 subscription, a potential further income of £80. Some SO's will still come in but I look forward to receiving cheques from 2010 debtors as soon as possible (and I make the usual plea for a commitment to paying by SO from 2011!)

### 'Ground Control S'

I am pleased say that the mystery of the standing order from 'Ground Control S' has been solved! The payer is member Keith Pope and I am indebted to Malcolm Knight for this information.

**Michael Gowlett**

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## Contact Details

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REUNION AND AGM 2010

Please Send All Returns Before 21 August 2010 To:

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mandpdperry@sky.com
01635 37510

From:

Forename:..... Surname:.....

Address: - Tel No: -

E-mail: -

Type & Make of transport:.....Registration No .....

I will/will not be attending the Reunion and AGM on 04 September 2010, I will be bringing the following guests:

Table with 3 columns: Forename, Surname, Relationship. Rows 1 and 2.

PLEASE REMEMBER OUR GEOGRAPHIC SUPPORT FUND NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

I enclose a cheque for £..... (Payable to: Military Survey Branch, REA)

Being the total of .....Numbers attending the AGM on the 04th Sep 10 @£12 each,

plus £..... PLEASE FOR THE GEO SUPPORT FUND - plus any unpaid annual subscription or annual subscription for new member joining this year £8. NB If you can only attend the AGM and not the BBQ then you must send £2 pp to cover the cost of refreshments.

Please note that any excess funds or overpayments etc will go to the Geo Support fund unless you specify otherwise.

If you have any special needs such as a vegetarian meal, disabled access, etc, please detail these below and every attempt will be made to accommodate your needs.

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NB military units do not cater for severely disabled conditions (for obvious reasons) and we apologise in advance for any shortcomings that might cause individual inconvenience.