

The Military Survey (Geo) Branch

Winter Newsletter 2018 – issue 70

MILITARY SURVEY BRANCH REA

IT'S A REUNION

FREE ENTRY AND FREE CURRY SUPPER

NON-MEMBERS £10 PER PERSON (NB) £5 pp. cash back if you subsequently join)

SUPER BAR @ MESS PRICES

FREE TRANSPORT LATE TO LOCAL HOTELS ONLY - M4 JUNCTION

1830hrs for 1900hrs FRIDAY THE 13th OF APRIL 2019

Location: SGTS MESS - DENISON BARRACKS - HERMITAGE

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

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

FRIDAY THE 13th OF APRIL 2019

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

The Committee with the kind permission of Commanding Officer and of course the RSM, the President of the WO & Sgts Mess, extend an invitation to members to attend this reunion and if so desired the earlier AGM in the Sgts Mess Hermitage on Friday night the 13th April 2019.

FURTHER DETAILS AND THE ENTRY FORM ARE AT THE LAST PAGE

PLEASE SEND IN YOUR RETURNS NOW

BUT NO LATER THAN THE 1st APRIL 2019



Christmas card 1943 sent to the family of Sapper Tommy Swarbrick of 13 (Corps) Field Survey Company RE attached to the Eight Army at Casalbordino Province of Chieti Italy



Sapper Tommy Swarbrick (2nd left) and colleagues of 13 (Corps) Field Survey Company RE enjoying the Italian weather in 1943

Mount Vesuvius Naples Italy

(As one of a few branch members who have either served or visited Naples I thought the following may be of interest. I served in Naples at HQ AFSOUTH from 1973 to 1976 and I recall being introduced to a US Air Force Colonel who witnessed the eruption of Vesuvius in March 1944 and the damage caused to the aircraft on Pompeii airfield)



Two Spitfire IX's of No 241 Squadron, Royal Air Force, MA425/'RZ-R' and MH635/'RZ-U' piloted by Flying Officers H Cotman and J V Macdonald respectively, flying over Mount Vesuvius. (Source: *IWM*). The aircraft were on detachment from Canne on the east coast of Italy near Foggia and were based at Pomigliano near Naples in February 1944.



On 18th March 1944 the last major eruption of Mount Vesuvius occurred destroying the villages of San Sebastiano al Vesuvio, Massa di Somma, Ottaviano, and part of San Giorgio a Cremano. Prior to the eruption lava flows appeared within the rim and there were outflows and small explosions until the major explosion took place on March 18th.

At the time of the eruption, the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) 340th Bombardment Group was based at Pompeii Airfield near Terzigno Italy just a few kilometres from the eastern base of the volcano. The picture on the left is of ash being swept off the wing of a B-25 bomber on March 23rd after the eruption. The picture of the eruption on the right was taken by Jack Reinhardt a B-24 tail-gunner of the USAAF.



The tephra and hot ash damaged the fabric control surfaces, the engines, the Plexiglas windscreens and the gun turrets of the 340th B-25 Mitchell medium bombers. Estimates ranged from 78 to 88 aircraft destroyed. No lives were lost at Pompeii Airfield and the only casualties in the 340th were a sprained wrist and a few cuts. The airfield was dismantled and the 340th relocated to Paestum Airfield at approximately 9 km north-northeast of Agropoli, in the province of Salerno, on March 23rd 1944.



An unidentified B-25C Mitchell of the 340th Bombardment group damaged after 18th March 1944 Mount Vesuvius eruption at Pompeii Airfield, Italy. The volcano erupted, showering nearby airfields with tons of hot volcanic ash and brimstone and severely damaged a significant number of Allied aircraft. Aside from losing many of its B-25s, the group also suffered significant damage to its maintenance and accommodation facilities. (USAAF Photograph)

Source:
 FaceBook Group – WWII Pictures
 Wikipedia
 Wg/Comd C G Jefford MBE RAF – RAF Squadrons

by Noel Grimmett

Singapore - wake up!

In 1967, the accommodation for the Royal Engineers in Gillman Barracks Singapore, were large three-story buildings built in the Far Eastern style to get rid of as much heat as possible, for those using them. Each floor was one huge room held up with pillars throughout. There were ablutions and a few single rooms at each end of the block. A 10-foot veranda went all the way round each floor. There was no glass used in this building at all. The roof jugged out another six foot to guard against the sun and the monsoon rains. From memory, the dimensions of the veranda on each floor must have been 150 feet by 75 feet. The walls of these 12 feet high floors were only about eight feet high to allow for air flow throughout the building. Inside the big room were numerous large ceiling fans with variable speeds to keep us cool.



We divided the room off into three equal sections by two walls of lockers width wise along a line of pillars, facing alternate directions so that a bed could be placed at the back of one locker and the next locker opened onto your space, then another bed and so on. Two long lines of beds in each section.

The space in-between these two lines of beds was about 12 to 15 feet wide giving plenty of room for tables and chairs and other furniture for our comfort, if not privacy. The whole squadron of single living in men was accommodated in one Block; the ground floor not being used for living accommodation.

We worked from six o'clock in the morning until one o'clock in the afternoon, and then if we were not on duty, we had the rest of the day off. This was because of the heat of the afternoon. We had to get up at 5 O'clock in the morning to have time to shower, dress and have breakfast. There would be no more meals until we came back at one o'clock. We had to catch the transport at 6 o'clock outside the Barrack block because the working area was not in the same camp as the one, we were living in.

At five o'clock we were woken up and we woke the people either side of us up then went to have a shower. This was a ripple effect until all personnel were up.

I woke up one morning at five pasts five in the morning and immediately got up grabbed my things to go to the ablutions and woke the two either side of me. I had a shave and was just getting out of the shower when, there was a cry from some rather angry sole as to why we had been woken up at half past one in the morning. By this time half the lads were up and getting ready for work. I never did own up to the fact that I had mistakenly misread the hour and the minute hand, swapping them over in my mind. Instead of being five past five, it was in fact twenty-five past one in the morning. Oops!!

By Jack Crompton

The Tiger and the Snake

I was in Sumatra working on the 'British Indonesian Transmigration Project'. My friend Brian Willis and I were Land Surveyors, on loan from the British Army working on this Civilian Project. It would not have been a good idea for us to be recognized by the local population, as foreign military, working in their country. It was legitimate but was only known by the Indonesian President and the highest echelon of his government. As two Royal Engineer Map Makers we were hardly an effective invasion force. This was for expediency; the Indonesian government wanted us there to carry out the function and they had no one of their own capable of performing the task at that time. If word had got out as to our true status, it would not have been a 'catastrophic diplomatic incident'. Just be mildly embarrassing!

We had travelled from our Base in the town of Bukittinggi Sumatra just south of the equator, northward for two day to the area to be surveyed, which was north of the equator. We were in two Land Rovers. The destination was a specific jungle area that had a dirt road through it. Any vehicle on this road could be considered as an unusual event. Our vehicles were the only ones we ever saw.

We made our camp on the side of the road in a large clear area of sand just before a river with our dirt road going over a bridge where it continued into the dense jungle. We set too, making camp and pitching our two large tents, one each, on the flat sandy area. 'The wise man builds his house upon the rock' does not apply to tents. Flat sand is much more comfortable. The sand was damp, not because of the river but because of the rain. It was not the monsoon season, but it still could rain quite hard. Whilst we were preparing the camp area, I came upon a cobra. It was not a good idea to be cohabiting with such a venomous and known to be cantankerous creature. I picked the snake up and went to the other side of the river to release it.

There is an old wives' tale and I emphasize, 'Old Wives Tale' that 'if you kill a Cobra its mate will get you'. I did not believe it. Of course, I didn't believe it. None the less when I was on the other side and about to release this snake, I held it up in a gesture that said - "it's still alive and unharmed". 'Prudence is the better part of valor'. That little gesture made me feel much happier and no one saw me make it.

That night we went to bed, with what was a routine whilst under canvas. The tents were double zipped. One set of zips for the main bell tent's sturdy canvas to keep big things out, then the zips for inner mosquito netting. These tents we could stand up in and were mosquito proof. When sealed up we would spray the inside with insecticide to kill the mozzies already in the tent. We slept all night undisturbed as we were used to the normal jungle noises and the jungle is never quiet. It did rain that night so the sand in the morning was mostly flat and smooth.

When I got up, I noticed large pug marks all round our tents of what Brian and I thought were Sumatran Tiger paw prints. I took a photo with a ruler beside it and sent it, with an explanation, to my wife in England.

She sent it on to the Natural History Museum and sure enough, they confirmed what we had thought they were. Brian once saw a tiger with two cubs in the headlights of his Landrover close to our camp but although I was following Brian close behind, I did not see them. This must have been the Tiger that came to visit us on that first day. I am glad that she was not hungry.



A more serious post script to this story: - The local chaps that were working for us asked if we wanted the Tiger's Skin. If we had said 'yes', they would have obtained it for us. Tiger hides are quite valuable. They realised from our horrified response, at the thought of killing such a magnificent creature, that we were not interested. We told them that it was illegal for us to try to import them into the UK. The legality of it did not concern them, only the possibility of money. They did not go after the tiger as we were probably the only people around with enough money to purchase the skin and therefore make it worthwhile.

By Jack Crompton

Kenneth Charles Williams

Bryan Osborne posted on FaceBook a copy of *Surveyette* a magazine Published by British Other Ranks (BOR) Survey Cadre RE Dehra Dun India dated March 1946.

On a casual read I noticed that a letter to the Editor was signed by a K C Williams Sapper RE, 62 Independent Reproduction Group, Indian Engineers Ceylon South East Asia Command.

This Mr Williams is none other than Kenneth Charles Williams the actor of *Hancock's Half Hour*, *Round the Horne* and the "Carry On" films fame. On reading his letter you will note that his wit and humour shines through with a touch of sarcasm added for good measure. The magazine's Editors response is also interesting!!



Kenneth Charles Williams centre row standing on the right



Letters to The Editor.

The Editor,
The *Surveyette*,
B.O.R. Survey Cadre, R.E.

Dear Sir,

I came upon a November copy of your unit journal in our reading room recently, and must admit it afforded me some interesting moments. I say moments, mark you, because the interest was aroused in spasms, occurring infrequently and few and far between. Altogether there was far too much harping on repeat and demob. half your jokes seemed to depend on either of these two subjects entirely, and it rather palls on one, after a while, (mother-in-law jokes, are not the only type which can be murdered).

Then there is this "Dingle" person, no wonder he uses such a colourful pseudonym, piles on the sentiment with a trowel don't you think? All that fatherly stuff about telling the parents about the sort of place their lads have arrived at, in India. Isn't it a trifle overdone?

The limerick (for I can hardly say poem) about how an illusioned sapper came to see the light, was positively "naive". But perhaps it was meant to be funny? anyway, we had a good laugh, over it.

Well, I daren't go on in this strain, lest such an amount of adverse criticism, arouses your wrath. However I will say that the whole production shows definite signs of promise, perhaps even literary talent, who knows? (mute inglorious Milton's and all that, what?)

With reference to Group news; a party of MEN left here recently, for the UK, namely, Jack Shirley, Don Harrison, Mick Summers, Sid Townsend, Ted Barker, Dave Morgan, Revitt, and a Sapper Andgren. This was their second try, they'd already been to Colombo once, but were unable to board the ship. However, they haven't re-appeared so we hope they were successful this time.

A unit dance was held recently in the nearby village of Kurunegalle, which was an apparent success. The R.E. band came down from Kandy and seem to have added to the general chaos. Jack Bosson was well up to standard on his saxophone, but after the first few numbers, he appears to have performed a vanishing trick. He was found afterwards though (making horrible moans) and duly taken care of.

Well, I will conclude here, wishing you all a happy 1946, from the Group, looking forward to your next number.

Yours,

K. C. WILLIAMS,
Sapper, R.E.
62 Ind. Rep. Group, I.E.
Ceylon, S.E.A.C.

The editor's first reaction on reading this most stirring letter was to wonder how much Spr. Williams wants for his typewriter; further meditation convinced him that the degree of discretion in most criticism varies in inverse ratio to the distance between the critic and the object of his wrath. Nevertheless, Spr. Williams' kind wishes for Christmas and the New Year are duly acknowledged, but it is suggested that if the conveying of these wishes was his ultimate aim, as it seemed to be, then he would have done better to have sent us a Christmas card.

Unfortunately Spr. Williams' choice of poetical allusion was a sad one: inglorious we may be, but never mute; moreover we least of all have pretensions to Miltonic aspiration; if Spr. Williams wants less sentiment, let him read Huxley; if he wishes to read Milton, copies of the Golden Treasury may be obtained for quite a small sum; but if he wishes to read the honest and spontaneous efforts of a few servicemen to offer a few bright moments for themselves and others, then we will promise him that a copy of the *Surveyette* will be forwarded to him each month.

It was intended to forward the above letter to the great Dingle himself, that he might answer it, but unfortunately for us and fortunately for the critic, he has returned home. In this respect

the editor bids our eager correspondent to take notice of the second speech of Charlie, keeper of the Cupboard, in the first instalment of "Sapper's Progress" in this issue.

The Editor,
The "Surveyette"

Dear Sir,

I have read with interest Serial No. 3 of the 'Surveyette' and whilst it is, of course possible to pick holes in any publication, in the main I thought it maintained a high standard even though, due to censoring, two articles were so much gibberish to me, but the uncensored version must have been very enlightening. Pity.

I should like, if I may, to deviate from purely "Surveyette" subjects and, if you are prepared to publish it, put forward in this my only way, a grievance I have.

Whilst I appreciate boys will be boys and, therefore, I suppose Sgts. will be Sgts. and even W.Os. will be W.Os., it is a bit trying to be woken up in the early hours of the morning and hear a melodious voice call out "It's a monsoon, a monsoon" followed by much laughter and, probably, the sound of breaking bottles. This is possibly pure jealousy as our own Canteen is very nearly "dead" now: the reason, I am told, is that most of our less sober-minded members were recently transferred to the Sgts. Mess.

Can anything be done to liven up the Cpls. and Sprs. Canteen?

Yours truly,

"SAPPER"

Dear "SAPPER"

It was with a little regret that I read of the 'nearly dead' Junior Mess: from my own experience I have found the atmosphere there not so much dead but rather restful and very nearly refined: a place where one can recuperate after a hard day's work.

There you will find often in progress such intelligent pastimes as chess, solo or darts, all of which you will agree are adult, manly pursuits. As a child, I found much pleasure and a certain subtle thrill in breaking my bottle, but there comes a time in a man's life when he must put away childish things.

No, Sapper,—the Junior Mess is not dead: it is grown up!

THE EDITOR

GROUP GEN

Two group publications have recently come into my possession, "Egress" by 63 Rep. Group and "Finale" by 61 Rep. Group. In general appearance both are similar and were compiled for the same purpose, namely, as a documentary souvenir of each group's part in the final victory in the Far East.

In my opinion, "Egress" is by far the better of the two as regards a souvenir. It contains a fairly detailed account of the units trials, tribulations and travels from Ruabon to Rangoon. The rest of the magazine is devoted to sketches of various places of interest seen during the group's travels, and portraits of the members of the group, with a few explanatory lines about each. Had I been a member of 63 Rep. Group, "Egress" would be a treasured possession.

"Finale", although extremely well produced, does not come up to my idea of a souvenir copy commemorating final victory. The articles "Third Class Single", "In To Burma", and "Rangoon", are excellent, but I fail to see why "Indian Summer" was included. The article seemed pointless to me. Bouquets should be handed to F. Fletcher, "Jenky" and "E.A.C." for their cartoons and illustrations.

When last writing on 61 Rep. Group's band, I apparently gave too much credit where it was not due. I have been asked to make the following corrections. Fred Haberman has never seen a guitar, and plays the violin only. Ted Roberts is the unit's guitarist and also the musical arranger, besides making all the outside arrangements. His must be a full time job indeed, and I humbly apologise for denying him the credit which is his rightful.

RUABONITE.

Sadly, Kenneth died on 15th April 1988 age 62, having consumed a lethal cocktail of painkillers.

1892611 S/Sgt Victor J Gridley RE

1209 Survey Base Instrument Workshop RE

(Irene Scrivener, Victor Gridley's daughter contacted Alan Gordon about 1209 Survey Base Instrument Workshop RE, he then passed her enquiry to me knowing that I had undertaken some research into the Survey units operating in WW2. Knowing little about 1209 and having been given a lot of information and photographs about Victor's Gridley's service I thought it would be of interest to record his activities in the Middle East and the tasks undertaken by this small unit and their important work in maintaining the technical instruments used by Survey units in the Western Desert and beyond)

Victor was born on the 4th Dec 1918 in Battersea, London, and attended Basnett Road School and then Battersea Central School until aged 16. At 20 he studied for his Fitters and Turners City and Guilds Exams at Battersea Polytechnic. He was employed by a number of firms between 1934 –1939 and in particular Smiths Meters, where he worked on blind-flying instruments, timing devices for missiles and experimental meters.

On Wednesday 18th October 1939, papers arrived, and Victor was called up for the duration of the Emergency under the provisions of National Service (Armed Forces) Act, 1939. Initially he was posted to the 2nd London Corps Troops Engineers at Whetstone under Major W.S. Douglas. His trade classification on enlistment was: Experimental Instrument Maker.

Then posted to 265 Company under Captain G.A. Shallidie RE and on to 297 Corps Field Park Company on 1st Nov 1939. He was then awarded his Certificate of Trade Proficiency as an Instrument Mechanic A3 Group A on 13th Feb 1940 from OC Major W. S. Douglas of 297 Corps Field Park Company, London Corps Troop Engineers Unit.

On 20th Feb 1940 he was posted to No 2 Engineers Stores (Base) Depot at Gravesend where he had become unwell, with scarlet fever but was untreated because of the troop movements. On 8th March he was posted to 263rd Field Coy RE and on the 10th March the 263rd moved to Milton Barracks Gravesend.



On the 7th March verbal orders were received for mobilisation and a move to France. 263 Company left for Southampton on the 19th April 1940, arrived at Le Havre on the 20th and were sent directly to Rouvray, near Rouen. After settling in the 263 were employed on construction work under the Works Services CRE stationed at Rouen.

(They were "Front Line Engineers" expected to cope with normal requirements such as wet and dry gap bridging, mine laying, and demolition by explosive etc).

263 Company had been at Alizay Normandy (building Nissan huts) for a few months when, in May, the Germans broke through the lines and they were sent north, supposedly to "control refugee movements". Between 1-2 a.m. the 263rd joined other RE's on "8 horse, 40 men" cattle truck train at the station near Rouen. They got as far as Amiens on May 18th when the train was bombed. Eventually Vic was evacuated from Cherbourg 17th June 1940 to Southampton as part of Operation Ariel and sent on to Newcastle, then Bardon Mills Estate in Northumberland. 263 then A. Forward Company moved to Bramber near Brighton and, as it was thought that a German invasion was imminent, they did explosives work, and guarding the pier etc.

On 16th Sept 1940 Victor was transferred to the 126 E and M Company RE at Chatham and by 5th Oct 1940 they had been issued with kit for hot climates. Then 126 Company was sent to Liverpool. They sailed on 7th Oct 1940 aboard *HMT Orontes* as part of Winston's Special Convoy WS3B fast, out into the Atlantic (to avoid U-boats), to Freetown and then to Cape Town, before sailing on and arriving at Suez on 16th Nov 1940 to become part of Middle East Forces (MEF).



SS Orontes - During World War II, the Orontes became a troopship, serving that role from 1940 to 1947

On 29th Nov 1940 Victor transferred to 141 Field Park Troop RE Egypt (141 Field Park Squadron) whose job it was to supply all materials and engineer stores, used by the Field Squadrons & Companies, and only occasionally did they become involved with combat.

141 Troop joined the push through the desert in North Africa to Libya and Sidi Barrani, Tobruk, Derna and Bengazi. It was a long way from their base and they were forced to turn back via the coast road, where they joined the biggest convoy, and made their way back to the Pyramids at Gaza near Cairo. They were based at El Giza and Mena close to the Pyramids and then sent back to Sidi Barrani and the Suez Canal". (Mena was at the foot of the Great Pyramid of Cheops and a properly organised military tented and hutted town about 10 miles from Cairo).

The Germans broke through into the Western Dessert and captured Bengazi on 4th April 1941 along with a large number of British prisoners. Because of this, 141 Troop was sent back into the desert to do Engineering work. Based at Lydda near Tel Aviv in Palestine and was trained to build bridges and also undertook general training. Victor then returned to Moascar in Egypt.

On 21st Oct 1941 Victor was posted to 512 (Army) Field Survey Company RE who were stationed at Abbassia near Heliopolis and was employed as an instrument maker.



Victor working on an Astro-clinometer



Astro-clinometer

The Astro-clinometer was invented by Professor E.H. Thompson in WW2 for night time navigation in the desert and may have been used by the L.R.D.G. for whom it is said to have been invented, and possibly by the S.A.S. It was put into service although the more commonly carried theodolite would do the same job. It is basically a land sextant and measures the angle of a star without the need of an horizon, it features a head up display in the viewfinder in the shape of an H the star is lined up with the crossbar and a reading taken from the micrometer and with the use of conversion tables the angle is worked out. Before use the instrument has to be set perfectly level using the two spirit levels and the adjusters, a shielded lamp is used to illuminate the spirit levels.

After about 3 months 512 moved into the caves at El Massara near Mena, Egypt close to the Tura caves where the RAF stored their explosives. He was there for two months in 1941 at the time of the attack on Pearl Harbour on 7th December 1941. 512 Company finally moved into the Tura caves by February 1942.

During the month of October 1942, the Central Instrument Repair Workshop was set up by 46 South Africa Survey Coy S.A.E.C. at Maadi by 2/Lieut G. A. R. MacDonald S.A.E.C. It was hoped by this means to ensure that all the vital and irreplaceable Survey instruments like theodolites will be kept in as serviceable condition as possible by doing work beyond the capabilities of the Unit Mechanic. During the month of November, the buildings in the shop were improved, and many Survey instruments came in for adjustment and repairs.

In December 1942 most notable was the discovery by A.D. Survey Eastern Cyrenaica, of three German Air Survey Cameras of 30 x 30 cm format. One was a brand new 20 cm focal length Zeiss "Topogan"; two were 50 cm focal length Zeiss, one of which was new and the other considerably used. An Air Stores Park abandoned by the enemy provided all the components required to work the cameras, including remote controls, motors, magazines plug and armoured cable and a large quantity of film. 2/Lt G A R MacDonald S.A.E.C. O.C. Central Instrument Repair Shop was flown to Tobruk and in conjunction with Lt-Col Thompson assembled and got into working order one 20 cm and one 50 cm camera. An aircraft mounting for the 20 cm was removed from a wrecked Ju 88DS at Sidi Barrani. On 16th December, Lt-Col Thompson and 2/Lt MacDonald took the 20 cm camera to 60 Sqdn S.A.A.F and is now fitted into one of the Sqdn Baltimore's, but weather has prevented a full flying test. The camera, as used by the Germans possesses no motion to correct for drift but one had been designed and installed by the Sqdn.

Victor worked with the South African Survey Unit Workshop at Maadi until the Palestinians took over the workshop. In August 1943 it was decided that the Base Survey Instrument Workshop (Palestinian) would be disbanded, and the Palestinian Personnel would be transferred to REME or be employed in other RE Workshops. REME will in future be responsible for the repair of all Survey instruments. British and South African Instrument Mechanics belonging to Base Survey units continued to work in a Central Workshop under command of Lieut G. A. R. MacDonald S.A.E.C. These men would be returned to their units when required.

On 7th January 1944 Lieut Macdonald S.A.E.C. left to re-join – 46 Survey Coy S.A.E.C. Lieutenant P Diamant RE assumed command of the newly formed 1209 Base Survey Instrument Workshop RE. Since this date, and up to 6th February, the Workshop completed 64 jobs varying from repairs to Theodolites, Calculating Machines and watches, to the manufacture of spare parts, and repair parts for printing machines, filing cupboards and new instruments. (see 1209 Base Survey Inventory below)



Victor working on a 'Tavistock' Theodolite



Thompson Pinhole Plotter

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8. 1209 Base Survey Instrument Workshop (cont'd)

(i) Works Completed :-

1	Facit Calculating Machine No 100564	For 512 Fd Svy Coy RE
1	Brunsviga Double Calc Machine	For 512 Fd Svy Coy RE
1	" Carriage Movement	For " " "
1	Box Sextant	For " " "
1	Watch Ingersoll)
1	Indian Clinometer)
1	Zeiss Theodolite No 44091	) For 524 Pal Field
1	Zeiss Theodolite No 52506	) Survey Coy., R.E.
1	Facit Calculating Machine No 100796)
1	Facit Calculating Machine No 100551	) For Survey Directo-
6	Demonstration Model Ast Clinometer	) rate, G.H.Q., M.E.F.
	Tools for Demonstration Models) " " "
1	Proving Roller)
1	Facit Computing Machine No 100797)
1	Gestetner Duplicating Machine)
1	Wireless Set	For Officers' Mess
6	Gum Lev Blocks)
1	Electro Blower)
1	Whirler Clamp	) For No 1 Base Survey
1	Printing Frame Pump	) Drwg & P.P.Office.
1	Fan Bracket)
6	Tripods)
1	Reflector Stand	) For Polish Survey
2	Arc Lamp Bushes)
1	Lens Holder for Camera)
6	Comparator Scales)
1	Numbering Machine	) For 512 Field
6	H.B.T. Feeder Suckers	) Survey Coy R.E.
5	Crabtree Printing Machine Bolts)
4	Wire Formers)
1	Commutator Assembly of Oscillograph adapted for new use	) For 42 Geol.Svy Coy
1	Filing Cupboard	For Workshop

(ii) Work in Progress

2 Epidiascopes
 33 Astro-Clinometers
 1 Screen Holder for 19 Coy.

(b) Further weekly reports on Works and administration will be submitted every Monday.

(c) The control of priority by the Survey Directorate as mentioned in your last instructions will no doubt increase the efficiency of the workshop.

(d) The spraying of the completed Astro-Clinom. cannot be done as the spraying machine handed over to Survey Directorate for repairs, has not been returned yet.

..../11

On 22nd September 1944 Victor was posted to 1209 Base Survey Instrument Workshop RE as an acting Staff Sergeant, Class A1 Instrument Mechanic. Shortly after he was posted back to 512 Company on 26th October 1944 and reverted to the rank of sapper. 1209 Base Survey Instrument Workshop RE was disbanded in April 1945 under Lieutenant P Diamant RE at Tura caves near Cairo Egypt, due to lack of work.

On 13th January 1945, after nearly 4^{1/3} years in the MEF, Victor was struck off strength and was bound for the UK, via Moascar, Ismailia, Suez and from there departed for Gibraltar and arrived at Greenock, Scotland on the 29th January 1945. (It is probable that he travelled as part of MKF 38, a fast convoy which left Gibraltar on 21st January and arrived at the Clyde on the 27th January). Sent to the Halifax RE Depot, he was soon granted one month's leave and went home to Battersea.

Victor was posted to RE Survey Training Centre, Wynnstay Hall, Ruabon, nr Wrexham, Wales on the 27th February 1945.

POSTWAR

The War had officially ended on 8th May 1945 but as Montgomery said "We have won the German war. Let us now win the peace." There was a great deal that had to be done and many hands still required for the tasks ahead.

Thus, Victor was sent to North Western Europe on 7th July 1945, as part of the British Liberation Army (BLA) and posted to Knokke in West Flanders, Belgium. The following day he was taken on strength of 50 RHU (Reinforcement Holding Unit) and billeted in a local café. He recalled that it was far from pleasant as the beaches were still mined and the local population just wanted to get back to civilian life. The BLA were renamed BAOR (British Army of the Rhine) in 25th August 1945 and on 27th August, Vic was posted to 515 Field Survey Company RE, a unit under DAD Survey 30 Corps District.

During August 1945, 515 Fd Svy Coy had been working on the German Administration Boundary Map to parish level (in preparation for the coming elections); GSGS4414 revisions and in organising a move to Kinder Heilanstalt Molke Strasse, Bad Salzuflen and by September this move had been accomplished. A recce on the Luneberg Trig was begun on 3rd September and three days later a survey of the Bayeux area for the Graves Commission was commenced. Victor stayed in Bad Salzuflen for a week. Overall, September was a busy month, with 30 Corps District in Nienburg concerned with finding an interpreter, sorting out local transport problems and the shift of the map depot from the local school to the outskirts and there into three German huts and another building, all of which required repair.

Meanwhile at BAOR Survey Directorate, Brigadier A. Prain, working on the order that all "complicated" photogrammetric equipment was to be removed from German possession, noted on his report, the dismantling of four stereo planagraphs recovered from the Harz Mountains. These were to be sent to the UK along with other Wehrmacht Survey equipment stored at Neumunster, another two stereo planagraphs in RAF custody, plus other items from the Hermann Goring Institute. Additionally, the Captured Maps Section was disposing of large stocks of German maps with 1937 frontiers and these were all sent to the 8 Corps District map store at Neumunster.

By 2nd October 1945, and still under HQ 30, Victor's RE unit was changed once again, this time to 3rd Army Field Survey Depot. (On the 10th November 3rd AFSD moved from the Naval Arsenal at Walstedt to Gartenstrasse 10, Neumunster, which was also the office of the Assistant Director of Survey and 8 Corps HQ). During November 1945 huge quantities of maps, (one 3-ton lorry daily) were shifted to 3 Depot. Victor recalled that, whilst with 3rd AFSD, he had been billeted at a bombed-out Luftwaffe factory at Bielefeld. And, whilst at Bielefeld, and for about a month, he had unloaded trains and then refilled them with maps of Europe for the Occupying Forces. HQ 30 Corps monthly report recorded that over 1 million surplus maps had been received at 3 Depot by 15th December. More were expected.

By December 515 Coy detachment were making good progress in the field and office with a total of 46 sheets at 1/25,000 and 24 fair drawn descriptions completed. And over the winter months one priority had been to prepare data for the British Areas M52 and then L52. Additional survey equipment, two geodetic levels, two planimeters and a meter bar were delivered to Survey HQ BAOR, whilst 10 aircraft cameras, 35 rolls of tracing paper and 40 bromide sheets were collected from 315 COSD and delivered to 3 Depot.

Additionally, many captured maps had been received from the US Zone and stock takes were undertaken at the Port Det. of 3 AFSD and also at the main 3 Depot at Bielefeld. Noted by Col. Heap at BAOR Survey Directorate, was the find of two German Ballon theodolites for metrological observations, and these were duly inspected and forwarded to the War Office along with 15 cases of captured German equipment including air cameras, miscellaneous air survey equipment, and an ordinance survey Zeiss-Bosshardt tacheometer.



No 3 Army Field Survey Depot RE BAOR – Christmas card 1946

Victor remembered that whilst with 3AFSD he had looked after survey equipment. He was sent to Neumunster and it is possible that whilst there he was billeted with German civilians, whom he recalled he generally got on well with. But by January 1946, reorganisation and a change of Corps District responsibilities meant that the RE stores in Neinburg and Neumunster were destined to close. In their stead, the Port detachment of 3rd Army Field Survey Depot located in Hamburg was intended to become a permanent full-sized store.

In this same month the Topographical Section of 14 Field Survey Coy were engaged in Trig work in the Neumunster area. A brief recce of the British Russian boundary was undertaken and the production of GSGS 4414 (A) was a priority for despatch to depots. 203 sheets were worked on by DAD Survey and a Hamburg civil office. (However, bad roads and poor visibility impeded further field work). Most of the German Army Survey equipment in Neumunster was dispersed to the 4 HVA's (Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung) in the British zone and what remained was then stored at the local Kasteramt (Land Registry). With this reorganisation and dispersal of survey equipment, Victor's work with the Royal Engineers was ending and on 19th Jan 1946, Lt. J R Cox, BAOR provided his testimonial.

"This man has had much experience as an instrument mechanic in RE Survey and has proved a reliable, methodical and painstaking workman, who knows his job thoroughly. He has maintained German, Czech and French instruments in addition to all types of British survey instruments. His work has been consistently good. He is very reliable and honest and a man in whom we have had every confidence."

Signed J.R. Cox Lt, RE BOAR

His Notification of Impending Release dated 22nd Jan 1946, stamped by No 3 Military Embarkation at Shorncliffe, noted his military conduct whilst with No 3 Army Field Survey Depot was "Exemplary" and that he had passed trade tests of Instrument Mechanic, A3, A2 and A1.

Army Form W5258 records that officially his service with the Royal Engineers ended on 18th May 1946. After his return to the UK and at the age of 27, Victor returned to Smith Meters as an instrument maker, and in the 1960's designed a timing meter for appliances. These were installed by TV rental companies to help customers pay for the rental charge and ¼ million were sold by Smith Meters.

Source:

Victor Gridley recollections recorded in 1998

TNA Files WO 166/3732 167/1003 169/391, 169/405, 166/3623, 166/3734, 171/5557, 171/9424

Information on instruments provided by Mike Nolan, Professor Gordon Petrie & Keith Atkinson

Phil Kingdom – photograph of Astro-clinometer. www.flickr.com/photos/philkingdom/8590578374/in/photostream/

Acknowledgements to: Alan Whytock for assistance with 263rd Field Company RE research and to www.baor-locations.org for assistance with 3AFSD in Neumunster.

Noel Grimmitt & Irene Scrivener



A busy two days at Westdown Camp Tilshead Wilts supporting Exercise STEM Cadet, introducing Army Cadets from across the UK to RE Geo and how we form part of the Royal Engineers



22746294 Sapper William T McKain

National Service in the Royal Engineers 1952-1954.

(A few years ago, William (Bill) sent a brief description of life in the desert as a National Serviceman with 42 Survey Engineer Regiment, which was not published. By now probably most of those who would have been involved are probably dead; but just in case Bill has re-sent a slightly amended version plus photos, which he feels might be of interest to older members, and some younger; which we are very pleased to publish)

After graduating from Aberdeen University with a BSc in Civil Engineering Bill was called up for National Service (NS) in the Royal Engineers in December 1952. He did a 4 months course in Field Engineering at Guillemont Barracks Cove, followed by a 4 months course as a Trigonometrical Surveyor at SMS Hermitage,

Along with most of his classmates most of whom worked for the Ordnance Survey, he was sent out to Egypt on the troopship *MoWT Empire Ken* and was based at Fayid Egypt with 42 Survey Engineer Regiment.



Empire Ken - Empire Ken was a 9,523 GRT passenger ship which was built by Blohm & Voss, Hamburg; and launched in 1928 as *Ubena* for Deutsche Ost-Afrika Linie was requisitioned in 1939 by the Kriegsmarine; and used as depot ship for the 3rd, 5th and 21st U-Boat Flotillas. It was converted in 1945 to a hospital ship and participated in the evacuation of Germans from the Baltic States. It was seized in May 1945 at Gravemound and transferred to Ministry of War Transport (MoWT) and renamed *Empire Ken*. Conversion to a troop ship was completed in December 1945. It was in collision with HMT *Empire Medway* in Valletta Harbour, Malta in 1951. It was subsequently involved in the Suez Canal landings in 1956. In September 1957 scrapping commenced at Dalmuir, Dunbartonshire. Hulk arrived on 16 December 1957 at Troon, Ayrshire for final demolition.

After some training about a dozen Engineers (a mix of regulars and NS) along with drivers and a cook (known as 3 Troop) went by ship to Aqaba and then overland to the RAF Airbase in Amman. In Amman they had to pack away their uniforms and only wore civvies for the task in Jordan and Iraq.

The troop went from Amman to H4 Oil Station, which was to be their main base for water, food etc., a few hundred miles east from Amman on the Mosul to Haifa Oil Pipeline although the oil stopped at the border with Israel. Their task was to carry out a Geodetic Triangulation in Jordan and Iraq starting off at the edge of the Black Desert, in the area between Syria and Saudi Arabia, although there were no boundary markings. The troop commanding officer was Major Buckley RE.



Unloading the trucks from the LST Humphrey Gale at Aqaba - Bill is with his back to the camera, hands on hips



Just outside Aqaba on the way to Amman

The conditions were very rough, and food was minimal with often two of them on a hill sleeping on the ground and living on 'haversack rations' for several days. If they did not eat it all the first day, the ants got it, so they lived on tea and 'dog biscuits' for the rest of the stint on the hill, before moving to the next hill. After three guys ended up in hospital, they were then given Compo Packs, which were much better.

The troop spent most of 1954 in the desert. Bill did manage about three weeks in a RAF base at Lake Habbaniya near Baghdad, where there was a small detachment of Engineers sorting out aerial photos. He had to go for an operation.



Bill with the troop interpreter and an Arab Legion Patrol



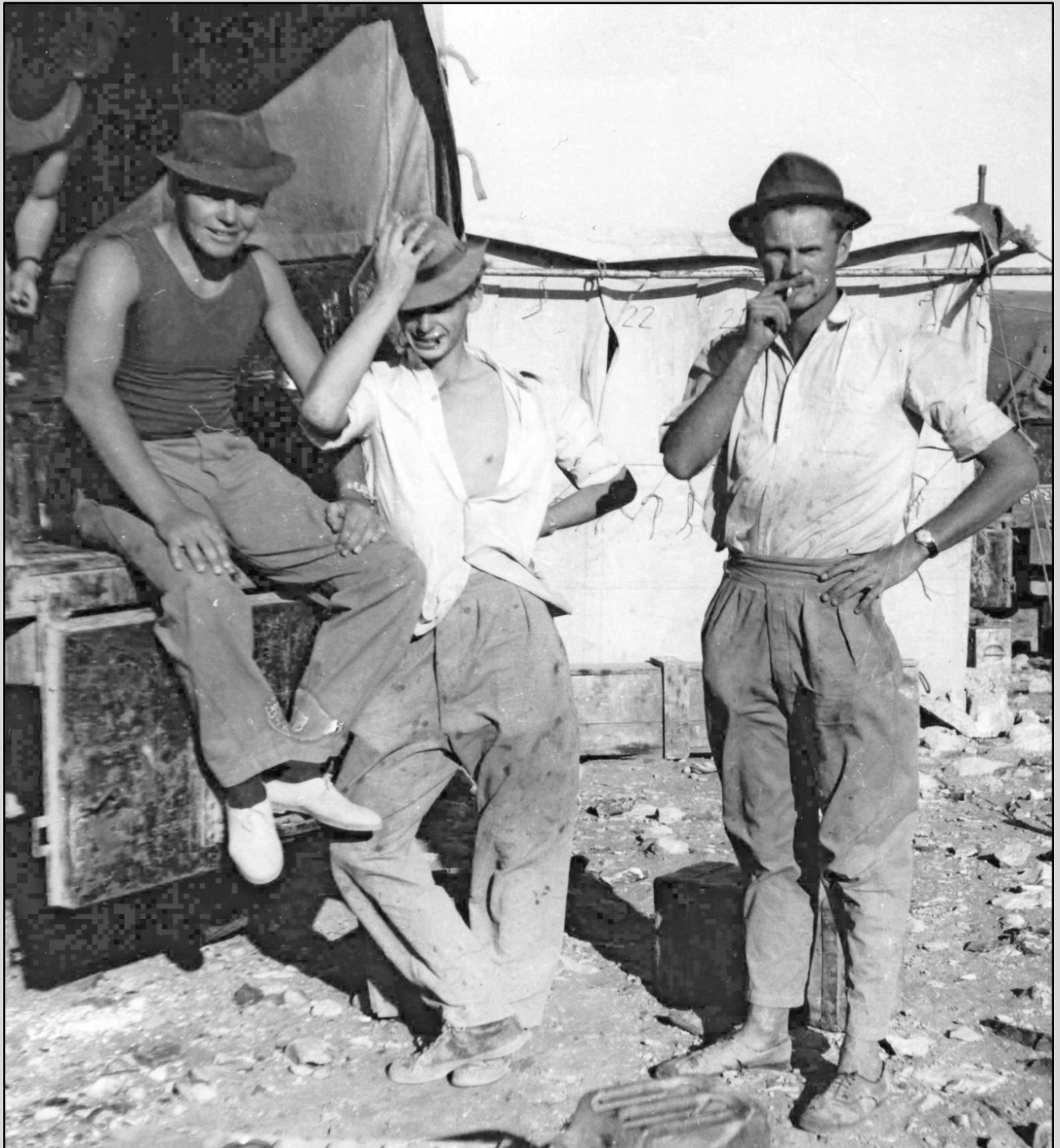
RAF Habbaniya



The troop would supplement its diet with Gazelle steaks. When they saw a herd of gazelle, they would chase them across the desert until some fell with exhaustion.



A base camp in the desert



Some of the Troop on Gebel Aneiza, which marked the boundary between Jordan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia

Life in the desert - "we lived on tea and 'dog' biscuits". To make our tea we had to use a 'Benghazi burner'. When two of us went on a hill for a few days, we were given an oil drum with holes in it; a jerry can with petrol and a jerry can with water. You filled the oil drum with sand; poured in petrol and very carefully dropped in a match and jumped back to avoid the explosion. After the flames died down you held your billycan over the flames and boiled your water.

After Sapper Dave Beck got TB in both lungs and malnutrition, we were given 10-man compo packs and primus stoves.

While a limited number of weapons were kept in a locked box under the 1-ton Austin trucks we never carried weapons. If there were two of us on a hill and we had weapons, the likely hood is that we would have been killed by wandering Bedouins in order to get our weapons. I never had a rifle in my hands after we left Egypt.



Sapper Ron Dunce preparing our accommodation for the night

For 50 years Bill kept in touch with Sapper John Duncan from Glasgow, although he was a draughtsman based in Egypt; but now deceased.

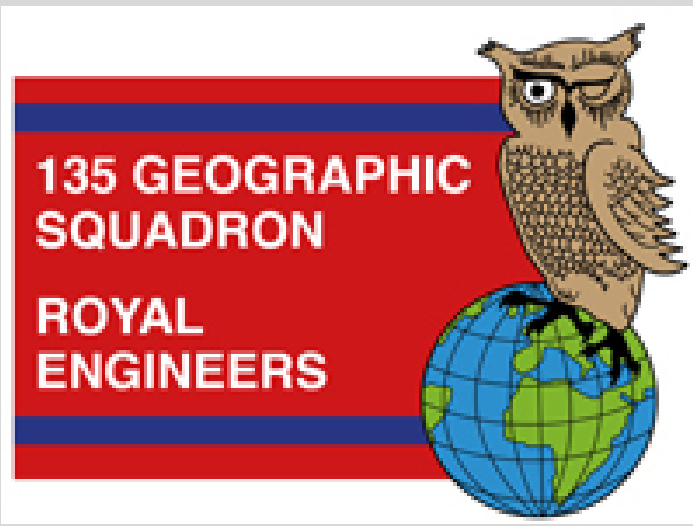
Bill wonders how many of the Troop, are still alive? He is 87 years old and lives in Thailand but returns home every year for a few weeks.

Some of the names Bill remembers are - Major Buckley, Captain Ireland, Sgt Edwards, Cpl Peddie and Sappers - Dunn, Dunce, Belfield, Combs, Pearmain and Beck.

Bill McKain



The shoulder badge worn in Egypt



135 at the UK Mapping Festival - September 2018

The Reserve Sub-Unit of 42 Engineer Regiment (Geographic) that provides geographic support to all elements of UK defence, and delivers geographic information analysis, distribution and geodetic survey capabilities.



WO2 Ollie Teasdale and a team from 13 Sqn, 42 Engineer Regiment (Geo) were deployed in November 2018 on Exercise *Trig Med*, a biennial survey task, to re-establish the Turkish - Greek border on the island of Cyprus.



Notification of Deaths

Brigadier Hugh Woodrow OBE

Hugh Woodrow died peacefully at 10.30 pm on the 16th November in Winchester Hospital. He had long suffered from the effects of Parkinson's disease and had recently changed care homes with a move from Southampton to Winchester. Hugh's funeral was held at the Wessex Vale Crematorium West End, Southampton on Wednesday 28th November.

Hugh was awarded an OBE in the Queens New Year's Honours list 1998, for services to Consulting Engineering as CEO and Secretary of the Association of Consulting Engineers.



Leonard 'Dick' Barton REME

Jon Barton (son) has advised us that his father 'Dick' died peacefully aged 91 on the 15th Sept 2018. His funeral was held in Middleton Tyas, North Yorkshire on the 2nd October.

Many will remember Dick from his time at Hermitage (1964-72) where he served as a REME S/Sgt technician in support of the school trade training activities.

Jon says that his son has inherited Dick's tools and uses them daily – 'so that's fine as the REME DNA lives on'.



Elizabeth Ellen "Betty" Payne

Bev Adcock (daughter) has advised us that her mother and widow of the late 'Satch' Payne RE, died recently following a serious illness.

Betty's funeral was held at The Chapel, Basingstoke Crematorium on Monday 19th November and many family and friends were in attendance.

Betty and Bev were regular attendees of the Branch Reunions and her support at future events will be greatly missed.



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1830hrs FOR 1900hrs FRIDAY THE 13th OF APRIL 2019

PRECEDED BY AN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1700hrs FRIDAY THE 13th OF APRIL 2018

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

Accommodation: A small number of rooms may be available but do note that as the barracks are no longer under the command of RSMS that this may be too difficult. Hotel facilities are available at junction 13 of the M4 motorway and at Chieveley too; we will provide transport free **back** to these locations late evening.

Dress: Smart casual or better if you wish!

WARNING: - Hermitage has become a high security Barracks.

ENTRY WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED to those who have returned this entry form with their details.
IDENTITY CHECKS WILL BE REQUIRED TO GAIN ACCESS TO THE CAMP.

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

SO PLEASE SEND RETURNS BEFORE THE 1st APRIL 2019 TO:

M. Perry, 101 Craven Road, Newbury, Berks, RG14 5NL

Problems? [Then contact me on] mandpdperry@sky.com or Tel; 01635 37510

From: Forename:..... Surname:..... **I am a member – YES//NO**
Non-members £10 pp. cheque please

Address: - Tel No: -
E-mail: -

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

I *shall/*shall not be attending the Reunion on Friday 13 APRIL 2019.

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

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

DO PLEASE REMEMBER THE GEO SOLDIERS SUPPORT FUND

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

If you have any special dietary needs or require disabled access, please detail these below and every attempt will be made to accommodate them. Please note - Military units do not cater for severely disabled conditions (for obvious reasons) and we apologies in advance for any shortcomings that might cause individual inconvenience.