



# The Military Survey (Geo) Branch

COVID – 19 Special Edition May 2020



## ARMY READY TO SERVE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Army's priority remains to protect the UK public in these unprecedented times. We are working hard to ensure we continue to be ready, resilient and responsive to all the challenges the coronavirus may bring. As the Army family, we are well disposed to support the nation in its time of need.

Whilst the pandemic is ongoing, we will keep you as up to date as possible across our channels on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram.

We will keep you informed on four key areas:

- How we are following the NHS Guidance for staying healthy, including hand washing, keeping fit and cooking at home
- How we're helping on the ground and in your communities to support our partners, including our amazing emergency services, as they work to keep everyone safe and healthy

- Keeping you posted on our events, where things are changing, being postponed or cancelled, this will include recruitment and training updates
- Dispelling rumours. Don't believe everything you read elsewhere, if you want to check what the Army is doing for COVID-19 check here and our social media channels on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram

## **FOLLOWING NHS AND GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE**

It's key that our staff are fit, healthy and ready to serve at any time, so we're all following the NHS guidance closely. We even made our own hand washing video for the troops although there are a lot more amusing ones out there.

All bases have received the guidance issued by Public Health England and the precautions taken at our establishments are the same as those for the public. As you can imagine, we have well-rehearsed plans in place for dealing with a whole range of health matters, so we are using these to inform our approach on a daily basis.

Any serving personnel who are infected with the COVID-19, or who have come into contact, directly or otherwise, with those who are, will follow the advice and guidance issued by Public Health England. To reduce the risk to the public, anyone that needs isolating will be kept in quarantine for the recommended 14-day quarantine period, with around-the-clock support from medical staff. This means there is absolutely no risk to the wider public from any of our staff that may get infected.

## **ARMY FAMILIES**

Support and advice are available through the Army Families Federation. To find out more please visit: <https://aff.org.uk/advice/family-life/covid-19/>

## **KEY WORKERS**

If a member of your family is a key worker and you need to find out where you stand on child care, please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>



*Our soldiers have been drafted in, short-term, to assist in the distribution of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) to NHS hospitals across the UK.*

## **HOW IS THE BRITISH ARMY HELPING?**

In addition to our troops that are always on standby, ready to serve, we are also providing specialists to local resilience groups who are providing planning advice and support to public services, local authorities and emergency services in

preparing their response to this pandemic. There are well-rehearsed plans in place for the military to provide support to civil authorities in times of need, our work includes:

### NHS Oxygen tanker drivers

We will be providing 75 drivers and 45 drivers' mates as part of Defence's support to the NHS Oxygen (O2) Supply Chain. They will be driving O2 tankers from production facilities to NHS facilities and will include loading and offloading. Sixteen soldiers have already begun their week-long training with NHS commercial-training delivery partners.



*Alongside delivering Personal Protective Equipment in London Soldiers have begun oxygen tanker training in Port Talbot to assist the NHS, if required. (Army FB Group 25/03/2020)*

## **Aviation support**

Forces from the Joint Helicopter Command are on stand-by to provide aviation capability in support to civil authorities. This will enable access to isolated communities that may not be able to obtain access to urgent medical care during the COVID-19 crisis.

The Support Helicopter Force, Army Air Corps and Commando Helicopter Force will provide helicopters and personnel from across the 3 Services, a Joint effort to respond to the COVID-19 effort as required. The Joint Helicopter Command remains at readiness to support broader disaster relief efforts and continues to conduct routine training to maintain proficiency of crews.

The Joint Helicopter Support Squadron and Tactical Supply Wing are key enablers and force multipliers within the JHC, comprising of both Army and RAF personnel. They will enable the provision of safe, cleared and suitable Helicopter Landing Sites, as well as remote aircraft re-fueling capabilities, in support of the COVID-19 crisis.

## **RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING**

The British Army is still recruiting. The process will continue ‘virtually’ during the period time we have paused face-to-face recruiting activity as a precaution. Further information or a list of FAQs on recruiting can be found at <https://apply.army.mod.uk/covid19>

The Army Training Regiments in Pirbright and Winchester; the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick, and the Army Foundation College in Harrogate have all announced a pause in training until May.

Everything will start again as soon as conditions allow. Any recruits in training will retain their place in training. Those who are due to start training will be given a new start date as soon as possible. All other candidates will be kept informed as the situation develops.

## **Amendments to British Army Events and Training**

### **Overseas exercises**

In line with direction from the Foreign Office, we have reduced all our international travel to the absolute minimum required to sustain major operations. All other international travel has been, or likely will be stopped in the near future. A number of overseas training exercises have been postponed, including:

SWIFT RESPONSE  
DEFENDER 20 CPX  
DYNAMIC FRONT  
JOINT WARRIOR  
PRAIRIE STORM

Overseas operations

Iraq

- There has been a reduced requirement for training from the Iraqi Security Forces and a subsequent pause in the Coalition and NATO training missions in Iraq. The MOD has therefore decided to redeploy some of its personnel back to the UK
- The training mission, which the UK has conducted alongside Global Coalition partners since 2014, has been paused for 60 days as a precaution due to the global pandemic
- The UK will retain key military personnel throughout the country to ensure the Iraqi Government, Global Coalition and UK national interests are appropriately supported
- The troops returning home will remain at readiness for a range of potential deployments across the world, while having the opportunity to support loved ones facing the challenges of the virus

Fake News

It's important to use trusted sources for your information. We provide regular updates on all of our channels about what our troops are up to in the UK and across the World. If you want to know what is going on, please keep checking back with us, and if you've seen or heard something online that doesn't make sense, let us know and we'll make sure the right information gets out there.

Like anyone else we travel around a lot. The difference is that we have very distinctive vehicles and uniforms and we often travel in groups, so we do tend to stick out more than anyone else, but it shouldn't be cause for concern. Here are some things we are not doing despite what you might have heard:

The Army has not been deployed to guard supermarkets in Northern Ireland

The Army has not been deployed to the streets of London

The Army is not patrolling UK streets in the event of a lockdown

The Army is not being deployed to Scottish beaches

The Army is not setting up in remote Welsh campsites

The Army is not making a giant lasagne in Wembley Stadium

(Source - <https://www.army.mod.uk/news-and-events/covid-19/> dated 25/03/2020)

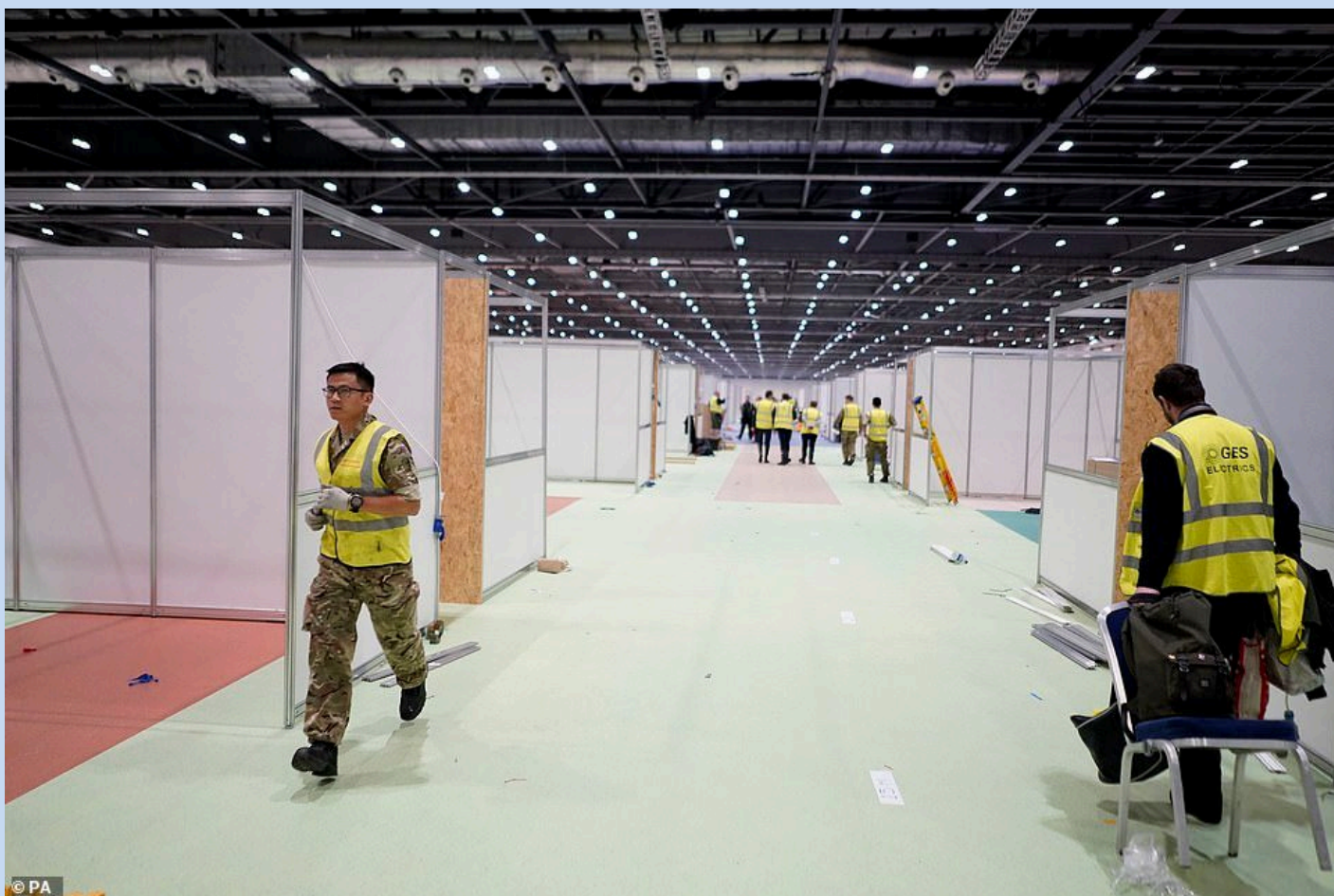


Queen's Gurkha Engineers have been hard at work helping to construct Britain's largest ever peacetime hospital in London's Docklands... the 4,000 bed NHS Nightingale...Excel Centre.



© PA





## GURKHA ENGINEERS TODAY

Gurkhas first became Sappers in October 1948 when 67 Field Squadron Royal Engineers was formed at Kluang, Malaya. The Squadron formed from Gurkha infantrymen who attached to the Royal Engineers. 68 Field Squadron Royal Engineers was raised at Kluang in April 1950.

Later in the same year both Squadrons moved to Hong Kong. The Regimental Headquarters of 50 Field Engineer Regiment Royal Engineers was formed in Hong Kong in June 1951. The Regiment moved to Malaya as the 17th Gurkha Divisional Engineers to support operations then in progress during the Malayan Emergency.

The Regiment was based at Sungei Besi near Kuala Lumpur from 1955 – 1961. The Regiment became part of the Brigade of Gurkhas in September 1955, and by Royal Warrant, on 28 September 1955, its designation was changed to “The Gurkha Engineers” and its own cap badge and insignia were adopted.

Today the two squadrons (69 and 70 Gurkha Field Squadrons) are part of 36 Engineer Regiment and play a key part in operations and tasks around the world.

*(Source: FB Group – British and Commonwealth Forces – Once a Sapper always a Sapper. 28/03/2020)*

## Ron Birch – A Child of War



In September 1939 at the tender age of four I had the dubious distinction of being evacuated even before war was declared.

In the last days of August with war seemingly inevitable Coventry Corporation, under Government instructions, initiated evacuation procedures for the children of Coventry. It was presumed (correctly as it turned out) that Coventry, being the centre of the nation's engineering industry, would be a prime target for enemy bombardment in order to eliminate the manufacture of arms and ammunition.

So early on that Sunday morning of 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939 I found myself, complete with name tag, gas mask and sandwiches at the Pool Meadow bus station where hundreds of other children were assembled around a variety of coaches.

I could not understand why many children were refusing to get onto the coaches as they kicked and screamed, clinging to their parents and begging them not to let them go; and why was my Mother so upset as she waved me goodbye?

After all it wasn't every day one gets a free day trip to a mysterious destination. It wasn't long before the mystery trip turned out to be 'Destination Leamington Spa' and not just for a day!

Being evacuated for most children was a terrifying experience not knowing how long, if ever, they would be able to return home.

I recall being totally confused as I was introduced to a strange lady and separated from my brother and sister. I just didn't know what was going on, particularly when I was taken into a strange house whilst my brother and sister were taken elsewhere.

Just as confusing was being told to keep quiet as my newly found foster parents listened to some man on the wireless talking of this 'Country being at War'.

Evacuation was very traumatic. We were not treated cruelly but made aware that we were different and not really a member of the family. A Mother's love was in short supply.

Some two days later I was re-allocated to another home to join my brother and sister, Number 21 Cross Street sticks in my mind.

As a four year old infant, placed in a strange environment with a new Mum and Dad wasn't exactly conducive to perfect behaviour, home sickness not considered to be a mitigating factor. Thus in late October my parents were requested to take me back to Coventry.

My return coincided as the serious blitzkrieg was starting, so instead of returning to my little bedroom I was given a small place in an Anderson Shelter at the bottom of the garden. Although I was now at school age, education in Coventry was virtually at a standstill as daylight bombing became a daily occurrence to accompany the ever increasing ferocity of the nightly attacks.

Our Anderson Shelter proved its worth as on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November debris, which had once been our lovely home, clattered in and all around the shelter. Came the dawn and we had become just another homeless statistic in the Cathedral City of Coventry.

The City's relief arrangements were soon put to the test as out of the blue a lorry appeared as out of nowhere to resettle and evacuate our entire family, now devoid of clothes, cash, property and furniture to a safer place. Our destination turned out to be some eighteen miles away to a village of which had never heard---Barwell.

At the tender age of just five I had now been evacuated twice!!

The empty house allocated to my family on arriving in Barwell turned out to be a two bedroom Bicycle Shop in the village centre previously owned by a Mullins family. Over-crowding was a problem, our family of eight somehow squeezing into the two small bedrooms. However, compared to an Anderson Shelter and the fear of continual bombing this was Shangri-La.



One regular problem encountered due to the recent closure of the bicycle shop, potential customers needing to purchase bicycle spares often opened the door, walking in to find us either having a meal or being in a state of undress.

Less than a fortnight later we were even more grateful for the help and safety afforded us by the people of Barwell as we were awoken during the night to witness the southern sky turn red as the civilian population of Coventry suffered such devastation that no civilised person could ever imagine---the date and never to be forgotten was the 14<sup>th</sup> November 1940.

That night saw the heaviest single most concentrated attack on a British City throughout the entire war. 30,000 incendiaries and 1,600 high explosives reigned down in a non-stop stream of absolute terror during thirteen continual hours. Official figures revealed that 568 citizens had been killed and a further 1215 injured with 4300 houses demolished.

Bombing continued throughout the war, the final raid on Coventry being on 30 August 1942 during which 1250 had been killed, 80% of those being during the 14<sup>th</sup> November blitz.

Settling into the Barwell community meant meeting new friends and neighbours but also meeting Coventry exiles in a similar position to us.

Education followed the usual Barwell pattern, Townsend Road Infants School (Miss Bennet) followed by the C of E Junior School where Mr. Plumber was the Headmaster.

In those days the '11 Plus Exam' was the dividing line into one's future education; those lucky enough to pass going on to either Hinckley or Bosworth Grammar Schools with others moving to Heathfield Secondary Modern School. I was fortunate in passing and graduated to Hinckley Grammar School where Mr Frank Oldham was the Headmaster. This coincided with cessation of hostilities in Europe.

At long last on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May the War in Europe was over, but unfortunately the war in the Far East would still rage for another six months.

Peace at last? --Well not really as the Korean War and Malay Emergency emerged shortly afterwards with further loss of life of local youth.





**Arnold Smith** – a memory jog for him happened when mentioning the military being called upon to help public services in an emergency.

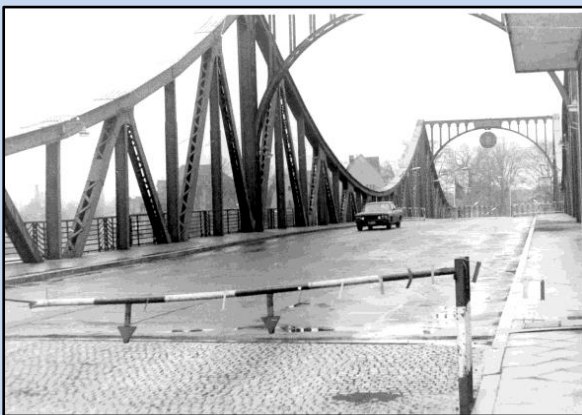
In the 1960's I was the SQMS at 135 Field Survey Squadron RE (V) in Ewell, Surrey. An 'Electricity Power Strike' was forecasted and mobile generators would be called up from the military. 135 had a 'Train' that on Exercises was powered by generators. The call came and I had to deliver a generator to Tooting Hospital .I drove a 5 ton Bedford truck with a 27.5 kva generator trailer (2 tons) to the Hospital where I was shown where the power connection was required. This point was in the centre of the base of a 'U' shaped building. Across the front of the two wings was a large Rose garden. Through 'howls of anguish' from all the staff I drove the Bedford through this garden and off loaded the generator. It was an emergency after all and now they could continue with surgical operations.

Forward to the 1970's I was now the RQMS at SMS and nationally a 'Petrol strike' was forecasted. I had an HGV license and was called upon to attend 2 weeks training at the Ordnance Depot, Thatcham. This training was to upgrade our driving qualifications to that required as Petrol Tanker drivers. Eventually the 'Strike' was called off so I never got to drive a 'big beast'.

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### **A Cold War Incident at Checkpoint Charlie**

The forty year- long Cold War had many incidents that were cliff hangers for a short time – the Cuba Missile Crisis, the shooting down of Gary Powers' U2, the building of the Berlin Wall to name a few but one such incident remains little known – the illegal detention of one of Her Majesty's cartographers at Berlin's infamous Checkpoint Charlie. The intrepid cartographer was Sapper 'Scouse' Bradshaw and now, with the Cold War long over, it is time for the World to know the story.



*A BRIXMIS Opel Admiral car crossing the bridge back into West Berlin from Potsdam*

First, some background for younger readers. Following the Second World War Germany was divided into four zones of occupation. Once the Cold War started only members of the British, US and French Military Missions were allowed into the Soviet Zone and they entered via the Glienicke Bridge from Berlin to Potsdam, famous nowadays as 'The Bridge of Spies'. Berlin city was divided into four occupation sectors but here any soldier in uniform could go into any sector and, until the building of the Wall, did so as a matter of course. After the building of the Wall the only access to the Soviet Sector was via Checkpoint Charlie (Alpha and Bravo being at the start and finish of the road corridor linking West Germany to West Berlin). Visits to the Soviet Sector, known as East Berlin, were strictly controlled by the Allied powers.

So, on to the story. One of the minor tasks for the Survey Staff Sergeant serving with the British Military Mission (BRIXMIS) was to cross into East Berlin every few months and visit the sole shop selling maps and buy up copies of the latest editions for the BAOR Map Library. By 1976, after over two years with the Mission, the novelty of these shopping trips had long worn off and so I had the bright idea that Scouse Bradshaw, the office's carto tech, could don number 2 dress and go through the long rigmarole necessary to get through Checkpoint Charlie. Hence one morning in mid-December, he appeared into work in best number twos, and was briefed on the mapping to look for.



*The Allied Duty Room at Checkpoint Charlie looking into the East to the East German checkpoint*

Fully briefed by the Adjutant on the rules regarding crossing the Checkpoint and moving around East Berlin with a very heavy stress on the fact that the East German police (Vopos) and Border Guards had no authority over him and in the extremely unlikely event of becoming involved with either them he must under no circumstances talk to them other than to demand to see a Soviet officer. Scouse was then handed a wad of East Marks, put under the tender care of Corporal Tony King, a very experienced RAF BRIXMIS tour driver, and set off in a Mission Opel Admiral.

After reporting in to the RMP in the Allied Duty Room at Checkpoint Charlie the car slowly wended its way into the East under the dead-pan stares of the East German Border Troops and through the concrete block chicane designed to stop speeding cars escaping to the west. Once through the complex of buildings and they drove down Friedrichstrasse and turned right onto Unter Den Linden when - the unbelievable happened - the Mission car, one of the most intensely serviced vehicles in the Army, spluttered to a halt. This happened just outside the East Berlin Opera House where our young sapper had been asked to collect some opera tickets for a forthcoming cultural event!

All attempts to restart it failed and so the two sat there for a while and discussed strategy. The SOP in this situation was either - wait in the car for 5 hours as search vehicles were always sent to look for late returnees or hope to flag down a passing allied vehicle. However, as luck would have it, they appeared to be the only representatives of the western allies in East Berlin that day. Eventually it was decided that Sapper Bradshaw would hotfoot it back to the west through Checkpoint Charlie, after all he was looking very smart in his British Army Number 2 dress, so there should not be a problem, should there? Once through the East German complex he would report to the Checkpoint Charlie RMP and contact BRIXMIS MT for recovery.

The last bit of the plan was that if he got into any difficulty he could just walk back to the car and wait for the search team to come and find them. Sapper Bradshaw left the safety of the vehicle, pulled down the front of his tunic and adjusted his beret. As he turned to go, Corporal King reminded him to have nothing to do with the East German police or border guards - just walk straight through to the West.

With some trepidation and excitement, the young Sapper stepped forward and headed back up Unter Den Linden and then turned down towards the East German side of the infamous checkpoint.

Scouse takes up the story - "I remember the glances and stares that I received on my walk from the East German people, their inquisitive looks as a smart, lone British soldier walking on his own in the East was not an everyday occurrence! As I approached Checkpoint Charlie, I thought of all the times I had seen this location on television and in the movies; it was the root of many spy novels. Indeed, I thought of the number of lives lost to those unfortunate persons making an escape bid to the west at this very point.



*The East German side of Checkpoint Charlie*

My thoughts were sharply interrupted as a Vopo stepped out of the shadows and with his hand on his breast pocket demanded "*Ausweis Bitte*".

I remembered everything that I had been told by the Adjutant, Staff Sergeant Gordon and a few minutes earlier by Corporal Tony King... I am in uniform I will show him nothing. I replied "*Auto Kaput*" then walked past him and further into the checkpoint. As I did this the Vopo shouted in German to his colleagues. Two guards advanced and blocked my passage to the west. The first guard was now behind me too. I could see a soldier in the tower resting a telephoto lens on his colleagues' shoulder and was snapping away furiously. A lot was going on around me. One of the guards gesticulated to turn around and follow the man in front

At this point I was thinking it would be wiser to go back into the East and await recovery with Tony. I turned around and followed the man that was now in front of me. He marched about 10-15 metres and then turned right towards the main buildings of the East German checkpoint. To this day I remember the dull off-color yellow of the corrugated sheeting that hid the building from those legally passing through the border.

This was my chance, as the guard I was following turned right; I marched straight on back into the East. Unfortunately, the two guards behind me ran up and put their hands on my shoulders and turned me towards the building.

On entering the inner sanctum of their checkpoint, a large room with a well-worn reception type desk in the far-right hand corner which was busy with people giving documents to the military for their perusal. To the left was a series of rooms. I was ushered into one of these.

Once in the room I was left alone, the key turned in the lock. Over the next couple of hours, I was either left alone or with one or both of my guards. They both spoke English, one was nice, the other was not. My request for a Soviet Officer was a long time coming.

Eventually after nearly two hours a guard came in and said I could go. I came out and turned left and walked towards the west. I was being escorted out. Again, the man in the tower was taking photos; I placed my escorts head between his lens and my face in a futile attempt to stop him. Then suddenly there was a flash of light on my left, they now had a profile picture too.

As I left Checkpoint Charlie, I walked up to the RMP Post to report the breakdown and arrange recovery. When the RMP realised that the breakdown happened several hours ago, he asked what I had been doing since. When I told him his attitude changed completely? "This is a possible International Incident" he gasped, and the paperwork started flying. He contacted HQ Berlin Brigade and the 'Incident in the East' plan was immediately put into action. This included contacting the Military Mission, BRIXMIS, any number of Intelligence branches and the Soviet authorities in East Berlin. He also asked if I would go with the recovery vehicle and trailer to collect poor old Tony and the Opel.

The rest of the day was taken up with debriefings by various interested branches and finally I returned to the Mission offices where I was congratulated by Brigadier Elderkin, the Chief of Mission, on maintaining under very frightening circumstances the rigorous stance of not recognising East German authority over Occupying Forces."

3 PD 131700 A PD A BRITISH SOLDIER CMM WHO HAD ENTERED THE SOVIET SECTOR IN A MIL VEHICLE VIA CHECKPOINT CHARLIE WAS DETAINED BY EG CHECKPOINT SECURITY GUARDS WHEN HE ATTEMPTED TO LEAVE THE SOVIET SECTOR ON FOOT PD THE VEHICLE CMM IN WHICH HE WAS TRAVELLING CMM HAD BROKEN DOWN IN THE SOVIET SECTOR AND HE DECIDED TO "WALK OUT" IN ORDER TO ARRANGE RECOVERY OF THE VEHICLE PD THE DRIVER REMAINED WITH THE VEHICLE PD THE SOLDIER WAS DETAINED FOR ONE HOUR FIFTEEN MINUTES BEFORE HE WAS ALLOWED TO PROCEED PD INVESTIGATIONS CONTINUE P

*An extract from the daily 'Live Oak' Berlin Intelligence Summary detailing the incident*

After the Mission car was recovered it was found that it had recently been on an extended tour in East Germany and had to resort to using the low octane fuel available there and had not yet been thoroughly cleansed.

And the footnote to the story is that the East German guards at Checkpoint Charlie were always strict and authoritarian but unluckily for Sapper Bradshaw, it turned out that only a few days before his visit a young East German man had walked through the Checkpoint wearing a US Army uniform and, in accordance with the rules, the Vopos had ignored him. However, once over the border the escapee turned and loudly taunted the Vopos who were almost certainly severely punished....and then several days later an unsuspecting young soldier from Liverpool innocently walked into the Checkpoint – it was on the cards that he was going to be in for a bad day! However, he has dined out on the story ever since and not once did he show his Military ID Card to the Vopos or guards... Result. Over the forty-four years that BRIXMIS existed, dozens of Mission members were detained in East Germany but only once was a Mission member detained at Checkpoint Charlie – Scouse Bradshaw turned out to be unique!



Alan Gordon



Richard 'Scouse' Bradshaw

## QUEEN'S COMMENDATION FOR BRAVERY

24872055 P. P. McCARTEN R.E.



On Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June 1998, Corporal Phil (Paddy) McCarten and Corporal Mark Kieras, members of 19 Specialist Team Royal Engineers, were deployed to Guinea Bissau to accurately position navigation aids around the Bissau airfield as part of an international campaign to improve flight safety. On Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June 1998 sporadic firing, explosions and artillery fire marked the start of a military uprising in the barracks adjacent to their hotel and throughout Bissau. Hostilities continued throughout the next four days.

During this period Cpl McCarten displayed a cool-headed courage well beyond that expected of a junior non-commissioned officer and played a vital role in bolstering the morale of the 50 other civilian hotel guests. He was one of two qualified first aiders who offered assistance to wounded and injured personnel.

He treated rebel soldiers for bullet wounds and other injuries which fostered trust and respect with the rebels to such an extent that, on entering the hotel, they left their weapons at the reception.



On Thursday 11th June, the guests from the hotel were evacuated to the docks and onto a Senegalese Navy ship. Cpl McCarten remained at the hotel until the last of the guests were ferried to the quayside and then followed carrying two medical bags. On arrival at the quayside, he discovered absolute chaos as 3000 expatriates attempted to flee the country, whilst the rebels shelled the harbour area.

Once again Cpl McCarten helped keep British and American evacuees together and maintained calm until they boarded the ship. Once on the ship, Cpl McCarten provided medical assistance to the 550 evacuees. Of these at least half were seasick, two had bullet wounds and two were new-born babies.

Cpl McCarten helped maintain order in a chaotic situation, administered first aid to the wounded, maintained the morale of the many trapped civilians in the hotel, whilst ignoring threats to his personal safety. His actions resulted in personal thanks from the Director of USAID and a letter of commendation from the British Ambassador in Senegal. His exemplary behavior under fire brought great credit to Britain and the British Army.



THE QUEEN'S COMMENDATION FOR BRAVERY

By The Queen's Order the name of

*Corporal Phillip Paterson McCarten,  
Corps of Royal Engineers*

was published in the London Gazette on

*Friday, 6th November, 1998*

as Commended for Bravery.

I am charged to record Her Majesty's high appreciation.

*Secretary of State for Defence*

## Good Day from North East Victoria

I was posted to the School of Military Survey in 1983, and retired from there in 1991. I had been promoted to WO1 in 1979 at Army Survey Regiment and was working in Technical Services, a little group comprising an American Exchange officer, and myself and others from the various squadrons as various projects required. At the School, I was the Technical WO1 involved in a myriad of activities as systems evolved. When I retired, I was headhunted by Albury City Council and helped to bring property surveys onto the Australian Map Grid in order to produce a digital map of the Council area. This led on to producing various digital databases and maps for the City Engineers such as road classifications and conditions. After a few years, I went to work in the IT Section and took a role as a computer nerd managing Oracle Databases and occasional management. I retired, whilst still on the ball when I reached 67, 12 years ago.

Mavis and I bought a house in Bethanga in 1989 in Bethanga which is about 30 km east of Albury NSW and Wodonga VIC. As we both worked in Albury, we still shop there. To get to Wodonga, slightly further than Albury, still involves crossing the State boundary into NSW over the Bethanga Bridge which is about 800m long over Lake Hume, and then crossing back into VIC again. These days there are no border controls, but since Covid-19, there have been suggestions that the border could be closed, which would be a bit of an issue for us; and extra 100 km to get to Wodonga.



*The Bethanga Bridge looking east towards Victoria from the NSW side of the Murray Arm of Lake Hume.*

Bethanga is a small township in hilly country which is surrounded by Lake Hume on three sides. The lake is currently at 12% capacity. My sundial in the garden is located at Latitude -36 07 38 Longitude 147 05 42. Bethanga was once a gold and zinc mining town of about 9000 people with 30 pubs, now reduced to one! But all pubs have now been closed. The General Store has closed; the virus gave the 84 year old owner an excuse to finally put up his feet. We still have a Post Office (one person at a time only), a police station (currently unmanned) and two churches both used about once a month or so.



*Bethanga Township from the South East. Road to Albury/Wodonga is over the Kurrajong Gap in the centre of the photograph.  
14 April 2020. The landscape is green again*

The town is essentially a dormitory for Albury and Wodonga, with some farming; beef cattle and some sheep. I am a volunteer member of the Country Fire Authority Bethanga Rural Fire Brigade, just retired from active firefighting. I held posts of Secretary, Treasurer and President. What with the spring drought, summer fires and now the autumn pestilence, it's been a tough six months Down Under.

Life is very quiet here, Social Isolation is the thing; leaving home is restricted to essential food shopping, petrol, medical and exercise. We walk the dog daily. We spend our time gardening and on house maintenance. Since we had 154 mm of rain in March, everything is green again and the grass grows at least 25 mm per day. Mowing is now a never ending occupation! I am the Ringing Master at St Matthew's Church in Albury but all churches are closed, so no bell ringing. Our band of ringers is largely elderly, and we made the decision to postpone ringing before the bans were imposed by governments. Ringing is good team exercise, some physical, but also mental and it exercises hand, eye and ear coordination. We all have withdrawal symptoms! I've been ringing bells since 1957 and was elected to the Ancient Society of College Youths in London in 1962 I attended the 375<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner in London in 2012 to mark my 50 years membership. The ASCY is England's oldest ringing society founded in 1637.

Here because of the state border, we have two sets of rules to obey because of the pestilence. NSW and VIC rules do vary in their interpretation by the police, so we must be careful, for fines are extraordinarily high. My son James went to the doctor in Albury last week and then called into Bunnings, a large hardware store, en route to drop off some lamb for us that had been slaughtered on his property. He was stopped by a patrol car and told to desist and move on!

We moan about living in an authoritarian state, but thankfully, our casualties are nothing compared to UK. Most of the infections have resulted from passengers on cruise ships (great incubators). Almost all international passenger air travel has ceased. Domestic air is minimal. Bethanga lies directly below the Melbourne to Sydney air corridor, the normally busiest in Australia. The sky is eerily quiet. I looked at my Flight Tracker App the other morning and found four aircraft over the whole of SE Australia, and one of them was a flight carrying infected passengers of an Antarctic cruise ship docked in Montevideo approaching Melbourne.





*Fire Emergency warning 9<sup>th</sup> January 2020. The Binocular symbol shows the position of Bethanga.  
There was very thick smoke for so many days*

There are very few casualties in this part of the country, and none here in sunny Bethanga. We have lots of people working from home. Thank God for the Internet. Regards to all my old comrades. Stay safe and well



Jim Jefferies

S/Sgt RE. Retired 1971 to Join RA Svy

## The Home Guard



*Mr Churchill inspects the 58<sup>th</sup> London Battalion (Civil Service) Home Guard © IWM A 11597*

*(In line with advice from Public Health England, our museums are temporarily closed for people's well-being and safety. Over the coming weeks we will continue to send you handpicked stories that resonate in remarkable times for your enjoyment at home. Your support - as ever - is appreciated)*

**“Should the invader come to Britain, there will be no placid lying down of the people in submission before him”**

The Home Guard was set up in May 1940 as Britain's 'last line of defence' against German invasion. Members of this 'Dad's Army' were usually men above or below the age of conscription and those unfit or ineligible for front line military service.

On 14 May 1940, Secretary of State for War Anthony Eden made a broadcast calling for men between the ages of 17 and 65 to enroll in a new force, the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV). By July, nearly 1.5 million men had enrolled, and the name of this people's army was changed to the more inspiring Home Guard.

The Home Guard was at first a rag-tag militia, with scarce and often make-do uniforms and weaponry. Yet it evolved into a well-equipped and well-trained army of 1.7 million men. Men of the Home Guard were not only readied for invasion, but also performed other roles including bomb disposal and manning anti-aircraft and coastal artillery. Over the course of the war 1,206 men of the Home Guard were killed on duty or died of wounds.

The criterion for joining the LDV was fairly broad. You had to be a man aged between 17 and 65, you had to have fired a rifle and you had to be 'capable of free movement'. Yet even then, none of these qualifications were seriously tested.

At first, uniforms and weapons were in short supply. There were only enough rifles for about a third of volunteers. The rest had to use shotguns, sporting rifles or 'weapons' such as golf clubs.



*The Local Defence Volunteers in this photograph are veterans of the First World War. The LDV was open to men aged between 17 and 65 who had fired a rifle and were 'capable of free movement'. None of these qualifications were seriously tested. At first, uniforms and weapons were in short supply. There were only enough rifles for about a third of volunteers. The rest had to use shotguns, sporting rifles or 'weapons' such as golf clubs. © IWM H 2005*

Volunteers were also taught simple German phrases, as the threat of a German invasion of Britain was felt to be a very real possibility in 1940.

By July, nearly 1.5 million men had enrolled, and the name of this people's army was changed to the more inspiring 'Home Guard'.

Members of the Home Guard still did their regular jobs and then drilled and patrolled around their work. They were not paid.

However, the Home Guard developed into a well-trained and well-equipped fighting force.

The average age of members of the Home Guard decreased as 'old sweats' were retired, and young men of 17 and 18 were incorporated into the Home Guard prior to reaching military age and being called up for military service.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill was a vocal supporter of the Home Guard and it was at his insistence that its name was changed in July 1940.

In a BBC broadcast on 14 July 1940, Churchill said of the Home Guard: 'These officers and men, a large proportion of whom have been through the last war, have the strongest desire to attack and come to close quarters with the enemy wherever he may appear.'

Should the invader come to Britain, there will be no placid lying down of the people in submission before him, as we have seen, alas, in other countries. We shall defend every village, every town, and every city'.



Local Defence Volunteers are taught simple German phrases, showing how the threat of a German invasion of Britain was felt to be a very real one in 1940. © IWM (HU 50154)



Men of the 5th Battalion (Doncaster) Home Guard round up an 'enemy' parachutist during training, 14 October 1940  
© IWM H 4755



*Home Guards in the Edinburgh area had organised a motorboat patrol for use on the canals and waterways of the district to protect local factories and buildings. In this photograph, Home Guards patrol a section of an Edinburgh canal in a motorboat armed with rifles and a mounted Lewis gun on 19 October 1940. © IWM H 4938*

Eventually 1.7 million men became part of the Home Guard. They were not only readied for invasion, but also performed other roles including bomb disposal and manning anti-aircraft and coastal artillery.

It was only as the Allied armies advanced towards Germany and the threat of invasion or raids over, that the Home Guard was stood down on 3 December 1944.

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/rare-colour-footage-of-the-real-dads-army>

Imperial War Museums - [enews@iwm.org.uk](mailto:enews@iwm.org.uk)



October 1940 children aged from 18 months at the Broomgrove Children's hotel and nursing home in Wavertree Liverpool well accustomed to playing in their gas mask.

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### On-line Lockdown Lectures at the Army Flying Museum

- Lockdown Activities
  - o Virtual Outreach Sessions
  - o Zoom Session
  - o Pilots on Parade
- Lockdown Lectures
  - o Air Support to SOE Operations
  - o The Last Days of the Luftwaffe
- Prices and timings
- Group visits
- Accessibility
- Before You Visit Us
- The Collection
  - o The Archive
  - o Donations to the collection
  - o The Balkans
  - o Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and 658 Air Observation Post Squadron

Anthony Beaver is currently giving some short lecturers for the Army Flying Museum

View at - <https://www.armyflying.com/lockdown-lectures/introduction-to-lockdown-lectures/>

On 7th May the Balfour Project will be showing a film about the British in Palestine, in the meantime there is a recording of the lecture given by Sir Vincent Fean on 2 April. View at - <http://www.balfourproject.org/palestine-and-isreal-britains-role-dundee/>



Michael 'Babe' Suckling (left) and other members of 'D' Flight of No 1 Photographic Reconnaissance Unit (PRU) in early 1941. Flight Commander Watts is third from right, whilst Jimmy Swift is second from right, with Sgt Parrott far right. Suckling would be lost in July 1941 just 2 months after discovering the location of the Bismarck; Swift from New Zealand would be lost in September 1941. Losses in the PRU were high relative to other commands particularly in the early part of the war, the majority of their aircraft being unarmed for operations over enemy territory.

(Photo Peter Arnold collection via Sandy's Spitfire <https://www.facebook.com/SpitfireAA810/> Colour by Richard James Molloy)

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## Congratulations - Captain Tom Moore



*This morning 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020, Captain Tom Moore completed his challenge to walk 100 laps of his garden, for his 100th birthday. Soldiers from The Yorkshire Regiment (a regiment formed from Tom's old regiment The Duke of Wellington's) surprised him with a guard of honour, at a safe distance. Captain Tom Moore has raised over £12m for NHS charities.  
(Source: FB - HM Armed Forces Group)*