



The Military Survey (Geographic) Branch

Royal Engineers Association

Spring Newsletter 2022 – issue 83

‘The Pete Dawes Quiz’

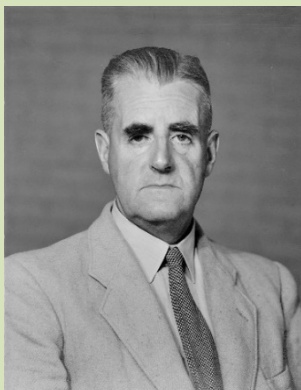


Lots of the readers of our newsletter will undoubtedly know Peter Dawes who worked for Ultra Electronics as a Support Engineer within the Field Support Office (FSO) at Hermitage. Pete worked at Hermitage for 18 years from 1998 – 2016 before ending the last year of Ultra’s contract at the Wyton site. He then worked with the parent company for another couple of years before taking retirement.

During his time at Hermitage, Pete worked alongside some of the pioneers who formed and moulded the responsibilities for FSO, and they included David Swann, Yannick Michaud, Adge Roe, Eddy Triggs, Bruce Crowe, Dave Turnbull, and Dave Pegg. Pete’s primary task was the requirement to build 11 x TACISYS containers, which were located in one of the Rhubb shelters on the parade square at Hermitage. He can vividly remember the many freezing cold days he had to work in the shelter to ensure the contract was met in a timely manner.

Pete became a ‘household’ name to many of our Geographic technicians and to some he was known as GOD (Grumpy Old Dawes). He deployed three times to Kosovo in support of geographic operations and travelled numerous times to Germany to visit each site which had geographic technical equipment.

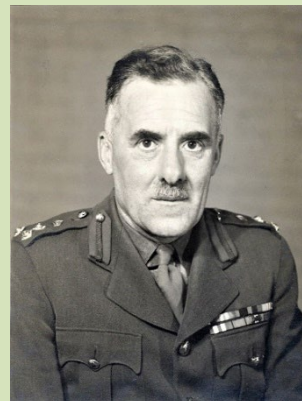
Pete happily recalls that there was never a dull day in FSO, and he was co-opted into a variety of other research and interest projects which really were not covered by his contract specification. One of those was in 2016 when he was asked to scan in a number of photographs which were displayed on the walls leading up the stairs of the entry into the headquarters building of the Geographic Engineer Group at Hermitage. Pete has kindly passed these photos on to the newsletter, and it was thought they would form an ideal quiz topic. The photos have been numbered and we would like readers to email the editor with their answers and we will announce who is the ‘Mastermind of Survey Personalities’ in the next newsletter. Good luck and remember your answers will help us record geographic history. Also, a big thank you to Pete for retaining the images. *Nick Collins*



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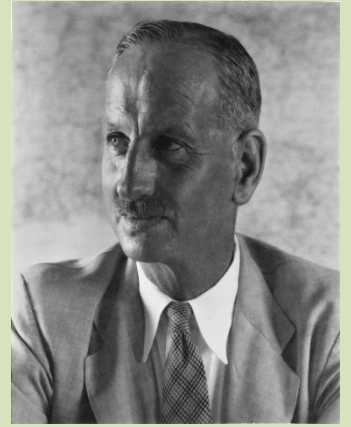
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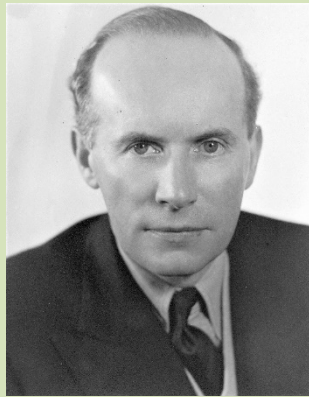
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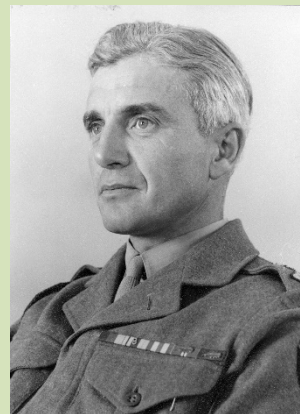
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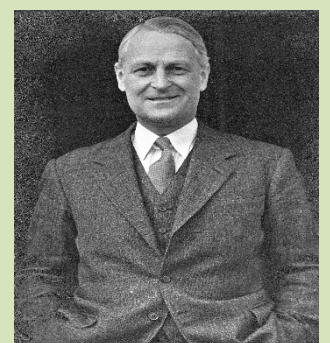
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Answers on a postcard or better still an email to the Editor – noel@burwells1.co.uk

THE ARABIAN SURVEY FLIGHT - 1934

By Flight Lieutenant F. M. V. May R.A.F.



Aden - Typical Coastal Country

With the exception of the local $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch to 1-mile sheet, which is not accurate, the hinterland of the Aden Protectorate is unmapped. The 1/1,000,000 maps which cover the area from Perim to Muscat are constructed on very little survey and mostly made from caravan routes, travelers' tales, and a vivid imagination. In certain districts the cartographer has been honest with himself, and one sees, printed across a vast area on the map, "unexplored territory." The only reliable part of the map is the coastline and on inquiry, the Hydrographic Department of the Admiralty stated that even this had certain points with a North-East meridional error of one minute of longitude.

Prior to 1928, when the Air Force took over the command in Aden, the inaccuracy of the maps did not matter so greatly, because the movements of the Army had of necessity been confined to a small area round the settlement and then only to the tracks and caravan routes – of necessity, because of the nature of the terrain. Generally speaking, the Aden Protectorate consists of a maritime plain, the foothills, and the mountains.

The first is a desert, with literally nothing but shifting sand and occasional camel thorn, for a belt varying in width from fifteen to thirty miles from the coast. The sand is soft and off the very few tracks only camel transport can move; vehicles particularly armoured cars, even with special sand gear, are useless once they get off the tracks. The foothills appear like small rocky breakers in a sea of sand with areas of cultivation around the wadi-beds, while the mountains are impenetrable barriers rising to a height of eight and nine thousand feet above sea level intersected by steep-sided canyon-like wadis.

The tribes of the Aden Protectorate inhabit these mountains and they are literally unapproachable by land forces. It was estimated that the minimum requirement to drive back the forces of the Yemen through these mountains in 1928 would have been a division and that it would have cost six to ten million pounds. The Royal Air Force did the job successfully with one squadron at a cost of eight thousand pounds.

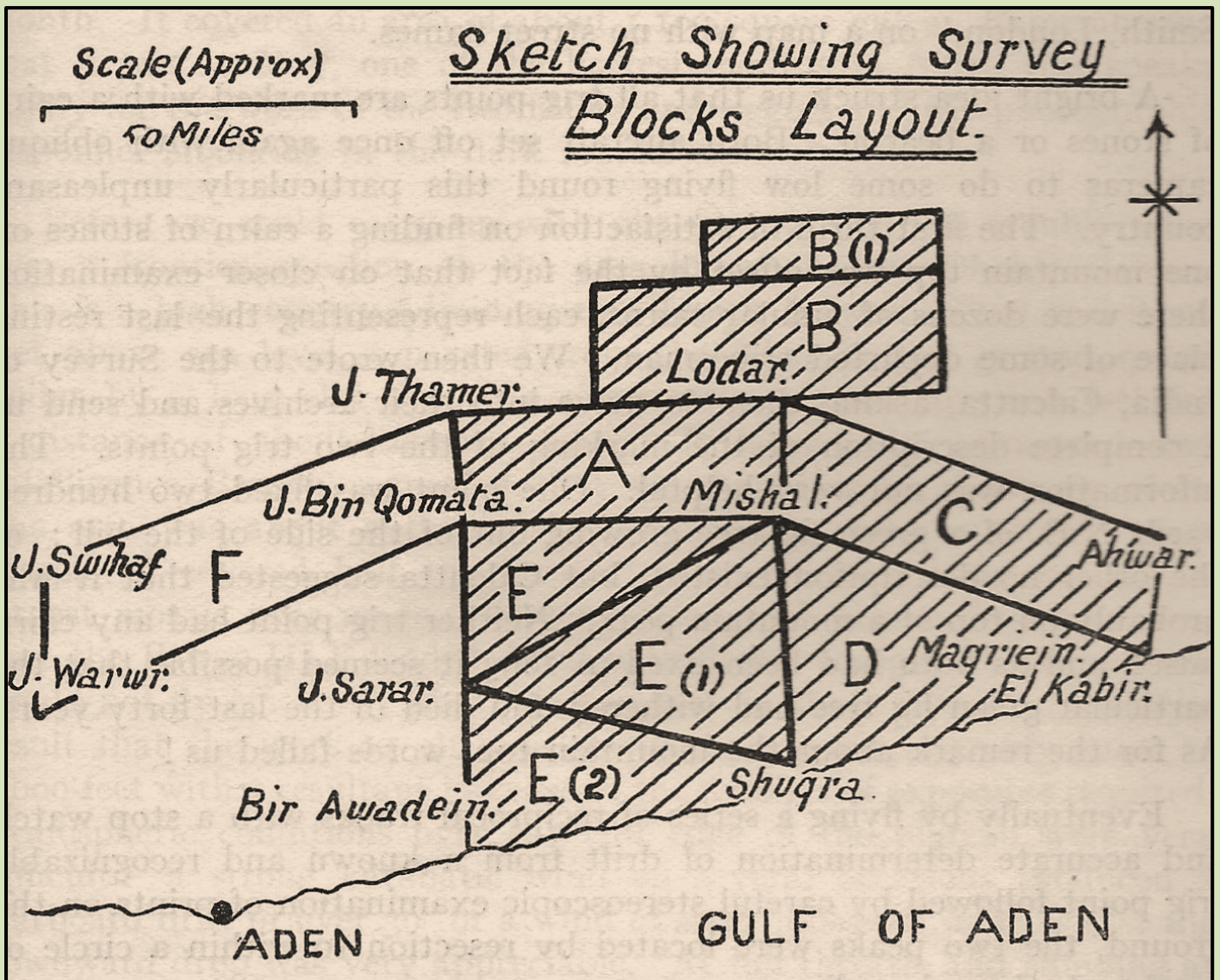
Anyone with any experience of air control in uncivilized areas knows how important accurate maps are. Inter-tribal boundaries follow the strangest lines of configuration and hostile villages may be separated from friendly tribes by only a few hundred yards in certain cases. Failing maps, mosaic photographs must be made, and copies produced for pilots and air gunners. Between October 1933, and March 1935, the squadron in Aden took part in six active operations against sundry tribes, and in each case the Arabian Survey Flight first mosaiced the area and produced innumerable prints of target pinpoints, in addition to sketch-maps and line overlaps and obliques. This was quite apart from hours spent by other aircraft flying round and round in small circles while painfully air-sick Arab agents endeavored to distinguish friendly village from hostile village for the benefit of, probably, an equally air-sick political officer; all of which meant a wastage of flying hours which accurate maps would have eliminated.

The Arabian Survey Flight was formed in May 1934, with two Fairey III.Fs from No. 8 Squadron, plus flying and maintenance personnel and the entire Squadron Photographic section. The survey cameras used were the F8 type with 7-inch lens. The object of the survey was to cover the area with a 1/253,400 scale map to join on to the existing sheet, but as has already been shown, the existing sheet was insufficiently surveyed and it was later decided, if possible, to cover that area as well.

The chief difficulty initially lay in the sparseness of ground control points recognizable from the air. An air survey cannot be carried out entirely from the air without some assistance from the ground. A certain number of points in the area to be mapped must be fixed astronomically by astrolabe or theodolite before the actual photographic work commences. The area to be mapped is usually divided up into a number of rectangular blocks of about a thousand square miles area each, and the minimum requirement from the air is that the corner points of each rectangle shall be fixed (or trig) points marked in such a manner that they will appear on a photograph taken from the working altitude of the survey. Owing to the inaccessibility of the mountains it was impossible to get a ground survey party with all their instruments, chronometers, etc., to points where one would have normally liked and therefore one had to improvise with the following:

- a) Existing trig points fixed by the Survey of India in XIXth century
- b) Five landing grounds, whose circles were fixed by Major Fryer, R.E., in 1932
- c) Two points fixed on the coast by astrolabe observations of Admiralty survey vessel HMS "Ormonde" in 1934.

As a result of this somewhat miscellaneous collection at hand when the Survey Flight was formed, the blocks as seen from the sketch-map cover the area in a somewhat peculiar manner.



“A” Block was given to the Flight by the War Office as an experimental first block, the corner points being Lodar Landing Ground; Mishal Landing Ground; Jebel Thamer; Jebel Bin Qomata.

Of the first two which were fixed by Major Fryer, the point fixed was the centre of the circle on the landing ground and considerable difficulty was experienced in getting the circle – which was whitewash – to show up against the white sandy surface of the landing ground. Jebel Thamer and Jebel Bin Qomata were shown quite clearly upon the existing maps of the Aden Protectorate but locating them accurately for survey purposes from the air proved an entirely different matter. Both are mountain peaks, one being 8,041 feet above sea level and the other 7,965 feet above sea level. The trouble was that the entire countryside for hundreds of square miles round was composed of nothing else but jagged mountain peaks. On the map (uncontoured) the location of the peaks seemed simple as they were clearly marked with a black dot and a triangle, but our first effort to find them resulted in confusion. Both pilots flew over the area in an optimistic frame of mind on the first day, but on discovering the difficulty returned with somewhat blank faces: it was rather like finding the house of “John Smith, London,” on a map with no street names.

A bright idea struck us that all trig points are marked with a cairn of stones or a beacon. Both aircraft set off once again with oblique cameras to do some low flying round particularly unpleasant country. The first thrill of satisfaction on finding a cairn of stones on one mountain top was offset by the fact that on closer examination there dozens of similar cairns, each representing the last resting place of some departed tribesman. We then wrote to the Survey of India, Calcutta, asking them to delve into their archives and send us a complete description of the markings of the two trig points. The information was not very helpful.

One point was fixed two hundred yards N.E. of a green fig tree growing out of the side of the hill; of the other no description existed, but Calcutta suggested that it was probably on top of a mountain peak. Neither trig point had any cairn raised and as both had been fixed in 1893 it seemed possible that the particular green fig tree had withered and died in the last forty years. As for the remark about the mountain top, words failed us!

Eventually by flying a series of reciprocal tracks with a stopwatch and accurate determination of drift from a known and recognizable trig point followed by careful stereoscopic examination of prints on the ground, the two peaks were located by resection to within a circle of 100 yards radius.

“A” Block was then surveyed by a method known as the “Arundel” method, which had been developed by the Air Survey Committee. The perimeter of the rectangle was first flown. The longer sides were sixty miles in length and since the area covered by one exposure was approximately 1½ miles square, the run had to be flown within an accuracy of 2° in order to finish over the right place. In excusing myself for doing this six times on the northern boundary before I was successful, I may point out that it was my first attempt at really accurate flying; furthermore, the run bearing coincided with a high plateau escarpment over which the bumps proved decidedly awkward.

The perimeter runs were then plotted by two sappers attached to the Flight from the 20th Fortress Company R.E., whose O.C. Captain K.H. Lockhart, R.E., acted as ground control and general liaison officer throughout the survey. Navigation tie strips were then flown, and a skeleton mosaic laid down to a uniform scale for marking out check points. The filling-in runs were then flown East and West until the entire block was covered.

“A” Block was finished in 120 hours flying by two aircraft in one month. It covered an area of about 1,100 square miles. Remembering that it was in May, one of the hottest months in Aden, this speaks highly for the work of the fitters and riggers and the photographic personnel labouring in the dark rooms.

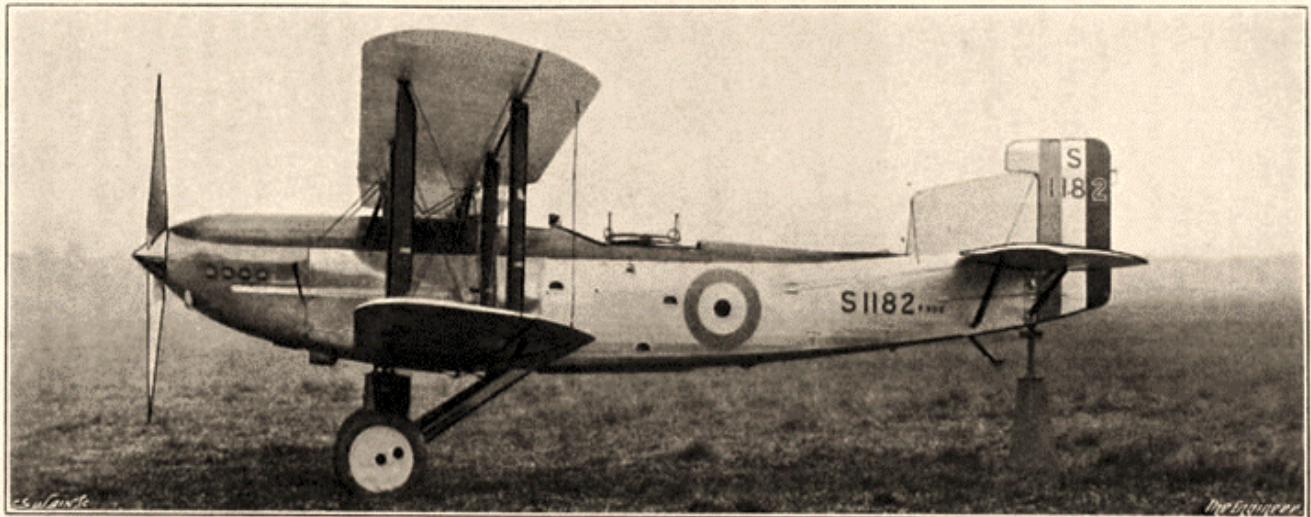
Before we could carry on with our survey, political trouble arose over a frontier question on the area known as the Dhahir plateau. This is a high country adjoining the Yemen between 6,000 and 8,000 feet above sea level, separated from the Khor or low ground round Lodar by a long cliff dropping a precipitous 4,000 to 5,000 feet for a distance of about seventy miles. It is entirely unmapped, and Intelligence Branch requested that we should make a mosaic of it. The area was about a thousand square miles, and the mosaic when completed covered half the hanger door. It is believed to be the largest mosaic ever made. In connection with this it is pointed out that the Fairey III.F loaded down with desert equipment and camera would not fly efficiently above 12,500 feet in those latitudes with the result that the working altitude above the ground was only 5,000 to 6,000 feet with a resultant increase in the number of exposures required. Atmospheric conditions over the cliff edge of the plateau were very difficult: a strong katabatic wind on several occasions produced a starboard drift of over 30° or a wind of sixty miles per hour, whilst the downward drop was very appreciable. At full throttle and climbing at the maximum angle of attack one frequently lost 500 feet in a thirty-mile run at 12,500 feet.

In intervals of bad weather on the plateau the Arabian Survey Flight completed a town planning survey of the Aden Peninsular from 8,000 feet and also completed some filling-in runs on the Anglo-French Somaliland frontier for the Anglo-Ethiopian Boundary Commission.

The mosaics of “B” Block on the Dhahir Plateau proving altogether too unwieldy a proposition for ordinary use, a sketch-map was made from them for H.Q.B.F.

In August, work was commenced on “C” Block (see diagram), of which corner points were again Lodar and Mishal, and an Arab fort on the coast at Magriein-el-Kabir which was fixed by a landing party from H.M.S. “Ormonde” by astrolabe observations. There was a lot of unproductive flying on this block owing to the distance from Aden and the inability to tell what local weather conditions were like over the block without flying there to find out. However, the work went on slowly but surely until the beginning of October when there was another frontier disturbance. This time Zeidi troops from the Yemen had invested on of the Aden Protectorate towns near the frontier called Am Turba, and it seemed as though pressure would have to be brought to bear on the Imam to make him withdraw. As a result, a horde of armoured clustered round the Survey Flight machines and covered them with bomb racks and Vickers guns. We pilot’s and the air gunners of the Flight trailed about over the bombing range and camera obscura while the Survey temporarily came to full stop.

After a period of tension and some demonstration flights the crisis was settled amicably, and the Survey Flight again commenced work. First there was some more survey photography required by the Anglo-Ethiopian Boundary Commission on the Abyssinian frontier which gave us a very pleasant week at Buramo and then we returned to Aden and carried on with "C" Block.



FAIREY III F GENERAL SERVICE AEROPLANE

By the middle of November, it had been almost completed when trouble broke out with the tribes in the Upper Yaafa country. The popular pastime amongst these sportsmen had been for years lying on their backs and shooting at aeroplanes as they passed over on their appointed businesses. Nobody minded much, but when the Intelligence Officer went to reprimand them and they chased him down the wadis with more bullets, accompanied by harsh words and abuse, it was decided that this was going too far and that a sharp lesson should be administered. Messages were dropped demanding that the culprits should come in and judgment given upon them. The messages produced more rapid rifle fire and nothing else. Then they were given so many days warning and still nothing happened, and so it was decided to drop a bomb or two on the chief offenders' villages, first, of course, warning them to clear out.

The map of the Upper Yaafa territory is particularly unenlightening. Its large white expanse has been known to suggest to new pilots that they will find a nice flat desert in the district. In actual fact, more land has been squeezed up into vertical-sided mountains in this area than anywhere else in the world, except possibly the Alps, and a closer examination of the map will show in small lettering "unexplored territory." Judging by the nature of the country, not to mention the unfriendly attitude of the local inhabitants, this is not surprising. The Arabian Survey Flight therefore made a mosaic of the area and a sketch map from the mosaic. In addition, pin-point photographs of each objective were carried by all pilots and air gunners. The Survey Flight aircraft accompanied each raid and took photos of the bursts and objectives after bombardment, from the stereoscopic examination of which it was possible to estimate the extent of the damage – the actual as opposed to the reported. Incidentally, this led to certain amount of argument between the squadron and the Survey Flight; though the camera cannot lie, an air gunner may do his best.

As a result of these operations in the Upper Yaafa, "C" Block was not completed until the end of December 1933, and in the following month work was commenced on the triangular area known as "D" Block. Two of the trig points on this block were already known and the third, Shugra, was fixed by H.M.S. "Ormonde" who astrolabed the Sheikh of Shugra's house. "D" Block was barely completed before trouble began in the Bakri country. By a treaty with the Imam of the Yemen, all Zeidies in the Aden Protectorate were withdrawn over the frontier. The Zeidis are the fighting tribes of the Yemen, similar in characteristics to the Pathans, and for years they had oppressed the Aden Protectorate tribes. When they were withdrawn by order of the Imam, the British Government promise them safe custody over the border, giving orders to this effect amongst all the Protectorate tribes. Unfortunately, the temptation was too strong for the Bakri, and they beat up a Zeidi caravan leaving for the Yemen.

The fine demanded by the Government was not forthcoming and there was the usual shooting at aeroplanes and rude messages to the Resident, with the result that punitive bombing had to be carried out. The area was a fairly large one and there were eighteen objectives in all – villages, forts etc.

The Survey Flight prepared mosaics and target photographs and generally assisted in the operations which had barely ceased when there was a further rumpus a hundred and fifty miles away at Beihan-el-Qasab. This time the Alowi tribe were harboring three escaped murderers from the Yemen and refused to give them up. Again, the Survey Flight made a mosaic and gridded off target photographs.

The two Survey aircraft flew the photographs up to Beihan for the political officer, Colonel Lake, M.C. to mark in the chief offenders' houses in the town and had an engine failure on the landing ground.

Being unable to trace the trouble we spent the night out with the aircraft. In view of the fact that there was a hostile tribe about 400 yards on the other side of the wadi and out total armament, apart from an air-cooled Lewis gun, was one Colt .45 and a couple of Very pistols, the night's rest was not so congenial as it might have been. However, nothing untoward happened and both aircraft returned at daybreak the next morning. The following day bombing operations commenced against the tribesmen who had missed an opportunity.

A week after this trouble had been settled, Bedouins in the Haushabi country began raiding caravans and the Survey Flight was called in for photography and co-operation with the Aden Protectorate armed levies which lasted up till the end of February.

In March, caravan raiding spread to the Qoteibi tribe who inhabited a large mountainous and badly mapped area, again calling for mosaics and photography. The succeeding operations lasted for two months, introducing the air blockade system, which, of course, included night raids in addition to continuous day patrols. It was not until May 1934, therefore, that the Survey Flight could work again as a Survey Flight.

The next block was "E" Block, another triangular area as shown in the diagram which was completed by the end of the month of June. This was held up by bad weather and by demands from H.Q. for overlaps and photographs of a new landing ground and rest camp site on Audalhi Plateau.

At the end of June, both aircraft of the Survey Flight proceeded to Somaliland to complete the work for the Anglo-Ethiopian boundary. This took a fortnight and proved a welcome change from Aden in the hot weather. The landing ground used for the camp was Buramo, which is 4,500 feet above sea level and situated in pleasant, wooded country. Urgent signals however recalled us, as there was friction in the Subeibi country and mosaics urgently required. These were made and the Squadron was once more ready for operations. Fortunately, this time, the turbulent sheikhs in question knuckled under before any bombing was necessary.

For two days the Survey Flight flew over E (I) Block when a further disturbance occurred. While the political officer was making a periodical visit to the Aulaqhi tribe, the aircraft in which he was flying had no sooner landed at Ahwar than it was met by a fusillade of miscellaneous size bullets from the edge of the landing ground. The pilot decided to call another day and took off again with several leaden souvenirs decorating his aeroplane. As usual, the maps were useless – Major Fryer found Ahwar fifteen miles away from its map position by astronomical observations – and the Survey Flight was called in again for overlaps and photographic pinpoints of dars belonging to the offenders. These completed, operations took place against the Lower Aulaqhi tribe until the dars had been demolished.

This brought us to September 1934. From then until Christmas was comparatively peaceful in the Protectorate and the Survey should have gone on smoothly. Unfortunately, the trooping season in November, took away one of the pilots and both air gunners, which meant time lost in training new personnel. However, E (I) and E (2) Blocks were completed, and work had just commenced on "F" Block when the Flight was disbanded to help form the West African Flight. In March, the Flight commander – the present writer- returned home.

In spite of the various interruptions the Flight did achieve a fair amount of work and covered in all about 7,500 square miles of country apart from the operational mosaics.

One word about the aircraft and engines: both functioned perfectly throughout the Survey – the failure mentioned at Beihan was merely a faulty pressure gauge; otherwise, no trouble of any sort was experienced. The writer flew some seven hundred and sixty hours over country where an engine failure meant an almost certain crash; that there was no such failure is a striking testimonial to the design and manufacture. Last, but not least, tribute must be paid to the fitters and riggers for their high standard of maintenance.

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Obituary

Ken Miller – 1929 – 2022

(The obituary of Ken Miller has been provided by Ray Bennett through the good offices of Chris Nash. Ray has also provided an article on his service with 63 Reproduction Group Indian Engineers, 14th Army in India and Burma 1944/45)

In 1941, aged 15, Ken was apprenticed at 'Mardon, Son and Hall', in Bristol, as a Photo Mechanical Operator. Two years later, in 1943, like so many of his contemporaries, he was called up to join the Army.

As with many in the printing trades, Ken was cap-badged as a Royal Engineer and sent to the Survey Training Centre at Wynnstay Hall near Ruabon in North Wales. There he underwent further training to become a Process Camera Operator. On completion of his training, he was drafted overseas.

His posting was to the Far East, and after a long sea voyage around the Cape, he briefly enjoyed some South African hospitality in Durban like many others. Arriving at Bombay in India, he went to the Survey of India at the pleasant hill station of Dehra Dun. In early 1944 Ken and a fellow sapper, Roy Green, were posted to 63 Reproduction Group Indian Engineers in the 14th Army. 63 Reproduction Group had lost seven or eight personnel through sickness and postings, so the new replacements were very welcome.



The Group moved through Comilla in Bengal and thence to Assam. By November 1944, 63 Repro Group was moving through Kohima to Imphal. Ken managed to avoid the prevalent illnesses of the area, such as malaria and typhus and other complications arising from living in tents and the arduous climate.

63 Repro Group's convoy of vehicles, including 10-ton Foden print lorries, followed the advance, and made a halt at Meiktila, where the campaign's most significant battle in February 1945 had resulted in over 3,000 Japanese killed.

On 1 June 1945, the Group was on the move again as 14th Army pushed the Japanese, now in full retreat, back from Myingyan to Rangoon, about 150 miles. The route passed through Yamethin, Toungoo and Pegu.

At Thatkon, the Japanese were trapped in the Shan Hills, waiting to break out eastwards across the main road. The convoy had to wait until the Allied shelling stopped before proceeding, by which time the road was impassable, making the convoy divert to the rail tracks.

At last, 63 Map Repro Group arrived in war-torn Rangoon. There, at Campbell Road, the unit camp was set up. A large house was provided for the camera section, paper store, an M.T. section, unit office and the Production unit. Tents were erected for accommodation.

The 12th Army was now formed to take control of operations in Burma, and 63 Map Repro Group became part of it, even printing the daily 12th Army newspaper on the Rotaprint.

It was a great surprise to everyone to learn of the two atom bombs dropped in Japan, leading to the immediate Japanese surrender. V.J. Day meant peace and thoughts of a return to the U.K.

Following the welcome break of some local leave, Ken and the Group repatriated to U.K., home, and demobilisation.

Once demobbed, Ken returned to 'Mardon, Son and Hall' to recommence his trade. He became the Head of Reproduction for the whole Group.

Service in Burma had a lasting influence on all who had served there. Ken, Roy, and others who had served together remained in contact for the rest of their lives, and I frequently met up again with Ken in Bristol and London.

Ken succumbed to Covid and pneumonia, aged 96. Our thoughts and condolences are with his wife, Colleen.

Ray Bennett

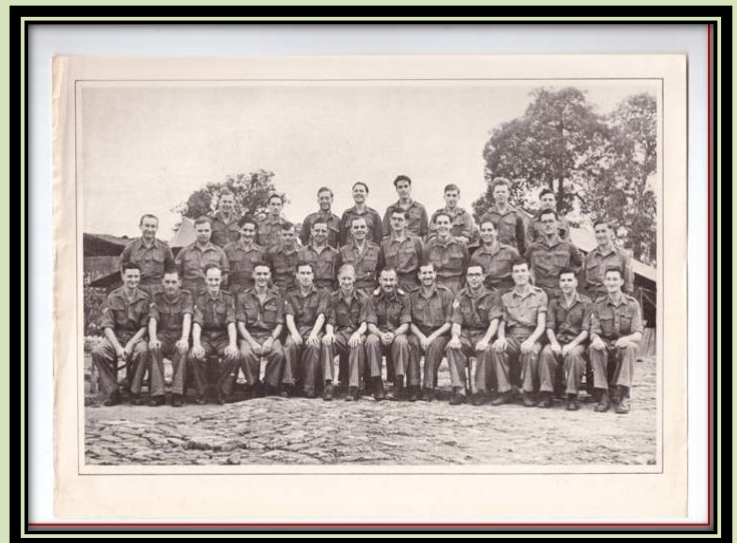
Burma and 63 Map Production Group IE

By Ray Bennett

Ray was a young platemaker at outbreak of World War Two. He served in 63 Map Rep Group IE from 1943 to 1946 and in 14 Fd Svy Coy RE in BAOR till 1947. He went from platemaking and proving to litho machine minding and production management. After the war he worked initially in the print industry in Java, Indonesia, for British American Tobacco and elsewhere in the world becoming BAT's Print Production Manager. Now a "young 92" he is retired in Woking.



Ray Bennett



63 Map Rep Group IE

The Burma Campaign took place between 1942 and 1945. The men who fought in Burma were up against one of the world's worst climates and some of its most forbidding terrain. They had to scale jagged mountains, hack their way through almost impenetrable jungle, cross swiftly flowing rivers and pass over dusty plains where temperatures often ranged as high as 130 F. Some units had to cut their way through knife-like elephant grass. In the mountains the unmade roads were so narrow that tanks had to creep along with half of their tracks hanging over the edge.

The huge variations in climate and terrain were a major challenge to all the forces in the campaign. The annual monsoon, with its dense continuous rain from May to November restricted movement and warfare. Against this background plans had to be made for the defence of India and the eventual re-conquest of Burma.

In 1942 the war with the Japanese had two disastrous episodes. In Malaya and Singapore, the British Forces sustained the greatest defeat in their history. In Burma they experienced the longest retreat in their history, leaving the Japanese on the borders of India, threatening invasion of that country.

Survey Situation

The mapping position at this time was that the whole of Burma and Eastern and Southern India had been surveyed at the 1-inch scale, except for a belt covering the Chin and Naga hills where the half-inch scale had been adopted.

Map Stocks.

Whilst the country had been very reasonably well surveyed, the map stock position was deplorable. In 1940-41 additional stocks were printed of certain areas of Burma and stored in Rangoon, but by March 1942, when overrun by the Japanese, these stocks were lost. The Survey of India presses, in Calcutta and in Dehra Dun in Northern India, were busy printing maps which were flown over to Burma. But the supply was inadequate.

Plans for Increasing Printing Capacity

Following the experience in North Africa, where the army had been provided with maps printed by Mobile Map Reproduction Units, plans were made to establish similar facilities for the printing of maps for Burma. Some 6 or 7 Map Reproduction Groups; some mobile and some semi-mobile were established. The semi-mobile units had their printing equipment in crates whereas the mobile units had their printing machines and ancillary equipment on 10-ton Foden lorries. A Repro Group had two printing machines and facilities, but a Repro Section had only half such equipment.

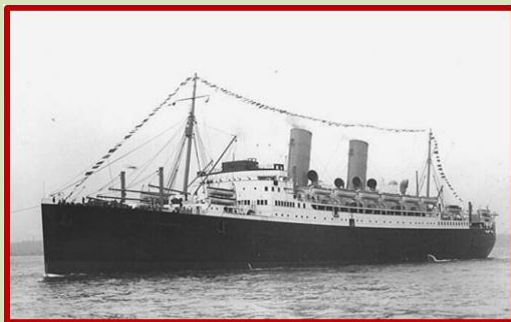
Unit Formation and Departure

At Wynnstay Hall, in Ruabon, North Wales, a RE Survey Cadre was established where instructional courses covering all of the trades associated with RE Survey were taught. The military personnel, who graduated from these army courses, were prior to call-up employed either by Ordnance Survey or commercial printers in the UK.

63 Map Repro Group was formed in Leeds in January 1943. The establishment consisted of 32 Other Ranks of various crafts and two Officers, Captain Johnson from Ben Johnson Printers of York, and Lieutenant Howarth



Wynnstay Hall, Ruabon



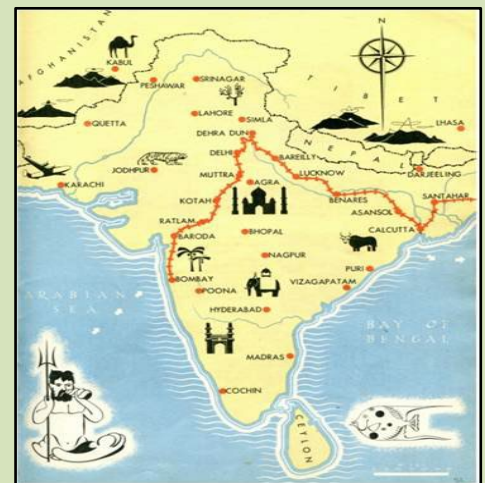
The Group departed from Liverpool on the *Duchess of Bedford* in a typical wartime convoy of about 20 ships. Accommodation was 12 men per mess deck above in head to feet formation. The officers were either 2 or 4 to a cabin. Lifeboat stations became a daily routine which in emergency became a 2 or 3 hour stay. After 3 weeks of zigzagging across the North Atlantic the convoy reached Freetown in Sierra Leone to re-equip with food and stores. This took 3 days Then a further trip of 2 weeks to Cape Town, South Africa. After wartime UK, South Africa was paradise and the Group enjoyed 6 weeks of comparative luxury.

Arrival in India

Another voyage of 3 weeks took the Group to Bombay, where India proved to be a stark contrast to South Africa. Then a 2-day train journey took the Group to the Survey of India base at Dehra Dun, where there was a relaxing 2-week period.

A further 4-day train journey took the Group to Barrackpore near Calcutta. There it was based at 9 H.Q., the Survey H.Q. of the Eastern Army. 66 Map Repro Group was already there, having been in India for a year and were established in map printing.

At last, on 2nd July 1943, 4 Fodens arrived. And within 2 days 63 Map Repro Group was also in production. After eighteen weeks of travelling from the U.K we were a real operational unit. At Barrackpore the unit set up a two-shift routine printing 1.25.000 maps. One month later 40 Indian troops arrived to make up the full establishment of the Group.



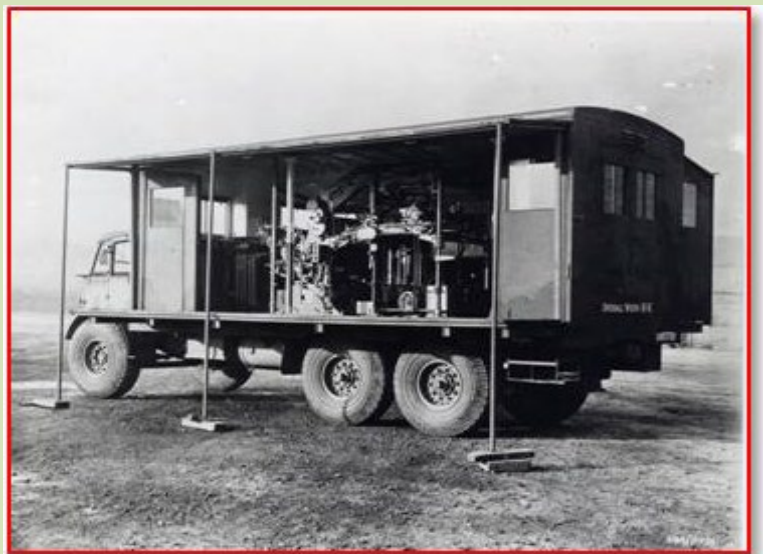
Sketch by G Ashley



The Repro Groups were raised under WE II/32-A/I, with 2 Officers, 36 BORs, 48 IORs.

They were equipped with two Crabtree demy printing presses in 14-ton Foden lorries and in 2 similar vehicles provided photomechanical and proving equipment. Additionally power units of 5 x 22KW Lister Generator Trailers arrived.

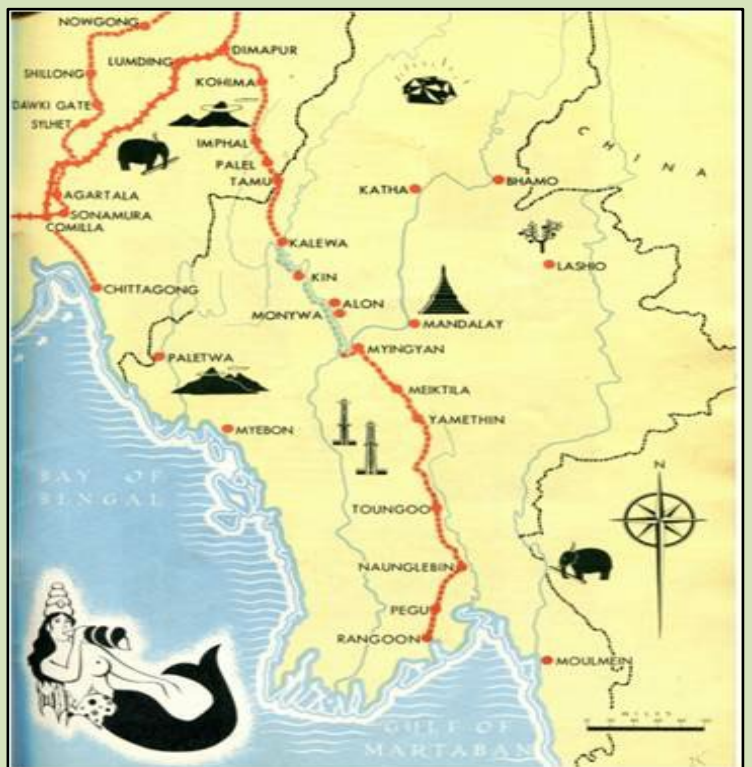
The original intention was to have camera and process lorries, but these never arrived. Instead a Hunter-Penrose camera and a folding darkroom were set up in one of the buildings. One extra vehicle was a Leyland Photo-mechanical truck. Then came 6 x 3-ton Ford general purpose trucks.



Survey with H.Q. 14th Army

In November, the Group was fully operational and, on the move, once more. The advance party moved from Calcutta by rail and ferry to Chittagong, where it awaited the arrival of the Fodens and other vehicles which came by sea.

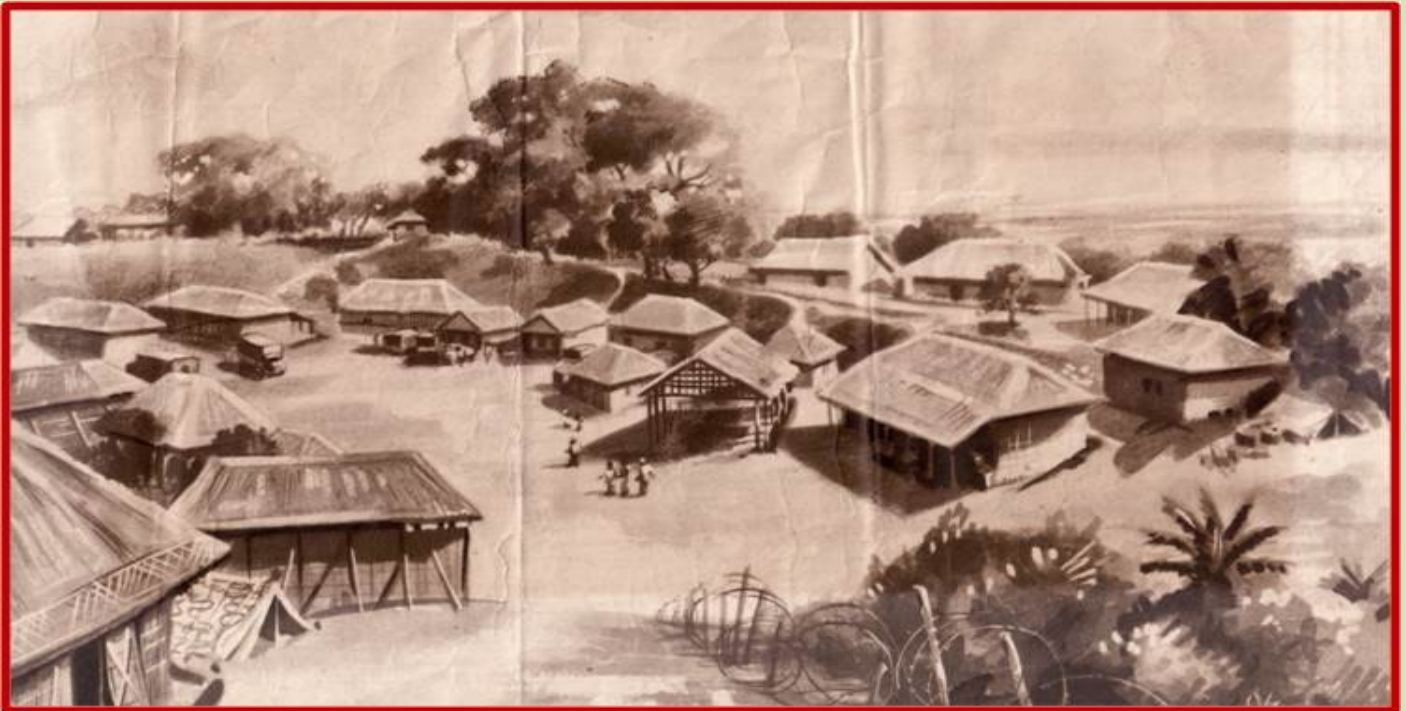
An air raid on Chittagong reminded everyone that they were in a war zone. The distance from Chittagong to Comilla, where we were to be based, is about 120 miles, but it took 4 days for the unit to travel, due to the terrain and the heavy vehicles. One day only 4 miles were covered. Some of the open-sided bridges were 9ft 6ins wide; quite a test for the 8ft 6ins Fodens. Fortunately railway sleepers had been brought to get across the mud and hacksaws were used to saw away overhanging branches.





There was a continual problem with diesel pumps of the Fodens. At Comilla diesel tanks were fitted above the cabins so that fuel was gravity fed.

Tanks on the cab and gravity feed - refueling



Getting Organized

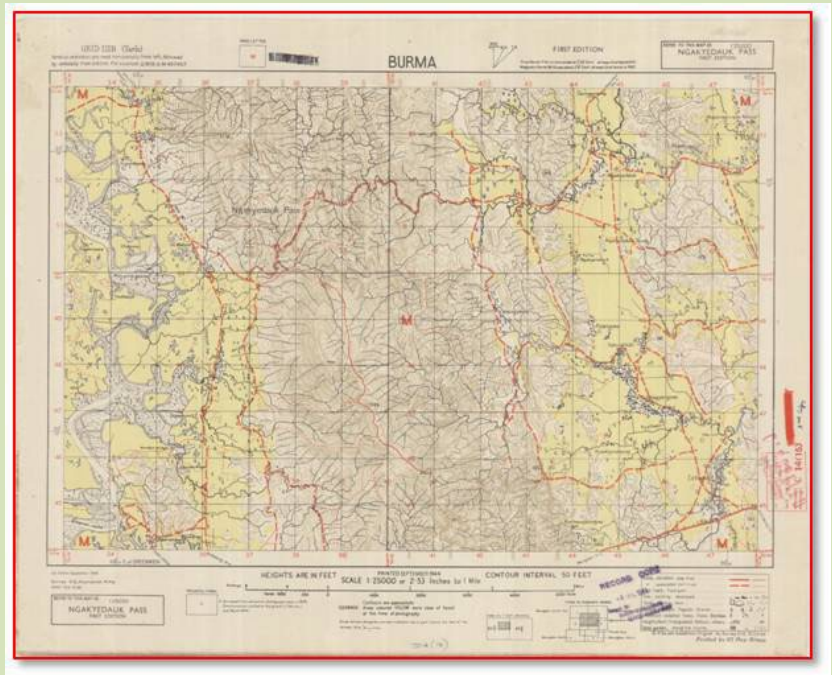
63 Rep Group was established at the Survey H.Q. at Mynamati, near Comilla. The Fodens had bamboo bashas built over them.

Personnel were billeted 8 to a basha in what became a Survey village. The Eastern Army became the 14th Army and map printing started as soon as 63 Group arrived.

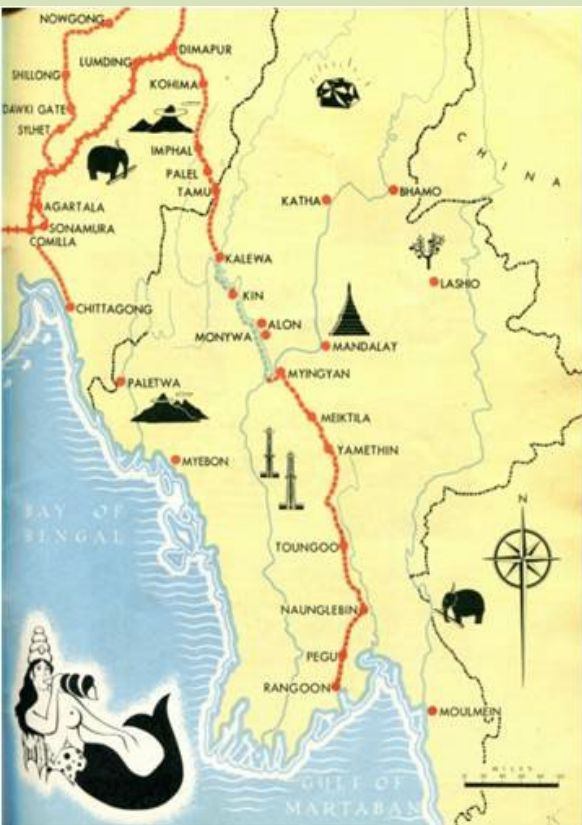
A small firing range was set up for rifle and Sten gun firing. Twin Bren guns, on a Motley mounting, were set up in a pit, manned each day when forewarned of Japanese aircraft. Slit trenches were dug around the camp. By now most of the BORs had learnt enough Urdu, the language of North India adopted by the army, to converse with the IORs, Many of the Sepoys learnt a little English, so communication was not a problem. In January 1944, 66 Map Group arrived from Calcutta, but en route one of their Fodens hit an overhead branch, damaging the superstructure and the printing machine. So, for some time they had only one Crabtree press operable.



Bashas – Fodens and Personnel



Map printed by 63 Repro Group



By this time anti-mosquito cream had been replaced by daily Mepacrine tablets. A daily rum ration was started. Our old K.D. clothing was replaced by jungle greens. Pith helmets were replaced by bush hats. Bamboo beds succumbed to white ants as were kit bags. Tin trunks were issued as replacement.

The extremes of the high humid climate and general conditions of life in a tropical environment began to take its toll. Malaria, dengue fever, sprue and skin complaints became normal. Cerebral malaria proved fatal. Several members were hospitalized. Seven members of the Group were returned to India or repatriated. This meant that members had to step into other crafts and activities as the need arose. Originally I was a helio-worker (plate-maker) but became a litho printer.

Lt. Howarth left and was not replaced, leaving Capt. B. P. Johnson as the only officer. Gradually reinforcements arrived to build up unit strength.

In April 1944, with arrival of the 11th East African Division their 155 East African & Southern Rhodesian Survey Company came to Comilla. Their printing Group had 2 Crabtree printing presses. Later this Group was split into two Printing Sections. One, 67 went to the Arakan, the other, 68, went to Imphal.

66 Repro Group had by this time been overseas for two and a half years and were returned to India, being replaced by 61 Repro Group.

The increased demand for map requirements meant that the printing presses had to be kept running for 24 hours on a 3-shift operation for 63 Repro Group. One month a record number of print impressions were over 1 million. Normally ½ million was the target.

Imphal & Intense Printing

In 1944 the Japanese undertook major military moves with the intention of invading India. Following the grave battles of Imphal and Kohima the Japanese attacks failed. The Allies moved forward through the mountains and their advance led to an increased demand for more maps.

The 68 Map Repro Section of the East Africans moved to Imphal. Malaria had left them without printing machine operators, so one replacement was flown up from 63 Repro Group. Then he too went down with malaria. I was then flown up as a further replacement in a Dakota which had been shot up the previous day.

By November 1944 63 Group was on the move to Imphal. It took 18 days for the Fodens. They travelled by rail to Dimapur, then by road to Kohima and Imphal. In the meantime an advance party moved to Imphal and set up camp in farm buildings before the Fodens arrived.

Then began an intensive period of continual map printing. Apart from the 1:25,000 maps the RAF brought in sets of overlapping photos which had to be set for printing and overprinting. There were also target maps for the RAF. Sometimes the maps were taken straight from the printing machine delivery, rolled up and placed into containers. It was 24 hours a day continuously.

After the high humidity of Bengal, the cool freshness of Manipur was welcome. Log fires and normal battledress were on show each evening.

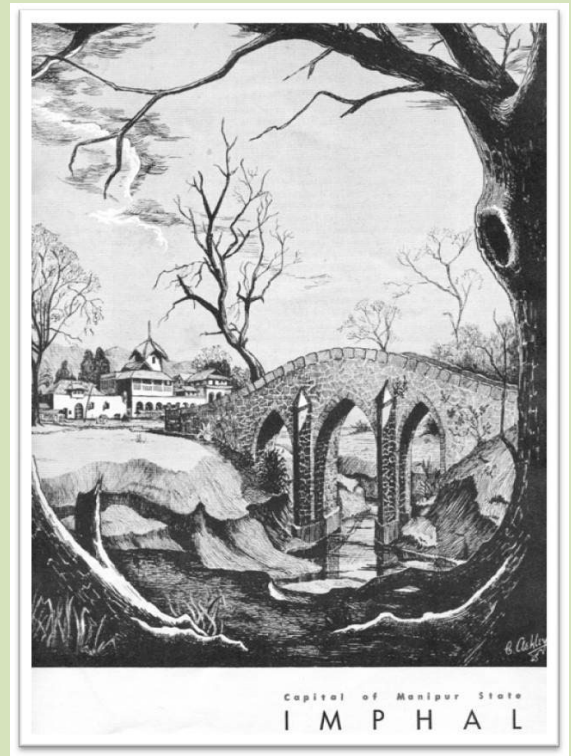
Into Burma

Following the Army, it was soon time for 68 East African Repro Section to move again, into Burma at Maymyo.



a Japanese mine and put it in a 3 tonner. When found later it was gently removed...by Indians and put in a river

The advance party, with 20 Indian sepoy, set off down the Chindwin in landing crafts. At night-time they pulled into the bank, set up a horseshoe defence of armed sepoy, made a meal and slept by the river.



They were followed by 63 Group. In March 1945 an advance party was sent to Kalewa to set up camp. The Fodens and the rest of transport followed via Palel and Tamu. This was a particularly difficult journey through narrow unmade mountain roads. Frequently vehicles went over the mountainside.

Our Leyland Photo-mechanical truck was one of them. When the Indians were sent down to salvage what could be there, they also picked up



Travelling down the Chindwin on landing craft

There were numerous sandbanks, which delayed the crafts. The journey took 5 days. At the junction of the Chindwin and Irrawaddy rivers the advance party joined 45 Indian Beach Group and turned into Myingyan.

The Japs were still in the area, but eventually the party made base camp at an empty girls school.

Awaiting the rest of the group

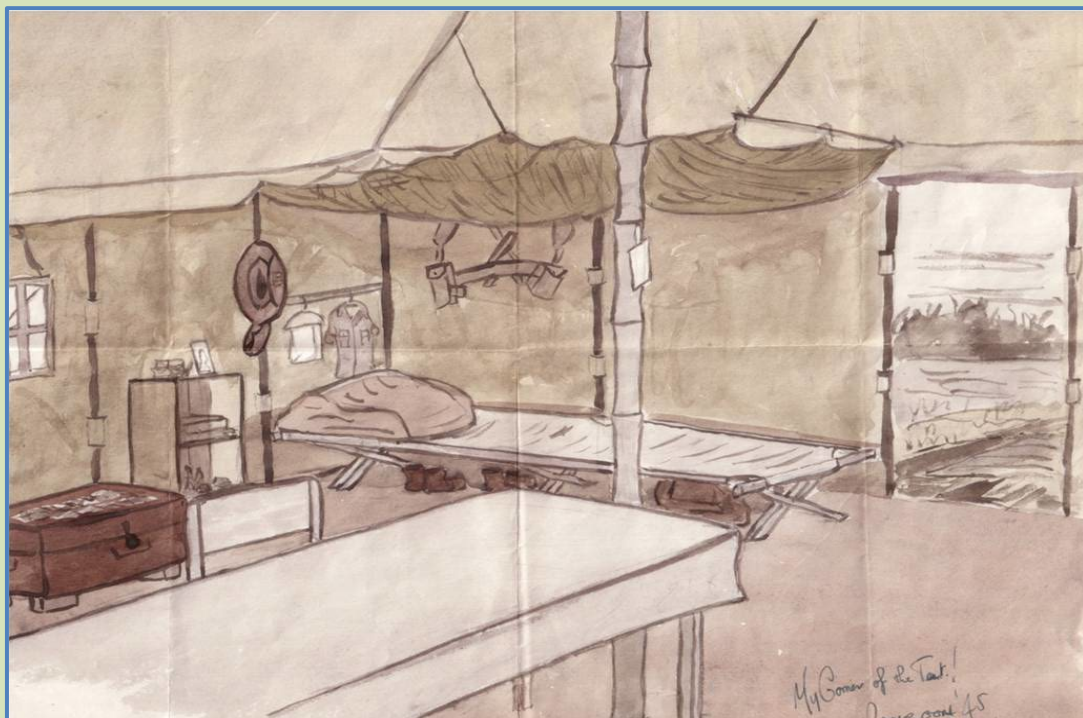
The Fodens and the rest of the Group made the same journey, arriving a week later. Everyone was now under canvas in the school grounds, with the camera, darkroom and stores in the building. Central Burma was quite different from the jungles and mountains further north. It was oppressively hot, with daytime temperatures of 40 to 50 degrees C. At night-time there were rats, snakes and huge spiders as companions in the tents. Apart from the odd cases of dysentery sappers and sepoy were in good health. Rations were reduced to half scale.



Girls school

V.E. Europe

In May 1945 came the news that the war in Europe had ended. A day off for everyone!!! Then it was back to printing again with a lighter heart. The 63 Group had now been overseas for two and a half years. Earlier repatriation was 7 years and 9 months. Then it came down to 5 years. That meant that if one had been overseas for 5 years you were head of the queue for going home to the UK !!



A sketch by Ray Bennett

Last Lap

On 1 June 1945 the Group was on the move again. This was to be its final journey to Rangoon. The convoy made its first stop at Meiktila, where there had been the greatest battle of the war, with 3 thousand Japs killed. The East African Repro Section was already there. From Myingyan to Rangoon is about 150 miles. The road was good but fraught with problems. It was a very large convoy to occupy a busy road and put up each night. The route passed through Yamethin, Toungoo and Pegu.

At Thatkon the Japs were trapped in the Shan Hills, waiting to break out across the road. The convoy had to wait until the Allied shelling stopped before proceeding. The road was impassable, so the convoy was diverted to the rail tracks.

Another evening, in darkness, a village was the nights stop. The horrible smells everywhere showed up dead Japs below the stilted huts where the men had slept. Another delay!!

Rangoon & VJ Day

At last the complete 63 Map Repro Group arrived in war-torn Rangoon. There, at Campbell Road, camp was set up. A large house provided for the camera section, paper store, an M.T. section, unit office and the Production unit. Tents were erected for accommodation.

The 12th Army was now formed to take control of operations in Burma and 63 Group became part of it, even printing the daily 12th Rotaprint.

The 14th Army was now withdrawn and re-formed to prepare for Op Zipper and activities further East.

With the war in Burma confined to mopping up operations there were still surrender leaflets to be printed and RAF target maps for other areas

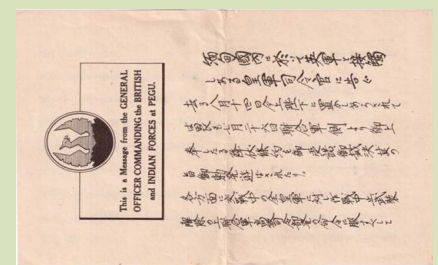
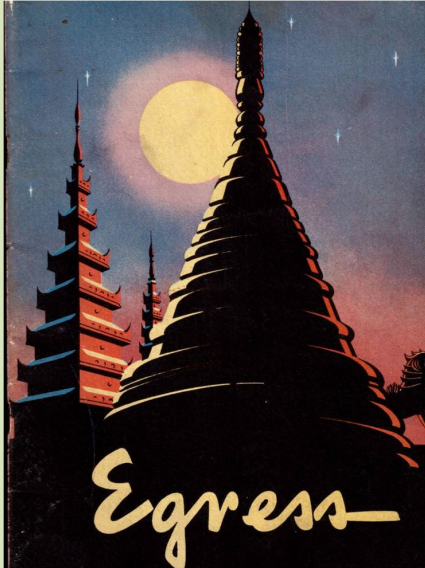
It was a great surprise to learn of the two atom bombs which were dropped in Japan and led to their surrender. V.J. Day meant peace and thoughts of a return to the U.K. The POWs arrived in Rangoon and all personnel gave up green clothes for them, prior to their repatriation.



Life became more relaxed without work pressures. Some of the sepoys returned home to India. Within two or three months (Johnnie), Capt. Johnson, and several of the long serving members were also repatriated. Gradually, the Group was reduced still further and by early 1946 Capt. Bisset and replacements arrived from Italy and Europe.

By mid-1946, the last remaining five original Group personnel, who had served three and a half years overseas were homeward bound. So the old 63 Map-Repro Group, the only Map Repro Group that served throughout the Burma Campaign, was changed dramatically and awaited the time when India became partitioned.

Apart from the printing capabilities, which broadened with time, many of the Group had artistic skills. This meant that a number of unit publications were produced. Many were light-hearted and contained appropriate cartoons others were sketches of locations.



Examples of Non-Mapping Products

In the post-war years Johnnie kept in touch with several of us. He always told us that if any of us wanted employment his company would be available. Three of the litho printers went to work at Ben Johnstons of York.

Society for Army Historical Research - Templer Medal for 2021

On behalf of the SAHR, I write to congratulate you formally on your award-winning books and to thank those of you who were able to attend the event at the National Army Museum (NAM) yesterday. I want to thank especially the Callahan, Marston and Jarboe families for flying across the pond to be present. It was a pleasure to meet and talk with so many of you yesterday, albeit briefly.

I also wanted to apologise that our Patron (Field Marshal HRH The Duke of Kent KG) was unable to attend and that your engraved cut glass goblets were not available. Rest assured that the goblets will be following as soon as feasible from Charles Street, our Treasurer (copied in). As Sterling cheques would be problematic (and costly) for those of you resident in the US and Australia, Charles will arrange a bank transfer: please supply him with your bank details if you have not done so already.

For the record, the results of the 2021 competition were:

Medal

Winner

The 1945 Burma Campaign and the Transformation of the British Indian Army by Prof Raymond Callahan and Prof Daniel Marston (University Press of Kansas)

First Runner Up

Semut : The Untold Story of a Secret Australian Operation in WWII Borneo by Prof Christine Helliwell (Penguin Australia)

Second Runner Up

History of the British Army 1714-1783 by Prof Stephen Conway (Pen & Sword)

Best First Book

Winner

The Changing of the Guard: The British Army since 9/11 by Simon Akam (Scribe)

First Runner Up

The Regiment that Mapped the World by the late Major Alan Gordon (Royal Engineers Association)

Second Runner Up

Indian Soldiers in World War I: Race and Representation in an Imperial War by Dr Andrew Jarboe (University of Nebraska Press)

Best wishes

John

Dr John Peaty FRGS FRHistS

Chair of Judges

Templer Medal

Society for Army Historical Research

Dave Johnson and Chris Nash attended the award ceremony at the NAM in London on 27 April 2022. Dave received the award on behalf of Alan. Chris has made the following comments – “*The event was very much the historical academic world. Putting everything into perspective there were over 50 submissions. Alan was the runner up in the 'Best First Book'. Alan's efforts were recognised and to come ahead of a professional historian indicates the high quality of Alan's research and writing. The winner Simon Akam is a professional journalist and writer – with years of experience. I believe that everyone can be very proud of Alan's achievements.*”

Notices

Copies of the last newsletter sent by post to the following members have been returned as not known at the address, and their phone numbers are no longer valid. If any members know of their whereabouts or can provide any contact information, please contact the Hon Sec on “REA-MILSVY-Sec@outlook.com” or on 01635 292407. Thank you.

L Banister -	A driver Served 1978 – 93. Last known address Newbury.
Owen Williams -	Ex Fd Svy Sgt Served 1943-56 last known address Lenten Pool, Denbigh.
Victor Watson -	Ex Lt Served 1946-48. Last known address East Keswick, Leeds.

Survey Companies - 200th Anniversary

The 200th Anniversary of the formation of 13 Survey Company, Royal Sappers and Miners will take place on 1 December 2024 and, to mark the occasion there is a plan to update the Squadron's history. Currently the historical record stands at 1986 when 42 Survey Regiment was disbanded, and in order to bring this up to date, we require your help! The aim is for the history to be representative of everyone's experiences and memories thus, we are collating reminiscences from all ranks, arms, and services (and nationalities) who served with 13 Squadron between 1986 and 2020. However, if you would like to make a contribution about your involvement in an event that occurred prior to 1986, please feel free to do so. We are currently looking for expressions of interest and more information will be provided on the scope/aim/etc if you feel you can contribute. Contributions can be anything from a short paragraph to several pages; nothing is too little or too much.

To express your interest please contact the Editor at 13Sqn.History.Editor@gmail.com.

Dear Members,

We have been notified of the Corps Freedom of Medway and Memorial Parade which is being held over the weekend of 16-18 September 2022. A summary of events is as follows:

Ser	Date	Time	Activity	Location
1	16 Sep 22	1200hrs	Arrivals	Student Reception
2		1800hrs	Reception & Dove Cup	WOs' & Sgts' Mess
3	17 Sep 22	0930hrs	CSM Update	Auditorium
4			QPJ Party	Station
5		1030hrs	Standard Bearer Comp	Regimental Square
6		1400hrs	Trade Bay/Families' Day Event	Station
7		1930hrs	Formal Dinner	WOs' & Sgts' Mess
8	18 Sep 22	0900hrs	Memorial Parade	Obelisk
9	18 Sep 22	TBC	Cathedral	Rochester

Members attending are asked to contribute £25.00 per head for the weekend.

Note: Accompanied personnel CANNOT be accommodated.

Interested personnel are asked to contact the Branch Secretary for more details.

Those wishing to attend are to submit their request to the Branch Secretary NLT 16-Jul-22 in order to meet the bookings deadline.

Notification of Deaths

Mike Sharp

Sue Sharp, widow of the late Mike Sharp, has notified us of his passing in August 2021.

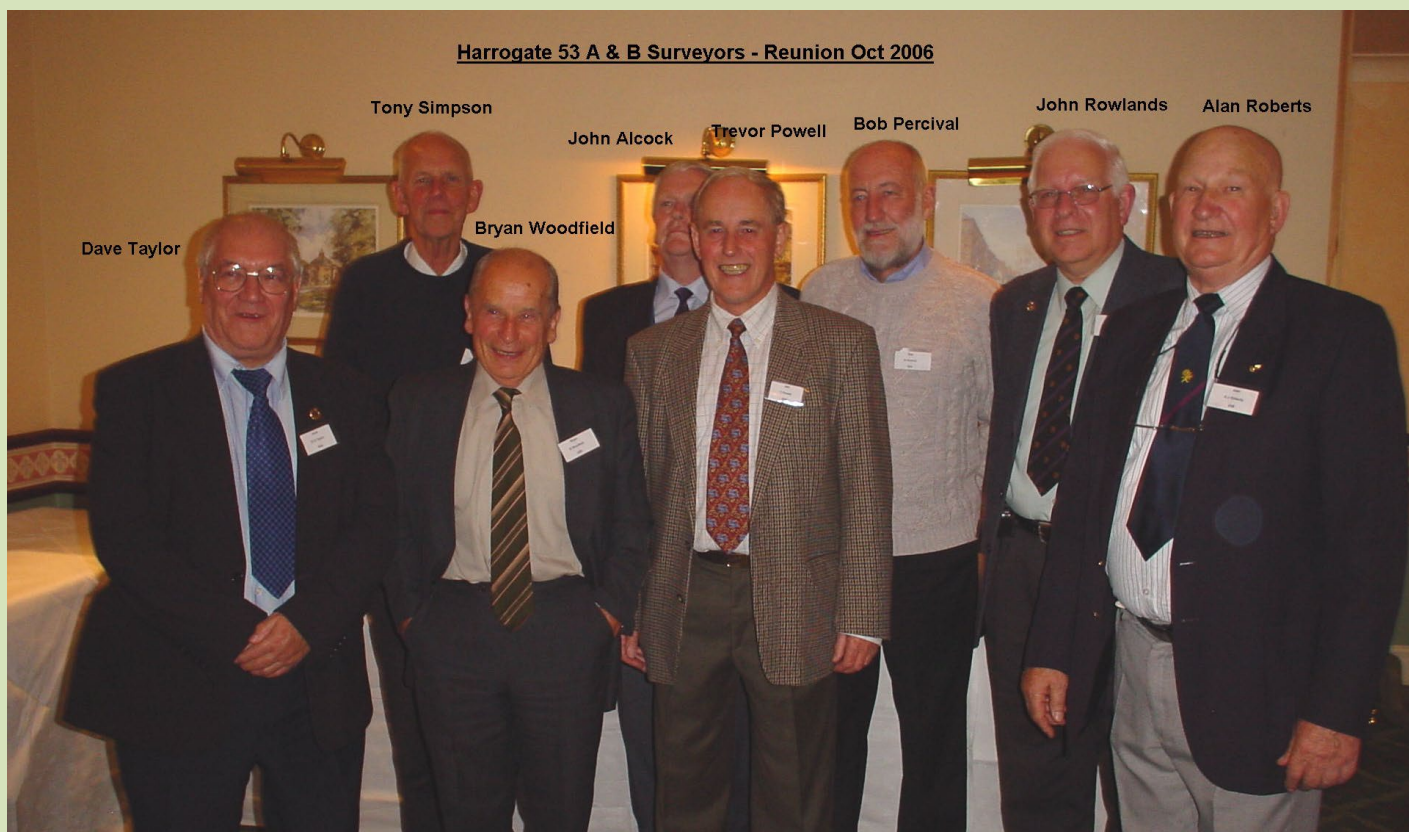
Mike was a Svr Topo and served with 42 Survey Engineer Regiment in Egypt and Cyprus from 1953 to 1957 and was awarded GSM Cyprus. As a civilian he was a Member of the Institute of Building Control Officers.

Gordon Clive Brown



Maurice Friend has been informed by Bill Glover of the death on 6 March 6 of 23419573 Spr. Gordon Clive Brown, Dtmn Topo A3. Gordon was a National Serviceman who was part of the Drawing Office team who worked at Survey of Kenya HQ Nairobi, whilst serving with 89 Field Survey Squadron RE from July 1958 until the Squadron disbandment in July 1959. In civilian life he worked at Ordnance Survey and lived in the Cotswold's. Bill, Gordon, and Maurice used to go around together in Nairobi. Bill visited him in retirement, and I understand that he had been poorly with lack of mobility for quite a while. Maurice comments - *There can't be many of us from 89 Sqn left now.*

Dave Gwynne Taylor



George Johnson and others have informed us of the sad news that Dave Taylor died on 30 Nov 2021. An emergency team had to break into his house and rush him to hospital where he did not regain consciousness. He died of pneumonia and hemorrhaging.

Dave was a cartographer and joined as an apprentice and served from 1953 to 1966 being awarded a GSM Cyprus. His sister Ann arranged the funeral but unfortunately did not have any details of his friends and ex-colleagues.

Nicholas John Cheesman **June 1942 – March 2022**



Nick was born on 5 June 1942 in Watford Hertfordshire, but by the age of 5 had moved south with his family to Tunbridge Wells. Being an adventurous lad he was often found in the woods chatting to the local tramps fascinated by their colourful stories. Nick loved his music and in particular the American Blues his first record being *Hootin' The Blues* by Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee played over and over on his prized portable turntable.

On leaving Huntleys Secondary School, Nick took up an apprenticeship learning letterpress printing skills. Being bored and looking for adventure Nick joined the Army in 1962 and was posted to Singapore with the RAOC, where he was printing Army Forms, a Gurkha Newspaper and various other bits using Rotaprint and Gestetner presses. It was here that he met his good mate *Gilly* Gilmore

Nick recalled – One morning an Army truck arrived with a couple of guys who wanted to use our guillotine to cut some paper as theirs had broken. We asked where they worked and what they did? Back came the reply “we are map printers with the Royal Engineers – you should come and have a look at what we do.” So on our day off we took a trip to the RE Printing (84 Survey – Dover Road) and what an eye-opener - air conditioning, big presses etc. We immediately put in for a transfer to the RE's and were taken on the strength of 84 Survey Sqn on 15 July 1963.

Nick returned to the UK and met and married Christine Eaton, a trainee nurse, at St Leonards on Sea in 1966. Yvette was born the following year and Nick still in the Army was posted to Barton Stacey and the family lived in Andover. Nick was fortunately posted back to Singapore in July 1969 returning in January 1970 when the Singapore Base was closing down.

Nick left the army in 1970 and following the birth of son Scott moved to Coxheath near Maidstone Kent and took up employment with Printers Alabaster Passmore. Christine was able to complete her training as a nurse, and also to qualify as a midwife.

Nick was huge fan of Motor sport and owned a Ford Mustang Mach 1 – which was far too loud for Chris who referred to it as *That Bloody Mustang*. His mate Gilly lived in the Isle of Man, which was ideal for going over to watch the TT Racing. Nick was also a lover of space travel and I understand was offering his services as a pensioner to aid the research programme, apparently without telling Chris. Nick will also be remembered for organising a number of very successful Survey reunions the biggest was at Pontins at Caister in Norfolk.

Nick had lived with rheumatoid arthritis since his sixties, and despite the pain getting progressively worse, never complained. He was taken ill earlier this year and after a stay in Maidstone hospital it was discovered he was fighting advanced bone cancer. He died in hospital on 3 March, age 79.



*A reunion at Bill & Vicky Chapmans at Windsor Great Park. (Bill was Topographic Draughtsman for the Great Park Est)
Back – Bill Chapman, 'Gilly' Gilmore, Nick Cheesman, Dave Hurd.
Front – Vicky Chapman, Babs May, Chris Cheesman, Ted May, Jen Gilmore, Eva Hurd.
(photo courtesy of Ted May)*

Malcolm (Mac) Douglas Parr

June 1944 to March 2022



Mac was born of 15 June 1944 in Southall Middlesex and attended Dormer Wells Secondary School. In 1959 following the early death of his father the family moved to Plumstead Common in South East London.

By this time Mac had decided to join the Army and arrived at the Army Apprentice College, Beachley, Chepstow to start his trade training in April 1960. Mac was a keen sportsman and while at Beachley played a lot of football and was the Army Junior Cross Country and One Mile Champion.

Following the completion of his training and qualification as a Field Survey Technician Class III he was posted to Cove for his Combat Engineering course. He was then posted to 42 Svy Engr Regt Barton Stacey, where he joined a survey detachment to the Far East arriving in Singapore on 9 February 1964. After 6 months working in Borneo and Sarawak he returned to the UK and in December married Wendy.

Mac and Wendy did a lot travelling after that with a variety of postings to Brampton, Italy, Northern Ireland, Germany and Canada, not to mention holidays in Greece and North America.

Their son Simon was born in 1968 while Mac was an Instructor at AAC Beachley and Natalie adopted whilst on their tour in Canada. Their daughter Natalie has three children, Julia, Dominic and Andrew.

Mac retired in 1984 and decided to enter the publican trade running many establishments in such places as West Lavington, Erith and Plumstead. They finally settled at St Leonards in Sussex.

Mac had a number of health problems and was later diagnosed with Alzheimer's Dementia. Wendy spent the last few years caring for Mac and making his life as comfortable as possible. The hospital realising that the end was close allowed Mac to return home to be with Wendy and his family. Mac died on 4 March, age 78.

Keith (Jack) Milburn



Dave (Streak) Hobson has informed us of the death of Keith (Jack) Milburn.

Keith started at AAC Chepstow, and Dave was with him in 84 Survey during 1966, in Sabah. Keith was not a member of the Association, but he did contribute to the 'memories' section on the website.