

The Military Survey (Geographic) Branch

Royal Engineers Association

Spring Newsletter 2023 – issue 87



His Majesty The King has become Colonel-in-Chief of the Corps of Royal Engineers - a role previously held by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. His Majesty received Lieutenant General Sir Tyrone Urch KBE (Chief Royal Engineer) at Buckingham Palace. FB - King Charles III dated 28/03/2023.



The King wore a Royal Engineers tie during a historic speech to Germany's Bundestag before meeting troops from the Corps (Joint Amphibious Engineer Battalion 130 - 23 Amphibious Engineer Squadron, Royal Engineers) based in the country. FB – BFPS Forces News 30/3/2023.

Avro Lancaster PA474 of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight



Many of you will be familiar with PA474 performing at air shows, fly pasts or transiting throughout the UK. However, few of you, if any, will be aware of the working relationship between PA474 and Military Survey.

Background History

PA 474 was built at the Vickers Armstrong Broughton factory at Hawarden Airfield, Chester on 31 May 1945, as a Lancaster B.1. just after VE day and was taken on Strength/Charge with the Royal Air Force with s/n PA474. She was intended for use by the British Tiger Force in the Far East. However, with the end of the war with Japan the aircraft was not needed and PA474 entered storage.

PA474 was then converted to a Lancaster PR.1. and with the gun turrets removed was transferred to 82 Squadron and used for survey photographic duties in East and South Africa.

The project for the extensive aerial surveying of large areas of British Africa, was first discussed in 1943, when the Colonial Research Committee agreed to the Colonial Survey and Geophysical Committee drawing up a scheme to undertake geodetic surveys and topographical mapping of Africa at the end of the war. Early in 1946, at the newly opened headquarters of the Directorate of Colonial Surveys at Teddington, Middlesex, it was decided that the survey unit should be drawn from the photographic-reconnaissance strength of the RAF. Apart from the extensive aircrew training a survey of this nature would provide it was felt that the RAF was best equipped for the long-distance flying such a programme entailed. It was also considered that the deployment of flying detachments could more easily be provided for by the RAF, which already had available radar equipment and airfields adjacent to the areas included in the project.

It was with this background that, in March 1946, a flight of No 541 Squadron was sent to Accra, on the Gold Coast, to begin photographic operations over an area covering 145,000 square miles of Gambia, Nigeria, Gold Coast and Sierra Leone. This initial attempt was affected by bad weather and the unit returned to UK a year later to re-organise and become the nucleus of No 82 Squadron.

In April and May of 1947, as a complete unit, No 82 Squadron moved to RAF Station Eastleigh, near Nairobi in Kenya, which became the principal base for the whole survey operations. The squadron consisted of approximately 310 officers and airmen with seven Avro Lancaster's Mk 1 (PR) ("B" Flight) (including PA474) for photography, and two Dakotas for passenger and freight carrying and supply-dropping to the parties manning remote radar-beacon sites. When it first went to Africa, No 82 was commanded by Wg Cdr J Abrahams OBE RAF.

Also included with the squadron personnel was a detachment from No 6 Radar Air Survey Liaison Section Royal Engineers: -

357651	Capt.	Wilson
1929003	Sgt	Haines B J R
1953079	Lcpl	Broadway W
1952909	Lcpl	Chowney G C
14968931	Spr	Beckett W J
1953999	Spr	Burnham G R
1953526	Spr	Hall G C
1931794	Spr	Rushworth P S
1953612	Spr	Trayford K R
1952854	Spr	Witham J S

Note: The Section travelled as part of the Main Sea Party (Party "C")

"B" Flight No 82 Squadron RAF Benson
Movement Order Number Two Dated – 25 March 1947

Information

1. "B" Flight (Lancaster aircraft) of No 82 Squadron is to move to East Africa for photographic survey duties in accordance with Headquarters Central Photographic letter reference CPE/9/AIR dated 20 March 1947 (Plan for the East African Survey by 82 squadron).

Intention

2. To move "B" Flight, 82 Squadron from RAF Station Benson by air and sea to RAF Station Eastleigh Nairobi.

Execution

3. The unit is to move in four parties: -
 - (a) Advance Air Party
This party as shown Appendix "A" will leave by the Dakota Aircraft KN.515 under command of S/Ldr Randall from Abingdon 29 March. A separate movement order for this party has been issued and is attached as Appendix "A".
 - (b) Main Air Party (Party "B")
Personnel of this party as shown at Appendix "B". They will proceed as aircrews and passenger in seven Lancaster aircraft which will fly out individually at dates to be given later. The first Lancaster will leave about 2 April.
 - (c) Main Sea Party (Party "C")
Personnel of this party are shown at Appendix "C" and will proceed to No 5 P.D.C. RAF Burtonwood on 26 March 1947. They will remain under C.C No 5 P.D.C. who is responsible for making arrangements for their move to the port of embarkation.
Officer in charge Main Sea Party - F/Lt R Dubock
 - (d) Follow-up Sea Party
A list of the personnel comprising this party together with a separate Movement Order will be issued shortly. The party is likely to consist of about 1 Officer and 20 other ranks.

Note: The appendices are not included but can be found in *TNA File – OD 6/613*.

In late 1947 the Army Council met to consider the most appropriate channels of command and control of No 6 Radar Air Survey Liaison Section, Royal Engineers, and decided the following: (War Office letter 20/Engrs/7169 (SD1) dated 10 February 1948).

That the function of this Unit is to assist the Air Officer Commanding, Central Photographic Establishment, Royal Air Force, in all matters relating to the Survey photography undertaken by the Central Photographic Establishment for the Director of Military Survey, War Office, and to interpret to the Air Officer Commanding the technical needs of the Director of Military Survey. By agreement between the War Office and Colonial Office, the Section also performs a similar function on behalf of the Director of Colonial Survey.

Hitherto, the Section had operated with its Headquarters at the Central Photographic Establishment, RAF Benson, and a detachment with 82 Squadron, Royal Air Force, in East Africa. It has now been decided that the whole Section shall be concentrated in East Africa, alongside the Squadron carrying out the survey flying. The Section commenced its movement from Southern Command to Nairobi at the end of 1948.

It had been agreed with the Air Ministry that operational command of the Section should be vested in the Air Officer Commanding, Central Photographic Establishment, who may delegate this command to the Officer Commanding 82 Squadron, or as he sees fit and has also been arranged that the squadron shall provide the Section with accommodation and messing.

Technical Direction of the Section will be exercised as heretofore by the Director of Military Survey, War Office, who will delegate from time to time such control as may be necessary to the Director of Survey, Middle East Land Forces.

The PR Lancaster's had a normal range of 2,300 miles and maximum range of 2,900 miles, with a cruising speed of 200 knots. Photographic ceiling at 23,000 ft was a handicap in mountainous country, for it was impossible to get the required 15,000 ft over some of the peaks in order to take the photographs at the pre-determined scale of 1:30,000.

The area in square miles of the entire photographic task in Africa, assuming all areas unmapped or in need of revision were to be photographed, can be seen from the following: --

Territory	Total area	Areas mapped Topographically	Areas unmapped or in need. of revision
<u>East and Central African Territories</u>			
Uganda	80,360	62,500	40,860
Kenya	219,730	73,530	189,200
Tanganyika	360,000	20,800	339,200
N. Rhodesia	287,950	97,950	190,000
Nyasaland	48,000	---	48,000
Br Somaliland	68,000	---	68,000
Zanzibar and Pemba	1,020	1,020	----
Seychelles	156	---	156
Mauritius	720	720	720
Total	1,065,936	256,520	876,136
<u>West African Territories</u>			
Nigeria	372,670	48,300	342,370
Gold Coast	91,840	54,560	37,280
Sierre Leone	27,920	27,920	27,920
Gambia	4,000	---	4,000
St. Helena and Ascension	50	50	---
Total	496,480	130,830	411,570
<u>South African High Commission Territories</u>			
Basutoland	11,716	11,716	11,716
Bechuanaland	275,000	---	275,000
Swaziland	6,704	---	6,704
Total	293,420	11,716	293,420
Total (All Territories)	<u>1,855,836</u>	<u>399,066</u>	<u>1,581,126</u>

The system used to integrate the exact location of the Photographing aircraft in relation to the ground involved the use of accurately plotted ground-control points and radar beacons. These were laid out by Royal Engineers of No 6 Radar Air Survey Liaison Section commanded in the early days by Major P J Carmody RE and then Major E A Miskins RE and from November 1948 by Major S Hellings RE. In addition to accurately siting the beacons by astral sights, the RE section was also responsible for the checking, classifying, and positioning of all the air photographs.

From the radar beacon – usually situated on hill-tops to avoid ground screening – the Lancaster navigators assessed their position in Gee units, flying inwards towards the beacon and turning on to course as the appropriate Gee unit was reached. This method obviously meant that the resulting photographic overlap strip formed the circumferential arc of a circle and also that the aircraft was performing a continuous turn.

To warn the pilot to fly the aircraft exactly level for each photograph, a red light showed in the cockpit just before the exposure. When it is remembered that with this system a photograph is taken once every 20 seconds and that the permissible limits were 2 deg., tilt, 3 deg., drift, 100 yds off course and plus or minus 200 ft in height, it can be realised how difficult, and fatiguing was the task performed by the aircrews generally.

Because of this mode of operation over circular tracks, it was found impossible to work closer than 30 miles to the radar beacon and, through erratic reception, unsatisfactory at distances much greater than 200 miles. Even the most expert aircrews failed to get perfect coverage and filling in the gaps was the most difficult job of all. Frequently, of course, these gaps were caused by cloud conditions co-incident with the inter-tropical front which moves up and down the African continent from April to October. The best photographic weather is experienced round about Christmas.



Royal Engineers setting up overlapping photographs from a sortie. The curved flight path is apparent.

Originally the squadron used the America-built K.17 cameras but in August 1951 a change was made to the F 49 type; this is the RAF designation for Williamson Eagle IX. The improvement in Photographic quality was most noticeable. This was probably due to two reasons: an improved optical system and the pressure-plate system for holding the film in perfect register with the focal plane.

During this long period of continuous flying, much of it over extensive jungle and desert areas, there was no serious casualty from any cause and only one Lancaster sustained any damage.

The return to the UK of No 82 Squadron, at the completion of their six-year task in Africa, brings to an end one of the biggest air mapping programmes ever attempted in peacetime. The arrival at Benson of the last Lancaster – Piloted by Wg Cdr S G Wise, CBE DFC the CO of No 82 Squadron – on Friday 31 October 1952.



Air Chief Marshall Lloyd was present for the arrival of the last Lancaster - speaks to the captain Wg Cdr Wise CBE DFC.

PA474 having returned to the UK in late 1952 continued work with 82 Squadron until 1964 when it was transferred to the Air Historical Branch (AHB) and came under control of the AHB for potential display in the proposed RAF Museum. While with the AHB, PA474 was used in the filming of *Operation Crossbow* and *The Guns of Navarone*.

PA474 Transferred to 44 Squadron, RAF Waddington on 18 August 1965 for full restoration as a Lancaster B.I. including fitting back the front and rear turrets.

On 7 November 1967 - Markings Applied: PA474, KM B finished in RAF markings. Marked to represent a Lancaster of 44 Squadron in which - *Squadron Leader J.D. Nettleton* was awarded the *Victoria Cross* for his part in leading the *low-level daylight raid on the U-boat engine factory at Augsburg in April 1942*. (The RAF Markings on PA474 vary, usually changed after each overhaul or to mark a specific event or squadron)

On 20 November 1973 PA474 joined the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight at RAF Coltishall Norwich Norfolk then moved to its present home at RAF Coningsby in March 1976.

Primary Source documents:

TNA File – OD 6/606 – DOD Functions of an Air Survey Liaison Section RE 1949-51

TNA File – OD 6/613 – DOS Air Photography East Africa 1947-48.

TNA File – OD 6/620 – DOS Report on Radar Survey, by Major Miskin 1948

TNA File – WO 402/373 – Report on No 6 Radar Air Survey Liaison Section, Royal Engineers, November 1948 to November 1952

Secondary Source Documents:

African Air Survey - Flight Magazine published on 14 November 1952

Wikipedia.

[\(Aerial Visuals - Airframe Dossier - Avro Lancaster B.I, s/n PA474 RAF\)](#)

(Researched, transcribed and compiled by Noel Grimmett - February 2023)

Editor’s Note: Having spent time researching the history of No 1 Air Survey Liaison Section Royal Engineers I have come across a number of interesting tasks undertaken by the section. I have selected two, which are rather special and I hope you will find of interest. Some of the personnel involved are I am pleased to say current members of the branch.

Joint Survey – 1 ASLS/HMS Vidal



HMS VIDAL off Gibraltar in 1960

Introduction

The field section of 1 ASLS tackles a wide variety of tasks, but the high point of the last two years has undoubtedly been the joint survey of the Oman coast undertaken with Royal Navy Hydrographer from HMS Vidal.

The requirement was to complete a gap of about 100 Km in the existing control by a third order tellurometer traverse from Ra’s Jibsh to Ras al Hadd.

Reconnaissance

The task was reced by OC 1 ASLS from HMS Vidal on her return trip from the Gulf in March 1970. At the same time the RAF flew a coastal strip of photography which proved invaluable in all stages of the task from the recce to the completion of PIRs. From the result of the recce, and in consultation with the Hydrographic Office, a plan was made for the task to be undertaken in January 1971.

The Plan

The plan was for three survey parties, each of one Hydrographer and two RE Surveyors, to observe at nine stations in a period of four days. Apart from the first and last nights when astro azimuths were to be observed the parties were to return to the ship each night. All movement was to be by HMS *Vidal's* Wasp helicopter.

As the intermediate stations had not been reced but merely chosen from photographs, and to allow for other uncertainties, the estimated time was doubled to eight days.



1 ASLS Detachment on HMS Vidal

*Standing: Lcpl E Male, Ssgt J Shaw, Capt HMS Vidal, Major J Eady, Lcpl P Fox
Kneeling; Lcpl I Bartle, Lcpl J Patterson, Cpl J Church, Lcpl R Maidment, Lcpl B Philp*

The Operation

The 1 ASLS party consisted of the OC, five field surveyors, two air surveyors and one draughtsman flew from Cyprus on New Year's Eve to be picked up at Masirah by HMS *Vidal* on Tuesday 5 January 1971. Work started on 6 January 1971 and proceeded according to the plan.

The RE tellurometer gave trouble on the first day but no time was lost because measurements were completed that night by the Astro parties using RN tellurometers. Fortunately, HMS *Vidal* had new MRA 3's which had been checked in South Africa on the voyage out. After the first day these were used exclusively. The RE surveyors observed all angles including the Astro and the Hydrographers operated the Tellurometers. There was close co-operation at all stages.

After placing the parties at the start of each day the helicopter was used for recce of the next lines. One extra station had to be inserted which increased the time taken from four days to five. 'Leapfrogging' of the rear station was carried out on the second, third and fifth days. The survey was completed with good closing results in five days.

On the return trip to Masirah excellent identification photographs were flown by the Wasp Helicopter. Whitewash crosses had been painted on the rear stations to provide positive identification.

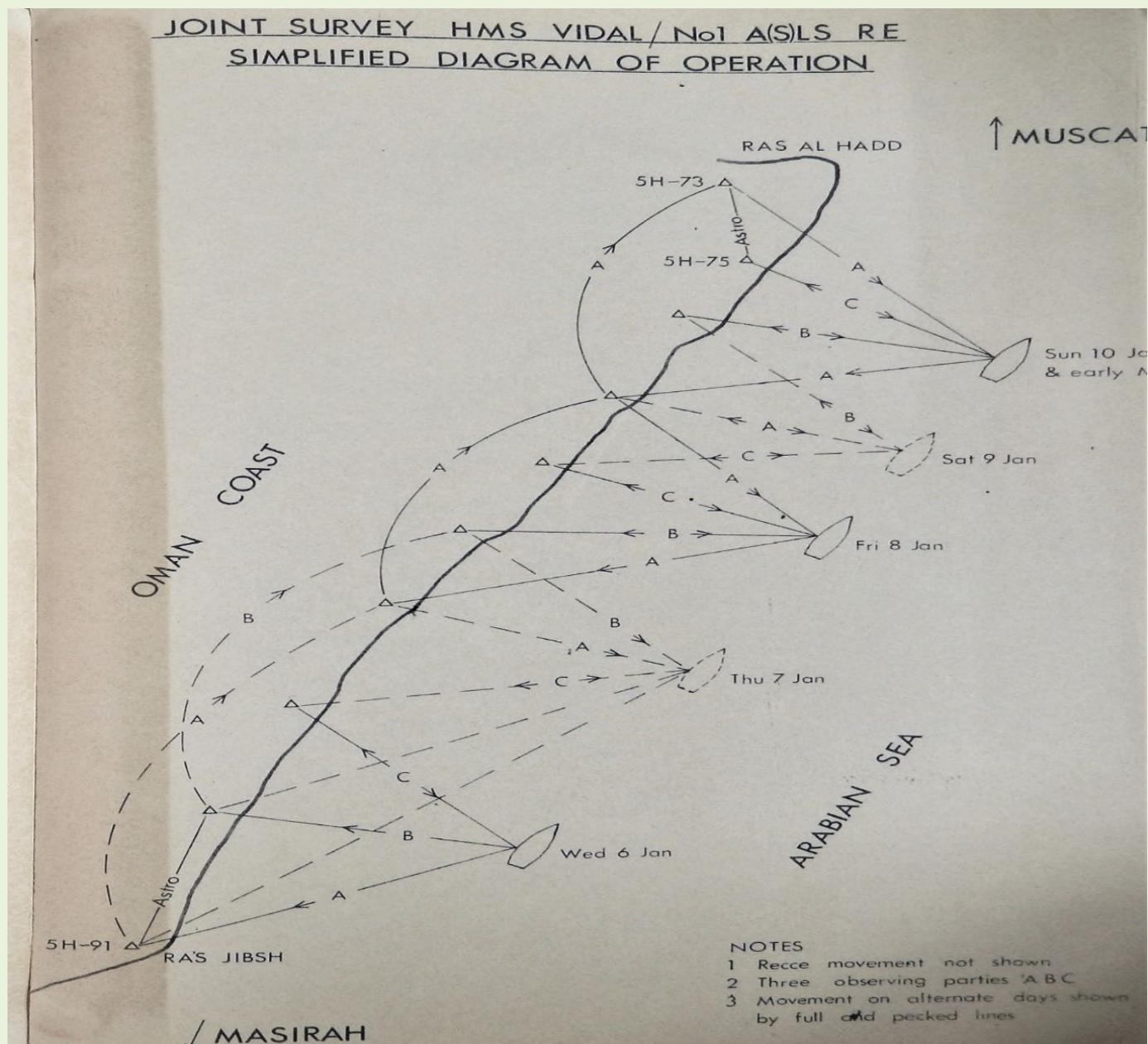
Although the coastal villages were avoided as far as possible there was some contact with the locals and the services of two liaison officers provided by SAF and BFG, was much appreciated.

The 'Lynch Pin' of the team was the helicopter which with one pilot and a very small ground servicing team flew 31.15 hours in the course of the survey.

The operation was commanded by the Captain of HMS *Vidal* and administration and logistics were undertaken entirely by the Royal Navy. Much thought went into the positioning of the ship, and it was invariably in the optimum position at the right time. Administration was excellent and the RE party were free to concentrate their entire energy on the observations. Computation progressed in step with the observations and provisional results were available within a few hours of the last astro reading.

Conclusion

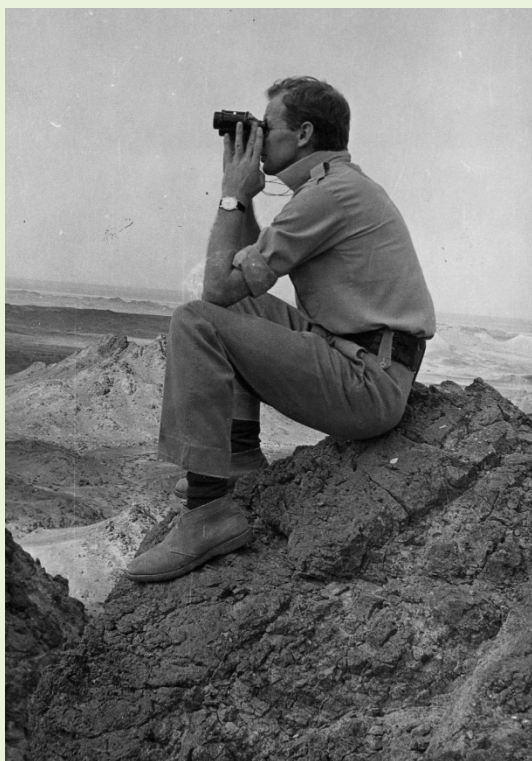
The operation was a complete success, and it is hoped that there will be further joint operations of this type.





Wasp Helicopter on HMS Vidal

Setting up an Observation station



Major John Eady RE

TNA file – WO 402/211 – Near East Survey Service & Gulf – Half Yearly Report : January to June 1971
Photos from 1 ASLS Photo Album
(Researched, transcribed & compiled by Noel Grimmett January 2023)

SAPPERS

IN THE

SOUTH PACIFIC

Survey of the New Hebrides

By Cpl R S H McNair RE

No 1 Air Survey Liaison Section RE

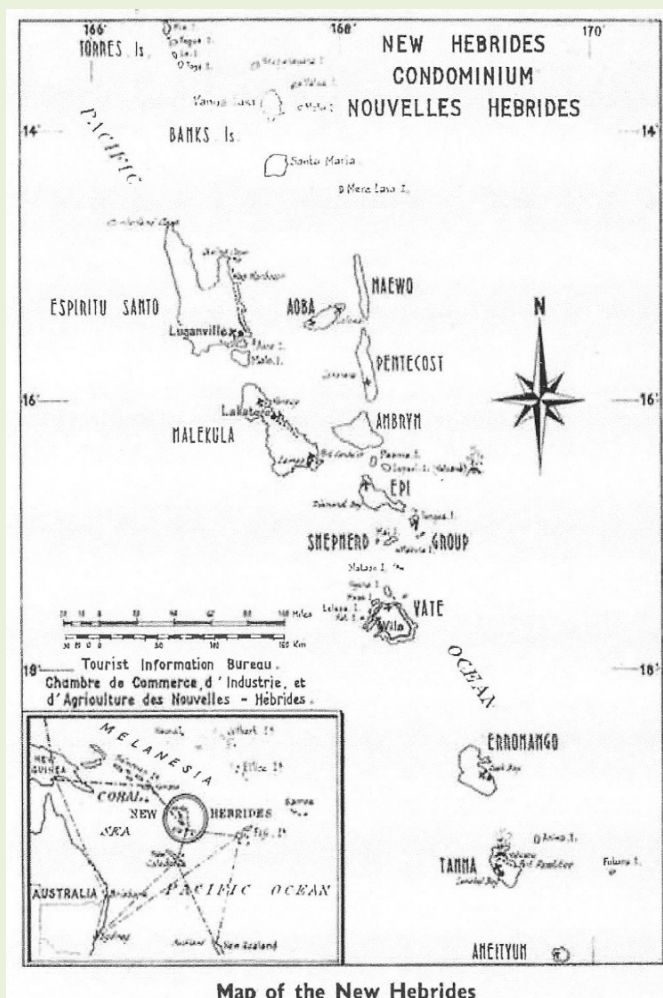
“Well, first of all RAF means Royal Air Force. Their work is to take photographs of islands, countries and continents These people have a special kind of plane called Canberra bombers They are usually sent by another team which is called the Royal Army. They are the ones that have more authority over the RAF team. They tell the RAF team what to do.” (From an essay by a New Hebrides schoolgirl in August 1972. See the full essay below).

With more accuracy, though less style, it can be said that the task 1 Air Survey Liaison Section was to carry out an aerial survey of the New Hebrides group of islands in conjunction with 13 (PR) Squadron RAF, so that up-to-date maps of the area could be compiled. Our responsibility was to provide flight planning for the pilots and navigators, brief them daily, and assess the photographic results of each sortie.

It all began on 18 July 1972, when with preparatory work completed, eight surveyors – Major M A Nolan, WO2 Payne, Sgt Gilhespy, Cpl McNair and Lcpl’s Bartle, Davidson, Starr and Stones – left Akrotiri with the main party on a five-day journey to Townsville, Australia. The RAF Britannia arrived at Townsville within minutes of its scheduled time after staging through Masirah, Gan, Singapore and Darwin. After a few interesting and expensive days in Townsville the detachment were ferried by RAF Hercules to Port Vila, New Hebrides, to find 13 (PR) Squadron Canberra’s already at the airfield and ready for work.

Having settled in at the three hotels in Port Vila and sampled the various cooking styles -- Vietnamese, French and English – the detachment was in good shape to begin the work of photographing the islands of New Hebrides. Operation “Addle”, as it was called, started well and the Canberra crews brought back plenty of work for the survey section; much midnight oil was burned in order to keep the RAF briefed on the progress of the survey. A large conference room had been “borrowed” from the Anglo-French administration, allowing plenty of space in which to spread our maps, surveyors and associated small stores!

Fine weather and good flying combined to give impetus to the task: by the end of the first week over three-quarters of the area had been covered by cloud free photography and by the time the weather deteriorated, most of the work was done. The air crews then had the increasingly frustrating job of dodging clouds and waiting for the weather to clear over the areas still requiring to be photographed. The quantity of work flowing into the surveyors diminished and the plotting of photography became more fragmented as smaller areas remained to be flown.



Our maps and photographs gave us a good idea of the New Hebrides islands, but we did not have time to travel away from the island of Efate, on which Port Vila is situated. The abundant marine life and warm waters of the Pacific we could see for ourselves, but there were many interesting places too far away for us to visit.

The New Hebrides group, lying between fifteen and twenty degrees south of the equator in the Southwest Pacific, comprises of small reef islands, active volcanoes, jungle-covered mountains and steaming lakes. The seventy-six thousand inhabitants of the islands are governed jointly by Great Britain and France in a Condominium, the only administration of this kind in the world.

Servicemen have been seldom seen in the New Hebrides since the Second World War, when thousands of American troops were based on the largest island, Santo, before the major thrust against the Japanese. The American presence provided many omens for Melanesian superstitions., the most famous of these being the “Cargo Cult”.

This becomes easier to understand when it is realised that such things as the Americans took with them – the troop transport, cargo planes, wireless equipment and thousands of tons of various stores – had never before been seen in the islands and were outside the scope of native experience. After the Americans left a belief grew up that a god would bring many planes carrying cargo for the islanders, and with this in mind the natives constructed airstrips and put together steel rods and metal assemblies to serve as radios. One or two of the airstrips can still be seen in the aerial photographs taken in the 1972 survey.

Then the time came to leave for Cyprus a mere 0.5 per cent of the area had to remain unphotographed because of persistent cloud. The 1:25,000 scale photography provides detailed topographical information and will assist in the development of the islands. Operation “Addle” was successful because the detachment received full co-operation from the authorities, and the weather was generally good. Also 13 (PR) Squadron, the RAF Photographic Engineering Squadron and No 1 A.S.L.S. dovetailed their operations to maximum effect. On the survey side thanks are due to Monsieur Louis Page of the Island Survey Department for his assistance – not to mention his hospitality.

While we were in Port Vila, work, rest and play were in stiff competition: rest seemed to come third and play a very good second. The social round began with a barbeque given by the British Residency and continued up to the very last moment with the British Ex-Servicemen’s Association Club (B.E.S.A) as a focus for many new friendships. The night clubs stayed open longer and beach parties seemed in order both by day and night. Everyone we met made us welcome and those of us who were lucky enough to go to Port Vila will never forget it.

If the survey proves to be of value to the people of the New Hebrides, it will in some measure show our gratitude.

(The article was first published in the Sapper Magazine in 1973, and reproduced by kind permission of the RE Museum)



The oil tanker “Pacific Mariner”. This tanker supplied all the jet fuel for the Canberra and Hercules aircraft.



Baverfield airfield at Port Vila. One of the three Canberra PR9 aircraft used for the survey of the islands is on the pan.

New Hebrides Air Survey

(An essay from a Form I Secondary Schoolgirl after a visit to the 1 ASLS Detachment)

The Royal Air Force Photographic Reconnaissance Team

Well, first of all, RAF mean Royal Air Force. Their work is to take photographs of islands, countries and continents. There are several men who join this team. They take photographs not for pleasure and because they want to look at them but because sometimes they might want to fight some of these countries and when they go to fight or make a war they will know and go to the exact part that they are going to fight.

They are usually sent by another team which is called "The Royal Army". They are the ones that have more authority over the RAF Team. They tell the RAF team what to do. The RAF follow the rules that have put up by the RA team.

There are no RAF or RA or any other teams like those in the New Hebrides because it is not yet independent and there are not many fights or wars in the New Hebrides.

Sometimes when they take photographs, they usually call it spying. They take the photos on the outside of the country because if they take it over the land, the natives there will see it and they will kill them. So they have a sort of cameras in the surveying planes which take photos sideways. They are nearly like surveyors.

Some of these people define themselves up with the following people: mechanics, pilots, navigators, mapmakers, engineers and some others. They have got to have all those because if they don't, their work will not be good. It will be spoilt. The mapmakers will have to see places and think quickly and also know a lot about mathematics. And the other to will have to have a sort of understanding like the map makers.

These people have a special kind of plane called Canberra bombers. This does not mean they are made from Canberra and contain bombs. This is just a name given to it. They are quite different from the ones we see every day in our airports. They contain lots of instruments which I can't name and I don't know. In these there isn't any room for passengers; it's just used for taking photos. Some of these are also used for bombing and contain bombs.

Those planes have a great deal of noise and they fly about 500 miles an hour. The fastest they fly is about 600 miles. In these only two people stay in: a pilot who controls the plane and a navigator who keeps on course or tells and shows the plane where to go and where it is. In other planes there might only be a pilot or a pilot, a navigator and passengers, so these people have a different kind of plane.

This team will also know how to fight in a war so if the plane or anything happens such as the enemy attacking them, they can fight them back.

The work they do costs a great deal of money by buying fuels, electricity, paying employers, water and food, paper for maps, some valuable instruments and some others. So this work is really a hard job to do and your country will have got to have millions of pounds if he wants to do this sort of work.

MT
NEW HEBRIDES

TNA File WO 402/214 – Near East Survey Service & Gulf – Half Yearly Report: July to December 1972

(Researched, transcribed & compiled by Noel Grimmatt January 2023)

Exercise Addle

- an aerial photographic survey of the New Hebrides

by Flight Lieutenant W J Lowry



The Lupevi Volcano

Nearly everyone has dreamed of escaping to the peace and tranquillity of a South Seas island – a blue lagoon, white coral sand, swaying coconut palm trees, and a warm gentle sun. Add to this a simple bamboo and palm thatch hut to live in fitted out with a comfortable bed, modern plumbing, a good French restaurant nearby, facilities for sailing, scuba diving, water skiing, tennis, and golf, as well as a dash of night life, and the scene fits exactly the island in New Hebrides, which was the home of a detachment of No 13 (PR) Squadron during the month of August 1972.

Before officials in the Treasury department suffer fits of apoplexy, however, let it be said that the detachment had a job of work to do and were merely fortunate to experience a unique way of life in a part of the world not normally visited by the Royal Air Force.

The task was to carry out an aerial photographic survey of the total area of the New Hebrides which consists of an Archipelago of 13 large islands and 60 small islands strung out in “Y” form in the southwestern Pacific, some 500 miles west of Fiji and 900 miles north-east of Australia's Queensland coast. Covering a total land area of 5,700 square miles, with a north/south distance of 560 miles, the island scenery varies from tiny coral islands to smoking volcanoes that seem to spring from the sea, to rolling mountains of jungle and grassy uplands. There is also an underwater volcano which boils in the Pacific waters, whilst the volcano on the island of Tanna is the world's most easily accessible and the turbulence caused by its activities can be distinctly felt in an aircraft flying 12,000 feet above it.

The islands were first charted and named by Captain Cook in 1774. During the next century British and French missionaries (whose influence is still very strong today) and planters and traders began to arrive. Moves by both British and French nationals for the annexation of New Hebrides led to the setting up of a joint administration or condominium, the only one in the world. The population about 80,000, consists of approximately 74,000 Melanesians, 1,500 Polynesians, 3,500 Europeans, mainly French, British, Australians and New Zealanders, a few Americans and Chinese plus several hundred Fijian, Gilbertese and Tongan workers.

As there is no common dialect, (there about 120 different native languages) Pidgin English is the lingua franca but French and English are the official languages. The chief exports are copra, cocoa and beef, whilst the tourist industry (5,000 visitors in 1969) is growing.

Long Distance Operation

Reconnaissance squadrons of the RAF will carry out surveys in many parts of the world, but never has a Canberra squadron in recent times operated quite so far from its parent station in an area unable to offer any major technical services or equipment. The airport at Port Vila consists of a 6,900-foot runway with a small hard standing, tiny control tower, terminal building and small hangar from which Air Melanesia operate a fleet of Islanders. It has only one small fuel tank, presenting a problem which was overcome by having fuel ferried from the dockside POL site to the airfield in a continuous daily shuttle throughout the period of the detachment. Arrangements were made for an oil tanker to top up the bulk installation. The estimation of equipment and supplies for that action was a question of striking a delicate balance between the amount of space available on the transport aircraft and the knowledge that 12,000 miles is a long way to go for another gallon of developer.

On the 23 July 1972, the detachment commander, Squadron Leader C R Adams leading three Canberra PR9's, left Akrotiri and followed the usual East-about route to Singapore and then via Australia and Papua, New Guinea, night stopping Masirah, Gan, Tengah, Darwin, and Port Moresby; the aircraft arrived at Port Vila, New Hebrides on the 28 July; a strike by employees in the fuel industry in Eastern Australia enforced some last-minute revisions of routes. They were preceded by an advance party of groundcrew and a photographic processing team, who travelled in the first of two Hercules aircraft of ASC and No 70 Squadron, which transported aircraft spares, photographic processing equipment, film and chemistry. Meanwhile, the main body of groundcrew together with a team from No 1 Air Survey Liaison Section, Royal Engineers, travelled in a Britannia of Air Support to Townsville, Australia, and were ferried by Hercules to Port Vila. (*No 1 Air Survey Liaison Section Royal Engineers – OC Maj M A Nolan, WO2 Payne, Sgt Gilhespy, Cpl McNair, Lcpl's Bartle, Davidson, Starr & Stones*)

The Canberras were met by representative from the British Residency staff, and a small crowd of local people. A corner of the Air Melanesia hangar was made available for storage of spares and as a line office, whilst the photographic processing and signals communications equipment will set up in offices of the Condominium building in Villa. The ground crew were accommodated in Villa's two hotels; the aircrew went to the island's third hotel, some 3 miles out of town. Aptly named Le Lagon, it was situated beside a blue lagoon and built in the Polynesian style.

On Sunday, 30 July the first two survey sorties were flown one day ahead of schedule. Next day the planned daily flying programme of five sorties began and two weeks intensive activity followed. Particularly hard worked at this time were the No 1 Air Survey Liaison Section who are responsible for the classification plotting of all survey photography. Before accepting photography the specialist sappers have to carefully check the film for its quality and freedom from blemishes and then measure it for distortion (occasionally a film stretches beyond the few microns allowed in the standards set for survey). The photographs are then plotted on a master chart to check that the correct forward and lateral overlap between individual flight lines have been obtained and that the photography has been taken during straight and level flight.

Initially there was some bad luck and two magazines were rejected; one because of film stretch, and the second because fuel from a small leak had smeared the camera flat during flight. Very few photographic problems, however, were encountered on subsequent sorties.



*End of a sortie at Bauer Field, Vila, New Hebrides.
l to r - Sqn Ldr Adams, F/O Crowley, Fl/Lt Carmichael, F/O Broadbent*

Good End Result

The basic problem of all surveys is weather. In this respect the detachment was very fortunate in that nearly all of the survey area was cloud free at some time, with the exception of one small island on the northern fringe of New Hebrides, some 300 miles from Vila; this small area was repeatedly overflown with little result. The final result, however, was very satisfactory. By the last flying day, 19 August, of 3,301 nms of flight line required 97 per cent was accepted cloud free, a further 2.58 per cent with acceptable cloud amounts and on only 16 nm or 0.42 per cent of the task was photography not obtained. A total 62 sorties were flown during which 6,200 prints were taken. The ground crew had a splendid servicing record, only three planned sorties were lost: one due to last minute fuel pump failure and two due to starting problems caused by a faulty drum of AVPIN.

The aim of any detachment is to do the job well, but inevitably it is the place and the people that leave one with the most memorable impressions. The drive from the airport to town is along a dusty road past vast palm groves kept parklike by grazing cattle. The harbour is truly beautiful; blue waters contain an islet some 100 feet high, on top of which is sited the British Residency. The town of Vila itself struggles along a narrow shoreline with secondary streets climbing a steep hillside amid flowering bougainvillia. Most of the old colonial buildings have been replaced by concrete constructions denigrating their once strong French atmosphere. Society is classless, dress at all times very informal and the working hours of 8 to 11.30 am and 2 pm to 5 pm are a reflection of the gentle pace of life.

The British focal point of the town is the BESA (British Ex-Serviceman's Association) Club. Officers and men were made temporary members *en masse* and it was here that many friendships were formed. The club gave a unique barbeque which ran from 11:30 am until dusk, at a private house by the sea with sweeping lawns, set amongst widely spaced palm trees. About 40 New Hebrides people set the scene by performing a traditional song and dance or more accurately, chant and stomp. A lively and very tuneful native band of banjos, guitar and skiffle bass provided the musical accompaniment to three grass skirted Tongan women, who danced the "Tarmare" with grace and charm.

Before long, everyone put a flower behind his ear and joined in. Apart from the traditional roast pig, curry, chop suey, native dishes, together with rato, yams and sweet potatoes, gave the meal a unique south seas flavour. A more familiar style of evening barbeque was given by the British Residency; excellent steaks, plenty of beer and dancing to modern 'pop' music, but the site was again an exotic south seas beach.

The British Resident hosted the officers at a cocktail party at the Residency shortly after the arrival of the RAF party and throughout the detachment took a keen interest in its progress was helpful in many ways. There were also many invitations by both French and British (mainly Australian and New Zealanders) residents to individuals and groups for parties and dinners. The aircrew spent a delightful afternoon as guests of a retired sea trader and his wife; from their home, on a rise by a lagoon, the beautiful garden swept down to the water's edge, where there was a swimming pool and a summer house. The host spent the entire afternoon taking everyone water ski-ing in turn while others swam or lazed in the sun with cool drinks.

Social contact with the local people also encompass the full sporting programme. Four football, matches were played, all lost by the squadron. The golf team were trounced 8-1 but (honour) was salvaged by winning a cricket and basketball match, not that the result of these very friendly games, mattered.

The two main schools in Vila took a great interest in the photographic work. The third or fourth forms of the French Elysée and the British Secondary School visited the airfield and was shown the Canberras, as well as the work of the survey role of the squadron. A talk on the techniques of aerial photography and processes involved in map making was given to the fifth formers at the British Secondary School.



Parking space for three Canberras at Bauer Field

Return Flight

On Monday 21 August the detachment gave a farewell party in appreciation of the goodwill and hospitality shown by the local community. The following day was spent preparing for the return to Cyprus, and on Wednesday the 23 the Canberras left for Townsville on the first leg of their return flight. The British Resident and many of the newly made friends came to wave farewell.

The airport had a touch of a holiday atmosphere which was tinged for many, in spite of being keen to return to wives and families, with a touch of sadness, knowing the Squadron was unlikely to return. The Canberras followed by the main and rear parties returned to Cyprus on schedule.

No 13 (PR) Squadron have carried out successful surveys in many parts of the world. To this background of experience can now be added our unique knowledge of operating conditions in the Pacific. We note with professional interest that the maps of Fiji, Tahiti and many others Pacific Islands could well be updated, and of course No 13 Sqn would be delighted to take on the job.

(First published in AIR CLUES in February 1973) (Transcribed by Noel Grimmett – February 2023)

A Diary Date

Defence Surveyors' Association Annual Seminar



22 June 2023

Arlington Arts Centre - Newbury

The Programme

10.00 hrs	Assemble for tea, coffee and biscuits.
10.30 hrs	Welcome and Opening Remarks - Chairman DSA.
10.45 hrs	Session 1. Defence Geographic Centre Update - Ian Spencer.
11.30 hrs	Session 2. Uncrewed Underwater Vehicles (UUVs) - Cdr Joe Tretton RN.
12.15 hrs	Session 3. DSA Awards and Introduction to displays by Vision Engineering.
12.30 hrs	Lunch. (Including Vegetarian Option and Bar).
14.00 hrs	Session 4. Dieppe Raid - Mike Nolan
14.45 hrs	Session 5. D-Day Preparations - Chris Barrington-Brown
15.30 hrs	Tea.
16.00 hrs	Session 6. Map Supply during Op Telic - Drew Craig)
16.45 hrs	Closing Remarks - Maj Gen (Ret'd) Roy Wood, President DSA.
17.00 hrs	Departure.

Cost £30:00 per person

For further details, see the DSA Web Site: <https://www.defencesurveyors.org.uk/>

ARMY SURVEY BOOK REVIEW

The Regiment that Mapped the World by Alan Gordon, published by The Royal Engineers Association, UK, ISBN 978-1-5272-9582-7, Call number L3 4 19.

A new book of limited edition, with only 400 copies printed and no more than 10 of those here in Australia, has been acquired for QFHS Print Library.

For those interested in Military History, Surveying and Mapping, this book offers all of this and more. Telling the story of members of 42 Survey Engineer Regiment, UK, it records the work, life, and daily efforts to complete tasks and leave their mark on a map. The book spans from post-war 1948 through to 1985 when the regiment was disbanded. The motto of the Royal Engineers is *Ubique* and those with that word on their cap badge, including myself for a time, have certainly been just about *everywhere* within this period. Exploits through Europe, the Middle and Far East, the Himalayas, the Americas, the Caribbean and even Australia are recorded with stories, maps, timelines, charts, and many photographs within this A4 colourful 200-page book.

One may think that standing on top of a jebel, observing through a theodolite, whilst a camel train meanders through the dunes, is a peaceful job, but as author Alan Gordon says, “this book is dedicated to seven military surveyors who served with the regiment but remain in some foreign field.”

This book covers all aspects of army life during those 37 years, from government policy at the time, improvement in survey equipment, uniforms, deployment, and also light-hearted moments. It is based on personal accounts and photos contributed by not only surveyors but cartographers, printers and many other trades that made up the map production units, backed up by situation reports and research at The National Archives in UK.

Taking some 30 years to compile, this book began as a loose collection of photos and memories falling into the hands of Alan Gordon, a Topographic Surveyor with an interest in military history. Alan rose through the ranks from a Sapper, when I first knew him in Singapore where we were mapping in 1964 during the Confrontation with Indonesia, to become a major within 42 Survey. He ended up as the first military surveyor to be posted to the British Commander's-in-Chief mission to the Soviet Forces in Germany, BRIXMIS. He was also Operations Officer for 42 Survey Engineer Group during the first Gulf war. Alan Gordon's experience and first-hand knowledge of his subject is in contrast with many military historians whose writings are through civilian eyes.

The book concludes with the Balkan wars and a photo of Her Majesty the Queen inspecting GPS equipment during her visit to the Survey Group in 1998.

Additional information for family historians is a 4-page list at the end, giving senior appointments at the Regiment and the numerous field squadrons throughout the world with names, rank, and dates.

In a similar vein is *The Great Arc* by John Keay, another survey book in my collection that records a 50-year task during the early 1800s. It tells the story of measuring a Meridian line 2500km, North from the tip of India to Dehra Dun at the base of the Himalayas, part of the time led by Colonel George Everest (pronounced Eve-rest by his family) who now has the world's highest mountain named after him. Showing true dedication combined with an amazing measuring accuracy, they battled hostile terrain, extreme climate conditions, equipment problems, tigers, elephants, and death where, I quote, “the death toll of both British and Indians sometimes reached three figures in a single season.” Nothing much seems to have changed for our 20th century Royal Engineers professionals except the welcome lower death toll. An authenticated tiger footprint was found outside a survey party's tent in Indonesia during 1967 and I did hear of elephants in Borneo trampling on an army survey instrument also around that time.

Feedback from ex-army colleagues who have read Alan's book suggest that he could have said more about this or that mapping task, which occurred in far off places. I have to concede that those comments would be reasonable. However, such was the work at times, that many of us were vetted far above the normal security level owing to its secretive nature; possibly why an event was not mentioned. He does tell briefly of providing accurate survey information for both Cruise missile and Polaris submarine deployment. Both sounded demanding jobs long after my time, that I was not aware of.

In April 2022 in London, this book was awarded second prize at the prestigious Templer award ceremony in the First Book category for Army Historical Research. The awards from the AHR Society are to commemorate the life achievements and mark the Society's Presidency of Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer 1898-1979, for which there were some fifty entries this year.

Unfortunately, author Alan Gordon was not present to receive the award as he died late last year, just days after a proof copy of his efforts was rushed to his bedside.

I remained in touch with him until that time. A good soldier and friend indeed.

This book shows a different type of soldier from the usual combat picture. Here we find a military life with a purpose and end product, where accuracy is instilled into every surveyor and map maker from the beginning. Not everything goes right as Field Marshal Sir William Slim is believed to have said, “whenever the British fight a battle it is uphill, in the middle of the night and at the corner of four map sheets.”

British army surveys have continued around the world after the regiment’s disbandment, albeit under different formations and names. For example, in 2015 four personnel from 42 Engineer Regiment (Geographic) were dispatched to the Korean Peninsula to survey the Demarcation Line within the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea and re-establish markers created in 1953.

Books with a mapping theme that may be of interest:

The Great Arc by John Keay, ISBN 0 00257062 9 pub. 2000, the survey of India to determine the shape of the planet leading to the development of the country.

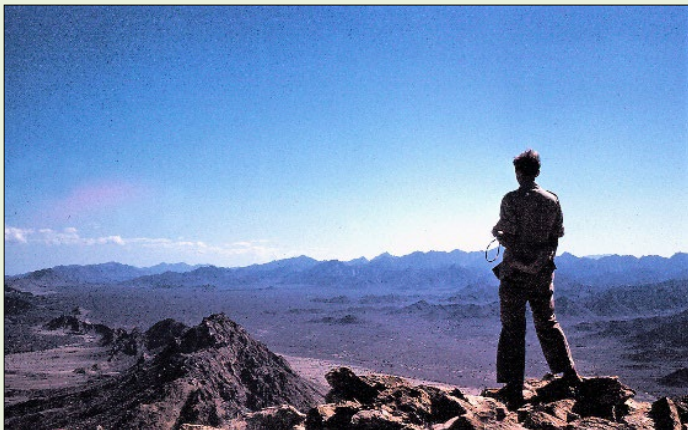
Australia’s Military Map-Makers by C.D. Coulthard-Clark, ISBN 0 19551343 6 pub. 2000, the story of The Royal Australian Survey Corps 1915-1996.

Lebanon to Labuan by Laurence Fitzgerald, ISBN 0959497900 pub. 1980.

The Royal Australian Survey Corps during WWII.

The Map Thief by Michael Blanding, ISBN 978-1-59240-940-2 pub. 2015, a true story of a modern-day thief who stole valuable ancient maps.

I have included four of my own photos from 1962 (not in the book). I was generally working in the region from the Dubai coast across to the East coast and northwards. The Trucial Oman is now part of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).



Al Hajar Mountains, Trucial Oman jebel, UAE



High Dune desert, Trucial Oman (now UAE)



With Bedouin in Trucial Oman



Night stop to fix broken vehicle – Trucial Oman 1962

Reviewed by Maurice Friend. (Email - mmkirinya39@gmail.com)
(First published in the Queensland Family Historian Nov 2022)

Notices

Grant to provide dehumidifiers to 42 Regiment families.

Shortly before Christmas 2022 the Branch was approached by the Regiment to see if we could help with the provision of some dehumidifiers for families living in sub-standard Service Families Accommodation (SFA). With the sub-zero temperatures in the Wyton area in mid-December, half a dozen of the Regiment's families living in SFAs were experiencing serious problems with damp from poor ventilation.

One means to alleviate some of the problems was the use of de-humidifiers and the Branch was approached to see if it could help with the provision of six machines – cost approx £1,000.

A flurry of e-mails between the committee members quickly agreed that the branch should help, and, with typical Sapper initiative, a means was found to not only agree to a grant of £500, but also to transfer the money to enable – with some funding from the Regiment - the dehumidifiers to be bought in a flash-to-bang time of 4 days, hopefully making for a much better Christmas for those deserving families.

After the Christmas break, the Branch received the following message from CO 42 Regt:

In the face of the rapidly increasing cost of living and ongoing and entrenched issues with Service Families Accommodation, looking after our people is increasingly challenging. Combating the cold weather in the run up to Christmas had exacerbated ventilation issues in the homes of some of our soldiers, meaning their homes were not to a livable standard. Timely action in the Regiment and, most importantly, by the Royal Engineers' Association Military Survey Branch allowed us to purchase dehumidifiers, at very short notice, to help ease some of these problems.

The dehumidifiers have been used to good effect and have improved the lives of those families. On behalf of 42 Engineer Regiment (Geographic) I would like to express my thanks for the support shown, once again, by the REA and their ongoing commitment to improving the lives of the people I have the privilege to command and their families.

I hope in the future that support such as this will not be required because, through concerted effort alongside RAF Wyton station, the condition of our SFA will improve. This will not happen quickly, almost certainly not in my tenure, but in the interim the support provided by the REA Mil Svy Branch will continue to improve the quality of life of our soldiers.

*Alex Mayes
Lt Col
Commanding Officer 42 Engineer Regiment (Geographic)*

No 1 Air (Survey) Liaison Section Royal Engineers

The Editor is researching the History of 1 ASLS and is keen to know the date when the Section was **Finally Disbanded?**

The section was working with 39 (PR) Sqn RAF and based at RAF Marham.

39 (PR) Sqn was Disbanded at RAF Marham on 28 July 2006 and was the RAF's final Canberra unit.



RAF English Electric Canberra PR.9 XH168/AD c/sign 'Hiram 41' from 39 Sqn RAF Wyton on short finals for RIAT on Arrivals Day 23/07/1999. (Pinterest)

BRANCH REUNION AND AGM

Saturday 1st April 2023



Annual Award “Spirit of Good Fellowship” – Winner 2023 - 42 Regt have nominated, Cpl Hart (14 Sqn) for the Annual Award under the following citation:

Cpl Hart has gone above and beyond what is expected of a JNCO in his demonstration of good fellowship, with his actions enhancing the experience and camaraderie of his fellow servicepersons in 14 Geographic Squadron. In May 2022, he organised Paddle for Bobby, which saw him achieve a world record by stand-up paddle boarding 130km along the river Ouse. As part of this, he signed up a significant number of Squadron personnel to pledge to paddle a leg of the expedition with him, raising a large amount of money and contributing to the memory of a fantastic soldier. A dedicated and enthusiastic PTI, he decided to add some variety to the Squadron physical training programme, so went out of his way to organise and run an assault course session at an external camp. Not content with this, he also organised a swimming session as well. These were fantastic fun and gave the Squadron an opportunity to conduct training they would not normally be able to do. Additionally, he is currently planning a double marathon charity event in memory of Sgt Bobby McCaigue, where teams of three from across the Regiment will race from Bobby’s resting place, back to RHQ.



Brief being given by Maj Simon Condon RE, 2IC on past and future activities of the Regiment.

Notification of Deaths

**23246361 Capt James (Jim) Leon Unthank
1940 - 2022**



***Jim Unthank (first left) anchoring the Tug-of-war team Cyprus 1972
they won a demi-john of brandy for being the smallest unit to enter a team.
(1 ASLS & Svy Directorate)***

Chris Cleeton has informed us of the death, of Jim Unthank on 31 December 2022.

Although not “Survey” he will be remembered by many having served as chief clerk at the Regiment in the late 70’s and also on the staff of the Survey Directorate Near East & Gulf, Cyprus from November 1971 to March 1974.

“Jim always had the interests of the Regiment and its personnel at heart.”

His funeral was held on 23 January. He is survived by his wife, Eileen, children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

Nigel Birch

The Branch has heard the very sad news from Ron Birch, that his and Nita's son, Nigel, passed away on Friday (3 March) after a short, but crippling, illness.

Nigel will have been known to many of the senior members of the Branch, and in particular those who baby-sat him when Ron and Nita were stationed at Hermitage and Chepstow.

The Branch sends its sincere condolences to Ron, Nita, and the family.

Michael (Mick) Fagan



It is great sadness that we have heard of the passing of Michael (Mick) Fagan, an Air Surveyor who served between 1977-89. Mick was diagnosed with kidney cancer in August 2021 and died on 21 January 2023.

Funeral was held at Babworth Crematorium, Straight Mile, Babworth Road, Babworth, DN22 8FJ at 1300hrs on Friday 10 March.

James (Jim) Hedley Young

It's sad to report the passing of James Hedley Young. Jim was 79c intake Air Surveyor at Chepstow and died last night after a long battle with Prostate cancer, his family were at his side. Ferg Brazier – FB 2/4/2023



Adrian Godfrey Lovell
“Lucy”

1954 to 2023



This is an abridged version of the Eulogy written and read by Adrian’s son James at the funeral service.

Jack thanked all those present for attending Adrian’s funeral.

Adrian Godfrey Lovell, Dad, Grandad, Grandad Adrian or even “Lucy” as he was to many, was born in 1954 in the British Military Hospital in Hostert, West Germany. They were living there at the time as his father, John, was posted to Germany with the Royal Engineers. When they got back to England, he spent much of his childhood days growing up in Nuthurst in West Sussex with his Mum, Dad, two sisters and brother. Dad would sometimes tell us about his house there with 3 acres of land for which he had fond memories.

In 1970, Adrian signed up to join the army, joining at Chepstow on 10 September as part of intake 70C. Maybe one of the guys from 70C will remember how he got the name Lucy? I’m not even sure my Dad knew where it came from? He spent the next 25 years proudly employed within the Survey Branch of the Royal Engineers. Much of his career there was in the training and development of others. He loved the experiences that came with this: the training, the sports, the travel and the adventure, the pension and of course, the lifelong friendships that he gained.

In 1984 he met Mum, Sarah. They met in the Crosskeys Pub in Chepstow where he was stationed at the time. He watched her dance to 'Agadoo' by Black Lace with Gillian. Eventually he and Mum got a house together, in Newbury first, and then they moved to Hungerford in 1988. They had a lot of fun together; his stories and the photos of them tell me that.

With dreams of a busy house, they quickly filled it up with two dogs, a cat and some goldfish. They then had my sister, Charlotte, who was born in February 1989. When Charlotte was a month old, they got married and then they had me the following year in 1990.

A couple of years later Dad's life, and ours, was completely turned upside down when our mum, and his wife suddenly died in August 1993. I can't begin to imagine how hard this part of his life must have been. He suddenly had two young children to raise on his own whilst going through the most unimaginable grief. He did have support from family and friends: Mandy, who lived next door helped so much, as did Gillian who was always there for him and us, and still is. But ultimately, he raised Charlotte and me.

He's our Dad and we could not be more proud of him. and we both know that he was so proud of us and that he would do anything for us. He'd call us gorgeous girl and handsome boy, and he still did. Growing up he gave us so many experiences, some were incredible and some we didn't do for long., but we all did it together anyway; the three of us. He took us climbing hills, mountains, triathlons, gliding, orienteering, surfing, camping; the list goes on. I don't know how he did it all, but he did and he did it so well and with a smile on his face.

Having retired from the Army, in 1995, at the age of 42, he started University at UWE in Bristol studying Law. A few years later, and with a lot of grit and determination he graduated with a Bachelor of Laws. I must mention the Blackstone Prize for Legal Method which he was awarded along the way that he was always so proud of. In 2002 he was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors.

In 2002 Dad was elected Chairman of the Reading and West Berkshire Branch of the Royal Engineers Association. A position he successfully carried out for the next 16 years alongside his long career as a Solicitor. There were many evenings with dinner and drinks that we were able to join him at the branch that I've got such good memories of.

I recently bought a book which is meant to help children understand grief; the book is called 'Badger's Parting Gifts', and I read it. It made me reflect on all the "parting gifts" that my Dad has given to me and how much I have learned from him. He'll have given all of us parting gifts. He was always learning something new, a new skill or trying to learn a new language, reading or dancing, and always trying to be that little bit fitter.

*But the difficulty I had with the book about Badger's parting gifts is that it describes an old and decrepit badger, which just wasn't my Dad. He was the opposite in so many ways. His love of so many different sports and endurance events stayed with him for his whole life - from orienteering, rowing, cycling, basketball, triathlons or badminton to his more recent love of the most ridiculous endurance events that he could possibly find. His stamina and determination on these events was remarkable; only last year he walked the Camino for the **second** time, walking 800km across the top of Spain. And last year he got to do it with Diana by his side. In 2021 he completed the "Jurassic Coast Challenge", walking non-stop for 100 miles, and in the same year going on to do another 50km "Run to the Sea", from Ringwood to Bournemouth.*



There's not much that he loved more than getting out, exploring the world and walking all over it, and he loved sharing it with everyone and trying to get anyone and everyone to do it with him. Which he had a few successes with: he got me to do the Welsh 1000 with him a couple of times, he's had Rob join him before, and Diana as well, obviously, and Luke (Charlotte's husband) has got a great story about their trip up to Scotland together to complete the Original Mountain Marathon. 2023 was planned out and he had it crammed full of even more silly events and trips away.

It was 14 years ago that he met Diana. They went for a coffee together in Fordingbridge and then a long walk across the forest. They were a match. In 2011, at the age of 57, my Dad moved in with Diana in Fordingbridge, he was still working as a Solicitor in Bristol at the time. Over the years they've had some truly amazing trips and experiences together.

In 2015 he became a grandad for the first time and now he's a grandad to four beautiful grandchildren: Mia, Layla, Josh and Elodie. He absolutely adored his grandkids, and they all loved him so much. He threw himself into being a grandparent: he'd go on days out with them, go swimming with them, trampolining or walking, and one of them was always sat on his shoulders. Like Charlotte and I experienced, he's amazing to grow up with.

Dad was so kind and so generous with his time and he loved being able to help people, and he'd go out of his way to help. You couldn't ask too much of him, and a lot of the time you didn't even have to ask. He would drive however many hours if it meant that he could help someone, whether that be trimming a hedge, house sitting, helping out with legal matters, or looking after his grandkids. But Charlotte and I both always knew that he would drop anything for anyone if we ever needed him, he was always there for us. His generosity and kindness will have touched so many.

Each and every one of us here have our own story with him. Our own memories. We each have the last time we saw him or spoke to him. The next thing we were going to do together. And the image of his smile.

He will be sorely missed by us all. A great sense of humour, intelligent. A real one-of-a-kind, truly incredible and happy man. I'm so proud of him.

James Lovell

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