

TRANSLATION OF ARTICLE IN NORWEGIAN NEWSPAPER

HALLINGDØLEN OF 24 JULY 1976

BRITISH TROOPS IN HALLINGDAL TO MAP MOUNTAIN RANGES
"Hallingdølen" airborne in Army helicopter

More than 50 British officers and men are visiting Hallingdal this summer to map parts of Hardangervidda, Hemsedalsfjellet and the Western part of Hallingdal. It is the first time since the beginning of the century that this area is being so thoroughly mapped. Then, of course, the methods and equipment for mapping were not even remotely comparable to the present techniques, and consequently the existing maps are not of sufficiently good quality.

Although the existing maps have been updated from time to time, they cannot be said to satisfy in any way the present-day accuracy and information needs. The Germans revised the maps to some extent during the war, and some had been done before and some was done later.

Now, completely new maps are being prepared, and this work is done by the 51-man unit that has come over from England. The unit's Commanding Officer, Capt Geoffrey Parkes, emphasises that the British themselves requested permission to come to Norway for mapping exercises. A similar outfit has, in the two previous years, prepared corresponding maps of the area further to the West, including the mountain ranges in the Voss area.

Capt Parkes says that this is a very good exercise in mapping for the British, at the same time as the exercise satisfies a long-standing need in this country for new and better maps.

Before the actual operations began, negotiations were held at a high military and civilian level concerning the execution of these tasks, and during the work itself the British are co-operating with the Norwegian Geographical Survey authorities.

The area now being mapped is really divided into four sectors, each sector to be covered by a 1:50,000 scale map. This means that four new maps are being prepared this summer, the same number as in both previous years. The maps are to be printed in four colours, and it is worthy of note that the costs involved in this work are defrayed in full by the British Army.

There is a lot of thorough work that needs to be done before the maps can be completed. Hallingdølen had the pleasure of flying with one of the helicopter crews for one day to get an idea of how some of the work is being done.

Our assignment on that particular day was to photograph parts of the area from an altitude of about 4,000 feet above ground level, which meant that we were mostly flying at an altitude of about 10,000 feet above sea level. At this altitude, and aiming at previously laid-out ground markings, we started the automatic camera equipment taking dozens of pictures while the helicopter was cruising slowly around.

Our mission completed, we returned to base with the film which would be developed and processed in the unit's camp, situated at a caravan site at Torpo, and in a military laboratory in England.

In England the film and the photos are checked in every possible way, and any errors are then reported back to the Torpo camp. When the film and photo prints have been cleared, large-size copies are sent back to Torpo, and the next stage can begin.

This is the marking of all roads, houses, huts and other items of interest on the photos. Some of this work is done on the ground by Land-Rover crews, but the helicopters are very useful in this connection, too. So we had to take to the air again to mark the exact positions on the finished prints that had been sent over from England.

The British unit will be staying in Hallingdal through the summer until early September, by which time they will have spent some three months here. British map experts will then process the information that has been gathered, and the initial map draft will be made after about a year's work. But it is not then finished - it will be sent to the Norwegian Geographical Survey which will have to do some field work including a thorough checking of the information given on the map. When the map can be said to agree with the terrain, the go-ahead is given for the final printing operation.

So there is every reason to expect the new maps to be ready for distribution in about two year's time, giving anyone who is interested the opportunity to replace his old and outdated maps.

Of course, the visiting British soldiers are not only interested in work while staying in the area. They are all quite pleased with the place and the fine summer weather they are having, but they would like a little more contact with the local inhabitants. To improve on this situation, Capt Parkes told us that they are planning to give a little party to which the children in Torpo and the surrounding area will be invited especially. The children will get a chance to see how the British soldier lives, and the highlight will probably be the opportunity to sit in the helicopters.

We would like to wish the British unit a pleasant stay in Hallingdal, and are looking forward to having new and accurate maps of some of our mountain areas.

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Captions:

1. Aerial photography is an important part of the mapping exercise. An altitude of 10,000 feet is necessary to obtain good results. A section of the Hemsedal mountains is seen in the background of our photo.
2. Commanding the unit is Captain Geoffrey Parkes, pictured (right) with a visitor from the Australian Army, Captain Reg Smith. Capt Parkes visited Hallingdal in March to choose a suitable site for his camp, and he found what he was looking for at Torpo.
3. Lance Corporal Paul Mitchell putting the latest impressions of Hallingdal down on paper for the people at home.
4. Pre-flight briefing. Helicopter pilot Phillip Stockley (left) studying maps and weather with Richard Nicklin and Brian Willis.
5. Reference points must be marked out on the ground for subsequent study of the aerial photos. This picture was taken after we had landed on top of the almost 6,000 feet high Hydalsberget to record cross references. The lake in the background is several hundred feet below the edge on which we are standing.

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