



# The Military Survey (Geo) Branch

Summer Newsletter 2017 – issue 64



## TURA CAVES - EGYPT

By Capt C H Newham SAEC

*Below is an article first published in the October 1945 issue of the South African "Sapper", which was attached to the Short Report of the Working of the Middle East Survey Service for the month of February 1946. The report also mentioned that on 26<sup>th</sup> February 1946, 512 Survey Coy RE moved from the caves, which had been its home for 4 years. The Company had moved to the caves from Abbassia in the period Dec 1941 to Apr 1942 when the threat of bombing in the Abbassia and Heliopolis area became a very real possibility. At the end of the war it was no longer necessary to stay in the Caves and as many men were feeling the effects of working underground it was decided to move back to Abbassia.*

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This short mining document on the famous Tura Caves, the development of which was largely due to the enterprising efforts of the South African Engineer Corps is only a combination of opinions arrived at from a close study of that area together with certain information obtained from local inhabitants who have handed it down from generation to generation and from relics that have from time to time, been unearthed during mining operations.

From a mining point of view its interest has no limit and from the historical side more so as most of the stone that was mined or quarried from these caves was used for the building of the Pyramids, which as every layman knows, are one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Tura Caves are probably the most unique in the annals of mining history. They are situated in a limestone escarpment 200-300 ft. high, known as the Gebel-el-Hof Range which runs parallel to the River Nile. The caves enter the face of the escarpment at a point about 12 miles south of Cairo and 2 miles east of the present position of the Nile. The valley bordering the East bank of the Nile and forming the floor of the escarpment is called Wadi Hof and geological evidence is strong in support of the fact that flood waters in previous eras, before the Nile was controlled by barrages and dams, not only completely submerged the Wadi, but came right up to the foot of the escarpment.

The first excavations were made about 5,680 years ago when Egyptian Engineers of that time decided that this limestone would be suitable building material for the colossal task with which they were faced, namely the construction of a tomb for the reigning monarch, and would satisfy his demands for the safe-keeping of his wealth after his death. The world-famous Pyramids are the result of their, and their successors, efforts and the lime-stone used in the construction of these vast edifices was nearly all mined from Tura Caves.

## **TYPES OF CAVES**

The caves stretch from Helwan City to near Maadi and in all, number about 56 of varying shapes and sizes. They are divided into three groups. The first consists of the lower escarpment caves whose floor level conforms with the present high-water mark of the Nile. The limestone from these caves is fine, closely grained, soft, can be cut with a saw, is easy to work with and fairly light to handle and in exposure to the atmosphere forms an outer covering of fine hard crust. It is thus ideal for monuments, decorations and ornamental work and was used solely for this purpose. The middle escarpment caves which run off into the floor of the escarpment have a parting of about 60 ft., to the lower caves. The limestone here is slightly harder and of a coarser grained texture than that in the lower caves and provided a large proportion of the building material for the Pyramids and for the buildings and homes erected at the Dead City, Memphis, Sakhara, Old Cairo and for many others. The top escarpments caves are approximately 80 ft. above the middle ones and were cut in such a position that the stone quarried could be removed easily by the plane leverage method on to sledges, big-wheeled wagons and barges. The stone from these was also considered a suitable building material for the great project.

## **ORIGIN**

Work in the production of blocks for the Pyramids was started prior to 3733 BC, and the magnitude of the task is indicated by the fact that about 85,000,000 cubic feet of limestone were used in the construction of the Great Pyramid of Gizah, built at the command of Cheops. Excavation of the caves continued over a period of many centuries and production varied from vast quantity indicated down to a mere trickle of odd stones for building purposes.



## MINING

The methods adopted in the mining of these caves are varied and interesting. Close study of the available evidence shows that over the length of the escarpment and over the long period of time there were many different opinions and many different systems adopted for excavation of the necessary blocks and their efficient and easy handling. They seem to have adopted the general principle of driving in three main shafts and leading off from these inter-connecting tunnels or fingers, roughly parallel to each other and conforming to the shape, in plan, of a man's hand. Within this general framework it appears that a foreman was put in charge of each production area to supply the necessary cut blocks for one complete floor section of the Pyramid and he could use whatever system of mining for maximum production that appealed to him as an engineer.

From the elevations of the present caves, the position of the fingers and the existence of survey marks on the roofs and side walls, it is abundantly clear that extensive and very accurate surveys were carried out for the fulfilment of the mining operations. The thinness of the partitioning walls between the various fingers, which would give maximum output, is an added indication, if such were needed, that the ancient Egyptians were no mean engineers. Support for the roof of the limestone escarpment was also taken into consideration for they realised that with a colossal output some sort of support was necessary to avert a major collapse. It is here that the different methods used by the various overseers are clearly shown. Some believed in large well-reposed natural pillars spaced at suitable distances apart to give them a maximum percentage of safety. Others of a more reckless nature were concerned mainly with production and output, neglecting supports and from evidence available many and fatal were the falls that occurred during this period of mining.

Another type of support used extensively in each abandoned finger as work proceeded was a dry packed stone wall, with a core of loose rubble, lying at an angle of 15° on either side of the center line of the finger and leaving a travelling way of approximately 15 by 10 ft. for ventilation and escape, if necessary. Only the cut blocks were transported to the mouths of the respective caves. All the loose rubble and chippings were packed in these additional dry wall supports. From a mining point of view these latter supports are preferable to the natural pillars as they have a greater cushioning effect than these natural pillars left in situ, as these gradually tend to scale off and become more dangerous and less effective. The loose rubble from the main shaft going into the escarpment face was used mainly for making ramps for handling the blocks outside the caves. As these tunnels were developed the rubble from each succeeding finger was packed into the previous one thus ensuring as little handling as possible and at the same time giving maximum support and steadying of the escarpment from any possible strata movement.

It appears that they worked out a very close and comprehensive schedule for maximum output and that daily tasks were marked out for each set of stone-cutters and that each foreman knew exactly how many blocks would be available at the end of each day. All the excavating and stone-cutting was done by hand using heavy wooden mallets, brass bolsters and sharp pointed steel picks in addition to steel-wedges for the breaking of the base of each heavy block. The system of cutting and breaking seems not to have varied through the centuries. It is obvious that such a system demanded an enormous labour force and statistics show that practically the whole nation in those early days was mobilised for the completion of this colossal undertaking. It was done for their king – their king was their God and judging from records and from signs in everyday life they were a very religious race; 100,000 labourers were used every three months and they suffered inconceivable hardships at the hands of hard and cruel overseers.

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*The camp outside the Tura caves*



*The entrance of one of the caves used as storage and maintenance workshops by No. 111 Maintenance Unit RAF at Tura-el-Asmant, Egypt. By October 1942, the RAF had established aircraft and engine repair, signals repair and general engineering sections within the caves, which also housed Army elements including 512 Army Field Survey Company RE, and a small hospital. (IWM CM 5892)*

In September 1941, it was decided to move No 2 Field Survey Depot RE with other units to the caves at Tura, six miles south-east of Cairo because it was considered to be too vulnerable to attack at the Heliopolis airfield. By August 1943 the Depot War Establishment was amended and the unit was then composed almost entirely of Palestinian and Jewish personnel, thus releasing UK survey tradesmen for more important technical work. 19 Field Survey Company RE arrived from the UK in September 1941 and were established in the Tura caves.



*19 Field Survey Company RE printing shop in the Tura Caves*



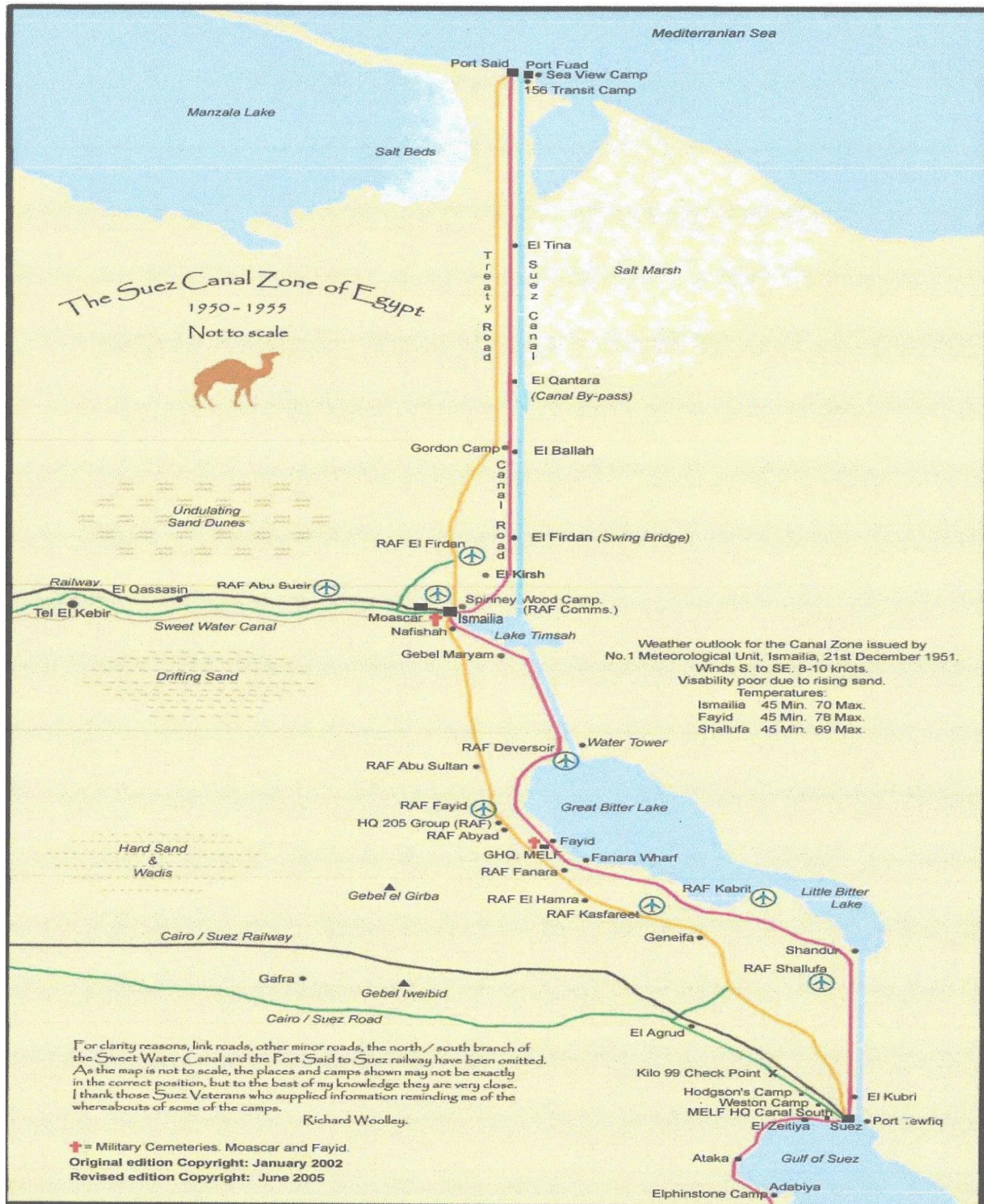
*19 Field Survey Company RE drawing section in the Tura Caves*



*19 Field Survey Company RE printing and stores section in the Tura Caves*

*Noel Grimmatt*

## The Canal Zone



Following the cease of hostilities, the Survey units located in the Tura Caves to the south east of Cairo moved to the Survey Camp Abbassia Cairo in February 1946. It was then decided to consolidate UK units into the Canal Zone and the Survey Units moved to Fayid and were settled in by April 1947.

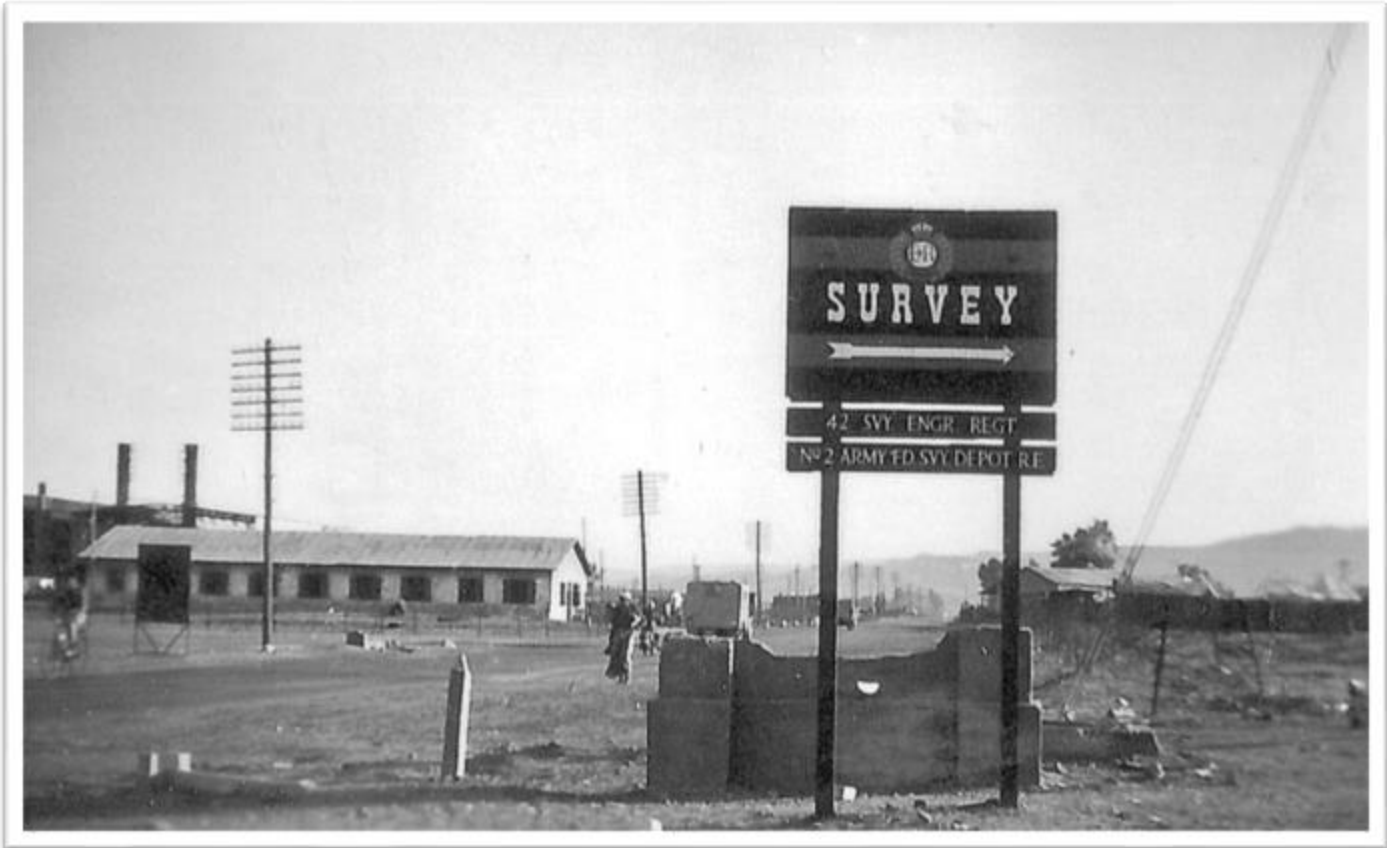
Amongst those with the survey units at the time was **Stanley J Humphrey (Stan)**, now aged 90 and living in Brisbane Australia. Stan may well be the last survivor of the six Royal Engineer trainees who attended a course on Aerial Surveying and Mapping using Multiplex equipment held at RAF Northolt, London, at the end of WW2. The course was run by instructors of the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers whose war time activities are described in the 2016 Summer Newsletter issue 60.

Afterwards Stan, along with others, was posted to the Canal Zone where nobody knew anything about them and it wasn't until an army vehicle with a Survey insignia was spotted that contact was made with their unit. Apparently the O.C. had been looking for days for his missing Multiplex operators. In 1947 - 19 Field Survey Regt was located at Camp 15 Rear, Fayid, Egypt, and in 1948 it was renamed 19 Topographic Sqn as part of newly established 42 Survey Engineer Regiment.

When Stan's tour in Egypt was completed he eventually got a passage back to the UK on the troop ship "*Empress of Australia*" a name that may have had some significance in years to come. After being offered a commission, which he declined, he left the army and took up a position with the Colonial Service in Kenya. Still following the sun, he worked in Tehran, Persia (Iran) and on completion drove his wife and young family all the way back to England in his car.

His final working years were in Brisbane as Photogrammetric Production Manager at Qasco Air Surveys and at the University of Queensland. At both jobs, he used his vast worldwide knowledge of all facets of mapping, to supervise and train future photogrammetrists, develop new techniques in production and generally impart advice in his quiet Derbyshire voice. Stan now quietly relaxes with his wife Tina and their daughters on his acreage north of Brisbane. An unsung stalwart of post war mapping!





*Sobraon Camp Signpost 1953 - Webb*



*42 Survey Engineer Regiment, MELF 15*



Alan Glyn James was another national serviceman stationed in the Canal Zone in the early fifties serving with 42 Survey Regiment as a Storeman Survey.

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**SOLDIER'S NAME AND PARTICULARS**

Christian or Fore Name(s) (in full) <i>Alan Glyn</i>		Surname (BLOCK LETTERS) <b>JAMES</b>				
Army Number <i>22787563</i>	Nat. Ins. No. <i>250575 B</i>	Date of Birth <i>17/6/34</i>	Marital Status <b>S</b>			
Main Civil Occupation <b>LABOURER</b>		Religious Denomination <b>C/E</b>				
Joined at <b>SWANSEA</b>		On <b>21-12-51</b>				
For the: Regular Army/Supplementary Reserve Territorial Army/Army Reserve Section D/National Service (Strike out as necessary) for..... years with the colours and..... years in the.....						
Date <i>15-1-52</i>		Signature of Soldier <i>Alan G. James</i>				
Extended/Re-engaged to complete..... years with the colours on.....						
Description (a) on joining (b) on attaining the age of 21 years.						
	Height ft. ins.	Weight lbs.	Chest (max.) ins.	Complexion	Eyes	Hair
(a)						
(b)						
Other Distinctive Marks (a)						
(b)						

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**PROMOTIONS**

Rank	Date	No. and date of Pt. II/III Order	Offr's Initials
<i>APPT. P/Lt/1/02</i>	<i>12 DEC 52</i>	<i>12 DEC 52</i>	<i>(1/2)</i>
<i>Promote to Sgt. with 16.1.54</i>	<i>16.1.54</i>	<i>16.1.54</i>	<i>(1/2)</i>
		<i>42 SER</i>	

**CIVILIAN DUTY**  
**C.C.D.**  
**22 NOV 1954**  
**WOKING**  
**ISSUED**

**RECORD OF TRADE OR STAR QUALIFICATIONS**

Trade or Duty	Group, Class or Star	Date of Class'n. Pt. II/III Order	Offr's Initials
<i>Old Equip. Maint 15.5.52</i>	<i>10/15</i>	<i>10/15/52</i>	<i>(1/2)</i>
<i>MASSED G.T. S/SUY</i>	<i>B III</i>	<i>21.11.52</i>	<i>(1/2)</i>
<i>PIREOTE S/SUY</i>	<i>B II</i>	<i>59/58. 10.9.53</i>	<i>(1/2)</i>
		<i>42 SER</i>	
		<i>42 SER</i>	

Alan has provided some interesting details of life for members of the Regiment during that period both on and off duty.



Getting ready for guard duty – 1952

### Litho Squadron off for a swim in the Bitter Lakes



*Roger Tibbets; Mick Smeaton; Dave Verlander; Cutie Curry; Charlie Capel; Eric Wratten;  
Mick ?; Jock Barclay; Barry Lloyd; Roy Lamb; Alan (Taffy) James.*



*The Mule Train - 1953*

I only ever saw the one mule and the lads who accompanied it to Port Said under armed guard, remarked how well behaved it was, traveling all that distance in the back of the truck.

Apart from the RASLs we (thoughts from the lads) think there was detailed survey work carried out in the Jebel's on the Sinai Peninsula in the early 1950s, and what could be better than to set up a base camp in the desert and use a mule to carry all the sensitive equipment to isolated spots. There is no doubt that Mules are born soldiers. They eat little and can survive without water and food for days. They make very little noise and are more stable and sturdier than horses and donkeys. You can trust a mule on the worst terrain and steepest climbs. Follow them when ascending or descending and, purely on their instincts, they will lead you on the safest and easiest route. They will find the most level paths and minimize your fatigue.

Unlike horses, mules are not afraid of heights. They don't fear a precipice of any kind. Their training is simple. They understand all commands. You say stop, come and go, and that's what they do. Interestingly, they are never angry with their masters.

They are loyal to the end and will never escape. At times of danger, they will find the safest location and wait for you there. In clashes with the noise of firing and explosions, they never rear and throw off riders. They don't like snakes but are not afraid of them.

Mules are ideal soldiers: They are perfectly adapted for rough terrain and weather conditions, disciplined, strong, resilient, courageous, and easily trained, have an innate sense of direction and never give up.



*The Chemical Lab and Store where Alan spent many happy hours learning how to process photographic film*

The NAAFI sold beer but not much in the way of spirits, so when returning from holiday we would bring rum, whisky, gin, etc. and believe it or not bury the bottles within the grounds of the camp. We didn't place bottles in spaces under the paving stones in each tent as inspecting officers would invariably sense the hollowness underfoot.

At Xmas guys with sketch maps would set out to find the buried grog....from the flagpole walk 15 paces north then turn east and walk another 20 paces and dig down two feet... as you would expect some bottles were never found!!

As a follow up to the retrieving bottles of spirits on before Xmas eve, it was traditional to wander, armed with a bottle, from one tent to the next to wish the occupants a Happy Xmas.



*Representatives of the QA's RNC as part of the coronation parade - 1952*

One of the guys sharing out tent was very athletic and quite handsome. He was nominated to run in a competition representing 42 Survey. As a result, he would go on early morning training runs of up to 2 hours. As there was a shortage of female company and to help overcome the problem a dance was arranged in the main camp building. Women from the Queen Alexander's Royal Nursing Corp were present and we were gob smacked when many of them came up to our runner and said, "How are you Dave?" another saying is your ankle any better now and so it went on. We all rounded on him for an explanation. All he would say is that they were just casual acquaintances.

Would you have believed him? We didn't!



**Ken Wakeman** was another national serviceman stationed in the Canal Zone in the early fifties serving with 42 Survey Regiment as a Storeman Survey 1952/53. Ken went on to do a further three and a half years' service with the Territorial Army.



*Cameronia Cinema, Fayid*

## Allied Naval Headquarters Southwick House Hampshire



Southwick House is a manor house of the Southwick Estate located just to the north of Portsmouth in Hampshire. The house was built in c1841 in the late Georgian style, to replace Southwick Park house which had been destroyed by fire. The house is distinct for its two-story foyer lit from a cupola, and a series of elliptical rooms. A hemi-circular portico is centered on the house's colonnade of paired Ionic columns. The estate, with the whole village, remained a unit, free from any suburban development, until the house was taken over during the Second World War (*Pevsner 1999*).

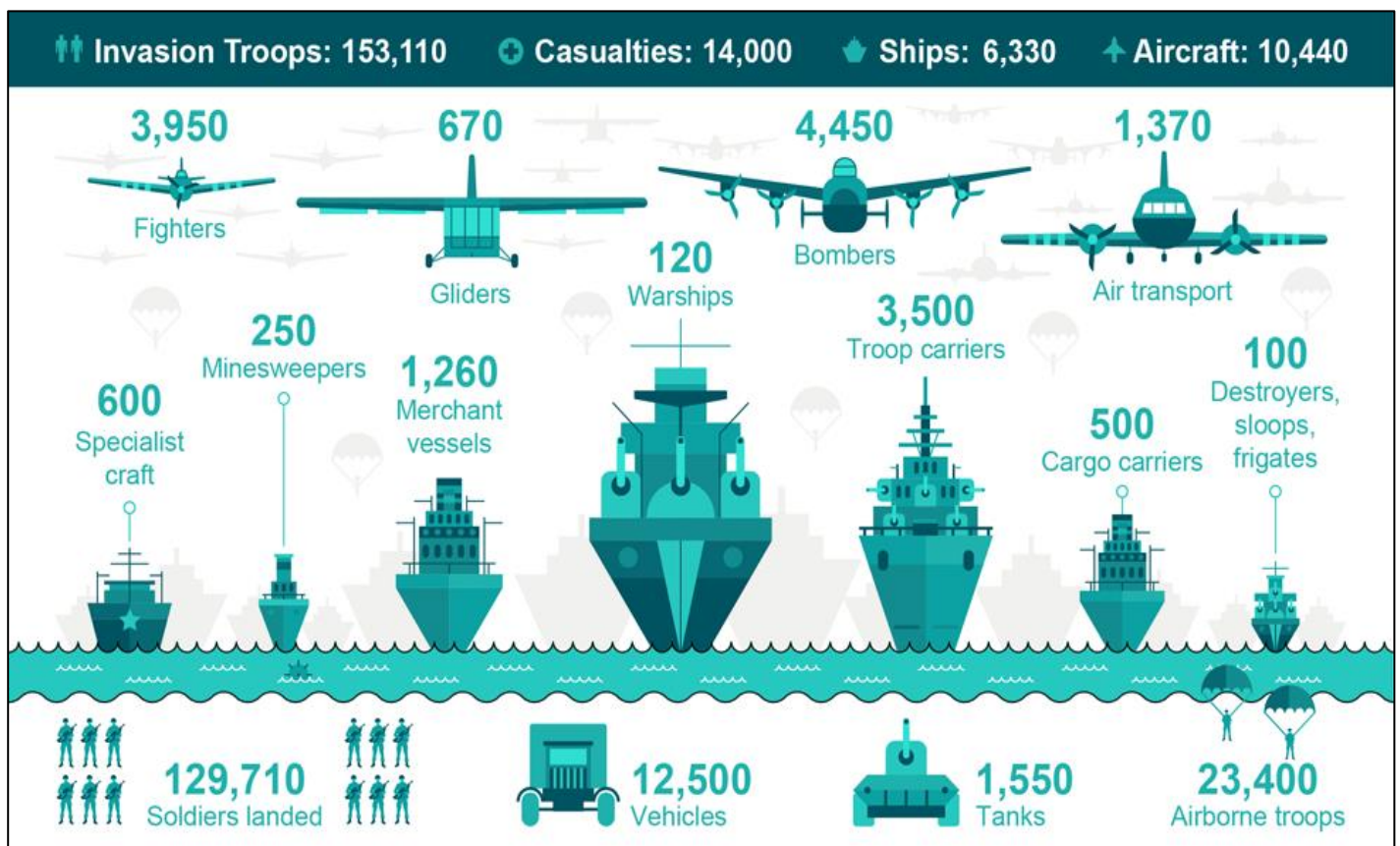
In 1940, the owners (Thistlethwayte family) granted the right to the Royal Navy to use the rooms for the benefit of pupils of the Royal Navy School of Navigation, who board the HMS Dryad. In 1941, after severe bombardment of the Portsmouth shipyard, many dwellings for the sailors were destroyed; the Royal Navy then requisitioned Southwick House to accommodate all the personnel of the HMS Dryad. In 1943, this building with large rooms, ideal for the needs of a staff, was chosen to serve as an advanced command post at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), the Supreme Command of the Allied Expeditionary Forces led by American General Dwight D. Eisenhower. In 1944, in the months leading up to D-Day, the house became the headquarters of the Naval Commander-in-Chief Admiral Ramsay and where the final orders for the landing in France on D-Day were given. Eisenhower and Montgomery's headquarters were not actually in Southwick House, but were hidden away in several woods nearby.

The Golden Lion pub in the village became the unofficial Officers' Mess during the preparations for the invasion and the bars were used for briefings and examinations. Generals Eisenhower and Montgomery would frequent the Golden Lion together and would settle themselves in the Lloyd Loom chairs in the corner to the left of the fireplace and would sometimes spread maps and documents on a small table before them. Ike would drink half pints of bitter whilst Monty, who was a teetotaler, would drink mineral water.

During the landing and the battle of Normandy, one of the rooms was used to display a large map of wood veneered against a wall, representing the south of England, the English Channel and the north of France. This wall map is still in place today, portraying Operation Neptune on June 6, 1944.



The map was commissioned from the toy firm of Chad Valley and arrived in sections. The pieces covered the European coastline from Holland to the Spanish border. So as not to give away any secrets, the two carpenters who erected the essential sections of the Normandy coastline of the map in the Wardroom were required to remain in Southwick House (it appears, under house arrest) to maintain secrecy until the invasion was underway.





*Meeting of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), 1 February 1944.  
 Front row: Air Chief Marshal Arthur Tedder; General Dwight D. Eisenhower; General Bernard Montgomery.  
 Back row: Lieutenant General Omar Bradley; Admiral Bertram Ramsay; Air Chief Marshal Trafford Leigh-Mallory;  
 Lieutenant General Walter Bedell Smith. (This is photograph TR 1631 from the collections of the Imperial War Museum)*

Ike, his commanders, and his weather team, led by Group Captain J. M. Stagg, met in the library twice a day, at 4 a.m. and 9:30 p.m. On the evening of Saturday, June 3, Stagg reported that the good weather England experienced in May had moved, a low was coming in. He predicted June 5 would be cloudy, stormy, and windy. That is, it would be too windy to disembark troops in landing craft and too cloudy for the all-important preparatory bombardment of the German coastal defences.

The group reconvened early the next morning to give the weather a second look. The forecast was no better, and Eisenhower reluctantly postponed the invasion. The group gathered again at 9:30 the evening of Sunday, June 4. Ike opened the meeting and signaled for Stagg to begin. Stagg stood and reported a coming break in the weather, predicting that after a few more hours of rain would come 36 hours of clearer skies and lighter winds to make a June 6 invasion possible. But he made no guarantees. Ike would wait until the next morning to make the decision final; rising at 3:30 he travelled the muddy mile from his camp to Southwick House through withering rain and wind. Group Captain J M Stagg had been right. If the invasion had started that morning, it would have failed.

In the conference room of Southwick House, Eisenhower turned to each of his principal subordinates for their final say on launching the invasion the next day, Tuesday, June 6, 1944. Gen. Bernard Law Montgomery, who would lead the assault forces, said go! Adm. Sir Bertram Ramsay, the Naval Commander in Chief, said go! Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, said go! Eisenhower stood up and began walking back and forth on the war room's blue rug, pondering the most important decision of his life and the fate of millions. It was now up to him. Only he could make the decision. He kept pacing, hands clasped behind his back, chin on his chest, and then he stopped. The tension left his face. He looked up at his commanders and said, "OK, LET'S GO".

**GENERAL 'IKE' EISENHOWER:** "Soldiers, sailors and airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force. You are about to embark upon the great crusade toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty loving people everywhere march with you."



**21 Army Group Officers outside Southwick House – June 1944**

Picture Shows: Left to Right: Colonel J.R.C Gannon, Deputy Military Secretary: Brigadier A.W Beament, Canadian Section, G.H.Q.: **Brigadier Alexander Prain, Director of Survey**: Colonel Harvey W. Wilkinson, Personnel Officer attached to, 21 Army Group: Brigadier C. Lloyd, Deputy Adjutant General: Major General J.D Inglis, Chief Engineer: Major General M.E. Dennis, Major General, Royal Artillery: Major General G.W. Richards, Major General, Royal Armoured Corps. Southwick House, Hampshire - June 1944. (IWM Catalogue Number - H 39165)



Brigadier Alexander (Sandy) Prain with Major General (Sir) J.D Inglis Chief Engineer at Southwick before D-Day



## Brigadier Alexander Prain CBE BSc

15 August 1894 - 5 June 1987



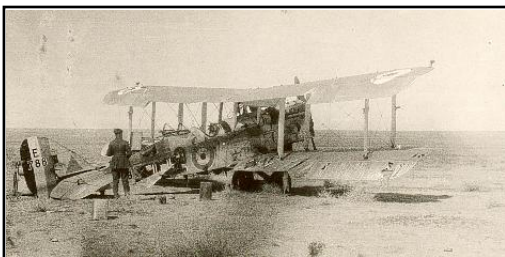
Alexander (Sandy) Prain was born on 15 August 1894 in Montrose, the son of a master saddler and attended the engineering course at the University of Glasgow. He was initially commissioned into the 8<sup>th</sup> Bn, The Border Regiment. He transferred to the Royal Engineers and having completed training at the 'Shop' in 1915 and Chatham, he saw service in France during World War 1 arriving in Jul 1916.



He served with 62 and then 61 Field Companies. The latter unit was in F (Brigade) Sector south of Arras. He recalled once how he made contact with a distant Prain relation while at home on leave. This Prain was acting manager of a Scottish distillery. He promised to send Sandy a bottle of whisky.

Soon after returning to France, attached to 145 Army Troops Company, Sandy was wounded at Passchendaele on 29 Nov 1917 and evacuated. His brother officers feared the worse and so when a crate of whisky arrived, drank to his memory. When Sandy made contact with his old unit he was rather disappointed!

In June 1918, he was sent to India for service with the 3<sup>rd</sup> (Bombay) Sappers and Miners. He arrived at the Depot in Kirkee in Sep 1918. In February 1919, he was sent to East Persia (Seistan Section) as Officer Commanding and Section Engineer. In 1921, Sandy undertook a university short course at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. He was then posted to Lancashire.



In Feb 1927, having reached the rank of Captain he was attached to MI4 at the War Office prior to going to Iraq in support of the Air Ministry. He was one of one two soldiers to be awarded the 'Southern Desert, Iraq' clasp to the GSM. By now he became fluent in Hindustani and Persian as well as French. After 2 years, in Iraq, he returned to Chatham. In 1933, he was promoted Major and served as Garrison Engineer in Eastern Command.



During 1934 he returned to duties with MI4 working in the Trans-Jordan on what was to become the Jordan – Saudi Arabia border. He was working on the section running east from Aqaba. He arrived in Jerusalem on 6 Feb 1934 as the officer-in-charge the Transjordan Air Survey. On 27 August 1934, he issued his final report from Chatham. He returned to the area on 19 Oct 1934 to undertake more survey work. On completion, he sailed home. By 23 Nov 1934 he was off Marseilles on board SS Mooltan. His next report, written at OS Southampton, was issued on 19 Dec 1934.



Between 1934 and 1939 he served again with the Royal Bombay Sappers and Miners as Officer Commanding 17<sup>th</sup> Field Company. In mid-1935 the Company was sent to Quetta to help with the clearing up and reconstruction after the earthquake which had struck the year before<sup>1</sup>. The unit remained there until November. Having spent Christmas 1939 at home he became DAD Svy at GHQ in Egypt in Mar 1940.



Coincidentally, his posting coincided with his brother, Major William Prain RASC, being invalided back home from Egypt suffering from TB and died at the Royal National Hospital, Ventnor, in 1940.



In September 1940, he became AD Svy at HQ British Troops, Egypt in rank of Lt Col. Then he moved to the Cyrenaica Command (North Africa). By Apr 1941, Sandy had risen to the rank of colonel and in October became Deputy Director Survey, HQ Ninth Army.

(Left) Major E. H. Thompson RE (in foreground, with unidentified instrument very likely of his own design) is seen with Sandy, probably between September 1941 and October 1942 and (judging from the maps on the wall behind) at GHQ Middle East in Cairo where Thompson himself was based.

Under his control was the 2/1 Australian Survey Company RAE. It had worked in Palestine and Syria before being recalled to Australia in January 1942. The Australians remember Sandy with fondness referring to him as a tall and lean Englishman (Scotsman actually) with a handle bar moustache, more suited to the Junior Service, together with an accent and a monocle.

In September 1942, he was appointed AD Svy, Northern Command before become AD Svy 2<sup>nd</sup> Army in May 1943. He then became DD Svy 21 Army Group. In Dec 1943 Sandy was promoted Brigadier and became Director Survey, HQ 21 Army Group. He was based at St Paul's School and was deeply involved in the 'Operation Overlord' planning. At the time, he was still a confirmed bachelor living in the Naval and Military Club. Subsequently when in France with the allied forces he was informed that a group of ATS girls were to join 14 Field Survey Company. He told the 2ic (WH (Freddie) Hore) that he wanted nothing to do with them!



After the war, Sandy was appointed Principal Cartographic Officer, Internal Affairs and Communications Division of the Control Commission/HQ BAOR. He eventually retired from the Army in April 1948. He later became a founder member of the Rhodesia Air Survey Company. He had been involved with the RICS but resigned as a Fellow in 1955.



In 1955, he married Joan Burton. They set up home in a remote cottage in Somerset. Sandy set to applying his sapper know-how to improving his property. In 1968, he and Joan moved to Malta for health reasons. Unfortunately, the Mintoff regime forced them back in 1974. They moved to Eype near Bridport. Despite his advancing years Sandy retained a sharp mind ever questioning the events around him, and was always a practical man. He was a regular contributor to the 'Pick Axe' including an article in recent years on sun-dials. He died after a short illness on 5 June 1987, aged 92.

James Prain recalls some thoughts from 2002, when serving as the SO1 Ops at the new HQ DGIA: -

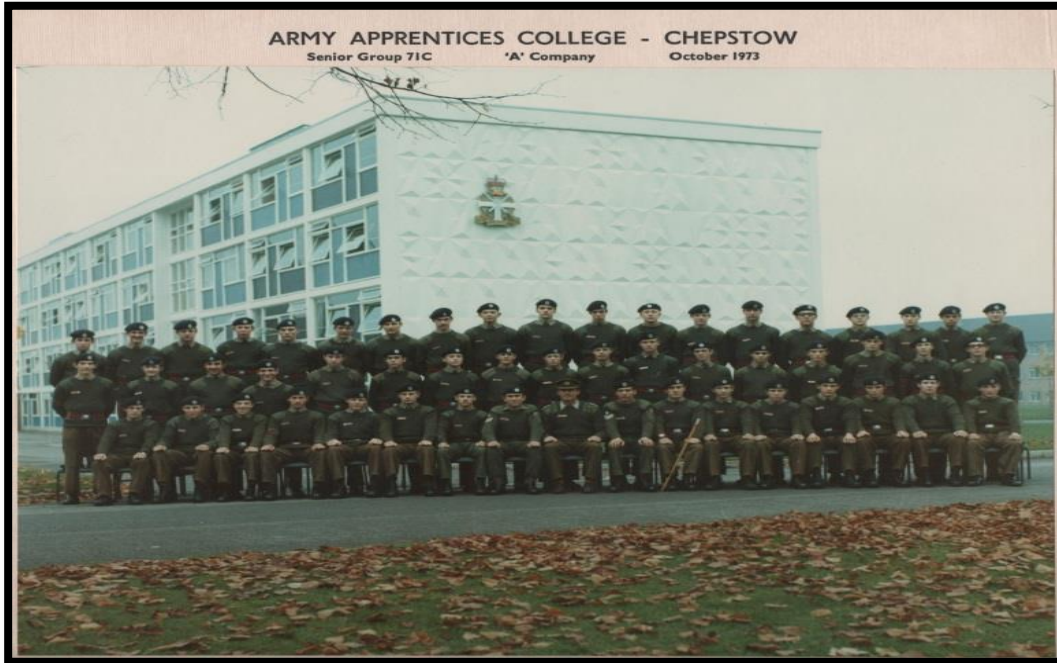
*"I was pleased to witness the opening of the new home for the MOD MACD. As I listened to AVM French recount the career of the late Brigadier Archie Clough CBE, I noted uncanny similarities with another military surveyor: Brigadier Sandy Prain CBE. Then as I walked back to the Officers' Mess after the ceremony I looked at 'A' Shed and wondered if and when this might become home to the Map Library. I then thought that when this did occur, a name would be needed. Whilst many may like to break with tradition and recommend a topical name such as 'The Tolworth Building' or more humorously 'The Toby Jug'. However, there may be those who will want a name in keeping with Hotine, Bomford, Watson, Clarke and now Clough. One less obvious but potential candidate is that of 'Prain'*

The family fascination for surveying continued and I followed my father and great uncle into Military Survey. As I enter the offices of Bomford Building, I wonder where my grandfather would have been sitting, some 65 years ago?

**Noel Grimmett & James Prain**

## Group 71C - Army Apprentices College (9<sup>th</sup> September 1971 – 11 December 1973)

When we joined the Army on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 1971 at the Army Apprentices College, Chepstow little did I or any of us realise that we would make friends for life and I am pleased to say that, despite several of our Group leaving the Military to pursue successful careers in other employment fields, most of us have stayed in touch. We have endeavoured to get together every 5 years so that it makes it possible for those living and working overseas to make the trip ..... which can be very expensive?



Within Group 71C at Chepstow there were a total of 29 young fresh faced 'boys' who joined to be Military Surveyors. Initially we were known as POT APPs (Potential Apprentices) and there were 9 Field Surveyors; 8 x Air Surveyors; 3 x Cartographic Technicians; 5 Photographic Technicians; and 4 x Print Technicians. We were all in for a shock in many ways what with being new to Army life; being away from home; and being told that we didn't have places as Surveyors but would now undertake several weeks of tests to determine whether we were 'good enough' to be offered Survey Apprentice posts. Fortunately, most of us progressed to being allowed into the Survey trade classrooms and to meet our instructors although, in some of the trades, these did change quite regularly, which we realised was the 'posting's circle' we would face in later Service life; however, we were taught by:

Field: SSgt Bob Pomeroy and SSgt Tim Crane

Air Survey: SSgt Ralph Stockley, SSgt Mike Gowlett; SSgt Pat Pearson; and SSgt Percy Kimber

Carto: SSgt Peter Wood and Mr Brian Woodfield

Photo: SSgt John South; SSgt Ken Browning

Print: SSgt Bob Cook.

These brave men were charged with looking after:

Field: Norman Beckwith; Jim Cowley; Jak Crossley; John Firth; Mike Herring; Martin Jackson; Alan Jones; Mac Maclean; and Fred Thomas.

Air Survey: Geoff Adcock; Brian Biggs; Martin Boatwright; Anthony Hopkins; Jeff Johnston; Ashley Kennedy; Dave Turner; and Steve Wilden.

Carto: Mark Binfield; Richard Brazier; and Chris Slade

Photo: Steve Chapman; Steve Coventry; Brian Gill; John Gough; and Nick Milne

Print: John Burnett; Nick Collins; David Eves; and Ray Wilkinson

Years later we now have a situation where we have sadly seen two of our number, Geoff Adcock and Ray Wilkinson, pass away. Whilst Jak Crossley; John Firth and John Gough all live in America; John Burnett lives in Thailand; Mark Binfield spends most of his year working in Saudi; and Chris Slade lives overseas in Scotland!

Our reunions have been extremely enjoyable events and the one on the 29/30 Oct 2016 was no exception. After letting everyone in our Group know in June about the untimely death of Ray Wilkinson, I was informed by Fred Thomas' wife that sadly he was suffering from 'early onset dementia' and she was going to take him back to her Country of Origin .... Trinidad .... so, her family could help with Fred's care. She asked if we could get together before they left and in consequence we arranged for a meal at the Scrumpy House at Much Marcle in Herefordshire (Near to Fred's house) and then on the Sunday we would all visit Beachley Barracks at Chepstow.

For this reunion, we also invited two other Field Surveyors who had been charged with looking after us when we were new boys at Chepstow by being our A/T Sgt and A/T Cpl .... namely Kev Smith and Garry Asbery. They both knew Fred well and wanted to attend this get together to try and help Fred remember some of the things that had happened whilst he was serving.

As we have experienced on every occasion we have met, the conversation flowed and not only did the 'boys' have great evening but the 'girls' thoroughly enjoyed each other's company. The food was great and the ambiance of the Scrumpy House was brilliant.



*Back Row L to R: Mike Herring; Steve Wilden; Richard Brazier; Jak Crossley; Martin Jackson; Nick Milne; Brian Biggs  
Middle Row L to R: Ginny Herring; Chris Slade; Nick Collins; Denyse Thomas; Unni Jackson; Gilly Smith; Kev Smith  
Front Row L to R: Carole Wilden; Kim Asbery; Garry Asbery; Fred Thomas; Ann Collins*

On Sunday the 30<sup>th</sup> of October, we all gathered for breakfast at the hotel and then departed for Chepstow. We arrived safely at Beachley Barracks although we all discovered that the route to Beachley Point had certainly changed and in consequence we didn't even drive through Chepstow or over the span bridge anymore! The barracks are now home to the 1st Battalion, The Rifles and they looked after us impeccably. We started our visit by laying two wreaths, in memory of Geoff Adcock and Ray Wilkinson, in the Rifles' Memorial Garden.

After a few carefully chosen words and a few quiet moments we all embarked upon a trip down memory lane! Whilst I could write about everything we witnessed I think it would be easier to show a few photographs of the sights we saw and shared on the day:



*Main Entrance AAC Beachley*



*The Reunion Group on the steps of Headquarters*



*Wreaths Were Laid in Memory of Geoff Adcock and Ray Wilkinson*



*New Look Assault Course but still Under the Bridge*



*The Old Headquarters building*



*The Old Survey Wing*



*Looking at St George's Church from across the site of where the Cookhouse stood*



*This was the Medical Reception Centre*



*This was the Lecture Theatre*



*The Parade Square*



*The WO's & Sgts Mess*

*Nick Collins*

## Announcements

It is my sad duty to inform you of the death of two of our colleagues:

**John Richard Burford Baynes** - Josephine Baynes has informed us that her husband, and one of our members, died on 30<sup>th</sup> January this year. John had dementia and other problems for several years and had ceased to be actively engaged in most things including our Branch. Josephine did continue to print out the newsletters for him and other correspondence she thought might stimulate him but with obviously diminishing recognition. Josephine said she was much in admiration of the work the Branch does in this respect. I have of course passed on the Branch's sincerest condolences.

**Lt Col Stan Ireland** - Geoff Keefe was the first to inform us that the Telegraph had reported the death of Stan Ireland on 30 June 2017, and it transpired to be the same Lt Col Stan Ireland that many of you will have served with. His daughter, Caroline told me that sadly Stan had died on 28<sup>th</sup> June – apparently, he was fighting fit last year, waiting for a hip operation but managed to fall over breaking his leg quite badly. From then on it was all downhill and these last 4-5 weeks he declined rapidly. He said his farewells a few weeks back and died at home – she said he waited for Mum & me to be asleep first, but it was very peaceful. Stan was 92 years old. Stan's funeral took place on Friday, 14<sup>th</sup> July at The Church of St John the Evangelist, East Witton, North Yorkshire, followed by a reception at the Blue Lion, in East Witton.

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For the period 30 April to 29 July 2017 the website had a total of 19,407 visits



# Military Survey Geographic Branch



A branch of the REA

**The Branch has launched its own Facebook Group**

**This Group is dedicated to all serving and retired military and civilian members of Military Survey Geographic from the United Kingdom and its Allies, including all arms and services. It is appreciated that there are several existing unit and trade Facebook groups and pages and it is not an intention to replace or infringe on them. It is hoped that this group will be a central source of information for Military Survey Geo to enable a much wider dissemination of pertinent items.**

**Welcome to those who are now "Ex Pats" and are looking for old mates. Feel free to troll old friends and colleagues, swap stories, lies, and generally do all social media was designed for. Chat; meet old friends, post, tag and exchange photos and documents. Please consider and respect others in the group, by using the same terms of endearment, general harassment and mickey taking as is expected in Military Survey!**

**The administrators are Colin Gardiner, Ian Parr, Mick Clowes, Mark Kieras and Mark Prince**