

# Military Survey (Geographic) Branch

Royal Engineers Association

Autumn 2024 Newsletter – issue 93

**Allan Marles**

**Congratulations and Happy 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday!!**



*Allan with his congratulatory card from King Charles and Queen Camila*

**The Branch sends its most sincere congratulations and best wishes to  
Lt Col (Retd) Allan Marles upon reaching his centenary.**

As will be appreciated Allan has had an amazing life and many Surveyors have been in touch with recollection of times spent with him and his family, both whilst serving and afterwards. Enlisting in 1943, his wartime career is quite fascinating, so much so that we will publish more details in our next newsletter but he was an Operation OVERLORD veteran and served from Normandy right through Belgium and Germany taking part in OP MARKET GARDEN and OP PLUNDER. On VE Day his troop were apparently guarding a Schnapps factory and so he was able to celebrate in some style.

Later, after undertaking the Long Print Course he was posted to 42 Survey Engineer Regiment at Zyyi Camp, Cyprus, and remained with Survey for the rest of his career including a tour as the last OC of 32 Lithographic Squadron, before it merged with 22 Squadron. After leaving the Army, Allan went on to join Ordnance Survey and later did consultancy work.

Allan and his wife, Beryl, retired to the South Coast. Subsequently widowed, Allan lived independent life until quite recently. He now lives in a retirement home in Newbury where he celebrated his birthday with family... and a massive cake!



*Allan with some of his family celebrating his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.*

### **13 Geographic Squadron RE – 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**



Another major birthday celebration will be taking place on 1<sup>st</sup> December whereupon 13 Squadron will be celebrating the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its formation. It has adopted a special logo for the anniversary - It's great to see that the Dhow is still in use!

The Squadron is planning a number of events and challenges which we hope to document.



Many of our members will remember the Squadron's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and more will have served with the Squadron at some time. We'd love to hear, and publish, your stories, memories and recollections of time spent in the unit, especially if you were present or involved with the 150<sup>th</sup>. Please send them to John Rigby at [REA-milsvy-newsletter@outlook.com](mailto:REA-milsvy-newsletter@outlook.com) or the Secretary at [REA-milsvy-sec@outlook.com](mailto:REA-milsvy-sec@outlook.com)

## **Royal Engineers Mural – In Memory of Patrick Pearson**

**by Nicola Pearson**



Following the passing of my father Patrick Pearson, we upped sticks and moved to the Rhondda Valley. My father was in 42 Survey Engineer Regiment, Military Survey, and his passing left a massive gap in our family.

On arriving at the Rhondda, we saw that many of the houses and businesses had street art on them. They were of various different subjects and themes. I had the idea that I wanted to put a mural on the garage wall in memory of my dear father.



I contacted Tee2Sugars and enquired if this was something he would like to do. He jumped at the chance and we arranged for him to visit and do the artwork in December 2023.



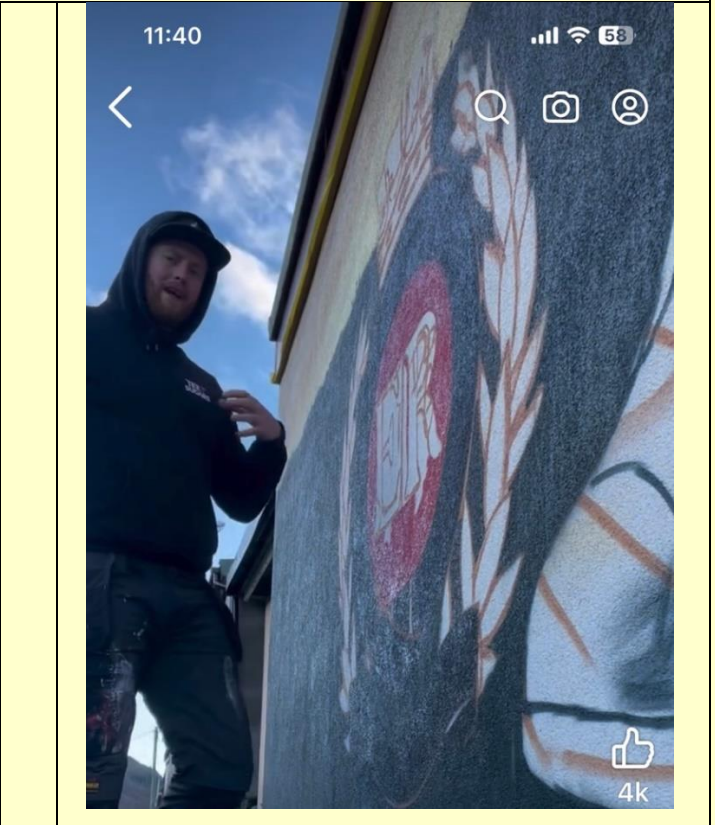
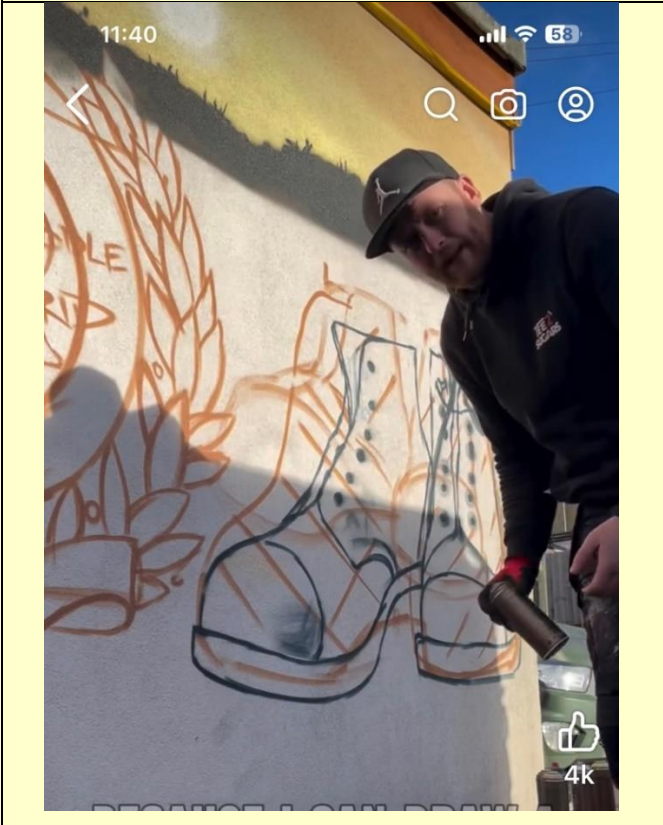
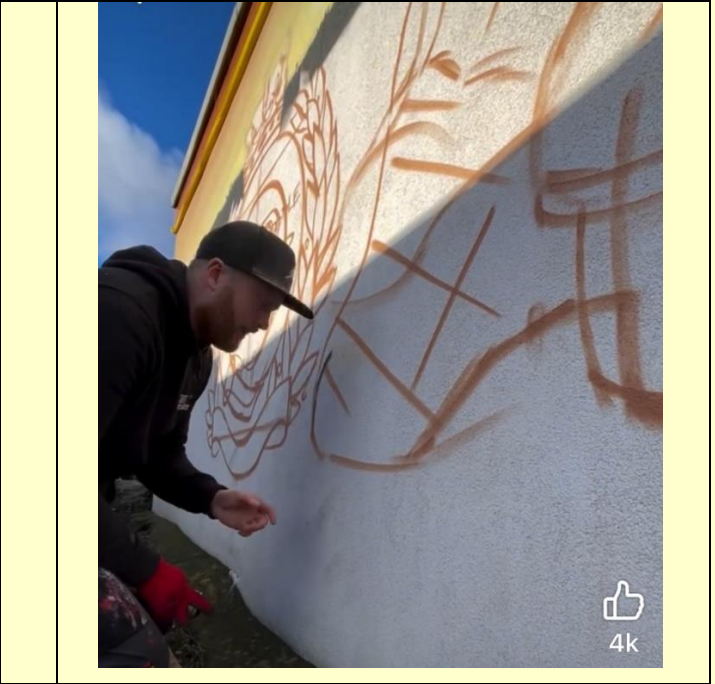
Now having booked Tee2Sugars, I needed to decide what would be appropriate to have on the wall. I wanted it to be personal to my father but also acknowledge the major part in his life apart from family, his military career. I put together some ideas and, using the book that Alan Gordon had written used the Fougasse as one of the 'must haves' including the Royal Engineers emblem.

Tee2Sugars suggested that the artwork needed 3 focal points and noticed that my father's boots were sitting there, still shining, really polished so that you could see your face in them. That was the 3rd element decided.

Tee2Sugars worked tirelessly on the wall for about a week, whilst I kept popping out for a nose! The results were fantastic and he made a video and sent the pictures over, which I have shared on Facebook and it has gone viral! The mural is an eyecatcher and very much loved in the community.

Some views of Tee2Sugars working on the mural







You can find out more about Tee2Sugars at <https://www.tee2sugars.com>



## Soldiers' Soldier Award

### No 59 Military Engineer Geographic Technician Class 0-2 Course

The Branch recently made its Soldiers' Soldier Award to a student on No 59 Military Engineer Geographic Technician 0-2 Course.

RSMS staff considered No 59 Course as being one of the best courses run recently. Out of 18 students, five received nominations for the award, but the winner was Sapper Aaron Pope who was awarded a prize of £25 together with a copy of Alan Gordon's Book "The Regiment that Mapped the World".

The presentation was made by Ian Thurgate, Honorary Secretary of the Branch, following the end of course discussion.



*Sapper Aaron Pope receiving his "Soldiers' Soldier" Award from the Branch Secretary, Ian Thurgate, whilst the CI, Lt Col Darren Hembury looks on.*



## Hamilton Prize Winner – Captain Ross Campbell RE



Capt Ross Campbell was selected as the winner of this year's Hamilton Prize being considered as the best 'all-rounder', this includes representing the course, keeping the Senior Instructor honest, and being a true team player and all-round good egg.

The Hamilton Prize was set up by Archie Hamilton OBE, one of the early co-founders of the School of Military Survey, which was set, after the war, in Longleat. It subsequently moved to the 'Camp' at Hermitage.

The prize was set up with a trust fund and the award was to be made to the individual on the Army Survey Course that made the greatest contribution to the course. It was very much a subjective view and the Chief Instructor made the final decision. There was a great emphasis pulling together the course as a team with a mix of UK, and overseas, often Commonwealth, students. Supporting some of the overseas students and their families was to be taken into consideration. This included

*Ross Campbell receiving the Hamilton Prize from Archie Hamilton's Grandson, our Chairman, Mark Burrows*

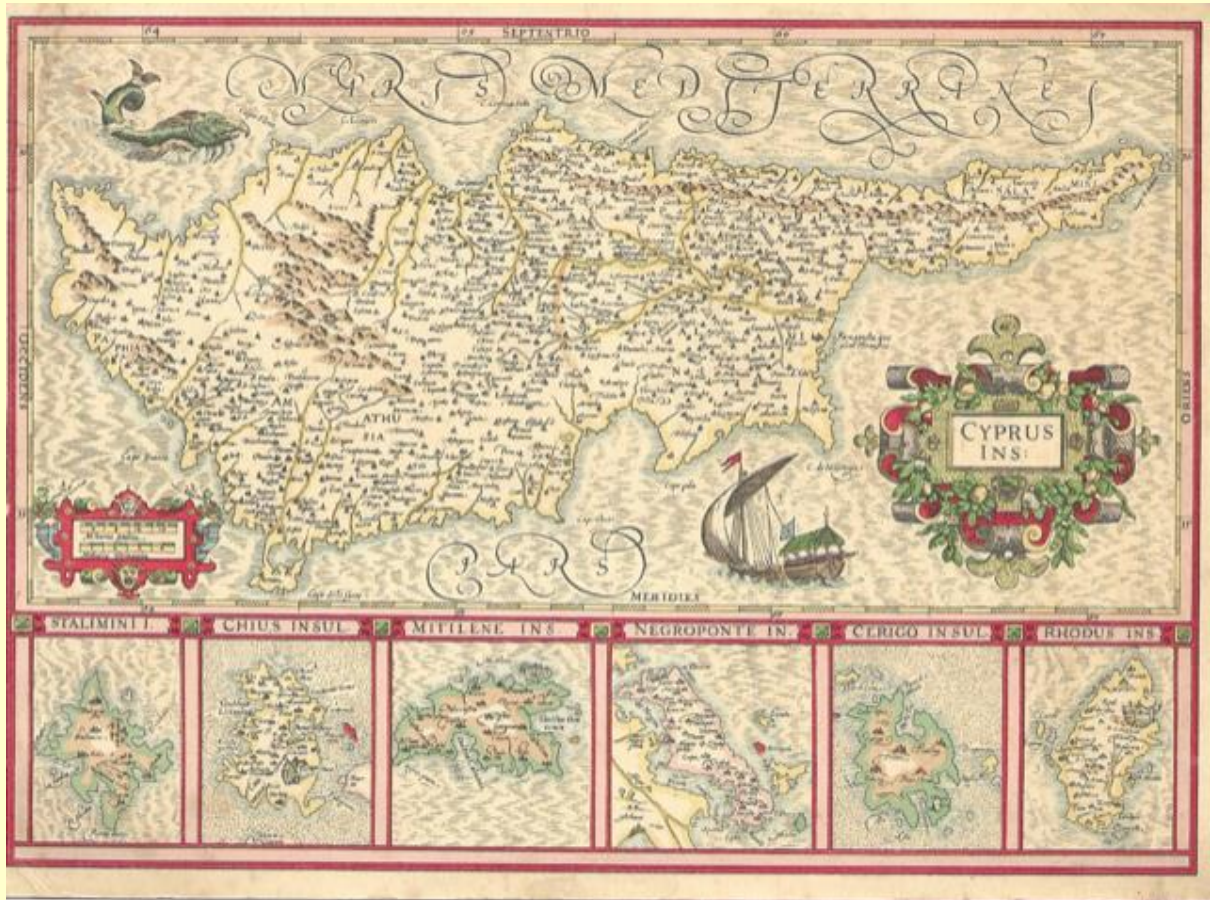
helping them with some of their studies and understanding the quaintness of British traditions.

There was little room for the 'inky swots' that sat in the corner with their books and abhorred the idea of going out in the cold; nor was their scope for the 'prima donnas' who routinely put themselves first in the line.

While Archie Hamilton died in the latter half of the last century, his daughter, (Mark Burrows' mother) kept the trust fund topped up so that the award could be meaningful from a financial perspective. Mark hopes to follow suit, so long as we have the relevant course run at the Royal School of Military Survey.



## The Cyprus Presentation Map by Ted May



*Cyprus Map*

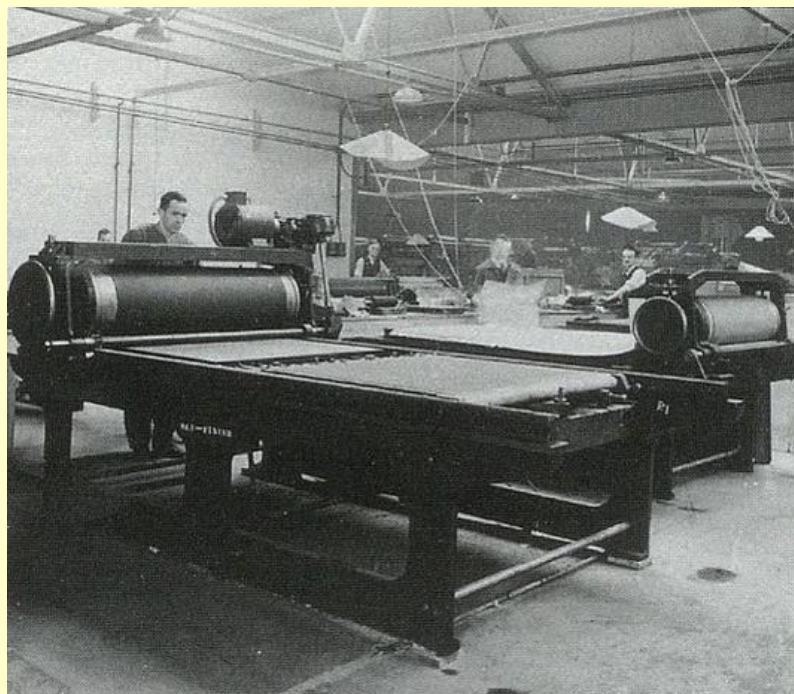
This is one of 4 or 5 reproductions of the Map of Cyprus. At the time of its production, in 1959, I was the Sgt in charge of the Proofing department at Zyyi in Cyprus and I proofed the map.

I had passed out from Harrogate in 1955 as a Lithographic Proofer and my first 2 years were spent in the Proofing department of 14 Squadron who were then located in Dortmund, West Germany.

I was posted from Germany to Cyprus in September 1957. My friend from Harrogate, Chalky White, and I were posted to 42 Regiment at Zyyi. We managed to get permission to move between the units by motor bike. This was a great adventure and we visited many places. We arrived in Cyprus, at the right time, in September 1957 to be met by Dave Guest, another Harrogate friend. After Germany the very best accommodation available at Zyyi was a tent, holding 4 soldiers, which was a real step down, but the weather was great and I had lots of friends from Harrogate and my home town of Gillingham.

Soon after arriving I was sent to 3 Map Depot at Polimedia for a short time with the reason that I was a disciplined NCO. The unit was commanded by Maj Store with a Capt, SSM and a WO1. The main job was counting, stacking and recording map stocks that had been shipped from Egypt. There were about 20 military personnel and a few civilians. It wasn't a happy unit, but I must say Maj Store, who rode a motor bike each day, helped me get my bike out of customs at Nicosia. I also spent my 21st birthday there and in all served just under 3 months before returning to the Regiment, at the end of December 1957.

I was promoted to Sgt in February 1958 at the age of 21 years and 2 months. I was VERY HAPPY to be put in charge of the Proofing department, graining and paper store. Paddy Burns was the Storeman and Grainer, and in the paper store I was lucky to have two civilians, both from Italy, and they were also very well-trained printers. The Proofing Department was a mix of 1 power assisted press and hand presses. The power assisted was with a blanket cylinder only but was a great help in the heat.



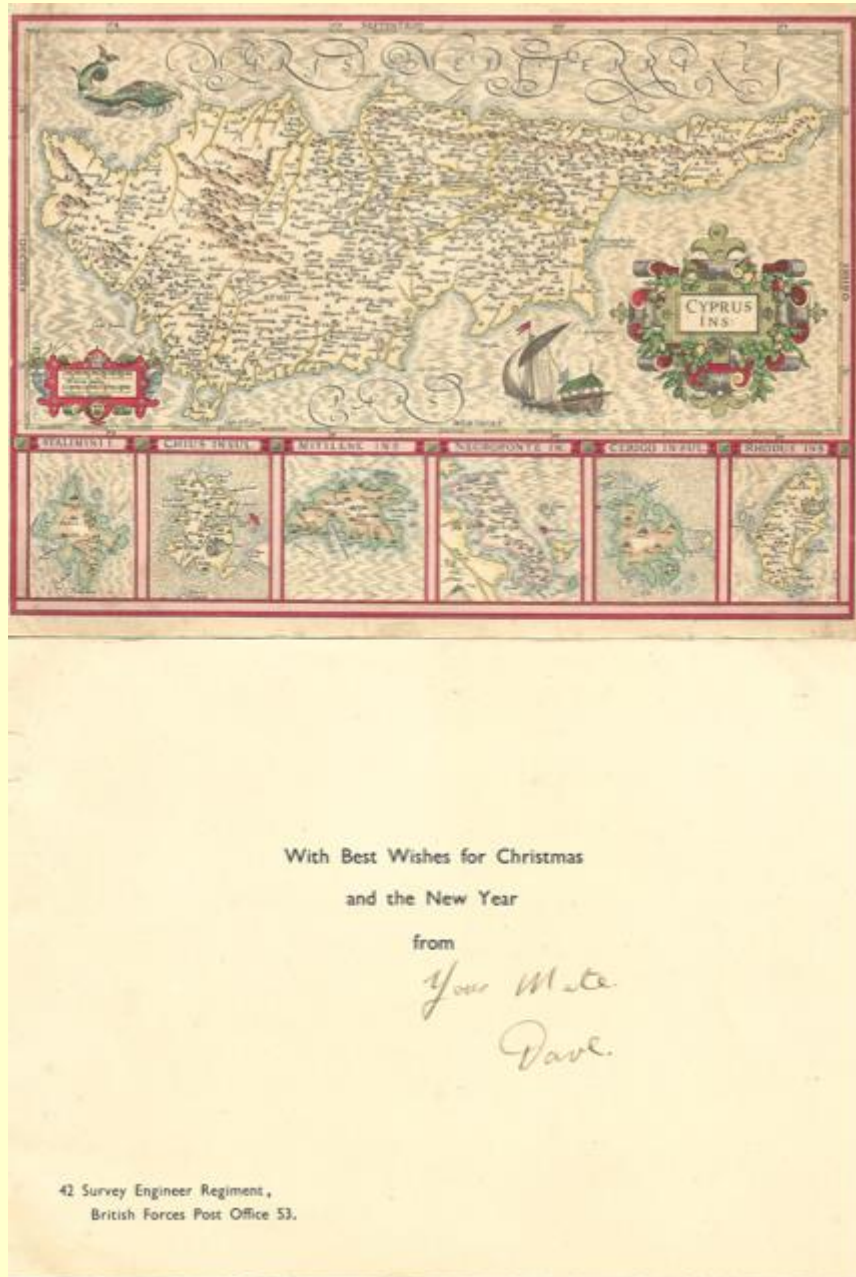
*Power Assisted Proofing Press*

I was given the task of proofing the Cyprus map by the OC, Maj Marles (*Allan Marles who recently celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday – see above*), so it could be used as a presentation piece for the outgoing Director of Military. One copy was also produced for the OC (he took over from Maj Sleep) but I also produced other copies for D Gale, Peter Dale and of course my copy!

The story of this map, from what I remember, was that a Field Survey party were out in the field on one of their Survey tasks, when they came across this map in a taverna. They brought it back to the Regiment and it was reproduced into a print task as a presentation piece. I do know that during its time in the Litho Artist's section, one or two additions were made (ie names). I know the location of one was 'Payne'. I am not sure whether that was implemented by Mick Payne (although I can't remember him being at Zyyi) or Satch Payne who I met at Polimedia in 3 Map Depot during my first 3 months in Cyprus. The name Payne is located above Limassol to the left just up from the coast. The job arrived in the Proofing department and I remember in those days most jobs were proofed before being printed using Zinc plates, with possibly gum reversal or albumen. One interesting point about this map is the original copies were printed on Watmans handmade paper and the colours used were in black, red, pink, green, green tint, blue, blue tint, yellow and buff, adding up to 9 colours all told

The second image shows a 1959 Christmas card I received from my friend, Dave Guest, which utilised the presentation map of Cyprus. I received the card when I was at the London School of Printing and Graphic Arts.





1959 Cyprus Map Christmas Card

## Reflections on Nijmegen Marches 1985-87 by James Prain

These reflections were triggered having read Andy Bell's excellent article in the REA (Military Survey (Geographic) Branch) Newsletter Summer 2024 describing the Nijmegen Marches. As a hoarder of souvenirs, I can add some detail to Andy's article. Along with others, I undertook the march on three consecutive years thinking it would get easier in successive years – it was not!



16-19 July 1985

*Cpl Hank Lazell, LCpl Andy Bell, Cpl Roger Mace, Cpl Al Bretherton, Spr Barsley, WO2 Tony Lewis  
Cpl Russ Garner, Spr Dave Blake, Spr Thompson, Capt James Prain, WO2 Roger Cramp  
Spr Leonard, WO2 (SSM) Ian Thurgate*





*Nijmegen – Bridge over the River Waal and the city streets*



*Ian Thurgate, Tony Lewis and Roger Cramp brace themselves for the marches*



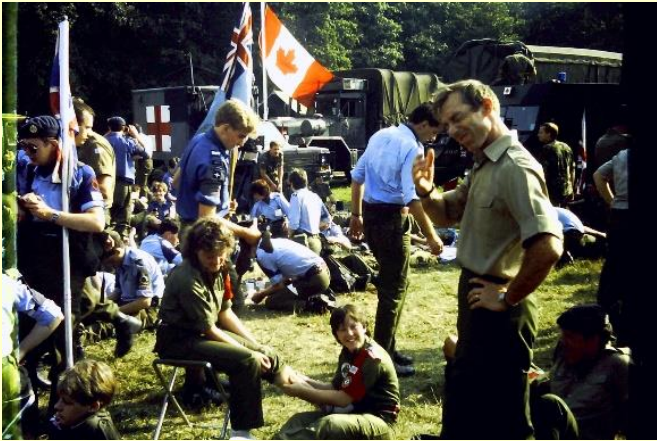


*The camp for the military contingents*



*1985 – Day 2*





1985 – Day 3



1985 – Day 4





70ste Vierdaagse, Nijmegen, 1986  
25 jaar Heumensoord, Holland

15-18 July 1986

*LCpl Dave Blake, Sgt Mick Paskin, Cpl Hank Lazell, Spr Neale, (Blank file), Spr Mark Davenport  
Cpl Al Bretherton, Spr Kleinman, LCpl Thompson, Spr Elliott, Sgt Wyatt (USA), Spec Ramsey (USA)  
Capt James Prain, WO2 (SSM) Ian Thurgate*





71<sup>STE</sup> VIERDAAGSE, NIJMEGEN, HOLLAND, 1987

22 July 1987

LCpl Barsley

Spr Carley, Sgt Townsend (Chef), Spr Wilson, Spr Mark Buglass  
 Cpl Hank Lazell, LCpl Mark Davenport, LCpl Dave Blake, Cpl Coombs  
 Capt James Prain, WO2 (SSM) Ian Thurgate



Squadron Shoulder  
 Brassard



Veteran's Medal  
 3 years

## **ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS**

### **Switch of Branch Accounts to Central REA Bank Account – Your Action is Required**

Further to the details in previous newsletters, and approved at the 2024 AGM, the Branch has switched to the REA Central Bank administered by a dedicated REA Fund Manager.

The new system will enable transactions to be made electronically rather than the more traditional ways (writing cheques with two signatures, etc), reducing much of the workload for the Treasurer, and will eliminate a lot of the inconvenience of paper.

**Members should notice no difference to the operation of the Branch BUT will need to change their Standing Order/Direct Debit instructions for their annual subscriptions.**

As articulated in **Item 6 of the 2024 AGM Minutes - Switch to Central REA Account**

The Branch would now request that all Life/Full Members\* create a new Standing Order/Direct Debit Instruction for their Subscriptions Payment to:

Account Name: **RE Association Branch Funds**

Bank: **Lloyds**

Sort Code: **30-11-75**

Account No: **34412560**

Reference: **MSGxxxsubs (xxx = Last 3 digits of Service No)**

Note: This bank account is being used by multiple REA Branches so the **MSG** identifies our Branch which assists the Fund Manager in ensuring income goes to the correct Branch).

The annual subscription still remains at **£8**

Then delete the previous Standing Order/Direct Debit to Military Survey Branch.

Whilst not essential, it would help the Treasurer to know who has changed their SO/DD. Please contact him at [REA-MilSvy-Treasurer@outlook.com](mailto:REA-MilSvy-Treasurer@outlook.com)

\* Note: All Arms; Widows and Widowers; and Friends and Family Members are not required to pay subscriptions.

### **Armed Forces Breakfast Clubs**

We have previously mentioned the Armed Forces Veterans' Breakfast Clubs which provide a chance for Ex-Military personnel - Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force; Regular and Reserves; Male and Female - to get together with others who have served and share each other's company.

There are clubs operating all over the country and, indeed, even some overseas. For personnel living in and around the Newbury/Thatcham area one is held on the first Saturday of the month at Thatcham Rugby Club, Henwick Fields, Thatcham, from 0900hrs. Roger Sutton has also let us know that there is one in Bristol held at the Toby Orchard Inn, Woodlands Lane, Bradley Stoke BS32 4QB (just north of Bristol and by the M4/M5 junction) on the third Saturday of the month also starting at about 0900hrs.

Search the web for "*Armed Forces Veterans Breakfast Clubs*" which will take you to the website from where you can search for details of breakfasts near you!



## Tony Webb – REA Badge of Merit

Members will remember that the Spring Newsletter announced the well-deserved award of the Association's Badge of Merit to Noel Grimmett in recognition of the outstanding contribution he made to the Branch. We reported that his was the first such award that the Branch had received. That is true, however, Noel is not the first member of the Branch to receive the Badge of Merit. That accolade goes to Tony Webb, who received his award in recognition of the service he has given to the Malvern and District Branch and South Wales Group.

Tony was presented with his award by the RSM of the R Mons RE (Militia) in 2019, at a dinner held in Monmouth Castle.

Tony had trained as a compositor before being called up to National Service. After a short posting to 42 Regiment, he was called back to SMS at Hermitage, where he spent most of his service as an instructor. He returned to his trade after leaving the Army and settled in the West Midlands where he had a very productive career.



*Tony (left) wearing his Badge of Merit  
sat with Rod Siggs at the CO's brief, 2023 AGM*



*Tony celebrating his 88<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2022, the  
Badge of Merit being worn proudly.*

Tony recently celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and is pictured above celebrating his 88<sup>th</sup> birthday in fine style with cake and a glass of port!

## **Blind Veterans UK formerly St Dunstons**

The Secretary recently received the following letter from James (Jim) Butterworth.....

*Dear Ian,*

*Just over three years ago I was registered seriously sight impaired / blind. I sincerely hope not, but there could be other REA-Mil Svy members who are in a similar situation. I would be grateful, therefore, if I could bring to the attention of the REA membership the existence of the little-known charity Blind Veterans UK (formally St. Dunstons). They have been of great help to me and I would recommend anyone having sight problems to contact them. I have just returned from a week at one of their two Holiday Care homes where I was very well looked after.*

*Even if their services are not required by members it is a charity well worth supporting. Their web site is [www.blindveteransuk.org.uk](http://www.blindveteransuk.org.uk)*

*I would be very pleased to talk to any members about my experience with them.*

*Regards and Best Wishes,*

*James Butterworth*

If any Member would like to get in contact with James about Blind Veterans please contact the Secretary at [REA-milsvy-sec@outlook.com](mailto:REA-milsvy-sec@outlook.com)

### **Could this be Gordon Thompson?**

In the Summer Newsletter we asked if anyone could identify the man in this photograph – known only as Gordon.

No responses were forthcoming but after having searched through our records, we think there is a possibility that the man is Gordon Thompson, a Litho Machine Minder, who served in Cyprus around the time the photograph was taken. Sadly, Gordon Thompson passed away two years ago and so we couldn't contact him to confirm.

If any member knew Gordon Thompson and can confirm or not that he was the man in the photograph we would be very grateful to hear from them. Please contact the Secretary at

[REA-milsvy-sec@outlook.com](mailto:REA-milsvy-sec@outlook.com)

Thank you





## **RSMS Armillary Sphere - An Appeal For Information**

We believe that most personnel will be aware of the Armillary Sphere, which sat in front of the Headquarters building within Denison Barracks at Hermitage. With the arrival of 77 Brigade into the barracks, the RSMS had to consolidate into three of the buildings and the sphere re-located. We will be covering the sphere's movement in an article in the next newsletter.

One thing that has become apparent is that there is no history as to the origins of the Armillary Sphere. No one seems to know where it came from, who purchased it and when it was originally erected. We have already canvassed several members for information and it is believed it was erected around 1980 as part of the celebrations to mark the opening of the new School by Her Majesty the Queen.

If you know any details about the sphere, please could you contact the REA Heritage member, Nick Collins, at [rea-milsvy-heritage@outlook.com](mailto:rea-milsvy-heritage@outlook.com)



*HM the Queen opening the new School of Military Survey in 1980  
The Sphere just visible behind the 2<sup>nd</sup> roof support from the right*



*The Sphere in one of the Rubb Shelters,  
awaiting its repositioning*

## **DEATHS OF OLD COMRADES**

### **Stephen (Steve) Sykes**

The Branch was saddened to hear of the recent death of Steve Sykes. He was 73 years old. A native of Lancaster after attending Lancaster Royal Grammar School he studied architecture at the University of Bath gaining both a BSc and BArch.

He went to the RMCS in 1976 and Military Survey first met him in January 1979 when he joined 63 ASC Course. He thought he had the best Christmas present our masters in Military Survey could dish out when he found out he was one of only three officers on the course, and that the other two

were Canadians. (It is believed to be the smallest ASC course ever.) He was obviously delighted (!) and was designated to be the course senior before he even arrived. He made an outstanding job of it, too.



**No 63 Army Survey Course  
26 Jan 1979 - 26 May 1980**

Steve related really well with the Field Survey departmental staff of all ranks and one can understand his urge, under the circumstance in which he found himself, to relate to and befriend many of the British RE's, both officers and NCOs too. Something that he always maintained throughout his service.

Steve's first tour from the ASC was with Field Troop 19 Sqn then based in Barton Stacey and, having bought a house in Newbury, used to car-share with Ian Thurgate who was the Tp SSgt. They both had small cars at the time and so it was quite normal for Helga to lick the driver's ear during the journey – for those not 'in the know' Helga was Steve's beloved Weimaraner dog.

Being single, Steve frequently ate out and was a regular at Indigo Bay, an Indian restaurant just around the corner from his house. He was a frequent visitor and was honoured by the staff, with his own specially reserved table.

After his tour with 42 Regiment Steve served in Germany as SO2 Geo HQ BAOR and as OC ASLS at Wyton. He also did a tour in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia based in Riyadh, and then served in PPCU at Feltham where he became friends with Duncan and Maggie Jacobs – Duncan had been a Survey WO1 and Maggie then worked in Svy 3 and, later, went on to become Director DGC. Steve often stayed with Duncan and Maggie when home from an overseas posting, and visited them at their home in France after Maggie retired.

Steve's last tour was as Chief Geo AFSOUTH in Naples. Upon his retirement he bought a property in Ireland complete with paddocks so that he could satisfy his long-held wish to keep horses. At one time he had two horses and five dogs, some of whom he had re-homed in Italy.

He loved his animals.... Mick Perry remembers the two Bernese dogs that he had in Germany..... *"Many a mess member found themselves on dog sitting duties. They could slobber for England!! and that.... "At some point he also acquired a cockatoo named Raffy and it could ululate better than*



*the best lady from the middle east. I'm not sure if he ever kept it, but we had to look after it and it was an absolute pain. Better than an alarm clock though!"* Maggie Jacobs confirmed that, indeed, Steve did keep Raffy – it *"lived to a ripe old age and accompanied Steve to Ireland"*

Steve was a very private man but very well-liked and respected by all those he worked for and with. A common theme in all the tributes paid to him was that he was a true gentlemen.

Our thanks to Maggie Jacobs, Mick Perry and Nick Rigby for their contributions.

### **Noel Charles**

The Branch will be saddened to hear of the passing, at the age of 91, of Noel Charles.

Noel enlisted in 1951 and was commissioned in 1953. He attended No 24 ASC later followed by a posting to the Military Staff at Ordnance Survey.



**No 24 Army Survey Course  
24 Aug 1959-21 Oct 1960**

*No 24 ASC - Noel -front row, 2<sup>nd</sup> from left*

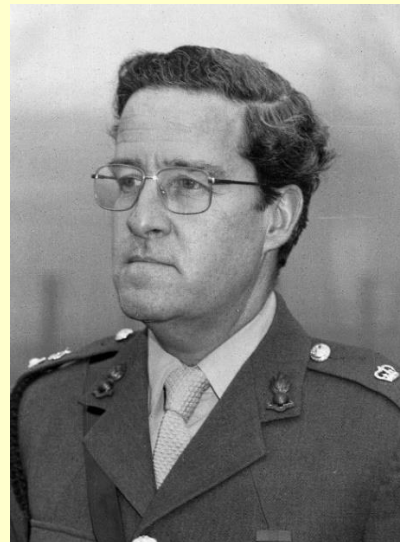
After attending the Long Print course at the London College of Printing he became SI Litho at SMS which was followed by a tour as DAD Svy NEAREAST & Gulf.

This was followed by a tour as AD Svy HQ UKLF and then one as AD Svy BF Cyprus. He returned to UK to take up post as CO 42 Survey Engineer Regiment 1980-82.

Noel returned to Cyprus to take up a Lt Col (SL) appointment as D Comd Episkopi Garrison and for his last year of service he held another Lt Col (SL) post, this time at AAC Chepstow.

He retired in 1987.

*Right: Noel Charles when CO 42 Survey Engineer Regiment 1980-82*



## Committee Contact Details

<p><u>President</u></p> <p>Lt Col Alex Mayes RE CO 42 Engr Regt (Geographic)</p>	
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<p><u>Secretary</u> Ian Thurgate email: <a href="mailto:REA-MilSvy-Sec@outlook.com">REA-MilSvy-Sec@outlook.com</a> Mob: 07952 286 268</p>	<p><u>Webmaster</u> Dave Johnson email: <a href="mailto:webmaster@militarysurvey.org.uk">webmaster@militarysurvey.org.uk</a></p>
<p><u>Treasurer</u> John/Geordie Hambling email: <a href="mailto:REA-MilSvy-Treasurer@outlook.com">REA-MilSvy-Treasurer@outlook.com</a></p>	<p><u>Wyton Sub-Branch</u> Cliff Nicklin email: <a href="mailto:cliff.nicklin@btinternet.com">cliff.nicklin@btinternet.com</a> Mob: 07500 706350</p>
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