

Military Survey (Geographic) Branch

Royal Engineers Association

Spring 2025 Newsletter – issue 95

ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS

SUBSCRIPTIONS – CHANGE OF BANK ACCOUNT - REMINDER

As has been notified to Members since the Summer 2024 edition of the Newsletter, the Branch has switched its Bank Account to the REA Central Account and as a consequence Subscription payments now need to be paid into the new account.

Branch Rules state that Subscriptions should be paid in January of each year. At the end of April, we had only received Subscriptions from 115 members. If you are required to pay subscriptions* but haven't yet done so in 2025, please make a payment to the Branch asap (account details given below) and then set up future payments to be effective from January 2026. In all cases please use the Reference "MSGXXXSubs" where XXX is the last three digits of your Service Number.

The annual subscription remains at **£8.00** per year, and payment should be made by Standing Order or Direct Bank Transfer to:

Account Name: **RE Association Branch Funds**
Bank: **Lloyds**
Sort Code: **30-11-75**
Account No: **34412560**
Reference: **MSGxxxSubs (xxx = Last 3 digits of your 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).

Although the Branch receives a small grant from HQ REA, our main income is from your subscriptions. Without them the Branch could not operate, produce and send out the newsletters, hold the AGM and reunion, nor could it make grants to support those serving.

Members should notice no difference to the operation of the 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

Lastly, don't forget to cancel your previous Standing Order/Direct Debit to the Branch.

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



200 Hundred Years

13 Geographic Squadron RE

Memories of Serving in 13

We have received a number of memories of their time serving in 13 Sqn which we will be including in newsletters going forward, but we'd be very happy to have more, especially if they concern the Squadron's 150th anniversary. Please send them to our new Newsletter editor/compiler Tish Gauci at REA-milsvy-newsletter@outlook.com or the Secretary at REA-milsvy-sec@outlook.com. Thanks

My posting to 13 Field Survey Squadron, Royal Engineers.

By Major (Retd) Peter F Wood RE

8 December 1961 – as a rooky ex-Survey apprentice from AAS Harrogate and Chepstow, I arrived at 13 Field Survey Squadron RE, in Battledress c/w Field Service Marching Order (FMSO) and a kit bag. The Squadron was based at Fernhurst Camp, about halfway between Haslemere and Midhurst on the A286, West Sussex. Known as 'Sleepy Hollow' by the locals, this camp was situated in beautifully wooded countryside, right opposite the local watering hole, The King's Arms. Most of the camp was of a wooden construction and we lived in accommodation known as 'Spiders,' due to their layout. Despite being wooden buildings, they were quite comfortable and fit for purpose, and surprisingly warm in winter.

The Squadron was commanded at the time by Major E X Halliday MBE, RE, with Major Tony Prain as 2 i/c; the SSM was WO2 Terry Membury. By April 1962, the OC was Major D P S Wilson RE. The Squadron was a completely self-sufficient mobile Field Survey unit with Field and Air Survey troops, and with the whole map reproduction facility housed in a set of special box-bodied vehicles known as 'The Print Train'. There were still quite a few National Servicemen amongst the personnel, and I learnt more about using the military system to one's advantage from these chaps than anyone else. During my early months there, the post-war Leyland 'Hippos' box-bodied vehicles were gradually replaced with large articulated vans, or semi-trailers, pulled by 'Thornycroft' tractors or what the MT called 'prime movers'. Some of the vans had expanding sides to accommodate their technical purpose such as the Topographic (Topo), drawing/retouching offices and the printing machine vehicles.

At the time, most of the field surveyors were involved in providing geographic data for the Thor Missile sites until about September 1962. They then provided survey parties for classified and other special tasks around the UK. Being a Lithographic Artist and Photo Writer at the time, I worked alongside the Draughtsmen in the Topo Vehicle, using the pull-out light frames that each workspace had. The vehicle also had the slotted template facility on which the Air Surveyors plied their skills. It was not uncommon to assist them on occasions when all hands were needed.

The Topo vehicle also housed the rudimentary telephone exchange which provided communication between the various mobile departments. This proved to be especially useful when playing 'Battleships' between departments on 'slow work' days! My early days at Fernhurst were spent drawing indexes for the MOD map catalogues, which was one of the main tasks for the production

side of the Squadron. However, being a 'Retoucher', I was often on call to repair the map images on printing plates that had 'walked off' during a print run. This was achieved by lying on one's back under the plate cylinder and repairing the image with an ink-charged ruling pen or a fine brush – not the best working conditions! The Squadron was also responsible for training some of the Military Survey reservists from 135 Squadron, especially during the summer months.

The other important job given to the Litho Artists (as we now had become) was the design and production of the Squadron dance poster (!) which, once printed, was liberally distributed around the surrounding area. This event attracted much of the local female 'talent' and was one of the regular highlights for the local civilian population.

In common with the other Survey units, 13 Squadron had a rather good hockey team. It was not unusual for us to reach the final of the UK minor units' competition and often to win it. Our success as a winning hockey team was, in part, due to the enthusiasm and skill of our team captain, WO2 Tom Jackson RE, who later became the SSM.



The victorious squadron hockey team in the UK Minor Units competition at Shorncliffe camp in summer 1963.

This somewhat dreamy existence at this beautiful location was inconveniently interrupted once a year by the annual exercise when we packed everything up, started the vehicles, and usually went off to a wood somewhere in deepest West of England (a place called Woodbury Common, not far from Exeter) and produced maps (here be dragons!), under 'Wartime' conditions (usually being attacked at night by the Royal Marines who trained nearby).

Another shock to the system was in January 1964 when we moved lock, stock, and barrel, to Aden, in support of the Aden Emergency (often known as the Radfan Uprising). This, after months of packing wooden boxes with all the technical equipment, innumerable other essential stores, and clearing out the camp. I remember assisting in dragging old, abandoned cars from the woods at the bottom of the camp as part of this operation. The other task I distinctly remember (being a Lithographic Artist) was painting the redesignated Divisional signs on all the newly repainted sand-coloured vehicles. I do recall one fellow Artist (who shall remain nameless) adding exceptionally long whiskers to the "Lion" Div. signs. I suppose you could call it Cartographic Licence!

At this point, the Squadron nominal roll was revised, and we arrived in Aden with 5 Officers and 92 other ranks. Maj Wilson remained as OC and WO2 Jackson as SSM. We were housed in Falaise Camp in Little Aden and spent many weeks acclimatising to the repressive hot climate, smell, and flies, whilst unpacking the boxes we had painstakingly packed at Fernhurst.

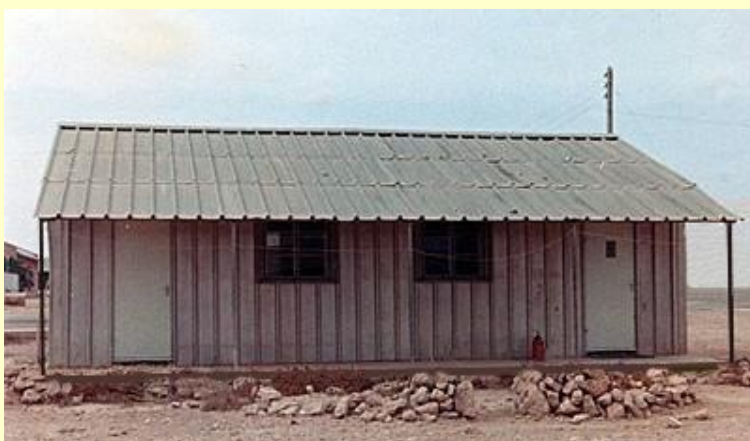
Having just settled into a working routine by beginning to provide general survey support to Middle East Command, in August 1964 the whole Squadron had to move yet again to Normandy Lines, adjacent to RAF Khormaksa airfield on the edge of Aden town. This became the home of the Squadron for the rest of its stay in Aden.



Unpacking boxes at Falaise Camp, Little Aden.

Normandy Lines was located on a vast expanse of flat, sandy desert by the beach, where numerous 'Twynham' huts were interspersed with larger brick buildings intended for communal use, such as the cookhouse.

The camp accommodated several units, including a couple of companies from the newly mustered Royal Corps of Transport (RCT) and a Pioneer Company. We all shared the same cookhouse and NAAFI, which could become a bit uncomfortable in the evenings, as it soon became clear that Surveyors and the Transport chappies did not always see 'eye-to-eye'.



A typical Twynham hut at Normandy Lines.

It was not long before the ingenuity of 'we' Sapper Surveyors solved the problem by the formation of an RE club!

The other unfortunate situation for the 'singlies,' who of course lived on camp, was the regular thunderous noise of the three squadrons of RAF Hawker Hunter fighters on the neighbouring Khormaksa airfield, warming up at 5 am, prior to conducting operational strikes up country.

Initially, the reproduction semi-trailers stood in the open air, under the blazing Middle Eastern sun, which did not help the life of their outer metal skins. Coupled with that was the doubtful reliability of the refrigeration units, or 'chillers' as they were known, to maintain a reasonable working temperature within the vehicles. It was not unusual for the temperature to shoot up to well over one

hundred degrees Fahrenheit within a few minutes of a failed chiller, so making it impossible to operate technically.



This 'stop-go' situation continued, with monotonous regularity for several months.

It was not until the open-sided shed (visible on the right-hand side of the photograph) had been completed, and under which the 'Print Train' could be parked, that some sort of normality returned to the working day

Normandy Lines - early 1965 showing the large expanse of sand on which were parked the line of reproduction semi-trailers and the field computation wagons.

The reproduction elements of the Squadron were kept very busy with the many mapping tasks that supported Middle East Command. A singularly notable task during my time was the production of the 'Radfan Report,' and its associated mapping; the official 'tome' of the many aspects of the ongoing operations by the services, and the lessons learnt to date. The production timeframe of this report was often so critical to the Theatre Command that all map reproduction personnel were placed on shift work for, what seemed, months.

Meanwhile, the Field Survey troops were deployed to produce 2nd order traverses from Ethiopia, along the South Arabian coast to Riyan, via Perim Island. Traverses were also carried out into the Radfan mountains in the wilderness of the Aden Protectorate. Whilst at the latter location many of the surveyors were based at Thumeir airstrip camp – the forward base area in the Radfan for operations against the local dissident warring factions. Later, field work included gravity surveys in the area and satellite tracking in support for the US mapping service.

A pleasant and welcome break for those at camp was the formation of the RE Aden Hockey Eleven. Although it represented all RE Corps members in Theatre, many of the team were drawn from the old 13 Squadron team that had played in 'Blighty'. In the same way, many of the Squadron's footballers joined the service leagues and were quite successful.

On a more salutary note, the growing independence troubles that occupied our forces in the Aden Protectorate began to infiltrate the local population in Aden town itself and became more evident as 1965 drew on. Guard duties became a serious matter, and the Squadron also provided people for guarding the Federal National Guard (FNG) and Federal Regular Army (FRA) barracks adjacent to Normandy Lines. Insurgence was becoming a matter of concern and a famous incident, which attracted news space in the national press in the UK, involved a local dissident being challenged and shot whilst attempting to climb the perimeter defences into our lines. Other incidents, which began to occur more frequently, included shootings in the town shopping areas and in the old Arab quarter of Crater. It is now history that the eventual outcome of the situation was the British Forces' withdrawal in late 1967. As part of that exercise 13 Field Survey Squadron RE was withdrawn on the 29th of June 1967, complete with their semi-trailers, and moved to Barton Stacey.

Meanwhile my service with 13 Squadron came abruptly to an end on being posted to SMS for a Class One course on the 30th April 1965. Not a moment too soon as life in Aden began to get a little troublesome. Never-the-less, an interesting and eventful period in my Military Survey career.

Peter Wood, June 2024

13 Squadron Quiz – Questions and Answers

In the last Newsletter we set a quiz to test people's knowledge about 13 Sqn. How many did you get right?

Q1 The formation date of any unit is considered as the date the Royal Warrant for its creation is signed. What was that date for 13 Squadron? *1st December 1824.*

Q2 What was 13 Squadron's title upon its formation? *13th Survey Company, Royal Sappers and Miners. Note: The Royal Sappers and Miners were a separate Corps until absorbed into the Royal Engineers in 1856.*

Q3 The Squadron served overseas in the First World War, in which theatre? *The Middle East – Gallipoli and Egypt.*

Q4 During the Second World War the Squadron was deployed first in North-West Europe and then Syria followed by Egypt and Malta. On 16th July 1943 it moved again to a new country where it operated until after VE and VJ Days. Which country? *Italy.*

Q5 For the period 1951 to 1964, the Squadron was based near Haslemere. What was the name of the Camp? *Fernhurst Camp.*

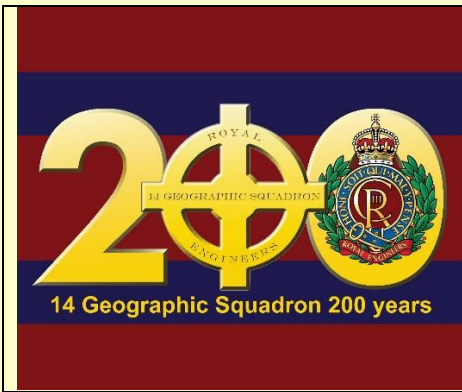
Q6 The Squadron spent the late 1960s until the mid-1980s stationed near to Andover, at B Camp and then A Camp, Barton Stacey, but what was the name of the camp/barracks? *Drayton Camp (after Drayton Down which formed part of the camp area).*

Q7 The Squadron has had many different titles. For which period was it called 13 Map Production Squadron? *June 1976 to November 2000.*

Q8 In late 1977 the Squadron was involved in OPERATION BURBERRY that took it away from its usual occupation of Map Production. What was OP BURBERRY the response to? *The 1977 Fireman's Strike.*

Q9 In the 1960s and 70s military vehicles carried a unit identifier plate. At the time 42 Regt's identifier was a blue plate with the number 176 in white lettering. What was 13 Squadron's? *A blue plate with the number 171 in white lettering.*

Q10 After many rumours of moves to various parts of the country, the Squadron finally left Barton Stacey and moved to join the School at Hermitage. When did that move take place? *September 1985.*



200 Hundred Years

14 Geographic Squadron RE

Close on the heels of 13 Squadron, 14 Geographic Squadron is also celebrating its 200th anniversary. We hope to include articles in the newsletters about 14 Squadron in the same vein as those we have included (and will continue to include) for 13 Squadron. 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 Squadron's 150th Anniversary. Please send them to Tish Gauci at REA-milsvy-newsletter@outlook.com or the Secretary at REA-milsvy-sec@outlook.com.

14 Squadron Quiz

How much do you know or can recall about 14 Sqn? Test your knowledge against the following questions.

Q1 The formation date of any unit is considered as the date the Royal Warrant for its creation is signed. What was that date for 14 Squadron?

Q2 13th Company was formed to undertake the Survey of Ireland. For which purpose was 14th Company formed?

Q3 The titling of 13th Company and 14th Company was different from all other companies at the time of their formation. What was that difference and why?

Q4 Since the time of its formation up until 1914 the Squadron had been engaged purely in Survey tasks. In 1915 its role was changed to one of "Corps Troops" and it was deployed to which country?

Q5 Between the wars the Squadron served most of its time within the UK. In 1929 it was absorbed into the Survey Battalion RE stationed where?

Q6 When war was declared in September 1939 the Squadron was mobilised and deployed as part of the British Expeditionary Force to which country?

Q7 For over 30 years the Squadron was stationed in Ratingen near to Dusseldorf but the only access to the barracks was via a suburb of Dusseldorf. What was its name?

Q8 Between the end of WWII and 2013 when it returned to UK, the Squadron was stationed in Germany. During that time it was based in 8 locations from Bielefeld to Bad Salzuflen and Minden to Mönchengladbach – one of them twice. Which one?

Q9 For much of the time in the 1970s, the title of the Squadron 'rag' was a play on that of a novel by John Steinbeck. Name the title of the Squadron production?

Q10 In 1985, at the time of 14 Squadron's 160th Anniversary, the Squadron's title changed again. To what?

Memories of Command: 14 Independent Topographic Squadron Royal Engineers (1984–1986)

By John Campbell

Looking back on my time as squadron commander of 14 Squadron from March 1984 to March 1986, I'm struck by how many memories still stand out after 40 years. While some details are a little hazy, there are moments and milestones that remain as vivid as ever.

One of the earliest highlights was in the spring of 1984, when we won the BAOR Minor Units Rugby Championship. It was a fantastic achievement, not just because we thoroughly deserved the win, but also (if I'm honest) because Andy Hoon hadn't managed to win it a couple of years before me. That little bit of rivalry made the victory all the sweeter—though I ought to be thoroughly ashamed of myself for saying so!

The squadron itself was a wonderful unit, but it wasn't without its challenges. One of the biggest was that although we had an SQMS, we didn't have a Quartermaster, which I felt was essential for a de facto independent squadron like ours. I made it my mission to have our independence formally recognised, which it duly was, and we became 14 Independent Topographic Squadron RE. Once that was done, I could send Captain Dick Kingswell on a QM training course. He came back as an outstanding Quartermaster, and it made such a difference to how we managed all the technical equipment and supplies we were responsible for.

The squadron's 160th anniversary in 1985 was a special year. While I can't recall all the details, three things stand out clearly. Firstly, we created two boards to honour our history: one listed all the squadron commanders since its formation, the other all the squadron sergeant majors. These were displayed outside the OC's office, a daily reminder of the people who had served before us. I don't know if those boards are still there in the squadron's new location, but it felt important at the time to acknowledge our heritage and leave something for future generations.

Another memory was the Beating the Retreat ceremony we held on the parade square during a beautiful summer's evening in 1985. It was a celebratory event, with the Corps Band performing and guests from HQ BAOR, 1 (BR) Corps, and Düsseldorf Station joining us. The evening started with a cocktail party, and the whole occasion had a wonderful atmosphere—a perfect mix of tradition and celebration.

We also marked the anniversary with a church service in the Garrison church overlooking the Rhine as it flowed alongside through Düsseldorf, to Duisburg, and beyond. It was a time to reflect on the squadron's past and present, and although I can't remember the Padre's exact words, I know the service left an impression. It felt like we were part of something much bigger than ourselves.

1984 was the year of *Exercise Lionheart*, the biggest exercise ever conducted by British Forces in Germany. It was as close as you could get to full mobilisation including the reinforcement from UK, and the whole squadron operated under field conditions in the Rear Combat Zone. We were reinforced by 135 Squadron from Ewell, and it was a great success. For a unit like ours to work so effectively in those conditions was a real achievement, both militarily and technically.

Looking back, I can say without hesitation that commanding 14 Independent Topographic Squadron was the most rewarding job I ever had in the Army. To lead soldiers is always a privilege, and I was fortunate to have an exceptional group of men. My Sergeant Majors, firstly Alan Beeston and later Ian Thurgate, were the heart of the Squadron—two of the finest examples of their rank I've ever known. Alongside them, officers like James Prain, John Fitzgerald, Mike Gilson, Roger Henry, and Dick Kingswell, and every soldier of every rank and trade, made the Squadron what it was. They were skilled, dedicated, and a pleasure to lead.

It was an honour to command such a fine group of men, and I'll always look back on those two years with pride and gratitude.

John Campbell

Roy Barracks – EX LIONHEART - POW Cage

It is funny how reading a few lines can bring memories flooding back. John Campbell in his recollections above, mentioned EX LIONHEART and in addition to the Squadron carrying out its role aided by 135 Squadron and personnel from the Regiment, the barracks also exercised its, then, role as a Prisoner of War cage. Fortunately, the Squadron wasn't tasked with taking on that duty but we had to give up Block 5, one of its soldiers' accommodation blocks, as prisoner accommodation. The guarding responsibly fell to one of the Reserve companies of The Royal Irish Regiment.

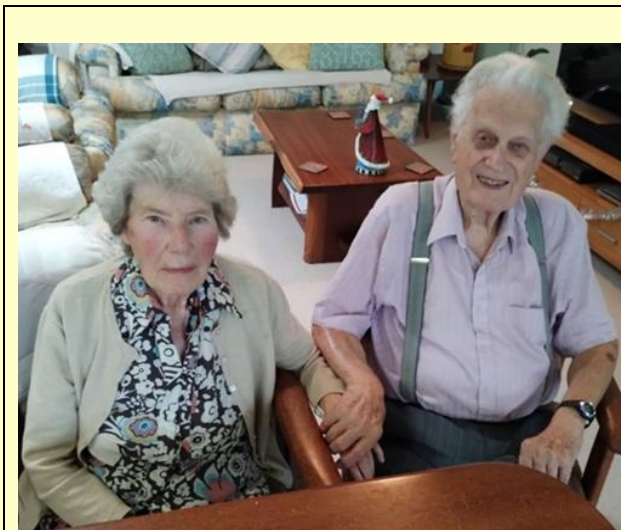
During the exercise there wasn't too much involvement between the two units as we were both fully engaged in our tasks but I do recall two or three things that provided some amusement to "the Troops". The first was the name of their OC – Major Hazzard. Thought initially as a premonition, it wasn't the case. The second, when the guarding troops fired off all their blank ammunition at a supposed enemy helicopter. They thought the Orange Dayglo markers on the aircraft indicated it was an "Orange Forces" aircraft, and therefore enemy! The mistake was made worse by the fact that the aircraft was carrying their CO who had come to visit them! Lastly, after End-Ex, a few beers were being shared in the Squadron bar. The Irish QM, had had a few Bushmills and latched on to our SQMS, Bill Peachey. Bill was scarlet with embarrassment as the QM put his arms around him and wanted to express his thanks with a kiss! Needless to say all the Squadron seniors rushed in to rescue poor Bill.....Not!!

Ian Thurgate

The Contribution of German Civilian Cartographers to 14 Field Survey Squadron

We are very thankful to Maurice Friend, one of our RE Survey members in Australia, for sharing this story of two of his friends, Kurt and Gundula, who were both civilian cartographers after World War II in Mönchengladbach. At a recent lunch, they recalled their time and connection with RE Survey. Both families have been friends in Australia for over 50 years, with Kurt and Gundula recently celebrating their 90th Birthdays. Thank you to Nick Collins for collating the story.

Kurt was born in Berlin and trained there as a Cartographer at an Engineering College, as did his then future wife, Gundula. Together in 1959, they moved to Mönchengladbach and were both employed at SPC (The Survey Production Centre), 14 Sqn, in Nicholson Barracks. Kurt lived in accommodation on the top floor of Block 3; Gundula lived in a flat in the town. They later married in a nearby village and continued working at the camp, separated from their British counterparts.



Gundula & Kurt, Brisbane Dec 2024



Nicholson Barracks, Mönchengladbach 1960

At that time, Kurt remembers, there were around 17 German civilians employed in the Carto section, 4 or so in the Photo Laboratory and 5 printers. They all came under the command of Major (Retd) Glue. Kurt did grid conversions whilst Gundula worked on conventional cartography.

The couple spent 18 months with the Squadron before departing for the International Training Centre (ITC), at Delft in Holland. There, Kurt qualified as a Photogrammetric Engineer and then took his new knowledge to a survey company in Switzerland. During this time he was told of an enterprise being formed on the other side of the world in Brisbane, Australia. This was the Queensland Aerial Survey Company (QASCO), where his family moved to in the mid-1960s.

Having left RE Survey, in 1969 Maurice also took his young family from the UK to Australia to join QASCO. He worked together with Kurt for several years as a photogrammetrist. The company had a national mapping contract together with mining and infrastructure projects in the rapidly growing State of Queensland.

Kurt and Gundula now enjoy a happy retirement in a complex in Brisbane, where Maurice and his wife keep in touch regularly.

Maurice Friend, Brisbane



135 Geographic Squadron Exercise Benchmark Owl



On Saturday, 15 March 2025, 135 Geographic Squadron created geographic history at its Army Reserve Centre in Ewell (in Surrey but within LONDIST boundaries), with the unveiling of the Mercator House Benchmark, the first Ordnance Survey Benchmark installed in this century.

A Benchmark is often found on old buildings and monuments, and with reference to an almanac or database to provide a known height above Mean Sea Level (MSL); they were widely used to map the British Isles. The widespread use of Global Navigation Satellite Systems such as GPS has replaced the use of Benchmarks for mapping and surveying purposes, but up to half a million are still in existence across the British Isles.

To mark the Squadron's 70th year at Mercator House in the Epsom and Ewell Borough and its links with the Ordnance Survey, a Benchmark was established through a squadron surveying exercise on the east-facing wall of Mercator House, under the supervision of a squadron member who is also an Ordnance Survey surveyor. After this, a brass plate 'Flush Bracket' type benchmark was mounted and recorded in Ordnance Survey's MasterMap database. The last Benchmark established was in 1999 at Portsmouth Docks. The Mercator House Benchmark was unveiled by the CEO of Ordnance Survey, Nick Bolton, at a ceremony attended by the Mayor of Epsom and Ewell (Councillor Steve Bridger), the Master of the Worshipful Company of Chartered Surveyors (Mr David Reynolds), the Commander Royal Engineer Geographic, and the Commanding Officer 42 Engineer Regiment (Geographic) alongside members of the Squadron.

The Corps of Royal Engineers has a long history with the Ordnance Survey dating from 1791 up to the appointment of the first civilian Director General of the Ordnance Survey, Walter P Smith MBE in 1977. Smith was a former Commanding Officer of 135 Survey Engineer Regiment (1957-1960). Furthermore, with the establishment of 135 Survey Engineer Regiment (Territorial Army) after WW2 in 1948, two of the Regiment's three squadrons were initially recruited from the Ordnance Survey cartographers and surveyors. The Regiment moved to the Ewell Army Reserve Centre in 1955 and was later reduced to squadron size in 1967. More recently, the Squadron's current Honorary Colonel, Colonel Vanessa Lawrence CB is also a former Director General and CEO of Ordnance Survey (2000-2014).

Benchmark Detail:

Levelled Height 36.476	Type of BM: FL BR
GPS height 36.372	Description: FL BR BLDG MERCATOR HO 3.7M NE ANG SSE FACE
Datum: N	Height above ground 0.408
Order 3	Levelling date 18 Jan 2025



135 Geographic Squadron Benchmark Unveiling

Lord Lieutenant's Meritorious Service Medal – Reserve Forces – WO2 Martin Barnes

Warrant Officer 2 Martin Barnes joined the Territorial Army in April 1975 at the age of 18, and has since completed almost 50 years of exemplary and near continuous service. He completed training as a Field Survey Technician with 135 Field Survey Squadron before becoming a Military Clerk. He promoted to Lance Corporal in 1979 and Corporal in 1983 whilst additionally qualifying as a Class 3 Driver and a Skill At Arms Instructor.

Looking for new challenges, Sergeant Barnes transferred to the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1987 in the role of Medical Clerk for 221 Field Ambulance, and later for 256 (London) Field Hospital. During this time, he qualified as a Combat Medical Technician Class 2. He mobilised in a Medical Clerk role to support the wider mobilisation of Reservists for Op GRANBY in 1991, and in 1992 along with all Military Clerks, he re-badged into the newly formed Adjutant General's Corps.

In 2007, he left his civilian employment to take up a Full Time Reserve Service post as a Chief Clerk with the Honourable Artillery Company in the rank of Warrant Officer Class 2. In late 2016, he returned to 135 Geographic Squadron as the Permanent Staff Administration Officer and later as the Chief Clerk.

Warrant Officer 2 Barnes left the service on 19 March 2025 after nearly 50 years providing exemplary Human Resources and Pay advice to four separate Reserve units and the countless Service Personnel that have passed through these units. He has been awarded the Efficiency Medal for the Army Reserve, the Volunteer Reserve Service Medal with five bars, and the Coronation and Jubilee Medals. For his unflinching dedication to the good administration of the Reserve Forces over an unprecedented 5 decades, Warrant Officer 2 Barnes was awarded the Lord Lieutenant's Meritorious Award.



WO2 Martin Barnes receiving his Lord Lieutenant of Greater London Meritorious Reservist Award on 15 March 2025.

(photo with thanks to ©GL-RFCA)

Soldiers' Soldier Awards

No. 60 ME Geo Tech Class 0-2 Course and No. 40 ME Geo Tech Class 2-1 Course

The Branch presented the prestigious Soldiers' Soldier Award to trainees who completed their Military Engineer Geographic Technician (ME Geo Tech) Class 0-2 and 2-1 courses in January 2025. The award holds special significance as it is based on nominations made by fellow soldiers, recognising the contributions each recipient has made to their peers, embodying the spirit of the REA's motto, "Service not Self."

At the End of Course Ceremony, John Rigby, on behalf of the REA, presented the nominated winners with certificates, a copy of Alan Gordon's book "The Regiment that Mapped the World," together with a cash prize. The winners were:

- No. 40 Military Engineer Geographic Technician Class 2-1: Spr Adam Barritt-Williams
- No. 60 Military Engineer Geographic Technician Class 0-2: LCpl Ffion Davies-Wigley



Spr Adam Barritt-Williams receiving his award from John Rigby



LCpl Ffion Davies-Wigley receiving her award from John Rigby

Congratulations to both LCpl Davies-Wigley and Spr Barritt-Williams for their outstanding achievements.

The Origin of the Armillary Sphere

Richard Lovekin – Librarian, School of Military Survey (Aug 1973 - Aug 1980)

We are thrilled to announce that the mystery surrounding the origins of the Armillary Sphere has been solved by Richard Lovekin! Thank you to everyone who answered the plea for information and particularly Mike Nolan who has found some compelling evidence that confirms Richard's story, and to Nick Collins for collating the information.

The Armillary Sphere was designed by the late Jim Walke, an instructor in the Field Survey Department within the School of Military Survey. In 1979, at the suggestion of Colonel Jay Coulson (Project Officer for the rebuild of SMS), Jim was asked to design a fitting piece of sculpture as a centre-piece for the new School HQ, to be in place for the Queen's Opening ceremony in 1980.

In conversation one coffee break, Jim recalled that he'd read somewhere that the young Princess Elizabeth (Tudor) had been very into astrology. She had doodled, in one of the many books in her library, a sketch of an armillary sphere as she waited for her half-sister to 'just go away' so she could be Queen. Jim suggested that it would be a very good thing to base a decorative sculpture on.

So I phoned round the library net and made contact with a real live Royal Librarian at Windsor Castle who knew the very book in question - he admitted that Good Queen Bess had indeed scribbled all over one of their precious books but that it was not certain that the sketched sphere was truly in her 'Princessly' hand. However, he was willing, for payment of a proper fee, to send us a 10x8 photo taken by a real Royal photographer. The photo duly arrived, but the bad news was that the sketch was very vague in reference to the star signs. Therefore, I borrowed an MOD official Pentax SLR camera from WO2 (QMSI) Frank Cobbe, who ran the Photo Department, so Jim and I could trek off to the Museum of Science in Oxford where I snapped the symbols on one of their exhibits. The film was developed and printed in Photo/Litho; Jim drew out the symbols and one of the Carto draughtsman produced a beautiful engineering drawing to enable members of the SMS REME Detachment to cut the metal, fix it all together and finish the whole work of art.

I was saddened to hear that the work had been uprooted from its place by the new unit at Denison Barracks, but rather glad that the funds to restore it were given by the Military Survey (Geographic) Branch of the REA. Thank you.



The sketch that gave inspiration to the creation of the Armillary Sphere

SCHOOL OF MILITARY SURVEY SYMBOL

The sculpture of the celestial sphere which can be seen at the main entrance of the School Headquarters is based upon a drawing which appears in the Psalter of Queen Elizabeth I. The book cannot be dated precisely but it is believed to have been printed in France between 1510 and 1520. The poem is certainly in Queen Elizabeth's handwriting and perhaps was written whilst she was a prisoner at Hatfield. It is not certain if the illustration is in the Queen's own hand although it is traditionally ascribed to her.

The illustrations overleaf are reproduced with the gracious permission of Her Majesty the Queen.

Information provided by Mike Nolan

Allan Marles' Diaries

In the autumn of 2024, the Branch became aware of the impending centenary of one of our Members, Allan Marles. There was enough time to publicise the event and some of our more senior Members were able to go to his care home and celebrate the occasion with him and his family. The event was recorded in our Autumn Newsletter.

Allan had always kept a diary, even during the war, and we were very lucky to be allowed to view extracts. Our intention was to publish extracts in the Winter edition but, very sadly, Allan died on 23rd January, and it was felt we should simply record his passing in that edition as a mark of respect.

Our thanks to Allan's family for allowing us to share some extracts from his diaries and giving us an opportunity to read some of his exploits.....

Introduction. Allan Marles was born on 16th October 1924 in Amesbury, close to Beauford Barracks and Lark Hill Camp. He was the youngest of six children, with three brothers and two sisters, the eldest being 20 at the time.

He was 15, coming up to 16 when war was declared on 3rd September 1939 and he couldn't wait to get into the Army, as three of his brothers were already in the Forces: One was in the Secret Service, another in the Grenadier Guards; and the third in the Royal Air Force.

His Service. In 1942, when he was 18, he requested to join the Royal Engineers and was posted to Chatham, where he was asked if he had ever thought about being commissioned. He applied and was sent to the commissioning board in London. After a couple of days, they recommended that he went to the pre-Officer Cadet Training Unit at Wrotham in Kent. He was subsequently commissioned as a Second Lieutenant on 16th October 1943, his 19th birthday. Allan recalled:

Next I attended 140 Sapper OCTU in Newark for six months until finally leaving on my 19th birthday, when on the passing out parade the Sergeant Major said "Cheer up, Marles. It's your birthday today and as you will soon be going on leave you don't have to ask me to your party!"

My first posting after OCT was to HQ 21 Army Group, formed with the Americans and Canadians and commanded by Monty, for the invasion of Europe. We were located in the exhibition buildings in Earls Court, London, lived in requisitioned houses in Putney and travelled daily by underground. Sadly, not my idea of helping the war effort.

Fortunately, although my job was posting other ranks to units in the group, other teams just across the corridor dealt with officer postings. It was therefore very simple for me to arrange a posting to an Engineer Regiment which specialised in bridging, which at the time was my prime interest. In my new role as a troop commander with 75 men to lead, we trained constructing bridges over water or dry gaps.

In February 1944 the Regiment moved to Romsey, where we lived in tents in the grounds of Lord Mountbatten's House. We were then sent to the Isle of Wight where we lived in requisitioned houses in Sandbanks (Sandown?) and trained, with the equipment we were about to use in action, on the east coast of the island. Our vehicles were all waterproofed to make them suitable for motoring in 3 feet of water and we were each issued with lifebelts.

On 3 May 1944, now as a Lieutenant, Allan joined the 584 (Suffolk) Army Field Company RE which had joined Kent Royal Fortress Engineers to the newly designated 15th (Kent) GHQ Troops Royal Engineers. Allan continued:

In May, the government put a restriction on people travelling to or from an area 10 miles in from the South Coast, and on the 18th May we moved into one of the transit camps. Here we were briefed on our role in the forthcoming invasion of France, but we were not told where nor when

this would be. We were also ordered not to make contact with families or people outside the camp. On the 1st of June we embarked on a Landing Craft Tank.

Operation Overlord

We were part of 30 Corps, 2nd British Army, with clear instructions to land on Gold Beach, near La Hamel. There we were to clear two traffic lanes through known German minefields and then on D+2, sink and operate a metal vehicle causeway, being towed across the channel, for dry and quick landing of vehicles and personnel from LCTs. We had very good maps of the beaches and hinterland and perhaps, more important, silhouette maps of the coastline.

Allan's Grandson, Fergus, summarised what happened to Allan and his men

"When they went to shore they came off the LCT and had to wade through 4 feet of seawater. There they saw vast numbers of dead soldiers in the water and on the beach. Army training had prepared them for this: They were not to pick them up or tend to them. Allan was very concerned not for his own safety, but about the troops and the way they regarded him. He was only 19 and there were 70 people looking to him to lead them, so he had to ignore all the bodies he saw."

The Minefield. "The Germans had left a vast number of mines buried along the coast to slow down the Allied Forces should they invade. Therefore, the first task Allan and his troops had when they got to Linemore (Longues-sur-Mer?), was to clear lanes through a minefield so vehicles and troops could make their way through safely to Bayeux.

They had practiced and practiced this on the Isle of Wight. They were made good progress, clearing lanes big and safe enough for vehicles to drive through. Suddenly there was an explosion. Three soldiers, unfortunately were killed. This was very sad, everyone was shaken up, so Allan pulled everyone back and went through the drill for disarming German mines. They then went back to work, and achieved two lanes through the minefield, so tanks and other army vehicles could get through safely."

Allan's memoir*Then concrete caissons were sunk close to the pier heads to further improve protection from the sea and if required from the air. Unfortunately, on the 19th of June a heavy storm developed at sea, lasting for 3 days, but because the breakwaters were in position, it didn't destroy the partly completed pier heads and roadways to the beach. It might not be generally known that the plan was to have 2 Mulberry Harbours, one in the British and the other in the American Sector. The American policy was to get their harbour into operation as quickly as possible and then build the breakwaters. Sadly, the storm came at the wrong time, most of their equipment was destroyed and the few undamaged parts were quickly moved to the British Mulberry.*

Fergus takes up the story again.....

After Allan and his troops had cleared the lanes, they returned to the beach to assist with the construction of Mulberry Harbour B. They checked to see if their pontoons had arrived, and once they did, they placed sections of them on the causeway to allow the LCTs to land, which occurred on the second day.

They quickly assembled the pontoons and brought in craft to help guide the LCTs into position. Within three days of D-Day, everything was in place, and they began their first landings of vehicles and tanks. As the LCTs arrived, Allan would moor and secure them, the ramps would be lowered, and the vehicles and troops inside would drive off onto dry land, heading straight toward Bayeux. Once Mulberry Harbour was fully operational, their job was done—they packed their bags and moved on.

Allan went on to have further adventures and experiences and we will continue telling them in our next edition.



Veterans for Veterans in Care

(Registered charity number 1210937)

Geordie Hambling

Some of you will be aware that last year I became involved with another local Northeast veteran set up called **Veterans for Veterans in Care**, which achieved charitable status in November 2024.

During 2024, we looked at how many veterans are in the care home system and were surprised to find out that in the 2001 national census, data showed that 7.9% of care home residents were veterans. This equates to some **26,000 veterans in care**. I am sure this will shock most readers as it did us. Further inquiries highlighted that once in a care home, a veteran can quickly become isolated, they lose contact with all veteran events and activities and become the **FORGOTTEN ARMY**.

Veterans for Veterans in Care is on a mission to change this. We seek to provide a veteran centred approach to support veterans in residential care homes, assisted living and sheltered accommodation, with services tailored specifically for all armed forces veterans, enhancing their quality of life, together with integrating veterans, their families and carers into the veteran community.

How do we do this? There are 3 pillars to our strategy:

1. **Locate** - where are the veterans.
2. **Engage** – create interest in the local veteran community.
3. **Integrate** – encourage veterans to go to local veteran events such as breakfast clubs and drop ins. This has been achieved in the Northeast by giving veterans access to the veteransdiarynortheast@gmail.com where some 80 events a month are available to any veteran, whether in a care home or not.

Although a new charity, we are already receiving referrals from care homes where they have a veteran who needs help, or would just like to talk with another veteran. If there is no help required, we can arrange a weekly telephone call through the Royal Star & Garter or sometimes for a veteran to visit. Our volunteer veterans visit them to chat, and these visits have been proven to lift their spirits and support their wellbeing. We are also able to apply for their veteran's badge which can make a significant impact, by recognising their service and allowing them to wear their veteran's badge with pride. Where required, we can refer cases to SSAFA or the RBL.

Another programme supported by Royal Star & Garter and the RBL, is the Veteran Friendly Framework, who are encouraging care homes to become veteran friendly and gain accreditation. **Veterans for Veterans in Care** is being asked to support care homes on their accreditation journey by demonstrating how, as veterans, we communicate and interact with each other.



This is a recent example of when we visited a new care home and asked if they had any veterans to whom we could talk.

The care home greeted us with open arms and said yes, but that the veteran was incredibly quiet and did not talk much. The veteran agreed to see us, and within minutes was chatting, told us his name, rank and number, where he served and much more.

The care staff were shocked at how easily he had opened up to us. That care home group has invited us into 37 of their homes to demonstrate to staff how they can engage with veterans.

Following this, we had a light bulb moment and decided that it would be an innovative idea to design and produce flash cards showing items that a veteran will recognise, such as a pair of bulled boots. On the other side of the card is a description of the item and questions to ask the veteran about them. We are also looking at producing a world map that will show the old names of countries where veterans have served, such as Aden now being Yemen. Carers and family members can use these items to prompt a conversation about the veteran's service. To this end, we are currently engaged in testing and measuring this concept and the results so far are very encouraging.

Would you like to know more and get involved at a local level?

A number of Survey veterans from the Newbury area who are aware of this service, have already expressed an interest in helping us extend this service into Newbury and the surrounding area. This would be a massive step for us - one we would welcome and embrace as our long-term plan is to cover the whole of England and Wales. Can you help us take our first baby steps into a new area and locate the **Forgotten Army**? If so, please email me at john@vfvic.co.uk

Finally - The big ask. If you would like to donate to our charity we would gratefully appreciate it. Every penny makes a difference, no matter how little it is. Our bank details are:

VETERANS FOR VETERANS IN CARE

Account number 67388503 Sort code 08-92-99

You can check some of our amazing pictures on our Facebook page where you can see the difference our volunteers are making already @VeteransForVeteransInCare. Thank you.

DEATHS OF OLD COMRADES

Alan Claxton

We have been notified by his son, Stuart, that Alan Claxton passed away peacefully on 13th February at his home in East Sussex. Alan was a Field Surveyor who served between 1959 and 1968. After leaving the Army he continued his career in surveying, travelling the world. His family were lucky to travel with him on most occasions.



No 3 Adv Svy Tech Cse
Cpl Shaw Cpl Nunley **Cpl Claxton** Cpl Newman
Cpl Johnstone Cpl Jones WO2 QMSI Wilkinson Cpl Durrop Cpl Parr

Stuart says that *Alan was the most doting Father and Grandfather who would drop everything to support his family. "We were truly blessed, which makes his passing all the more painful. I'd like to thank all the support from his Sapper family. He truly loved his time with the Royal Engineers, he would speak about it almost daily."*

RIP Dad all our love always.

Our condolences go to Alan's family.

Dave Nunley

We are also saddened to report the passing of David (Dave) Nunley on 3rd February, just a few weeks short of his 82nd birthday.

Dave was a Field Surveyor who served between 1959 and 1968, during which time he was awarded the GSM South Arabia. By sad coincidence, he was on the same Class 1 Field Survey Tech Course (No 3) as Alan Claxton whose passing is recorded on the previous page, as is the photograph of No 3 Course.

Dave provided a number of photographs to the Branch Historic Archive Collection, principally of life in Aden/South Yemen, including the photographs below:



Dave with a Federal National Guard soldier eating Gazelle

Our condolences go to Dave's family.

William (Bill) Saunders

We recently heard from Julie, one of the daughters of William Norman Saunders (Bill), to say that her Dad sadly passed away on 20th July last year at the age of 99. Bill served in Military Survey Branch as a Cartographer from 1941 to 1952. Bill's funeral was held in his home of Llangollen, North Wales, on 15th August. His beloved wife, Betty, passed away in 2005. He led a full and active life, and leaves behind 4 daughters, 8 grandchildren & 4 great grandchildren.

Straight after we notified the Members of Bill's sad passing, Mike Nolan got in touch saying that he knew Bill quite well. *"Bill came to one of the first DSA Seminars and we corresponded on ASLS matters"*. We are very grateful to Julie and Mike for the following obituary.

Bill Saunders was born in Wandsworth on 24th June 1925. His family moved to Portsmouth around 1930. After his father's death in 1935 he was enrolled at the Duke of York's Royal Military School in Dover, which he attended from 1936-1941. He learned to play the cornet and joined the school band. Amongst his school subjects was map reading. In 1941, Captain Kelleher R.E. visited the school in order to recruit apprentice tradesmen and Bill enlisted immediately. The group photo taken at Milford-on-Sea shows Bill ninth from the left in the second row from the rear, with Capt. Kelleher seated centrally. The group includes Bob Eade, known to many in the REA.



*Ordnance Survey Apprentice Boys - Barton on Sea or Milford on Sea - April 1942
Bill is ninth from left, in second row from the back.*

In 1943 he was posted to the Survey Training Centre in Ruabon, North Wales where he was also married. He attended Cambridge University in 1943-44 and attended lectures in engineering and surveying, but in what capacity is not known. From 1945 to 1947 he served in India, Ceylon, Singapore, and Thailand. One of his tasks was drafting large-scale town plans of Mandalay, and Rangoon. For part of this time, he was in 2 Air (Survey) Liaison Section one of whose tasks was the production of large-scale beach maps of the Port Swettenham area for the Op Zipper landings, using aerial photographs flown by Fleet Air Arm Hellcats operating from an escort carrier to the west of Sumatra.

At the end of the war 2 ASLS carried out an extensive aerial survey of southern Thailand with 684 Sqn RAF, at that time flying Mosquito aircraft, and the squadron also covered parts of Malaya, Borneo, and Java. Bill was then posted to Egypt serving in the Canal Zone until the 1952 crisis before returning to the U.K. and leaving the Army.

From 1952 to 1955 he worked as Superintendent of Air Surveys in Khartoum, Sudan, before moving to Entebbe, Uganda, where he worked in the Lands & Surveys Department until Uganda gained independence in 1962. Bill was fortunate in that his wife, Betty, and daughter Julie accompanied him and whilst there his family expanded with the birth of another two daughters. Bill played a major part in the production of the Atlas of Uganda, heading the cartography.

On return to the U.K., he initially found employment in the printing department of Dobson & Crowthers in Llangollen in North Wales, and whilst living there Bill and Betty's fourth child, another daughter, was born.. The family then moved to Surrey where he was employed at Cook, Hammond & Kell in Merton. He remained in this job until his retirement in 1990.

The family then returned to Llangollen where they had a very happy retirement until his wife passed away in 2005.

Bill continued to lead an active life, joining the Ramblers Group and undertaking many long-distance walks, Offa's Dyke, the Anglesey Coast, the River Dee from its source to its mouth to name a few. He was very interested in his family-tree and did much research on this. He also acted as a sidesman in his local Church

Sadly, his health deteriorated, and he spent his final three years in a care-home, passing away peacefully on 20th July 2024.



Bill on his 95th Birthday

Bill's daughter Julie says that *"He was a great Dad & is missed by us all"*.

Our condolences go to Bill's family.

Guy "Phillip" Robinson

In our last newsletter we reported that sad passing of Guy (Phillip "GPG") Robinson on 3rd December, at the age of 84 years old. A memorial service for Phillip was held on 29th March. There was a large congregation, estimated at around 200 and filling the church. At least six old Survey colleagues were present - those who both served with him and served under his command.

Phillip spent most of his army career with Military Survey retiring as Lieutenant Colonel. He was OC 19 Squadron 1977-79. After leaving the Army his interest in military subterranean works (tunnelling and mining, bunkers etc) led to him becoming an authority on the subject. He was a founder of the Durand Group, an author and was interviewed on, and narrated several television programmes about the First World War.

Phillip's son, Jeremy (Jez) is working on an obituary which we will publish in a forthcoming Newsletter....."Thankfully my father kept everything – all logged and filed – including a daily diary from aged 18 (started at RMAS when he began his journal!) so I have plenty of material, photos, sketches, maps etc. He also had quite a career – Aden, Radfan, Sarawak / Malaya, Singapore, Kenya, Oman, Germany, Cyprus as well as becoming the youngest ever fellow of the Royal Geographical Society aged 25, and then became a leading expert of First World War Tunnels post his career – So the challenge will be keeping it brief!!"

Our condolences go out to Phillip's family.

David 'Percy' Kimber

We were very saddened to hear from his wife, Julie, that Percy Kimber had died on 12th April. Percy was one of "Survey's characters", known to almost everyone and, as many people have said, "one of the good guys".

Percy joined the Army as an Apprentice in 1959 and later became an Air Survey Tech. He had a varied career and progressed through the ranks with posts as an instructor, Sergeant Major, was

commissioned, a Quartermaster and then headed the Training Development Team. He had a profound influence on many people's lives. Nick Collins commented,

"In many ways, Percy Kimber helped shape my military career. It started at Chepstow when he was one of my Survey Wing permanent staff, through to soldierly advice as my QM whilst in 14 Squadron, and then as a fellow officer helping to organise our very successful Regimental Tri-Service champion hockey team. Percy was always there if you needed some advice or just a quiet chat. He had a wonderful sense of humour and was one of life's true gentlemen."

We will publish an obituary for Percy in our next edition. Anyone wishing to contribute or submit a few words in remembrance of Percy is asked to forward them to the Secretary at REA-MilSvy-Sec@outlook.com



No16 Adv Air Survey Tech Course (Percy front row, 2nd from left)

Contributors

Our thanks go to Mike Nolan, Julie Kingdon (Bill Saunders' daughter), Jez Robinson, Nick Collins, Quintin Locke, Maurice Friend, Peter Wood, Ian Thurgate John Campbell, Stuart Claxton, Richard Lovekin, Allan Marles diaries (with thanks to his family) for their contributions to this edition of the newsletter.

The Secretary and Newsletter Compiler are always very grateful for contributions and, especially so at this time, any associated with 13, 14 and 16 Sqn. We hope, equally, to recognise 19 Sqn upon its 200th anniversary in due course.

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