

THE BLYTHE SAPPERS
67TH MANAGEMENT MEETING
1130hrs Wednesday 26th September 2012
THE ARMY & NAVY CLUB, LONDON

Those Present:

Sapper Bill Woodburn	Chairman
Sapper Hooky Walker	Chairman Elect 2013
Sapper Charles Holman	Honorary Membership Secretary
Sapper Roy Wilsher	Honorary Treasurer
Sapper Stuart Sinclair	Link Member
Sapper John McLennan	Honorary Secretary

1. **Item 1 Introduction.** The Chairman welcomed all those in attendance and a very warm welcome to Lt Col Peter Clayton who was attending his first meeting as Honorary Treasurer Designate. The Chairman also informed the Committee that Sapper John Wilks has given his notice of retiring from the BS Management Committee and the BS Council. He thanked him for his loyal and dedicated service to the Blythe Sappers. It is therefore necessary to recruit an auditor for one year and Sapper David Hamilton has agreed to that brief. The Chairman will inform the AGM.

2. **Item 2 Apologies for Absence.** Apologies received from Sapper Idris Pearce, Sapper John Wilks, Sapper Charles Holman and Colonel Callum Skeat. *(It was suggested that the Corps Colonel would be invited to become a BS)*

3. **Item 3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting.** The Minutes of the 66th Meeting of the Blythe Sappers Management Committee had been published on the BS website recently. The Minutes were signed.

4. **Item 4. Matters Arising.**

a. The Blythe Sappers talk to the Troop Commanders Course on the tau of Everest Expedition went well – the Secretary read out the report from the Membership Secretary. The Chairman reported that he had spoken to the Corps Col about the possibility of holding similar events and if each course could be exposed to BS that would be of benefit. The cost was about £340. The report is attached at **Annex A**

b. **Internet Banking.** To be discussed later.

5. **Item 5. Finance.** The Honorary Treasure went through the SOFA to be presented to the AGM.

a) **A&CP Fund.** The Hon Treasurer informed the meeting that there had been no applications for funds so far in 2012. The uncommitted amount held by the Corps Treasurer is

£3,726.

- b) **Charity Donations.** The committee agreed to make a grant from the Blythe Sappers to the following charities.

a.	Veterans Aid	£1,000
b.	Army Widows Association	£1,000
c.	Forces Children's Trust	£500

Carried

- c) **Outstanding Subscriptions.** There are 19 outstanding Sappers who have not paid this year. It was agreed that each would be written to with a stamped addressed envelope to ask if they wish to continue but if they have not paid by the Dec Lunch it will be assumed that they no longer wish to be a Member.
- d) **Internet Banking.** The BS Management Committee authorised the Honorary Treasurer to again make contact with the Clydesdale Bank to set up a system of Internet Banking as many of the Members were now using the Bacs system for payments of their lunch fees.

Proposal: That the Blythe Sappers set up an Internet Banking System with the Clydesdale Bank.

Proposer: Stuart Sinclair

Seconder: Brigadier Bill Woodburn. Chairman

CARRIED

6. **Item 6. Corps & TA Report – September 2012.** This had been circulated before the meeting and is attached at **Annex B.**

7. **Item 7. Casualties Since Last Meeting**

Deceased Sapper Edward Sharpe FICE, FASCE, FCMI. MInstRE. ENG
Resigned

8. **Item 8. Nominations for New Members**

Nomination	Sponsor	Seconder
Major (Retd) Ingram Murray	Sapper Iain Brice	Sapper Ian McGill
Major John Stanion (EL&Staff Corps)	Sapper Idris Pearce	Sapper Bill Francis
Colonel (Retd) John Crompton	Sapper John Russell Jones	Sapper John McLennan

All Approved

9. **Item 9 Attendance & Arrangements for Today's Luncheon.** Chairman's Bar will be in the Ladies Drawing Room.

Principle Guest: **Mr James Barr;** Historian and Author:
“Demolitions Under Fire -- TE Lawrence and the Hejaz Railway”

Total Number attending 96
Number of Guests 21 (including The Army & Navy Club Secretary)
Those to Rise Sapper Darren Bowyer, Sapper Stephen Hodder,
Sapper Nick Lakin

10. **Any Other Business**

a **Date for 2012** Wed 5th Dec 12
b **Notice in Daily Telegraph** Thursday 27th Sept 12

11. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** Christmas Lunch Wednesday 5th Dec 2012 at
1130hrs



*Sapper Bill Woodburn
Chairman
The Blythe Sappers*

*Sapper John R McLennan
Honorary Secretary
The Blythe Sappers*

The Tau of Everest

The talk, ‘The Tau of Everest’ went very well. Ian Woodall was an excellent speaker; an entertainer rather than a briefer and his talk went down extremely well. He was well entertained afterwards by members of 163 and 164 TCC in the Mess.

His talk was to raise funds for an expedition (or more likely, 2 expeditions) to Everest to give dignity to the bodies of 3 dead climbers, all lying at over 26,000 feet. The cost of this exercise is something over \$300,000 of which he has raised approximately \$100,000 so far. Two bodies lie on the NE side of Everest and one lies on the SW side; 2 expeds and 2 lots of fees! His intention (limited by money) is for 2 people only to climb up to the bodies and cover / move them as best they can. At over 26, 000 feet almost anything seems to be hugely difficult and this is no minor undertaking – the more so bearing in mind Ian is the wrong side of 50.

The talk provided an excellent opportunity to showboat the Blythe Sappers. TCC 163 formed up in May and members are a little bit more “RE” than those of 164 who formed up on the week of the talk. Rabbits in the headlights time! But insofar as we told them about a Corps activity – and they get told about many Corps activities – it will be another piece of info they log in the back of their mind. On balance I think it was worth it.

Charles

Corps Secretary

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Annex B
Blythe Sappers Management Mtg
Corps Update Jun 12

ENGINEER OPERATIONS AND COMMITMENTS

1. **Afghanistan – OP HERRICK.** The high water mark of engineer numbers has been reached and Force Levels will decrease over the next few years with the firm target of 2014 for the UK to have ceased Combat Operations. Although dominated by construction work, the Engr Gp continues to conduct a wide range of tasks from bridging, to demolitions, to diving. The Engr Log Node has doubled in size to enable a two way flow of resources during drawdown. The Afghan National Army (ANA) Engr Tolay (Squadron) has developed so significantly that the number of Engr Gp mentors is being reduced and a number of Afghan Assistant Supervisory Officers (ASOs) have now been recruited and are undergoing training and these new Afghan ASOs will gradually replace the RE JNCOs currently employed in the role. The EOD and Search Task Force continues to provide support to the Contingency Forces and, indirectly, Afghan National Security Forces although development of indigenous EOD and search capability is increasingly positive. Very sadly, LCpl Matthew Smith was killed in action on Friday 10 Aug 12 whilst serving with 30 Armd Engr Sqn, 26 Engr Regt.

2. **Op OLYMPICS.** Approximately 11,000 personnel were drawn from the Army, Regular and Reserve, to meet this commitment. For RE personnel, the commitment was substantial and included ceremonial duties, accommodation construction / deconstruction, design and construction support to the Air Security Plan, venue security and venue military C2. Specifically, the nominated lead at Horse Guards was 28 Engr Regt and at ExCel, 8 Force Engr Bde composite HQ.

CORPS STRUCTURES – REGULAR

3. The 'Army 2020' (A2020) announcement was made public 5 Jul 12. Recognising that the Nation cannot afford Armed Forces of the current size A2020 addresses this by reducing the Army to a total strength of 82, 000 by 2020; roughly a 20% reduction in size. The effects of this reduction are being felt across the whole of the army and the Corps has had to take its proportionate share of the pain.

4. The design for the future Army is simple; five brigades comprising predominantly Regular units (three Armd Infantry; one air asslt; one logistics) will be held as high readiness 'Reaction Forces'. Complementing them will be a pool of Regular and Reserve units configured on a functional basis and commanded by 7 brigades and a divisional HQ. Adaptable forces will be held at lower readiness and will provide 'a la carte' support to the Reaction Forces as required.

5. **Impact on the Regular Corps.** The Regular component of the Corps will reduce from 15 to 11 regular Regiments; the loss of 38 Engr Regt had already been announced, as had the loss of HQ 25 Engr Regt. Future losses are 28 Engr Regt, HQ 24 Cdo Engr Regt and 67 Wks Gp.

6. **Command and Control.** Command of the serving Corps will remain focused on 8 Force Engr Bde. When required for representational purposes, Comdt RSME acts as the "Engineer in Chief" but carries none of the personnel, organisational or structural responsibilities that were vested in the old HQ EinC. The Regimental Colonel RE has been re-titled 'Colonel RE' and has assumed responsibility for the 'people matters' originally part of HQ EinC portfolio. Col RE sits on all major selection and promotion boards.

CORPS STRUCTURES – TERRITORIAL ARMY (TA)

6. As at Mar 12, RE TA strength was 230 officers (70% manned) and 2230 soldiers (55% manned). This included over 600 in training and is a reduction in numbers since last year. Ongoing uncertainty over the future role and structures of the TA in the post SDSR era is hampering retention and Commanding Officers are hard pressed to maintain impetus in the absence of clear decisions as to the way forward. Increased investment in the TA is being delivered through PR proposals and the Army Recruiting and Training Division (ARTD) is already placing a higher priority on TA recruiting and training. In response, the Corps is making efforts to ensure that RE TA units have high calibre Permanent Staff Instructors and CREs and Group Commanders are expected to be given increased responsibility for providing direction and support to TA units once revised command structures are implemented.

PEOPLE ISSUES

7. **Soldier Recruiting.** Inflow into the Corps remains healthy with the 12-month soldier figures increasing for 2012/13 to c800 persons. Academic standards have been re-visited and amended where necessary prior to Capita

assuming a partnership role for Army Recruiting under the Recruiting Partnering Project.

8. **Officer Recruiting.** Sixty six officers were commissioned in trg year (TY)11/12. Nine had no academic basis for further engineering or geotechnical training; 40 held qualifications that put them on the road to chartered membership. Despite this healthy inflow, the Corps is still struggling to deliver sufficient chartered engineers and aims to rectify this with incentive measures, better marketing and improved PET nurturing.

9. **Manning.** The total number of Corps personnel is 9470 against a liability of 9409. Soldier numbers are balanced but mask a deficit of c480 JNCOs and an excess of c530 Sappers. There is an excess of approx 50 officers, predominately from the LE Community.

CAPABILITY DIRECTORATE COMBAT SUPPORT (CD CS)

7. CD CS stood up on 1 Apr 12, split between three sites at Army HQ Andover, Cloutman Block Minley and the old HQ Director RA building at Larkhill. The Director and 9 key staff provided a foothold in Army HQ, while the majority of staff remained in their old locations at Larkhill and Minley. CD CS is to provide policy, direction and professional advice to the Army and Defence on Offensive Support, Manoeuvre Support and Operational Infrastructure, and Defence EOD. Key outputs are:

- Support the Army programme of translating analytical concepts into applied ones, focussing on the development of concepts and doctrine for possible future operations.
- Act as the pan-Army lead for Land Environment combat support issues.
- Delivery of Urgent Operational Requirements.
- Develop and manage Experimentation, Research & Development and Trials activity to underpin Force Development and enhance operational effectiveness.
- Act as the Training Requirement Authority for RA and RE individual and Special to Arm Collective Training and relevant pan-Army training and evaluate training standards.
- Manage RA and RE liability and advise on force structures. Interface with Corps Colonels, DM(A) and the Army Personnel Centre to ensure the optimum manning of liabilities.
- Support to operations.
- Contribute towards Interoperability and Defence diplomacy through international engagement and delivery of international Interoperability Plans.

CORPS SPORTS

21. **Boxing.** 2010/11 has been the most successful season in the history of Corps boxing. Four boxers were awarded Army colours; two were awarded Comb Svcs colours; and three achieved international level representation. 26 Engr Regt won the Army major unit trophy.

22. **Skating.** The Corps ski team finished 5th out of 23 in the Inter-Service Nordic Ski Team Championships and 5th out of 21 in the Army Nordic Ski Team Championships. The 28 Engr Regt team, in conjunction with the Regimental Alpine Ski team, won Best Engineer Unit in the Princess Marina Cup and 7th in the Military Patrol Race.

23. **Rugby League.** RE defeated the REME to win back the Lawson Cup (14th time in 17 years we have held the trophy) to become the 2011 Inter Corps Champions.

24. **Rugby Union.** This has been another good season for Corps 1st XV although defeat by the REME in the final of the Merit League was disappointing. The continued success of the 1st XV has ensured that the Corps has remained well represented at senior levels with 26 players having played for the Army U23s, A Team or senior team; 4 have played for the Combined Services.

25. **Association Football.** Fourteen games were played in the Massey (Inter-Corps) league; winning 7, drawing 2 and losing 5. The Corps was knocked out of the Woolwich Cup in the first round. A Corps Squad played in the inaugural Sgt Paul Fox Memorial match; Sgt Fox lost his life whilst serving on Op HERRICK with 28 Engr Regt and the match is in his memory.

26. **Swimming & Waterpolo.** A very successful season for the swimming team by achieving the Inter Corps Male

Swimming Champions, Inter Corps Female Water polo Champions, Inter Corps Open Water Swimming Champions (20km), BA(G) Inter Unit Water polo Champions (32 Engr Regt) BA(G) Inter Unit Swimming Champions (28 Engr Regt). Within the Army team of 6 racing for the Guinness World Record in the Round the Island Race (Jersey) 5 are Sappers.

27. **Sailing.** Redcoat and her REYC crew had a storming Fastnet race, being the fastest Joint Services boat to finish. In the Round the Island Race, 3 retired Royal Engineer officers yet again won the Modern Gaffer Class in their yacht Sea Badger II. In terms of 'Inshore' activities, the Corps windsurfing team retained their Inter-corps team trophy for the fourth year. REYC Dinghy sailors took part in a number of competitions, and achieved first place in the acclaimed Triangular race held at Seaview against teams from the Royal Artillery and Royal Signals.

28. **Hockey.** 42 Engr Regt won the 4 Div Minor Units league as well as the Army Minor Units Cup, prompting them to seek a more suitable and appropriate challenge in the Major Units this season.

29. **Sports Diving.** In 2010 the Army Sub-Aqua Diving Association (ASADA) and RESDA were awarded the NEPTUNE Medal, a national award by the BSAC, for their rehabilitation work with Headley Court and the inaugural BattleBack expedition to Cyprus in Jun 09. RESDA was also awarded the Ormerod Trophy by ASADA for its contribution to Army Sports diving.