

THE BLYTHE SAPPERS
70TH MANAGEMENT MEETING
1030hrs Wednesday 29th May 2013
THE ARMY & NAVY CLUB, LONDON

Those Present:

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Sapper Hooky Walker | Chairman |
| Sapper Bill Woodburn | Vice Chairman |
| Sapper Scott Robinson | Chairman Elect 2014 |
| Sapper Charles Holman | Honorary Membership Secretary |
| Sapper David Hamilton | Honorary Auditor |
| Sapper Stuart Sinclair | Link Member to BS Council |
| Sapper John McLennan | Honorary Secretary |

1. **Item 1. Introduction.** Sapper Hooky Walker welcomed all to the meeting with a special welcome to Sapper Carel Bouwens at his first meeting and as Hon Sec Designate.
2. **Item 2. Apologies for Absence.** Apologies had been received from Sapper Peter Clayton.
3. **Item 3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting.** The Minutes of the 68th Meeting of the Blythe Sappers Management Committee had been published on the BS website recently. The Minutes for 69th Meeting were signed.
4. **Item 4. Matters Arising.**
 1. There had been no further developments on the new BS neck decoration.
 2. Chairman asked if there had been any snags with Internet Banking to which the Hon Sec said that none had become apparent. The Hon Auditor said he was content with the present arrangements.
 3. The Chairman informed the meeting that he had attended the Blythe Sappers AFA Cup Final between 36 Engr Regt v 39 Engr Regt and had been well looked after.
5. **Item 5. Handover of BS Honorary Secretary.** Sapper McLennan informed the meeting that, after eight years in post he thought it time to step down and had been fortunate to find a willing, and much younger, volunteer, Sapper Carel Bouwens prepared to take on the challenge. It was agreed by the Management Committee to seek BS Council approval.
6. **Item 6 Finance**
 1. The BS Budget 2013 had been approved and the Hon Sec informed the meeting that plans were running as expected.

2. The Chairman noted the forecast of out-turn and the need to consider to which charities the BS would make grants to at the following meetings this year.
3. Purchase of a BS Laptop Computer for the Hon Sec (des).

Proposal: That the sum of £800 be authorised towards the costs of a Laptop.
CARRIED

6. **Item 6. Corps Report.** The Corps Secretary, Sapper Charles Holman went through the Corps Report and outlined the proposed changes to the Corps Structure in the future.

The Corps Report is attached at Annex A.

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

Deceased Sapper Keith Foster.
Resigned Nil

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

| Nomination | Sponsor | Seconder |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Brigadier John Wootton | Sapper Idris Pearce | Sapper John McLennan |
| Mr Bob Stephens | Sapper Jem Blades | Sapper Jim MacKenzie |
| Lt Col (Retd) Sean Leslie Naile | Sapper Max Heron | Sapper Stuart Wright |
| Lt Col Ed Robinson RE | Sapper John McLennan | Sapper Larry Inge |
| Kenneth Edward Clunie | Sapper Geoff Field | Sapper John Ewing |
| Colonel Callum Skeat ADC | Sapper John McLennan | Sapper Charles Holman |

All Approved

9. **Item 9 Attendance & Arrangements for Today's Luncheon.**

Principal Guest Professor Michael Clarke, RUSI.

Total Number attending 88
Number of Guests 19
Those to Rise 0

10. **Any Other Business.**

- a. **Brief on the BS Guest Night 27th July at Chatham.** Chairman thanked Sapper Inge for his endeavours in the negotiations with the

RE HQ Mess. The music for the evening will be provided by the Band of the Army Air Corps as the Corps Band had another gig. The **2014** BS Guest Night is planned for 26 July 2014 and Sapper Charles Holman suggested a request for a Band is registered as early as possible -- he agreed to make the booking.

Action: Sapper Holman

- b. **Recruiting into the Blythe Sappers.** The Chairman wished to make the point that as we have less National Service Members and a shrinking Corps, it will be necessary to encourage all to bring guests and recruit them into the Blythe Sappers.
- c. **Potential Chairman 2015.** It was agreed that **Sapper Alasdair Wilson** would be proposed to BS Council for approval to be the Chairman in 2015 -- the BS 70th Anniversary Year.

11. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** The next BS Management meeting will be on 25th Sept 13 which will be followed, after Lunch, by the AGM 2013



Sapper Hooky Walker
Chairman, The Blythe Sappers

Sapper John R McLennan
*Honorary Secretary
The Blythe Sappers*

*Annex A
BS Minutes
May 13*

20 May 13

8 Force Engineer Brigade Report to the Corps June 2013 (Abridged)

G3 OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY

OP HERRICK

1. **Overview.** Afghanistan remains Defence's Main Effort and significant progress continues to be made by the ANSF (Afghan National Security Forces). As a result the UK has been able to cease mentoring at the Tolay (company) level. In 2013 mentoring at the Kandak (battalion) and District levels for the Afghan National Army and Police respectively will also cease. This will leave mentors solely at the Brigade and Province level by the end

of 2013. The success of the ANSF in assuming the lead role in delivering security in Helmand province will allow, on current planning, British troop levels to reduce to around 5,200 by the end of 2013 as announced by the Prime Minister last December.

2. Redeployment. In parallel to Transition, Redeployment has now formally begun, with Reverse Supply Chain facilities in Camp Bastion complete and initial trial 'proof of principle' movements undertaken. It is planned to redeploy materiel by a combination of air, road, land and sea, and rail movement. By the end of 2014 the UK will have completed its combat role in Afghanistan, although there will still be a small residual presence to assist our Afghan partners. It is anticipated that Afghan, US and NATO plans for enduring operations will continue to mature this year, which will allow the UK to confirm its longer term commitment in detail, centred in Kabul at the Afghan National Army Officers' Academy and other key locations.

3. Engr Wks Gp. The Engr Wks Gp has begun to reduce as the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) has also decreased in size. Afghan Assistant Supervisory Officers (ASOs) have started to replace the RE NCOs undertaking this role in overseeing contractor construction work, and UK ASO numbers will be reduced through 2013. The Infrastructure surges (Ops TETHYS (Irrigation), IODINE (Water), VESICA (Fuels), FARADAY (Power), CASTRA (FP) and EUNOMIA (ISP Oversight)) are now approaching their last iterations and are increasingly focussed on rationalising the UK infrastructure estate. As the UK looks towards longer term tasks in Kabul, so the Engr Wks Gp effort has also begun to switch with an increasing number of tasks outside of the Helmand Area of Operations.

4. TFH Engr Gp and EOD&S TF. The major C2 change in mid 2013 will be the merger of the Task Force Helmand (TFH) Engr Gp and the EOD&S TF during Op HERRICK 18. The remaining number of EOD&S teams and ANSF CIED mentors will form a single EOD&S Sqn within the Engr Gp. ANSF CIED capability development continues to progress and the ANSF now hold a significant number of Explosive Hazard Reduction Teams (EHRT) and IEDD teams across the various ANSF branches. This is a significant step forward in ANSF capability allowing for a reduction in the number of UK BRIMSTONE teams deployed. The reduction in overall troop numbers and bases will also result in there being a requirement for only one CS Engr Sqn in theatre by the end of 2013. Base Realignment and Closure/Transition (BRAC/T) has dominated the workload of the TFH Engr Gp during recent months, with UK bases in Helmand now reduced significantly. Those remaining are mainly the larger level 3 bases, which will be closed through the remainder of 2013 and into 2014. However, the recent emphasis on Force Protection has seen an additional Op CASTRA surge deploy and as the BRAC/T workload has reduced, the Force Protection workload has increased significantly implementing their recommendations. By the end of the year HQ TFH will relocate from Lashkar Gar to Bastion, including the HQ elements of TFH Engr Gp.

5. RE Geo Sp Gp. RE Geo elements within HQ TFH and JF Sp(A) will reduce and merge to form a single team at Camp Bastion during Op HERRICK 18. UK Geo elements within HQ RC(SW) will also reduce, with greater synergy across all elements within Camps Leatherneck and Bastion and investment in the Afghan Regional Corps Battle School (RCBS) for the continued training and development of the ANSF.

6. The Op HERRICK GeoViewer continues to provide access to 'live' data from the OVERTASK RE Intelligence Application (ORIENT) database, widely exploited by BGEs, Int Offrs and MSSTs.

7. Slowed Tour Rotations. As the Afghan Campaign draws to a close, there will be slowed tour rotations for some Force Elements, resulting in longer deployments of up to nine months.

This is likely to include the TFH Engr Gp and some EOD&S elements. Further details such as the level of individual roulement within units are still being refined.

OTHER COMMITMENTS

8. **Op VOCATE (Libya).** The UK remains committed to the development of the Libyan armed forces. 29 EOD&Search Gp will deploy a Short Term Training Team (STTT) and project manager in support the development of Libyan CIED and EOD&Search capabilities.
9. **Op VERDITER (Pakistan).** The Corps continues to support the delivery of CIED and EOD&Search development in Pakistan through the deployment of STTTs.
10. **Op NEWCOMBE (Mali).** The UK has assisted French, Ghanaian and Nigerian Forces to deploy into Mali using C17 aircraft, and provided ISTAR support. The Army has also deployed an Infantry Training Team as part of the longer term EU Training Mission to assist the Malian Armed Forces. 29 EOD&Search Gp supported these operations with Ammunition Technicians to inspect and consign ammunition for the follow on forces.
11. **Op BACKWELL (Somalia).** The Army continues to provide assistance to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) through a small team of military stabilisation, intelligence, communications and infrastructure specialists.
12. **Op TOSCA (Cyprus).** 28 Engr Regt will undertake Op TOSCA as the main deploying unit from Oct 13-Mar 14. The E1 RE commitment of five personnel continues to rotate between 1 (UK) Div and 3 (UK) Div Engr Gps (DEG).
13. **Op KIPION (Middle East).** Support provided to AIR assets across the Middle East region by 12 (Air Sp) Engr Gp. This area is likely to grow over the coming months with increasing emphasis on the Broader Middle East for both redeployment of materiel from Op HERRICK under Op CATALINA, and in support of the UK government strengthening of partnerships in the Middle East.
14. **Falkland Islands.** No change. The RE commitment is for a Maintenance Team of eleven personnel managed centrally by APC Glasgow.
15. **Kenya.** The Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) in Kenya continues to be the focus for the Joint Force Enabling exercises (JFEEs). More on the specifics can be found in the G7 element of this report.
16. **Upstream Capacity Building (UCB).** Multiple in-roads are being made into UCB through: the work of the DfID Liaison Officer providing subject matter advice and deployments to East Africa in support of DfID; ongoing MSSG deployments (including the planned deployment to Chile for Ex CIVIL BRIDGE 13B); 170 (Infra Sp) deployment to Sierra Leone on a well drilling task in support of IMATT; the support of charity organisations such as the Prince's Foundation where 12 (Air Sp) Gp recently deployed artisan tradesmen into the local community to assist in a charity project; and participation in overseas exercises such as Ex AJEYA WARRIOR, an Anglo/Indian exchange exercise supported by Infrastructure and EOD specialists.
17. **International Engagement.** The renewed emphasis on Defence Engagement and partnering has reinvigorated the relationship with our closest military partners. The established Bonds of Friendship between UK Sapper Regiments and their French equivalents is part of this and the relationships have been adjusted in line with A2020 roles. This area is expected to grow along with opportunities to strengthen bonds with France as

well as the US and other countries such as Denmark, where we have built valuable relationships during operational deployments over the last 10 years.

G5

18. **Knowledge Management.** A Corps Knowledge Management working group has been established to provide a forum for sharing best practice and 8 Bde guidance to RE unit info managers. This and the preservation of the Corps Back Brief beyond Op HERRICK are steps currently being taken towards ensuring that the Corps is a learning organisation.

19. **A2020.** The decision to delete sub-Units this year was a necessary evil that has put the Corps in a better place to weather the effects of Tranche 3 Redundancy. The Corps has already taken some significant steps to integrate the Reserve through Hybrid Regiments and wholly transferring the Wide Wet Gap crossing capability to the Reserves.

G7 Training Activity

20. **Reserves.** Precursor activity to ensure the Reserves are integrated appropriately with their future Regular counterparts has occurred to pre-empt Reserve growth and maintain seed corn capabilities. Opportunities for Regular / Reserve collective training integration include deployments of Sect to Tps on FTXs, JFEs and plant concentrations to BATUK, BATUS and Cyprus.

21. **Force Sp Construction Tasks.** The first RE Construction Working Group sat at the end of May 13 to deal specifically with the growth and maintenance of sufficient HFT Force Support Engineering training opportunity. It collated customer aspirations for military design and military construction that are of mutual training benefit and economic value to a range of customers (DTE, PJOBS, Sp Comd, BATUK, Charities and non-profit organisations). Forward programming design work for 2014 – 2016 and construction work for 2015 – 2017 will seek to generate up to 10 CT2 Joint Force Enabling Exercises (JFEs) per year.

22. **Ex LION STAR.** 71 Engr Regt and R Mon RE (M) deployed individuals to Cyprus to deliver the construction tasks funded for British Forces Cyprus.

G1

23. **Army Redundancy Tranche 3 (T3).** The Army announced the Tranche 3 redundancy selections on 18 Jun 13. T3 has been designed to ensure it underpins the future structural integrity of the Army.

24. **Deaths.** The following members of the Corps have died since the last report:

| Ser | Rank | Name | Unit | Date of | Remarks |
|-----|------|------|------|---------|---------|
|-----|------|------|------|---------|---------|

| (a) | (b) | (c) | (e) | Death (f) | (g) |
|-----|------|----------------|---------------|--------------|--|
| 1 | Spr | Richard Walker | 28 Engr Regt | 7 Jan 13 | KIA – Insider attack shot by a member of the ANA |
| 2 | Cpl | Colin Clark | 42 Engr Regt | 31 Jan 13 | Non Operational Death |
| 3 | SSgt | Gary Hill | 101 Engr Regt | 27 Mar 13 | Non Operational Death |
| 4 | LCpl | G Coleman | 22 Engr Regt | 10 Apr 13 | Non Operational Death |
| 5 | WO2 | John Marley | BATUK Nairobi | 26 Apr 13 | Non Operational Death |
| 6 | Spr | Josh Thomas | 1 RSME | 29 Apr 13 | Non Operational Death |

G4 Engineer Logistics.

25. **Overview.** There has been significant progress into how the Corps conducts future engineer logistic business ranging from current operations to Joint Force Enabling Exercises (JFEE) and looking ahead to A2020 and the restructuring of Engineer Logistic Nodes within HQ & Sp Sqns. The main work strands are:

a. Doctrine. Starting with the development of the Engineer Logistic Concept of Operations and Concept of Employment, a review of doctrine is underway. Engineer Logistic Guidance Notes (ELGNs) have been produced and published. ELGNs have replaced Engineer Logistic Policy Statements (ELPS).

b. Personnel. There is a manning shortfall at Engineer Logistic JNCO level. To date there are insufficient Logistic Specialists qualified for promotion to Lance corporal. This is being addressed through the provision of more PNCO Cadre places.

c. Equipment. With the return to 'Contingency', it has been identified that current operational stocks may not be fit for future requirements. Engineer units, currently held at readiness, are in the process of identifying tasks that they will be required to or are likely to achieve on various types of deployment. Once all tasks have been ratified by this HQ, Special Purpose Operational Stocks (SPOS) will be generated and endorsed at the agreed level of readiness for future deployments.