

**THE BLYTHE SAPPERS**  
**72<sup>nd</sup> MANAGEMENT MEETING**  
**1100hrs Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2013**  
**THE ARMY AND NAVY CLUB, LONDON**

**Present:**

<b>Sapper Hookey Walker</b>	<b>Chairman</b>
<b>Sapper Bill Wodburn</b>	<b>Vice Chairman</b>
<b>Sapper Scott Robinson</b>	<b>Chairman Elect 2014</b>
<b>Sapper Alasdair Wilson</b>	<b>Chairman Elect 2015</b>
<b>Sapper Stuart Sinclair</b>	<b>Council Link Member</b>
<b>Sapper Peter Clayton</b>	<b>Honorary Treasurer</b>
<b>Sapper David Hamilton</b>	<b>Honorary Auditor</b>
<b>Sapper Charles Holman</b>	<b>Membership Secretary</b>
<b>Sapper Carel Bouwens</b>	<b>Honorary Secretary</b>

**ITEM ONE. Introduction.** Sapper Hookey Walker welcomed everyone to this his last meeting as Chairman.

**ITEM 2. Apologies for Absence.** There were no apologies.

**ITEM 3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting.** It was pointed out that the record of attendance at the 71<sup>st</sup> meeting was incorrectly recorded. Sapper Stuart Sinclair had not attended the meeting whereas Sapper Peter Clayton had. Otherwise the minutes of the 71<sup>st</sup> meeting were accepted as a true record.

**ITEM 4. Matters Arising.**

- a. Sapper Hamilton advised the meeting that he had not completed his paper on Honorary/Associate membership and agreed to present it at the next management Meeting so that, if approved, it could be put before Council in May and hopefully the AGM in September.
- b. The Chairman had noted that the appointment of the Council Link Member had been inadvertently omitted from the minutes of the AGM and asked this meeting to agree Sapper Stuart Sinclair's appointment as Link Member. There were no objections.

**ITEM 5. Finance Report.**

- a. The Honorary Treasurer presented the financial report for the year 2013. He pointed out that after giving due consideration to retaining a reserve of funds to cover unforeseen contingencies, we could afford to make donations totalling £2,500.
- b. He advised those present that he had looked into the matter of the size of donations which are passed to the Corps for adventurous and challenging pursuits. Whilst there are guidelines on the level of support we give, the Committee felt that once the funds are handed to the Corps it was its responsibility to decide how best to distribute them. However the membership Secretary pointed out that there is now a greater emphasis on sport and adventurous training in the Army and furthermore that the Corps does not need to seek external funding for these activities, albeit for the time-being. He also pointed out that there has been considerable development in Government support for our wounded resulting in less demand on the funds of the REA. Members of the Committee considered these points and concluded it more appropriate to make donations to smaller charities that struggle to raise funds and especially those with Sapper connections.
- c. After further discussion it was agreed to donate £1,000 to the Lord Kitchener National

Memorial Fund, £1,000 to Gordon's School and £500 to the Samaritan Fund of the RE Officers' Widows Society.

- d. The Honorary Treasurer continued by reminding the Committee that the Blythe Sappers have in the past made a small donation at this time of the year to the Army and Navy Club to be put towards its staff Christmas gratuities. He suggested that as we are obliged to make a 10% donation of all our bills that it was perhaps over generous to make this additional donation. It was agreed to cease this practice.
- e. As the late Sapper Mike Stancombe had been a Chairman of the Blythe Sappers the Chairman asked if it was still the tradition to make a £50 donation the charity chosen by the deceased's family, to which he was given a positive reply. Sapper Stuart Sinclair agreed to contact the family to finalise the donation.
- f. Finally the Honorary Treasurer said that he had been asked to investigate new banking facilities because our current bankers have just one branch (in London) making it difficult to make deposits. He advised the Committee that HSBC might be able to offer free banking but he would not pursue this matter further until after the subscriptions have been collected in the New Year.

**ITEM 6. Corps Report.** Sapper Charles Holman reported that he had not received the Corps report in time for this meeting and agreed to provide a copy to the Honorary Secretary for inclusion with these minutes. It is attached at Annex A.

**ITEM 7. Casualties.**

- a. Deceased: The following Blythe Sappers have been notified as having died since the last meeting:
  - Sapper Ian Stuart
  - Sapper Barry Wilson.
- b. Resignations: the following have resigned since the last meeting:
  - Sapper Geoff Gathercole
  - Sapper Mike Cooper

**ITEM 8. Nominations for Membership.** The following nominations have been proposed and seconded for membership of the Blythe Sappers:

<i>Nomination</i>	<i>Sponsor</i>	<i>Secunder</i>
Lt Col Alan Miller	Sapper Nigel Snelling-Colyer	Sapper Nick Larkin

There were no objections to this nomination and consequently he will be notified by the Membership Secretary of his election.

**ITEM 9. Attendance and Arrangements for today's lunch.**

**Principal Guest:** Lord Hannay of Chiswick.  
former UK Representative to the UN and EU.

**Total Number attending:** 122

**Number of Guests:** 28

**Those to rise:**

Sapper Jon Mullin  
Sapper Nigel Snelling-Colyer  
Sapper Nick Elliot

**ITEM 10. Any Other Business.**

- a. The Chairman reminded the meeting that a member had suggested that the

Chairman's chain of office be replaced, but that an informal quote of £3,500 had been received and he felt that this made the idea unaffordable. All agreed.

- b. The Honorary Auditor pointed out that 2016 would be the centenary of the death of Lord Kitchener and that it might be appropriate to designate one of the lunches in that year to his memory, to which it was agreed that the summer lunch should accord this recognition.

**ITEM 11. Next Meeting.**

- a. The date of the next meeting is set for 1100 hrs Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2014.
- b. There being no other business the meeting closed at 1150 hrs.

**Sapper Hookey Walker**  
*Chairman, the Blythe Sappers*

**Sapper Carel Bouwens**  
*Honorary Secretary*  
*The Blythe Sappers*  
**Annex A**

**CORPS REPORT – DECEMBER 2013**

**GOVERNANCE**

1. Lt Gen Sir Mark Mans KCB CBE DL assumed the appointment of Chief Royal Engineer 15<sup>th</sup> September 2013 in succession to Gen Sir Peter Wall.

**OP HERRICK**

2. **Overview.** Afghanistan remains the Defence Main Effort with the mission now firmly focussed on the drawdown and redeployment of troops and materiel by the end of 2014. Mentoring at the Kandak (battalion) and District levels for the Afghan National Army and Police has been disengaged as the ANSF prove their increasing ability to successfully delivery security without the supporting aid of ISAF. A reducing footprint creates its own issues including a significant number of bases to be remediated, transitioned or closed and a large quantity of Engineer logistics materiel requiring rearward redeployment.

3. **Task Force Helmand Engr Gp.** Base Realignment and Closure/Transition has dominated the workload during recent months. The remaining bases are mainly larger level 3 bases, which will be closed through the remainder of 2013 and into 2014. In addition to Infrastructure improvements, there has been a marked change of requirement for Military Working Dogs (MWD) with a reduction of High Assurance Search Dogs but an increased requirement for Protection dogs to ensure base security. The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) Counter IED capability has developed to a high level and this has allowed the redeployment of UK EOD and Search teams back to the UK. The UK Theatre Redeployment Pool remains on standby to reinforce the TF Helmand Engr Gp as required.

4. **RE Geo Sp Gp.** RE Geo elements have reduced, with greater synergy across all elements within Camps Leatherneck and Bastion. There is continued investment in the Afghan Regional Corps Battle School for training and developing the ANSF.

5. **Engr Wks Gp.** The Engr Wks Gp continues to oversee key infrastructure projects and has been central to the design and commissioning of Force Protection across the Area of Operation. Despite an ever increasing requirement to facilitate drawdown and remediation,

there still are many ongoing infra projects to complete. The Wks Gp has been integral to the construction of the officer training school in Kabul – a centre which will be manned by UK personnel to train future ANA Officers. .

## **OTHER COMMITMENTS**

6. **Op PATWIN (Philippines).** Disaster relief to the Philippines proved the concept of an Army at readiness for Contingency as a wide number of options were scoped. At present, a from 24 Commando Engineer Regiment is deployed on HMS Illustrious as part of the Lead Commando Group Task.
7. **Op VOCATE (Libya).** The UK remains committed to the development of the Libyan armed forces including C-IED support provided by units from 8 Engr Bde.
8. **Op TOSCA (Cyprus).** 28 Engr Regt is currently deployed on Op TOSCA Oct 13-Mar 14.
9. **Falkland Islands.** The RE provide a maintenance team of eleven personnel.
10. **Kenya.** The Infrastructure Development Plan in Kenya continues to be the focus for the Joint Force Enabling exercises.
11. **Defence Engagement (DE) and Upstream Capacity Building (UCB).** 8 Engineer Brigade is taking Regional responsibility for the Far East (including among others Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam) under the Army's new Defence Engagement Strategy. Priorities will be set by International Policy and Plans branch of the MOD and the Defence Attachés.
12. **HQ Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC), Engineer and Civil Military Interaction (ECMI) Branch.** HQ ARRC is now firmly established in Imjin Barracks, Gloucestershire. The ARRC continues to be at the forefront of developments in the way NATO military operations are conducted and HQ ARRC is developing its preparedness to integrate and command elements from the Maritime, Land and Air environments at the Theatre level as an "Integrated Land Command".

## **CONTINGENCY**

13. **Lead Air Support Squadron (LASS).** The LASS continues to be used for small scale construction and maintenance taskings whilst maintaining the capability for a Sqn to deploy at short notice in support of AIR.
14. **Lead Airborne Task Force (ABTF).** The ABTF provides a high readiness contingency force able to deploy worldwide with engineer support from 23 Engr Regt (Air Asslt).
15. **Lead Commando Task Group (LCTG).** Engineer support continues to be delivered by 24 Cdo Engr Regt.
16. **Joint Task Force Headquarters (JTFHQ).** 42 Engr Regt (Geo) continues to provide high readiness RE Geo elements to support JTFHQ, the Foreign Office Crisis Centre and the Multinational NEO Coordination Cell.

17. **Reserves.** As a of the Government's Reserves White Paper published in July, the RE Reserve Corps has been restructured with the loss of two Regimental HQs and closer integration of RE Reserve and Regular units in similar roles. It is intended that that Army Reserve will be able to deploy on operational activity at up to sub-unit level, with a reduced requirement for individual Reserve augmentation on operations. Key to achieving this is a focus on demanding and engaging training linked to a predicable commitment cycle. So there will be an increase of collective training opportunities, FTXs and overseas exercises with Regular and Reserve counterparts. In 2014 RE Reserve units are expected to provide support to Kenya (BATUK) and Canada (BATUS) as well as continuing with M3 Rigs collective capability training in Germany.

18. **Professionalisation of Engineer Logistics.** The Corps continues to develop Engineer Logistic policy and doctrine in line with Army 2020 and the implementation of the newly established Engineer Logistic Nodes.

## **PERSONNEL**

19. **Army Redundancy Tranche 3 (T3)** About 3300 applicants will leave the Service on 17 December, leaving approximately 900 working through their notice period as a mixture of non-applicants and those with an operational delay.

20. **Army Redundancy Tranche 4 (T4)** Corps planning for the final redundancy tranche, Tranche 4 is well underway. An announcement is expected in the first quarter of 2014.

21. **New Employment Model (NEM).** This is the most extensive review of Service Personnel Terms and Conditions of Service (TACOS) for a generation covering: terms of service, accommodation, training and education and pay and allowances.

22. **Obituary.** There have been no operational deaths in this period. One Sapper died as a result of a traffic accident.

## **SPORT AND ADVENTURE TRAINING**

23. The Royal Engineers' Mountaineering and Expedition Club concluded an ambitious, demanding and successful expedition to the Himalaya. The Club is now looking forward to an expedition to South America and another to Greenland in the next couple of years.

24. **RE AFC.** The Royal Engineers' Association Football Club has concluded a series of events to celebrate its 150th anniversary. Activities have included a dinner, a tour of the West Coast of America and exhibition matches in the UK. They look forward with great pleasure to the next 150 years!

25. **Fastnet Race 2013.** The RE Yacht Club successfully entered *Ilex of Upnor* in the 2013 Fastnet Race. After an exciting and demanding 4 days (and a few hours) *Ilex* crossed the line 187<sup>th</sup> out of 337 competitors – a very good result bearing in mind many boats are now raced with professional crews.