

The Royal Engineers Association

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Patron: HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN



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Corps Treasurer

04 February 2010

MINUTES OF THE 112th MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION, HELD IN 042 HISTORIC ROOM 24, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, MAIN BUILDING, LONDON, ON THURSDAY 28th JANUARY 2010

PRESENT

Maj Gen J D Moore-Bick CBE DL	Chairman
Col D Caulfield	Regimental Colonel
Lt Col W Clark	Central Southern Group
WO1 (RSM) J Blaylock	21 Engr Regt
WO1 (RSM) M Stewart	3 RSME Regt
Mr T Mitchley	East Anglia Group
Mr J R V Mason	South West Group
Mr M Crooke	North West Group
Mr E Lowbridge	North Midlands Group
Mr G Littleford	South Midlands Group
Mr E Briggs	London Group
Mr R Fenn	South East Group
Mr B Prosser	North East Group
Mr J Bell	Scotland & NI Group

IN ATTENDANCE

Lt Col J R McLennan	Controller REA
Lt Col N Jordan	D Con REA and Secretary
WO1 (RSM) R Garland	RSM 170 (Infra Sp) Engr Group

APOLOGIES

Lt Col J Townsley

WO1 (RSM) Yates

Mr H Evans

Maj B Ironton RE

Lt Col R Murfin TD DL

Maj (Retd) B Henderson

Corps Treasurer

1 RSME Regt

Chairman, Families Events Committee

Comdt RETC Wyke Regis

Reserve Army

South Wales Group

1. The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed those present especially those who had come from afar. He extended seasons greetings to all assembled. He also welcomed WO1 (RSM) R Garland the RSM of 170 (Infra Sp) Engr Group who was attending the meeting to advise members on the possible creation of a new veteran's weekend at Chilwell to replace the Ripon Weekend.

2. The Chairman noted that apologies had been received from those listed above. He welcomed the following new member to the Committee:

- Mr Mike Crooke North West Group

ITEM 1 - TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE 111th MEETING

3. The Committee accepted that the Minutes of the 111th Meeting were a true record of the proceedings.

4. Proposed: Ted Lowbridge (North Midlands Gp). Seconded: Eddie Briggs (London Gp)

5. The Chairman signed the Minutes.

ITEM 2 - MATTERS ARISING FROM THE 111th MEETING

6. The Chairman asked Ted Lowbridge (North Midlands) if the NMA issue was Minuted to his satisfaction. Ted Lowbridge was content with the Minutes but took the opportunity to bring the Cttee up to date on the condition of the Memorial. He explained that there was a problem with the rocks which is being investigated and there was some deterioration of the wearing surface to the recently laid path. He said that Steve Fisher, the contractor, said that perhaps the application did not take the first time. The Regt Col pointed out that we should not be considering making good the path at our expense, rather that the contractor should be approached to find out what went wrong the first time and to get it repaired at their expense. There was consent for this approach and the Controller took it upon himself to contact Steve Fisher, probably through Ted Lowbridge, to determine a way forward. The Chairman thanked Ted Lowbridge for being the eyes and conscience of the Cttee in ensuring the quality of the Corps Memorial.

Action: Controller

7. The Controller took the opportunity to advise the Cttee on the condition of the rocks at the Memorial. He said that from the beginning it had been assumed that the rock was granite from the Falklands but in fact the rock is quartzite. A feature of quartzite is that it is made up of layers and our rocks have been placed with the layers in the vertical plane rather than a horizontal plane. This means that it is possible for water to permeate the strata. This is not a desirable state as in particularly cold weather the

water will freeze, expand and gradually split the rock. A geologist from the TA has carried out a survey of the rocks but as yet the REA has not received his report. It is understood that the geologist will contact Dr Richard Kindersley, who was responsible for the design of the Monument, to see how best the rocks can be treated to protect them on the upper sides. It is possible that application of the resin used to previously repair one of the rocks may provide a solution. WO1 (RSM) R Garland (170 (Infra Sp) Engr Group said that a number of solutions had been discussed but that they might change the texture or colour of the rocks. It was agreed that something needed to be done and as soon as the report was received, a way forward would be determined.

8. The Regt Col said he had had a request in from the Junior Leaders Branch of the REA to plant a commemorative tree on the site of the Corps Memorial. He asked for guidance on this matter. The D Con said that it was policy not to allow the planting of any trees on the site other than that planted by the CRE at the opening of the memorial. This policy has been enforced previously. The D Con continued by saying that he had had a chance meeting with officials from the Junior Leaders Branch that morning, he had explained to them that no trees would be allowed on the Corps Memorial site. He suggested that they should approach The Royal British Legion (TRBL) who manage the site and seek permission to plant a tree elsewhere within the NMA. The Regt Col thought that small commemorative plaques might be placed on the ground around the Corps Memorial. The D Con reminded members that at the previous meeting they had agreed that the Corps Memorial was a place for quiet contemplation and there was no need to apply any 'wow factor'. He continued by saying that if you allowed one plaque to be placed on the site, you would have to allow for 106, because that was the current number of branches in the REA. WO1 (RSM) J Blaylock (21 Engr Regt) agreed and said that we were not in competition with other memorials and should avoid falling into the trap of one-upmanship. He said the site should remain clean and serene. The Chairman thought that the Corps Memorial might need to develop but in a minimalist fashion and over time; perhaps decades rather than years.

9. The Controller said that there was no reason why individuals or branches should not contact TRBL to find out if there were other places within the NMA to erect such plaques/memorials.

10. REA Centenary 2012 (Paragraph 45). There was an action on the Controller to take forward, in terms of detail and costs, some of the ideas to celebrate the centenary. The Controller said that the Trustees have considered the ideas and were still considering them and the matter would be raised again at their next meeting, but it looked as though what is coming to fruition, and is in the budget, is:

- a. A grant to each of the groups to enable the Group Director to hold a reception to celebrate the centenary of the REA in their areas. Invitations could be extended Lord Lieutenants, Councillors and other local luminaries to raise the profile of the REA in each of their areas.
- b. A drumhead service at the NMA sometime in May 2012 similar to the opening ceremony of the Corps Memorial.
- c. To enhance the Corps Memorial Weekend and get more REA on parade, more of the Management Cttee and Trustees to attend the service on the Sunday.

11. The Chairman remarked that because the Colonel Commandants at Home was being incorporated into the 2012 Corps Memorial Weekend we need to be a little cautious that we don't overload the Weekend. The Regt Col assured that Cttee that as it was to be an 'enhanced' Weekend that year he did not see a problem incorporating the REA Centenary activities.

12. The Regt Col further reminded Group representatives that if their group was considering holding such a reception, then it was an ideal opportunity to book the Corps Band, and bookings should be made as far in advance as possible. He added that the latest submission date for 2012 engagements was May 2011. If possible bookings should be submitted before May 2010, for there to be any realistic hope of getting the Corps Band.

13. Relocation of Benches (Paragraph 51). The Controller confirmed that 3 of the benches had been relocated, as agreed by Council, to the three Combat Stress Homes in Shropshire, Surrey and Ayrshire.

ITEM 3 – TO NOTE THE REPORT OF THE BENEVOLENCE COMMITTEE

14. The Controller presented the Benevolence Report for the 6-month period ending 31st December 2009. The report is at Annex A.
15. The Chairman said it was a very good report and that he was interested in the average cost per case. The Controller confirmed that this is about £470 and is similar to that indicated by the 'Gunnners'.
16. He added that interestingly cases were up 10% year on year last year, but in terms of cost we were 3.5% down. This has been possible through better almonizing and better awareness of other available charities that are able to assist. In real terms this meant we were helping 10% more people who had fallen on hard times.
17. The Controller also said that attendance at Benevolence Meetings by unit observers was very welcome. There had been good support from units and Cttee members were asked to take the message back to units and branches that observers were most welcome.
18. Judging by the thank-you letters received at HQ REA, the Controller said that the Christmas cards sent out each year are most welcome and provide some cheer to those who are on their own, are unwell or at a low point.
19. The Kitchener Scholarship is currently looking after the educational needs of 5 children of the Corps through private education.
20. The Controller said that the Corps Memorial Book (CMB) was proving most popular and its presence has resulted in a dramatic increase, over 120%, in the notification of deaths of old comrades to HQ REA. Cttee members need to be aware that this increase demands a great deal of staff effort to manage.
21. The D Con said he was concerned that the Corps website did not offer any news about sapper losses on Ops. This meant there was no way to keep interested parties, former or serving sapper, informed of our losses. He described the Corps website as unimaginative and lacking in current Corps information. There needed to be some changes to the site that would enable information about sapper losses to be published and links to the CMB to be provided. The Regt Col agreed and suggested that contact be made with the relevant HOD at EinC (A) to discuss a way forward.

Action: D Con

22. The Controller told the Cttee that after 23 years of loyal service with the REA, Mrs Marilyn Gittings would be retiring in February 2010. During her service Mrs Gittings has been employed as the Benevolence Clerk and has handled over 26,000 benevolence cases. She has always taken a great deal of pride in her work and will be hard to replace. The Chairman & Cttee offered a vote of thanks to Mrs Gittings for all the work she has done over the years, and wished her a long and happy retirement.

23. The Benevolence Report was accepted.

ITEM 4 - TO NOTE THE REGIMENTAL COLONELS REPORT ON THE CORPS

24. The Regt Col presented his report. The report is at Annex A.

25. The Regt Col said that the Controller and he had recently visited Capt Nick Beighton in Heady Court. Capt Beighton was the latest Corps casualty, a double amputee. He is doing well and the Regt Col said he was most impressed with his amazing positive attitude. The Controller said that he had made arrangements for Capt Beighton and his girlfriend to take a welfare break at the Victory Service Club in London.

26. The Regt Col added that Spr Stevenson, a double amputee, of 59 Indep Cdo Sqn was doing well and had been posted back to his unit.

27. Mr Ted Lowbridge (North Midlands) asked how, as a Corps, we looked at things in Wootton Bassett. The Regt Col replied by saying that Wootton Bassett was an informal gathering and basically the word goes round and the local branches turn up and pay their respects. In the event of a Sapper being repatriated the Corps RSM will speak to HQ REA to ensure some representation is present.

28. The D Con said that he had recently been contacted by HQ EinC (A) and asked if something could be done to control the attendance of REA Standard Bearers at the funerals of Sapper killed on Ops. This had been prompted by reports that 27 REA Standard Bearers had attended a recent funeral and had held up the service by 15 minutes. He said this was clearly unacceptable, added to the already enormous family stress and took the focus away from the person in the coffin. The D Con said he would be writing to Group HQs to advise them of the problem and to search for a way of moderating the attendance of branch Standard Bearers.

Action: D Con

29. The Regt Col's report was accepted.

ITEM 5 - TO NOTE THE REPORT FROM THE FAMILIES EVENTS COMMITTEE

30. The report was presented and is at Annex D.

31. The Families Events Committee report was accepted.

ITEM 6 – TO AWARD THE BADGE OF MERIT FOR 2010

32. The Committee took great pleasure in approving the Award of the Badge of Merit to the following members:

Name	Branch	Group
Mr R E Maginnes	Northern Ireland	Scotland & NI Gp
Mr J Chitty	Brighton	South East Gp
Mr R Bardsley	Cyprus	HQ & Overseas Gp
Mr T Higginson	Chesterfield & Distr	North Midlands Gp
J Hindle	Blackpool	South West Gp
Mr J Everitt	Colchester	East Anglia Gp
Mr J W Hasnip	Lichfield & Tamworth	South Midlands Gp
Mr R Cooling	South Humberside & Lincolnshire	North East Gp
Mr P Ladlow	Scarborough	North East Gp

ITEM 7 – Ripon Weekend

33. The Controller said some considerable work had been done by Group officials in the North East to find an alternative location for a Ripon type Weekend in the North and that has failed. He said that Deverall Barracks is closing/has closed and the REA has no option but to report the demise of what has been known in the past as ‘The Ripon Weekend’. 21 Engr Regt would still be running with the Freedom Parade and band concerts but there would be no REA input. The REA is looking at an alternative location for a weekend gathering, and that is Nottingham. The intention is that the veteran’s weekend coincides with celebrating the Freedom of Broxtowe, a new Freedom to be initiated in March 2010.

34. The Controller said that there was too little time to mobilise branches for a weekend event for 2010 and the intention is that we would ask 170 (Infra Sp) Engr Group to move the Freedom Parade from March to May from 2011 to allow REA veterans to be there for the weekend to add support to the parade.

35. WO1 (RSM) R Garland said that he had already presented the idea to Commander 170 (Infra Sp) Engr Group and that he had some reservations based on a number of issues. A précis of those issues follows:

a. Accommodation. Chilwell Station Transit Accommodation and Reserve Training and Mobilisation Centre (RTMC) accommodation could provide over 300 bed spaces. Availability of this transit accommodation is subject to pre-programmed events. To secure adequate transit accommodation would require a commitment from Chilwell Station and RTMC.

b. Resources. Even though the unit is comparable in size to a field regiment, much of its manpower is continuously deployed the spare capacity to devote to running a veterans weekend would just not be available. With regard to a static display, the unit did not possess the type of equipment that would lend itself well to a display; if a display was required, there will be a burden on other units in the Corps to transport that equipment. Funding presents a potential problem – the Commander has said if the event comes to 170 (Infra Sp) Engr Group, it comes at no cost.

36. The Chairman thanked WO1 (RSM) R Garland for his input. He said he did not think we should be trying to recreate the Ripon Weekend. If we wanted a Northward leaning REA weekend, the best thing would be for Chilwell to design something that suits their location. He said the 'Ripon Weekend' was dead and gone, we should move on and Chilwell offered the best solution. There was consensus from members on this view.

37. The Chairman asked that WO1 (RSM) R Garland carry out a feasibility study for a Chilwell based REA weekend starting in 2011, get the outline approval of the Commander 170 (Infra Sp) Engr Gp, and present a plan to the REA for consideration. *After note - WO1 (RSM) R Garland will be asked to provide a plan in time for consideration at the next Management meeting in July.*

Action: WO1 (RSM) R Garland

38. The Controller advised that the Chatham weekend has shown that transportation costs can be quite crippling and care should be taken to minimise dependence on MT during the Weekend. He further said that the study should assume a £6000 REA grant as a planning figure.

ITEM 8 - BRANCH MATTERS

39. REA Reunions and Other Events. Although not advised at the meeting, the dates of the following events for 2010 are confirmed:

14-21 May	Spring Reunion, Mundesley Holiday Village, Mundesley
29 May	Trooping the Colour – “Major Generals Review”
05 June	Trooping the Colour – “Colonel’s Review”
09-10 June	Beating Retreat, London
10 June	Royal Hospital Chelsea Founders Day Parade
12 June	Queens Birthday Parade
19-20 June	Aldershot Weekend *
17-19 September	Corps Memorial Weekend Chatham*
09 October	REA AGM and Annual Dinner *
10 October	Sapper Sunday at Royal Hospital Chelsea
11 November	Field of Remembrance, Westminster
14 November	Remembrance Sunday

* REA National Events

40. Annual Branch Financial Summary. The D Con briefed the meeting on the status of Branch and Group submissions for the FY 2009. He reminded all members that the end of year Financial Summaries were due from all Groups and Branches by the end of January each year. He said that in past years, the timely submission and accuracy of these documents left much to be desired; he hoped this year would be different. On 26 January 2010 HQ REA Staff contacted Branch Officials of all those branches that had failed to submit Summaries. Whilst some of the Branches accepted the reminder, some branches were less than accommodating. To-date he had received 104 Summaries with 14 yet to be received. With only one

day remaining until the end of the month, it was unacceptable that branches still had not submitted their Financial Summary. Of the 104 received two had errors yet to be resolved. The names of those branches/groups yet to submit Summaries were provided to members. He asked that Group delegates contact these branches and remind them of their responsibilities.

41. The D Con said that yet again there were still too many Summaries being submitted that did not balance. Resolving these errors had resulted in a huge amount of telephone time with branch Treasurers. It was particularly frustrating to note that had the Treasurers of these branches used the simple arithmetic check explained in the notes on the Summary, the imbalance would be startlingly obvious prompting them to take corrective action.

ITEM 9. TO NOTE THE ALLOCATION OF GRANTS TO ANNUAL EVENTS

42. Grant requests have been received for the following events in 2009:

Minley/Aldershot Weekend	£4,000.00 – £4000 supported by HQ REA
Chatham Weekend	£8,500.00 - £6500 supported by HQ REA

43. The Controller reminded the Cttee that it does not have any financial authority; it can only recommend amounts to Council. The Controller said that HQ REA will only support a grant of £6500 to the Chatham Weekend 2010. He said that the cost of transport for veterans over the Weekend was quite prohibitive, for instance, the hourly overtime rate for the minibus driver was in the region £60. He asked that the Management Cttee recommends the £6500 to Council. If transport is the cost driver, the Controller said it must be accounted for directly and in greater detail. Once the figures were known, and it was appropriate, he would then approach the Trustees for the additional £2K.

44. Cttee members agreed to recommend the revised allocations to Council.

ITEM 10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

45. The Chairman said that with great regret this was the last meeting for Col David Caulfield the Regt Col. He thanked the Regt Col for his proactive support to the REA and his tight grip on Regt Affairs for which his is very much respected. The Cttee roundly applauded the Regt Col.

46. The Regt Col replied by saying that he had thoroughly enjoyed his time as Regt Col and especially his dealings with the REA which he declared was a fantastic organisation doing great, great work. He said it was a real honour and a privilege to be an intimate part of the REA over the last three and a half years. He further added that “it is the REA that makes the Corps so special, the fact that we’ve such a strong family, not only inside the Corps but outside within the wider Corps family”.

47. Eddie Briggs (London Group) asked if the changed format of the Chatham Weekend in 2009 was to be used for future events. The Regt Col replied that he thought so although every third year there would be an open day where the public would be involved; the next one would be in 2012 which will coincide with the Centenary of the REA. The Controller said he was extremely keen to see more REA Trustees and

Management Cttee members attending the Corps Memorial Weekend. It is a very important weekend for the Corps and, as officials of the REA, we should be giving it as much support as we can.

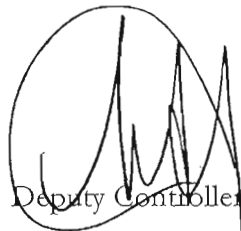
48. Lt Col W Clark (Central Southern Group) advised the Chairman that this would be his last meeting. This was due to his sudden and impending move to Wales. The Chairman thanked him for all he done. He will be replaced by Major Peter Bain.

49. WO1 (RSM) M Stewart (3 RSME Regt) said that he had made a request for the RE TA band for the Minley Weekend and wanted to know who would be responsible for travelling cost. The Regt Col said that unless it was a Cat 1 Engagement then travelling cost would lie with the requesting unit/branch.

ITEM 11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

50. The date of the next meeting is planned for 22nd July 2010 in MOD Main Building.

03 March 2010



Deputy Controller

Minutes Approved

Date

Chairman