

The Royal Engineers Association

(Registered under the Charities Act 1992 and a charity registered in Scotland)

Patron: HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN



All correspondence to:

The Controller
RE Association
Brompton Bks
CHATHAM
Kent
ME4 4UG

Telephone: 01634 847005
Website: www.reahq.org.uk
Email: info@reahq.org.uk

All Council Members
All Management Committee Members
All Group Secretaries
All Branch Secretaries
Controller REA
Corps Treasurer

21st November 2017

THE MINUTES OF 49th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION HELD IN THE VICTORY SERVICES CLUB, LONDON, ON 14th OCTOBER 2017

OPENING REMARKS

1. The Annual General Meeting was opened at 1600hrs by the President of the Association, Lt General Sir Mark Mans KCB CBE DL, who welcomed all those present and thanked them for attending; he made special mention of those who had travelled long distances. He noted that there were 80 attendees at the AGM: 17 REA Trustees, 26 REA Branch Delegates and 37 other REA members.
2. Apologies for absence had been received from:
 - Lt Col (Retd) Adrian Bunting – Central Southern Group
3. The President advised that Brig Andy Craig, Chairman of the Benevolence Committee, would be delayed, but that when he arrived he would be invited to provide his input to the REA Chairman's report.
4. Executive members of the Association seated at the top table were introduced by the President. He also introduced Julia Ferguson and Ann Richardson from HQ REA who were the strength behind the scenes. They do fantastic work in putting the AGM and Dinner together and these events would not happen without their input. The President reminded Branch Delegates to brief their Branches on the matters discussed at the meeting, and asked that once the Minutes had been published, Branches would ensure the widest distribution to all their members.
5. In order to ensure correctness of the records, the President asked that whenever someone rose to speak, they would clearly announce their name and Branch or official position.

ITEM 1 - To confirm the Minutes of the 48th AGM held on Saturday 8th October 2016

6. The President emphasised that this Item was dealing only with the accuracy of the Minutes. The document had been widely circulated and HQ REA had not received any comments or proposed amendments. There were no comments from the floor.

Proposal: That the Minutes of the 48th AGM be accepted
Proposer: Mr E C Prosser – Trustee North East Group
Seconder: Mr J Bell - Trustee Scotland & NI Group
Carried

ITEM 2 - Matters Arising from the Minutes of the 48th Annual General Meeting.

7. There were no Matters Arising.

ITEM 3 – To Receive the Council’s 49th Annual Report to the AGM

8. The President invited the REA Chairman, Maj Gen Alastair Dickinson CBE, to present Council’s report. The REA Chairman said the Association continues to move forward with its central purpose to ensure support reaches those of the Sapper family, be they serving, veteran or related who are in need for whatever reason.

9. On the HQ front he said that after the decant from their temporary home in Wood Street back to the RE Museum building, HQ REA were now operating from smart, spacious and comfortable accommodation. In February 2017 the post of Controller was disestablished from the Civil Service and became a charity funded post; this was filled by Lt Col Neil Jordan. In June an Assistant Controller was recruited and this has helped reduce the Controller’s workload. With the increased capacity now available in the Association headquarters, the Chairman said it was his intention to review the 5 year annually “refreshed” strategy.

10. With regards to the affiliation of Branches with Corps Units, the Chairman said that a certain amount of dust had now settled on the rebasing issue and the Association was better placed to determine how to affiliate its Branches with Corps units. This work is currently being undertaken in partnership with 8 Engr Brigade.

11. The Chairman said the REA Membership Scoping Study had been concluded and the consultants have produced a very good report that provided some useful and innovative recommendations, many of which we will look to implement through the appropriate Association channels. These include extending the range of National Branches to include popular communities of interest, reviewing the membership structure as well as the membership offerings and refreshing our internet presence to improve its functionality and appearance.

12. In reaching out to the wider Corps, the Chairman recognised that the Queens Gurkha Engineers (QGE) is part of the family of the Corps of Royal Engineers. At the same time, Gurkha Sappers also belong to the Gurkha family. He gave details of a recent meeting with representatives of the Queens Gurkha Engineers Association (QGEA) where ways in which the REA can align better with the QGEA, so as to improve our support for our fellow Sappers serving in the QGE, were discussed. More work on this potential affiliation will be carried out during the coming year.

13. The Chairman said the Association had been developing better links with Sappers Network Ltd (SNL); SNL is the recently launched Corps recruiting agency for serving and former serving sappers. He said the Association was looking to provide some sponsorship to that organisation so that the REA is seen as being of better utility to serving and retired sappers.

Note: Brig Andy Craig, Chairman of the Benevolence Committee arrived later in the meeting but his input to the REA Chairman’s report is included in this Item here as it would normally have done.

14. Brig Craig gave two examples of where REA benevolence had provided much needed assistance to both a serving soldier and one who had retired. He explained that the Controller had financial delegation of up to £1K, however, for cases that might require more financial clout these were referred to

one of the quarterly Benevolence Committee meetings. Urgent cases that might exceed the Controller's delegated powers were dealt with out of committee. Although there is a roster for unit observers to attend the Benevolence Committee meetings, he encouraged the attendance of REA members as observers at these meetings. However, space within the allocated meeting room was often tight.

15. In response to a question about benevolence eligibility from Mr Bill Loughlin (North Wales Branch), Brig Craig advised that those being assisted by the REA were veterans of the Corps or dependants of same. Our eyes and ears on the ground were in the main from SSAFA and The Royal British Legion (TRBL); it was these organisations that referred benevolence cases to the REA. It was not necessary for those being assisted to be TRBL members although the TRBL often provided financial assistance, regardless of membership status.

16. Mr Graham Doughty (Medway Branch) said he knew of a case where a veteran, recently released from prison was in need of assistance. He asked whether that was something that the REA would assist with. Brig Craig said that similar cases had been considered by the REA and the veteran in question should seek advice from either SSAFA or TRBL.

17. The Chairman REA thanked the sub-committees and Trustees of the REA, without whom the REA would not function, and he was personally grateful for the support and effort they put in. He also thanked all REA members as it was their enthusiasm that got people involved and it was that involvement that enables us to maintain that wider network of comradeship. He recognised the diligence of the REA HQ staff and thanked them for all their hard work. Finally, he acknowledged that the Chief Royal would be saying a few words about the Controller at this his last AGM and Dinner, but wished to record a very strong 'thank you' for all the work he had done in supporting, not only him, but all the other previous Chairmen of the REA. The full text of Council's report is at **Annex A** to these Minutes.

18. Mr Bill Loughlin (North Wales Branch) wished to record his thanks to the Controller for all the work he had put in to what is indeed a thankless task.

Proposal: That the 49th Annual Report of Council be accepted.

Proposer: Lt Col (Retd) N Parmley – Branch Delegate Weymouth Branch

Seconder: Lt Col (Retd) L Inge – Retired Officer Trustee

Carried

ITEM 4 – To receive the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the REA for the period 01 January to 31 December 2016

19. The President reminded attendees that the full accounts were distributed to all Trustees and all REA Branches in May 2017. He invited the Honorary Treasurer, Col Chris Davies MBE, to present his report. The full text of the report is at **Annex B**.

20. The Treasurer said that as the papers had been distributed far and wide prior to the meeting he did not intend to plough through the figures. He would, however, respond to any questions that may arise. He continued by saying that the accounts were in a healthy state, the money was safe and growing a little. He reminded all that the Association's investment portfolio is managed by BlackRock and that currently we had Capital Reserves of around £11M. He said that by far the biggest single expenditure was benevolence but that each year the amount expended in this area was decreasing. This is a reflection of the older veterans from WW2 and the Korean War dying; of course the Corps was much larger in those days and is now getting smaller and smaller. He did not believe that the impact on veterans of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and subsequent conflicts and wars had yet fully surfaced.

21. He reminded members that a Welfare Grant of £1M was allocated from Capital Reserves for the year 2017. This was to enhance *Esprit de Corps* – a specific objective of the REA - by providing the opportunity for Units and Branches to bid for support in funding projects or activities which had no – or incomplete – support from other resources. The overall result both in 'PR' for the REA and benefit for recipients has been most encouraging. He said it has been disappointing that more bids were not received and that, therefore, the full amount allocated will fall some way short of being spent. Despite all of this, it is not intended that under-spend should be carried forward or that a similar allocation from REA reserve of capital should be made available again in 2018. A little time is needed to assess the marketing, management and results of this initiative before deciding whether – and how - it should be

repeated in future. The Finance Committee will conduct a review in early 2018 and expects to be in a position to make recommendations to Council by its September meeting in 2018.

22. Lt Col Scott RE (CO 3 RSME Regt) wondered about the logic of not carrying the remainder of the £1M over to 2018. He said that from a CO's perspective the initiative was beginning to gain traction. The President said it was a fair point but suggested that the initiative should be looked at as more of a trial, not a pilot, and in real terms it has been pretty positive. He thought there was now enough background to enable a look at the initiative and determine if it is possible to do it on an enduring basis; clearly it will not be £1M every year as that is unaffordable. He said that is why at his meeting of Council last month it was decided to pause, take stock of the initiative and see if it might be done better and on an enduring basis. He added that there was some surprise within Council at the lack bids to take advantage of this generous offer.

23. Mr Jimmy Hall (Newcastle Branch) asked about the status of a bid for improvements to the Junior Ranks Club at 103 Fd Sqn. The Controller said that he had not received any bids for that unit from the parent REA Group, 21 Engr Regt. WO1 (RSM) P Clark of 21 Engr Regt advised that the bid was still being discussed at unit level.

24. Mr Adrian Lovell (Reading & West Berkshire Branch) asked if it was known what percentage of RE units and REA Branches had responded with bids. The Treasurer said he was not sure that a meaningful answer could be provided but the percentage would be determined and communicated to Mr Lovell.

Action: Controller

25. There was some further general discussion on where bids had gone and for what purpose and the President wished to make it perfectly clear to all that the REA Welfare Fund, or whatever it might later be called in the future, had to meet the charitable objects of the Association; it is not a blank cheque.

26. The President thanked the Honorary Treasurer for his report.

Proposal: That the 2016 REA Annual Report and Financial Statements be accepted

Proposer: Mr Adrian Lovell – Reading & West Berkshire Branch

Seconder: WO1 (CSM) S Webster – Corps Sergeant Major Trustee

Carried

ITEM 5 – To note the appointment of Kreston Reeves LLP (Formerly Reeves LLP) as the Auditors of the Association

27. The President advised those assembled that the responsibility for appointing auditors to the Corps charities rests with the Chief Royal's Committee. At the last Chief Royal's Committee meeting, Kreston Reeves LLP were approved as auditors of the Corps' charities. REA Council has approved the appointment.

ITEM – 6 - Appointment of Honorary Treasurer 2018

28. The President said that Colonel Chris Davies had kindly agreed to continue as the REA Hon Treasurer. He took the opportunity to thank publicly Colonel Chris for his work. He reminded those assembled that being the Honorary Treasurer was not something you do on the odd day each year, it is quite an onerous task and that had been clearly demonstrated today, and the financial success of the REA is largely down to what Col Chris does behind the scenes.

Proposal: That Col Chris Davies is appointed as REA Honorary Treasurer for 2018.

Proposer: Mr Ted Lowbridge – Chesterfield Branch

Seconder: Lt Col M Heffer RE – Army Reserve Trustee

Carried

ITEM 7 – Development of an REA Strategic Plan

29. The President invited the REA Chairman to brief the meeting on the way ahead. The Chairman said although there were Strategic Objectives, and these were reviewed on an annual basis by the Trustees, there was a need to develop these as a plan and show how we intended to meet them. He said the Strategic Plan would focus on our real aim which is two fold, one is to maintain the esprit of the Corps from cradle to grave and the second is to ensure that we have a wide reaching benevolence strategy in place that met the diverse needs of those eligible. There will be different courses of action and lines of operation that will need pulling together and the recommendations of the recent Membership Scoping Study will form an important part of the strategy. The final strategy would be put to Council for their endorsement in due course.

30. The President said that although this development was long overdue, it had not been possible due to the manning problems experienced at HQ REA. Given that we are fully manned, we have the horsepower now to focus on the future in terms of what the REA is about. He expected that over the next year or so we would see some interesting developments that would ensure the REA is well positioned for the future.

31. Mr John McGahan (Derby Branch) reminded the President that there was a potential problem with ensuring the ongoing maintenance of the Corps Memorial at the NMA. He said that currently all the maintenance work was being carried out by volunteers who were becoming physically less able to meet this commitment. He had raised the matter previously with the President at a site meeting and asked if there was any development in securing a sustainable way forward. The President replied by saying it was a matter very close to his heart and that he had been frustrated by the inertia. He continued by saying that much of the inactivity was due to the proposed TRBL development adjacent to the Corps Memorial; it was not clear whether this would impact on the Corps Memorial and negate any decision that we might make. He was now satisfied that there would be no lasting impact and that a plan for the long term maintenance and for suitable enhancements had been agreed and would be finalised at his Chief Royal Engineer's Committee meeting in December. He thanked John McGahan and all the others volunteers who had given freely of their time and expense in order to maintain the Corps Memorial to an acceptable standard.

ITEM 8 – Date of next meeting

32. The date of the next AGM will be 13th October 2018 at the Victory Services Club, London.

ITEM 9 - A presentation by the Corps SM WO1 (CSM) S Webster

33. The President introduced the CSM who gave a short presentation on the state of the Corps from a soldier's perspective.

34. The President thanked the CSM for his presentation.

President's Closing Remarks

35. The President reminded those assembled that as usual Sapper Sunday will take place at The Royal Hospital Chelsea the next day and provided outline timings.

36. The President said there had been some really interesting points raised from the floor during this AGM, however, whilst he did not want to stop people raising such matters at the AGM, he encouraged members to raise them through their elected representatives at both Council and Management Committee levels and not to bottle them up for this once a year event where they might not get the attention they deserved.

37. He said the Association relied on the dedication and work of everyone in it, at the very top he paid tribute to Council and the Management Committee for their valuable contribution to the development of the Association. He thanked the Col Chris Davies for his thoroughness in managing the Associations funds, the Benevolence Committee under Brig Andy Craig for its outstanding work which is in effect the main effort of the Association and the Chairman, Maj Gen Dickinson, for his guidance and

support. He particularly thanked the REA HQ staff for their hard work and continued loyalty during the very lean manning times and recent periods of disruption.

38. The President asked that his thanks be extended to all Branch and Group officials and the highly valued grassroots membership for the work that goes on in terms of promoting the REA and maintaining esprit de corps. He was keen that the serving Corps became more engaged with the REA and noted that whilst there were some Group Directors and Group Secretaries present at the meeting, he expected even more to attend the 2018 AGM.

39. The President said that whilst he would be keeping his powder dry for his later Dinner address, it would be remiss of him not to acknowledge the work of the Controller, Neil Jordan, who would be retiring at the end of March next year. He reminded members that Neil joined the REA as Deputy Controller in 2001 so it has been 16 years that he has been involved with the Association. He said Neil he had done outstandingly well and weathered some pretty hard times during his time as Deputy Controller and Controller. The President offered his grateful thanks for all that Neil had done and achieved but added that a full and formal farewell would be included in his Dinner speech.

21st November 2017

Controller

Minutes Approved

Dated

President
Lt General Sir Mark Mans KCB CBE DL

REA Council Report to the 49th Annual General Meeting - Saturday 14th October 2017

Forward by Chairman REA – Maj Gen A S Dickinson CBE

1. This is my third Chairman's report to the AGM. The Association continues to move forward with its central purpose to ensure support reaches those of the Sapper family, be they serving, veteran or related who are in need for whatever reason. Like building the foundations of a house, much of this year's work will not be clearly obvious but the diligence and industry of the REA Headquarters and branch officials has established the basis on which to move forward next year with a number of issues. The successful conclusion of the REA Membership Review, the long awaited civil service review enabling the recruitment of an assistant controller and greater granularity on the future of RE basing offer action opportunities next year. In addition, I am personally very sad to announce our Controller Neil Jordan is retiring; more on that later, suffice at this point to record recruiting for his replacement is ongoing.
2. It has been a very busy year for the Headquarters.
 - a. HQ REA. The decant from its temporary home in Wood Street back to the RE Museum building went very smoothly and the HQ are now operating from smart, spacious and comfortable accommodation. In February 2017 the post of Controller was disestablished from the Civil Service and became a charity funded post; this was filled by Lt Col Neil Jordan. In June an Assistant Controller was recruited and this has helped reduce the Controller's workload. With the increased capacity now available in the Association headquarters, it is my intention to review our 5 year annually "refreshed" strategy.
 - b. Affiliation of Branches with Corps Units. Now that a certain amount of dust has settled on the rebasing issue we are now better placed to determine how we can affiliate our Branches with Corps units. This work is currently being undertaken in partnership with 8 Engr Brigade.
 - c. REA Membership – Scoping Study. Our consultants have produced a very good report that provides us with some useful and innovative recommendations many of which we will look to implement through the appropriate Association channels. These include extending the range of National Branches to include popular communities of interest, reviewing the membership structure as well as the membership offerings and refreshing our internet presence to improve its functionality and appearance.
 - d. The Queens Gurkha Engineers Association (QGEA). The Queens Gurkha Engineers (QGE) is part of the family of the Corps of Royal Engineers. At the same time, Gurkha Sappers also belong to the Gurkha family. Work is underway to examine how the REA can align better with the QGEA so as to improve our support for our fellow Sappers serving in the QGE.

Council's Report

3. The REA is governed by the Deeds of Trust 1968 supplemented by the REA Rules 2009. Trustees of the REA are recommended to the Council after a thorough search for suitable candidates in the eleven REA Group areas and by ex-officio appointments for REA representation by the Chief Royal Engineer. On appointment each Trustee is given a standard Trustee briefing pack and is strongly encouraged to attend Trustee briefing days where they are given updates on various matters on the running of their Association.
4. Trustees make and approve Association policy and delegate the day to day running to the Controller REA and his staff through different committees for management, benevolence, recruiting and finance. At each Council meeting the Minutes of each of the delegated

committees are reviewed recommending adjustments as necessary. Council also carries out an annual review of the Risk Register. Council is content that all measures are in hand to minimise risk.

5. The delivery of benevolence is at the heart of what the REA does and the Association is structured in a way to ensure that this is done in a caring and efficient manner. Government initiatives over the past few years have increased the awareness of the general public and local authorities as to the availability of benevolence assistance for those who have served in the Corps and their dependents. The pattern of fewer requests for Benevolence support continues its downward trend. This is probably due to the decline in the number of ex-Sappers as the WW2 veterans pass on and the progressive reduction in the size of the Corps in recent years. The majority of cases continue to be processed by SSAFA and The Royal British Legion (TRBL) on behalf of the REA Benevolence Committee.

6. The increase in the delegated powers of the Controller has contributed greatly to the speedy delivery of benevolence and enabled the adoption of quarterly Benevolence Committee meetings. The move from monthly to quarterly meetings adequately supports the committee's decision making process and has considerably reduced the associated travel budget. Urgent benevolence cases that exceed the Controllers delegated powers are dealt with out-of-committee.

7. With the help of other charities like The Army Benevolent Fund – The Soldiers Charity, Help for Heroes and The Royal British Legion, our seriously injured Sappers are now given extensive treatment and advice in the Personnel Recovery Units as they prepare for the return to civilian life.

8. The audited net cost of REA benevolence in 2016 made up of Grants, Christmas grants, weekly allowances and grants to other charities was £401,628. This is some 3% lower than 2015 where the net cost of benevolence was £415,438. Table 1 summarises the benevolence cases considered and cost of associated grants 2016 – 2013.

Regular – Reserve Case Comparisons	2016	2015	2014	2013
Regular Cases	540	605	666	715
Reservist Cases	25	45	53	22
Regular Grants	£260,925	£282,412	£287,855	£276,912
Reservist Grants	£10,145	£20,318	£18,217	£6,630

Table 1

9. Effective benevolence requires many organisations working together to bring the help needed to the applicant. In addition to the eyes and ears support provided by REA membership on the ground, the REA relies on the volunteer caseworkers of SSAFA and The Royal British Legion to intervene on our behalf to assess the needs of those requiring assistance. They inform us of the requirements of the applicant and often provide help with their paperwork so the appropriate benevolence can be provided quickly. In addition to the vigilance of our own members, Veterans UK through their Veterans Welfare Service (VWS) signpost the REA to those RE service personnel and veterans who may need assistance. Our link with the Army Benevolent Fund – The Soldiers Charity, is also important as it contributes to the homes and other military charities, such as BLESMA, St Dunstan's and Combat Stress. The Trustees are most appreciative of the financial support provided by The Soldiers Charity towards the cost of welfare grants to serving and former members of the Corps and their dependants. In 2016, the Soldiers' Charity supported 179 serving and retired sapper cases with grants of £168,503. This is significant support for which we are extremely grateful. In recognition of the valuable work done by the charities already supported annually by the REA, the Council authorised an increase of £10K to the ABF with an annual grant of £50K, and a £5K increase to SSAFA with

an annual grant of £20K; these increases to be effective from 2018.

10. The REA Council wish to record its gratitude and appreciation to all the organisations and to the volunteers who act as caseworkers and fund raisers in a combined “partnership” for the benefit of all those in need in our Corps family. Caseworkers for all these charities are always required and volunteers are warmly welcomed.

11. Branch Changes. Since the last AGM, HQ REA has been advised of the closure of the Barnsley Branch, the New Forest Branch and the Norwich Branch. A declining, ageing membership and a reluctance of Branch members to act as Branch Officials were cited as the reasons. In July the Management Committee approved the formation of the Hartlepool Branch within the North East Group, and steps are being taken to re-form the Norwich Branch.

12. Badges of Merit 2017. In January 2017, the Chairman REA and the REA Management Committee announced the award of Badges of Merit to the following:

Name	Branch	Group
Mr David Barter	Dover Branch	South East
Mr Mick Dobson	Junior Leaders Regt	South East
Mr Chris Woodford	Maidstone Branch	South East
Maj (Retd) Barrie Wilks	Eastbourne Branch	South East
Mr George Elliott	Swindon Branch	South West
Mr Anthony Franklin	Newton Abbot & Distr	South West
Mr Mick Pascoe	Dundee Branch	Scotland & NI

13. In May last year, Council approved a £1M allocation to fund the 2017 REA Welfare Fund. This provided the opportunity for Sapper Units (Regular and Reserve) and REA Branches to bid for a grant from the £1M allocation in support of ongoing, or aspirational, projects or activities that lack financial support from public funds. To date there has been eight successful bids for grants from this fund. Notable examples were: two Recreational vehicles for 39 Regiment in its isolated location and support for an ambitious sports complex project at Wimbish. A full list of bids and disbursements is included in the Honorary Treasurers report. The uncertainty surrounding the future basing of regular RE units caused by the Secretary of State’s announcement to reduce the Defence Estate by 30% has led to COs not being able to guarantee a return on investment for some of the major project ideas they have. Therefore, the full amount allocated to this initiative will fall some way short of being spent this year. We will review the progress of this initiative to learn lessons and see if and when we do something similar in the future.

14. Recruiting. Branch membership continues to occupy the thoughts of the REA Recruiting Committee. Overall Branch membership in 2016 was 20% lower than in 2015. Table 2 shows the number of new Life Members enrolled for each of the last five years and, of those members, how many were enrolled into the three National Branches with the highest membership.

	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
Total new Life Members enrolled (all Branches)	422	528	581	442	469
Airborne Engr Branch (new members)	55	1	8	10	9
Bomb Disposal Branch (new members)	14	73	50	57	15
Cdo Engr Branch (new members)	20	21	31	24	47

Table 2

15. The REA Recruiting Committee continues to review ways of publicising the work of the REA to serving Members and marketing the REA with the aim of attracting more members to each of the Branches. A renewed effort has been made through the chain of command in order to capture those leaving the Corps, and the unit point of contact has moved from the Regimental Career & Manning Officer (RCMO) to the RSM. The REA is looking to support from the serving Corps with this initiative as it provides a key part of the Chief Royal Engineer's Intent.

16. In addition to the Welcome Pack, provided to each service leaver, the following recruiting initiatives are in place:

- a. REA Spider Dome tents for Branch, Group and Unit use
- b. REA Website
- c. REA Facebook

17. Re-unions. National Branches continue hold very successful annual reunions. These are mostly combined with their AGM and a visit to a place of significance to the Corps, such as the Corps Memorial at the NMA. The Association Veterans Weekend reunions have again been a great success and we wish to give you brief details on them:

a. Chilwell Veterans Weekend. The REA Chilwell Veterans weekend was held Fri 24 – Sun 26 Jun 17 and hosted by the Gp RSM at Chilwell. Attendance from across the REA was excellent; over 130 REA members including guest/partners attended and thankfully the weather held throughout which facilitated additional attendance from across Chilwell Station. The weekend commenced in the WOs' and Sgts' Mess with maximum attendance from the WOs' & Sgts' Mess, the REA, Cpl's Club and several members of the Officers Mess were also present to form teams for a hard fought games night, sadly the REA did not win and were beaten by the WOs' and Sgts' Mess. A Standard Bearers competition inspection took place early Saturday morning and was well supported by spectators from across the REA. Four participants took to the floor and later that day after the Freedom of Stapleford parade, the Standard Bearers drill part of the competition was held with the overall winner being Mr Rick Tootle (The National Standard Bearer). The Freedom of Stapleford was very well attended by the local civilian population. HM Lord Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire (Sir John Peace), the Rt Hon Anna Soubry MP (Conservative MP for the Borough of Broxtowe), Mayor of the Borough of Broxtowe (Councillor Halimah Khaled MBE) and the Town Mayor Stapleford (Councillor Chris Rice) were in attendance. The REA standards were exceptional in all respects and received massive applause as we all marched off to the Civic Centre after the freedom parade. The Gp RSM hosted a Regimental dinner in the WOs' and Sgts' Mess on the Saturday evening with 151 personnel seated, Col Jim Crawford (Comd 170) was present as well as the Rt Hon Anna Soubry MP and Councillor Halimah Khaled MBE, the dinner was a complete success and the REA continued to socialise afterward in the WOs' and Sgts' Mess.

b. Minley Veterans Weekend. The 2017 REA Minley weekend was held over the period 28 – 30 July 17 and was deemed to be a great success judging by the comments and feedback that have been received. In total 152 REA members were scheduled to attend with the actual attendance figure of 144, this is a vast improvement over previous years. The weekend was planned around last year's event and was held on the same weekend as the Minley Station family's day. The Friday night was a chance for REA members to meet and greet fellow comrades across the various groups and all in station WO's and SNCO's within the WOs' and Sgts' Mess. Saturday started early with the CO's welcoming address followed by a revision period based around Combat Engineering for a KAHOOT interactive quiz competition. The morning ended with a Corps update presented by 8 Bde allowing the REA to gain an insight into what the wider Corps is currently engaged with. REA members were then welcomed to the Minley Station family's day where a variety of static and moving stands were on show displaying the capabilities

of the Corps. Members took the opportunity to chat with young recruits currently going through training and with instructors and families who attended the afternoon's activities. The daytime events were concluded with the KAHOOT Combat Engineer quiz. Saturday evening was the REA Dinner night held within the WOs' and Sgts' Mess and hosted by the management of 55 Trg Sqn. This included a Curry buffet, a DJ and a raffle with some great prizes. Sunday saw a well turned out REA attend their Act of Remembrance. The Standard Bearers performed their duties extremely well within the confines of the WOs' and Sgts' Mess (no holes in the ceiling this year). This was followed by REA members being fell in and marched up the hill to the Officers Mess for a carvery lunch where prizes for the KAHOOT quiz and the shooting competition winners were presented. The CO gave a farewell address and the whole weekend was brought to a close around 1400hrs on the Sunday afternoon.

c. Corps Memorial & Veterans Weekend. The 2017 Corps Memorial and Veterans Weekend was a great success. The event was supported by the serving Corps, cadets and REA Branches nationwide, in total the REA attendance was approximately 180 with many being accommodated in Wildfire Block (formerly HMS Collingwood) and surrounding hotels in the Medway Towns. The Weekend started off on the Friday evening with an informal meet and greet in the WOs' & Sgts' Mess, hosted by Mess members and splattering of RSMs from around the Corps. The event was very well attended and everybody enjoyed the music performed by the REA Band. Saturday morning saw some of the veterans and their partners receiving a brief from the Corps SM on recent changes within the Corps before being split down into several groups ready for the day's activities. During the day, veterans and their guests moved around various stands including the RE Museum, plant display, workshop tour, Mk 3 Rigid Raider and Combat Support Boats. Both the regular and reserve bands performed together in the afternoon providing a spectacular display of traditional and contemporary music on the Regimental Square. The National Standard Bearers Competition and the Dove Cup (darts) ran concurrent to the day's activities. The prizes for the competitions were formally presented during the evening at the official function in the WOs' & Sgts' Mess by the Chief Royal Engineer. As always the function was well attended with some veterans staying until the early hours. On a fine Sunday morning, some 65 veterans, 21 Standard Bearers, 40 cadets and 100 serving members of 1 RSME Regt marched on parade – the numbers were impressive and they certainly added value to the parade. In the afternoon Rochester Cathedral was filled to capacity for the Memorial Service, after the service the veterans once again 'fell in' with the serving Corps to march through Rochester to exercise the Freedom of the borough of Medway.

In summary a fantastic weekend was had by all and we look forward to doing it all again next year.

18. Media Matters.

a. REA Facebook. This has proved a most useful interactive REA promotional tool. It is an excellent and modern means of delivering REA information and many REA branches are making themselves known by this medium.

b. REA Website. The website continues to be the main REA information pool for those able to access the internet. It has been recognised, however, that the site needs updating to make it tablet and mobile friendly. Funding has been allocated to enable the update and provide further enhancements. Work on the redevelopment of the site will start this year.

c. Corps Memorial Book. Since its commencement, this has proven to be a most popular development. The facility provided through 'Friends & Relations' that allows friends and families to add comments and reflections to those who have passed away is also popular. Access to the site has been limited of late as the facility is not tablet and mobile friendly. Action to rectify this is in place with a complete overhaul of the site; a new, widely accessible site will be available within a few weeks.

Honorary Treasurer's Report to the 2017 AGM of the Royal Engineers Association

1. The 2016 Budget was authorised by Council with an income of £835,290 and an overall surplus of £54,333. The year closed on 31st December 2016 with a surplus of £961,844. Three principal factors contributed to this surplus viz: income exceeding forecast by £36,337, expenditure on Benevolence being some £75k under budget and the RE Museum transformation grant of £30k not being expended (due to Lottery bid failure).
2. The budget for the current accounting year, which started on 1st January 2017, had an authorised income of £820,631 and an overall deficit of £961,844. This deficit arises from the £1M REA Welfare Grant which is expanded upon below.
3. Next year's budget (2018) has been approved by Council with an income of £837,071 and an overall deficit of £2,397. This deficit will only actually appear if the RE Museum £30k grant is paid. (*It is almost certain that it will not and we await a revised grant bid from the Corps Museum following production of a revised strategic plan*).
4. For convenience a copy of the Budget Plan 2018-2022 is attached together with an up to date FOO for 2017.
5. Members will recall that a Welfare Grant of £1M was allocated from Capital Reserves for the year 2017. This was to enhance *Esprit de Corps* – a specific objective of the REA - by providing the opportunity for Units and Branches to bid for support in funding projects or activities which had no – or incomplete – support from other resources. The overall result both in 'PR' for the REA and benefit for recipients has been most encouraging. Notable examples were: two Recreational vehicles for 39 Regiment in its isolated location and support for an ambitious sports complex project at Wimbish. A full list of bids and disbursements is attached. It has been disappointing that more bids were not received and that, therefore, the full amount allocated will fall some way short of being spent. However, the initiative was without precedent and there was, perhaps, a reticence on the part of many units and Branches to consider how they might benefit from the Grant. Some uncertainty over future unit moves under the Army's revised Estate Plan is also probably a factor that discouraged units from submitting a bid. Despite all of this, it is not intended that under-spend should be carried forward or that a similar allocation from REA reserve of capital should be made available again in 2018. A little time is needed to assess the marketing, management and results of this initiative before deciding whether – and how - it should be repeated in future. The Finance Committee will conduct a review in early 2018 and expects to be in a position to make recommendations to Council by its September meeting in 2018.
6. It will be remembered that The RE Continuous Personal Development (RE CPD) Team is the operating arm of the RE Vocational Education & Training Trust (REVETT). In 2016 the CEO of REVETT requested support for the expansion of the current portfolio of (Civilian-recognised) qualifications available to serving members of the Corps. An annual grant of £30K per year (wef 2017) was approved and a sitrep from REVETT has been received (attached) which indicates that the money is being used to provision the mapping of military courses to the most appropriate civilian qualifications. Again, this expenditure is positive evidence that the REA is providing valuable support for the serving soldier in ensuring that his military qualifications will be readily transferable to the civilian world into the future: a convincing demonstration of the REA's commitment to enhancing *Esprit de Corps*. It will be noted that REVETT expects to spend about only half of the sum (£30K) allocated for 2017 but that the remainder could usefully be used in 2018, in addition to the sum already set aside for that year. The Finance Committee has agreed to a carry-forward of the 2017 under-spend into 2018 without prejudice to the £30k already allocated for 2018.
7. REA capital is invested in the Armed Forces Common Investment Fund (AFCIF). At 1st August this year the capital value (including the Kitchener Scholarship Fund) was £11.4M compared to £10.4M in 2016 and £10.1M In 2015. The REA did not invest any further capital into AFCIF during 2016.

8. As ever, Benevolence remains a key part of REA business and its biggest expenditure. In 2016 £401,628 was spent, overall, in support of Benevolence against a budget of £476k. At 1st August 2017 a total of £195,933 had been disbursed against a budget of £499k. The estimated final figure for Benevolence in 2017 is expected to be £403.8k which will be under budget as, notwithstanding the increases to weekly and Christmas grants, the number of grant recipients is reducing.

9. The pattern of fewer requests for Benevolence support continues its downward trend. This is probably due to the decline in the number of ex-Sappers as the WW2 veterans pass on and the progressive reduction in the size of the Corps in recent years. The amount spent on individual benevolence (excluding weekly allowances, Christmas grants and other charitable donations) for the period 1 Jan – 31 Jul 2017 was £149,146.00 which is a 2.3% decrease, overall, on the same period in 2016 (£152,675.00).

10. As far as investments go, BlackRock, our portfolio manager, continues to achieve encouragingly successful results despite the continuing uncertainties of the Market overall. The dividends in 2016 totalled £399.6K by comparison with £394K in 2015. During the period 1 January to 31 December 2016, the performance of distribution units invested in AFCIF was +12.7% after fees and expenses.

Colonel (Retd) Chris Davies MBE
REA Honorary Treasurer