

From: Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) N A Jordan – Controller

The Royal Engineers Association

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Patron: HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN



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All Council Members
All Group Directors
All Group Secretaries
All Branch Secretaries
Controller REA
Corps Treasurer

23rd February 2017

MINUTES OF THE 126th MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION, HELD IN 052 MEETING ROOM 05, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, MAIN BUILDING, LONDON, ON TUESDAY 24th JANUARY 2017

PRESENT

Maj Gen A S Dickinson CBE	Chairman
Col D L D Bigger ADC	Corps Colonel
Lt Col M Heffer RE TD	Reserve Army
WO1 (RSM) J Rankine	1 RSME Regt
WO1 (RSM) M Eastley	3 RSME Regt
Maj (Retd) R C A Macgregor MBE TD VR	Scotland & NI Group
Mr M Payne BEM	Central Southern Group
Mr B Simm	East Anglia Group
Mr K Gover	South West Group
Mr G Doughty	South East Group
Mr A Bulmer	North West Group
Mr S Lipscombe	North Midlands Group
Mr T Webb	South Wales Group

IN ATTENDANCE

Lt Col (Retd) N Jordan	A Con REA and Secretary
Maj (Retd) I Sidebottom	Corps Treasurer

APOLOGIES

Maj R Oakes RE	Serving Officer
WO1 (RSM) S Webster	170 (Infra Sp) Engr Group
Mr P Markham	London Group
Mr K Street	South Midlands Group
Mr W P Halloran	North East Group

1. The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed those present, especially those who had come from afar. He extended season's greetings to all assembled.
2. The Chairman noted that apologies had been received from those listed above. He welcomed the following new members to the Committee for whom it was their first meeting:

Mr S Lipscombe
Lt Col Martin Heffer RE TD

North Midlands Group
Reserve Forces representative

ITEM 1 - TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE 125th MEETING

3. The Committee accepted that the Minutes of the 125th Meeting were a true record of the proceedings.

Proposed: WO1 (RSM) M Eastley - 3 RSME Regt

Seconded: Mr A Bulmer - North West Gp

Carried

4. The Chairman signed the Minutes

ITEM 2. TO CONSIDER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 125TH MEETING

5. Paragraph 10 – Welcome Pack Initiative. The Chairman had agreed to approach the serving Corps through the chain of command to improve the unit response to the REA 'Welcome Pack' initiative. He said he had yet to discuss the matter with Comd 8 Bde but wished to wait until the latest rebasing policy was firmed up enabling him to discuss the affiliations of units to Groups and Branches at the same time. To be continued.

ITEM 3 – TO NOTE THE REPORT OF THE BENEVOLENCE COMMITTEE

6. The A Con presented the Benevolence Report for the 12 month period ending 31st December 2016. The report is at Annex A.
7. The A Con reminded members that Branches should be urged to send observers to Benevolence Committee meetings. A diary list of all future Benevolence meetings was available on the REA website www.reahq.org.uk
8. The Benevolence Report was accepted.

ITEM 4 - TO NOTE THE CORPS COLONEL'S REPORT ON THE CORPS

9. The Corps Colonel presented his report. The report is at Annex B.
10. In addition to the points covered in his report, the Corps Colonel provided details of Sapper Network Limited (SNL). He said the purpose of SNL is to provide an employment service to match the needs of industry with RE Service Leavers (SLs), Reserves and Veterans, who seek employment and support beyond MOD career transition support, and in so doing provide a revenue stream to fund non-public funded RE Central Charitable Trust activities, enhance Corps reputation and esprit de corps, and signpost emergent benevolent need to the REA. It is hoped that SNL will be launched in the third quarter of this year.
11. The Chairman advised the Committee that he was very much in favour of the REA sponsoring SNL. He recognised that this Committee was not the forum to discuss any allocation of funds but he said it was important that members were aware of his wholehearted support. He asked members what their thoughts were on REA support for SNL. There was great support for the concept and for the opportunity to publicise the involvement of the REA in such a valuable and highly relevant initiative.

12. The Chairman thanked the Corps Colonel for such a comprehensive and informative report and urged Committee members to share the information with Branches and members.

13. The Corps Colonel's report was accepted.

ITEM 5 – TO AWARD THE BADGES OF MERIT FOR 2017

14. The Committee took great pleasure in awarding the prestigious REA Badge of Merit to the following members:

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

15. In addition to those listed above, the following member was awarded the Badge of Merit as a result of a recommendation by the Chairman REA, Maj Gen A S Dickinson CBE.

a. Maj (Retd) Barrie Wilks Eastbourne Branch South East Group

16. Their commitment to the Association and their comrades was remarkable and worthy of recognition through the award.

ITEM 6 – BADGE OF MERIT – REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

17. The Chairman reminded members that at the previous meeting the Committee expressed a degree of disquiet in the way awards for the Badge of Merit were marked and that Mr Mike Payne had kindly agreed to do some work to consider a better way; the work had been completed and the Chairman thanked Mike Payne for his report. Mike Payne was invited to brief members on his report. After his brief, committee members were invited to comment on the report content. Some considerable discussion took place and it was summarised by the Chairman. He said any new system should do away with the allocation of points to appointments held, and be based on a primary citation by the Branch and an authentication by the Group Director. The citation should comment on the nominees achievements, the number of people affected by the achievement, Branch funds raised, dedication and commitment of the individual, Branch appointments held, personal sacrifices made in carrying out his appointments, initiatives he has developed, any increases in membership and importantly, supporting evidence of the achievements. The list is not exhaustive and there will be other factors that should be considered. The Group Director should be required to authenticate, and if necessary prioritise, what he is forwarding to the Awards Board.

18. Members agreed that rather than the Committee marking the nominations, an Awards Board be established to consider the nominations. The Board should consist of the Controller (Chairman), Corps Col, an RSM from the Committee and two elected Committee members. The RSMs and elected Committee members would rotate each year.

19. The Chairman suggested that rather than the current time period for requesting and submitting Badge of Merit documentation (Jul – Nov incl), documentation should be available in January with the Awards Board sitting in early December to assess the submissions. There was agreement with this suggestion.

20. Mike Payne kindly agreed to provide a proposal that described an annual award process that was based on a primary citation and embraced the comments and agreements defined in Paragraphs 17 to 19. He said the proposal would be provided by Easter 2017.

ITEM 7 – ANNUAL FINANCIAL SUMMARIES - UPDATE

21. The Chairman asked the A Con to update the Committee on Branch submissions.

22. The A Con said there were still 17 Branch Summaries outstanding. He confirmed that he was in contact with the Group Secretaries of those Branches and that hastening action had been taken. Details of the Branches with Summaries outstanding were passed to the Group representatives present.

23. The Chairman was concerned that each year there was the same problem with the timely receipt of Branch Summaries. He asked what punitive action was taken against Branches that failed to comply fully with Association Rules. The A Con said that whilst it was very difficult to impose punitive action on Branches, he worked very closely with Corps Funds on the submissions and advised them and the auditors of the Branches to be selected for audit each year. The Chairman urged Branches to ensure that they submitted accurate and timely Summaries.

ITEM 8 – TO NOTE THE ALLOCATION OF GRANTS TO ANNUAL EVENTS

24. Grant requests were received for the following events in 2017:

Event (a)	Requested Amount (b)	Amount Supported by HQ REA (c)
CM & Vets Weekend - Chatham	£8,500 (£8,000 in 2016)	£8,500
Minley Weekend	£7,000 (£6,000 in 2016)	£7,000
Chilwell Weekend	£8,500 (£6,500 in 2016)	£8,500

25. Committee members are asked to note the requests. The Committee recommends to Council the allocations shown in column (c).

ITEM 9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

26. The following events of interest for 2017 have been notified to HQ REA:

03 June	Trooping the Colour - Major General's Review
08 June	Royal Hospital Chelsea Founder's Day Parade
10 June	Trooping the Colour – Colonel's Review
14 & 15 June	Beating Retreat, London
17 June	Queen's Birthday Parade
23 – 25 June	Chilwell Weekend*
28 – 30 July	Minley Weekend*
15 - 17 September	Corps Memorial Weekend*
14 October	REA AGM and Annual Dinner *
15 October	Sapper Sunday at Royal Hospital Chelsea
09 November	Field of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey
12 November	Remembrance Sunday

*National Events

27. Passchendaele Battlefield Tour. Graham Doughty (South East Group) told members that a further Battlefield Tour was being organised by the Medway Branch this year. He had been approached by the organiser to request REA financial assistance in obtaining Band support to attend the Menin Gate ceremony. The Chairman explained that this was not the right body to consider the allocation of funds and advised that an approach should be made to the REA Finance Committee giving full details of the requirement. Mr Doughty also requested assistance with the provision of five wreaths to cover the planned wreath laying event on the Tour; the A Con agreed to provide the wreaths FOC.

28. Contact Details of Service Leavers. Steve Lipscombe (North Midlands) was concerned that there appeared to be a missed opportunity in obtaining the contact details of soldiers that terminate or discharge from the Corps. He suggested that upon joining the Corps, soldiers give their permission for the Corps to use their contact details; this could be used to send them information about their local REA Branch. The A Con pointed out that the REA already had an initiative in place that targeted those leaving the Corps. It was reliant on unit RCMO cooperation and the willingness of the soldier to provide the information the REA sought; neither was 100% certain. The Corps Colonel also pointed out that the processing of such information would require resources that RHQ RE and HQ REA did not possess. Chairman said he understood the problem and he would discuss the matter with Comd 8 Bde.

Action: Chairman

29. Inglis Bridge. Steve Lipscombe (North Midlands) asked for some guidance on the recovery of a very rare Inglis bridge. He explained that some work had already been done by local volunteers to expose the bridge. He had hoped that the RE Museum would want the bridge and estimated that recovery costs would be in the region of £300k; there were no signs, however, that the RE Museum was interested. He asked for some advice on how to proceed in securing this rare bridge for the Corps. The Corps Col said that of course the Corps would love to have the bridge but there was only a certain amount of money available, it would have been ideal as a MACC task in old money but that is now not possible. The Corps Colonel continued by advising Steve Lipscombe to go back to the RE Museum and ask them to raise a case for funding through the Royal Engineers Museum, Library and Archives Committee (REMLAC).

ITEM 10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

30. The next meeting is planned for mid-July 2017 in MOD Main Building. Members were asked to check their availability for the 19th, 20th and 21st July and advise the Controller accordingly.

{original signed}

23 February 2017

Controller

Minutes Approved

Chairman

Benevolence Report to 126th Meeting of the REA Management Committee

1. **Trends 2016.** There were 85 fewer benevolence cases considered in 2016 than the previous year. The reason for this decrease in submitted cases is unclear but it could be due, in part, to the success of the Armed Forces Covenant. Additionally, the Annual population survey of UK armed forces veterans residing in Great Britain 2015 identifies that a general decline in the number of veterans overall is in progress. Given that approximately 52% of the veteran population are aged 75 years and over, over the next 10-20 years, a large proportion of these may pass on thus reducing the veteran community. Of these 565 cases, 397 were submitted by SSAFA and 139 by TRBL.

2. Benevolence Cases Considered 2016 – 2012

Category	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
Disabled & Illness	174	175	202	185	192
Aged	53	71	63	52	118
Widows	55	86	78	110	138
Unemployed	107	118	137	152	210
Miscellaneous	136	149	171	187	285
Grants not made	40	51	68	51	23
Totals	565	650	719	737	966

3. **Cost of Benevolence Jan to December 2016.** The unaudited amount spent on benevolence for the period 1 Jan – 31 December 2016 was £263,465; this is £27.8K lower than 2015.

4. **REA Branch Observers.** Observers are always most welcome to visit REA Benevolence meetings in London to see how the Committee carries out the business of making financial grants on behalf of the Corps. The Chairman and Controller REA invite REA Branch observers to attend and participate, with the aim reporting back to their Branches on the breadth of cases that are considered and how we are able to help. We would hope that all REA Trustees would attend at least one meeting.

5. **Benevolence Committee meetings.** In 2016 the Controller's delegated powers increased from £500 to £1,000. Since that increase the REA Benevolence Committee sits quarterly rather than monthly. Meetings will now be held on the third Tuesday of March, June and September and on the second Tuesday in December. Cases requiring financial assistance greater than £1,000 (Controller's financial threshold) are referred to the REA Benevolence Committee. Cases of an urgent nature that exceed the Controller's delegated powers are considered out-of-committee in consultation with the Chairman of the Benevolence Committee and the Hon Treasurer REA. There is no financial limit on grants that the Committee can authorise for benevolence. The Committee also deals with applications for weekly allowances. Cases, having been in front of the Committee, are dealt with within a week of the Committee decision.

CORPS UPDATE JANUARY 2017

8 Engineer Brigade

12 (Force Support) Engineer Group

1. HQ 12 (FS) Engr Gp continue to force generate for upcoming operational deployments as well as provide manpower to overseas exercises. The Gp Geographic officer has been assisting the Gurkha Welfare Service (GWS) formalise and identify a way of capturing data on their pensioners and projects across Nepal.
2. 21 Engr Regt are in the final stages of preparation for an upcoming deployment to South Sudan. 4 Fd Sqn continue to prepare for a deployment to Kenya on Exercise ASKARI STORM whilst other members of the Regiment still continue to support the ongoing construction task in the Falklands Islands (Project ANEMOI).
3. 32 Engr Regt has returned from its construction tasks in Cyprus and the Falklands Island and is now on a well-earned period of recuperation prior to a busy 2017.
4. 36 Engr Regt have now recovered all its soldiers from the final operation in Nepal. This saw the final handovers of the school and pensioner home builds to the Gurkha Welfare Services. In addition, all troops have recovered from operations in Cyprus. 20 Sqn continue training on the Route Proving and Clearance (RP&C) fleet.
5. 39 Engr Regt continue to be extremely busy supporting the RAF on exercises and operations in the UK and overseas as well as providing manpower for Project ANEMOI and UK operations. 34 Fd Sqn still continue to prepare for an upcoming deployment with 21 Engr Regt to South Sudan.
6. 71 Engr Regt's main effort has been preparing to mobilise 30 soldiers for an upcoming operational tour. A number of training exercises were conducted prior to Christmas stand down in preparation for a busy 2017.
7. 75 Engr Regt continue at pace conducting numerous Sqn and Regt'l weekends along with the continued training of Amphibious Engineers across in Minden, Germany for both Regular and Reserve soldiers. Amphibious Support will now likely deploy on two multinational exercises in 2017.
8. R Mon RE (M) completed a training weekend prior to Christmas stand down which included: final elements of regimental inter-sqn competitions, sub-unit annual briefings and a winter celebration.

25 (Close Support) Engineer Group

9. HQ 25 (CS) Engr Gp has been involved in the new STRIKE Brigade development including: Virtual Experiment Training (Combined Arms Tactical Trainer) and gap crossing drills.
10. 22 Engr Regt are in a particular busy period at the moment. Sub-Units are either deployed on operations or in the middle of pre-deployment training for an overseas deployment.
11. 26 Engr Regt have completed their constructions tasks in Kenya and the temporary staff for the BATUS (Canada) season has now recovered back to the UK. Sub-Units have now begun low level training in preparation for their training year.
12. 35 Engr Regt are now the lead engr unit in the UKs high readiness armed task force. 77 AES assumed their role as part of the Lead Armoured Battle Group and are preparing for an Armoured Fighting Vehicle gunnery range camp.

29 (EOD & Search) Group

13. HQ 29 EOD and Search Gp currently have vast numbers deployed supporting the various operations and exercises being conducted in the UK and around the world.
14. 1 MWD Regt have handlers and dogs deployed on operations in the Middle East as well as providing Short Term Training Teams (STTT) to a variety of overseas locations. The Regt continues to support the two Very High Readiness (VHR) Brigades (Airborne and Cdo) and also supplied handlers for various exercises overseas.
15. 11 EOD Regt RLC continues to maintain its support to UK operations and other task-lines, and providing Ammunition Technical support in the UK and overseas. EOD teams are in preparation or deployed in Nigeria, Pakistan, Iraq, BATUS and the Falkland Islands as well as various potential short-notice tasks around the world.
16. 33 Engr Regt (EOD) troops remain deployed in the Middle East as well as operators in Kenya conducting a large range clearance task. 821 Sqn continue to train for VHR contingency operations.
17. 101 Engr Regt (EOD) is supporting the Middle East and continue to have soldiers held at very high readiness. A small 13 man deployed to Nigeria to train the Nigerian Army and elements of the Regiment are preparing for upcoming operational deployments.

170 (Infrastructure Support) Engineer Group

18. 20 Wks Gp continues to support various RAF stations in the UK as well as having personnel deployed in the Middle East.
19. 62 Wks Gp has delivered infra support across the broader Middle East area of operations as well as preparing for deployment to South Sudan and Somalia.
20. 63 Wks Gp is delivering project management for Project ANEMOI, which is the rebuilding of the three radar head site on the Falkland Islands. Teams are currently training for deployments to the Middle East as well as producing design reports for a construction task in Cyprus.
21. 64 Wks Gp are in the final phases of preparation for an upcoming deployment to Cyprus. In addition, training has been conducted to ensure they are prepared for their role as the high readiness Wks Gp.
22. 66 Wks Gp continue to have soldiers deployed in the Middle East and South Sudan. Flood Defence Training was conducted to the KRH, RIFLES and Yorks Standby Battalions.

Specialist Units

23. 24 Cdo Engr Regt continues to support 3 Cdo Bde RM by holding a large number of officers and soldiers at readiness. The Regiment has been operationally committed almost continually since Jun 15. 59 Cdo Sqn returned from a live firing exercise in America and are now in the final phase of preparation for an upcoming winter deployment to Norway.
24. 23 Para Engr Regt has seen 9 Sqn return from operations in the Sinai and the remaining elements of the Regiment take part in a major overseas NATO exercise. 299 Para Sqn continue to recruit large numbers of reserve soldiers to its ranks.

Future Activities & Events

25. The following notable activities are planned for the future:
 - a. 9 Mar 17 – Iraq and Afghanistan War Memorial unveiling – more information to follow.
 - b. 15 – 17 Sep 17 – Corps Memorial and Veterans Weekend – Chatham.

26. **Army 2020Refine.** A number of outcomes involving the Corps were announced prior to Christmas. These details, as currently known, are as follows:

- a. 35 Engineer Regiment will return from Germany and re-role in to an EOD and Search Regiment. 29 and 37 AES will move to 21 and 32 Engineer Regiment as part of this re-role.
- b. A growth in the Wide Wet Gap Crossing (amphibious) capacity. More information to follow.
- c. A growth and realignment in the EOD&S capability. More information to follow.
- d. A realignment of the Corps Reserve Units.
- e. A realignment of the Wks Gps.

Though some sweeping changes, the Corps has done well out of A2020R. There is still a considerable amount of work to be conducted prior to a formalised plan being announced.

General Points

27. **Royal Engineers Website.** To find out more about what the Corps is up to and view electronic copies of things like Sapper Magazine visit the RE pages inside the Army website using the link at the bottom of the page.

Sports & AT

28. **Corps Sporting Fixtures.** A short list of Corps sporting fixtures, should personnel wish to drop into events to provide support, is below:

a. **Rugby:**

- (1) RA versus RE, Larkhill – Wed 25 Jan 17.
- (2) Inter Corps Final , Aldershot – Wed 22 Feb 17.

b. **Boxing:**

- (1) Inter Corps Boxing Championships, Chatham – 18/ 19 & 20 April 17.

29. **Corps Sports Results:** A short list of Corps sporting results are as follows:

a. **Rugby League.** The Corps Rugby League won the Inter-Corps and Woolwich Cup and are arguably one of the most successful Corps sports teams.

b. **Army Sports Awards 2016.** The following individuals won awards at the annual Army Sports Awards Dinner:

- (1) **Army Sportsman of the Year.** Sgt Crossley (22 Engr Regt) for wakeboarding.
- (2) **Army Adaptive Sportsman of the Year.** Capt (Retd) D Henson MBE RE.

c. **Para Olympics Rio 2016.** The Corps had three ex-Royal Engineers compete at the Para Olympics in Rio 16:

- (1) Ex-SSgt M Yule – Powerlifting.
- (2) Capt (Retd) N Beighton – Bronze medal in canoe sprint.
- (3) Capt (Retd) D Henson MBE – Bronze medal in 200m sprint.

d. **Corps Games.** 1 RSME Regt retained the RE Games overall winner's trophy.

30. **Corps Deaths.** With sadness, there have been two serving Corps deaths since the last update:

- a. Spr H Key – 36 Engr Regt.
- b. Lt Col I Webster – Army HQ.

31. **Useful Links:**

- a. Army Website (Royal Engineers): <http://www.army.mod.uk/royalengineers/26293.aspx#>
- b. REA Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Royal-Engineers-Association>
- c. RE Museum: <http://www.re-museum.co.uk/>
- d. Institution of Royal Engineers: <http://www.instre.org/>
- e. Sapper Shop: www.sappershop.com