

The Royal Engineers Association

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Patron: HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN



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

24th February 2015

MINUTES OF THE 122nd MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION, HELD IN 034 MEETING ROOM 16, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, MAIN BUILDING, LONDON, ON WEDNESDAY 21st JANUARY 2015

PRESENT

Maj Gen C J Boag CB CBE	Chairman
Col C N R Skeat ADC	Corps Colonel
WO1 (RSM) A Crossen	1 RSME Regt
WO1 (RSM) T Whiteman	3 RSME Regt
Maj (Retd) R Macgregor MBE TD	Scotland & NI Group
Maj (Retd) B Henderson	South Wales Group
Mr M Payne BEM	Central Southern Group
Mr G Doughty	South East Group
Mr B Simm	East Anglia Group
Mr K Gover	South West Group
Mr M Crooke	North West Group
Mr K Street	South Midlands Group
Mr P Markham	London Group
Mr W P Halloran	North East Group

IN ATTENDANCE

Lt Col (Retd) K Lowerson MBE	Controller
Lt Col (Retd) N Jordan	D Con REA and Secretary
Mr T Webb	South Wales Group (Des)

APOLOGIES

Lt Col (Retd) R Murfin TD DL	Reserve Army
Maj (Retd) I Sidebottom	Corps Treasurer

Maj I Drummond RE
WO1 (RSM) S Bell
Mr R Price

Comd Wyke Regis
170 (Infra Sp) Engr Group
North Midlands 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:

- Lt Col (Retd) K Lowerson MBE – Controller REA
- Brian Simm – East Anglia Gp
- Tony Webb – South Wales Gp (Des)

ITEM 1 - TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE 121st MEETING

3. The Committee accepted that the Minutes of the 121st Meeting were a true record of the proceedings.

Proposed: Col CNR Skeat ADC – Corps Col

Seconded: Maj (Retd) R Macgregor MBE TD – Scotland & NI Gp

4. The Chairman signed the Minutes

ITEM 2 - MATTERS ARISING FROM THE 121st MEETING

5. **Paragraph 30 – Associate Membership.** There was an action on all Group representatives to canvas their Branches to determine their feelings about a 20% cap on Associate Members and a restriction on their voting rights. Group Representatives reported their Group position and a majority declared that 20% should be the preferred cap on Associate Members within Branches. Branches currently with more than 20% of Associate Member *will not* be required to reduce their numbers, but will not be permitted to recruit more Associate Members until that category is below the 20% cap. This cap should be observed by all Group Directors when considering applications for Associate Membership. In this respect, if requested, the D Con will provide Group Secretaries with up-to-date Branch membership statistics. This guideline would be reviewed in one year. Only three Group representatives supported a restriction on voting rights for Associate Members at Branch level so this aspect of the arising matter was not considered further.

Action: D Con, Group Directors, Group Secretaries

6. **Paragraph 34 - Hon Treasurer Job Description.** A job description for the post of Hon Treasurer REA was requested by the Chairman. This was produced and assisted greatly in recruiting a new Hon Treasurer. The Chairman advised those assembled that the new Hon Treasurer is Col (Retd) Chris Davies. NFA

ITEM 3 – TO NOTE THE REPORT OF THE BENEVOLENCE COMMITTEE

7. The Controller presented the Benevolence Report for the 12 month period ending 31st December 2014. The report is at Annex A.

8. Kevin Street, South Midlands Gp, said that the number of benevolence cases 'not' considered was increasing and given the healthy state of the REA coffers perhaps it was time to look at the criteria for giving benevolence and suggested that the bar was being set too high to enable people to get a grant. The Chairman said that it was much more complicated than just the 'bar'. Other factors must be considered such as the effect of the Military Covenant and social services providers. He believed that the call on regimental funds for benevolence had reduced because civil society is now doing what was expected of it. This was echoed by the Corps Colonel who advised that the Corps Colonel cohort had all acknowledged a downturn in requests for benevolence.

9. The Controller pointed out that the number of cases declined was not increasing; it was the number of cases considered that was decreasing. He said that strict eligibility criteria had to be considered before benevolence was granted and where cases were declined, it was because 'clients' were ineligible. He encouraged Kevin Street to attend a Benevolence Committee meeting as an observer; it was at these meetings that the reasons why requests for grants had been declined were given. He emphasised that no one was denied assistance if they were genuinely in need through poverty.

10. The Chairman said he was happy with the system, it is well tried and tested but it was right that the Committee should keep its eye on this most important aspect of our business.

11. The Benevolence Report was accepted.

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

12. The Corps Colonel presented his report. The report is at Annex B.

13. The Corps Colonel said that there was a perception that because our operational commitment in Afghanistan had ceased, there would be more breathing space for the serving Corps. He emphasised the continuing commitments of the Corps, in particular the efforts of 170 (Infra Sp) Engr Gp and 34 Fd Sqn in support of the Ebola outbreak. He said the Corps is as busy as it ever was.

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

15. Mike Payne, Central Southern Gp, said that even though Military Survey was not part of the 'sapper command' he asked that they were not forgotten. The Corps Col said that regardless of whether they featured in his report on the Corps, Military Survey were indeed part and parcel sapper family.

16. The Corps Colonel's report was accepted.

ITEM 5 – TO AWARD THE BADGE OF MERIT FOR 2015

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

Name	Branch	Group
Mr Barrie Owens	Medway Branch	South East Gp
Mr Frederick Andrews	Brighton Branch	South East Gp
Mr Peter Markham	Bomb Disposal Branch	London Gp
Mr William Steele	Bath & West Wilts Branch	South West Gp
Mr G Kirk	Blackpool Branch	North West Gp

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

19. The Chairman reiterated what he said last year. Whilst it was clear that some of the recommendations had been skilfully written, others were less so. It was also clear from the marks awarded that those recommendations of a high standard caught the eye and attracted the higher marks. Those nominated for the Badge of Merit are nominated because of the service they have given to their Branches and the REA, it is incumbent upon recommending officers to produce a

recommendation that reflected that service; time and effort must be expended, there were no short cuts.

ITEM 6 – ANNUAL FINANCIAL SUMMARIES - UPDATE

20. The Chairman remarked that each year Branches appeared to be getting better at submitting timely and accurate Annual Financial Summaries. He hoped the trend would continue this year and asked the D Con to update the Committee on Branch submissions.

21. The D Con said he had received eighty two Summaries, four of which had errors, and there were still twenty four Summaries yet to be received. He provided the Committee with a list of Branches and Groups yet to submit a valid Summary and asked Group Representatives to assist in their timely submission.

22. The Chairman urged Branches not to slip into bad old habits and to ensure that they submitted accurate and timely Summaries. This was supported by the Corps Colonel who said that HQ Royal Engineers was about to go through the annual audit which included the REA charitable account. He said it was most unhelpful if we were not able to present accurate accounts in support of that process.

After note: The only Branch failing to submit an accurate Financial Summary was the Luton Branch, East Anglia Group

ITEM 7 - BRANCH MATTERS

23. Longmoor Branch Closure. The Chairman said the Longmoor Branch had taken the difficult decision to close. A declining, ageing membership was cited as the reason. The Branch has been advised to comply with Association Rules with regard to accounts and membership data. The Branch Chairman has advised his Group Director of the Branch decision. The Committee noted the closure.

24. Hameln Branch Update. The Chairman said HQ REA had contacted their man in Hameln, David Howard, in order to determine progress. David Howard said he had had approximately eighteen responses to the Facebook notice about forming a Branch in Hameln, however, the responders were unsure of their membership status. The D Con said he asked David Howard to provide HQ REA with the service numbers of those responders in order to determine their membership status. Other than that, there was no further news.

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

25. Grant requests have been received for the following events in 2015:

Event	Requested Amount	Amount Supported by HQ REA
Chatham Weekend	£8,000	£8,000 (£8,000 in 2014)
Minley Weekend	£6,000	£6,000 (£6,000 in 2014)
Chilwell Weekend	£6,500	£6,500 (£6,500 in 2014)

26. The Committee recommended the allocations to Council.

ITEM 9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

27. **Additional commendation between Group Directors Commendation and the Badge of Merit.** The Chairman said that there has been a suggestion by the South Midlands Group that the REA introduce a Chairman's or National Commendation that sits between the current Badge of Merit and the Group Directors Commendation. The Chairman asked Kevin Street, South Midlands Gp, to expand on the item. Kevin Street said the main reason the Group felt this commendation was required is because the criteria for the Badge of Merit favoured members serving long periods as

Branch Officials. The Group felt that there should be an award that the Committee or Chairman could award to individuals without necessarily having long service as an Official. For example where an individual steps in to save a Branch or leads a merger that results in a thriving Branch being formed from two Branches that would otherwise have closed. This award would sit between the Group Directors Commendation and the Badge of Merit.

28. The Corps Colonel said he would support a proposal for such an award but the Chairman was concerned that such a award would not so much fill a gap but undermine the awards already in place; he was not convinced that there was a gap or that the current system was not working and was clear that he wished the 'air gap' between the Group Directors Commendation and the Badge of Merit to remain.

29. The Chairman said that a strategic issue challenging the REA was membership and suggested that, for a trial period, the REA introduces some sort of motivating award that rewards or recognises particular acts or initiatives that increased active membership; it would raise the profile and importance of this issue and focus effort on a strategic problem. He asked that members think about how this might be developed and what the reward might be; he did not think a badge appropriate. By way of example he said that national recognition of some description could be made to an individual who, by their own initiative, increased Branch membership by a significant amount. He suggested that members discuss the issue with their Groups and Branches and provide some ideas for consideration at the next meeting. It would be useful if such ideas were provided in written form to the D Con prior to the next committee meeting in order that they could be distributed to members for consideration. The Chairman thanked Kevin Street for raising the matter and for his input.

30. **Service of Thanksgiving at St Pauls Cathedral.** The Corps Colonel said the Prime Minister had directed that in March there would be a service of thanksgiving at St Pauls Cathedral and invitees would be those people who had lost family members in the Afghan conflict. He said that this would involve a lot of people; certainly within the Corps we had in the region of thirty fatalities. He continued by saying that there was no funding available for travel or subsistence to support those wishing to attend the service. Whilst there would be those who had the means to fund attendance at the service, there would be many unable to do so. The Corps was therefore looking to assist funding the attendance of relatives, expected to be two people from the family. He anticipated that each family would need about £350 and for the Corps this would cost in the region of £10,000. The Corps Col said the Chairman of Corps Finance had accepted that the Corps had a moral responsibility to support this event.

31. The Chairman asked for a show of hands to see how many members agreed that the Corps had a moral responsibility to support the event; all were in agreement. Whilst the Management Committee was not in a position to propose such expenditure, the Chairman said it was important that they agreed in principle to support funding and this had been done. Other than suggest that funding should not exceed £10k, the Chairman was unwilling to discuss amounts but the Corps Colonel said the original crude calculation was that the Corps and the REA might provide £5K each. Before recommending the financial support to Council, the Chairman said it was important to first determine whether or not the provision of any funding by the REA was lawful within the aims of the charity and asked for reassurance that Charity Commission rules were not being breached.

Action: Controller REA, Corps Treasurer

32. **2015 Diary.** Events of interest for 2015 have been notified to HQ REA.

- 30 May Trooping the Colour - Maj Gen Review
- 04 June Royal Hospital Chelsea Founders Day Parade
- 06 June Trooping the Colour - Colonels Review
- 06-07 June Chilwell Weekend*
- 10 - 11 June Beating the Retreat, London
- 13 June Queen's Birthday Parade
- 01 – 02 Aug Minley Weekend*
- 11 - 13 Sep Corps Memorial Weekend*
- 10 October REA AGM and Annual Dinner *

- 11 October Sapper Sunday at Royal Hospital Chelsea
- 05 November Field of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey
- 08 November Remembrance Sunday

*National Events

33. **Member's last meeting.** The Chairman noted that it was the last meeting for the following.

- Maj (Retd) Brian Henderson (South Wales Group)
- Maj Ian Drummond RE (Comdt Wyke Regis)
- WO1 (RSM) A Crossen (1 RSME Regt)

34. He thanked them all for their support to the REA and the Corps in general and hoped they would continue to be active ambassadors of the REA.

35. The Controller reminded members that it was also the last meeting for the Chairman. On behalf of all members of the REA he thanked Maj Gen Boag for his time, commitment and support to ensuring the continued relevance of the REA as part of the wider family of the Corps. This was echoed by all members present.

36. **Vote of Thanks.** Mr Mike Payne, Central Southern, said that having earlier welcomed the Controller, the Committee had not acknowledged the work the D Con had done in holding HQ REA together for the two years it took to recruit a Controller. He proposed a vote of thanks and this was supported enthusiastically by all members.

Proposed: Mr Mike Payne, Central Southern Gp
Seconded: Maj Gen Boag, Chairman REA
Carried

ITEM 10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

37. The next meeting is planned for mid-July 2015 in MOD Main Building.

24 February 2015

Deputy Controller

Minutes Approved

Chairman

Benevolence Report 122nd Management Cttee Meeting – 21st January 2015

1. **Trends 2014.** The total number of benevolence cases considered in 2014 was 2.5% less than the previous year. This has now become steady state after a 24% drop in 2013 although, the figures will need to be continually monitored in order to detect any further downward trends in the number of cases the Committee deals with. The majority of cases continue to be processed by The Royal British Legion (TRBL) and SSAFA on behalf of the REA Benevolence Committee.

2. **Benevolence Cases Considered 2014 – 2010**

<u>Category</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2010</u>
Disabled & Illness	202	185	192	329	404
Old age	63	52	118	84	73
Widows	78	110	138	132	138
Unemployed	137	152	210	144	122
Miscellaneous	171	187	285	268	206
Grants not made	68	51	23	12	10
Totals	719	737	966	969	953

Table 1

3. **Cost of Benevolence 2014.** The *unaudited* net cost of REA benevolence in 2014 made up of Grants, Christmas grants, weekly allowances and grants to other charities was in the region of £401,411; this figure does not include donated services support costs which are as yet unknown. This is lower than 2013 where the *audited* net cost of benevolence made up of Grants, Christmas grants, weekly allowances and grants to other charities was £419,752; this figure does not include donated services support costs of £62,369 (£482,121 in total).

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 of 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 Committee members would attend at least one meeting.

5. **Weekly Allowances 2014.** Regular weekly allowances were awarded to about 100 applicants and some have further assistance from the Army Benevolent Fund (ABF) where there is a need to financially assist with nursing home fees.

6. **Christmas Cards and Gifts 2014.** Approximately 1288 Christmas cards and some 408 monetary gifts were sent out in November to those in elderly people homes, in hospitals or homes for the mentally infirm, to those who are in receipt of weekly allowances and those being treated through Combat Stress.

7. **Grants to Other Charities 2014.** REA Council approved grants to other Service charities who are involved in the care and benevolent work for our Sappers and their families.

- A grant of £35,000 was made to the ABF
- A grant of £7,500 was made to SSAFA
- A grant of £2,500 was made to Combat Stress, The Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society.
- A grant of £3,000 was made to Veterans in Action.

CORPS UPDATE JANUARY 2015**8 Engineer Brigade****12 (FS) Group**

1. Support to the Ebola outbreak remains the priority; 20 personnel from 34 Fd Sqn deployed as the Main Construction Force (MCF) element and 18 pax were recovered in early Dec. 53 Fd Sqn assumed responsibility as the LASS for the final quarter of 2014 until Jan 15, when the commitment returned to 34 Fd Sqn.
2. 36 Engineer Regiment have remained engaged in delivering a PNCO Cadre and preparing for large exercises; notably, individual training on the RP&C capability within 20 Fd Sp Sqn. Preparations are well underway for QGE involvement in Gurkha 200 celebrations throughout 2015.
3. In the broader Middle East (BME); a 5-man Plant Maintenance Team endures in MINHAD under with a two-man maintenance team remaining in AL UDEID.
4. R Mon RE re-subordinated to 12 (FS) Engr Gp on 1 Dec 14, becoming the third Reserve Regt within the Group. 71 and 75 Engineer Regiments have conducted Training Weekends prior to deploying individuals on Regimental and Corps-level skiing training in the New Year, both Alpine racing and Nordic. 75 Engineer Regiment have begun preparation for Amphibious Crewman courses later this month; R Mon RE will begin build-up for Kenya upon return from Adventurous Training. 71 Engr Regt conducted a confirmatory recce to Cyprus in preparation for a future exercise.

29 EOD & Search Group

5. EOD, Search and MWD assets have recovered from Op LEEWAY (101 Engr Regt led STTT) and the final training serials are underway for subsequent deployments from Feb 15.
6. Support to the Afghan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA) endures (1 MWD Regt provision of MWD Sp) alongside support to the backload of equipment from Afghanistan.
7. Additional Defence Engagement activities are forecast for the early part of 2015 in Egypt, Bahrain, Tunisia and Nepal. Homeland resilience still endures.

170 (Infra Sp) Group

8. Commitment to the Ebola virus support endures but will reduce to 3 x Clk Wks by end Jan 15.
9. 62 Wks Gp are preparing to take on the Infra sp role for the ANAOA in Afghanistan and are manning the high readiness STRE.
10. 63 Wks Gp are committed to Pr ANEMOI, which is the re-building of the radar head in the Falkland Islands.
11. 64 Wks Gp remain committed in STRE strength to the ANAOA until end Mar 15, and have one STRE committed to other tasks.

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12. 65 Wks Gp continue to lean into Op FORTIFY supported by the 170 Engr Gp Reserve Support Wing.

13. 66 Wks Gp are set to deploy on exercise in Jan 15, are supporting other Gp commitments and a number of discrete operational tasks including Egypt.

Operations

14. **Afghanistan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA).** The RE commitments to the ANAOA is at steady state with 10 personnel from 170 Infr Sp Gp and regular endorsed surges. 11 Personnel from 35 Engr Regt deployed to Kabul on 05 Jan 15 to assist in the closure of one of the Camps.

15. **Africa (Ebola).** The majority of 62 Wks Gp and the MCF from 39 Engr Regt returned before Christmas. There remains a requirement for a Major and a Capt in the HQ, 3 x Clk of Wks and 6 x Artisans.

16. **Iraq.** 6 personnel from 29 EOD & Search Gp deployed in Dec in order to facilitate and plan C-IED Training in Iraq. The team is being headed up by CO 33 Engr Regt. 2 x C-IED Training Teams with infantry Force Protection are being prepared for deployment. 20 Wks Gp have continued to provide Infra sp to AIR in Iraq.

17. **Sudan.** Planning continues for sappers to deploy to South Sudan in order to provide a MCF for an UNMISS building project.

18. **Egypt.** Scoping is currently taking place for a Tp task in the Sinai Peninsular in order to upgrade the FP of the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) Camps.

Honours and Awards

19. The Following personnel were honoured in the 2014 New Years Honours List:

Appointments to the Military Division of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath

As Companions

Major General RR Davis CBE, late Corps of Royal Engineers

Appointments to and Promotions in the Military Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire

As Commanders

Major General AS Dickinson, late Corps of Royal Engineers

As Members

Lt Col JJ Greaves RE
Major CC Elworthy RE
Major DD Hembery RE

Meritorious Service Medal

WO1 W Bye RE	75 Engineer Regiment
WO1 SD Coburn	29 EOD & Search Gp
SSgt G Sunderland	35 Engineer Regiment

CGS Commendation for Outstanding Service

Major M Bennett RE	AFTC (W)
Captain AR Higgins RE	35 Engineer Regiment
WO1 J Pearson RE	C&STTG

CLF Commendation for Outstanding Service

Captain FW Bell RE	101 Engineer Regiment (EOD)
Captain MC Hales RE	DIO Falkland Isles
Captain IJ Higginbotham RE	ICSC, RMCS
Captain SC Mayers RE	75 Engineer Regiment
WO1 GG Aisbitt RE	RTC ATU (NE)
SSgt ICC Spence RE	26 Engineer Regiment
LCpl J Biddulph	39 Engineer Regiment

Comd FD&Cap Commendation for Outstanding Service

WO1 PC Quinn RE	63 Wks Gp RE, 518 STRE
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GOC FTC Certificate of Meritorious Service

Lt Col DL Woods RE	NATO
Capt MG Coles RE	RMonRE
WO1JB Aldridge RE	39 Engineer Regiment
Sgt SR Avis RE	29 EOD & Search Gp
Sgt AB Walker RE	3 RSME Regt

Sports & AT

20. **Corps Sporting Success.** A brief synopsis of some of the Corps sporting successes for 2014 are detailed below:

- Army Boxing Champions
- Army Basketball Champions
- Army Rugby League Lawson Cup Runners Up.
- Army & CS Windsurfing Champions
- Army Cross Country Championships Individual ladies winner (LCpl Van Standen) and men's RU (WO2 Watkins)
- Army Inter Unit Football winners (Reserve regiment).
- 2nd in Army Champs for Netball.
- 2nd in Army Squash Championships.
- 2nd in Army Cricket Championships (22 Engr Regt).
- REAF, 150 year celebration played against England select XI.

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21. **Invictus Games.** 11 RE personnel took part from both the serving and veteran community with some great success. An article can be found at the following link.

<http://www.army.mod.uk/royalengineers/35212.aspx>

22. **Army Sports Awards.** The following Corps personnel were honoured at the Army Sports awards:

WO2 Scorgie won the Official of the Year Award

Spr Royle won the Rising Star Award

Capt Simmonds RE came second in the Unsung Hero category.